

Reflection Questions: Acts 17:16-34

For the message, "Jesus & the Resurrection" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on April 17, 2022

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Acts 17:16-34

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for

"In him we live and move and have our being";
as even some of your own poets have said,

"For we are indeed his offspring."

29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and

believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- Verse 16 tells us that Paul's spirit was provoked within him as he observed that the city was full of idols. Think about why this would have been the case with this proclaimer of gospel of Jesus.
- Contrast Paul's response to the city of Athens being full of idols with the spirit of our age which is pretty much cool with whatever a person wants to believe as long as they are sincere. What thoughts or questions come to your mind as you think about this?
- Dial in on verses 30-31: "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."
 - This is the point that Paul has been driving at all along in his proclamation of Jesus and the resurrection. What are the key points he stresses? Which are you most confident about, and why? Which make you most nervous or hesitant, and why?

2. Let's think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus' followers.

- What comes to your mind when you imagine a group of Jesus' followers who are focused on the reality of Jesus and his resurrection? What does that look like? What difference would it make in our worship? Our life groups? Our one-to-one conversations with each other?
- What happens to a church when we forget or marginalize the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus?

3. Let's think about how this text applies to our city.

- What questions do you think your co-workers, neighbors, or extended family might have about this encounter that Paul had in Athens proclaiming news about Jesus and the resurrection?
- What do you think we are meant to learn or take away from a text like this as we interact with those in our community who do not yet know and follow Jesus?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....