

date: **7/30/17**

## **Bible Passage: Acts 17** (Paul in Athens)

# God Is the Living God

### REMEMBER VERSE

**Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”**  
John 14:6–7

## Inspire

*Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

“Would you like a cup of hot chocolate?” I asked Henry. Henry was at the outreach center. He had been homeless and in a wheelchair for several years, traveling from one hilly San Francisco street to another. His legs had developed many deep sores.

I asked, “Can I pray for you?” But Henry did not want my prayers. “What are you doing out here, man?” he replied. “You wanna know what I need? I need some bandages! Look at my legs!” I stared at his injured legs but could do nothing. I was in charge of junior high kids and couldn’t leave them alone to search for bandages. Not knowing what else to do, I looked at Henry and said, “I’m going to find you tomorrow, and we’ll get you what you need.”

“Alright man, whatever,” he said.

The following morning I scoured the Tenderloin district for Henry but couldn’t find him. I finally cried out to God and asked for help, an action I had thus far neglected to do! I thought I could help this man on my own; I did not recognize that God had been there long before I showed up.

Later that night, I headed back out to the street. Within minutes, I found Henry! I asked if he remembered me. He nodded, somewhat surprised. I asked if he was ready to get clean bandages. After a bit, Henry looked up at me with a big grin and said, “You can pray for me now.”

Thankfully, we serve a living God who is faithful, a God who recognizes our helplessness and provides help. We serve a God who can be known and who wants to be known. He is the living God.

*Jeff Given*



## Equip

*Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 1 Corinthians 9:22

Paul lived out this conviction when speaking to the Athenians at the Areopagus in Acts 17. Paul was from the cosmopolitan city of Tarsus. Tarsus, Athens, and Ephesus were considered the foremost intellectual cities in the ancient world. Because of this, Paul was able to teach to the members of the Areopagus from a position that would fit their intellectual framework. He did this by appealing to the common ground between them, quoting their poets, and systematically undermining the assumptions of his Epicurean and Stoic listeners.

First, Paul assailed the Epicureans' and Stoics' belief that matter was not created. He began his speech by declaring God was the Creator of all. Second, Paul attacked the Epicureans' belief that, although there might be a Creator, He does not interact with the created world. Paul asserted that the God who made everything is Lord of all, the One who sustains and rules over the world He made (v. 24). Third, Paul challenged the Stoic belief that the "divine spark" of reason lives within us and quoted one of their own poets: "In him we live and move and have our being" (v. 28). Fourth, Paul explained that all people in all nations came from Adam. We have a common ancestry. This contradicted the Athenians' boast that they had come from the soil of their homeland and were unlike other men.

Paul's listeners became hostile when he spoke of the resurrection. Both the Epicureans and Stoics saw death as merely a dispersal of atoms. To them, resurrection was impossible. It is tragic that many people deny that the Creator can be known and wants to be known.

## Support

*Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

The first step in knowing God is having faith that He is real, living, and can be known. Many of the children in your ministry, and the people you encounter every day, don't have a grasp of this basic reality. The wonderful thing about God is that not only can He be known, but also that He wants to be known because He loves us.

As you prepare to teach this week's lesson, spend some time asking God to give you more of Him. Pray He will give you new realizations about His character, His love for you, and His amazing gift of salvation through Jesus. Pray He will reveal Himself to you in new ways. Pray God will use you to lead the kids into a time of seeking God, seeking to know He is real, and seeking to know Him.

**SMALL GROUP**  
SECTION

## EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.*



In today's part of The Big God Story, Paul preached to a group of people who worshipped a god they didn't know. Paul told them that God sent His Son, Jesus. He is the living God who can be known. These EXPLORE activities will help children consider knowing a little bit *about* someone, which is different from really *knowing* someone.

## Option 1: Drawing Faces (for younger kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Pencils or pens
- Stopwatch

### RELATE

Invite the children to pair up, and give each child a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen. Give the children 30 seconds to study the faces of their partners. Then have the kids sit back-to-back with their partners. Give them one minute to draw pictures of their partners with as much detail as possible. After one minute, encourage the children to turn back around and look at their partners and their pictures to see how much they remembered.

## Option 2: What Do You Know about Me? (for older kids)

### SUPPLIES

- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Pencils or pens
- Stopwatch

### RELATE

Invite the children to pair up, and give each child a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen. Then give the kids 30 seconds to write or draw as many facts as they can about their partners (hair color, favorite sport, siblings' names, etc.). At the end of the 30 seconds, have the kids set their lists aside and listen to their partners. Each partner will get 30 seconds to talk about his friends, family, and favorite things.

Once the kids have all had 30 seconds to talk about themselves, invite them to turn over their papers and spend 30 more seconds writing everything they know about their partners now. After 30 seconds, have each child compare the number of items on the front of his paper with the number of items on the back of his paper to see if he came to know his partner better the second time around.

**LARGE GROUP**  
SECTION

## DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

*Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.*



## Traditions and Remember Verse

### SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

### RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

**Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” John 14:6–7**

## Connect

### Question

**Which is better: ice cream or hamburgers? Debate!**

## The Big God Story

**Bible Passage: Acts 17**

**Storytelling Technique: Images, Props, and Sculpting Clay**

**God Is the Living God**

### SUPPLIES

- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- Images: [Ancient World Map](#), [People Debating](#), [Idol](#), [Areopagus](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Whiteboard
- Dry erase marker
- Object to represent an idol (e.g., trophy with small figure on top)
- Optional: poster board, marker, additional objects to represent idols

### SET UP

Place the “idol” near the stage. Optional: On the poster board, write “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD” in large letters and set the additional “idols” around the stage.

### RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.



For the past couple of weeks we've heard about Paul going to different places to tell people about Jesus. We also heard how he got thrown in jail for this. But this didn't stop Paul! He knew that all people need to know God and know that God knows and loves them. So Paul headed to a famous ancient city: Athens, the capital of Greece. *Tech: Cue Ancient World Map Image.* Point out Athens.

Athens was full of very smart people who would stand in the marketplace where people sold things and debate about philosophy and religion. *Tech: Cue People Debating Image.* Athens was also the center of Greek religion, a religion that worshipped many gods. Because of this, there were many shrines to and idols (*Tech: Cue Idol image*) of false gods everywhere—in the marketplaces, in homes, and even at the entrances of roads.

When Paul arrived in Athens, he went to the marketplace and started sharing about Jesus. After a while, Paul started to get some attention from the people. They thought Paul was telling them about a new god. Because they were curious about what Paul had to say, he was invited to speak in a very important place: the Areopagus (air-eee-ah-puh-gus). Invite kids to say the word with you. *Tech: Cue Areopagus image.* At the Areopagus, about 30 smart and important people listened to Paul speak to them about the living God. What an audience!

Paul had been raised in a city similar to Athens, so he knew how to talk with these people. First, Paul said he knew they were very religious. Paul had seen their shrines and altars to their many gods, had seen them practicing magic, and had heard them talking about spiritual things.

Optional: As you share the following Bible verse, walk around the idol-like objects on the stage and then unveil or display the poster board with "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" written on it. **Let's turn in our Bibles to Acts 17:23 to see what Paul said. "As I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD."** The people had an altar for a god they didn't know! Paul took this opportunity to tell the people that he knew the God they didn't know—the one true God—the living God!

Paul started from the beginning of The Big God Story. He told them God created and controls everything. Even though God doesn't need people, He loves them because He created them. And God brought about everything so people would seek and find Him. Because Paul was such a good speaker, he knew he needed to share proof with the people. Paul said, "[God] has given proof of this to everyone by raising [Jesus] from the dead" (v. 31). Jesus' death and resurrection are proof God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. Many people got angry about what Paul said and some mocked him, but some believed and wanted to hear more about the living God.

Paul's words still speak to us today. It is amazing to know God created everything, He loves us, He wants to be known, and He can be known. Look at this (hold up an object representing an idol while you continue to speak). Can this comfort us when we are sad? Has it known about us since before we were born? Can this know us like our friends, like we know God? Of course not! That is what Paul was trying to tell the Athenians. False gods can't be known like God can. And false gods are not living like our God! Ask kids to tell you what they know about God, and write their answers on the whiteboard. Invite kids to take their clay and transform their idols into objects that represent what they know about God.

God made everything and everyone for one purpose: to search for and find Him. God wants to be known. That's why God invites all of us to be a part of His family and The Big God Story He is still writing. Share a personal story of a time you came to know God as the living God.



## SMALL GROUP SECTION

### RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.*

## Reflect: God Is the Living God

Encourage kids to look up the following verses in their Bibles.

### Questions for Younger Kids

- **What did Paul do as he traveled?** Acts 17:2–3
- **What did the Greeks worship?** Acts 17:16
- **What is the difference between false gods and the one true God?** Acts 17:24–26
- **How can we help others know God?** Matthew 28:18–20; Romans 10:17

### Questions for Older Kids

- **What did Paul do as he traveled?** Acts 17:2–3
- **What did Paul say about God?** Acts 17:22–29
- **What is the difference between false gods and the one true God?** Acts 17:24–26
- **How did the people in Athens react to Paul?** Acts 17:32
- **How can we help others know God?** Matthew 28:18–20; Romans 10:17

### BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

#### SUPPLIES

- **Remember Verse cards** (see Resources)
- Bible

#### RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Matthew 28:18–20:

**Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

**May God reveal Himself to you this week. May God inspire you to share the truth with others.**

