



WEEKLY STUDY

Fully Persuaded - Week Two

Those responsible for spreading the Gospel into new areas had to be fully persuaded that Jesus was and is the Son of God, and that he came to earth, died for our sins and rose from the grave so that we might have eternal life. It's difficult to put your life on the line for something you only halfway believe in. It doesn't mean they (or we) had to have every theological point ironed out. How do you become fully persuaded? Paul's example in Acts 17 gives us an idea. Point to Jesus. Keep pointing to Jesus and in the process you yourself will become more fully convinced that the Gospel is true even in a foreign land with foreign gods. May you see that God is already present in every place where you share about him this week.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for religious people who have not yet encountered the risen Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to talk with others about Jesus.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 17.16-18 (NIV)

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

- Resurrection is a foreign concept. Even for our world today. It goes against just about everything our world seems to value. There are some compelling parallels between the thought in the ancient Greek world and today's. The Epicureans, for instance, were sure that gods were far away and uninvolved in the world. Many people today would say they believe in God but are not sure He has anything to do with the world. Sounding like a “babbling” is something we risk when we share that God really is with us and has come to redeem the world. Have you ever shared the good news about Jesus and the resurrection? If so, how was the message received?
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- **Prayer Prompt: For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15.22)**
- *God, I want to be fully available to you and your will. Give me words and opportunities to share them. Our hope is in Christ. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 17.19-21 (NIV)

Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.”²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

- It is good to hold space for the sharing of ideas. The fact that these folks spent their time doing nothing but talking about ideas leads to some questions. Did they work? Did they have families?! It sounds like a luxury of time, but it is this fact that provided the platform for Paul's message to be shared. Where do you have space to share and hear ideas? Are there places where both talking and listening take place? How does God use our exchange of ideas?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3.1-2)**
- *God, I want to be better at both speaking up for you, and listening to others who are struggling to find you. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 17.22-23 (NIV)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

- Paul saw that the people of Athens were covering their bases by worshiping as-yet unidentified gods. This would be like us worshipping “the great Etc.” Worship of the one true God is about responding to what He has done, and entering into relationship through His Son. It becomes very personal. He covers all of our bases so we don’t have to! Is there anything besides God, that you may not have named, that seems to be demanding your worship?

- **Prayer Prompt: The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (Hebrews 1.3)**
- *Lord God, I want 100% of my worship to be spent on you. I’m sorry for the times that I give you less than that. Please forgive me and increase my desire for you. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 17.24-31 (NIV)

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

- The temples built to false gods were places of appeasement to those gods through providing shelter, food sacrifices, and the creation of idols. The God and Father of Jesus does not require such things (lessons learned by Israel over many generations). Instead, God gives us life and breath and everything we need. What he wants from us is relationship and worship. Turning away

from the old way of thinking about God is the first step towards enjoying the relationship He invites us into. Is there anything keeping you from fully accepting the embrace of God?

- **Prayer Prompt: God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73.26)**
- *Almighty God, I know that you don't need anything from me. But you want my heart. Today, may I freely give it to you. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 17.32-34 (NIV)

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."³³ At that, Paul left the Council.³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

- Paul was offering hope of new and eternal life for those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he rose from the dead. Some sneered, others stayed engaged, and some believed. That's about right. The results of pointing to Jesus are rarely going to be 100% successful. But Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus (like a judicial court), believed and later became the Bishop of Athens. He and Damaris are both considered saints of the Eastern Orthodox church today. This moment shaped the future church for generations to come! Have you ever thought about the potentially lasting impact of a conversation about Jesus? Is there someone who shared Jesus with you that might be looking upon your spiritual legacy with a sense of gratitude?

- **Prayer Prompt: as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3.14-15)**
- *God, I give thanks for those who have shared Jesus with me. I may not even remember them all, but I am indebted to their faithfulness. If you choose, use me in similar ways today. Amen.*

SATURDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15.20-23 (NIV)

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

- I Corinthians 15 is probably Paul's best teaching on the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection to come. The real end of proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus was for those who believed to participate in the resurrection themselves. To be made alive in Christ! How does the hope of resurrection allow you to live differently here and now?
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- **Prayer Prompt: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3.16-17)**
- *God, show me what it means to live as one who has confidence in the resurrection to come. I don't want to waste this life. Help me to practice resurrection in every aspect of my life today. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

In the message on Sunday we identified what Paul **saw** as he walked around Athens, what he **felt** about what he saw, and what he **did** in response to what he felt. If you can, take a walk through your city or town, or simply imagine walking the familiar streets.

- **What do you see?** Are there beautiful things? What are troubling signs that you see? What idols (objects of worship) do you see?
- **What do you feel about what you see?** What is going on in your heart as you see the beauty and the brokenness?
- **What will you do in response?** Are there conversations to be had? Are there ways you can be pointing to Jesus as an alternative to the idols of worship?