



**SEMI-ORGANIZED LOVE** Wk 7: *Church is on a Mission* @pastorerichuffman @thestoryhouston www.thestory.church

What is Church? So far in this series, we've learned how Church is *mobile* and *kinetic* (Wk.1), *animated by the Spirit of God* (Wk.2), *a community where life and resources are shared* (Wk.3), *fearless* (Wk.4), *a place to remember you belong with God* (Wk. 5), and ...

Today we finish up this set of talks by thinking about the MISSION of the CHURCH, and we'll look specifically at the Book of Acts, which tells the stories behind the very first Church and its mission.

#### **Acts 17:16-34**

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 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. 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. 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? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

What are idols? What idols did Paul see in Athens? What idols still exist today?  
What are your "favorite idols"?

Who were the Epicureans and the Stoics? What did they believe?

#### **Acts 17:16-34**

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. 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. 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. And he is not served by human



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hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

From one man he  
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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. 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. '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. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 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."

What was Paul's strategic approach with unbelievers? How did he honor their culture *while* sharing the truth about Jesus?

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." At that, Paul left the council. 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.

How would you define Paul's *mission*? Where did his mission come from?

What is a mission statement? What are the elements of an effective one?

If your life (or your marriage or your family) had a mission statement, what would it be, based on the way you've been living?

In light of Christ and his love for us, what do you *hope* your mission statement will become? Write a first draft of your mission statement below: