



# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

How God Turned a Band of Nobodies into a Movement for Everybody

*How did a handful of ordinary people become ten thousand followers of Jesus in the year following his public execution? How did his movement gain so much momentum, especially as ten of the eleven charter members were crucified, burned, or stoned to death? How did ten thousand Christians become one million by the second century, and 3.3 billion today? Acts of the Apostles tells the story of how Christianity spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire and beyond. We will journey through Acts in pursuit of the truth behind history's most consequential movement.*

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## Group Discussion Guide: Week 18

### Conversation Starter

According to recent surveys, 47% of all American adults belong to a Christian church (down from 70% in 1999). What factors do you think have contributed to this decline?

### **Paul's Concern**

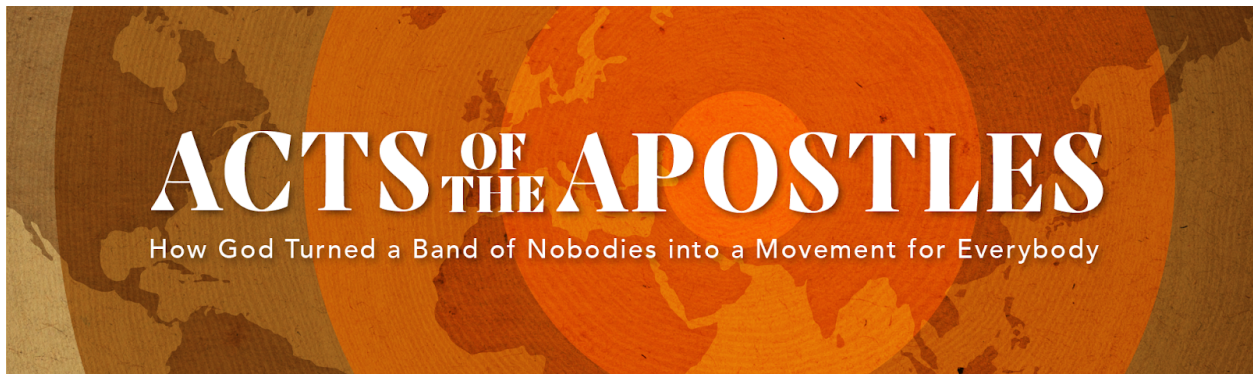
Read Acts 17:16-18. What did the Apostle Paul find so troubling about the predominant Athenian worldview? Why was it so discouraging to him?

Once Paul saw the pervasive idolatry of Athens, he couldn't unsee it. When you look around the world today, what do you see that you can't unsee? What are the idols and false gods people are chasing these days?

### **Paul's Response**

Read Acts 17:19-23. What was the Areopagus, and what went on there every day?

How did Paul begin his address to the Athenians? Why is it important for Christians to first carefully observe the context we're in *before* speaking out?



Read Acts 17:24-28. Why do you think Paul began his presentation with the universe, the earth, the creation of all things, and the origin of life - rather than opening with a more religious or biblical worldview?

In this brief talk, Paul referenced popular Greek poets (v. 28). Why would Paul quote non-Christian poets while attempting to explain the Christian gospel?

Read 17:29-31. Having paid homage to Athenian religiosity and values, Paul made a more aggressive appeal here. What might his audience have found challenging or offensive about the claims Paul made in these verses?

Read 17:32-34. Paul's Athenian audience responded to his appeal in three distinct ways. What were the three different responses found in this passage?

### Reflection Questions

When you observe the world around you today, as fallen as it may be, where do you see signs of God's Truth in modern, secular culture?

Why is it important for Christians to be both gracious (in our assessment of secular contexts and worldviews) **and** truthful (about the gospel of Jesus Christ) - and not just one or the other?

If you've ever tried to tell unbelievers about Jesus, you've probably seen people react in each of these three ways discussed above. Spend a few moments reflecting and sharing about a time when you shared the gospel (even if it was only inviting someone to church). How was your message received? How did their response affect or change your enthusiasm for sharing the gospel with others?