



# Growth Group Discussion Guide

"Growing Upward, Inward, Outward, and Forward"

*For the Week of September 6, 2015*



## Acts 17

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 the Jews and the 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 dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling 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. 19 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 want 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.) 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men 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. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. 24 "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 hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each 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.' 29 "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 man's 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 all men by raising him from the dead." 32 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 A few men 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.

## John 9

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I

## Sermon Outline

- This week we looked at two more evangelistic styles – the Intellectual style and the Testimonial style.
- Paul's approach Acts 17 with the philosophers at the Areopagus worked well because they loved to debate and ponder and Paul was gifted in those ways.
- Paul was courteous, he built connections with them, he was courageous, and his delivery was Christ-centered.
- The Blind man in John 9 is a good representative of the Testimonial approach to evangelism.
- He wasn't confrontational and he didn't want to enter into a debate, he simply shared his personal experience with Jesus.
- Everyone can and should use the testimonial approach at times. No one can argue with your story.

## WELCOME – Getting to Know Each Other Better

- Who has been most influential to you in your spiritual journey? How?
- How would you describe your personality?

## WORD - Applying Scripture to Our Lives

1. What negative things did Paul see in the culture of Athens? (Acts 17:16)
2. How did Paul build a relational bridge with them by showing them respect in spite of their idolatry in Acts 17:22?
3. Do you think Paul planned his speech or his method of building a bridge relationally before he spoke to them?
4. How might we be able to do this in today's culture?
5. How else did Paul connect to them in Acts 17:28?
6. What did he do in verses 30-31? Why is this important?

am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. 8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." 10 "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. 11 He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." 12 "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided. 17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." 18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" 20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" 28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

7. Moving into the story of the Blind man, what was the question the disciples had about him?
8. What was Jesus' explanation?
9. Who did the Blind man first share with?
10. What did he tell them?
11. What was the hope of the Pharisees in their line of questioning?
12. Why do you think the Blind man didn't debate them?
13. How would you describe his demeanor and responses to the Pharisees?
14. How do you think the Blind man felt about his parents' response?
15. How did Jesus respond to this man's witness for Him?
16. Who can you be investing in currently to a) Share your faith with and b) Invite to Back to Church Sunday on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>?

### **WITNESS - Prayer Concerns from my Growth Group:**

- Who has God placed in your life who does not know Christ?
- How can we pray for *your* spiritual growth tonight?
- What other prayer concerns do you have?