



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Acts 17:16-34

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

Session Theme:

Instruction

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Idols and gods?

Invite kids to imagine that they are walking through the downtown of their city or perhaps a local mall. What might they see around them on their stroll? What are most people doing? Write all answers on the board. Some possibilities: Looking at cell phones, scrolling or texting, eating, drinking, buying items, etc.

Once kids have given their ideas, ask them what a visitor from another place and time might think of what they just described. How important would those things or activities appear to the visitor?

In today's Bible story, the apostle Paul was visiting ancient Athens. He saw many things that gave clues to what the people valued and worshiped. What did he say about this? Let's start our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Lord God, Help us to be faithful and to put you first in our lives. Keep us focused on what matters most. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "This Is My Father's World" (hymn)
- "I Am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N" (children's song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Understanding

God used the apostles to bring the message of Jesus to many people across the ancient world. The Holy Spirit created faith through the power of God's Word, and people's lives were changed. The early Church continued to grow.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level:

Children: Read aloud the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read aloud Scripture from the Bible

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Pre-Readers: Coloring Page and Activity

Elementary: Children's Pages (Worksheet and Drama)

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Pre-Readers: Teacher leads a simple prayer

Children: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Acts 17:16-34

1. Most people in Athens had never heard of the God of Israel. Do you know the names of some of their false gods? (See Acts 14:11-12, 19:27.) How were these Greek "gods" different from the God of the Bible?

They had names such as Zeus, Hermes, Artemis, Athena, Hera, Apollo, and Ares. These gods were not perfect and transcendent like the God of the Bible. Being invented by men, they were caricatures of humans and exaggerated all the vices and weaknesses of men and women.

2. Why do you think the people of Athens had a temple dedicated to an "unknown god"? What angle were they trying to play? How is it even possible to worship an unknown god?

They were so fearful of angering a god by failing to worship it, that they felt it necessary to worship the unknown, just in case. They wanted to avoid punishment from the unknown. But we really can't worship a god we don't know. That is what makes Jesus different. In him we have come to know God.

3. In verses 24-27, what did Paul teach the people of Athens about the real God?

The real God is the God of Heaven. He does not live in temples made by man. He made all the nations and gave them their place. We should seek him because he is close to us. We may not know him, but he knows us! He is our Creator and the One who gives us life.

4. In verse 28, what are the two verses of Greek poetry that Paul quotes? In what sense is this true of all people?

Even the Greek philosophers acknowledged that our human life comes from a greater power, and that we are all part of one human race. Unlike rocks and trees and other inanimate objects, we are individual spiritual beings capable of a personal relationship with God.

"In him we live and move and have our being" and "For we are indeed his offspring." These verses echo the stories of Creation from the Bible, where we are told that all of humanity was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), and that we were made into living creatures by the breath of God's own Spirit (Genesis 2:7).

5. In verse 30, Paul told the people that God has overlooked our past human ignorance. But what does God want from us now? What does God expect of you?

God knows our limitations. We human beings often act out of ignorance and a lack of trust in him. God is able to forgive us for this and overlook what we could not know. But now that Christ has been revealed to us, God expects us to repent of our sins and trust in him.

6. Who is "the man whom God has appointed" that Paul talks about in verse 31? What had God done for this man? What does this man do for us?

Jesus Christ is the man of whom Paul is speaking — the one God has appointed to be the Messiah and ruler of his kingdom. Jesus died on the cross for our sake that we could be forgiven. But God proved his power by raising Jesus from the dead. Because we have been united with Jesus in his death and resurrection, we have the assurance that God will raise us from the dead as well. (See Romans 6:1-11.)

7. Who were the man and woman in the crowd who listened to what Paul said and joined him? (Hint: both names start with a D.) Why do you think they believed when other people present did not?

They man was Dionysius, and the woman was Damaris. They believed because God's Holy Spirit worked through the words of the Apostle Paul. It was through the promise of Jesus that God created faith in their hearts. As Paul wrote in Romans 10:17: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

Since faith is the Holy Spirit's work in us, we human beings are not the ones in control. We can't make someone else believe. But we are the human instruments through which God brings his promise into the life of others.

8. Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-25. The Greek civilization was known for its philosophy and higher learning. But what kind of wisdom and understanding do people miss out on when they exclude God from the equation?

Godly wisdom and worldly wisdom are very different things. The wisdom of the world is tainted by sin and cannot know God. Christ, who is with God and came from God, is the only one who can reveal to us the truth and grace of God (John 1:18). As human beings, we may be able to perceive and understand things in the physical world, but spiritual truth is something only God himself can reveal. When we exclude God from our search for wisdom, we will never know the wisdom that brings life and salvation.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

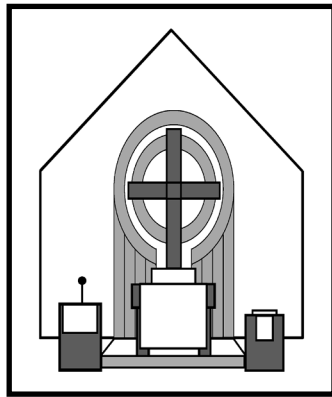
Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Design a Church Art Project

For all children

Materials Needed:

- White copy paper
- Pencils and erasers
- Colored markers or colored pencils
- Rulers
- Colored construction paper
- Stapler



Instructions:

For this activity, invite kids to design a Christian church to worship the one, true God. Their church can be as simple, or as ornate, as desired. However, it should include the following at a minimum:

- A Bible (for God's Word to be read and preached)
- A cross (as a symbol of Jesus Christ)
- A baptismal font (where children or adults can be welcomed into the family of faith)
- The elements of Holy Communion (bread and wine).

Invite kids to draw their churches on the copy paper, using pencil and then markers (or colored pencils). Staple the finished drawing to a colored piece of construction paper as a "frame."

Paul told the people of Athens that God did not live in temples built by human hands. God is bigger than that! He does not exist within statues or other things (like a tree, or the sun), as some people thought.

So why do we worship in churches? In part, it's because Jesus said he would be with us wherever two or more are gathered. We meet in churches to stay warm and dry when the weather is poor. Additionally, a church building can easily house the important elements of worship — Bibles, a cross, the baptismal font, and the elements of Holy Communion. But if we were to worship in Jesus' name outside, under a tree (as people in some parts of the world do), he would be there too. As Paul explained in today's story, the Lord God does not need a building to be present. The important thing is to gather with other Christians for worship.

Activity 2: Uncover the Idols Game

For all children

Materials Needed:

- Scissors
- Timer



Instructions:

Before class begins: Cut out the images on this page. Hide these pictures around the room before class begins.

To play the game:

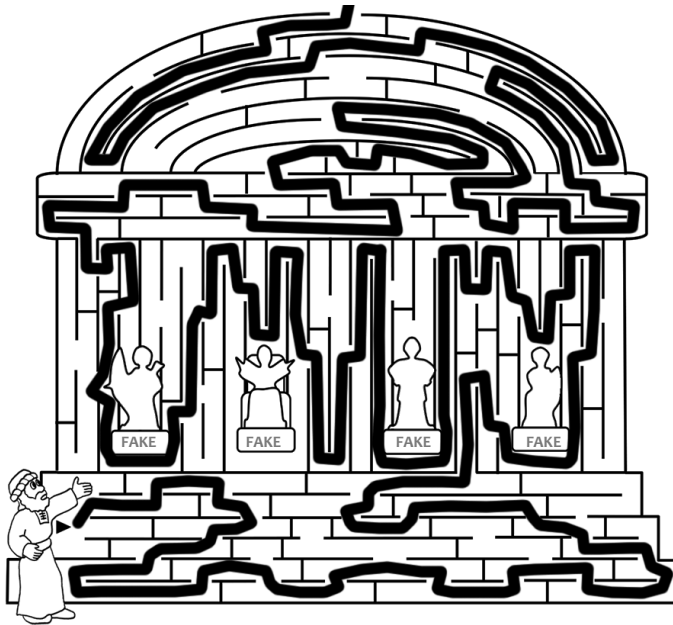
Like the people of ancient Athens, we sometimes have idols in our lives, too. Set a timer. Invite kids to search for 12 little pictures hidden around the room before the timer sounds. Afterwards, look at each picture and ask kids how we may turn even a good thing into an idol without realizing it.



Worksheet Answer Key

Below are the answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

THE ONE TRUE GOD REAL



Reflection for the Week Ahead

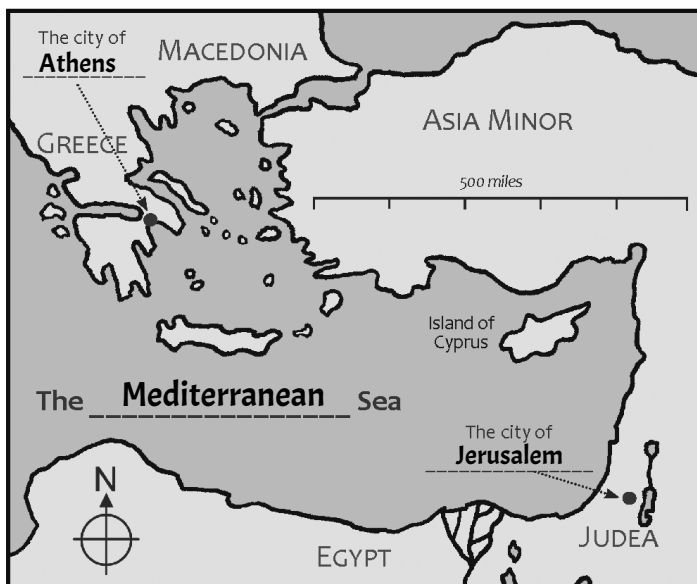
When Paul visited ancient Athens, he noticed that people were religious but did not know the Lord. They worshiped idols of every kind, even making an idol to an “unknown god” in order not to leave any entity out. This may seem strange to us, yet were they really that different from us today? It is not unusual to hear modern people say that they worship nature, or perhaps that they worship *in* nature rather than in church. These people do recognize the “hidden God” of creation, who made both the beautiful trees and the terrifying storms. Yet they may not know Christ, who showed us the loving heart of the “revealed God.”

Talk to each other about these questions:

Paul wanted to explain God to the people of Athens. How can we as Christians help people in our own time come to know God? What are some specific things we can do?

Do you think people in our time worship things other than God? Why or why not?

Map Answer Key



Athens is in Greece; Jerusalem is in Judea
(These cities are about 780 miles apart.)

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer giving thanks to God for Jesus Christ and for faithful teachers and preachers who have passed on the Good News even when their lives were in danger. Pray for the persecuted church.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.

A: _____

D: _____

T: _____

R: _____

C: _____