

# Ministry Among Ungodly Idolaters

1. Read Isaiah 44:9-20. What does this passage say about idolatry?
  - a. Why is it so foolish?
  - b. Why do you think idols were so popular everywhere Paul went?
  
2. Read Exodus 32:1-6. Most of us will never buy or make a graven image and then bow down to worship it.
  - a. Is idolatry a danger to us today?
  - b. Read I Corinthians 10:6-11. Was worshiping the golden calf the Israelites' only idolatry?
  - c. What kinds of idolatry might we struggle with today?
  
3. The Epicureans said, "Enjoy life!" and the Stoics said, "Endure life!" Both groups were equally unimpressed with the teachings of Paul. They ask, "What does this idle babbler want to say?" (Acts 17:18) The words "idle babbler" (Greek, *spermologos*: a seed-picker) originally referred to someone who picked up scraps in the marketplace. Later, the phrase referred to someone who picked various scraps of learning from others and offered them to anyone who would listen.
  - a. How did Paul respond to this critical comment (Acts 17:18-20)?
  - b. How could you apply Paul's example to various situations in life when non-Christians make critical comments to you about the things of God?
  
4. The Athenian philosophers took Paul to the Areopagus (Greek, *Areiou Pagou*: "Ares rock," Hill of Ares; Latin equivalent: Mars Hill), where he was invited to address those in attendance and present his "philosophy" (Acts 17:19-21).
  - a. Many Christians have a difficult time sharing their faith with non-Christians because they do not know how to introduce the subject of spiritual things. Paul's introductory statement to the Athenians reveals an important spiritual insight that can help every Christian become more effective in personal evangelism. What is it (Acts 17:22,23)?
  - b. How could you use this spiritual insight from Paul's life to become a more effective witness for Jesus Christ in your neighborhood? at work? through your local church?
  
5. Many people believe that America has entered the Post-modern era. By this they mean that America has now passed the time when society still adheres to an absolute standard of right and wrong as revealed in God's Word. Like the philosophers of ancient Greece, truth to the Post-modernist is not determined by some external ethical code such as the Ten Commandments, but by one's own concept of truth. According to the Post-modernist, abortion, euthanasia and immorality are right because they are right for him.
 

Some people claim that Christians need to change their approach to witnessing in the Post-modern culture. Rather than initially talking about God (His being, His nature, His righteousness) and man's need for salvation, they recommend a more philosophical approach. Take a few minutes to examine Paul's message to the Athenians (Acts 17:22-31).

  - a. Does Paul take a philosophical approach in his witness to these secular philosophers? Please support your answer.
  - b. List the other elements of Paul's message.

6. Read I Corinthians 1:21-25. What message are we called to bring to the lost? Why do they need to hear it?

## Read: Acts 18:1-28

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### Monday

v. 1-3 — What did Paul have in common with Priscilla and Aquilla? In what ways were they a help to Paul? In what other ways might they have been a help to Paul? List some ways you might be of help to a missionary. Pick a missionary you know and make plans to help him or her in a concrete way.

### Tuesday

v. 4-6 — How often did Paul "reason in the synagogues"? What did Paul mean by "I am clean"? Paul likely had Ezekiel 3:17-19 in mind when he said those words. (See also Acts 20:26,27.) In what ways could you demonstrate this same kind of zeal?

### Wednesday

v. 7-11 — What part did Justus have in Paul's ministry? What "fruit" did Paul bear while living with Justus? Would it have been possible for Paul to do his missionary work without the support he received from Justus? Would his work have been any harder? Missionaries and pastors face the same reality today. While it is possible to do the work of the ministry and be self-supported, it is God's design for the church to support missionaries and pastors—"Let him who is taught the Word share in all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6). Do you think Justus gained any eternal benefit for his part in Paul's ministry? See Philippians 4:15-17.

### Thursday

v. 12-17 — God used Gallio to deliver Paul. Do you think Gallio was saved? Read Acts 18:9; do you think God had Gallio in mind when He spoke to Paul? We cannot know that for certain but we do know that God used this unredeemed government official to deliver Paul. Read Romans 13:1-4; what does it say about government officials? Does this give you any comfort in an election year?

### Friday

v. 18-23 — The details of these verses seem very mundane (comparatively with the rest of Acts). In verse 18, Paul completes a Nazirite vow; in verse 19, we find him reasoning with the Jews; in verse 22, he greets the church at Caesarea. He then traveled to Antioch and the churches of Galatia and Phrygia. Ministry is very often nothing more than faithfulness in daily tasks. Do you think God is more concerned about our obedience during the "great," "important" moments (like Paul preaching at Mars Hill), or do you think God is more concerned about our obedience in the "mundane" events of daily life?

### Saturday

v. 24-28 — Who did God use to train Apollos? Why do you think that was? How were Priscilla and Aquilla able to "more accurately" explain Christ to this already well versed man? Who trained Priscilla and Aquilla? Are there any implications for discipleship you can take away from this passage?

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