



Searching for God

(based on Acts 17:22–31)

Paul wanted everyone to hear the amazing story of Jesus. He traveled far and wide, bringing good news to anyone who would listen.

After many adventures, Paul arrived at the great city of Athens. Athens was a famous Greek city. The people of Athens loved to talk about religion and new ideas. Reading and thinking, studying and learning were very important to them.

When Paul got to the city, he walked around looking at all the interesting things. Paul could see that the people living in Athens were very religious. There were statues and altars everywhere to many gods and goddesses they worshiped.

“These people are searching for God,” thought Paul. “I must tell them about God’s love. I must tell them about Jesus.”

So Paul went to the big meeting place in the middle of the city. He began to teach about God and God’s love. Paul told the people that he could see they were searching for God.

“I was going through your city looking at all the things you worship,” explained Paul. “I found an altar for the unknown God. I know who this God is.”

Paul explained that the unknown God made the whole universe and everything in it.

“This God doesn’t live in temples or statues made by human hands,” proclaimed Paul. “God is much bigger than that. God gives us life and breath. Just reach out, and you will find that God is close. God is deep inside and all around. We are all God’s children.”

The people were interested. They listened and listened to all that Paul had to say. Some wanted to know more. Paul told them about Jesus and how he died and came back to life! Some of the people believed when they heard the good news. They became followers of Jesus too, and the message of Jesus continued to spread throughout the world.



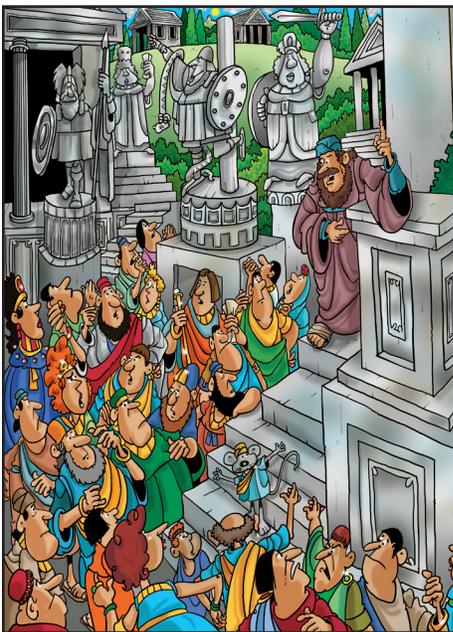
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Read together *What Is God's Name* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Skylight Paths, 1999) or watch the YouTube video “What Is God's Name by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso” (bit.ly/GodsNameVideo, 2:29). Wonder together what name you might know God by.
- Paul recognized that the people of Athens were searching for God. He was able to tell them about the God he knew who had done mighty and marvelous things, and particularly about Jesus and his life, showing people how to live in God's way. Together, make a list of what things you would tell about God and Jesus to others who may be searching for God.



Responding to God's Grace

- Try an adaptation of an ancient prayer practice called *examen*. This practice helps a person reflect on God and God's presence in their life. Have each person trace their hand on a piece of paper.
 - On the pinkie finger, write “Breathe” and take three deep breaths in and out, focusing on God's presence with you right now.
 - On the ring finger, write “Gratitude” or “Thanks.” Think about times, places, or people where you saw God today or this week and give thanks.
 - On the middle finger, write “Feel.” Draw simple faces showing how you felt at different times during the day or week. Wonder what God might be saying to you at those times when you were happy, sad, frustrated, angry, bored, envious, or other emotions.
 - On the pointer finger, write “Pray.” Talk with God. Ask for forgiveness, ask for help, give thanks or praise, share a concern. Listen for God.
 - On the thumb, write “Look ahead” or “Tomorrow” and draw a sunrise. Remember that tomorrow is a new day. Seek God in the new day.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Using as many words below as each person can, make word-search puzzles on pieces of graph paper. Use an 8" x 8" square and write the words horizontally, vertically, and diagonally. Write the words backward for extra challenge. Fill in the blanks with random letters. Make a word bank of the words used. Exchange papers and search for the words. Words to use: ALTAR, ATHENS, BEING, GOD, LIVE, LORD, MOVE, OBJECTS, PAUL, PROCLAIM, SEARCH, UNKNOWN, WORLD, WORSHIP

- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Gracious God, let my heart this day know where and how to see you, where and how to find you. Amen.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.