

MISSION:
~~IMPOSSIBLE~~

WEEK Four

God at work in the world



Recap

What is the *missio Dei*? _____

What are the 3 R's? _____

We added a 4th R last week...what was it? _____

What happened when Mary saw? _____

Homework!

You were asked to “see” where God is at work in people’s lives, to be a “divine detective.” What did you discover?



We are now going to spend some time with Paul. He was adept at seeing what people were searching for and what God was doing in their lives.



Acts 17:16–32

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, “What does this babbling man want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.)

¹⁹So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.”



²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. ²²Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.



²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live,

²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ ²⁹Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.





³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

³²When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.”
³³At that point Paul left them. ³⁴But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”



What in the world is Paul doing?!

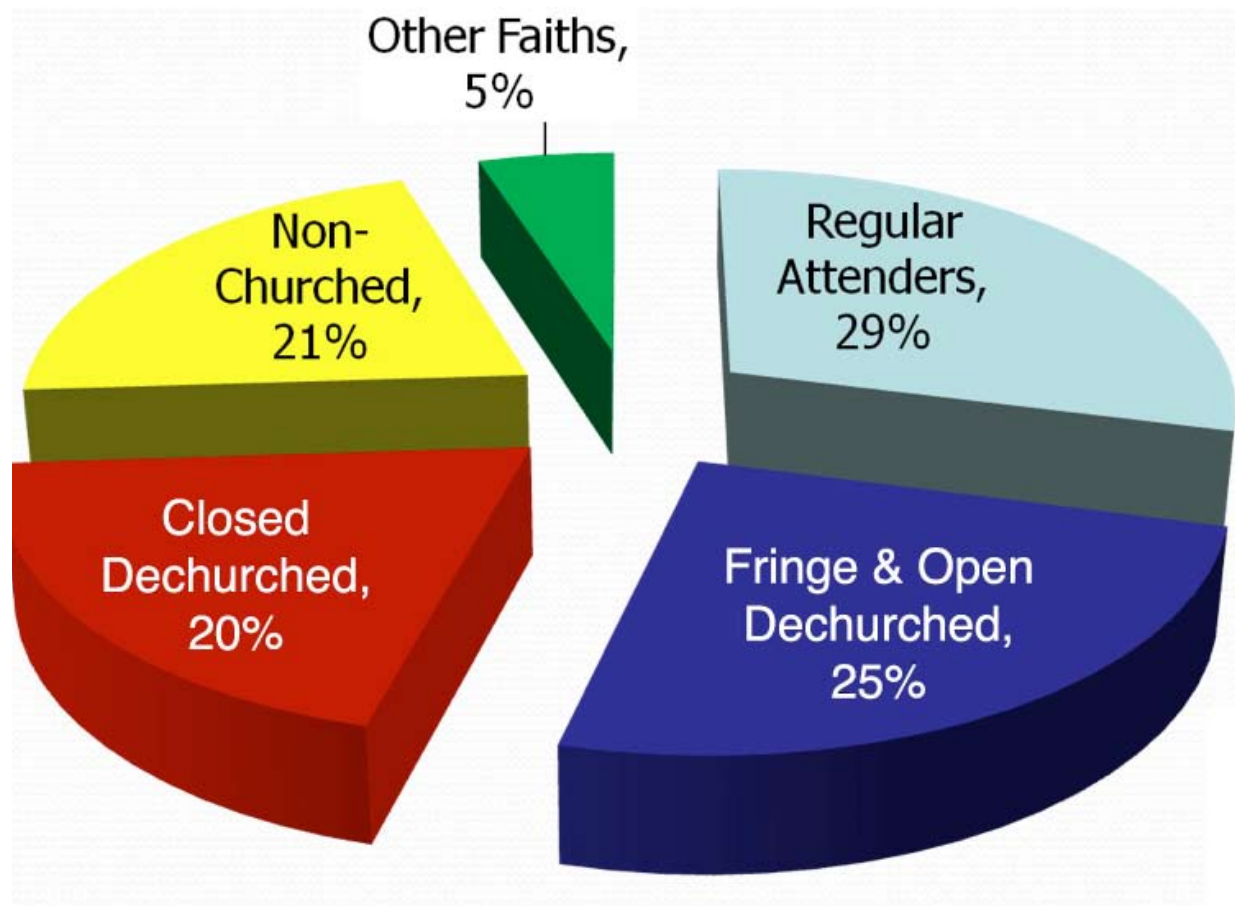
Discuss:

- Where is Paul?
- What is he observing?
- Where is he seeing God in what he is observing?
- What is his audience really asking?
- What is Paul teaching?
- How did he approach each group?

We live in a time similar to that of Paul; our society is full of spiritual seekers, people of other faiths, the mildly curious, the disinterested and the antagonistic.



Who are our Athenians?



Please note that this is **approximate** data taken from 2001 and represents **all** of Canada. So the exact percentages may be different in your context.

We are now going to look more closely at the people in our own culture. We are doing this because we believe that God is at work in their lives and we want to serve them.



Who are our Athenians?	<i>The Fringe</i>	<i>Open de-churched</i>	<i>The Non-churched</i>	<i>Closed de-churched</i>
Cultural Context				
How we could start to connect				

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Cultural Context	Christendom			
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How we could start to connect	Engaging worship	Process evangelism (Alpha, baptism prep)		

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Cultural Context	Christendom	Lingering Christendom	Post Christendom	
How we could start to connect	Engaging worship	Process evangelism (Alpha, baptism prep)	Community (connecting with theirs and the quality of ours)	

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Cultural Context	Christendom	Lingering Christendom	Post Christendom	Opposed to Christian faith
How we could start to connect	Engaging worship	Process evangelism (Alpha, baptism prep)	Community (connecting with theirs and the quality of ours)	Begin with our repentance

Discuss

- Can you think of people in your life who would find themselves in these categories?
- Do you know the circumstances that took place that made that the case?
- Were you ever in one of these places yourself? If so, what has drawn you closer into the community of faith that you are now in?



This week's homework....

Select group(s) you see regularly.

Determine where they each individually fit on the wheel:

- Office co-workers
- Rotary members
- Running club
- Book club
- Parent organization
- Facebook friends.



Closing Prayer

“Loving God, we thank you for your never failing love for us and for all that you have made. In you we live and move and have our being. Equip us to serve all those who are far from you and do not know of your love and mercy. We pray for those who have been hurt by our Christian communities, and ask that by your Holy Spirit, all people will be brought to wholeness of mind, body and spirit. We ask this in the name of the risen Lord, Jesus the Christ. Amen.”

Next week....

We are going to look at how we are called to participate in God's mission in the world. What might that begin to practically look like in our local churches?

God's mission awaits if you choose to accept it.



