

# The Truth Seekers

## Text: Ephesians 4:21

The objective of every person is to escape an empty life and find a life with meaning. Some may see an attempt to achieve such an escape as hopeless even before the effort begins. Most find the definition of emptiness in life changes as one's age changes.

Paul indicated that one reason for these gentile Christians turning to Christ was to find truth in him. Paul commonly appealed to idol worshipping gentiles to realize the foolishness of worshipping idols.

Consider his speech in the Areopagus to well educated, idol worshipping gentiles found in Acts 17:22-31. Note his following emphasis to thinking people.

1. God is Creator of everything. (verse 24)
2. God is Lord of heaven and earth [the all-encompassing Lord, not Lord of a sphere]. (verse 24)
3. God is not confined to temples made with human hands. (verse 24)
4. God does not depend on humanity for existence. (verse 25)
5. God is over humanity, not dependent on humanity. (verses 26-28)
6. God's nature cannot and should not be reduced to created materials and images that are a product of human art.
7. God will judge the world by His [not our] concept of righteousness.

Paul's presentation of God's nature was in distinct contrast with most idol worshippers' concept of God's nature. Idol worshippers [whether they realized it or not] embraced concepts of the nature of deity that made deity dependent on humans. Paul stressed that God was independent of humans in every area and consideration of existence.

Consequently, when gentile idol worshippers became gentile Christians, they were seeking truth about God and themselves in Jesus Christ. Idols did not represent the truth about deity or the truth about humanity. Jesus revealed the truth about God and the truth about humanity.

Just as Paul called those at the Areopagus to note some of their convictions about divine nature, you are asked to contrast faith in Jesus Christ with some prevailing attitudes in the American culture today.

1. Some hold the conviction that acquiring money and possessions is the key purpose of life. This conviction presents itself in many forms. One form is seen in just plain greed. Another form is seen in the declaration, "I do not want lots of money; I just want the lifestyle lots of money makes possible." Another form is measuring one's personal significance in terms of his worth. There seems to be a direct relationship between age and the significance of money. The older one gets, the emptier having money becomes. There is a time in life when "look at what I have" seems significant. There is a time in life when "look what I have" becomes the height of foolishness.
2. Some hold the conviction that having 'fun' is the key purpose of life. Interestingly, those that are beyond retirement age likely lived through periods in life when surviving was the primary consideration and having 'fun' was never mentioned. Of equal interest, it is likely that many 30 or under never lived when having 'fun' was not a significant consideration. The first went through

periods when there was no 'disposable income'. The second never existed in conditions when 'disposable income' was not a normal monetary situation. As maturity advances, the concept of having 'fun' changes. There is an age when one cannot have 'fun' physically in any manner he or she had 'fun' in the past. There is a sad emptiness when having 'fun' is relegated to one's memories.

3. Some hold the conviction that 'success' is the key purpose of life. Those who hold this conviction often define success either as achieving a goal or as receiving recognition for accomplishments. True, it is always a special joy to receive the appreciation of others. However, if you link 'success' with the purpose of life, reflect on some questions. How does a person measure his or her success? What happens when you can no longer pursue your goals? Is present life made meaningful by looking at past awards? Does life lose meaning because a person can no longer pursue past important goals? Is life to be divided in the 'meaningful' and the 'meaningless' period as a result of 'success' surrendering to one's past measurements? Numerous other things may be substituted in the quest of the key meaning of life. The single point to be made is this: passing time, deteriorating bodies, and age make meaningless pursuits we considered as central to our earlier existence.

Paul reminded gentile Christians that when they were in idolatry, idolatry destroyed them and gave them wrong concepts of God. It was only Christ that gave purpose and meaning to their lives. Christians today need to be reminded that when we substitute a declared purpose in life for the one given us by Jesus Christ, life becomes empty and meaningless as it nears its physical end. Few horrors are greater than nearing the end of one's life, looking back, and seeing a life that was incorrectly focused and misused.

**For Thought and Discussion:**

1. What is the objective of every person?
2. What was one reason Paul often told gentile Christians that they turned to Christ?
3. State 7 things Paul told the people at the Areopagus about God.
4. What about God was in distinct contrast in the Christian's and idol worshipper's views?
5. What two things were gentile Christians seeking in Jesus Christ?
6. State 3 things people commonly consider the key to life's purpose in this culture.
7. What single point is made in the three illustrations question 6?
8. Of what two things did Paul remind gentile Christians when they lived lives of idol worshippers?
9. What is a great horror for some when they near the end of life?