

Aim of lesson

To learn of the character and purpose of God, and the importance of reading the Bible for ourselves.

Bible background

Acts 17.

Outline of lesson

The lesson could be introduced by using the large map to remind the class of Paul's journey so far, and having the class read Acts 17:1 to bring him as far as Thessalonica.

Thessalonica

Remind the class that at the last city Paul and Silas had been thrown into prison. What would happen when they preached in Thessalonica? Read together Acts 17:1-10. Discuss what happened, and have the class begin the letter on the worksheet from Timothy to his grandmother.

Berea

The class can look through verses 10-15 and tell you what happened at Berea. Use the space on the letter on the worksheet to emphasize the good quality of the Bereans in searching the Scriptures to find out what was true. The last line shows how Paul went on ahead to Athens.

Athens

Read together verses 16-33. You could use different members of the class as narrator, Paul, Epicureans and Stoics. Point out that usually Paul would be preaching to Jews or Gentiles who accepted the God the Jews worshipped, but here Paul was speaking to pagans who had statues as gods. Paul was in Greece, and the people there worshipped the gods your class may have heard about in stories of Greek mythology. Paul was amazed that they even had an altar 'To the Unknown God' – in case they had left someone out. Paul used this to begin telling them about God – the living God. Have the class look through his speech and list all the things Paul told them about God. They may well find more than fifteen. Discuss what each student has found, clarifying anything that is not understood and building up a picture of who God is, and how concerned he is in what happens here on earth.

The class should try to express the different reactions to Paul's speech as noted in verses 32-33 in the 'think bubbles' in the workbook.

Digging deeper

The church at Thessalonica

By looking at the letter that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians on his second missionary journey we can find out things that are not written in Acts, and which show Paul's feelings towards the people in Thessalonica.

Relevance to our lives

You may like to have the class discuss, and write out a statement of what they would include if they met someone today who did not know God, and they wanted to say what he is like and who he is.

Prayer

Two groups may like to write a one-line prayer based on Acts 17:27 and v30-31.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could consider the letter Paul wrote at this time to the church at Thessalonica. They should read the following references to complete the picture: 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:1; 2:17-3:8.
- The class could look at the Bible Society web site to find out in how many countries and languages Paul's speech to the Athenians can now be found.