

Why We Were Made

Acts 17:26-28



The Unknown God

- ❑ While in Athens, Paul was brought before the Council of Areopagus, and they asked him, “What is this new teaching you’re giving us?” (*Acts 17:19, NIV*) How did Paul respond?
- ❑ Read Acts 17:22-31. Paul began by presenting two fundamental teachings of Christianity: 1) God exists; and 2) God made the universe, including humans. So why were humans made?

Who Are We?

- ❑ “From one man [God] made every nation of men” (*Acts 17:26a, NIV*). One man, Adam, is the father of the human race.¹ In this sense, we are all part of one race – the human race.²
 1. Why do you think this is significant?

Why Were We Made?

- ❑ Paul presents two of the reasons:³ 1) “that [we] should inhabit the whole earth” and 2) “that [we] would seek [God] and perhaps reach out to him and find him” (*17:26-27*).
- ❑ After God created the first man and woman, he said to them, “Have children and increase your numbers. Fill the earth and bring it under your control” (*Genesis 1:28, NIV*).



2. What does verse 26 indicate about God’s involvement in, and relationship to, the lives of humans?⁴

- ❑ God did this so that men would seek him, “in the hope that they might feel their way⁵ toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.” (*17:27, ESV*)

3. What does verse 27 indicate about our relationship to God, and his desire for us?

¹ Also, one woman, Eve (meaning “mother of all living”), is the mother of the human race. The idea that all humans came from one man and one woman is consistent with scientific research; in particular, mitochondria-DNA and Y-chromosomal-DNA studies (for maternity and paternity, respectively). See *Who was Adam?* by Dr. Fazale Rana.

² Looking down on other “races” and ethnic groups is too common in our world. Both Greeks and Jews were guilty of this. Athenians believed they were a unique race, “sprung from the soil” of their native Attica (area of Athens).

³ These two reasons are not the whole reason God made us, but they served Paul’s purpose in this speech.

⁴ Paul’s statement about God’s involvement in human existence conflicted with Epicurean philosophy which stated that gods (if they exist) have no interest in the affairs of humans. Atheists would agree with the Epicureans because they believe God does not exist. Though “deists” believe God made the earth, they believe he takes no further part in controlling it. So they too would agree with the Epicureans. Paul’s statement reflects Deut. 32:8 and Psalm 74:17.

⁵ “feel their way toward” (ESV) or “reach out for” (NIV) – from Greek *psēlaphaō*, which conveys the idea of people feeling or searching around in the darkness attempting to find something they are looking for.

Where is God?

- ❑ God wants us to seek him. But where is he? Is he really there?
 - 📖 In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen,⁶ being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew⁷ God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (*Romans 1:20-21, NIV*).⁸
 - 📖 “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts (*Ephesians 4:18, NIV*).
 - 📖 “The true light⁹ that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.” (*John 1:9-10, NIV*).
 - 📖 “Yet he is actually not far from each of us” (*Acts 17:27, ESV*).
- ❑ To make his point, Paul used two quotations from Greek poets:¹⁰ 1) “For in him we live and move and have our being;” and 2) “We are his offspring.”¹¹ God is everywhere present and near to each of us; and we are always dependent on his constant provision and maintenance (whether we know it or not). In addition, God is our maker. We are his creatures. Thus it is very foolish for us to make images of him – “images made by our design and skill” (*17:29*).¹²



Seeking God

- 📖 “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near” (*Isaiah 55:6, NIV*).
 - 📖 “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (*Jeremiah 29:13, NIV*).
4. What do you think is involved in truly seeking God?¹³

Reflection/Application

- To seek God is our choice. Have you decided to seek God? If not, what are your reasons? If you *have* decided to seek God, what steps are you taking? What questions do you have? Seek answers to your questions. And seek the Truth with all your heart.
- “Seeking” does not end when one becomes a Christian. We should continue to seek a more intimate knowledge of the Lord (Philippians 3:7-11). We should always “seek first his kingdom and righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). In what specific ways are you seeking God?

⁶ God reveals himself through what he has made (see Psalm 19:1-4a), as artists reveal themselves in their art.

⁷ This knowledge was limited, but adequate to know something about God through his creation, history, and human consciousness (“general revelation”). A true knowledge of God is personal, and is found only in Christ (Gal. 4:8-9).

⁸ This “darkening” had its origins in “the fall of mankind” recorded in Genesis 3. See Jay’s *The Fall*.

⁹ The “true light” refers to Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The Light has come into the world, but the “god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light” (2 Cor. 4:4).

¹⁰ The first quotation is supposedly taken from a poem written by Epimenides (c. 600 BC). The second quotation is taken from the fifth line of *Phainomena*, by Aratus (c. 310-240 BC). Paul disagreed with the philosophies reflected in these poems, which were Stoic and referred to Zeus rather than the one, true God. However, he could quote these lines because they showed that even their own poets spoke of man’s dependence on “God” for existence and life.

¹¹ All humans are God’s “offspring” in the sense that God made us all, and we are all one race. However, the Bible rejects the idea that all humans are in the same family in a spiritual sense. If we want to enter God’s family, we must become his children. We only become his children through faith in Jesus Christ (see John 1:12-13).

¹² This refers to physical images, but can also apply to mental images, or anything else that displaces the true God.

¹³ This includes genuine humility, willingness to respond to truth, Bible study, prayer, time with mature believers.