

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Streams of Living Water

Acts 17:22-28 (NIV)

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

NOTES:

Common Grace

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!” -Abraham Kuyper

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; *the whole earth is full of his glory.*” -Isaiah 6:3

“In Him, we live and move and have our being” - Acts 17:28

The Evangelical Tradition

The Evangelical Tradition encompasses much more than simply converting people. The evangel – the “good news” – is God’s great message to humanity: that all can be redeemed and restored to its intended design. This is the message embodied in Jesus himself, rooted in the word of God, and ultimately expressed through the lives of those who follow Christ. It is a living tale of grace spoken in and through word and action. This faith stream addresses the crying need for people to see the good news lived and hear the good news proclaimed. -Richard Foster

A Better Story

Tolkien used a beautiful word—*eucatastrophe*. It means “a good catastrophe” —a sudden turn toward joy. He said, “The Gospels contain a story of a larger kind... the greatest and most complete conceivable *eucatastrophe*.”

Next Step

Over 40 million Americans have stopped attending church in the past 25 years.

This is the largest religious shift in U.S. history, affecting all demographics—age, ethnicity, theology, and denomination.

A Surprising Opportunity: Despite the decline, more than half of dechurched evangelicals say they would consider returning to church if someone personally invited them.

“If there is one single application from our research that you walk away with, please let it be this: invite your dechurched friends back to a healthy church with you. But unlike a simple nudge to go back to the gym, we would do well to open the doors to our homes and chairs at our table. We aren’t just telling them they should go back to church; we are inviting them into our lives, which includes church.” (p. 123)

(Davis, Jim; Graham, Michael; Burge, Ryan P. (2023). *The Great Dechurching: Who’s Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective.)