

# The World Is Searching

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## Sermon Synopsis

In the heart of Rome, before the ancient Pantheon, amidst a pantheon of deities and the relentless pursuit of mankind to connect with the celestial, Dr. Billy Wilson gives a proclamation of the singular pathway to the Divine. In **THE WORLD IS SEARCHING**, we discover the God who so loved the world that He offered His only begotten Son.

The episode unfolds with a profound exploration of the world's myriad religions, contrasting their intricate doctrines with the simplicity of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Dr. Willson, standing where once the Apostle Paul stood in Athens, echoes the declaration of the unknown God, revealing Him through the person of Jesus Christ. The narrative takes a turn towards education and empowerment. The episode emphasizes the importance of understanding the world's religions not to critique, but to connect, to witness effectively, and to guide those on their search towards the truth found in Jesus Christ.

Amidst the discussion of religious plurality, the sermon zeroes in on the story of the Samaritan woman, whose encounter with Jesus at Jacob's well ends her search for fulfillment in human relationships and religious observance. Her transformation exemplifies the rest that comes from a relationship with Christ, a theme that transcends time and culture, offering the same peace to the viewers embarking on their own spiritual searches.

Dr. Wilson invites us all to embrace the love of God, as demonstrated on the cross, and to find rest in the arms of Jesus. It is a call to action for those yearning to quench their spiritual thirst, and to consider the role of Oral Roberts University in shaping their destiny, and affirms that the search for God concludes in the person of Jesus Christ – the only way, the truth, and the life.

## Sermon Highlights

- The exhaustive search for God through various religions is ultimately fulfilled in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Since the fall in Eden, humanity's quest to reconnect with God is only completed in Him.
- Religions of the world, as demonstrated through the building of altars to numerous gods and the pursuit of different dogmas, lead to a dead-end. Only through Jesus can one find the way, the truth, and life (John 14:6) and salvation (Acts 4:12).
- The story of the Samaritan woman reflects humanity's search for satisfaction in relationships and religions. Jesus provides the ultimate fulfillment, quenching the spiritual thirst that worldly pursuits cannot satisfy.
- Saint Augustine's profound insight reminds us that our hearts are restless until they find rest in God. This restlessness drives the search across religions, pointing to a deep-seated desire for divine connection.
- Christians have the responsibility to guide others in their spiritual search, not through religious debate, but through love, integrity, and a living testimony of the transformative power of Jesus Christ.

## Scripture Verses

### Acts 17:22-28

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. 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. 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. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 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. 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. For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

### Acts 17:29-31

'Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.'

### John 4:10

Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

John 4:13-14

Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

John 4:24

'God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.'

John 14:6

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

Acts 4:12

'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.'

## Quotes

- "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." - St. Augustine's 'Confessions'
- "Jesus Christ came not to give us another religion but to give us a relationship with the living God." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "The religions of the world are a result of man's searching heart." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "In Him you can live and move and have your being. You don't have to search anymore. Jesus is your answer." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "Your search is over in Jesus Christ." - Dr. Billy Wilson

# Bible Study

## Objectives

- To understand the futility of the world's search for God through man-made religions.
- To discover the true satisfaction and fulfillment that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- To learn how to effectively witness to those of different religious backgrounds with love and respect.
- To explore the transformational story of the Samaritan woman as a personal example of how one's search for meaning is fulfilled in Christ.

## Reading and Reflections

- Acts 17:22-31 - Paul's sermon on Mars Hill about the 'unknown god'.
- John 4:4-42 - The story of the Samaritan woman at the well.
- 1 Peter 3:15 - Being prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks about the hope that we have.

## Key Observations

- Humanity has an inherent search for the divine, which often manifests in various religions.
- Paul addresses the Athenians by connecting to their religious culture and then presenting Christ.
- Jesus addresses the Samaritan woman's deepest needs by offering living water that quenches her spiritual thirst forever.

## Personal Reflections

- Reflect on your own journey to finding Christ and how it compares to the universal search for God.
- Consider times when you have attempted to find satisfaction in things other than Jesus.
- Think about how you can relate to those who follow different religions with empathy and genuine interest.

## Lessons for Daily Life

- Humans are designed to worship, and without the knowledge of Christ, they will direct their worship elsewhere.
- Religious rituals and relationships with other people cannot fill the void in our souls—only a relationship with Christ can.
- The transformation witnessed in the Samaritan woman is possible for every person who encounters Jesus.

## Practical Applications

- Study the beliefs of different religions, to better communicate the Gospel to adherents of those faiths.
- Practice hospitality and friendship with individuals from different religious backgrounds.
- Share your personal testimony as an illustration of Christ's work in your life.

## Challenges for the Week

- Identify one or two people of different faiths in your life and take steps to understand their beliefs.
- Commit to sharing your faith with someone who is searching for spiritual truth this week.
- Pray for a specific opportunity where you can demonstrate Christ's love to someone in need.

## Further Study

- Undertake a comparative study of world religions to discern their views of God and salvation.
- Deepen your understanding of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, especially his cross-cultural engagements.
- Read and meditate on the account of the Samaritan woman, and consider how Jesus met her at her point of need.

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for revealing Your love and salvation to us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us wisdom and courage to share this truth with a world in search of You. May Your Holy Spirit guide our words and actions, that we may reflect Your love to those caught in the futility of their own searches. Help us to welcome the searching souls, just like Jesus did with the Samaritan woman, leading them to the well of living water. Let Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

# Daily Devotionals

## Day 1

### Scripture Verse

Acts 17:22-24 (NIV): '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. 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. 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.'

### Reflection

Today, let us reflect upon the Apostle Paul's encounter with the Athenians. The city was filled with idols, a clear sign of humanity's deep yearning for the divine. Yet, in their search, they had not found the true God. Paul's message to the Athenians is just as pertinent to us today. We live in a world overflowing with modern 'altars' to unknown gods – be it wealth, fame, or power. These are the idols we may unknowingly serve, thinking they will fill the void within us. But like the Athenians, we too are searching, even if we don't realize it. Our hearts are restless, as St. Augustine famously said, until they rest in God. This restlessness can lead us on many paths, but only one leads to true fulfillment. Let us examine our own lives. What are the 'altars' we have built? Are we, perhaps without knowing, worshiping at the shrine of the unknown? Paul's revelation to the Athenians is a call to us: to acknowledge the true God, who does not dwell in the temples we construct, but in the very fabric of our being. In Him, we live and move and have our existence. Today, let us dismantle the altars to the unknown and embrace the known God, who is closer than we can imagine.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, I thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me to recognize and turn away from the idols in my life, and to seek You with all my heart. Amen.

## Day 2

### Scripture Verse

Acts 17:27-28 (NIV): '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. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.''

### Reflection

Consider the profound truth that in God we live, move, and have our being. This is the essence of our existence and the answer to our search. God's omnipresence means that He is always near, not distant as we might sometimes feel. The Athenians, much like us, had an inkling of this truth, as Paul quotes their own poets. But they, and often we, miss the personal relationship with God that is offered through Jesus Christ. Our search for meaning, purpose, and belonging ends in the discovery that we are indeed His offspring, created for communion with Him. Reflect on your life's journey. Have there been moments when you've felt God's closeness? Or times when He seemed far away? Remember, He is closer than a breath away. Today, let us reach out for Him with the assurance that He is reaching out for us. In every breath, every heartbeat, every step, may we recognize the divine presence that sustains us.

### Prayer

Lord, I am in awe of Your nearness. Open my eyes to see You in every moment of my day. I reach out for You, knowing that You are already holding me. Amen.

## Day 3

### Scripture Verse

John 4:13-14 (NIV): 'Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'"

### Reflection

Today, let us drink deeply from the well that is Jesus Christ. The Samaritan woman at the well represents each one of us in our search for something that will quench our inner thirst. We try to fill our lives with relationships, achievements, and material possessions, but like the water from Jacob's well, they leave us thirsty again. Jesus offers us living water – a relationship with Him that satisfies our deepest longings and springs up to eternal life. Have you experienced this living water? Does your life reflect the joy and fulfillment that comes from a relationship with Jesus? The world around us is parched, searching for this water without even knowing what they are looking for. We, who have drunk from the true well, are called to lead others to it. Let us live today in such a way that others may see the source of our satisfaction and be drawn to the living water we have found in Christ.

### Prayer

Jesus, my Savior, thank You for the living water You provide. May it refresh and sustain me, and may it overflow to those around me, leading them to You, the source of eternal life. Amen.

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