

Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.

Acts 17:21

SKIPPING STONES

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, the more they stay the same. The more society modernizes in things technologic, the more we imitate our ancient brethren. Or, as the wise but cynical Solomon put it, “there is nothing new under the sun.”

In ancient Athens the Areopagus was the governing and judicial council that met on the Hill of Ares, or Mars—think the combined U.S. Congress and Supreme Court meeting as one in the open air. Even under the domination of Rome, during the apostle Paul’s time, they still conducted official business, but the hill was also the most public site of that old Athenian custom of seeking out and being entertained by the very latest new philosophical fad—think a very low-tech, analog Internet.

And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.”

Acts 17:19-20

Unfortunately the Athenians’ inquisitive nature ran broad and shallow. As the late historian Will Durant put it, “The Athenians had heard too many ideas to have much enthusiasm for any.” They also had a reputation for being taken in by the myriad philosophies and ideas they sampled voraciously. Cleon, the fifth-century B.C. politician, general, and fellow Athenian, said, “You are the best people at being deceived by something new that is said.”

This painfully but accurately describes contemporary society: a hunger and gull-

ibility for every crackpot, faddish belief system that comes down the pike. At the same time the individual’s investment in these is shallow; like a stone skipping across the lake’s surface, they touch down here, they touch down there, but never plunge beneath the surface, committing themselves wholly to any one thing.

Sadly, this also describes some Christians today. They take a little bit of God here, a little more of God there, but never commit to a systematic understanding of who He truly is. Like the Athenians they are fascinated by every latest fad pre-



sented in the church, but are maddeningly disinterested in the more substantial, tried and true fundamentals of faith. They favor chrome and shiny plastic over solid oak.

The apostle Paul repeatedly, persistently prayed that the Colossian church would embrace this more-substantial kind of relationship with the Lord.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Colossians 1:9

Paul chooses words that describe a deep, full realization of God. Not complete, certainly; that will come for every believer only on the far side of the gates of heaven. Yet the source for this wisdom and understanding is the same, whether during the Christian’s earthly sojourn or after he has moved to glory. Very God is the implied agent of this enlightenment.

We do not come to know the fullness of God by picking and choosing from the bright and pretty sparkles offered in the spiritualized smorgasbord of the church universal, or the latest gewgaws arrayed in the Bible Book store. Neither do we come to know Him to this degree by just spending more time reading our Bibles, reading more Christian self-help books, watching videos about how to be a better Christian, or studying more commentaries by the leading scholars.

We do not obtain knowledge of God by going to the library and reading *about* Him; we obtain knowledge of God by *living with Him*, by opening ourselves to receive from Him every day.

True knowledge of God comes through dedicated, deep communion with Him. It comes by not just reading His word but meditating on it, by pouring its truths into our life. Understanding of God comes through much time spent knelt before His throne in worship and praise and thanksgiving. Through this He becomes true Lord over our life—not just Master, but an active, vital, dynamic participant—as He graciously permits us participation in His.