



God's Church (Week 3/18: The Mind of Christ)

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *How can we keep the cross central to all that we do?*

Warm-Up

1. What do you think is the most common pieces of wisdom that our culture offers?
2. Where were many in the church in Corinth seeking their wisdom from? How can we sometimes be tempted to do the same?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-9 - The True Nature of Wisdom

3. What and who are *not* the source of true wisdom? Who are rulers of this age that Paul describes?
4. What is the ultimate trajectory of a worldly type of wisdom (devoid of God)? How can you see this as true - perhaps considering examples from your frontline?
5. What is the content of the 'message of wisdom' which Paul speaks about here?
6. In what way was this message hidden but is now revealed? How does this contrast with the secret knowledge that some of the Corinthians longed for?
7. How is it evident that the rulers of Paul's age did not understand the wisdom of the cross?
8. What is the trajectory of God's wisdom compared to the wisdom of the world?
9. What has God prepared for those who love him? How should this good news spur us on amidst our daily lives across the whole spectrum of frontlines?
10. How can we encourage and remind one another of the promise of the glory that God has prepared?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 - Received in the Power of God's Spirit

11. Who were the Apostles? How was the Holy Spirit particularly at work in the lives of the Apostles?
12. How is the Holy Spirit at work in us in order to bring about an understanding of the cross?
13. How does the Holy Spirit make a way for phenomenal intimacy between every believer and God?
14. As you seek to show and share the Good News, how is the Holy Spirit involved? How should we be greatly encouraged that it is ultimately the work of God's Spirit that brings about conversion?
15. How are you dependent on the Holy Spirit in seeking to follow Jesus on your frontline?

Apply *How can you seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom this week on one of your frontlines?*

Pray *Gracious Lord, thank you for the gift of your Spirit! Please help us to understand the Gospel, live responsively to your Spirit, and participate in the proclamation of your Son. Amen.*



GOING DEEPER

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On Your Front Line this Week

Amongst holidays, what new opportunities do you have to visit, love, or listen to someone?

For Families

Download some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *The Power of the Spirit* by Peter Adam:
<https://bendigopc.org.au/2018/10/the-power-of-the-spirit-1-corinthians-21-16-rev-dr-peter-adam/>
- *The Spirit and Revelation* by Christopher Wright:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/Player.aspx?show_popout=true&show_media=250919&show_file=267822
- *Grow UP!* By Richard Coombs:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/4993/>
- *Understanding God's Wisdom* by Alistair Begg:
<https://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library?f%5Bbook%5D%5B%5D=1+Corinthians&page=5>

Series Resources:

Some helpful resources for this series:

- Website: "First Corinthians" by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/learn/1-corinthians/>
- Course: "1 Corinthians" as part of the Ridley Certificate (6-week online course):
stbarts.com.au/ridley

Week 03/18 (GOD'S CHURCH): 09/05/21

"The Mind of Christ" by the Rev'd Adam Lowe

Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

The Church in Corinth is in a bit of a mess.

- Paul, *serial church planter*, established the church in Corinth, went on to pastor it for around 18 months, *but now in his absence*, leaders of different house churches are popping up here-there-and-everywhere, resulting in people vying for allegiances and contending: that their leader is the greatest, that their leader is the true source of some special wisdom and knowledge.
- These are the first super-spiritual Christian influencers, {they would have had amazing Instagram accounts if they lived today} *but it's not only tearing away at the fabric of their unity in Christ, but it's also leading people away from putting their ultimate trust in Jesus. They've taken what Paul has taught them - the Good News, and built this super structure around it of things that are just not necessary. //*
- Paul's masterfully taken a wrecking-ball to this whole proposition, he's pointed out how nonsense it is to somehow elevate a particular leader over Jesus: saying, *is Christ divided, was I crucified for you? Answer is obvious: No! Only Jesus was, so make him the **focus**, make him the **foundation** upon which you build your life.*
- *It's not Team Paul, or Team Apollos, or Team Adam, but **team Jesus**.*
- Paul saying, chapter 2, verse 2...

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

- True wisdom is not found in human leaders:
but true wisdom is found in the cross of Christ.

That's where we landed last week.

- Paul wants the Corinthians to see that there are two types of wisdom in our world, but there's only one of them, if we are to be mature and to be maturing, that we should seek.
- So let's look at this in two parts:
of what real wisdom is, and how we have access to it.
- *The True Nature of Wisdom,
Received in the Power of God's Spirit.*

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THE TRUE NATURE OF WISDOM | 1 COR 2:6-9

지혜의 진정한 속성 | CÖK DĚ NYIËNY-YIC

First, **the true nature of wisdom.** *Verses 6-8:*

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (vv.6-8)

*Hear what Paul is saying: that even though God's wisdom demonstrated through the cross, may look - and may continue to look foolish to some, **make no mistake** - it's not just for people who are willing to believe anything, it's not for people who give it no thought and go along with whatever they're told, it's not for people who believe six impossible things before breakfast, but it's a message spoken among the mature.*

- The Corinthians could feel pretty attracted by that notion, another inner circle, they might even think that Paul is giving them a massive compliment, but we'll see that the mark of maturity is not *the super-spiritual, smart, or good*, but those who have been reconciled to God through the cross of Christ.

4

So what is the shape of this message of wisdom?
Paul shows us both **what it is**, and **what it isn't**.

- *So first, what it isn't.*
- *True wisdom, Paul says is not of - or does not stem from - this age or the rulers of this age.*
- *When Paul uses that phrase "wisdom of this age or rulers of this age", he's likely not only referring to the leaders of the time, in their local sphere, some of the religious leaders they were tempted to follow, in their socio-political sphere, people like Pilate and Herod, but more broadly, the wisdom that comes from a world that is entrapped by powers and principalities, by Satan and evil, that prevent us from seeing clearly who Jesus is.*
- *The type of wisdom that is so devoid of substance, that in the words of Professor Caird, resulted in, "the highest religion and the best government that the world had ever seen, getting together to execute the Lord of Glory."*
- *And not only does such a wisdom result in disastrous decisions, but Paul says, it's the type of wisdom that is, verse 6, "coming to nothing"; it's a dead-end. //*
- *So often in our privileged western culture, we can kind of think that: the world is on an upward trajectory, that humanity is progressing, and that somehow, with our collective social capital that we've got this, we can get the world in order.*

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- *Sometimes we can buy into that, because it's really ingrained into our culture. //*
- *Over 200 years ago, Immanuel Kant, one of the central thinkers in the Enlightenment, who has enormously influenced our culture and our way of thinking: was so positive in his view that humanity in its wisdom has it together, that he wrote:*

Gradually violence on the part of the powers will diminish and obedience to the laws will increase. There will arise in the body politic perhaps more charity and less strife in lawsuits, more reliability in keeping one's word... partly out of love of honour, partly out of well understood self interest. And eventually this will also extend to nations in their external relations toward one another...

- *Well it doesn't take too much of an assessment to see we're certainly not there, because the problem is that regardless of all the improvements we might make, there's a deeper problem of sin, that we just can't resolve on our own.*
- *That's what Paul effectively is saying in fact, that not ultimately will: the type of wisdom that says 'we've got it all in hand' fail, **but** the type of wisdom that rejects Jesus has no future, Paul says: it's coming to nothing.*
- *On an individual leader level that's evident: for leaders fail, leave, or die, but on a much grander scale, the wisdom of our world just doesn't have a future that will last.*
- *That despite the temptation, even in the face of contradictory evidence, to think we're on this upward trajectory, the Bible says, that actually without God that's just not true.*

6

But in contrast, a wisdom that comes from God,
a wisdom that recognises the power of the crucified Jesus,
the trajectory of such a wisdom is not down, but its destiny is glory. It's the opposite.

"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" – the things
God has prepared for those who love him– (v.9b)

- Such a phenomenal image....
that God in his incredible love and wisdom,
destined before even the beginning of time,
in the knowledge that we would rebel and seek our own rule above his own,
made a way that we might be part of a glorious future with him.
- Not God loves you so much that he wants to enable to live your best life,
Not God has a wonderful plan full of prosperity and comfort,
but God loves you so much, that he has prepared a future,
so glorious and wonderful in its nature,
that it is utterly incomprehensible to us right now,
better than we ever dared to dream or imagine.
- The cross of Christ might look foolish to the world,
but it's through the cross of Christ that God has dealt with sin and made our future possible.

7

And even though the nature of that glorious future is incomprehensible,
the way that we take hold of that future is - because of Jesus - it totally within reach.

- We are not authors of our future, but Jesus has forged a way through the cross.
- Note, in verse 7, when Paul says that God's wisdom was a mystery that was hidden,
he doesn't mean that somehow God's grace is a riddle or puzzle to be solved.
- He doesn't mean that the Good News of Jesus is beyond our comprehension.
- But he's saying that because of Jesus' death and resurrection it is now plain to see!
- Here the Corinthians are, longing for secret and special spiritual knowledge,
they want to be in the inner circle, in some special privileged group,
and Paul is drawing them in, saying, well hey Church in Corinth,
let me tell you the biggest secret of them all,
that actually, God's wisdom for salvation,
is been made plain to see. It's been blown out of the water.
- And the way that you access these things,
is not according to your latest guru,
it's not by a special group that you belong to,
it's not going to the most elite university in the world,
but through the power of the Holy Spirit.

...these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit (verse 10)

8

RECEIVED IN THE POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT | 1 COR 2:10-16

성령의 능력으로 받음 | AYĚ LÖM NĚ RIĚĚR DĚ JÖNDIT DĚ NHIALIC

Of course, that's where Paul started back in verse 4...

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. (vv.4-5)

- When Paul speaks of his preaching with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, as the means by which we would be convicted of the news of the cross, he's probably not talking about miracles, *about signs and wonders, being the basis on which we would be convinced and come to believe.*
- Not only does Paul use a very different word for **power** in those instances, but miracles were no surety that people would believe. There were people with false miracles and signs, and even when people witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, some still did not come to believe.
- No the demonstration of power that Paul is referring to is the way in which the power of the cross has been declared to us.

9

What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. (vv.10b-13)

The image here is kind of mind-blowing!

- That God hasn't left us guessing!
- This is not like one of those great relational moments, when communication has broken down between two people, only for one person to eventually erupt with a phrase along the lines of, how could I possibly know what you're thinking? I'm not a mind reader!
- I don't know what you're thinking, I can only know according to what you're willing to share.
- Well, incredibly, we're told here, *we can know God's thoughts, because God has told us!*
- It's important to understand that when Paul says 'us' here, verse 12, *but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us,* what he is likely referring to is the special revelation of Jesus to the Apostles, by the power of the Holy Spirit, which we now have recorded in the Scriptures.

10

- Of course, that's exactly what Jesus promised to the disciples, that when he leaves, that he would send his Spirit, to teach them.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. (John 16:12-15)

- It's the most amazing image!
- *The Spirit was at work in a particular way in the life of apostles just as Jesus promised.*
- The Spirit of God speaking into the Apostles.
The Spirit of God enabling the Apostles to understand.
The Spirit of God empowering the Apostles to proclaim.
- But, not only was the Spirit at the work in the Apostles in a specific way, but the Spirit is also at work in a general way in the life of all believers.
Not bringing us special knowledge about God that is outside of the Scriptures, *but illuminating our hearts and minds in order that we'd get it - that we'd understand.*
- The post-modern world says there is no truth,
Our culture says that we are the authors of our own truth,

11

but the Bible says, no, God is the source of truth,
and through his Holy Spirit, spoken to the Apostles, received by us in the Scriptures
he has made his wisdom known and helps us to understand.

- How can we possibly understand and get the Gospel?
Why can we have an a-ha moment? Only by God's Spirit at work.

Without the Spirit we're tone deaf.

- *Paul says, verse 14:*
the person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God.
- It's why we shouldn't be surprised when our friends, colleagues, loved ones, don't understand the decisions and priorities we make.
- *That should be a great motivation for us to pray that the Spirit would open their hearts, we should be inviting them along to Alpha that they might come to understand, that God's wisdom might be theirs.*
- It also means if you're a believer we have no cause for arrogance!
We haven't come to faith because of our prowess or goodness or intellect,
but only by the grace of God in the power of his Holy Spirit.

12

- *It means that the Spirit of God enjoins us in incredible intimacy with God.
It means that the Spirit is at work leading us, shaping us, growing us.
It means that when we open up God's Word, the Spirit is at work helping our understanding.*
- It means that when we're sharing the Good News;
it's not us trying to strong-arm the situation;
it's not us trying to get into the person's heart and mind to convince them;
but we're simply participating in how the Spirit of God is at work. //
- If you hear this, and you think, well, look I've heard the Gospel,
I've asked questions, but I just still don't believe, I just still don't get it,
I want to encourage you to pray a simple prayer:
- God, please help my unbelief! Please be at work in my heart,
Spirit, please have your way with me. *Would you pray that prayer?*
- *God wants you to understand his love poured out on the cross,
God wants you to receive that Good News,
and he's even at work in the power of his Spirit,
that we might come to know the very thoughts he chooses to share with us.*
- That of course doesn't mean we disengage our minds,
or should abandon learning more about the Gospel, or stop investigating the claims of Jesus,
but it does mean, that the work of coming to understand the Good News is not merely
academic, but it's also phenomenally personal.

13

- We can **so** often wonder what other people in our lives are thinking,
but here we're promised help to know the very mind of Christ!
- I often feel like following Jesus is like being at the beach.
That when you take your eyes off the flags,
it doesn't take long before the current has taken you away from where you've been.
- God in his grace, has revealed the wisdom of the cross to us.
- Why would we neglect that? Why would we ignore that?
- We should be praying that in the power of the Holy Spirit,
that God would give us wisdom, the very mind of Christ:
*about relationships,
responding to problems,
speaking to people,
attitudes to what I do or others do,
decisions that I need to make,
distinguishing between false teaching,
understanding God's Word.*
- Inviting the Holy Spirit to shape us day-by-day, on every one of our frontlines.

14

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- Yet, God's wisdom has been made known through the cross, and we can access it this very day in the power of his Spirit.