

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 1 Corinthians
Christian Conduct
Lesson 2 - 1 Corinthians 2:1-16
"The Christian Message"

When Paul came to Corinth, it was from a seeming defeat at Athens where he addressed the Greek philosophers but won few converts. This experience, plus his conviction that only the plain Gospel is the power of God, led Paul to minister in Corinth in fear and trembling. He did not use the persuasive words of the speaker or philosopher; he simply preached in the power of the Spirit. He was anxious that the believers put their faith in God and not in people. It is sad when pastors or evangelists make converts to themselves and fail to teach people how to walk with Christ alone. How sad when Christians have to lean on other believers and never learn to walk on their own.

Paul did not stop with a simple statement of the Gospel, as important as that is. He also taught a deep wisdom of God to those who were more mature in the faith. Sad to say, there were few of these in Corinth. These people had their eyes on human leaders, were comparing men, and were failing to grow in the Word. It is necessary in the local church for the pastor and teachers to declare the Gospel to the lost, but it is also important that they teach God's wisdom to those who are maturing in the faith. It is impossible to build a strong church on the preaching of the Gospel alone; there must be the teaching of the plan and "mystery" of God.

The mystery that Paul taught at Corinth was that Jew and Gentile are "*one in Christ*" through faith, and make up the one body which is the church. This mystery, or hidden wisdom of God, could never be known by the "*rulers of this world,*" because it is understood only through the prompting of the Spirit. Many professed Christians do not really understand God's purpose for this age. In this chapter, Paul will emphasize the message of the Gospel and the warning that we must not mix it with human wisdom or human philosophy.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

D.L Moody was once scheduled to preach at Cambridge University. Some of the students were outraged that an American without a college education would dare to speak in that center of culture. They planned to boo him off

the platform. Moody began his sermon by saying, “Young gentleman, don’t ever think God don’t love you, for He do!” The scoffers were dumfounded, and Moody’s unpolished words captured them. That was the beginning of a revival and one of the greatest awakenings of the nineteenth century. This chapter in Paul’s letter shows clearly that polished speech is not the key to effective ministry.

1. How did Paul’s regard for the world’s wisdom affect his preaching and testimony?
2. Describe some different preaching styles you have heard. Which of these follows Paul’s example, and why is it most effective?
3. List some benefits of living according to God’s wisdom instead of human wisdom.
4. What can you do this week to follow God’s wisdom instead of the wisdom of the world?

For more Bible passages on the limits of human wisdom, see Proverbs 3:5-7; Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Ezekiel 28:2-7; Matthew 11:25 and 1 Corinthians 3:19-20.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

Believers and churches today are seeking to meet the challenges of an increasingly industrial society that depends on advancing, new technologies.

But they cannot improve upon the essential strategy Paul reveals here. Today's churches often fail to gain New Testament results because they do not rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to take the message and make it effective in the lives of the people. Paul here presents the argument that nobody really knows what goes on inside a person's mind, (memories, reflections, motives) except for the person's spirit. In a similar way, no one can know what goes on in God's mind, except the Spirit of God.

5. Why do people often fail to see God's purpose for them?

6. List some ways that the Holy Spirit helps believers.

7. Record a time in your life when God gave you the opportunity (Divine appointment) to witness to someone above and beyond your own natural abilities? What was the result?

8. How could these experiences become more frequent in your life?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14-16. Pray and answer the following questions:

This section of Scripture is open to several interpretations, some of them misleading. "*We have the mind of Christ*" and "*we are subject to no man's judgment*" have been slogans of cults and individuals who accept no authority beyond their own opinions. But since Paul was rebuking a group of self-styled spiritual people who were taking just that position, we can be sure that he did not mean that any believer should follow his own opinions because he has the mind of Christ. It is up to us to come up with a sound, consistent interpretation of these verses that takes into account all that Paul

has to say about judgment, spirituality, and maturity. When we come to Christ, we receive God's Spirit, who searches and knows the mind of Christ. He is able to impart the things of God to us. Worldly wisdom, however impressive, cannot do for us what God's Spirit can.

9. According to Paul, what is the difference between a spiritual and an unspiritual person?

10. If a non-believer cannot understand the things of the Spirit, how can we talk to them about Christ?

11. What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?

12. How does Paul's assurance that we have the mind of Christ affect you?

Life Application

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review, group discussion and application.