



151st Church of Christ
Small Group Study Guide – 1 CORINTHIANS
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AN IMPERFECT LOCAL CHURCH
A Study in 1 Corinthians

LESSON 3: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
TEACHER

In a day where media, internet and technology dominate the world of communication, the gospel often takes a back seat to the latest fads and trends for “doing church.” Churches feel that they *must* use the latest technology and *must* offer the most overwhelming experiences in their assemblies. Preachers are valued more for their entrepreneurial skills and stage presence than their simple presentation of the biblical message. We might wonder how Paul would have fared in our day if he insisted on trusting the power and wisdom of the gospel rather than the “wisdom” and rhetorical devices of the world. How often is “relevance” redefined by the world’s “wisdom?”

OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 1:18-4:21 Human vs. divine wisdom

Lesson outline

1 Cor 1: 18-25, The fundamental solution to division: The Cross
26-31, Those whom God has called

DISCUSSION

1 Cor 1:18-25, The fundamental solution to division: The Cross

1. How does “the message of the cross” present a stark contrast to the rivalries in the Corinthian congregation?

- The gospel presented the message of a Savior who gave himself for others. The greatest of all was he who was the greatest servant of all. The Corinthians hadn’t understood that such yielding & sacrificial service was to be their example to follow.
- Christ was the only true “great” one in the church. No man should be elevated.
- No one in the congregation had been saved other than by responding to the message of the cross. All had the same problem; no one was elevated; no one was an exception.

Note: Even the apostles (e.g., Paul) keep their authority low key. They tend to plead rather than order.

2. Why was a crucified Christ a stumbling block for Jews and foolishness for Gentiles?

- Jews were offended by the idea of a crucified Messiah. An oxymoron.
- Gentiles thought that a dead man, an executed man, made for a strange “savior – god.”

- 3. What negative responses to the gospel today reflect the same principles as those mentioned about “foolishness?”**
 - Many are simply not interested in a 2000-year-old response to the “outdated” concept of sin.
 - Many feel that they “are not good enough” to be saved, and so the cross is a stumbling block.
 - We can think of many other thought-provoking options.

- 4. In what way would remembering that God’s wisdom and power are greater than ours have solved many of the Corinthian problems?**
 - “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:9).
 - They had to learn that in the church, normal methods and goals of the world were useless.

- 5. Discuss some ways Christ and his gospel represent a form of power and wisdom that causes our world today to stumble and reject his message.**
 - Love, service, humility, etc., are not the ways of our world. They are not deemed sufficiently powerful or wise to solve problems, win elections, make money, etc.
 - Even people who are involved in good works tend to respond differently when facing an opponent or critic. Humanitarian non-profits still have power struggles.

1 Cor 1:26-31, Those whom God has called

- 6. Whom has God called? Not called?**
 - Called: The foolish, weak and lowly
 - Not called: The wise, mighty and noble
 - Here we have a series (i.e., a list) of contrasting ideas.

- 7. To be counted among the chosen of God, what would the Corinthian Christians have to admit?**
 - That they were foolish, weak and lowly. If they elevated themselves, they automatically excluded themselves from the “foolish” message of Christ.

- 8. What was the evidence that the Corinthian Christians were living by the wisdom of the world?**
 - Their various divisions were caused by self-promotion, self-satisfaction or a lack of concern for others.

- 9. Can you think of cases in Israel’s history when they did the same?**
 - Wanting a king “like their neighbors” is one among several possible answers.

10. Can you think of situations today where we (i.e., churches) reveal a desire to be viewed as other than “foolish, weak & lowly?”

- Want to match others with size of congregation or building, clout in the community, prestige of “important” members. We want the “standing” and sophistication of the “leading” churches. We are eager to show off our celebrities. Missionaries report on converting “important” people (politicians, doctors, etc.)
- Many think that the worship assemblies must provide the most “exciting experience”. Human ideas of quality worship experiences increasingly tend to require professional worship leaders.

