GBC / CIC / CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

10 May 98 / 4 Feb 07 / 16 Sep 12 Message 3 of 24

NIV 1:15 Minutes

**How to Be a Wise Guy**

Title

***1 Corinthians 2:6-16***

**Topic:** Divisions/Gospel/Wisdom

**Attribute:** God’s Wisdom

**Subject:** We’ll be united as a church

**Complement:** by focusing on God’s wisdom (as seen in the gospel).

**Purpose:** The listeners will focus on the gospel rather than a single church leader.

# Introduction

### Interest/Background: Today is our third week to study 1 Corinthians, and since Corinth was just down the road from the philosophical capital of the Roman world––Athens––I thought it good to review some of these philosophies which were also at Corinth…

Map +
18 slides

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **Founder and date** | **Development of perspective** | **Reality is…** | **Basic Viewpoint** |
| Pythagorean-ism | Pythagoras of Samos; latter 6th cent. BC | Material and spiritual worlds are antithetical (he was both a philosopher & mathematician!) | Dualistic (what you can’t see) | Influenced Gnostics in their dualism (spiritual = good, material = bad) |
| Platonism | Plato429-380 | Learned the dialectical method (challenge assumptions) from Socrates; ethical goodness in life; spirit is all important | Mental ideas (what you think) | Reality is not in tangible objects but in the mental ideas behind them |
| Cynicism | Antisthenes; Diogenes of Sinope 412-323 | Anti-establishment, simple lifestyle (e.g., Diogenes lived in a bathtub and talked back to Alexander the Great who visited him!) | Asceticism (what you deny) | Virtue consists in living according to nature (don’t let any philosophy influence you) |
| Aristotelianism | Aristotle384-322 | Proof by syllogism; deductive logic as the means for sound reasoning and the standard for measuring truth | Material world (what you can touch) | Reality corresponds to the material world and vice versa |
| EpicureanismActs 17:18 | Epicurus341-271 | Distrusted Plato’s dialectical method; the gods have nothing to do with us and there is no afterlife (“eat, drink, & be merry, for tomorrow we die”) | Physical sensations (what you enjoy) | Happiness is gained by the pursuit of pleasure since this life is all there is |
| StoicismActs 17:18, 28 | Zeno of Citium336-264upper class(Seneca) | Rejected Epicureanism because he felt it fostered atheism and self-indulgence; neither the universe nor man is meaningless; strong ethical teachings/moral maxims | Natural reason (what you reason)Lead to materialism | Cause & effect pervade all so man must adjust himself for tranquillity = Buddhism, Hindu- ism, Confucianism?(Niswonger, 81) |
| Skepticism | Pyrro of Elis365-275 | No-one is good and all are contradictory so just “go with the flow” in life | Notattainable (impossible) | Knowledge is unattainable |
| Eclectics |  | No philosophy has all the answers, so we’ll take the best of each (similar to new age thought or “free thinkers”) | Partly seen by all (what you invent) | Hard to determine or summarize (too varied) |

### Raise Need: We can see some merit in each philosophy, but what we really need is wisdom–– applied knowledge—not facts, but knowing how to use them with God’s perspective guiding us. Do you have real wisdom?

You Wise?

#### Years ago the University of Berlin receptionist received a phone call asking for the address of Dr. Albert Einstein. “I’m sorry,” she responded, “University policy prohibits me from releasing the address of any of our professors.” There was a pause on the end of the line, “Vell,” he said, “I suspect I must tell you that I myself am Dr. Einstein, unt I cannot remember my vay home!” Knowledge is good, but wisdom is practical and very much better!

Finding address…

Einstein

#### If you are a typical person in this church, you are a professional with at least a college degree and you are doing quite well in the area of knowledge. In fact, many of us here are educators. Today there’s a great emphasis on IQ (Intelligence Quotient). But how is your WQ? How’s your Wisdom Quotient?

IQ/WQ

### Background: The Corinthian church sure needed to know God’s wisdom.

Path

#### Corinth was just down the road from Athens, Greece—the philosophical capital of the Roman world. Acts 17 shows that there were many “isms” there:

#### As we have been studying through this book we have seen in chapters 1–2 that Paul is giving ways the church could be united rather than divided. In these chapters he gives a three-fold path to church unity:

##### First (in 1:1-9) he told them to focus on the things going right—God’s making them holy, God’s grace to them, their giftedness, their guaranteed salvation.

• right

##### Then (in 1:10–2:5) he noted that they needed to focus on Christ crucified rather than favoring certain church leaders.

• Christ

##### Now in today’s passage (in 2:6-16) Paul gives a third way to solve the “division dilemma”—to focus on God’s wisdom.

• Wisdom

### MI: So the path to unity is to focus on God’s wisdom.

MI

### Intro. MPI: But what is this wisdom? What does this wisdom look like? Paul says to just look at the gospel! Chapter 2:6-10 says that…

# I. The gospel is God’s secret message of wisdom that the world rejects (2:6-10).

I.

#  [True wisdom is the godly wisdom of Christ crucified that most don’t believe.]

#  [Unity is based in our focus on the gospel as God’s wisdom even though the world rejects it.]

## Anticipating the objection that Christianity is irrational, Paul says that believers do speak wisdom—God’s wisdom (6).

2:6

wisdom

### The Corinthians mimicked their intellect-obsessed culture—human wisdom over God’s wisdom.

#### Greek philosophy is seen in the nearby city of Athens in Acts 17:21 where it says that the people did nothing more than sit around speculating about the latest ideas.

#### John MacArthur says regarding the world’s wisdom…

MacArt

##### “Human wisdom never solves anything. All of our education never solves anything. You say, ‘Wait a minute! Wait a minute! We used to be living in the boondocks out there in the bush, and now we’re in cities and homes.’ That’s right, and we’re just as rotten here as we were there. We haven’t changed. We’re just more comfortable. [Now] our immorality isn’t committed out in the wood, it’s committed in fancy hotels. It isn’t any different. We just make our sinning a little more accommodated” (WISDOM OF MAN doesn’t improve man’s nature).

Quote 1

##### “The problem with man’s wisdom is that it’s nice to sit around and talk about it, but it can’t do anything. Have you ever noticed that? People don’t get changed lives from it, it doesn’t transform people, it doesn’t forgive sin, it doesn’t make new creatures, it doesn’t usher people into the presence of God, it doesn’t do anything like that. It gives people satisfaction by playing little intellectual games, and builds their ego by telling people what they know” (WISDOM OF MAN useless).

Quote 2

#### The wisdom of man is useless for what really counts in life. As C.S. Lewis so aptly put it, “No clever arrangement of bad eggs will make a good omelet.” WISDOM OF MAN useless

Bad eggs

### Good thing we Christians haven’t got caught up in this worldly knowledge-thing, right?

Black

#### At the first church I pastored, one of my members belonged to MENSA. Have you heard of it? It’s a US-based organization exclusively for those in the top 2% of the general population in IQ. “M-E-N-S-A” stands for “Mentally Superior Adults.” They meet together to talk about how smart they all are. Anyway, Ray was a MENSA member. Susan and I conducted several marriage counseling sessions with Ray and his wife Judy. Among other things, we tried to help him with his explosive anger problem and convince him it didn’t show high IQ to drive 140 kilometers per hour on the expressways—which terrified his wife! Ray was like the Corinthians who thought that intellect is enough, a value of this world.

Mtgs

MENSA

#### But what are some other ways to contrast God’s wisdom with human wisdom?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God’s wisdom claims… | The wisdom of this age says… |
| Salvation is God’s free gift—by faithFree | “There’s no such thing as a free lunch”—so salvation must be by works |
| God became manPoemMan | God cannot become man—I like the “B.C.” poem by Johnny Hart, NTS 88…It seems to me that since the fall—without even thinking it odd—that man has had no trouble at allbelieving that he can be God.How he could do this I cannot conceive,Tho, he certainly thinks that he can—And yet, he cannot bring himself to believe,that God can become a man. |
| You can’t visualize things into realityVisual | But I have this New Age booklet called “Imagine That!” which claims to be “a proven method of creating what you want in your life.” Just imagine telling the bank officer, “But I *imagined* that million dollars into my bank account so it must be there!” |
| Explosions don’t create order but chaosExplode | “The universe began with a big bang.” Just try creating a shopping centre on Orchard Road this way! If the explosion won’t create order, just wait a few billion years and it’ll happen! |
| Sex outside of marriage hurts everyoneSex | “Casual sex” (that’s like saying “casual roulette”) |
| Godly character is our most vital assetCharacter | Education is our most vital asset |

(Paul goes on in verses 7-10 to explain how…)

## Only believers understand God’s wisdom (7-10).

Believers

### God’s wisdom is secret—a mystery not revealed to unbelievers (7a).

Secret

#### What is “God’s secret wisdom”? The gospel?

Top Secret

#### Well, yes, close— God’s secret wisdom is Christ Himself according to 1:24, 30, or more specifically, Christ crucified in 2:2.

7a

### This wisdom of Christ crucified was hidden from all until God revealed it to the apostles (7b).

7b

Hidden

#### It was a “mystery” (NASB), which means something previously unknown but now revealed. Before the cross Jews were always puzzled how their Messiah could be a suffering savior (Isa. 53) as well as a reigning king (Isa. 11)—kings typically don’t suffer for their people!

#### Some Jewish scholars even tried to reconcile these apparently contradictory ideas by teaching that Israel would have *two* Messiahs—one to suffer and one to reign!

### Christ crucified was predestined from eternity past that believers would have eternity future (7c).

7c

Predest.

### God’s wisdom is misunderstood as seen in those who crucified Christ (8).

Misund

#### One reason the gospel is so misunderstood is because it’s so plain simple.

8

#### Recent history shows that those preachers with the greatest impact have not been the eloquent, fancy speakers. The best known preachers of the past 150 years have been D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham. Moody had a sixth grade education and Billy Graham has been criticised for giving such simple sermons.

### God’s wisdom in Christ crucified is not even thought about by unbelievers but only learned by believers through revelation (9-10).

9-10

Thought

#### But those who crucified Christ only represent us all who can’t see, hear, or conceive of God’s plan (9).

#### That’s why God had to reveal His wisdom to us through revelation by the all-knowing Spirit (10).

(So in verses 6-10 Paul has told us that we should focus on the gospel as God’s wisdom even though the world rejects it. But why do so few unbelievers understand the gospel? Why do they reject it? And why is it that only Christians have God’s wisdom?)

MPI

# II. Only believers have God’s wisdom because only believers have the Spirit (2:11-16).

II

#  [We alone have the Equipment to see spiritual things—and that Equipment is the Spirit.]

## No one knows what someone else is thinking (11).

11

### This is true of humans—only that person knows his thoughts (11a).

#### Can you tell what I’m thinking right now? I was thinking, “Why did God give me three sons instead of three daughters?”

3 sons

#### I can’t tell what you’re thinking either—I can only guess that maybe you’re saying, “What kind of preacher is this guy?”

Black

### This is also true of God—only the Spirit knows God’s thoughts (11b).

(Since no one knows God’s thoughts…)

## God gave us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth (12-13).

### We have the Spirit in order to understand the salvation we have (12).

#### It’s amazing how different our learning styles are. Some of us buy a new iPhone, Blackberry, or DVD player with all the features—and we’re willing to pay for it! But then we toss the instructions aside and try to figure it out on our own! Oh, we do learn how to turn it on or off or how to press PLAY or RECORD, but without reading the instructions we’re at a loss to really use the product to its potential.

iPhone

12-13

#### The Spirit is our inner Guide to help us look at the instruction book. He helps us comprehend what we have in Christ so we can get the fullest benefit out of our salvation. But we’re often tossing our Bibles aside, aren’t we?

(But when we submit to the Spirit’s teaching ministry…)

### We don’t proclaim godless intellectualism but rather the Spirit’s teaching ministry in words of truth (13).

Ivy

#### An old country church in England years ago had a sign above the entrance which said, “We Preach Christ Crucified.” The church faithfully proclaimed the gospel to its generation with its motto based on Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2:2.

• Crucified

#### But as the years passed, the newer pastors stopped preaching about the cross, though they did say much about Jesus’ ministries of compassion, care for people, etc. Interestingly, at this same time the ivy grew on the bricks so that it obscured the last word “Crucified.” Now the sign read only, “We Preach Christ.”

• Christ

#### Things got worse. Liberal preachers soon occupied the pulpit of this church where the message of Christ was ignored altogether—and—you guessed it—the ivy continued to grow, covering up another word so the sign read only, “We Preach.”

• We preach

#### There’s a lot of ivy around today because we’ve hidden the message of the cross.

(So if we can’t learn except from God’s Spirit telling us in God’s Word, where does that lead us?)

## Unbelievers don’t understand God’s wisdom while Christians do (2:14-16).

Under-stand

### The non-Christian thinks spiritual truth is foolish since he doesn’t have the Spirit teaching him (14).

14

#### Verses 14-16 basically ask who sits in your chair of control in your life. Everyone has a chair, or control center—according to the imagery used by CCC.

Chair

##### Most people have themselves on the throne and Christ outside the life. (But this verse really emphasizes more of the ministry of the Spirit.)

Self

##### With “self” in control their lives have various interests but all results in spiritual confusion.

#### To ask a non-Christian like this to discern spiritual truth is like asking a blind man to judge an art exhibit or a deaf man to judge a music contest. They just don’t have the equipment!

#### In Israel I was privileged to have an excellent Jewish tour guide who really knew his stuff—the geography, where Scripture texts were in the gospels, etc. Then one evening one of our travelers asked Avner the meaning of a difficult text in the gospels. He was dumbfounded—he could memorize where the texts were, but he was not taught of the Spirit since he had yet to trust Christ.

#### Maybe the only spiritual truth unbelievers can really understand is their own sin and the gospel—and even *that* Satan often blinds, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4.

(But are we Christians in the same boat? No…)

### We can make intelligent spiritual decisions since Christ instructs us (15-16).

15

#### We have Christ—or the Spirit—inside us to bring order and understanding to life.

Circle

#### We can discern spiritual truth in every area of life (15a; it’s like Christians wear “headphones” given by God and tuned into His frequency).

#### We can make intelligent decisions apart from counsel of other humans (15b). this is why young people who know Christ often have more discernment than their parents.

Youth

(Yet let’s not get proud about this!)

16

#### We *can’t* teach God but He *can* teach us (16).

##### We still can’t instruct God (16a).

##### But we are instructed directly by Christ as to God’s perspective on life (16b).

# Conclusion

### Let’s remember that today’s text fits into the larger context of telling the Corinthians ways the church could heal from their problem of divisions. And this text says that…

### We’ll be united as a church by focusing on God’s wisdom (M.I.).

MI

### What does God’s wisdom look like? How does it all apply?

Apply

#### Unity results from true wisdom, but divisions come from worldly thinking—so focus on the gospel rather than any church leader.

• Unity

##### God has given us genuine wisdom, but its centred in the gospel—not in any fancy rhetoric or ideas of men.

##### What this church needs is not a “new key” to successful ministry, evangelical technique, music style, self-help therapy, or strategy for church growth. Such gimmicks are often bound up in a certain leader and divide the body into competing ideologies.

##### No, what we need is the central focus of the cross.

#### Humility: Let’s not be fooled in thinking that because we’re wealthier, we’re wiser.

• Humility

##### I’m grateful for the privilege to teach pastors in poorer countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Jordan, Mongolia, etc. but why don’t those believers come here to teach us?

###### If true wisdom is the gospel, who understands and lives it better?

###### I think that they may have more to teach us than we have to teach them.

###### Frankly, that applies to many in our body. We have much to learn from members of our body like Singpu.

##### This applies to one of my ministry trips in Mongolia as well.

###### I went there to teach preaching, but no one received Christ after my sermon.

###### But when my student Maidar spoke an hour later at another service, six came to Christ—plus another 20 persons had been won to Christ that week by people in the congregation!

##### No, being wealthier is typically a *disadvantage* in comprehending and living the gospel. It was a danger for the Corinthians and it’s a danger for us.

#### Witnessing: Don’t expect any spiritual comprehension out of unbelievers. I remember speaking with a woman who refused to become a Christian until she had no more questions about the Bible. It reminded me how futile it is to try to give spiritual understanding beyond the gospel to her as an unbeliever.

• Witness

#### Character:

• Character

##### Is character training more important to you than intellect? It should be!

##### Am I anti-education? Hardly! I am an educator!

#### Bible: Get godly wisdom by being taught by the Spirit through your Bible. This is where those “spiritual words” in verse 13 are found!

• Bible

##### Do you eat breakfast? Why? You need physical energy for the day. Most parents want their kids to get “As,” but I tried to help my sons with their 4 “Bs”—Bed, Bible, Bath, and then Breakfast.

##### Also, how many of us bring our Bibles to church?

###### At another church once during the Scripture reading, I did a quick survey of the people in my row and the one behind me. Of the 16 people, only 4 even had a Bible to read the passage—and all 4 were missionaries worshipping at that church!

###### Perhaps if we don’t even bring our Bibles to church, then we probably don’t read our Bibles at home either.

###### In our day we have smart phone Bibles, BibleGateway.com and other websites, computer Bibles, study Bibles, memory verse aids, small group guides, but we are biblically illiterate.

### So how can you be wise in God’s eyes? Unite by focusing on God’s wisdom—in a humble way where the Spirit increasingly teaches you.

Need wisdom

### Prayer

Black

GBC / CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

10 May 98 / 4 Feb 07 Single Message

NIV 40 Minutes

**How to Be a Wise Guy**

Title

***1 Corinthians 2:6-16***

**Topic:** Divisions/Gospel/Wisdom

**Attribute:** God’s Wisdom

**Subject:** We’ll be united as a church

**Complement:** by focusing on God’s wisdom (as seen in the gospel).

**Purpose:** The listeners will focus on the gospel rather than a single church leader.

# Introduction

### [Arouse Interest: Mothers are some of the wisest people among us.]

#### Some years ago I asked one of our sons when he was 11-year olds if he thought his mother was wise. Actually I was testing his own wisdom as well as his honesty since his mom was sitting across the table from him. Seeking to score high marks in both honesty and wisdom, he said, “Yes, she’s wise—except when it comes to fixing things!” Little did he know that his Mom is incredibly wise not to learn how to use a drill!

Black

#### Then Susan remarked that she was wise enough to know that Dad was preaching on Sunday and therefore was scouting for sermon illustrations.

#### Yeah, the mothers here are some of the wisest people among us.

##### They can think about so many things at the same time compared to us Dads who have to compartmentalize life to understand it.

##### Susan also notices numerous things that pass me by—especially when it comes to the feelings of other people.

##### In our day a woman is commended for many things: being an educated woman, a career woman, a beautiful woman, a smart woman, a talented woman, a busy woman, a sophisticated woman, the total woman (even “totaled” woman)—but a *godly* woman or a *wise* woman, these sound very strange to our ears today.

### Topic: Now as believers we know that godliness and wisdom go hand-in-hand. You can’t have wisdom without godliness.

#### As Solomon said, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

#### By wisdom I mean applied knowledge—not facts, but knowing how to use them with God’s perspective guiding us.

#### Years ago the University of Berlin receptionist received a phone call asking for the address of Dr. Albert Einstein. “I’m sorry,” she responded, “University policy prohibits me from releasing the address of any of our professors.” There was a pause on the end of the line, “Vell,” he said, “I suspect I must tell you that I myself am Dr. Einstein, unt I cannot remember my vay home!” Knowledge is good, but wisdom is practical and very much better!

### Raise Need: If you are a typical person in this church, you are a professional with at least a college degree and you are doing quite well in the area of knowledge. In fact, many of us here are educators. Today there’s a great emphasis on IQ (Intelligence Quotient). But how is your WQ? How’s your Wisdom Quotient?

IQ/WQ

### Background: The Corinthian church sure needed to know God’s wisdom.

Path

#### Corinth was just down the road from Athens, Greece—the philosophical capital of the Roman world. Acts 17 shows that there were many “isms” there:

#### As we have been studying through this book we have seen in chapters 1–2 that Paul is giving ways the church could be united rather than divided. In these chapters he gives a three-fold path to church unity:

##### First (in 1:1-9) he told them to focus on the things going right—God’s making them holy, God’s grace to them, their giftedness, their guaranteed salvation.

##### Then (in 1:10–2:5) he noted that they needed to focus on Christ crucified rather than favoring certain church leaders.

##### Now in today’s passage (in 2:6-16) Paul gives a third way to solve the “division dilemma”—to focus on true godly wisdom.

### MI: So the path to unity is to focus on God’s wisdom.

MI

### Intro. MPI: But what is this wisdom? What does this wisdom look like? Paul says to just look at the gospel! Chapter 2:6-10 says that…

# I. The gospel is God’s secret message of wisdom that the world rejects (2:6-10).

I.

#  [True wisdom is the godly wisdom of Christ crucified that most don’t believe.]

#  [Unity is based in our focus on the gospel as God’s wisdom even though the world rejects it.]

## Anticipating the objection that Christianity is irrational, Paul says that believers do speak wisdom—God’s wisdom (6).

wisdom

### The Corinthians mimicked their intellect-obsessed culture—human over God’s wisdom.

#### Greek philosophy is seen in the nearby city of Athens in Acts 17:21 where it says that the people did nothing more than sit around speculating about the latest ideas.

MacArt

#### John MacArthur says regarding the world’s wisdom…

Black

##### “Human wisdom never solves anything. All of our education never solves anything. You say, ‘Wait a minute! Wait a minute! We used to be living in the boondocks out there in the bush, and now we’re in cities and homes.’ That’s right, and we’re just as rotten here as we were there. We haven’t changed. We’re just more comfortable. [Now] our immorality isn’t committed out in the wood, it’s committed in fancy hotels. It isn’t any different. We just make our sinning a little more accommodated” (WISDOM OF MAN doesn’t improve man’s nature).

##### “The problem with man’s wisdom is that it’s nice to sit around and talk about it, but it can’t do anything. Have you ever noticed that? People don’t get changed lives from it, it doesn’t transform people, it doesn’t forgive sin, it doesn’t make new creatures, it doesn’t usher people into the presence of God, it doesn’t do anything like that. It gives people satisfaction by playing little intellectual games, and builds their ego by telling people what they know” (WISDOM OF MAN useless).

#### The wisdom of man is useless for what really counts in life. As C.S. Lewis so aptly put it, “No clever arrangement of bad eggs will make a good omelet.” WISDOM OF MAN useless

### Good thing we Christians haven’t got caught up in this worldly knowledge-thing, right?

#### At the first church I pastored, one of my members belonged to MENSA. Have you heard of it? It’s a US-based organization exclusively for those in the top 2% of the general population in IQ. “M-E-N-S-A” stands for “Mentally Superior Adults.” They meet together to talk about how smart they all are. Anyway, Ray was a MENSA member. Susan and I conducted several marriage counseling sessions with Ray and his wife Judy. Among other things, we tried to help him with his explosive anger problem and convince him it didn’t show high IQ to drive 140 kilometers per hour on the expressways—which terrified his wife! Ray was like the Corinthians who thought that intellect is enough, a value of this world.

Mtgs

MENSA

#### But what are some other ways to contrast God’s wisdom with human wisdom?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God’s wisdom claims… | The wisdom of this age says… |
| Salvation is God’s free gift—by faithFree | “There’s no such thing as a free lunch”—so salvation must be by works |
| God became manPoemMan | God cannot become man—I like the “B.C.” poem by Johnny Hart, NTS 88…It seems to me that since the fall—without even thinking it odd—that man has had no trouble at allbelieving that he can be God.How he could do this I cannot conceive,Tho, he certainly thinks that he can—And yet, he cannot bring himself to believe,that God can become a man. |
| You can’t visualize things into realityVisual | But I have this New Age booklet called “Just Imagine!” which claims to be “a proven method of creating what you want in your life.” Just imagine telling the bank officer, “But I *imagined* that million dollars into my bank account so it must be there!” |
| Explosions don’t create order but chaosExplode | “The universe began with a big bang.” Just try creating a shopping centre on Orchard Road this way! If the explosion won’t create order, just wait a few billion years and it’ll happen! |
| Sex outside of marriage hurts everyoneSex | “Casual sex” (that’s like saying “casual roulette”) |
| Godly character is our most vital assetCharacter | Education is our most vital asset |

(Paul goes on in verses 7-10 to explain how…)

## Only believers understand God’s wisdom (7-10).

Believers

### God’s wisdom is secret—a mystery not revealed to unbelievers (7a).

#### What is “God’s secret wisdom”? The gospel?

#### Well, yes, close— God’s secret wisdom is Christ Himself according to 1:24, 30, or more specifically, Christ crucified in 2:2.

### This wisdom of Christ crucified was hidden from all until God revealed it to the apostles (7b).

#### It was a “mystery” (NASB), which means something previously unknown but now revealed. Before the cross Jews were always puzzled how their Messiah could be a suffering savior (Isa. 53) as well as a reigning king (Isa. 11)—kings typically don’t suffer for their people! Some Jewish scholars even tried to reconcile these apparently contradictory ideas by teaching that Israel would have *two* Messiahs—one to suffer and one to reign!

#### Why did God keep this wisdom secret for so long? I don’t think He did! He told it like it was in Isaiah and Psalms and other places. The problem was with us and our wrong attitudes against servant leadership!

### Christ crucified was predestined from eternity past that believers would have eternity future (7c).

### God’s wisdom is misunderstood as seen in those who crucified Christ (8).

#### One reason the gospel is so misunderstood is because it’s so plain simple.

#### Recent history shows that those preachers with the greatest impact have not been the eloquent, fancy speakers. The best known preachers of the past 150 years have been D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham. Moody had a sixth grade education and Billy Graham has been criticised for giving such simple sermons.

### God’s wisdom in Christ crucified is not even thought about by unbelievers but only learned by believers through revelation (9-10).

#### But those who crucified Christ only represent us all who can’t see, hear, or conceive of God’s plan (9).

#### That’s why God had to reveal His wisdom to us through revelation by the all-knowing Spirit (10).

(So in verses 6-10 Paul has told us that we should focus on the gospel as God’s wisdom even though the world rejects it. But why do so few unbelievers understand the gospel? Why do they reject it? And why is it that only Christians have God’s wisdom?)

MPI

# II. Only believers have God’s wisdom because only believers have the Spirit (2:11-16).

II

#  [We alone have the Equipment to see spiritual things—and that Equipment is the Spirit.]

## No one knows what someone else is thinking (11).

Black

### This is true of humans—only that person knows his thoughts (11a).

#### Can you tell what I’m thinking right now? I was thinking, “Why did God give me three sons instead of three daughters?”

#### I can’t tell what you’re thinking either—I can only guess that maybe you’re saying, “What kind of preacher is this guy?”

### This is also true of God—only the Spirit knows God’s thoughts (11b).

(Since no one knows God’s thoughts…)

## God gave us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth (12-13).

### We have the Spirit in order to understand the salvation we have (12).

#### It’s amazing how different our learning styles are. Some of us buy a new iPhone, Blackberry, or DVD player with all the features—and we’re willing to pay for it! But then we toss the instructions aside and try to figure it out on our own! Oh, we do learn how to turn it on or off or how to press PLAY or RECORD, but without reading the instructions we’re at a loss to really use the product to its potential.

#### The Spirit is our inner Guide to help us look at the instruction book. He helps us comprehend what we have in Christ so we can get the fullest benefit out of our salvation. But we’re often tossing our Bibles aside, aren’t we?

(But when we submit to the Spirit’s teaching ministry…)

### We don’t proclaim godless intellectualism but rather the Spirit’s teaching ministry in words of truth (13).

#### An old country church in England years ago had a sign above the entrance which said, “We Preach Christ Crucified.” The church faithfully proclaimed the gospel to its generation with its motto based on Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2:2.

#### But as the years passed, the newer pastors stopped preaching about the cross, though they did say much about Jesus’ ministries of compassion, care for people, etc. Interestingly, at this same time the ivy grew on the bricks so that it obscured the last word “Crucified.” Now the sign read only, “We Preach Christ.”

#### Things got worse. Liberal preachers soon occupied the pulpit of this church where the message of Christ was ignored altogether—and—you guessed it—the ivy continued to grow, covering up another word so the sign read only, “We Preach.”

#### There’s a lot of ivy around today because we’ve hidden the message of the cross.

(So if we can’t learn except from God’s Spirit telling us in God’s Word, where does that lead us?)

## Unbelievers don’t understand God’s wisdom while Christians do (2:14-16).

### The non-Christian thinks spiritual truth is foolish since he doesn’t have the Spirit teaching him (14).

#### Verses 14-16 basically ask who sits in your chair of control in your life. Everyone has a chair, or control center—according to the imagery used by CCC.

Chair

##### Most people have themselves on the throne and Christ outside the life. (But this verse really emphasizes more of the ministry of the Spirit.)

Self

##### With “self” in control their lives have various interests but all results in spiritual confusion.

#### To ask a non-Christian like this to discern spiritual truth is like asking a blind man to judge an art exhibit or a deaf man to judge a music contest. They just don’t have the equipment!

#### In Israel I was privileged to have an excellent Jewish tour guide who really knew his stuff—the geography, where Scripture texts were in the gospels, etc. Then one evening one of our travelers asked Avner the meaning of a difficult text in the gospels. He was dumbfounded—he could memorize where the texts were, but he was not taught of the Spirit since he had yet to trust Christ.

#### Maybe the only spiritual truth unbelievers can really understand is their own sin and the gospel—and even *that* Satan often blinds, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4.

(But are we Christians in the same boat? No…)

### We can make intelligent spiritual decisions since Christ instructs us (15-16).

#### We have Christ—or the Spirit—inside us to bring order and understanding to life.

#### We can discern spiritual truth in every area of life (15a; it’s like Christians wear “headphones” given by God and tuned into His frequency).

#### We can make intelligent decisions apart from counsel of other humans (15b). this is why young people who know Christ often have more discernment than their parents.

Youth

(Yet let’s not get proud about this!)

Black

#### We *can’t* teach God but He *can* teach us (16).

##### We still can’t instruct God (16a).

##### But we are instructed directly by Christ as to God’s perspective on life (16b).

# Conclusion

### Let’s remember that today’s text fits into the larger context of telling the Corinthians ways the church could heal from their problem of divisions. And this text says that…

### We’ll be united as a church by focusing on God’s wisdom (M.I.).

MI

### What does God’s wisdom look like? How does it all apply?

Apply

#### Unity results from true wisdom, but divisions come from worldly thinking—so focus on the gospel rather than any church leader.

##### God has given us genuine wisdom, but its centred in the gospel—not in any fancy rhetoric or ideas of men.

##### What this church needs is not a “new key” to successful ministry, evangelical technique, music style, self-help therapy, or strategy for church growth. Such gimmicks are often bound up in a certain leader and divide the body into competing ideologies.

##### No, what we need is the central focus of the cross.

#### Humility: Let’s not be fooled in thinking that because we’re wealthier, we’re wiser.

##### I’m grateful for the privilege to teach pastors in poorer countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Jordan, Mongolia, etc. but why don’t those believers come here to teach us?

###### If true wisdom is the gospel, who understands and lives it better?

###### I think that they may have more to teach us than we have to teach them.

###### Frankly, that applies to many in our body. We have much to learn from members of our body, some who direct nation-wide ministries: Budmaa (EE Mongolia), Maya (CCC Sri Lanka), Manik (Thailand), and Thi (JB VN).

##### This applies to my last ministry trip in Mongolia as well.

###### I went there to teach preaching, but no one received Christ after my sermon.

###### But when my student Maidar spoke an hour later at another service, six came to Christ—plus another 20 persons had been won to Christ that week by people in the congregation!

##### No, being wealthier is typically a *disadvantage* in comprehending and living the gospel. It was a danger for the Corinthians and it’s a danger for us.

#### Witnessing: Don’t expect any spiritual comprehension out of unbelievers. I remember speaking with a woman who refused to become a Christian until she had no more questions about the Bible. It reminded me how futile it is to try to give spiritual understanding beyond the gospel to her as an unbeliever.

#### Education:

##### Is character more important to you than intellect? It should be!

##### Am I anti-education? Hardly! I am an educator!

#### Bible: Get godly wisdom by being taught by the Spirit through your Bible. This is where those “spiritual words” in verse 13 are found!

##### Do you eat breakfast? Why? You need physical energy for the day. Most parents want their kids to get “As,” but I’m trying to help my 14-year-old son John with his 4 “Bs”—Bed, Bible, Bath, and then Breakfast.

##### Also, how many of us bring our Bibles to church.

###### At another church once during the Scripture reading, I did a quick survey of the people in my row and the one behind me. Of the 16 people, only 4 even had a Bible to read the passage—and all 4 were missionaries worshipping at that church!

###### I suspect that if we don’t even bring our Bibles to church, then we probably don’t read our Bibles at home either.

###### In our day where we have more PDA Bibles, BibleGateway.com and other websites, computer Bibles, study Bibles, memory verse aids, small group guides, we are biblically illiterate.

### So how can you and I avoid being a wise guy in the world’s eyes? How can we be wise in God’s eyes? Unite by focusing on true godly wisdom—in a humble way where you are increasingly taught by the Spirit.

Black

### Prayer

### “All That I Need” is in Him! [Demo first, then sing 2x].

Song

Grace Baptist Church Dr. Rick Griffith

10 May 1998 (Mother’s Day) Single Message

NIV 40 Minutes

**How to Be a Wise Guy**

***1 Corinthians 2:6-16***

**Topic:** Divisions/Gospel/Wisdom

**Subject:** We avoid divisions among us

**Complement:** by focusing on true godly wisdom (as seen in the gospel).

**Purpose:** The listeners will focus on the gospel rather than a single church leader.

# Introduction

### [Arouse Interest: Mothers are some of the wisest people among us.]

#### Last Thursday I asked our 11-year old, Kurt, if he thought his mother was wise. Actually I was testing his own wisdom as well as his honesty since his mom was sitting across the table from him. Seeking to score high marks in both honesty and wisdom, Kurt said, “Yes, she’s wise—except when it comes to fixing things!” Little did he know that his Mom is incredibly wise not to learn how to use a drill!

#### Then Susan remarked that she was wise enough to know that Dad was preaching on Sunday and therefore was scouting for sermon illustrations.

#### Yeah, the mothers here are some of the wisest people among us.

##### They can think about so many things at the same time compared to us Dads who have to compartmentalise life to understand it.

##### Susan also notices numerous things that pass me by—especially when it comes to the feelings of other people.

##### In our day a woman is commended for many things: being an educated woman, a career woman, a beautiful woman, a smart woman, a talented woman, a busy woman, a sophisticated woman, the total woman (even “totaled” woman)—but a *godly* woman or a *wise* woman, these sound very strange to our ears today.

##### Given that today is Mother’s Day, it’s appropriate that we remember the *wisdom* of our mothers—and their *godliness*.

###### On this day churches sometimes find out which mother has the most kids, who’s the oldest mother, or who’s the youngest mother (though most churches have the wisdom to avoid that one nowadays!).

###### Yet we all know what’s most important is that we honor *godly* mothers.

###### The great American president, Abraham Lincoln, said, “No man is poor who has a godly mother.” He was right.

### Topic: Now as believers we know that godliness and wisdom go hand-in-hand. You can’t have wisdom without godliness.

#### As Solomon said, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

#### By wisdom I mean applied knowledge—not facts, but knowing how to use them with God’s perspective guiding us.

### Raise Need: If you are a typical Singaporean Christian, you are doing quite well in the area of knowledge. Here there’s a great emphasis on IQ (Intelligence Quotient). But how is your WQ? How’s your Wisdom Quotient?

### Background: The Corinthian church sure needed to know God’s wisdom. As we have been studying through this book we have seen in chapters 1–2 that Paul is giving ways the church could heal from their problem with divisions. Chapter 1, verses 10-17 is the key section which rebukes them for factions among them, but the surrounding verses provide a handle on how to address this problem.

#### First (in 1:1-9) he told them to focus on the things going right—God’s making them holy, God’s grace to them, their giftedness, their guaranteed salvation.

#### Then (in 1:18–2:5) he noted that they needed to focus on Christ crucified rather than favoring certain church leaders.

#### Now in today’s passage (in 2:6-16) Paul gives a third way to solve the “division dilemma”—to focus on true godly wisdom.

### MI: So how can we avoid divisions among us? We can be united only as we focus on true godly wisdom.

### Intro. MPI: But what is this wisdom? What does this wisdom look like? Paul says to just look at the gospel! Chapter 2:6-10 says that…

# I. The gospel is God’s secret message of wisdom which the world rejects (2:6-10).

#  [True wisdom’s godly wisdom of Christ crucified which most folks don’t believe.]

#  [We should focus on the gospel as God’s wisdom even though the world rejects it.]

## Anticipating the objection that Christianity is irrational, Paul says that believers do speak wisdom—God’s wisdom (6).

### The Corinthians mimicked their intellect-obsessed culture—human over God’s wisdom.

#### Greek philosophy is seen in the nearby city of Athens in Acts 17:21 where it says that the people did nothing more than sit around speculating about the latest ideas.

#### John MacArthur says regarding the world’s wisdom… (WISDOM OF MAN doesn’t improve man’s nature and WISDOM OF MAN useless)

#### The wisdom of man is useless for what really counts in life. As C.S. Lewis so aptly put it, “No clever arrangement of bad eggs will make a good omelet.” WISDOM OF MAN useless

### Good thing we Christians haven’t got caught up in this worldly knowledge-thing, right?

#### When I was a pastor one of my members belonged to a group called MENSA. Have you heard of it? It’s a US-based organisation exclusively for those in the top 2% of the general population in IQ. “M-E-N-S-A” stands for “Mentally Superior Adults.” Anyway, Ray was a MENSA member. Susan and I conducted several marriage counseling sessions with Ray and his wife. Among other things, we tried to help him with his explosive anger problem and convince him it didn’t show high IQ to drive 140 kilometers per hour on the expressways—which terrified his wife! Ray was like the Corinthians who thought that intellect is enough, a value of this world.

#### But what are some other ways to contrast God’s wisdom with human wisdom?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God’s wisdom claims… | The wisdom of this age says… |
| Salvation is by faith | “There’s no such thing as a free lunch”—so salvation must be by works |
| God became man | God cannot become man—I like the “B.C.” poem by Johnny Hart, NTS 88…It seems to me that since the fall—without even thinking it odd—that man has had no trouble at allbelieving that he can be God.How he could do this I cannot conceive,Tho, he certainly thinks that he can—And yet, he cannot bring himself to believe,that God can become a man. |
| You can’t visualize things into reality | But I have this New Age booklet called “Just Imagine!” which claims to be “a proven method of creating what you want in your life.” Just imagine telling the bank officer, “But I *imagined* that million dollars into my current autosave account so it must be there!” |
| Explosions don’t create order but chaos | “The universe began with a big bang.” Just try creating a shopping centre on Orchard Road this way! If the explosion won’t create order, just wait a few billion years and it’ll happen! |
| Adultery is harmful and should be avoided | “Casual sex” (that’s like saying “casual roulette”) |
| Godly character is our kids’ most vital asset | Education is our kids’ most vital asset |

(Paul goes on in verse 7-10 to explain how…)

## God’s wisdom is understood only by believers (7-10).

### God’s wisdom is secret—a mystery not revealed to unbelievers (7a).

#### What is “God’s secret wisdom”? The gospel?

#### Well, yes, close— God’s secret wisdom is Christ Himself according to 1:24, 30, or more specifically, Christ crucified in 2:2.

### This wisdom of Christ crucified was hidden from all until God revealed it to the apostles (7b).

#### It was a “mystery” (NASB), which means something previously unknown but now revealed. Before the cross Jews were always puzzled how their Messiah could be a suffering saviour (Isa. 53) as well as a reigning king (Isa. 11)—kings typically don’t suffer for their people! Some Jewish scholars even tried to reconcile these apparently contradictory ideas by teaching that Israel would have *two* Messiahs—one to suffer and one to reign!

#### Why did God keep this wisdom secret for so long? I don’t think He did! He told it like it was in Isaiah and Psalms and other places. The problem was with us and our wrong attitudes against servant leadership!

### Christ crucified was predestined from eternity past that believers would have eternity future (7c).

### God’s wisdom is misunderstood as seen in those who crucified Christ (8).

#### One reason the gospel is so misunderstood is because it’s so plain simple.

#### Recent history shows that those preachers with the greatest impact have not been the eloquent, fancy speakers. The best known preachers of the past 150 years have been D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham. Moody had a sixth grade education and Billy Graham has been criticised for giving such simple sermons.

### God’s wisdom in Christ crucified is not even thought about by unbelievers but only learned by believers through revelation (9-10).

#### But those who crucified Christ only represent us all who can’t see, hear, or conceive of God’s plan (9).

#### That’s why God had to reveal His wisdom to us through revelation by the all-knowing Spirit (10).

(So in verses 6-10 Paul has told us that we should focus on the gospel as God’s wisdom even though the world rejects it. But why do so few unbelievers understand the gospel? Why do they reject it? And why is that only Christians have God’s wisdom?)

# II. Only believers have God’s wisdom because only they have the Spirit (2:11-16).

#  [We alone have the Equipment to comprehend spiritual things—and that Equipment is the Spirit.]

## No one knows what someone else is thinking (11).

### This is true of humans—only that person knows his thoughts (11a).

#### Can you tell what I’m thinking right now? I was thinking, “Why did God give me three sons instead of three daughters?”

#### I can’t tell what you’re thinking either—I can only guess that maybe you’re saying, “What kind of preacher is this guy?”

### This is also true of God—only the Spirit knows God’s thoughts (11b).

## Since no one knows what God is thinking unless God tells him, He has given us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth (12-13).

### We have the Spirit in order to understand the salvation we have (12).

#### It’s amazing how different our learning styles are. Some of us buy a new radio, computer program, or a VCR with all the features—and we’re willing to pay for it! But then we toss the instructions aside and try to figure it out on our own! Oh, we do learn how to turn it on or off or how to press PLAY or RECORD, but without reading the instructions we’re at a loss to really use the product to its potential.

#### The Spirit is our inner Guide to help us look at the instruction book. He helps us comprehend what we have in Christ so we can get the fullest benefit out of our salvation. But we’re often tossing our Bibles aside, aren’t we?

(But when we submit to the Spirit’s teaching ministry…)

### We don’t proclaim godless intellectualism but rather the Spirit’s teaching ministry in words of truth (13).

#### An old country church in England years ago had a sign above the entrance which said, “We Preach Christ Crucified.” The church faithfully proclaimed the gospel to its generation with its motto based on Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2:2.

#### But as the years passed, the newer pastors stopped preaching about the cross, though they did say much about Jesus’ ministries of compassion, care for people, etc. Interestingly, at this same time the ivy grew on the bricks so that it obscured the last word “Crucified.” Now the sign read only, “We Preach Christ.”

#### Things got worse. Liberal preachers soon occupied the pulpit of this church where the message of Christ was ignored altogether—and—you guessed it—the ivy continued to grow, covering up another word so the sign read only, “We Preach.”

#### There’s a lot of ivy around today because we’ve hidden the message of the cross.

(So if we can’t learn except from God’s Spirit telling us in God’s Word, where does that lead us? The remaining verses of this section say that…)

## There exist two categories of people: unbelievers who don’t understand God’s wisdom and Christians who do (2:14-16).

### The non-Christian thinks spiritual truth is foolish since he doesn’t have the Spirit teaching him (14).

#### Asking a non-Christian to discern spiritual truth is like asking a blind man to judge an art exhibit or a deaf man to judge a music contest. They just don’t have the equipment!

#### In Israel I was privileged to have an excellent Jewish tour guide who really knew his stuff—the geography, where Scripture texts were in the gospels, etc. Then one evening one of our travelers asked Avner the meaning of a difficult text in the gospels. He was dumbfounded—he could memorise where the texts were, but he was not taught of the Spirit since he had yet to trust Christ.

#### Maybe the only spiritual truth unbelievers can really understand is their own sin and the gospel—and even *that* Satan often blinds, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4.

(But are we Christians in the same boat? No…)

### We can make intelligent spiritual decisions since Christ instructs us (15-16).

#### We can discern spiritual truth in every area of life (15a; it’s like Christians wear “headphones” given by God and tuned into His frequency).

#### We can make intelligent decisions apart from counsel of other humans (15b).

(Yet let’s not get proud about this!)

#### We *can’t* teach God but we *can* be taught by Him (16).

##### We still can’t instruct God (16a).

##### But we are instructed directly by Christ as to God’s perspective on life (16b).

# Conclusion

### Let’s remember that today’s text fits into the larger context of telling the Corinthians ways the church could heal from their problem of divisions. And this text says that…

### We avoid divisions among us by focusing on true godly wisdom (M.I.).

### How does it all apply?

#### Divisions result from worldly thinking—so focus on the gospel rather than a single church leader.

##### God has given us genuine wisdom, but its centred in the gospel—not in any fancy rhetoric or ideas of men.

##### What this church needs is not a “new key” to successful ministry, evangelical technique, music style, self-help therapy, or strategy for church growth. Such gimmicks are often bound up in a certain leader and divide the body into competing ideologies.

##### No, what we need is the central focus of the cross.

#### Humility: Let’s not be fooled in thinking that because we’re wealthier, we’re wiser.

##### Now I’m grateful for the ministry that GBC has in Myanmar. Why do we go to Myanmar rather than the Burmese believers come here to teach us?

###### If true wisdom is the gospel, who understands and lives it better?

###### I think that they may have more to teach us than we have to teach them.

###### I’m not advocating at all that we close this ministry—only that we do so in a most humble manner.

##### This applies to my own recent ministry trips in Mongolia as well.

###### I went there to teach preaching, but no one received Christ after my sermon.

###### But when my student spoke an hour later at another service, six came to Christ—plus another 20 persons had been won to Christ that week by people in the congregation!

##### No, being wealthier is typically a *disadvantage* in comprehending and living the gospel. It was a danger for the Corinthians and it’s a danger for us.

#### Witnessing: Don’t expect any spiritual comprehension out of unbelievers. I spoke with woman named Amy this week who refused to become a Christian until she had no more questions about the Bible. I saw again how futile it is to try to give spiritual understanding beyond the gospel to her as an unbeliever.

#### Education:

##### Is character more important to you than intellect? It should be!

##### Am I anti-education? Hardly! I am an educator!

#### Bible: Get godly wisdom by being taught by the Spirit through your Bible. This is where those “spiritual words” in verse 13 are found!

##### As a whole, we believers at GBC are not people of the Book. We say we are, but our actions speak louder than our words. Let me share just two ways this is evident…

##### For one, many of us do not bring our Bibles to church.

###### In December when Ric Poolman read one of his preaching texts, I did a quick survey of the people in my row and the one behind me. Of the 16 people, only 4 even had a Bible to read the passage—and all 4 were missionaries worshipping at this church!

###### I suspect that if we don’t even bring our Bibles to church, then we probably don’t read our Bibles at home either.

###### In our day where we have more computerised Bibles, study Bibles, memory verse aids, small group guides, we are biblically illiterate.

##### A second reason I say that we are not people of the Book is because most do not attend GBS.

###### It’s considered a big class if only 10% of those in the service come!

###### Many attend based on topic and speaker, not because they sense a need to get to know God’s Word better.

###### I recognize the need for fellowship with friends, but what better fellowship than sharing around God’s Word? Sure beats comparing golf scores in the void deck!

###### Turn over a new leaf by starting today with the new series!

### So how can you and I avoid being a wise guy in the world’s eyes? How can we be wise in God’s eyes? Avoid divisions by focusing on true godly wisdom—in a humble way where you are increasingly taught by the Spirit.

**Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Wow, what a tough text! At my first reading I found 31 things I didn’t understand in only 11 verses!

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage? Paul told the Corinthians not to be divided since the focus of the gospel is Christ rather than human leaders. He also told them not to rely on signs (power), worldly wisdom or eloquent talk.

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible? This passage helps the Corinthians see that Paul is not against *all* types of wisdom—only worldly wisdom!

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage? The Greeks were enthralled with human wisdom.

6 Is this verse another title verse for the new section just like 1:10 and 1:18? (Yes)

 What contrast to the preceding is indicated by the word “however”? (Purpose above)

 Who is the “we”? Apostles? Preachers? Christians? (Probably Christians since he’s contrasting wisdom of this age/world with that of believers, but some say apostles (e.g., Robertson/Plummer).

 Who are the “mature”? Is this all Christians or only those who are not carnal? (Only spiritual believers as he will deal with the babes in 3:1 and contrast these with adults in 14:20; cf. Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15)

 What’s the wisdom of this age? (man’s best attempt to explain life without God)

 Who are the rulers of this age? Some of the early church fathers saw these as demons but 2:8 identifies them as including the rulers of the Jews since for the Romans only Pilate [sg.] was the only civil ruler responsible for Christ’s crucifixion—perhaps it includes both religious and civil rulers (Robertson/Plummer)

7 What is “God’s secret wisdom”? The gospel? —Well, yes, close—it is Christ Himself (1:24, 30), or more specifically, Christ crucified (2:2). The word “God” here is emphatic in the Greek—the particular emphasis. It’s not “the wisdom of God” but the *“of God* [kind of] wisdom”! The NIV translation “No” (alla) also emphasizes that we have true wisdom.

 When was this wisdom secret or hidden? It was a mystery (NASB), which means something previously unknown but now revealed. Before the cross Jews were always puzzled how their Messiah could be a suffering saviour (Isa. 53) as well as a reigning king (Isa. 11)—kings typically don’t suffer for their people! Some Jewish scholars even tried to reconcile these apparently contradictory ideas with the teaching that Israel would have two Messiahs—one to suffer and one to reign!

 Why did God keep this wisdom secret for so long? I don’t think He did! He told to us like it was in Isaiah and Psalms and other places. The problem was with us and our wrong attitudes against servant leadership!

 How is wisdom destined for *our* glory—not God’s? God will share His glory with us so that as Christ is exalted, so also will we be glorified!

8 How would understanding God’s wisdom have prevented the crucifixion? The Jewish leaders and Pilate would have seen that Christ was actually no threat to their own power, but rather a blessed fulfillment of prophecy regarding the King as one to whom they could submit joyfully!

9 Does “what God has prepared” refer to heaven? Yes, but it also includes many things that God has prepared for us now.

 How does this relate to the context? Mature believers have insight given by the Spirit (10b).

10a Does this introduce a new section with the word “for” (gar NASB, Rob/Plum, Fee) or is it a contrast with the unbelievers’ lack of knowledge indicated by the word “but” (de NIV, Metzger, 546)? The textual variants are inconclusive themselves, but since “for” is in the next phrase (though not in the NIV) and since de is often used loosely by Paul, I’m holding to the NIV reading.

 How did God reveal the secret wisdom through the Spirit? By revelation?

 Did God reveal it only to the apostles? In a sense, yes, as the tense here is aorist—but this wisdom is also passed on to us through the Scriptures as well as the Spirit’s ministry to our own spirits.

10b What does Paul mean by “the Spirit searches all things”? Surely He doesn’t need to do research, does He, since He already knows everything! No, it has the idea of the Spirit’s omniscience. Do you know what “research” means? To search or it again! We keep forgetting or else we don’t know it in the first place—but not so with the Spirit. The Spirit “fathoms everything” (BAGD 306d; John 5:39; 7:52; Rom. 8:27; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 2:23). Or the idea is that the Spirit “knows the thoughts of” (v. 11b; Blomberg, 64).

 What’s the Spirit searching for anyway? (He’s not looking for anything—it means that He totally understands the depths of God’s nature and plans of grace, NIVSB).

 How does it fit the context? The contrast is between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God shown through the Spirit.

11 How does only God knowing His own thoughts fit Paul’s argument? The idea is that what is true of people is also true of God—just as we are unknown apart from sharing ourselves, so God is not known unless He reveals Himself to us.

12 Who is the “we” in “we who have received the Spirit”? All believers? or just apostles? Seems to be all believers.

 What is the “spirit of the world”? Godless intellectualism.

 What’s the point of saying, “How can you know what God is thinking unless He tells you?” To show that believers can’t know anything about God either unless God reveals it.

13 What is meant by “expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”? Believers don’t proclaim godless intellectualism but rather the Spirit’s teaching ministry in words of truth.

14 What kind of spiritual things can unbelievers not accept or understand? (salvation by grace, the Trinity, God becoming man, etc.)?

15 What does it mean by “the spiritual man makes judgments about all things”? I thought we weren’t supposed to judge! (He can discern spiritual truth in every area of life.)

 How is the spiritual man “not subject to any man’s judgment”? He can make intelligent decisions apart from counsel of other humans.

 Where’s accountability? It is not excluded here.

16 Do spiritual believers really have the mind of Christ? Yes, that’s what it says.

 But what does this mean? He is instructed directly by Christ as to God’s perspective on life.

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

The reason we should proclaim the wisdom of the gospel to unbelievers is because they can’t understand God’s thoughts like we can.

The reason divisive believers cannot understand the wisdom of the gospel is because they can’t understand God’s thoughts like mature Christians can.

(2:14-16) The result of receiving God’s wisdom is three categories of people: unbelievers don’t understand it, spiritual Christians do, and carnal believers choose not to.

Exegetical Idea: The reason the Corinthians should be united is because they can understand God’s thoughts unlike unbelievers.

Exegetical Idea: Another way the Corinthians could be united was to focus on God’s wisdom shown in the gospel and given only to believers through the Spirit.

**Possible Illustrations**

Extolling the wisdom of mothers: mind readers, doing ten things at once

Can you tell what I’m thinking right now? I was thinking, “Why did God give me three sons instead of three daughters?”

Asking a non-Christian to discern spiritual truth is like asking a blind man to judge an art exhibit or a deaf man to judge a music contest. They just don’t have the equipment! In Israel one of our travelers asked Avner the meaning of a difficult text in the gospels…

What are some other examples of true wisdom seen by believers but not by unbelievers?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is obvious and true to Believers | `What is False yet Still Claimed by Unbelievers |
| Salvation is by faith | “There’s no such thing as a free lunch” |
| God can become man | God cannot become man (BC poem, NTS 88)  |
| Man is not God | Man is God (new age)  |
| Things can’t be visualized into reality | “Just Imagine!” brochure vs. checkbooks |
| Explosions don’t make order but chaos | “The universe began with a big bang” |
| There are innate differences between men and women (Reader’s Digest) | “So-called male-female differences are imposed by society’s prejudices” |
| Adultery is harmful and should be avoided | “Casual sex” (like saying “casual roulette”) |
| Character is our kids’ most vital asset | Intellect is our kids’ most vital asset |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Recent history shows that those preachers with the greatest impact have not been the eloquent, fancy speakers. The best known preachers of the past 150 years have been D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham. Moody had a sixth grade education and Billy Graham has been criticised for giving such simple sermons. In fact, it seems to help one’s influence for Christ to be named “Bill” (or “Billy”): Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Bill Gothard…[pause]—did I hear someone whisper Bill Clinton?! Each of these “Bills” have had a simple but true message.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

An old country church in England years ago had a sign above the entrance which said, “We Preach Christ Crucified.” The church faithfully proclaimed the gospel to its generation with its motto based on Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2:2.

But as the years passed, the newer pastors stopped preaching about the cross, though they did say much about Jesus’ ministries of compassion, care for people, etc. Interestingly, at this same time the ivy grew on the bricks so that it obscured the last word “Crucified.” Now the sign read only, “We Preach Christ.”

Things got worse. Liberal preachers soon occupied the pulpit of this church where the message of Christ was ignored altogether—and—you guessed it—the ivy continued to grow, covering up another word so the sign read only, “We Preach.”

WISDOM OF THE WORLD God cannot become man

I like this “B.C.” poem by cartoonist Johnny Hart, NTS 88…

It seems to me that since the fall—

without even thinking it odd—

that man has had no trouble at all

believing that he can be God.

How he could do this I cannot conceive,

Tho, he certainly thinks that he can—

And yet, he cannot bring himself to believe,

that God can become a man.

**How to Be a Wise Guy**

***1 Corinthians 2:6-16***

**Exegetical Outline**

# Exegetical Idea: Another way the Corinthians could be united was to focus on God’s wisdom shown in the gospel and given only to believers through the Spirit.

# I. (2:6-10a) The content of Paul and the apostles’ message was the gospel—God’s secret message of wisdom revealed to the apostles but rejected by the world.

## (6) To counter the Corinthian objection that Christianity is irrational, Paul declares that only believers speak God’s wisdom**.**

## (7-10a) God’s wisdom is only understood by believers.

### (7a) It is a secret or an unrevealed mystery to unbelievers.

### (7b) It was hidden from everyone until God revealed it to the apostles.

### (7c) It was predestined from eternity past that believers would have eternity future.

### (8) It is misunderstood as seen in those who crucified Christ.

### (9-10a) It is not even thought about by unbelievers but only learned by believers through revelation by the all-knowing Spirit.

#### (9) But those who crucified Christ only represent us all who can’t see, hear, or conceive of God’s plan.

#### (10a) That’s why God had to reveal His wisdom to us through the ministry of the Spirit.

#### (10b) The Holy Spirit knows everything.

# II. (2:11-16) The reason only believers have God’s wisdom is because they alone have the Spirit.

## (11) No one knows what someone else is thinking.

### (11a) This is true of humans—only that person knows his thoughts.

### (11b) This is also true of God—only the Spirit knows God’s thoughts.

## (12-13) Since no one knows what God is thinking unless God tells him, He has given us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth.

### (12) Believers have the Spirit in order to understand the salvation they have.

### (13) Believers don’t proclaim godless intellectualism but rather the Spirit’s teaching ministry in words of truth.

## (2:14-16) There exist two categories of people: unbelievers who don’t understand God’s wisdom and Christians who do.

### (14) The non-Christian thinks spiritual truth is foolish since he doesn’t have the Spirit teaching him.

### (15-16) The Christian can make intelligent spiritual decisions since Christ instructs him.

#### (15a) He can discern spiritual truth in every area of life.

#### (15b) He can make intelligent decisions apart from counsel of other humans.

#### (16) He still can’t instruct God but he can be taught by Christ.

##### (16a) He still can’t instruct God.

##### (16b) He is instructed directly by Christ as to God’s perspective on life.

# Introduction

### Interest: Mothers are wise (Kurt, Susan, thinking, feeling, totaled, godly, Lincoln).

### Topic: Godliness and wisdom go hand-in-hand (Solomon, applied knowledge).

### Need: Emphasis on IQ (Intelligence Quotient). But how is your WQ (Wisdom Quotient)?

### Background: Ways to heal from their problem with divisions (1:10-17): Focus on things going right (1:1-9), Christ crucified (1:18–2:5), godly wisdom (2:6-16) = MI.

### Intro. MPI: But what does this wisdom look like? Look at the gospel! 2:6-10 says…

# I. The gospel is God’s secret message of wisdom which the world rejects (2:6-10).

## Against Christianity = irrational, Paul says believers do speak wisdom—God’s wisdom (6).

### The Corinthians absorbed a culture that stressed intellect (Athens, MacArthur, Lewis).

### Good thing we haven’t got caught up in this worldly knowledge-thing, right? MENSA

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God’s wisdom claims… | The wisdom of this age says… |
| Salvation is by faith | “There’s no such thing as a free lunch”—works |
| God became man | God cannot become man—Johnny Hart poem |
| Things can’t be visualized into reality |  “Just Imagine!” vs. current autosave |
| Explosions don’t make order but chaos | “The universe began with a big bang” |
| Adultery is harmful and should be avoided | “Casual sex” (like saying “casual roulette”) |
| Godly character is our kids’ most vital asset | Intellect is our kids’ most vital asset |

## God’s wisdom is understood only by believers (7-10).

### It is secret—a mystery unrevealed to unbelievers (7a) = Christ Himself or crucified (2:2).

### It was hidden from everyone until God revealed it to the apostles (7b)—suffering king.

### It was predestined from eternity past that believers would have eternity future (7c).

### It is misunderstood like those who crucified Christ (8)—Moody, Sunday, & Graham.

### It is not even thought about by unbelievers but learned by believers via revelation (9-10).

(But why do so few unbelievers reject the gospel? And why do only Christians have God’s wisdom?)

# II. Only believers have God’s wisdom because only they have the Spirit (2:11-16).

## No one knows what someone else is thinking (11)—3 sons, HS = God.

## God has given us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth (12-13)—VCR, ivy.

## Two types of people: unbelievers don’t know God’s wisdom & Christians do (2:14-16).

### A non-Christian considers spiritual truth foolish (14)—blind judges, Avner, gospel.

### We can make intelligent spiritual decisions as Christ instructs us (15-16)—headphones.

# Conclusion

### Let’s remember that today’s text fits into the larger context of telling the Corinthians ways the church could heal from their problem of divisions. And this text says that…

### We avoid divisions among us by focusing on true godly wisdom (M.I.).

### How does it all apply?

#### Divisions result from worldly thinking—so focus on the gospel —not church leader.

#### Humility: Let’s not be fooled in thinking that because we’re wealthier, we’re wiser.

##### Now I’m grateful for the ministry that GBC has in Myanmar. Why do we go to Myanmar rather than the Burmese believers come here to teach us?

##### This applies to my own ministry trips in Mongolia as well (me vs. Mider).

##### No, being wealthier is typically a *disadvantage* in comprehending and living the gospel. It was a danger for the Corinthians and it’s a danger for us.

#### Witnessing: Don’t expect any spiritual comprehension out of unbelievers (Amy).

#### Education: Is character more important to you than intellect? It should be!

#### Bible: Get godly wisdom by being taught by the Spirit through your Bible. This is where those “spiritual words” in verse 13 are found!

##### GBC people are not people of the Book.

##### Many of us do not bring our Bibles to church (Dec. survey, computer Bible).

##### Most don’t attend GBS (big class if 10% come, fellowship v. comparing golf).

### So how can you and I avoid being a wise guy in the world’s eyes? How can we be wise in God’s eyes? Avoid divisions by focusing on true godly wisdom—in a humble way where you are increasingly taught by the Spirit.

**Outline of 1 Corinthians**

**I. (Chs. 1—4) Paul answers Chloe's report of divisions with the absurdity of exalting favorite teachers since their message is Christ crucified and minister simply as Christ's humble servants to convince the church to humble itself.**

A. (1:1-9) Paul's introduction affirms his apostolic authority and thanks God for the Corinthians' giftedness in order to begin his stern epistle on a positive note.

B. (1:10-17) Paul states that Chloe's household has informed him of divisions in the church whereby competing factions have rallied around their favorite teachers: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and "Christ" to let them know this is contrary to what he taught them.

C. (1:18—4:21) Paul states that their divisions stem from misunderstanding the true gospel message and the motives and self-abasement of God's ministers to reveal the remedy for their problem with pride.

1. (1:18—3:4) A misunderstanding of the gospel *message* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to see that the gospel message of Christ crucified is the true wisdom of God, in contrast to the human “wisdom” which caused their divisions.

a. (1:18–2:5) Since the gospel is not human wisdom but Christ crucified, the church shouldn’t boast of competing “versions of wisdom.”

b. (2:6–3:4) Since the gospel is wisdom from the Spirit, the church shouldn’t divide into groups following different leaders.

2. (3:5—4:5) A misunderstanding of the gospel *ministers* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to see that these messengers are only servants of God, not leaders rallying for followers and personal fame.

a. (3:5-17) Gospel messengers are fellow workers with God who will be evaluated based on their works for Him.

b. (3:18–4:5) Gospel messengers are accountable to God ultimately (not to men).

3. (4:6-21) A misunderstanding of their *own pride* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to imitate Paul's self-abasement for the cause of Christ.

**II. (Chs. 5—6) Paul answers the report of disorders in immorality and lawsuits to enable the Corinthian believers to realize that God has given them ability to make wise decisions to exercise church discipline.**

A. (Ch. 5) The church should discipline a man involved in open promiscuity with his own stepmother because his immorality has polluted the entire body to the extent that the church is proud of its "liberality."

B. (6:1-11) Disputing believers should prefer to be wronged without retaliation rather than take fellow Christians to pagan law courts because the Corinthians fail to see their spiritual competence to judge disputes within the church.

C. (6:12-20) The Corinthians should stop committing immorality with prostitutes because fornication is completely at odds with their relationship to the Triune God, who gives the body value.

CIC Rick Griffith

4 February 2007 Message 3 of 24

**How to Be a Wise Guy**

***1 Corinthians 2:6-16***

# Introduction

### How is your WQ?

### The Path to Wisdom: Focus on things going right (1:1-9), Christ crucified (1:10–2:5), and godly wisdom (2:6-16).

### But what does this wisdom look like? Look at the gospel!

# I. The gospel is God’s secret message of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wisdom that the world rejects (2:6-10).

## Believers do speak wisdom—God’s wisdom (6).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God’s wisdom claims… | The wisdom of this age says… |

## Only\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ believers understand God’s wisdom (7-10).

# II. Only believers have God’s wisdom because only they have the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Spirit (2:11-16).

## No one knows what someone else is thinking (11).

## God gave us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth (12-13).

## Unbelievers don’t know God’s wisdom while Christians do (2:14-16).

### A non-Christian considers spiritual truth foolish (14).

### We can make intelligent spiritual decisions since Christ instructs us (15-16).

# Conclusion

### We’ll be united as a church by focusing on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s wisdom (Main Idea).

### What does God’s wisdom look like?

 **Rick Griffith**

 16 September 2012

 *Message 3 of 24 in “Becoming Who We Are” series*

**How to Be a Wise Guy**

***1 Corinthians 2:6-16***

# Introduction

### Corinthian Christians confronted many of the following Greek philosophies:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **Founder and date** | **Development of perspective** | **Reality is…** | **Basic Viewpoint** |
| Pythagorean-ism | Pythagoras of Samos; latter 6th cent. BC | Material and spiritual worlds are antithetical (he was both a philosopher & mathematician!) | Dualistic (what you can’t see) | Influenced Gnostics in their dualism (spiritual = good, material = bad) |
| Platonism | Plato429-380 | Learned the dialectical method (challenge assumptions) from Socrates; ethical goodness in life; spirit is all important | Mental ideas (what you think) | Reality is not in tangible objects but in the mental ideas behind them |
| Cynicism | Antisthenes; Diogenes of Sinope 412-323 | Anti-establishment, simple lifestyle (e.g., Diogenes lived in a bathtub and talked back to Alexander the Great who visited him!) | Asceticism (what you deny) | Virtue consists in living according to nature (don’t let any philosophy influence you) |
| Aristotelianism | Aristotle384-322 | Proof by syllogism; deductive logic as the means for sound reasoning and the standard for measuring truth | Material world (what you can touch) | Reality corresponds to the material world and vice versa |
| EpicureanismActs 17:18 | Epicurus341-271 | Distrusted Plato’s dialectical method; the gods have nothing to do with us and there is no afterlife (“eat, drink, & be merry, for tomorrow we die”) | Physical sensations (what you enjoy) | Happiness is gained by the pursuit of pleasure since this life is all there is |
| StoicismActs 17:18, 28 | Zeno of Citium336-264upper class(Seneca) | Rejected Epicureanism because he felt it fostered atheism and self-indulgence; neither the universe nor man is meaningless; strong ethical teachings/moral maxims | Natural reason (what you reason)Lead to materialism | Cause & effect pervade all so man must adjust himself for tranquillity = Buddhism, Hindu- ism, Confucianism?(Niswonger, 81) |
| Skepticism | Pyrro of Elis365-275 | No-one is good and all are contradictory so just “go with the flow” in life | Notattainable (impossible) | Knowledge is unattainable |
| Eclectics |  | No philosophy has all the answers, so we’ll take the best of each (similar to new age thought or “free thinkers”) | Partly seen by all (what you invent) | Hard to determine or summarize (too varied) |

### How is your WQ?

### The Path to Wisdom: Focus on things going right (1:1-9), Christ crucified (1:10–2:5), and God’s wisdom (2:6-16).

### But what does this wisdom look like? Look at the gospel!

# I. The gospel is God’s secret message of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wisdom that the world rejects (2:6-10).

## Believers do speak wisdom—God’s wisdom (6).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God’s wisdom claims… | The wisdom of this age says… |

## Only\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ believers understand God’s wisdom (7-10).

# II. Only believers have God’s wisdom because only they have the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Spirit (2:11-16).

## No one knows what someone else is thinking (11).

## God gave us His Spirit to teach us spiritual truth (12-13).

## Unbelievers don’t know God’s wisdom while Christians do (2:14-16).

### A non-Christian considers spiritual truth foolish (14).

### We can make intelligent spiritual decisions since Christ instructs us (15-16).

# Conclusion

### We’ll be united as a church by focusing on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s wisdom (Main Idea).

### What does God’s wisdom look like?

Home Group Questions:

1. Read the 2:6-16 aloud. What characteristics of God’s wisdom can you find in this text? How do they contrast with the Greek philosophies taught in Corinth? Which of these Greek ideas exist today? List them in the left column on page 1.
2. Does God try to hide his wisdom today? How do you explain 2:7?
3. What is the relationship between believers having God’s wisdom and having his Spirit since some Christians don’t seem to be very wise but they still have the Spirit (2:12-16)?
4. Where do you need to follow God’s wisdom instead of human wisdom in your life?