

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 2 **1 Corinthians 2**

Searching the Scriptures ***for hidden treasure***

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

Paul begins 1 Corinthians 2 with a continuation of his thought process in 1:18-31, where he contrasts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. According to Paul in God's inspired Word, the wisest man who lives by the wisdom of the world will not find God. It is in the apparent foolishness of the cross that the power of God is revealed and received. Paul begins this chapter by sharing his own personal testimony as to how he approached the Corinthians, leaning not on his intellect and powers of persuasion, but on the power of the Holy Spirit. The theme of the chapter is *reliance on the Spirit*.

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

1. When Paul first came to Corinth, fulfilling his commission from God, what methods might he have used to convince them of the importance of his message?

1:17

2:1

2:4a

- a. Share what this means in simple terms.
2. What was Paul's message? v. 2
 - a. Does this mean that Paul shared nothing but this one thought, with no personal thoughts or words of explanation? What does it mean?
 3. Of what was Paul's message a demonstration? v. 4
 - a. How (explain)?
 - b. Why? v. 5

We remember that Paul is writing this because of the "party spirit" in the Corinthian church. From the start, we see that Paul did nothing to add to or create this problem. He did everything to see to it that they placed their faith correctly—not in the cleverness of man, but in the power of God, who alone brings salvation.

- c. What can happen when a person places their faith and hope in another person rather than on the unchanging God?

Making It Personal...

When Paul preached the gospel, what he was really doing was sharing his testimony. He had been saved from death and hell because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross, and he knew that was the point!

4. When sharing your testimony, do you rely more on your exposition than on the power of God? How can you lean on the Spirit more as you share Christ with others?
 - a. Share your testimony here with *Jesus Christ and Him crucified* being the main emphasis.

Digging Deeper

Paul first came to Corinth on his second missionary journey. After revisiting some areas he had been to on his first journey, the Spirit of the Lord led him to the European Continent for the first time.

- ❖ Trace Paul's journey to Corinth as he traveled through the following cities. If you are able, you may read all of Acts 16-17 to get the entire picture. Look up the following Scriptures and state in a few words the outcome of each visit:

Philippi—Acts 16:19-24

Thessalonica—Acts 17:8-10

Berea—Acts 17:13-14

Athens—Acts 17:32-34

Upon arriving in Corinth, 1 Corinthians 2:3 tells us that Paul was with them "*in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.*" The above verses may give you some understanding as to why that might have been.

Acts 18:1 says, "*After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.*" There the word of the Lord came, "*Do not be afraid, but speak...*" (Acts 18:9).

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Galatians 6:14a. This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Paul's thoughts so far almost seem to indicate that he would use *no* wisdom among the Corinthians, and that the message of Christ and Him crucified was literally a "foolish" message (rather than a profound and divine message which only seemed foolish to the perishing). Of course that was not true. The contrast he makes continues to be between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. Although Paul was careful to use plain words to preach the message of the cross, so that his audience would not be tempted to rely on the wisdom of man, yet he does speak words of wisdom to those who are mature.

1. What kind of a person is Paul referring to when he uses the word *mature*? (Does it have anything to do with age or education?) You may use v. 10 to help you with your answer.
 - a. Use the following verses to define the wisdom Paul speaks to the mature:
 - v. 6 (*negative perspective*)
 - v. 6 (*negative perspective*)
 - v. 7 (*positive perspective*)

Paul speaks of this wisdom of God as a *mystery*. The usual meaning of the word mystery implies *knowledge withheld*, in the scriptural sense it is *truth revealed*. The New Living Translation speaks of the *secret wisdom of God* (v. 7), hidden in former times, still hidden to many.

2. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus' words emphasize what Paul has spoken so far to the Corinthians. To whom does Jesus say God's mysteries would be hidden? To whom would they be revealed?
 - a. How does Mark 10:14-15 amplify this thought?
 - b. Share what you think this means.
3. Who *didn't* understand this mystery? I Corinthians 2:8
 - a. What is our proof of this fact?
 - b. Who do you think Paul was referring to when he spoke of *the rulers of this age*? (Be specific.)

In this passage, we see the *mature* in contrast to the *rulers of this age*, *Paul's message of wisdom* in contrast to the *wisdom of the age*, and that those who are *not mature* are unbelievers, while the *mature* are believers.

4. How is it that the mature (those who are believers) know these things that are hidden to others? v. 10

Making It Personal...

5. Consider the words in verse 9 (as quoted from Isaiah 64:4). Let your mind go with this verse for a moment. Meditate on the magnificence of God's plan for **you** by way of the cross of Christ.
 - a. What is Paul's prayer for **you** in Ephesians 1:18?
 - b. What does Paul's want you to know in Ephesians 1:19?
 - c. Do you get it? Share your thoughts.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

- ❖ What would you consider as the key verse of this passage? Why?

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 2:11-16

In these verses, Paul gives us a picture of two types of people—those with the Holy Spirit and those without the Holy Spirit.

In verse 12, Paul makes the most wonderful pronouncement, he says, "*Now we have received...the Spirit who is from God.*" The New Living Translation puts it this way: "*God has actually given us His Spirit.*"

1. What do the following verses teach you on this note?

Romans 8:9

1 Corinthians 6:19

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Alan Redpath says, “*Every child of God has living within him God the Holy Spirit—not an influence, but the Third Person of the Trinity. Therefore every Christian—no matter how weak and feeble, how poor and helpless, perhaps with a sense of utter inability and frustration—whatever his own personal feeling may be, is indwelt by the Third Person of the Trinity.*”

- a. Personalize these thoughts—make them your own.
2. What do you have that the non-Christian doesn’t have? (See 1 Cor. 2:12.)
 - a. What difference does this make? v. 14
 - b. Share your personal experience with this truth.
 3. What amazing truth does Paul share in verse 16b?
 - a. Share the beautiful way this is presented in John 15:15.

Making It Personal...

You may not understand everything there is to know about God and His incredible plan for mankind, but if you are a Christian you have the capacity to understand things that are hidden to non-Christians. Each time you pick up the Word, ask the Holy Spirit to open it up to you and to reveal to you the *deep things of God*. Each day, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and to lead you into all the truth. Ask the Holy Spirit to use you to speak to others and to open up their minds to things of the Spirit. Remind yourself often that as a Christian you are a *spiritually alive* person—the Holy Spirit dwells in you; and that you have the mind of Christ—God can (and does) speak to and through you!

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Paul has told us that as believers we have the Spirit of God! In His final words to the disciples before the cross, Jesus spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit. Share from these verses the facts Jesus wants you to know (use the NLT if you have it):

John 14:26

John 16:7-8

John 16:13-15

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today’s passage in a couple of sentences.

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research. The first example is done for you.

God ordained (2:7)

How does the dictionary define **ordained**? To destine or predestine; to order or command; arrange or appoint.

Using the following references, note what the Scripture says that God, in His wisdom, has ordained: Romans 8:29-20; Ephesians 1:5, 11; John 15:16; Ephesians 2:10

God predestined believers to: be adopted as sons by Christ, be conformed to the image of His son; bear fruit to glorify His name; walk in the good works He prepared for us beforehand.

- ❖ Write your own definition: God in His wisdom ordained that those of us who believe would live as His sons and daughters, richly enjoying our spiritual inheritance, and bearing fruit through our good works to glorify His name.

Mystery (2:7)

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Deuteronomy 29:29; Colossians 1:26; Mark 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:16 _____

- ❖ Write your own definition: _____

Freely given (2:12)

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Luke 7:40-43; Romans 8:31-32; Revelation 22:17; Isaiah 55:1-2; Matthew 10:8 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Spiritually discerned (2:14)

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? 1 Kings 3:9; Psalm 119:18; 1 John 4:1-6; Hebrews 5:12-14 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Mind of Christ (2:16)

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Hebrews 8:10; Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:5-8; Matthew 11:28-30; Matthew 22:37 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

Understanding and Speaking the Language

Read 1Corinthians 2:1-16 for review.

Look around and you'll realize that the things we see happening in the church at Corinth are also happening in our churches today. Worldly philosophy (man's wisdom) is being mixed with God's revealed Word, causing confusion and even division. Some are attempting to mix political agenda with the truth. We can hear preachers creating their own vocabulary and inserting their own perspective into God's message just as they did in Paul's day, but he urged his readers to return to the heart of the Gospel message, the only message that is capable of dramatically changing lives!

How is it possible to stay focused on "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" without being led astray by man's wisdom? Those who are successful in the Christian life have learned the vocabulary of the Spirit, as they have come to know the Savior. They understand that spiritual matters can only be discerned by the Holy Spirit who indwells us and who unfolds the truth of God to us as we seek Him. We got a taste of that in yesterday's lesson through our word studies. How can we mine the depths of words such as *ordained, mystery, discernment, and mind of Christ?* It takes supernatural digging to uncover the *deep things of God*. We need His Spirit to understand and speak the language.

If you are a professional woman currently employed in the workforce, you have probably had to learn some terminology unique to your particular job description. Others may think it's Greek, but to you it makes sense, it is second nature. If you're a mom with little ones at home, you know how to relate to them in terms they will understand. If you have teenagers, you've discovered a language that evolves as they do! In each instance, it takes patience and a commitment to learn in order to be successful. We all had a starting point, so be patient with *you*. If you're new to Bible study, know that the understanding and the language will come. As you apply the Word of God to your life, it becomes yours. The Spirit will unfold the truth, as you are able to receive it. Then as you find yourself understanding more, ask God to increase your capacity to receive more! He desires that you not only be "full," but overflowing into the lives of others around you.

1. Please take a moment to prayerfully consider and comment on the following:
 - a. What would you say is your greatest struggle with the study of God's Word?
 - b. Has God shown you something you can do to make a change that will help?
 - c. Have you made this a matter of prayer?

2. According to 2 Timothy 2:15-17a, what are you to be diligent about doing?
 - a. Who should you focus on pleasing?
 - b. How will you go about this?
 - c. Who should you be avoiding? What will their message become?

In order to spiritually discern something, we must make it a practice to *scrutinize* and *investigate* through the process of asking, questioning, examining, and searching with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. This will enable us to make a determination that will bring us closer to God. The Bible tells us, in this week's chapter, that we have the mind of Christ, allowing us to understand the mystery of God's plan and to fully and freely receive everything that is given to us in Christ. Understanding God's Word will open up to our minds His ways and His will for our lives, so that we can live it out in practical ways. Doctrine is never dull when it is understood the way the Bible presents it, and the Holy Spirit is the one indispensable requirement that makes it all possible!

Paul's primary goal for the church at Corinth is mentioned in another letter where disunity was also a problem. In Philippians 1:27, he encourages the believers to: "*let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ...that you stand fast in **one spirit**, with **one mind**, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*"

3. What does standing fast in one spirit, with one mind, and striving together for the faith do for the body of Christ?
4. Have you made a determination to live your life for God's approval? Are you diligently working toward this goal?

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week's study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21***

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes