

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: 1 Corinthians

Week of August 18 (Week 3)

1 Corinthians 2: *The Holy Spirit and "Spirituality"*



1 CORINTHIANS 2: SUMMARY

1 Corinthians 2 picks up the topic Paul discussed in the second half of Chapter 1. Paul challenges believers to lean not on their own understanding or the world's wisdom but on the Spirit-led wisdom that transcends human comprehension. This chapter encourages Christians to recognize the mystery and depth of God's wisdom and to strive for spiritual discernment in their walk with Christ.

OBSERVING & APPLYING THE TEXT

Starting with God

1. What do we know about the character and nature of God from 1 Corinthians 2?

Reflection: Take a moment to reflect on the character and nature of God found in Chapter 2. How does the character and nature of God lead you to worship Him?

Continuing the Conversation

2. In Chapter 2, Paul picks up the topic he was discussing in the second half of Chapter 1. What do we understand about the ethos of Corinth in Verses 1 & 2 and how was Paul different in his oratory or presentation of the gospel?

Reflection: Does preaching, teaching, or witnessing sometimes draw more attention to the speaker than to Christ? Some Christian preachers use manipulative devices or methods that are unworthy of an honest proclamation of the cross. (Anthony Thiselton, 52). In presenting the gospel message, Paul's message to us is to "be simple" rather than with "lofty speech or wisdom" (2:1) that Corinthians championed.

3. Why does Paul say: "I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3)?

Reflection: "Why should anyone present the gospel truth with "fear and trembling"? Is this sometimes fear of what others might think? Or would experiencing no fear suggest that the preacher has forgotten how much is at stake? Might experience of "weakness" become occasions for experience of God's resurrection power? (See 2 Cor. 1:9; 11:30; 12:8-10)" (Thiselton, 53). In Verse 3, what Paul saying is this: "Be humble." Humbleness is the posture of the heart that relies on God and not one's ability.

4. According to Verses 4 & 5, how is Paul's speech different compared to the kind of speech and rhetoric celebrated in Corinth—"plausible words of wisdom," and why?

Reflection: "The polished oratory sometimes heard in North American pulpits, where the *sermon itself seems often to be the goal* [emphasis added] of what is said, makes one wonder whether the text has been heard at all. Paul's own point needs a fresh hearing. What he is rejecting is not preaching, not even persuasive preaching; rather, it is the real danger in all preaching – self-reliance" (Gordon Fee, 101-102). Paul's advice to us in presenting the gospel is to "be plain" and simple.

5. In Verses 1 & 3 Paul mentioned a “wisdom” that he did not employ, but in Verse 6 he is talking about a “wisdom.” What “wisdom” is Paul talking about in 1 Cor. 2:6?

Reflection: As believers, we need wisdom to discern whether what we read in books and other print media or hear from the pulpit, radio, or podcasts reflects God’s wisdom. As ministers of the gospel, we impart the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of man that seeks self-glory. The bottom line from Verse 6 and what follows is this: “Be wise.”

6. What do we understand about the “natural person” and the “spiritual person” in Verses 14 & 15?

Reflection: “It has truly been said that “the profane person cannot understand holiness; but the holy person can well understand the depths of evil. But taken out of its context, there are always some who consider themselves full of the Spirit in such a way as to be beyond discipline or the counsel of others” (Fee, 126). Between the “natural person” and the “spiritual person,” Paul’s implication in Verses 14 & 15 for believers is to “be a spiritual person.” However, is there a danger in using the word “spirituality” in an overly vague, free-floating sense rather than in a more direct relation to Christ and the Holy Spirit? (Thiselton, 59).

7. What does the phrase “we have the mind of Christ,” mean in 1 Cor. 2:16?

Reflection: To have the “mind of Christ” means “to have the ability from God to estimate the true value of things. As we reject the ways of the world, we learn over time to see things as God sees them. This isn’t instant or automatic, but since it is God’s desire having a transformed mind is within the reach of every believer” (Ray Pritchard, Preceptaustin.org). Thus, the bottom line from Paul’s words is: “Be Christ minded.”

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

August 19-23, 2024

Read 1 Corinthians 2

Monday: 2:1-2 *“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”* Pray that we may avoid the temptation to critically analyze preaching/gospel presentation through the lens of lofty speech and eloquence. May we appreciate the simplicity of the gospel.

Tuesday: 2:3 *“And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.”* Consider the posture of Paul’s heart and his approach to the ministry of the gospel. May we approach any ministry or job with an attitude of humbleness and the need for God in whatever we do.

Wednesday: 2:6 *“Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.”* Contemplate on the wisdom of God that is revealed to us and thank God for involving us in his wisdom.

Thursday: 2:15 *“The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.”* Think about the “natural persons” you know of and pray for them to become “spiritual persons” and understand and “accept the things of the Spirit of God” (v. 14).

Friday: 2:16 *“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”* But we have the mind of Christ.” To have the “mind of Christ” is to give up our sinful inclinations and putting to death of selfish ambitions, humbling oneself, and giving oneself for others. Pray that our lives may reflect “the mind of Christ” daily.