

Church in Real Life



1 Corinthians 1:16-2:2

¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²²Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

²⁶Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

¹When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ²For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Questions:

What relationships or experiences in your life have shaped your response to and understanding of the symbol of the cross?

How is this symbol understood and/or employed by the culture that we live in? Where is it seen? What does it mean? etc.

What was the meaning of the cross for Paul's contemporaries? There are two particular groups of people that had specific responses to the cross. Who were they, and what was each of their response?

What do you think caused such a strong reaction?

How does the message of the cross challenge these views? (How is it 'wise' and 'powerful' even when it seems not to be at first look)

What connections do you see between Paul's day and our own?

Describe the kinds of people that Paul was writing to in this letter – what do we learn about them from this portion of the text?

How might their social status help them resonate with Paul's message and the cross of Christ?

Can you be affluent, intelligent, and influential and still be a person who lives the message of the cross? Are there different obstacles to overcome for people like this?

What does it mean to "live the message of the cross"?

In his book *Dying to Live*, Clive Calver makes the following statement: "Many of us would like the opportunity to live the life of Jesus, and here we confront the main difficulty – we want to do all the living and we want Jesus to do all the dying. What he really wants for us is to know the reality of dying so that he can come and do the living in our lives." What does that statement make you think or feel?

What are the dangers of a church losing the cross as the central message?

Are there areas of your inner spirit that need to be changed to be it possible for you to live like this?

In what ways does the life of your group resemble the cross of Christ? Are there ways that your group could experience the cross of Christ with greater resolve?