



Frisco First Baptist Church

SPIRITUAL ADULTING: 1 CORINTHIANS DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN EYES

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31 1/18/2026

MAIN POINT

We can only trust and boast in Christ and the work He did on the cross.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Being wise in your own eyes displays a lack of wisdom. Why?

What could be the root sin of the person who is wise in his or her own eyes?

Who is the wisest person you know? What is it about this person's character that contributes to him/her being wise?

The strong Christian is the one who knows his or her weaknesses and need of God's strength in life. The humble person is the one who is aware of his or her pride and need for continual growth. The wise person is the one who is not wise in his or her own sight, but instead knows the infinitely wise Creator. This is how the kingdom of God operates. The Christian walks in humility because we understand that everything we have and all that we are is not of ourselves, but gifts from God. In fact, the Bible is very clear; we can't get to God through human wisdom. We are not believers in Jesus because we are wiser than anyone else. We are Christians by the grace of God alone—this truth is the pathway to wisdom. Those who are wise are those who know the grace of God that has brought them out of darkness and into light.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-21.

What are some ways that the cross could be considered “folly” according to the world’s standards?

Every religion has a message of salvation. Consider the message of Christian salvation. What sets this message apart from every other message of salvation?

Why is it impossible to arrive at belief in Christ’s message through the wisdom of the world?

C.S. Lewis attended a British conference on comparative religions. One particular conversation contained the question, “What is Christianity’s unique contribution to world religion?” Upon hearing the question Lewis piped in, “Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.” Lewis was correct. At its core, Christianity says that humanity can do nothing to save itself. With all our attempts to make ourselves better, to clean ourselves up, and to make the world a better place, we cannot fix the fundamental problem of sin. The message of Christianity is so radical because it tells us that the offended party, God, came to seek and save the very ones who offended Him. God saves single-handedly: this is the message that so confounds the wise. We cannot save ourselves.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-25.

What are some contemporary excuses that people use to reject the message of the cross?

What were your excuses or “demands” before the Holy Spirit worked in your heart?

How has your understanding of the cross changed from before you were a Christian to today?

How does this message keep us from being “wise in our own sight”?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-27.

Paul told the church in Corinth to consider their calling. He said “not many of you” were wise, powerful, or of noble birth; this implies that some of them were of noble birth, though. How does the message of the cross unite both the “few” and the “many” together?

Are there still people today who consider Christianity a message for the foolish and the weak? In what ways are they right? In what ways are they wrong?

Rich or poor, respected or reviled, all must lay down earthly wisdom and enter by way of the cross. How does this truth keep individuals from getting a big head?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:28-31.

The intended effect of God's wisdom is to exclude boasting in ourselves. With that in mind, explain the problem of being "wise in our own sight."

According to verse 30, who is the reason you are in Christ?

What should our response to this message be?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

This week, consider the wisdom of God. How does this shape the way you understand human wisdom?

How can you encourage someone in this group with the wisdom of God?

How does this study affect the way you approach evangelism this week?

PRAYER

Father, help me to know that I have been saved apart from any wisdom of my own. Thank you for the cross of Christ and I pray that your wisdom would shape my thinking this week. Help me see that the pathway to true wisdom is found in you and not me.

COMMENTARY

| 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

1:18-19. The cross divides the human race between those who are perishing, to whom the cross is foolishness (lit "stupidity"), and those who are being saved, to whom the cross is wisdom and power. Paul supported this truth by quoting Isa 29:14, where God warned the

unbelieving leaders of Jerusalem who considered themselves wise. God's judgment will expose all pretensions to human wisdom not anchored in Christ.

1:21. Paul introduced in this verse a key paradox of the gospel. The Greeks, including most Corinthian Christians, valued wisdom. The Greeks embraced philosophy, a word that literally means a love of wisdom. Ironically, God's ways are not accessible through worldly wisdom.

God's wisdom is found in the foolishness of the message preached. God's Son becoming a human and dying on a cross for the sins of humanity sounded foolish to the Greeks. Moreover, the idea of Jesus' resurrection from the dead seemed ridiculous to them (see Acts 17:18,32). The paradox in this verse is that God used "foolish" truth to become the means of salvation for those who believe. This offer from God takes the focus off of human achievement and wisdom. In Christ, God did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves.

1:22. The typical Jewish view in the first-century world was a division of people into two kinds: Jews and Greeks (that is, Gentiles). Paul followed these categories in this verse. His purpose was to illustrate the inadequacy of both systems of thought. The Jewish passion was for signs. Throughout Israelite history, God had provided signs through His messengers who represented Him. During Jesus' ministry, the Jewish leadership demanded signs from Jesus to authenticate His claims.

We have already mentioned the Greek love of philosophy or wisdom. Their culture was highly focused on learning and exploration. They produced advances in such areas as science, mathematics, and architecture.

Again, the paradox was that both these views fell into a kind of idolatry. They could not deliver salvation from sin. Neither could they produce, in the Corinthians' specific situation, a unified church. Both the Greek and Jewish worldviews focused on human achievement as the fountain of truth.

1:23. When Paul preached in the city of Athens, the epicenter of Greek culture, his message to the philosophers there was focused on the inadequacy of idolatry, the coming judgment, and the resurrection of the dead (see Acts 17:29-31). When he left Athens and came to Corinth, however, Paul determined that he would focus on Christ crucified. This new focus seems to have been a careful and intentional shift in emphasis (see 1 Cor. 2:1-2.)

Without question, the gospel makes little sense from a worldly perspective. It was a stumbling block to the Jews because in their thinking the Messiah wasn't supposed to die on a cross. It was foolishness to the Gentiles because it sounded hopelessly weak and illogical.

1:24. Those who are called refers to people who have accepted God's offer of salvation. It is the equivalent of "us who are being saved" in 1:18 and "those who believe" in 1:21.

As noted earlier, at one time in his life Paul divided the world into Jews and Greeks. As a Christian, he used those designations only to emphasize their common need of salvation and the one way by which people in both groups could be saved. Differences among people such as ethnicity and social class are inconsequential compared to the fundamental spiritual need all individuals have.

1:25. God's working through the weak and scandalous illustrates an important point. If we were trying to accomplish something great, we would put forth our best example of power. When God accomplished something great, He did so by using an apparent defeat to bring about the greatest victory. His purpose was to illustrate human inadequacy. His foolishness and weakness transcend our wisdom and strength.

1:26. The foolishness of the gospel is matched by the apparent foolishness of those who accept the gospel. "Your calling" refers to the calling by God to become Christians, and none of the Corinthians brought an impressive resume. The phrase "not many" suggests that some Corinthian church members may have been part of the city's nobility. However, Paul declared that from a human perspective they were not wise, powerful, or of noble birth. They were not saved because they were elite persons.

1:27. God used a consistent strategy. He used the weakness and foolishness of the cross to bring about the offer of salvation. Did He use this strategy to save only the strong and capable? No. Instead God chose the world's foolish things. This term refers to the people who accept the invitation to salvation. From the world's perspective they appear foolish, but not from God's view.

Likewise God chose the world's weak things (the Corinthian Christians). They were weak in that they could not accomplish salvation in their own strength. They were entirely reliant on God. God's purpose was to shame the wise and the strong. In other words, God once again demonstrated His power by using what appeared to be weak. This strategy undermines all human confidence and pride, and that was one of Paul's major aims in the letter.

1:28. God's strategy is fully revealed in this verse. Paul drove home the inadequacy of human effort with three terms: "insignificant" ... "despised" ... "viewed as nothing." We human beings bring nothing to the table except our spiritual bankruptcy. God needs nothing that we have.

The real focus at this point, however, is the implication of our inadequacy in the life of the church. The Corinthians' main problem wasn't a misunderstanding of salvation but rather factions in the church. However, by emphasizing human inadequacy in salvation Paul laid the groundwork for undermining the Corinthians' efforts to form factions among themselves. Paul's reasoning was as follows: How foolish to take a gift we received but didn't deserve and couldn't earn; then begin to rank ourselves in terms of human importance and taste!

Ironically, the Corinthian Christians had begun to think of themselves as something. Paul was no longer aiming at the Greek philosopher who trusted in wisdom or at the Jewish leader who trusted in righteousness. Paul's goal was urging the Corinthian Christians to lay aside their pride-filled disunity and to embrace one another. By their disharmony they were acting like the worldly wise and strong who did not realize their need for the gospel.

1:29. This verse refers to both Christians and non-Christians. If no one can boast before God, then the Corinthian Christians shouldn't boast before one another or claim superiority in some allegiance or gift.

1:30. The gift of salvation came from Him (Christ), not by virtue of human effort. It is by God's work alone that any of us are in Christ Jesus. That Jesus "for us became wisdom from God" means that He is the Source of God's wisdom on our behalf. Paul added three further descriptions, each of which focuses on some aspect of salvation. Righteousness refers to our right standing before God. "Sanctification" refers to our being made holy by the sacrifice of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. "Redemption" refers to our liberation from the bondage and guilt of sin.

1:31. Paul's aim was to show that we can only boast in the Lord. We cannot boast in anything we have been given. If we are to boast, we must boast of the Giver.