



## **Church & Culture, Part 2**

### **How Wise Are You?**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to 1 Corinthians 2. We've started a journey reading through the book of 1 Corinthians together. This is week two. Let me encourage you to pick up a Bible Reading Plan or you can download one from our website which is [mcleanbible.org](http://mcleanbible.org). We're reading through a chapter on Sunday, then through the week we're soaking up that chapter in smaller chunks. If you also want to keep reading the Psalms, you can do that, so there's a guide for that as well.

Between now and the end of May, our goal is to soak in these 16 chapters in the book of 1 Corinthians. We also have Scripture journals available that have the Scripture on one side and a place for notes on the other—either when we're together on Sunday or during your time alone with the Lord. This can be a way to meditate and reflect on 1 Corinthians. Let me encourage you to take advantage of that.

Today we're looking at a chapter that is so appropriate, because it gives a crystal-clear picture of two ways we can all live. There are two ways to live and every single one of us has to make a choice between these two ways. Men, women, singles, husbands, wives, parents, grandparents—you have a choice to make between two ways to live. The choice you make will not only affect your life; it will affect the lives of those closest to you. And I would argue that it will affect people far from you as well. Even more, the choice you make will not just affect your life on earth, but it will affect your life in eternity.

Students around this room, you have the same choice. This is not a choice your parents can make for you. Whether you're in first grade or about to graduate from high school, or anywhere in between, you have a choice to make between two ways to live. God is about to make those options crystal clear in His Word in a way that's going to lead you to make a decision today.

What I want to do is to give you a few minutes to read 1 Corinthians 2 on your own, and as you're reading, I want you to do one thing. You'll need something to write with—hopefully you have a pen or can share one with somebody around you. Anyone can do this—young or old, if this is your first time ever to read something in the Bible or if you read the Bible every day—anybody can do this.

As you read in the next couple minutes, I want you to look for words that repeat. What words do you see over and over and over again? Circle them, then put a square around another repeated word every time you see it. I'm thinking bigger words here, not pronouns or words with one, two or three letters.

Don't be thinking, "I see 'the' over and over again." That's not the point. Think words longer than three letters. I'll give you about three minutes to read the passage and look for repeating words.

Let me pray for us.

God, as we read Your Word right now, we pray that Your Spirit would help us understand, so things will click today in the minds and hearts all across this gathering in new and fresh ways. I pray that Your Spirit would move supernaturally during this time through Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, take a few minutes to read through and make notes on words that repeat over and over again. Go for it.



All right. I know that's not a ton of time, but let's bring this together. It's so great to see people talking together. Just so you know, it's totally legit to look on somebody else's paper in this exercise. There's no cheating here; we're studying the Word of God together. If you see somebody looking over at you, you don't have to turn your shoulder to hide your work.

Let's see what you found. Did you note a word that repeats multiple times, particularly in the first half of this text, in the first seven verses? Wisdom, right? How many times did you see it?

*<sup>1</sup> And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

*<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.*

Wisdom is mentioned six times so far. Then jump down to verse 13 where Paul writes, "*And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.*" So that's seven times that we see the word 'wisdom' in this chapter.

Just as a reminder, Paul was the one who started this church in Corinth. He's not there anymore, but he's writing a letter back to that church. He tells them, "When I came to you, I didn't come in these ways, but in this way," after which he talks a lot about wisdom.

Then in the second half of the chapter, what word do we see over and over and over again? Spirit, right? So let's count those. Early on in the chapter, Paul says:

*<sup>4</sup> [When I came to you,] my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Then we skip down to verse ten:

<sup>10</sup> ...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

<sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

Thirteen times this chapter talks about the spirit—either the Spirit of God, the spirit of a person or spiritual things. It's pretty clear that the theme of this chapter revolves around spiritual wisdom—the wisdom from God's Spirit. There's a clear contrast between the wisdom that comes from God's Spirit, spiritual wisdom and the wisdom that comes from man or woman, natural wisdom.

This is no surprise to us in light of what we read in 1 Corinthians 1. We need to remember these chapter and verse breaks in the Bible were not originally in what Paul was writing. So when he was writing this letter, he wasn't thinking about chapter divisions. These divisions have been added to help us reference different parts of Scripture. So when we get to chapter two, we see a new heading, but Paul didn't write it. He's continuing what we read and hopefully you've had an opportunity to meditate on this last week.

So let's jump back for a minute to 1 Corinthians 1:17 and look for references to wisdom here. Remember, it was there seven times in chapter two; let's keep that count going from back in chapter one.

<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

<sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

<sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

<sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup> And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God.

This makes a total of 20 times Paul talks about wisdom in the first two chapters. We've got to get the point here that God is teaching us about wisdom in His Word. In chapter one, and focusing today specifically on chapter two, there's a clear contrast between foolishness or folly and wisdom—between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God. If you combine this with his emphasis on the spirit in the last half of chapter two, the contrast is between that which is natural, from men and women like us, and that which is spiritual from God.

Let's draw it out this way. Let's make two columns and on one side, let's write "The foolish life." This life is marked by what we'll call "natural wisdom." Then on the other side, let's call this "The wise life." Let's call this "spiritual wisdom." Here we have the contrast, the choice every one of us must make. From students to adults, where you're sitting right now, which way are you going to live? Let's think about your options.

**First, the foolish life is marked by natural wisdom** or the wisdom of men and women in this world. Let's hear what God is saying to us in His Word, starting with what we've already read in chapter one, but then continuing into chapter two. What does the foolish life look like?

Well, the foolish life on one hand feeds pride. Remember how Paul ended chapter one? Verse 29: "*So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*" Verse 31: "*As it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'*" Clearly there is a right boasting and a wrong boasting. In your Bible, you might have a little letter or number around verse 31, where it says, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." Those little letters and numbers that many Bibles have are called cross references and point to other places in the Bible that talk about the same things.

Right here this is specifically a quotation that Paul is taking from Jeremiah 9:23-24. This is actually one of our memory verses from last year:

*Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."*

So we see boasting throughout this passage in Jeremiah. We are to boast—just not in our own wisdom or might or riches. The foolish life says, "Look at my wisdom. Look how strong and powerful I am in this world." The foolish life says, "Look at my money." The foolish life actually lives for these things, boasts in these things, takes pride in these things. Natural wisdom—the wisdom of this world—loves to think about what we have.

We are all prone to focus there, from the student who is consumed with what others think about him or her, to the man or woman who is consumed with how they compare with others at work or on Facebook. They're focused on what they have, how they look, how they dress, what status you attain.

This is the curse of the foolish life—the constant focus on ourselves and what we have, instead of on God and Who He is. This is why Paul says back in 1 Corinthians 2:1, *“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom,”* like he was trying to impress them. That’s the opposite of what he was trying to do—or could do. Verse three, *“I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.”*

Coming back to our columns, the foolish life not only feeds pride, it also depends on human power.

**So secondly, the foolish life—natural wisdom—depends on human power.** What Paul is saying in this chapter is, “I’m not good enough to impress you. When I came to you, I was weak and afraid and trembling.” We talked about this last week. Paul was afraid when he was in Corinth. He was ready to leave until Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid. Stay there.” Paul is saying, “I don’t want to preach in a way that makes you depend on my wisdom or power. It would be utter foolishness to bank your life on the wisdom or power of people—including yourself.” In the process of banking on your own wisdom, you will reject wisdom from God.

**The third characteristic of the foolish life is that it rejects truth from God.** Natural wisdom rejects God’s truth. This is exactly what Paul says. After he starts talking about how the Spirit of God reveals the wisdom of God, look at 1 Corinthians 2:14: *“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.”* He rejects them. *“He is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”*

This means the foolish person is so focused on the wisdom of this world—their pride, their own supposed power—that they have no room to receive truth from God. You say, “Well, I would never say that.” But if you go day by day without opening up God’s Word and soaking it in, isn’t that what you’re saying? It’s the foolish life to suppose that you have it all figured out without God. I see this tendency in every one of our lives.

Students, there is a tendency in you to think that as a teenager, you have it all figured out. You don’t need God to tell you what to do. And that tendency does not go away. It’s in every single one of us. As we grow older, we actually convince ourselves that we know better than God what is best for our lives and reject His truth—or maybe just ignore it. This is foolishness.

It’s interesting that verse 14 says the things of God are “folly to him.” That’s not the first time we see the word folly. That was also used back in chapter one. Look with me back at chapter one, verse 18, where Paul wrote, *“The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing.”* It’s foolishness. He goes on, *“Since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through*

*the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*” The cross, the message of Christ crucified, is folly to Gentiles.

We actually turn this whole thing on its head. The wisdom of the world says, “God’s wisdom is foolish. The cross of Christ is foolishness.”

This leads to the next thing in this column: **The foolish life sees Jesus on the cross as foolishness.** This makes sense when you think about it, because the cross represents truth from God that is a shot to human pride and human power.

Put yourself in the shoes of these people in the first century who are reading this letter. We wear crosses around our necks. We hang crosses in our homes. They did not do that in the first century. That would be like wearing an electric chair around your neck. It’s really weird. Or putting up a picture of a lethal injection table over your dining room table. People aren’t coming over for dinner again after that one. The cross is the most gruesome, torturous, shameful way to kill someone. It was reserved for barbarians and slaves.

This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that the idea of the cross and Christ crucified is “a stumbling block to Jews.” To a Jewish person, anyone who hung on a tree was cursed of God. The idea of the Messiah being crucified was shocking, even blasphemous. That would never happen in Jewish thought.

It was also “folly to the Gentiles.” This word literally means madness. If the Gentiles heard that a Jewish man died on a piece of wood on a nondescript hill in a nondescript part of the world, and his death determined the eternal fate of everyone else in the world, they would think that’s ridiculous. Ladies and gentlemen, if Christ crucified is a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles, it is absurd to Americans in our pride and our power.

Take the nice, successful, well-dressed American man, with a nice job and a big house and a nice car, take the free-thinking American woman who thrives on her independence from everything including God, take them both outside the city to a garbage dump where a naked Man is hanging by nails on a tree, covered in blood. Then tell them, “Your only hope in life is to believe that this Man is God and you are entirely dependent on Him as your Judge, Master, Lord and King.” That man and that woman will roll their eyes. At most, they will feel sorry for this Man in His deranged condition, then will move on with their lives. Or maybe, like many professing Christians in America, they will give lip service to that Man, because it’s the culturally acceptable thing to do, while they continue on with a life that’s focused on themselves.

The natural wisdom of this world sees the cross as folly. Ultimately this natural wisdom and the foolish life is doomed to pass away, which is the exact language God uses in His Word. In 1 Corinthians

2:6 we read, “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.”

Don’t miss the point here. In this age, you can have it all. You can have all the riches, power, wealth and natural wisdom in this world to the point where you’re a ruler in this world. You’re ruler over a company. You’re ruler over a country. You can have it all, but in the end it is doomed to pass away. Please hear this sobering reality: you are going to die. It could be today for any one of us, including myself. It will not matter in that moment how big your house was, how comfortable your life was, what positions you had attained, what people had thought of you, because all those things combined will leave you empty in that moment. Remember the old saying, “There are no U-Hauls behind hearses.” It’s the foolish life, yet it looks so wise according to this world.

Let’s just put it out there. See it. Open your eyes. We live in a world that encourages and exalts pride. Self-esteem is the mantra. Self-worth is the mantra. We have a thousand words that start with “self.” It’s what we’re all about. It’s about what we can do. “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” What can you do? “Look deep within yourself.” We exalt human power and reject truth from God, which is antiquated and offensive. People ask, “You don’t really believe that, do you?” We reject it, or at best we give lip service to it while practically ignoring it.

There’s nothing in this world that is encouraging you to be in this Word and receive this truth. The world sees the cross as folly, as foolishness, but I just want you to open your eyes and see. The world is encouraging all these things, but God is saying to you right now, “It’s all doomed to pass away.”

See the end of the foolish life; open your eyes and see there’s another way to live that’s characterized by spiritual, supernatural, other-worldly wisdom—wisdom that comes from God and not self. This life is available to you. First Corinthians 2 says it’s freely given to all who want it. What does it look like? Instead of feeding pride, spiritual wisdom crucifies pride. And “crucifies” is definitely the right word. Think about it. As he’s making this contrast in 1 Corinthians, why does Paul open chapter two by saying, “I decided to know nothing among you except one thing: Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Nothing? Really? Nothing? It’s the one thing Paul talked about? And the answer is yes, because this summarizes the wise life.

**The wise life dies to self, position and status in this world.** That’s not what we live for. We’ve died to these things. This is the same Paul who says in Galatians 2:20 that not just Christ has been crucified, but “*I have been crucified with Christ... The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” The wise life is an entirely new life in Christ.

**The wise life boasts in one thing: Christ.** Students and adults all across this church, do not boast in nice houses, nice jobs, nice status, nice success in this world. This is rubbish. Boast in Jesus. He's our life. Everything revolves around Him.

Students and adults who say "Christ is my life" are living the wise life which crucifies pride. Instead of depending on human power, the wise life trusts in spiritual power, supernatural power. I love the way Paul talks about this. Back in verse three he said, "When I came to you, I was in weakness and fear and much trembling." We might read the New Testament and have a picture of Paul being an amazing preacher. But listen to the way 2 Corinthians 10:10 talks about Paul: "*His bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.*" We may have a picture in our minds of Paul as some stout dude, but that's not what people who saw him thought. They thought, "The dude is weak and can't preach."

I mean, just ask Eutychus. The poor guy was so bored with one of Paul's sermons that he fell asleep to his death. Remember that story in Acts 20:9? The language is so humorous. It literally says he was lulled to sleep. You've been there, haven't you? You're fighting sleep and finally just give in. That's the whole picture of the language there. He was the first man to ever fall asleep in church, but he's had many successors since then. For all of eternity, he's going to be known as the first guy who ever fell asleep in church. You remember what happened. He falls asleep and falls out of a window to his death. Paul goes down, brings him back to life, then what does Paul do after that? He keeps preaching. Ha! You'd think you'd call it a night when people are dying during your sermons. But not Paul.

All that to say, Paul wasn't the best preacher, but that's the whole point. He said, "I don't want to preach in a way that you trust in me; I want to preach in a way that you trust in God's power. I want your faith not to rest in the wisdom of man but in the power of God." This is a really good word for us. It's good news to know that when we are weak, God is strong.

I don't know who here today feels weak, but if you do, I'm with you. If you have struggles, I'm with you. If you have hurts, I'm with you. If you need help, I'm with you. Heather and I were talking about a parenting issue the other night and said, "We should not be in charge of these humans." Do you ever feel weak as a parent, a spouse, a single, a student? If you don't feel weak, then I would submit that you have a pride problem. If you do feel weak, then I have great news for you. To all who are weak and look to God, He is your strength. There is spiritual power available for you to lean on and live in. That's a wise way to live. It's a wise way to live, experiencing the power, strength, wisdom and help of God Himself. And not just trusting in spiritual power, but instead of rejecting truth, receiving truth from God. This is the wise life.

**Spiritual wisdom receives truth from God.** There's so much we could talk about here, but let me just point you to 1 Corinthians 7:2 where Paul says, "*But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed.*" When you meditate on that passage this week, think about those two words,

*“God decreed.”* What the Bible is saying here is that God has spoken to us. He has decreed messages for us. This Word in front of us is not just information about God—it’s a word from God. And there’s a big difference between those two.

I mentioned Facebook earlier. You can find out a lot about a person by looking at their Facebook page. But if that person messages you on Facebook, that’s different, right? That’s personal. That’s from them to you. All the stuff on their page is about them, but their message is from them to you. What we have in the Bible is not just a bunch of information about God; this is a message from God to you and me.

When you sit down and open this Book this week, you’re not just reading information about God for everyone; you’re reading a message from God to you. That’ll change the way you look at this Book. When we come together on Sundays, there’s a reason I start by saying, “If you have a Bible—and I hope you do...” then we open to a certain place. It’s because we have not come together to hear wisdom from David Platt. That would be a colossal waste of your time. Trust me—I know. No, we’ve come together to hear a word from God. My job is not to come up with that word myself. My job is to take that word from God and speak it to you. Remember, I’m not the chef here; I’m the waiter. My job is not to cook the food; my job is just to get it to the table and get it there hot. That’s my job.

There’s a famous preacher from the past named W.A. Criswell who once said:

When a man goes to church, he often hears a preacher rehash everything he has read in the editorials, the newspapers, the magazines and the TV commentaries. He hears that same stuff over and over again, he yawns, and he goes out to play golf on Sunday. When a man comes to church, actually what he’s saying is this: “Preacher, I know what the TV commentator has to say—I hear him every day. I know what the editorial writer has to say—I read it every day. I know what the magazines have to say—I read them every week. What I want to know is does God have anything to say? If God has anything to say, please tell us what it is.”

That’s what I want to do every week. I just want to tell you what God’s Word to you is. Your faith needs to rest, not on the wisdom of people, but on the power of God. So the wise life prioritizes receiving this truth every Sunday. This isn’t just an afterthought. Wisdom says, “I want to hear from God, week after week after week—and then all week long in between.”

In that, instead of seeing the cross as folly, **the wise life sees the cross as forgiveness**. The wise life doesn’t look at the cross and walk away thinking it’s absurd. The wise life looks at the cross and falls on our faces in awe, because God—in wisdom far greater than ours—has made a way for us to be forgiven of our sins, not by our pride or by His power, but by His mercy alone. And we see the cross as beautiful as the way to be forgiven of our sins forever.

This leads to the last mark of the wise life. It is not doomed to pass away. **The wise life is destined for eternal glory**. This is the exact language from 1 Corinthians 2:7. Right after we hear about

In His wisdom, God has made a way for sinners to be glorified with Him in eternity. This is why verse nine says, *“As it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.’”* The wise life does not live for this world. Set your sights higher. The wise life lives for what God has prepared for those who love Him.

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**Attitudes on Autism Are Changing!**

As I think about these two ways to live, I believe Jake's life is instructive for us. His life was not a picture of human pride or human power. Jake was full of life because he trusted in spiritual power. Jake believed God's truth about him and about the world around him. He knew the cross was a picture of God's forgiveness, so Jake trusted Jesus with his life.

So I ask what about you? If today is your last day, which way are you going to live? Are you going to feed your pride or crucify your pride? Are you going to depend on your power or trust in God's power? Are you going to reject and ignore God's truth, or are you going to receive it and soak it in? Ultimately, are you going to see the cross as folly and give Jesus pity and lip service, or are you going to

see the cross as forgiveness and give Jesus your life? The answer to these questions will determine not just the shape of your life on earth, but the shape of your life in eternity.

Today is the day for some of you to draw the line in the sand and say, “I’m choosing the wise life. I know that it goes totally against the grain of this world, but I know that it will be worth it.”

Will you bow your heads with me? As you bow your heads and close your eyes, I want to ask this question that I asked at the very beginning: if you were to die on the way home today, do you know that you will have eternal life in heaven? If the answer to that question is not a resounding yes in your heart, then I want to invite you to pray to God right now.

Say to God, “I know I am a sinner and have sinned against You, God. I have chosen my ways and my wisdom over Yours. But today I am seeing the cross, not as folly, but as forgiveness for me. Today I want to trust in Jesus to save me from my sins and become Lord of my life. I believe in Him and today I receive eternal life through Him.”

With our heads bowed and eyes closed, if you just prayed that to God, if you just said, “Yes, today I’m choosing to trust in Jesus as my Savior and Lord,” indicating, “Today I am trusting in Jesus to be my life,” just lift up your hand, between you and God. Amen. Amen.

God, I praise You for the work of Your Spirit in drawing people to life right now. I pray that You would give them courage to proclaim eternal life in You, even today, through baptism. And God, for every single one of us, we pray that You would deliver us from foolishness and the folly of this world. Help us trust You, Your power and Your wisdom. Help us walk in Your wisdom and Your ways. Help live crucified lives, receiving and soaking in Your truth and living it out as we look forward to eternal glory. We praise You for Your wisdom and pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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