

## 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18–2:5, “TO THE CHURCH OF GOD”

1<sup>18</sup>For 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. 1<sup>19</sup>For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”<sup>[a]</sup>

2<sup>0</sup>Where 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? 2<sup>1</sup>For 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. 2<sup>2</sup>Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 2<sup>3</sup>but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 2<sup>4</sup>but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 2<sup>5</sup>For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

2<sup>6</sup>Brothers, 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. 2<sup>7</sup>But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 2<sup>8</sup>He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 2<sup>9</sup>so that no one may boast before him. 3<sup>0</sup>It 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. 3<sup>1</sup>Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”<sup>[b]</sup>

2<sup>1</sup>When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2<sup>2</sup>For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3<sup>3</sup>I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4<sup>4</sup>My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5<sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

<sup>[a]</sup> Isaiah 29:14; <sup>[b]</sup> Jeremiah 9:24

### *Discussion Questions* (Choose a manageable number to discuss)

1. Name some individuals who would qualify in our age (1:20) as sources of wisdom.
2. Paul described (1:22) what was valued in the religious thought of his day. What does it take to win public approval in our day?
3. How (1:25) does God’s wisdom and power stack up against the human variety?
4. What (1:19) sets up the intelligentsia of any age for being frustrated by God? (See Jer. 8:9 and Isa. 44:25.)
5. How (1:21, 27–29) has God deliberately chosen to overthrow human learning?
6. Why (1:29, 31) is this God’s deliberate approach?  
Read the full text of the passage (Jer. 9:23–24) from which Paul quotes.
7. What (1:18, 30) is the central focus of God’s wisdom and power?
8. If we don’t sense God’s power unleashed among us, what (2:1–5) might be the reason?
9. Why do you think Paul focused on the source of God’s power before raising several “practical” issues with the church in Corinth?
10. How could we return to the “foolishness” of the cross of Christ (1:30) to redemptively empower our righteousness and holiness?