

## Topic

The wisdom of God

## Theme

The Bible, God's fully inspired and reliable Word, forms the basis of team church's ministry and message.

## Desired learner Response

The learner will use the Spirit's illumination ministry as a motive for dili gently studying God's Word.

M aterials

* Resources1 and 4

Team Playbook

## Scripture Focus

1 Corinthians 2

## Summary

Paul reminded team church that he preached Jesus Christ so they might put their faith in the wisdom of God rather than in him. He then went on to demon­ strate that the wisdom of God, or God's Word, is far superior to the wisdom of man. God's Word is a result of revelation and inspiration. And understanding and applying God's Word is a result of illumination. Consequenlty, God's Word served as Paul's playbook for team church.

#### Outline

1. Paul's Preaching (2:1-8)
   1. Focus: Christ crucified (2:1, 2)
   2. Effect: Faith in God (2:3- 5)
   3. Foundation: Wisdom of God (2:6-8)
2. **Paul's Reception of God's Word (2 :9- 16)**
   1. Revelation of God's Word (2:9 - 11)
   2. Inspiration of God's Word (2:12, 13)
   3. Illumination of God ' s Word (2:14- 16)

#### Memory Verse

*"For who hath known the mind of the Lord,that he may instruct him?*

*but we have the mind of Christ"*

*(1 Corinthians 2:16).*

**17**

# GETTING STARTED

### Ad Techniques and the Gospel

Ask the learners to form seve ral small groups. Distribute two or three newspa­ per, magazine, or web ads to each group. Ask the groups to decide the persuasion techniques behind the ads (e.g., fear, guilt, greed). After several minutes, let each group report its decision.

**ASK:** Why might the ads be effe ctive? (Ql)

**ASK:** Mu st we use adve rtis ing met hods of sorts to get people to buy 111t o

t he gospel? Exp lain. (0 2) *No. The gospelis powerful because it is God's method of shining the light ofGod's truth into a sinne'rs darkened heart.*

Paul understoodthat sharing the gospel unleashes God's power to affect the lost. God's power, not any advertising technique, makes the gospel effective. Peo­ ple will respond to it because God has chosen to work through it. In this lesson, we will see Paul's testimony concerning the power of the gospel and the reliability of God's Word in general.

### Important Letter

Mail carriers brave all kinds of weather to deliver the mail. Through snow, sleet, rain, hail, heat, and cold they carry written messages to millions of address­ ees. The mail must get through- eventhough at times it is only junk mail.

The apostle Paul was not a mail carrier, but he gladly bravedall kinds of adversity to deliver a message to as many people as possible. That message ca me from God, was addresse d to whosoeverwill, and had life-changing power. It was God's reliable Word.

**ASK:** If you were as effe ctive at deliveri ng the ma il as you are at wit ness ing, would you st ill have a job as a mail carrier ?

**ASK:** What might someo ne conclude about the importa nce of t he gospel based on your life?

In this lesson, we willsee Paul's testimony concerning the power of the gospel and the reliability of God's Word. Both shouldmotivate us toshare the gospel faithfully.

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### Paul's Preaching (2:1-8)

* + - 1. **Focus: Christ crucified (2:1, 2)**

Paul's desire to preach Christ shaped his epistle. He drew sharp contrasts between the wisdom of God and Greek wisdom and philosophy. First Corinthians, then, is a manual for dealing not only with church problems, but also with human philosophies and the evil fruit they bear in people's lives.

Paul opened 1 Corinthians 2 by stating that when he visited Corinth for the first time (Acts 18:1- 18), he did not rely on compellingoratory or Greek philosoph­ ical reasoning to affect the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2:1). He did not try to win them to himse lfby impressing them with his ability to share his words of human wisdom. That is what the Greek philosophers did. They gained power by gaining followers. Similarly, bloggers today spout words of human wisdom in hopes of gaining more followers and becoming a more powerful, respected voice in the blogosphere. Paul did not worry about who followed *him;* he cared about who followed *Christ.* So he simply preached *Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (2:2).

* + - 1. **Effect: Faith in God (2:3-5)**

Paul preached *in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling* (2:3). He preached *in weakness* in that he humbly set himself as ide and focused his mes­ sage on Christ. He preached *in fear* and *trembling* because of the seriousness of his responsibility and the seriousness of the message he conveyed. He feared that the Corinthians, who desperately needed the gospel, would reject the message of salvation. Paul was gripped by the fact that the eternal destinies of hundreds of thousands of people were on the line.

**ASK:** What abo ut Corint h would have given Pau l reason to fea r t he Cor int hi­ ans would reject the gospel? (Q3) *Thecity was known for their indulgent life­ styles.They did not often say no to self*

The very fact that Paul was plain-speaking, weak, and fearful made it clear that the Corinthian converts were drawn to Christ by the Spirit and not by the wisdom and charm of the speaker. Clearly, Paul revered God's Word. He did not try to embellish it; he just preached it as it was to people as they were.

Paul understood the seriousness of the gospel message and his need to rely on the HolySpirit to work in the hearts of the lost. Notice that it was the inward *demonstration of the Spirit* (2:4) that Paul considered more powerful than any sign miracle or any word of eloquentwisdom. The same power that Paul had is avail­ able to us today through the HolySpirit whenever we share God's self-authenticat­ ing Word. The Holy Spirit will use His power to draw some unbelievers to faith in Christ through the gospel (cf. 1:24).

**ASK:** Do you t hink a perso n muc h firs t convince a sinne r th at God is t he creator of the world before he can share the gospel with him? Is the gospel powerless to o vercome man's ignorance of God? (Q4) *The gospel is accom­ panied by the power ofGod. We should not sell it short, thinking that the gospel is unable to affect the heart of even an evolutionist or an atheist.*

Paul did not try to amuse the Corinthians with his oratory and human inge­ nuity as they were accustomed to in the secular Greek culture. He wanted to do all he could to stay out of the way of the Spirit-empowered gospel so the Corinthians would have genuine faith in God rather than a meaningless faith in him (2:5).

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 2:5. **ASK:** What might be some character ist ic s of a

preac her who is more concerned about attract ing follo wers t han he is about

affecting hearts? (QS) *He tailors his message to please his listeners. He is careful not tosay anything offensive or controversial. He focuses on how he preaches more than he does on what he preaches.*

**ASK:** Describe a time when you experienced the Spi rit's heart-chang ing work after hearing a message based on God 's Word. (Q6)

Paul viewed himself as a herald. His responsibility was to deliver the gospel plainly so that the audience would understand it and heed it. He did not obscure the message by trying to embellish it. Nor did hedetract from it bydrawing attention to himself.

The tendency today is to alter the gospel to present something that is more palatable and seemingly more relevant to the listeners. For example, some preach­ ers describe the gospel as a *personal journey of finding one's way to God.* Such men leave open what exactly that *way* is. The Bible is very clear that there is only one way to the Father. Paul preached about the Way, Jesus Christ. As a result, many sinners in Corinth put their trust in the Christ for salvation.

We should note that since Paul's simple gospel could win the day in the wicked city of Corinth, we can be assured that its power can triumph anywhere. We should never limit where we share God's Word. Its power can change the vilest sinner.

### Foundation: Wisdom of God (2:6-8)

Paul was not opposed to all wisdom. He is certainly not saying that ministers should not give themselves to gaining true, Biblical wisdom and to understanding theological precision. He is saying that he did not adopt the wisdom of worldly rulers, who are doomed to fail (2:6). But he did *speak wisdom among them that are perfect,* a reference to believers (2:6). Paul's point is that some sinners in Corinth responded to the wisdom of God, the preaching of Christ crucified.

The cross has always been God's solution to sin. Even before God launched

the ages of human history, He in wisdom planned the cross (2:7; cf. Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Rev.13:8). The whole Bible, then, points to Calvary as the place where God provided redemption in Christ. But this wisdom about the cross and salvation is not readily accepted by all who hear it. Some rejected even Paul's preaching. Why? Because the gospel is a mystery to unbelievers until the Spirit works in their hearts to allow them to comprehend and accept the truth.

**READ:**1 Corinthians 2:8. **ASK:** What did Paul write about the world's religious a17d po lit ic al leaders who crucified Christ? (Q7) *They were spiritually ignorant and operated according to the wisdom of this world when they crucified Christ.*

Without the Holy Spirit's intervention, even the world's leaders could not comprehend the wisdom of God in giving His Son on the cross for salvation. In fact, it was the elite of the Jewish and Roman nations that proved this by crucify­ ing *the Lord of glory* (2:8). By executing God's Son, the rulers served as an example of spiritual ignorance. Of course, Paul serves as a shining example of the gospel's power to make wise those who are spiritually blind.

**TESTIMONY:** Share how your view about Christ 's death changed dramatically when the Holy Spir it e nab le d you to unde rst and the gospel. (QB)

### Paul's Reception of God's Word (2:9-16)

Paul went on to describe the process God used to reveal His wisdom to human­ ity so that they might understand Him and their need for salvation. God gave Paul and other writers His Word through revelation and inspiration. He then communi­ cates the truth of His revealed and inspired Word th rough illumination.

### Revelation of God's Word (2:9-11)

*Revelation* is a disclosure of God's tru th that would be otherwiseunknowable. Unbelievers cannot comprehend spiritual truth (2:9). The scientific method cannot uncover it. Higher edu cationcannot fathomit. Nor can the human senses grasp it. In fact, unbelievers do not even consider spiritual truths in their hearts (2:9). Their hearts are darkened and devoid of spiritual understanding.

God used the Holy Spirit to reveal His Word to Paul and others who then recorded God's revealed truth (2:10). The phrases *all things* a nd *deep things* gives the dimensions of God's revelation of truth. The former refe rs to the extent of the revelation. No topic is missing from God's revelation. The latter refers to the depth of God's revelation. No details about God's revelation are missing. God's revelation of His Word s upplies all we need to know about His plans and provisions for us.

God's revealed Word is *complete.*

God used the Holy Spirit to impart His revelation to humanity (2:11). It is the Spirit's part in revealing God's truth that makes God's Word *perfect.* For the Spirit knows God perfectly and can commun icate His truth flawlessly. Paul likened the Spirit's knowledge of God the Father to a person's knowledge of himself. Paul is essentially saying that the Spirit knows God's truth because He is God.

**ASK:** What two words would you use to describe God's revelation of His Word based on 2 Corinthians 2:10 and 11? (Q9) *Perhaps complete and perfec.t*

Re jecting God's revelationleads to the dangerous extreme of rationalism on the one hand, believing only that which one can understand, or mysticism on the other, denying that there is objective truth and that knowledge of spiritual truth can be attained through opening one's minds to *mystical* forces. We need God's infallible guidance to understa nd the spiritual world. We have no basis to assume that it is simply a logicalextension of what we perceive in the natural world. Thus, rationalism and mysticism are unsound. We must bow to the authority of the Bible, God's completeand perfect revelation.

**RESOURCE:** Display the first stat ement of resource 4 concerning God's revealing His Word.

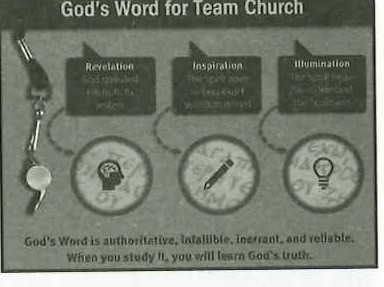
### Inspiration of God's Word (2:12, 13)

The second importantterm concerningGod's communication of His Word is

*inspiration.* Paul specified that the Spirit of God transmitted God's truth to him and other authors of Scripture (the *we* in 2:12). Years earlier,Jesus predicted the

inspiration of New Testament Scripture: *But the Comforter, which* is *the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all*

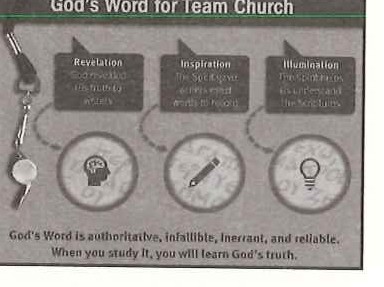
Verse 9 is most likely a loose quotation of Isaiah 64:4. It appears that the verse is meant as a gen­ eral statement about the message of the Old Testa­ ment rather than a direct quote from any particular Old Testament verse.



A focus on subject ive reve­ lation (mysticism) is once again a major emphasis in the culture and the pro­

fessing church. It has made extensive inroads into evangelicalism through dangerous trends such as contemplative prayer and other attempts to listen to God's voiceoutside of His objective revelation in Holy

Scripture.



*things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you* (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit guided each writer of Scripture, including Paul, to select the very words God wanted included in the Bible. The content of Scripture was *not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth* (1 Cor. 2:13). Notice that Paul is talking abo ut specific *words.* This is the doctrine of *verbal* inspiration- that God inspired the exact words that He desiredto place in the text.

The phrase, *compairng spiritual things with spiritual* (2:13), is better rendered *matching spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.* The Holy Spirit did not allow the writers to put any words into the sixty-six books of the Bible that God wanted left out, and He did not allowthe writers to leaveany words out that God wanted in. He guided their exact words that communicated exact spiritual thoughts.

**READ:** 2 Peter 1:21. **ASK:** What is the message of this verse? (Ql O) *The Scrip­ tures are the result of the Holy Spirit moving writers to pen God's wor ds.*

The writers of Scripture had distinct personalities, different vocabulary ranges, and individual writing styles that are reflected in God's Word. But remember that God gave them their personalities and intentionally used those personalities to com­ mun icateexactly what He wanted them to write as the Holy Spirit bore them along. That their personalities are apparent in God's Word is part of God's plan to commu­ nicate His truth.

Liberal theologians regard the Bible as simply a religious book- inspiring in some respects but not inspired, and certainly not reliable. Neo-orthodox theo­ logians believe the Bible is the product of writers who had encounters with God and shared their insights based on those encounters. They claim a Bible passage becomes the Word of God whenever it speaks to the reader. These are false teach­ ings regarding the nature of Scripture. The Bible does not merely become the Word of God; it is the Word of God.

Furthermore, the Bible is not a subjective revelation; it is an objective revela­ tion. Its validity does not depend upon the fee lings of its read ers. Instead of being judged by its readers, it judges its readers .

Biblical theologians are correct in rejecting both the liberal view an d the neo-orthodox view in favor of the Bible's own claim that it is God's Word in its entirety. Second Timothy3:16 states, *All scripture* is *given by inspiration of God.* Literally, this translates, *All scripture* is *God-breathed.*

**ASK:**Why is it important for us to understand the nature of Biblical ins pira­ tion? (Ql 1) *The authority ofGod's Word is based on whether it is inspired.*

The very words of Scripture are inspiredand every part of Scripture is as inspired as the other parts. Second Chronicles is as inspired as the Gospel of John. The term verbal inspiration, as we have seen, means that all the words of Scripture are inspired. Plenary inspiration, on the other hand, means the Bible is inspired in all its parts. Because the whole Bible is the inspired Word of God, it is authorita­ tive, inerran t, infallible, and reliable.

**RESOURCE:** Dis play the second section of resou rce 4 about insp iratio n.

### Illumination of God's Word (2:14-16)

Because the *natural man* is spiritually dead, he does not have the Holy Spirit to guide his understa nding of spiritual truth (2:14). But the believer- he *that* is *spiritual* (2:15)- can learn and understand spiritual truth in God's Word. The word *judgeth* (2:15) refe rs to the spiritualperson's ability to draw correct conclusions about spiritual things recorded in God's Word.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 2:14, 15. **ASK:** How would you respond to a believer who says he doesn't read the Bib le b ecause he can't understand it? (Ql 2) *That he needs to commit to studying God's Word because the Holy Spirit is w ith him to illuminate theScriptures and guide his understandi ng.*

The unregenerate *one* (2:15) lacks the Spirit's presence in his life and therefore cannot rightly judge a spiritual person regarding spiritualthings. So when an unregenerate perso n concludes a spiritualperson is a fool, he is doingso from a position of ignorance. He is the one playing the fool.

**ASK:** Should we be offended when an unregenerate person calls us fools for our beliefs? How should we respond to such a judgment? (Ql 3) *We should not be offended when we are called fools for our beliefs. Instead, we should continue to share the gospel with our accusers, realizing that thegospel is the only catalyst powerful enough to change their hearts.*

Paul's question in verse 16 reiterates the fact that the unregenerate person does not know the *mind of the Lord* and therefore cannot pass jud gment on the Lord. He lacksthe Spirit to help him see God's truth. By contrast, the believer has the *mind of Christ* (2:16). The HolySpirit gives the believer the ability to under­

s tand spiritual things so accurately that his under standing aligns with Christ's understanding of truth. That amazing truth should drive us to study God's Word diligently. As we study, our prayer should be, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law* (Ps. 119:18).

**RESOURCE:** Display the third section of resource 4 about illumination and the final st atement at the bottom of the reso urc e.

God's Word for Team Church

# MAKING IT PERSONAL

### A Reason to Study

**ASK:** How does learning about the Holy Spirit 's illuminating ministry in the life a believer affect your desire to study God's Word? (Ql 4)

**ASK:** What will you do to give the Holy Spirit more opportunities to illumi­ nate the truth in God's Word? (Q l 5)

Studying God's Word requ ires a measure of time and discipline. Most likely you won't profit from devotional *soundbites.*

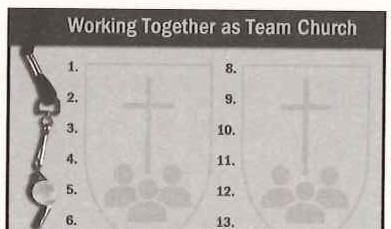
### Sharing God's Word

**ASK:** How have you shared God's Word with an unbeliever recently? (Ql 6)

**ASK:** What are some ways you could use Scripture in witnessing to the un­ saved? (Ql 7) *Memorize Scripture, give* a *person* a *Bible or* a *tract, or direct them to* a *message on your church website.*

**ASK:** With whom will you share the gospel this week? (Ql 8)

You do not need to rely on your own eloquence when sharing the gospel. Speak simply and plainly, allowing the supernatural power of the gospel to convict and bring understanding. Of utmost importance is the gospel, which God will ultimately bless-not your rhetorical excellence.

You should rejoice to know that God's Word is a powerful tool that can change the heart of even the most hardened sinner.

### Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Make use of the Spirit's illumination ministry.

7. Encourage your learners to memorize 1 Corinthians 2:16. Give them an oppor­ tunity to quote the verse in class next week.