

1 CORINTHIANS

discussion guide

OVERVIEW FOR PART 1:

Join us as we walk through the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. We'll see the many cultural similarities between the pacific northwest and ancient Greece, as well as be challenged in how we are designed to live out the gospel through the local church.

In the first mini-series we will look to the first four chapters, where Paul deconstructs the counterfeit places we find meaning and significance, and makes his case for why Christ is the greatest person for us to look to for our status and hope for the future.

PART 1: WEEK THREE The Foolish Gospel

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

We are all prone to be more deeply shaped by our culture than by the truths of God's Story. The Corinthian Church was deeply embedded in a culture that valued power and wisdom. The only problem is that the cross of Jesus Christ was seen as foolish and weak. How could you believe in a Jewish man who claimed to be Israel's Messiah when instead of conquering Rome he was crucified on a Roman cross? Besides, any good Jew knew that dying on a tree was a sign that you were cursed. So, the cross of Jesus Christ was a scandal to Jews. To the Greeks the cross was foolishness. They lived in a context full of polished orators known for making wise rhetorical arguments, drawing crowds and amassing students. However, Jesus didn't even make an argument when he was falsely accused. He looked like a fool and was treated like a criminal. And to the Romans death on the cross was a publicly humility display of defeat and weakness. Why would anyone see the cross as a symbol of their faith? Caught up by the worldly narrative, the Corinthians looked for power and wisdom in worldly forms. Paul knew they needed to a renewed view of the cross and how it truly

is the wisdom and power of God to save. Paul also knew that the reason they were wrongly related to God, self and one another was because they had a distorted view of the cross and how it truly is the wisdom of God and the power of God. If they could recapture a clear view of the cross, they would in turn see that what looks like God's foolishness is higher than man's wisdom and God's supposedly weakness is stronger than man's power.

Man's wisdom did not lead him to Jesus, but away to self. God in his wisdom saw fit to see that happen so that we would realize our intellect cannot save us. Religious performance could not save us either. Only what appears to be the foolishness and weakness of God at the cross can save. Yes, Jesus was cursed on the cross, however he took on our curse for our sin so that we might be free from condemnation. Yes, Jesus did not open his mouth to defend himself that he could cry out for our defense before God. Yes, Jesus became weak to the point of death so that he could defeat sin, Satan and death in the grave and rise again victoriously over them on our behalf setting us free for their power. The cross of Jesus is the wisdom and power of God on display to save us. And when we see this and believe it, we will not boast about our wisdom or power or performance. We will only be able to boast in Jesus.

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

1. What does Paul want you to know about God and his wisdom and power displayed in the cross?
2. How is the cross a picture of the wisdom and power of God?
3. How does the cross display the foolishness and weakness of humanity?
4. Who were we apart from Jesus and who are we now by faith in Jesus?
5. How should that affect how we respond to God and treat one another?