

# Church Problems: We Forget the Goodness of the Gospel

## September 15, 2024

### Series Overview

The "Church Problems" series focuses on the first six chapters of 1 Corinthians, addressing issues within the Corinthian church, which was influenced by its wealthy, philosophical, and morally corrupt environment. The church, made up of diverse members, allowed differences and personal grievances to create division and chaos. Paul wrote to correct these problems and guide the church to function as a united family in faith. Today, similar divisions can occur within our own churches, where conflicts and bitterness can disrupt unity. The goal is to work through these issues and come together in the gospel and faith.

### Sermon Key Passage - 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

#### Sermon Highlights

God's way of saving the world through the cross seems foolish to human thinking, yet it's the ultimate display of His power and wisdom.

*The Gospel is Simple.* The "word of the cross" isn't about cleverness but is the declaration that Jesus died for our sins, was raised to life, and offers salvation to all who believe. Paul preached this simple message through the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not just a story but a call to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23-24). The simplicity of this message seems foolish to the world, but it is the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18-19).

*The Gospel is Foolish.* From a human perspective, no one would have thought of saving the world through the crucifixion of a humble servant. Jews expected a powerful, earthly king, and the Greeks sought deep wisdom. But this is how God confounds the wisdom of the world: He uses what appears weak and foolish to reveal His power (1 Corinthians 1:20-25). The world's wisdom can't bring people to God—only the "foolishness" of the Gospel can save.

*The Gospel is Powerful.* The Gospel doesn't just rescue us from the penalty of sin, but it also saves us from the power of sin and guarantees our future salvation. God uses the weak and the foolish of this world to shame the strong and wise. In Christ, we find true wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). The power of the Gospel is transformative—it offers peace and emotional rescue and guarantees physical resurrection. It is only by God's power, not human effort, that we are saved.

*The Gospel Demands a Response.* The Gospel calls for a response of faith. Anyone can believe and be saved. It's not about being wise, mighty, or noble by worldly standards. It's about humbling ourselves and accepting the free gift of grace through Jesus. This levels the playing field: no one can boast before God. We are all saved by the same grace, which unites us as believers (Ephesians 2:4-5).

The Gospel may seem foolish to the world, but to those who are called, it is the power and wisdom of God. As we live out the Gospel, we boast only in the Lord, recognizing that we are saved by His grace and power alone.



**LEADER TIP:** Remind your group about Identify Baptism on Sunday, September 22. Encourage them to make plans to attend together and celebrate life change as a group. For details specific to your campus, visit <https://pinelake.org/baptism/identify/>.

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### GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

**The Simplicity of the Gospel** *Read Isaiah 55:8-9 and John 3:16*

- The Gospel is described as simple but powerful. Why do you think the simplicity of the Gospel can be hard for some people to accept? What makes it so powerful despite its simplicity?
- How would you respond if someone asked, "What is the Gospel?" Do you feel confident in your ability to explain it clearly to someone else?

*LEADER TIP: This is a great opportunity to review the Jesus-Centered Life Salvation Drawing with your group. It provides a clear and simple way to explain the Gospel, which can be impactful for both the group members and those they engage with throughout the week. The drawing and explanation are at the end of this guide.*

**Foolishness vs. Power** *Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Isaiah 29:13-14, and Proverbs 14:12*

- When you think about the message of the cross in your own life, how has it shifted from something that may have once seemed confusing or foolish to something that now holds deep meaning?
- How does relying on God rather than the world's wisdom influence your daily decisions and relationships? Can you think of a situation where you had to choose between the two?

**God's Strength in Weakness** *Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*

- Think about a time when you felt inadequate or weak. How did God use that situation to display His power or teach you something valuable?
- What are some areas in your life where you feel strong or capable? How might God be asking you to surrender those areas to Him, trusting that His strength is made perfect in weakness?

**Boasting in the Lord** *Read 1 Corinthians 1:29-31 and Jeremiah 9:23-24*

- In a culture that values self-promotion and personal achievement, how can you practically "boast in the Lord" while maintaining healthy relationships? What does it look like in everyday conversations?
- How does truly understanding that your identity, righteousness, and value come from God impact your sense of self-worth? What would change in your life if you fully embraced this truth?

*LEADER TIP: Encourage your group to write down their next step. This practice helps clarify their thoughts and increases the chance of follow-through.*

### NEXT STEPS AND PRAYER

Based on your group dynamics, ask one of the following sets of questions:

- How do you need to respond to the Gospel today? Is it time to surrender your life to Christ, take the step of baptism, or make a change so your life more clearly reflects the truth of the Gospel?
- Where have you been relying on your strength or wisdom instead of trusting in God's power? This week, commit to surrendering that area to God in prayer, asking Him to show His strength through your weakness. As you do this, find a way to 'boast in the Lord' by sharing with someone how God is working in that situation.

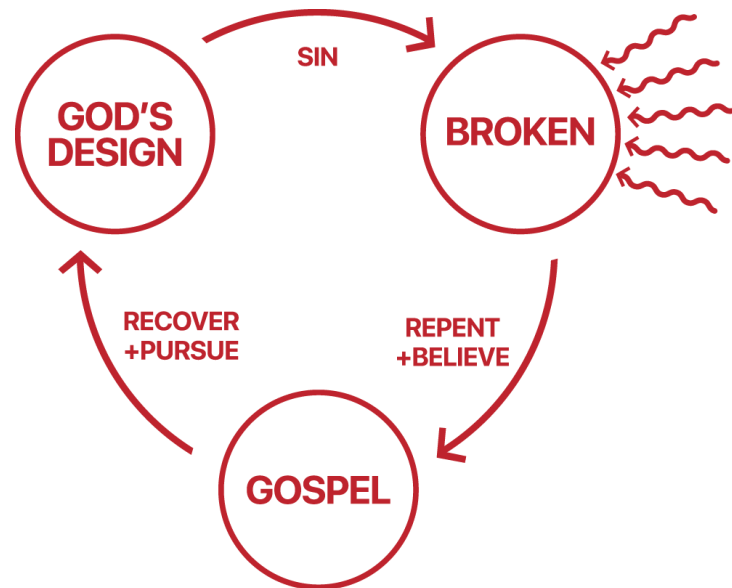
Pair up members with someone of the same gender. Encourage them to share with their partner the action steps they plan to take this week based on what they've learned. Then, have each person pray for their partner, asking God to give them the strength and determination to follow through with these commitments.

# Jesus-Centered Life: Salvation

## God's Design

The Bible begins with the story of God creating the world. Adam and Eve were the first people to live in God's paradise on Earth, a garden called Eden. There, they had the unique opportunity to experience life on Earth exactly as God designed it. Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve lived in a state of perfection because God's presence was with them unhindered. Read Genesis 1:31.

God has a design for how your life is meant to work. He has a design for your identity, relationships, family, work, purpose, etc. Because God is good, loving, and righteous, His design for you is the best possible life. This design is spelled out in the Bible and modeled in the person of Jesus.



## Sin

If God designed this amazing way for you to live, why aren't you experiencing it? Just as God's good design originated in the Garden of Eden, so did the problem. Satan crept into the garden as a snake with a plan to deceive, and Eve listened to his smooth talk and was duped into eating the fruit God had commanded them not to eat. Adam followed suit, and the rest is history. From that moment, sin entered the world, and God's perfect design for mankind was shattered. Read Genesis 3:1-7.

When Adam and Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit, they sinned. Sin is the word the Bible uses to describe how we have missed the mark God called us to. And it's not just that Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Every single person has chosen to walk away from God's design. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all decide to do what we want instead of what God wants, and because of this, we lose that perfectly designed life He created for us.

## Brokenness

What is the result of your sin? What happens when you walk away from God's design? It leads to brokenness. Life as it was meant to be is broken, not functioning according to God's plan. But you aren't just broken. It's worse than that. Romans 6:23 tells us that the "wages of sin is death." Because you have walked away from following God's ways, you now deserve death—spiritual death in this life but also an eternity of death separated from God. Our attempts to heal our brokenness only lead us further from God's design. Read James 4:4.

## The Gospel

But there is wonderful news in the midst of brokenness! God is unwilling to leave you in your sin. Instead, He sent His Son, Jesus, to restore you to God's design by forgiving all your sins. Rather than trying harder to make things right, all that God requires of you now is to **repent** of your sin (change your mind and your life's direction) and **believe** that what Jesus did on the cross is real for you. Only through faith in Jesus can you have freedom from sin, confidence in salvation, and the guarantee of a changed life. Read John 3:16, John 14:6, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9-11.

This is the message of the Gospel: the good news that Jesus has come to bring you back to God so that His design may be fulfilled in your life. And now, having put your trust in Jesus, you can fully desire God as you should (the effects of sin no longer have power over you!). You can now **recover** the design broken because of sin and **pursue** God with all your heart. Read Matthew 6:33, John 15:4, Romans 1:16-17, Romans 12:1-2.



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