

*God's Wisdom in an Age of Confusion*  
**1 Corinthians 2:1-16**  
*Knowing God by Loving Jesus*

**Introduction**

Good morning! Welcome to EBC, please open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians...

During our early years in Kansas, Suzanne and I led a Bible study for our graduating High School seniors. The goal of our Bible study was to prepare them for the challenges they would encounter in college concerning their faith and walk with Jesus. We covered topics like dating, relationship with your parents, finding community, and basic apologetics to the questions they would receive about their faith. After one session in which I was explaining the basic evidences of God's existence and the truthfulness of the Bible, one student asked, "If knowing God is as clear as you say it is, how come not everyone believes this?"

Her words stopped me in my tracks, and my mind immediately went to the chapter we are going to cover today in 1 Cor. 2; and I said, "Because unless the Holy Spirit brings the revelation of God in Christ to the human mind, then everything I am saying will be to them as foolishness." It was a humbling moment!

Apologetics, study, learning, debates, all have their place and are important. But as we will see, unless the Holy Spirit works, we cannot of our own accord, actually come to know God. We know God only as God chooses to reveal Himself to us – otherwise, we live in spiritual darkness and blindness.

However, the good news is this: God wants to be known and has chosen a way for us to know Him, but knowledge of God comes to us in a very unexpected mode: a crucified and risen Messiah.

So, Paul will tell us that knowledge of God is possible, but we have to be willing to become "foolish" and receive God's revelation as He's given it: and that is Christ.

The Good News is that you don't have to be a scholar, scientist, or even be an expert in the bible (though that helps of course!). All you have to be is willing to submit yourself to this Jesus, the crucified Savior.

I hope this will encourage you today to greater dependence upon the Spirit as our source of power and strength to witness to Jesus in our day...

Let's pray...

**Background to Corinth: Review**

Paul comes to Corinth, a beautiful yet corrupt city, to bring the good news of Jesus. Here is what we have found so far:

Paul's goal: *fellowship with Jesus is the goal (salvation, eternal life)*

Paul's problem: *due to the Corinthians sense of cultural pride and misplaced priorities (human wisdom, strength, and beauty) they are questioning Paul's ministry/message while competing with one other over who is more "spiritual".*

Paul's approach to the problem: *show the folly of human wisdom by comparing it with God's wisdom in the "foolishness" of the cross (Christ crucified).*

For Paul, the spiritual danger the Corinthians find themselves in is emptying the cross of Christ of its power by boasting in human wisdom, strength, beauty.

## **Exposition of 1 Corinthians 2:1-16**

*How is God known?: Christ crucified*

1 Cor. 2:1-5

Now, notice something here. Paul is not saying he didn't try to communicate clearly; or with reasoned or sound arguments; or with thought, study, meditation, and his overall best efforts. He gave us all in preaching! We know from the book of Acts that Paul was brilliant in arguing, knowing the key philosophers of his own day and sometimes even being willing to quote from them. But note what he says: my focus was not on trying to impress you with my own wisdom, eloquence, or what-not. I didn't try to compete with these other philosophers. Instead, Paul says, I focused my attention on one central, key theme: Christ and Him crucified.

*I did so, Paul says, so that your faith wouldn't be tied in to how great my presentation was, but rather to how God has revealed Himself to the world through the most unimaginable way – a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks – a crucified Savior.*

*Who can know God?: Those who love Him*

1 Cor. 2:6-9

The wisdom Paul speaks is not for those who live by the wisdom of the age, the rulers of this age, all of which is coming to nothing; instead, Paul's wisdom is grounded in the wider plans of God which He has had throughout all eternity. Now, the quote Paul gives is not something found directly in the OT. The closest is probably Isa. 64:4. However, it was likely a compilation from other Jewish sources. But Paul using the introductory statement "it is written" assures us that we can take it as Holy Scripture, meaning, that no one can comprehend what God has planned for us in the future, for those who love Him.

That's the key: it's not the skeptical, the wise, the powerful, but the ones desperate enough for Him to risk loving Him.

*What does it take to know God?: The Spirit*

1 Cor. 2:6:10-12

Here Paul affirms that it's only by the power of the Spirit that God's mind and plans are revealed to us. So, Paul is a conduit – an important conduit! – for God is pleased to reveal Himself, His plans, His glory through human messengers; so it isn't as if Paul is saying that his ministry and preaching are worthless – far from it, they are essential, for it is through the foolishness of preaching that God has chosen to reveal His truth! Note the end of verse 12: these are the things that are "freely" or "graciously" revealed by God. So, it's not as if God is holding anything back, but He is disclosing Himself in a very specific way.

*The "mind of Christ": the pathway to God*

1 Cor. 2:13-16

Paul says that the one who is natural, not spiritual, cannot understand the wisdom of God revealed in the gospel. That is why your best arguments, on their own, don't always convince people.

Paul concludes by telling us that the "spiritual one" is able to discern the things of God, despite the foolishness of how the world might see it. In other words, Paul says you don't need the world's approval or permission or standard to know the things of God.

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Paul then quotes again from his favorite prophet Isaiah (40:13). Who has known the mind of God? The answer: no one!

*Now, the pathway to this wisdom, to God's thoughts, is by the way of the "foolishness" and simplicity of Jesus. And unless God opens our eyes to that foolishness and simplicity, we simply will not and cannot receive it.*

But then he says: "but you have the mind of Christ".

In other words, as a follower of Jesus, indwelt by the Spirit, you have been given the supernatural capacity to know and discern God's thoughts and God's perspective on life, salvation, holiness, priorities, everything. Everything we need to live a life hope, purity, and joy, and anticipation for what is to come – has been revealed and given to us freely, by His grace.

What an amazing gift!

Again, here are both the challenge and the joy of Paul's teaching. It's only by God's Spirit – you can't make it happen; but God delights in giving the Spirit when Jesus is the focus, so it can and will happen as we trust, depend, and pray in Jesus's name and share His good news with others.

**Main Idea:**

*God makes Himself known to the world through the "foolishness" and "simplicity" of the cross of Christ. Those who desire to "know Him" can only do so by relying upon the Spirit, whose aim is to draw people into a saving union (fellowship!) with Christ.*

**Application: Knowing God means loving, trusting, and obeying the Lord Jesus**

For Paul, the pathway to knowing God is loving, trusting, and obeying Jesus. You cannot know Him in any other way; this is why the philosophers and rulers of the age could not know Him or understand Him; it's why they crucified Him. If the heart is not opened by the Spirit, then all is vain. However, here is the good news: God wants to be known, and He has chosen a specific means by which knowledge of Him can be produced – it's by acknowledging the Son.

I want to read a parallel passage for you, one that I believe likely shaped Paul's thinking in this regard.

John 14:15-24