

The Blessed Mess: Paul's First Letter to the Church at Corinth

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The Upside-Down Power of the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5)

1. A "foolish" *message* exposes the world's wisdom (1:18-25)

2. Lowly *members* humble the proud (1:26-31)

3. Weak *ministry* displays God's power (2:1-5)

For Further Thought and Discussion:

Getting Started:

1. What was helpful to you in this week's sermon? What didn't you understand?

Going Deeper:

2. Why did the gospel sound like “*foolishness*” (1:18) to both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 22-23)? Why would God choose to give the world a “*foolish*” message of salvation (see 1:20-21). How does God’s decision fulfill the words of Isaiah 29:14? In Isaiah, how does God destroy (or nullify) the wisdom of Israel’s leaders (see Isaiah 29-30)? How does this illustrate Paul’s point in 1:18-25?
3. What kind of people does God call to himself (1:26; see also Deuteronomy 7:7-8; James 2:5)? What is God’s purpose in calling such people to salvation (vv. 27-29)? How does Jeremiah 9:23-24 (see v. 31) illustrate Paul’s point?
4. Paul says he did not preach with “*plausible words of wisdom*” (2:4; see also 2:1). What *isn’t* Paul saying (compare 2 Corinthians 5:11)? What did Paul avoid doing when preaching the gospel? What was his purpose in this (see 1 Corinthians 2:5)?
5. Paul says that he preached the gospel in Corinth, “*in weakness and in fear and much trembling*” (2:3). Read Acts 18:1-17. Why might Paul have been intimidated by the culture of Corinth? How does this serve as an encouragement to us?

Application:

6. Paul says that in the eyes of the world, the “*word of the cross*” is a foolish message (1:18-25), delivered in a foolish way (2:1-5), that creates a foolish looking people (2:1-5). Why did the Corinthians need to hear this? What was at the root of their divisions with one another (see 1:17)?
7. In his talk, Jeff mentioned three barriers to personal evangelism; (1) “*the message is too offensive,*” (2) “*I don’t feel qualified to share it,*” and (3) “*I’m too scared to say anything.*” How does this passage change our perspective on these barriers? Which of these barriers do you struggle with most? How is this passage an encouragement to you?
8. Think of one person in your life who doesn’t yet believe in Jesus. Spend time praying that God would give you a clear opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with this person.