

August 16th, 2020



Session 2

2:1 – 3:23

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we see the Corinthians trying to live a double life with one foot in the world and one foot in the Christian life. Their immaturity only caused division among them. But Paul proposed a different way of living—one filled with the risk of looking foolish, leaving behind cultural norms, and putting the needs of others before self.

Adapting to cultural norms can bring a sense of comfort and normalcy. We straddle the line of living in the world and living for Christ because we're too busy being worried about the issues of life. But God is our source of comfort and we don't have to worry.

This week, think about this question: In what areas of my life am I running to something for comfort or distraction? How can I begin to resist running to cultural norms and take the risk of running to Jesus?

1. Spiritual Wisdom

One of the petitions Paul makes in this section of the letter is that the Corinthians understand their need for spiritual wisdom.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

Paul's back to contrasting the wisdom of the world with God's wisdom just like he did in chapter 1. But this time he's putting a magnifying lens up to the wisdom of God so we can see what it means to have God's wisdom through the Spirit in us.

How do these verses explain the nature of godly wisdom? Why does Paul say that it's impossible to understand the Spirit's wisdom if you don't have the Spirit?

Many times, we find ourselves doing what's right in our own eyes—making decisions based on what seems right or what the culture says is normal. But as believers, we need spiritual wisdom to follow God with our lives.

What consequences have you witnessed or experienced by following the world's wisdom?

Take a look at verses 10-13. Paul highlights several things the Spirit does for us. He gives us access to the mind of God. He helps us speak with the wisdom of God. But most importantly, he is *with* us.

Whether you feel alone in a crowd or are having the best day ever, God is with you. When you lose your job or buy a house, he's there. You're never alone. **In what ways can having God's wisdom benefit us in the midst of hard circumstances?**

Read verses 14-16 again. One advantage of being indwelt with the Spirit is that we can now discern spiritual truth in a way that the "natural person" or unbeliever cannot.

What are some examples of things you do or values you hold because of your relationship with Jesus that seem odd to unbelievers? Have you ever been criticized for those actions of beliefs? If so, how did you respond?

As we look forward to the coming week, let's consider ways we can follow God's wisdom and obey the Spirit's leadership in our lives. **What could it look like for you to follow the Spirit this week?**

2. Isaiah 64:4

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4 to make a point about God, his wisdom, and humanity.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:8-10. Then read Isaiah 64:1-4.

What does Isaiah 64:1-4 say about God? What does it say about humankind?

These verses are full of images that speak to God's power. Mountains quake. Nations tremble. The prophet Isaiah is pleading with God to act on behalf of Israel in a powerful way, like he's done in the past. Paul, in using this reference, reminds us that this same powerful God still acts for those who wait for him.

What difference does the truth that God is powerful and acts on your behalf make in your life today?

What does Isaiah 64:4 show us about the importance of depending on God?

We see from Isaiah 64:4 that God is eternal and that there has never been—nor will there be—any God like him. It takes much more than our natural minds to understand our supernatural God. But through his Spirit, we can begin to understand the spiritual things of God and see the plan and purpose that he's prepared for each one of us.

How has God revealed more of himself to you over your time following him?

As you look back, how have you seen the plans that he's had for you unfold? When have life circumstances seemed confusing? Looking back, in what ways do now you see his presence through it all?

Take some time to thank God for all the blessings he's brought into your life.

3. Apollos

As Paul discusses the role of being a servant of God, he talks about a brother in Christ named Apollos.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 and 3:1-9.

Looking through these passages, what is your impression of the relationship between Apollos and the Corinthians?

Apollos was an evangelist and church leader from Alexandria in Egypt—the second largest city in the Roman Empire—which was quite cosmopolitan. We first hear about Apollos in Acts 18.

Read Acts 18:24-28.

How is Apollos described in verses 24-25?

Not only was Apollos a great teacher, but he was also willing to be taught by others.

What did Priscilla and Aquila teach Apollos?

The verses suggest that Apollos was familiar with John the Baptist's call to repentance, but not the finished work of Jesus on the cross, the full gospel message.

What did Apollos do once he got to Achaia?

God uses powerful teachers and preachers to advance his kingdom and help others hear the good news. But even though Apollos was a great teacher with much influence, Paul needed the Corinthians to understand that he and Apollos were only servants of God—they weren't worthy of special admiration or glory.

Now re-read 1 Corinthians 3:5.

There's nothing in these passages to imply that either Apollos or Paul were looking for attention or had impure motives. But it's worth self-reflecting to see if we've adopted a similar attitude to the Corinthians. Are we using the gifts God's given us for personal attention? Are we propping up human leaders over God? Spend some time today examining your motives.

4. The Temple

The temple was a grand structure built by Solomon (see 1 Kings 6) that served God and the people of Israel in many different ways. It was the place to bring your sin offerings, where the priests would make sacrifices, and it housed the ark of the

covenant, which represented God's presence. The ark was a symbol of God's presence inside of the temple structure—in the past, Israelites couldn't enter the most holy place where the ark was, or where his presence was. But now that we have been saved and bought by Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells within us—our fleshly temple—just as God's presence dwelled in the temple made of stone.

Read 1 Kings 9:1-9.

What made Solomon's temple so special? How does the purpose of the temple show God's care for his people? What does it show you about his standard for sin?

Knowing that the ark of the covenant was in the temple was important for the Israelites because it reminded them that God was with them. **How does God's presence in 1 Kings 9 compare to God's presence today?**

In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul explains that we as believers are God's temple and the Spirit of God lives in us. As the body of Christ, we all make up Christ's church and should glorify God by relying on his Spirit that lives in all of us. **How does knowing about the temple impact your view of the church? How much more important is loving and serving one another knowing that Paul calls us the "temple" of God?**

Solomon's temple was stationary, so God's presence had to be sought by coming to a single place. But the church makes God's presence known everywhere we are and everywhere we go. **In what way does this truth impact your understanding of the role of the church?**

If we as the church are the temple of the Lord, and his Spirit is within us—how important is it to be a good example to those around us? In what ways can unbelievers see the presence of God as the body of Christ submits to the Spirit?

Sometimes we can feel discouraged, wondering what our purpose is and how to best display the love of Christ. But that's why we need each other as fellow members of Christ's church. We work together for the common goal of spreading his love and displaying the power of his Spirit. **According to what you've learned about the**

church as God's temple, what would you say our purpose is as Christians? What can we do to obey the Spirit as a church this week?

The temple was an important aspect of the lives of Old Testament Israel. It represented the house of God and the ark inside represented his presence. We should be in awe of the impact God makes on the world through us because the Holy Spirit dwells within us.