

1 Corinthians 1:28-25: Is It Foolish to Follow Jesus?

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1 Corinthians / 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

Introduction

- <https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/investigations/murder-suspect-mistakenly-released-from-cuyahoga-county-jail-because-of-a-typo>
- A huge mistake - We're human. Even when we try to do the right thing, we sometimes mess it up.
- But, an even greater problem than our mistakes - we are outright sinful ([Romans 3:23](#)). We need a Savior. In God's goodness, He has sent a Savior, Jesus.
- Many of us have embraced Jesus as our Savior, but was it the right decision to give your life of Jesus?
- After all, the demands of the Christian faith are high - [Luke 9:23](#) - take up your cross and follow Jesus. Jesus asks for your life. That's demanding.
- Further, you live in a world that is increasingly hostile to people to follow Jesus. Is it wise to give your life to a Savior that you'll be ridiculed for? It is wise to live for Jesus knowing that the world will call you anti-intellectual, close-minded, bigoted, homophobic, misogynistic, oppressive, and superstitious.
- Following Jesus could cost you your reputation, your career, your relationships, or even your life. Is it worth it, or is it foolish to follow Jesus?

- Undoubtedly, a question first century believers wrestled with, especially in Corinth. In a culture that lived for anything but Jesus, Paul encouraged the church at Corinth to keep their eyes on Jesus. For Paul, the wisest way to live was a life with Christ.
- Three truths from this passage to help you answer the question, “Is it foolish to follow Jesus?”

You are a fool if you try to be wise apart from Jesus.

- vs. 1-17 - Paul calling the church to be unified - not around a personality, but around the person of Jesus Christ.
- vs. 17 - Power NOT in eloquent speech but in the message of the Gospel. vs. 18-31 - Paul begins to talk about the Gospel.
- vs. 18 - It’s like Paul takes an aside to settle in the minds of members of the church at Corinth what was really wise, and it wasn’t the “Wise guys” that were so popular in Corinth.
- Truth: those who claim wisdom apart from God do not understand the power of the Gospel. For the sophists, the message of the Gospel was foolish. But, for the church at Corinth, the Gospel is a display of the power of God that saves lives.
- *There are many who think they are too wise or smart for the Gospel.* For many, the Gospel is ridiculous and foolish.
- vs. 19 - Paul quotes [Isaiah 29:14](#). People have always thought that they know better than God and that they can be wise apart from God. (Think tower of Babel.) People have always been self-sufficient and arrogant. However, Isaiah prophesied of a day that God would reveal just how ignorant the world really is and how wise He is.

- vs. 20 - Where are all the smart people? Where are the philosophers? Where are debaters of the age? What answers do they really have? In Corinth, people prized the pursuit of wisdom. The sophists spoke eloquently, and people fervently listened to their words of wisdom. But, how wise were they? Did all of their wisdom actually lead them to know God?
- vs. 21 - It's not man's pursuit of trying to figure life out that leads man to real answers, real hope, or real knowledge. Instead, God gives the real answer, real hope, and real knowledge through the Gospel - a message that seems foolish to a lost and dying world.
- In Paul's day, the message of the cross seemed ridiculous. To Jews, a stumbling block. They wanted a sign from God that God would restore their country. The sign they longed for was a Messiah who would defeat Rome and restore the nation of Israel to power. A crucified Messiah? How could they believe that? That God would send His Messiah to die? That's not victorious! The cross a stumbling block to Jews.
- To Greeks - the cross absolute nonsense. It makes no sense. That God would come in the flesh and die? That's not what gods do.
- BUT... to those who are called - the called are the ones who are saved. You are a follower of Jesus because God called you to faith. He opened your eyes by His Spirit and showed you the truth. You didn't wake up one day and say, "the Gospel makes sense." No... In the power of the Spirit, God did a work in you to bring you to the truth and save you.
- vs. 25 - This plan of God that seems foolish and weak to an unbelieving world, is actually wiser than human wisdom and stronger than human strength.
- Is it foolish to follow Jesus? It's foolish not to because there is no salvation apart from Jesus. Paul's message is clear:

- **Philosophical wisdom will not save you.** We put much emphasis on education and learning. Nothing wrong with that. But, has all the education and learning in the world been able to answer simple questions like, “what is good?” Or, “What is right?” Or, “What is purposeful?” If anything, the philosophies that we are taught in today’s culture lead us away from what is good, right, and purposeful. Many have yet to settle that God is good, and His Word is right, and living for Him is purposeful.
- **Earthly success will not save you.** Jews were after earthly success - a kingdom where everyone who know they were powerful. You live in a culture that tells you it is wise to pursue worldly success, but to what end?
- **Biblical knowledge will not save you.** The Jews had that. They knew a Messiah was coming based on their Scripture, but they missed Messiah. You can know a lot of the Bible and not be saved because Jesus saves, not your knowledge of the Bible.

You are wise if you embrace what the world calls foolish.

- vs. 26 - Paul to church: “Look around. How many of you are wise? How many of you are powerful? How many of you come from the right family?” The kind of people that made of the church at Corinth were not what the world would consider elites in society, but instead regular, ordinary people.
- In this room, how many of us would consider ourselves the wisest people? Powerful? Elite? Most of us would consider ourselves regular, ordinary people. That’s the point. God has saved regular, ordinary people like us. God has entrusted to Gospel to ordinary people, and He has given the greatest mission in the world to ordinary people. The mission to make disciples - the mission to teach and model the things of

God to your children. The mission to make a difference in the world by proclaiming a message that seems foolish in the eyes of the world.

- vs. 27-30 - God has chosen people like us to shame the wise, shame the strong, and bring to nothing what is viewed as something. One day, everyone will see that it's foolish to reject Jesus, and it's wise to embrace Jesus. On the day that Christ returns, the whole world will know that we, the church, were the wise ones (vs. 28). We might not have all the advanced degrees. We might not be the most influential people in the world or the most powerful. BUT, we know the ONE who is all-powerful - the ONE who is the very wisdom of God for us - and our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption is found in Him, not this world. When you think of what God has done for you, how can you not boast in Him? (vs. 31)
- It is not foolish to follow Jesus. It's wise to embrace the ONE that the world calls foolish.
- **Don't be ashamed of being ordinary.** We look at our lives and compare it to others... "I'm not as successful as..." Or, "I'm not as educated as..." Or, "I'm not as wealthy and powerful as..." We end up envying fools. Talk about ridiculous!
- **If you know Jesus, nothing about your life is ordinary.** The world might ridicule you because of your faith, and you might not have everything this world offers. However, you have a changed life and a relationship with the God of all creation. There is nothing ordinary about you. God has done an extraordinary work in you. Think about the many testimonies in this room. Because of Jesus, some of you no longer struggle with addiction. Because of Jesus, some of you have been set free from sexual sin. Because of Jesus, some of you have seen God restore your marriages. Because of Jesus, some of you have stepped out in faith and gone on mission trips, given generously of your finances, entered ministry, shared the Gospel, etc. God has changed

you - He's given you a different perspective of life. You are not ordinary. God is at work in you accomplishing His purpose.

- It is foolish to follow Jesus? No - it is wise to embrace Him and see Him change your life.

You are wise if your life is consumed with the mission of Jesus.

- 2:1 - When Paul came to Corinth, he didn't come like one of the sophists of the day. He didn't come with eloquence or brilliance.
- 2:2 - Paul didn't spend his time giving elaborate speeches in an attempt to prove that he knew his stuff. Instead, in Corinth, and everywhere else Paul went, he preached the simple Gospel message and left the results in God's hands.
- 2:3 - Paul didn't come to Corinth as an impressive man, but instead as a weak man. He probably looked sickly after being severely persecuted on several occasions. He came with fear and trembling. Paul was an amazing missionary, but he was human. I'm sure each town he entered, he entered with a bit of fear. Would his message be accepted or would he be run out of town?
- 2:4-5 - Paul was not a rhetorician who had been trained by the Greeks to deliver public speeches. He was a messenger (herald) called by God to simply tell the good news. The power was not in the messenger (Paul) but in the message itself (the Gospel).
- **Today, know the power of the cross.** It doesn't matter what else you know if you don't know the power of the cross. If you've never experienced the power of the cross to change your life, turn from your sins, and believe that Jesus died and rose again for you.
- **This week, talk about the power of the cross.** Our lives are consumed with the mission of God because we know the power of the cross. Do

your everyday conversations reveal that you believe in the power of the cross? Do your everyday conversations reveal that you believe that the cross is the solution for humanity? Or do your conversations reveal that you think hope is found somewhere else?

- Is it foolish to follow Jesus? Does Paul sound like someone who was a fool? No... Paul found truth, and that truth changed everything about him. This world might have its labels for us, and this world may call us fools, but it will never be foolish to follow the One who came to this earth to rescue us from sin and death to give us the gift of life.