

Lake Cities Community Church
October 10, 2010
Pastor Craig Schill
Series: 1 Corinthians

Division Part II
“Wise Guys (and Gals)”
1 Corinthians 2:6 – 3:4

Tammy and Trevor had lunch with Nate and Heather Hales last Tuesday, up in Norman Oklahoma. Nate is doing well in his Law School program, and we miss them both and Audrey very much. But Tammy and Trevor were not there just to see the Hales, but to visit OU. Trevor is graduating from High School in May, and we have had several people recommend this school to us, so they went on a campus visit.

In fact our lives are consumed right now with several more college visits in the works, SAT tests and applications. And once we get Trevor off to College, Hayden will be going the following year. Too SOON! It seems just like yesterday they were born. Time goes by so fast.

But the sad statistic is that in many cases the students that parents send off with tears and prayers *never graduate*. Last month, The Texas Commission on Higher Education came out with a report of graduation rates in Texas and the news is not good. “The six-year graduation rate for Texas’ institutions of higher education is about 56 percent. Without Texas A&M and the University of Texas, that rate drops to about 50 percent. Some colleges have graduation rates as low as 15, 20, and 25 percent.” - Texas Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes, 9/14/2010.

All those dreams unfulfilled. All that excitement and anticipation ending in disappointment. Why?? Why do so many start and so few finish? Well, the report said that for most students, they are *simply not prepared for the transition* from high school to College. Some are not ready academically. Others are not ready socially or emotionally to be away from home. And so some drop out because of homesickness, others fall into the party and alcohol scene, and many - even those who had good grades in high school - cannot handle the academic stress.

And that problem is the same one we have in the church. Many people respond to the gospel message but then struggle with the transition from being students of the world, to being students of Christ. They begin with much excitement and anticipation but then.... USA Today reported: “Seven in 10 Protestants ages 18 to 30 — both evangelical and mainline — who went to church regularly in high school said they quit attending by age 23.” (USA Today, LifeWay Poll, 8-6-07). College graduation rates are about 50%. Christian graduation rates are at 30%.

The letter of 1 Corinthians is about a church of Christian people who are struggling in their faith. And if they don't figure it out soon, they are in danger of giving up, and dropping out. Paul, in every section of this letter, like a spiritual guidance counselor, is helping, imploring them, motivating them to make the transition to spiritual maturity before it is too late.

Our passage today is 1 Corinthians 2:6 – 3:4. Turn first to chapter 3:1. Listen to Paul re-articulate the problem with the transition: **1Cor. 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 1Cor. 3:2 I gave you**

milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, [1 Cor. 3:3](#) for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

They are far more immature than they should have been after four years in the faith. Just like a College student who still acts like she is in high school. Here is where they should have been: [1Cor. 1:10](#) Now I exhort you, brethren... that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. Instead of being unified, they are divided.

Review of First Reason for Division

The first reason for their problem of division (that we saw last week) was that they had *misunderstood the message of Christianity*, which is the cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross we are all equal. At the cross we have unity – but if we take up other messages and become enamored with celebrities and cool philosophies we end up in division. The immature Corinthians tried to use their old worldly wisdom and apply it to the cross. But (again Paul taught us last week) God works through weakness. And so the cross MUST be the center of everything -- [1Cor. 2:5](#) so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

A misunderstanding of the message was the first problem. The second problem was a **misunderstanding of wisdom**. They were fascinated with wisdom – but had entirely the wrong idea of what **true wisdom** was. Understanding the nature true wisdom is Paul's objective in our passage today.

True Wisdom Comes from God

Paul begins his argument in verse six, chapter two. Regarding wisdom Paul says: 1 Cor. 2:6 Yet (“Yet” is a transition, a contrast. ‘Everything I have said about wisdom so far has been negative, yet...’) **we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.** Remember that the City of Corinth is in Greece. In Paul’s day they would have been kicking around the ideas of Socrates (5th c. B.C.) , Plato (5th c. B.C.), Aristotle (4th c. BC), Pythagoras (5th . B.C.). Some of the brightest minds in recorded history are from Greece! Paul is again saying, “I am going to tell you now about wisdom – but not that kind of wisdom.”

Two more clarification before we move on. **Mature** probably mean simply **believers**. Paul speaks wisdom to Christians. Even though the Corinthians are immature in the spiritual journey – they are here *included* in the mature. Mature (*telios*) can refer to being *complete* in Christ. Also related, **wisdom**, in this context is not referring to the Book of Proverbs type of wisdom – helpful advice for living life. Wisdom is a continuing reference to God’s wisdom, expressed through the message of **the cross**.

Paul goes on about this true wisdom. 1Cor. 2:7 **but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 1 Cor. 2:8** **the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;**

God’s true wisdom is a mystery – hidden and not understood by those in the world. Jesus said: Matt. 13:13 **“Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.** Paul’s point here is not that an unbeliever can’t understand the gospel message – the sentences and paragraphs

of biblical text – but responding to the gospel, the power of the gospel and the blessings of the gospel are *not available by applying natural means*. They can fully access Plato or Aristotle through diligent study and reason. But true wisdom takes something more. What?

True Wisdom Accessible Through the Spirit ONLY

How do we get to true wisdom then? Paul tells us, verse ten: [1Cor. 2:10](#) For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. [1Cor. 2:11](#) For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. [1Cor. 2:12](#) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

The Spirit is the key. If you have the Spirit – you have access to understand the wisdom of God. The Spirit is the only *place* to go to understand God’s wisdom. In other words God’s wisdom is like *Rito’s Gren Chili Burritos*. Ritos what they call a “hole in the wall” restaurant in central Phoenix sells the very best, highest quality, most tasty and addicting green chili burrito in the world. When we moved to Dallas, Tammy started to search for something equivalent. We tried El Phoenix, On the Border, Sols and others places. And - Yes they had something *called* a green chili burrito, but one bite was all it took too see that their similarities ended there. In all of this world, there is only one source for the best green chili burrito. From time to time Tammy leaves me with the kids and tells me she is going back to Phoenix to visit her parents. But really I know she is at least partly motivated to go again to - 907 N 14TH street to enjoy a world’s best green chili burrito. You think I am making this up?

A woman named Sally wrote: I've been eating Ritos since I was 17. I have since lived in NYC & Atlanta and nothing anywhere compares to their burros It is the best! George says: The green chili burro enchilada style with a side of beans was the best I had ever tasted. It was good enough to dream about. I no longer live in Arizona, and here in L.A. nothing compares. Maxine offered: The red sauce burrito is very good but the green sauce is like you died and went to heaven. It is the best I have ever tasted, and I am 65 years old.

Paul is saying to us – you can talk about Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – but they are not the source of true wisdom. Pythagoras had a great theorem, but it doesn't have the power to change the world. You can look for God's wisdom in Islam, and they will offer you something by the same name, but one taste will show it to be inferior quality. You can ask about God's wisdom at the Buddhist temple, and they will fill your order; but ultimately it will disappoint you.

The only true wisdom – the only life-transforming, sin destroying, forgiveness granting, hope creating, peace producing, heaven helping wisdom comes from God Himself accessed by the Spirit – the wisdom of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The world boasts that its wisdom can be found in many places. God is in you, and in me, and in the tree and in all religions. But they is like expecting to get a Ritos burrito at a Taco bell. Paul has taught us today that true wisdom comes only from **one place** God, and is accessibly only through the Spirit of God: **1Cor. 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

Application

Now here is the kicker as we move toward application: You ready? **The Corinthians had the Spirit of God!!** They had access to God's true wisdom, but they were choosing to continue to follow the wisdom of the world. And that was leading to division, jealousy and strife. All those things we talked about at the beginning of the message.

And so this is our challenge: Most of us in this room have the Spirit of God. Are we availing ourselves to this wisdom? Or are we going back to what the world offers? If we settle for an inferior burrito we will end up with spiritual indigestion – strife, jealousy and division.

Cathy Ashby, associate superintendent for instruction for the Abilene Independent School District, said, "I have parents tell me they want their child to have an easy and fun senior year. That's exactly the opposite of what they need. They need that high level of rigor for when they enter that first year of college."

The temptation is for us is that the wisdom of the world promises an easy and fun senior year. God's wisdom demands a high level of patience grace, self-control and love. But here is the irony. While the world's wisdom promises the easy life, it delivers just the opposite. And while God's wisdom appears at first glance to be demanding and restrictive – it is actually easy to follow and freeing.

Let me end by making a specific appeal to our teenagers. If you are a teenager, raise your hand. If the statistics are right - of our roughly 20 teens in this church only six will be still attending church ten years from now. I pray that is not true! But I am a realist, and chances are good that some of our kids will not be walking with the Lord in 10 years.

And so I am telling you teenagers today that if you don't want that to be you, you must begin to think and act differently than the world. If you don't want to be a spiritual drop-out, you must make the transition to mature Christianity. Here are some things to think about.

The world's wisdom will tell you to identify yourself with your clothes, or music or friends. God says your identity is in Jesus Christ. The world says to spend on your money on yourself, because you deserve it. God says to give generously to help others and then he will bless you with even more! Worldly wisdom says you can be anything you want to be – it is up to you. God's wisdom says, you must be what He wants you to be, and that is what will bring you happiness. The world's wisdom says to indulge your desires as long as you love the other person. God's wisdom says to stay pure *because* you love the other person. The world's wisdom says divide and separate when you are offended. God's wisdom says be humble and forgive.

The bottom line, teenagers, is that you will not last long in the Christian faith, if you - like the Corinthians - seek to have a foot in both worlds. It just will not work. Seek God's wisdom, by the Spirit's power – and that will guarantee graduation, spiritual rewards and acceptance from God.