

Session 2



Wisdom from God

THE POINT

*Believers have the wisdom of God
because we have the Spirit of God.*

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Wi-Fi and the internet have made it easy for us to be smart. Long gone are the days when a dinner conversation included a question—such as “Where exactly is Belize?” or “What was that guy’s name in that movie?”—and we’d just stare at each other in ignorance. Now our smart-phones can give us an answer quicker than we can set down the dessert fork.

But that doesn’t mean we’re any wiser. Despite our heads being full of information, we still come to our own conclusions based on what we see and experience. For example, one in four Americans believe the sun revolves around the earth.¹ One survey found that 34 percent of Millennials believe the earth is flat.² And why not? We can see long distances because the earth is flat, and we can see the sun moving in the sky! [Sigh]

Even the smartest people can miss true wisdom. Thankfully, we’re not left alone to determine what is true and what is wise. God has given His followers the greatest source of wisdom—His Holy Spirit.

We don’t have to guess; the Spirit guides us in what truly matters.

QUESTION 1:

How has smart technology improved your life?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:20-25

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? ²¹ For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached. ²² For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. ²⁴ Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, ²⁵ because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

In our previous session, we saw that one of the essentials for the Christian life is fellowship with other believers. That's not optional, because as we each come into a relationship with Jesus Christ through the gospel, we come into a relationship with one another. It's the gospel that binds us together. That gospel makes no sense to those outside the faith, which brings us to another essential for the Christian life: wisdom. We need the wisdom of God to understand and follow the things of God.

To be clear, anyone can know things *about* God. We call this general revelation. Paul wrote, "his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made" (Rom. 1:20). But to truly *know* God—to know Him intimately—requires a wisdom that goes beyond the way we humans think. Sadly, the wisdom we need—God's wisdom—is considered foolish to the world, yet it is that "foolish message" that saves us.

Paul gave two examples of the way the world views the gospel.

- **The Greeks.** The Roman Empire remained heavily influenced by the Greek culture, a culture that took pride in their many philosophers. When Paul entered Athens, the hotbed of Grecian influence and culture, he encountered those who "spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new" (Acts 17:21). They loved to philosophize! However, they saw no room in their "rational" thinking for a man on a Roman cross. In their minds, a god who couldn't overcome being crucified like a common criminal wasn't much of a god. This was "foolishness to the Gentiles."
- **The Jews.** During His earthly ministry, the Jews repeatedly asked Jesus for a sign that He was the Messiah (Matt. 12:38; John 2:18; 6:30). Never mind the many miracles Jesus performed; the Jews wanted Him to act on demand. Wouldn't the real Messiah do what-

ever they asked to prove Himself? Instead, what Jesus did was get Himself killed on a tree, and the law was clear: “Anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deut. 21:23). This fact was “a stumbling block to the Jews.”

This type of thinking hasn’t changed. The Muslims revere Jesus, considering Him one of Allah’s prophets alongside Abraham, Moses, and David, but they draw the line at the cross. It’s inconceivable to them that Allah would allow one of his beloved prophets to be humiliated and executed. Hindus might accept Jesus as just another one of their countless gods, but the need for Him to be on a cross is totally unnecessary in their minds. In the same way, many Eastern religions and philosophies place the emphasis on us. Beliefs like “god is within all of us” and “we are all a part of god” place the emphasis on us; it’s up to us to embrace the divine within us.

The gospel of Christ is rejected because it doesn’t fall in line with the way people think. This is the same rationale behind why so many

people embrace conspiracies. We easily accept something as true (or false) because it falls in line with what we already believe. We have little discernment or filter beyond our own opinions.

No amount of human wisdom would dream up the idea that “God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). The message of the cross doesn’t flatter our pride or align with human logic—but that’s what makes it divine. As foolish as that sounds to others, though, it is that very “foolishness” that saves us! No amount of human wisdom can conquer our sin problem, yet the cross of Christ does just that! “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor. 1:25).

QUESTION 2:

How does our culture elevate man’s wisdom over God’s truth?

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-11

⁹ But as it is written, What no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived—God has prepared these things for those who love him. ¹⁰ Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, since the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person’s thoughts except his spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

After showing the foolishness of the world’s wisdom, Paul reminded the Corinthians they weren’t any better. (See 1 Cor. 1:26-31.) They had no wisdom of their own, but God used their very weakness to shame the strong. Their wisdom

(and ours) is in Christ. Paul included himself in this, noting he didn’t come to them “with brilliance of speech or wisdom” (2:1).

Gentile wisdom, Jewish wisdom, Paul’s wisdom, or our own wisdom—it doesn’t matter, because

none of these sources for wisdom measure up. “What no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived—God has prepared these things for those who love him.” Paul was indirectly quoting Isaiah 64:4, which was written at a time when the disobedient Jews had been exiled to Babylon. They cried out to God, and God would deliver them in His time. Such a personal, rescuing God was foreign to the ancient world, and Isaiah acknowledged that “no eye has seen any God except you who acts on behalf of the one who waits for him” (Isa. 64:4). And God delivered and brought the people home in an unimaginable way. As God said through Jeremiah, “‘For I know the plans I have for you’—this is the Lord’s declaration—‘plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope’” (Jer. 29:11).

Paul embraced the truth of this Old Testament word and applied it to contemporary life. This time, the unimaginable event wasn’t deliverance from exile but deliverance from sin and *into* life! What has God prepared for those who love Him? Forgiveness. A new life. Eternal hope

and joy—all through the cross and resurrection of Christ. Who woulda thunk it? No one!

If salvation and the way God has worked is beyond our imagination or way of thinking, how do we know these things? “God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit.” Alongside the Father and Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is God. As part of the Trinity, He’s not less than the Father or the Son. He is all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-knowing (omniscient) even as They are. They are One.

There’s nothing of God that is hidden from the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” He is our only reliable source for understanding the things of God.

QUESTION 3:

What are some obstacles we face in knowing the mind of God?

1 CORINTHIANS 2:12-16

¹² Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. ¹³ We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. ¹⁴ But the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. ¹⁵ The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, and yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. ¹⁶ For who has known the Lord’s mind, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Engage

ANY OLD EXCUSE WILL DO

People really don't need a valid reason for choosing worldly ways rather than Godly wisdom. Put check marks beside excuses you've heard people offer for rejecting God and His Word. Then answer the question.

_____ I just don't feel like it.

_____ It's not reasonable.

_____ No one else does that.

_____ The Bible was just made up.

_____ I don't have time for that.

_____ It's not relevant anymore.

Choose one of these excuses and share how you might respond using the wisdom of God's Word:

Before we dig further into the wonderful truth—that the Holy Spirit imparts to us the wisdom of God—we need to clarify a word Paul used repeatedly in these verses: “spiritual.” This is a popular word in our culture, but it’s hard to know what people mean when they use it. Even irreligious people will say, “I am not religious, but I am deeply spiritual.” It has become a vague term, and people toss it around with whatever meaning they want to give it. At best, that which is spiritual could be viewed as that which is beyond the physical, but Paul’s intent is far more specific. In this context, Paul used “spiritual” to refer to those things connected to God’s Holy Spirit. Nothing less than that.

By this definition, only those who have the Holy Spirit can rightly understand spiritual matters. This doesn’t mean unbelievers have no understanding or can’t show wisdom in some areas of life. Even when it comes to the gospel, unbelievers aren’t totally clueless. Paul acknowledged that unbelievers *can* embrace certain truths (Rom. 2:14-16). Without the Holy Spirit’s involvement, though, no one can truly embrace the gospel and biblical teaching. Our understanding of spiritual truth is severely limited.

So how do we get the Holy Spirit into our lives? When we come to Christ in repentance and faith, He saves us, and in that moment, He gives us His Spirit. “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9). A relationship with Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit go hand in hand!

That doesn’t mean, though, that the wisdom and spiritual discernment that come from the Holy Spirit are automatically at work and evident in our lives. Paul was addressing believers who had the Holy Spirit, but in just a few verses

(1 Cor. 3:1ff), he would address the fact that they were not acting like spiritual people. This underscores for me that, while I have the Holy Spirit in my life, I need to evaluate whether or not I am *dependent* on the Spirit.

Paul told the believers in Ephesus, “And don’t get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Remember, they were already believers, so he wasn’t telling them (or us) that we need to receive the Holy Spirit. The command is for us to allow the indwelling Spirit to take control and fill every corner of our lives. We won’t truly seek God’s wisdom unless we first recognize His authority. That’s where wisdom starts.

When we live that way, we come to Paul’s conclusion: “We have the mind of Christ.” In submission to His Spirit, we see the world and our own circumstances from His perspective. As we grow in Christ, we begin to think more and more as Christ thinks.

QUESTION 4:

How would you describe having the mind of Christ?

QUESTION 5:

What are challenges we face in helping people understand the things of God?

LIVE IT OUT

Since the wisdom of God is critical for Christian living, how will you live out the truth from this passage?

- **Submit.** Evaluate your life and consider if you are living in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and guide your thoughts and actions.
- **Examine.** If you are facing a decision and need counsel, look to Scripture and examine passages that address that issue. Contrast what Scripture says with the counsel the world might offer. Determine to follow the wisdom God has given through His Word.
- **Share.** Tell others in your group the insights God has given you. As God's Spirit gives you discernment, He may desire for you to be a conduit of His wisdom to others.



1. Scott Neuman, "1 in 4 Americans Thinks the Sun Goes Around the Earth, Survey Says," *NPR*, February 14, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/02/14/277058739/1-in-4-americans-think-the-sun-goes-around-the-earth-survey-says>.
2. Michael Shermer, "Do People Really Think Earth Might Be Flat?" *Scientific American*, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/observations/do-people-really-think-earth-might-be-flat/>.