



Week 13: Christ Our Wisdom

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

GOAL:

To seek the superior wisdom that comes from centering our lives around Christ and the cross.

CHECKLIST

- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members. Help new members register for your group using the QR code in your room or at vrbc.net/grow.
- Between now and your group meeting, remind your group members that there are only two weeks left in this spring semester of Grow Groups. (Last group meeting is the week of April 28.) Encourage them to come and to finish strong!
- Look for an opportunity to thank your Inreach Coordinator for serving your group through this new role this semester. If your group has other volunteers who serve in consistent ways, let them also know how much you appreciate what they do.

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, we confess that we have too often depended upon the flawed wisdom of this world. Forgive us for not recognizing that true wisdom comes only from you. Thank you for your sacrifice on the cross that has revealed your power and love to us. Help us to live according to your wisdom, seeking your kingdom and righteousness first and foremost, knowing that your way leads to an abundant and thriving life. Help us not to lean on our own understanding, but to trust in you with all our hearts. Teach us to walk in your ways, embodying your love, grace, and wisdom in all that we do. Amen.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

CONNECT, COORDINATE & PRAY

- Use this time to connect with your group relationally - both formally and informally.
- Remind your group about some things happening in the next few weeks that might interest them:

May 1, 6pm	Pray First (this time praying for pastor search, VBS, 8612 mission trip)
May 5, 11am	Explore Membership
May 5, 2pm	Cinco de Mayo celebration (adults ministry)
May 9, 11:30am	Wisdom Warriors Spring Fling (lunch) & Hymn Sing
May 12, 9:30am	Mother's Day celebration & Baptisms
- Invite your group to share one way that they have seen God at work in the past week, and one way they're praying for God to move in the week to come.
- Spend time praying for your group members and for your time together today, including any praises or prayer requests from your previous conversation.

DISCUSS

- What did God highlight for you about wisdom from the Growth Guide readings this week?
- Who is the wisest person you've ever known, and why?

Leaders: *To get your group thinking about wisdom in general, share someone who stands out to you, and ask them to share who comes to mind. You can ask what signs of wisdom they identify in that person, or what they most respect about that person. Many of us will likely think of someone older, someone who has a good perspective, or someone who chose a path different from what was expected or easiest and it worked out. Maybe they had the right word or approach to navigate a challenge. Maybe it's someone who thinks things through rather than going with their knee-jerk reaction to something.*

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Why does Paul use such strong language to contrast worldly wisdom with the wisdom of God?

Leaders: *Sometimes we tend to think that we can take what we like from the culture and the world's wisdom and sprinkle a little Jesus on it to make it even better. (This is what we sometimes refer to as "cherry on top" theology—as if all we need is a little bit of Jesus to improve things.) But the apostle Paul never lets us do that. In fact, in this passage, he's saying that God's ways are diametrically opposed to the ways of the world. The wisdom of the world is made foolish or rubbish in comparison with the wisdom and power of God.*

We tend to take a human-centered approach to life. My life revolves around me and my daily concerns, and God brings me comfort, guidance and blessings. While Paul wouldn't argue that God

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provides comfort, guidance, and blessings, he would strongly insist that those are found when we put Christ at the center of our lives.

Consider this quote from Dallas Willard in The Divine Conspiracy:

“Recently a pilot was practicing high-speed maneuvers in a jet fighter. She turned the controls for what she thought was a steep ascent—and flew straight into the ground. She was unaware that she had been flying upside down. This is a parable of human existence in our times—not exactly that everyone is crashing, though there is enough of that—but most of us as individuals, and world society as a whole, live at high-speed, and often with no clue to whether we are flying upside down or right-side up. Indeed, we are haunted by a strong suspicion that there may be no difference—or at least that it is unknown or irrelevant.”

When we put Christ and the wisdom of the cross at the center of our lives, only then do we gain the clarity to see whether we are flying upside down or right-side up. We begin to see things the world considers foolish—things like victory through sacrifice, humility, gentleness and patience—as truly wise and powerful ways to live.

- Read Ephesians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 1:18, and 1 John 3:1. What is the ultimate goal of wisdom? Why does the wisdom of God appear foolish to the world?

Leaders: *In Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians, which we read in the Growth Guide on Monday, he says that the goal of wisdom is to know God better. If we really stop to think about it, this is remarkable. To think that we can not only approach God but also know God personally, and continue to know God more and more, is a wonderful gift and privilege. But for those who don’t know God, this seems too good to be true. The idea that God would lavish love upon us (1 John 3:1), sacrifice himself for us, and invite us into a personal and intimate relationship can only seem like foolishness to those who do not know God (1 Cor 1:18). The world cannot know us—cannot understand why we hold to the wisdom of the cross—because they do not know God.*

A famous writer named Alexander Pope wrote, “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.” Charles Spurgeon responded to this famous statement: “It has been said by someone that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the God-head. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

Do we truly desire the wisdom that comes from knowing God better? Do we treasure it and fervently seek after it? We may be more likely to seek God’s wisdom in a particular area of our lives—how to parent better, how to improve our relationships, how to serve others. But Paul says that the real goal and value of wisdom is to know God better. If we were to make this our one goal—our one prayer—for the week, it would not be a misguided one.

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WEEK 13

- What are some of the “worldly wisdom” assumptions that we operate under without even thinking about it?

Leaders: *It may help generate ideas if you encourage the group to think of popular clichés or sayings, or common pieces of advice. Here are a few examples:*

- *Don't start a fight, but if someone hits you, slug them back. (eye for eye, tooth for tooth)*
- *He who dies with the most toys wins.*
- *Working for the weekend*
- *When the rubber hits the road, look out for #1.*
- *The new thing will make you happy.*
- *More than 1000 likes means that I'm important. (My worth or importance or value is determined by the opinions of others.)*
- *I can't be happy unless I get my way.*
- *I can only be fulfilled if my needs are met.*
- *Trust your heart. (You can be anything you want to be. Just believe.)*

- Reflect on a time when you felt pressure to conform to the wisdom of the world rather than embracing the message of the cross. How did you respond? What was the result in your life?

Leaders: *This question takes us in a more personal direction, so please model transparency by having an example of your own that you can share first.*

I (Amy) am thinking of an incident from middle school. Worldly wisdom says that status is tied to who you are or aren't friends with. I remember making a disparaging remark about another girl in my class that I found annoying, as a lame attempt to make myself look better. Not surprisingly, it damaged my friendship with that girl. But it also brought to the surface some tensions between other girls in the class and the damage was multiplied.

But what if I had sought Christ's wisdom for how to treat this person? Jesus' wisdom says that it is not enough for us to love the people that are easy for us to love; we are called to show love, kindness, and mercy to our enemies and those who are harder to love (John 6:32-36). That is the wisdom of the cross! In fact, that is exactly what Jesus has done for us. Colossians 1:21 says, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." We were enemies of God by our own choice and willful disobedience! And yet Colossians 1:22 goes on to say, "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." Jesus loved us so much that he gave his life for us to reconcile us with God and make us holy. What a beautiful foundation and model we have for wisdom in our earthly relationships!

Give your group time to share from their own past experiences. This will help us connect with our need for transformation and help us value the superior wisdom found in Christ and the cross. Then in the next question, we will identify some concrete action steps to replace our worldly wisdom with the wisdom of Christ and the cross.

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- What is one area of your life where you may be relying more on human wisdom than on God's wisdom? How can you surrender those areas to God and seek His guidance instead?

Leaders: *Don't skip over this important question! This will really help your group to see real life change. If your group is large, it could be helpful to divide into smaller groups to allow more time for each person to share. In this part of the conversation, we want to identify a particular area where we've sought the world's wisdom. Maybe this is one of the "worldly wisdom" phrases we brainstormed in a previous question. Maybe it's an area of our lives where we are facing a current challenge or difficulty. Maybe it's a worldly attitude or habit where the Holy Spirit has recently convicted us. Help your group to openly and honestly acknowledge these areas with one another, so that you can pray for and encourage one another to instead pursue the superior wisdom of Christ and the cross.*

To think about what that might look like, consider what Scripture says that is the opposite of that particular "worldly wisdom." For example,

- *The world says, "he who dies with the most toys wins," but Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).*
- *The world says, "trust your heart," but Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that "the heart is deceitful above all things."*
- *The world says, "look out for number one." But 1 Peter 5:6-7 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*

Work together as a group to discern and share what wisdom and guidance are revealed in Scripture that pertains to what each person shares. You don't have to cite particular verses. Even naming consistent themes and principles from Scripture is going to be very helpful to point us to the wisdom of Christ and the cross.

PRAY

Spend some time praying together for Christ's wisdom. If you split into smaller groups for the last discussion questions, you may choose to pray in those groups or return and close in prayer all together.

- *Invite the group to spend a few moments in silent confession, asking God's forgiveness for trusting in worldly wisdom.*
- *Invite group members to pray aloud that we would center our lives around Christ and the cross, valuing and trusting his wisdom above all else.*
- *Pray for VRBC, specifically as we look ahead to the transition to a new Senior Pastor. Pray that we would seek God's wisdom for the season ahead.*

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