



Week 14: Christ Our Message

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

GOAL:

To help followers of Jesus trust in the power of the Holy Spirit rather than their own power of persuasion as they share the gospel.

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.
- Between now and your group meeting, reach out to your group members and let them know this is the last week of spring Grow Groups, and encourage them to come!
- 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.
- Consider what your group will do for the summer semester (June 2-July 31). Browse the content options and let me (Amy) know what you decide. If your group will do anything different this summer, please let me know asap.

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

Father, I desire for Jesus to be so very deeply at the center of my life that I will naturally and joyfully point others to him every chance I get. 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

- Since today is the last day of Grow Groups this semester, take a moment as a group to reflect on how you have seen God at work. Where have you seen God transform your own life this semester? How has God worked in the life of your group? What do you hope to see God do next?
- Spend time praying for your group members and for your time together today, including any praises or prayer requests from your previous conversation.

DISCUSS

Read I Corinthians 2:1-5.

- Review the passage from last week, I Corinthians 1:18-31. Now read verse 2:1 again. Why would Paul say that he did NOT come to the Corinthians with eloquence or human wisdom as he proclaimed the gospel?

Leaders: *You might need to do a little review with your group on the previous message of “Christ Our Wisdom” in order for the first verse of chapter 2 to make sense. Paul says, “And so it was with me, brothers and sisters.” What is he referring to? He is referring to the previous paragraphs at the end of chapter 1 where he talks about Christ’s wisdom versus human wisdom. The Greeks (whom the Corinthians admired) valued logic and rhetoric. It didn’t really matter what your content was as long as you could make a persuasive argument. Paul was saying that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (see v. 24).*

In fact, go back just a little more in chapter 1:17: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel – not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” You could almost skip then to 2:1, “And so it was with me, brothers and sisters . . .” Paul did not depend on human wisdom and eloquent speech for his proclamation of the gospel to the Corinthians. He wasn’t going to play that game lest his message lose its focus – Christ and him crucified.

- What does our culture value that we might be tempted to depend on as we share the gospel rather than the power of the Holy Spirit? What are ways we can distort the gospel in our attempts to appeal to our culture?

Leaders: *The Church sometimes resorts to the tactics of persuasion in its present culture to share the gospel instead of trusting in the power of God to bring about faith. We can resort to being the most fun or entertaining. We can resort to slick productions or managing a brand. We can make the gospel sound more appealing by sharing a part of the gospel instead of the full message of the gospel.*

I (Deirdre) heard Cynthia Clawson, a Christian music artist, tell a story one time about doing a concert

at a very large, new church in the LA area back in the 1970s. A representative from the church came backstage and said, “Now I need to explain a few things to you. First, we don’t ever talk about blood, as in the blood of Jesus. That’s just offensive to people and we don’t want you to talk about that.” Cynthia thanked the gentleman and rearranged what her opening song would be. She decided to open with the hymn that begins, “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”

- Read verse 2. Paul “resolved to know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” What do you think he means? How do we get distracted from the central message of the gospel?

Leaders: All the commentaries I consulted agreed that Paul was not saying that he literally only taught about the crucifixion of Jesus and nothing else. We know from his letters that he explained many facets of the gospel and did a lot of pastoral care as well. The point Paul is making is that he “kept the main thing the main thing.” He pointed to who Jesus was and what Jesus did as the central focus for everything.

- What does it look like for us today to “know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified?” As Pastor John put it, how might we point to Jesus? Can you give an example of how you have tried to do this? Or how you have seen others do it?

Leaders: In his sermon, Pastor John talked about simply “pointing to Jesus” every time we get the chance. He gave some examples: talking to his friend about anxiety and how Jesus helped him, Johanna taking treats and a notecard that offered friendship and an invitation to church to a new neighbor.

Be sure to give your group time to talk about their experiences of pointing people to Jesus or how they have seen others do it.

- Read verse 3. Why do you think Paul came to the Corinthians “in weakness with great fear and trembling?” Can you relate? What are you afraid of that prevents you from pointing someone to Jesus? Have you ever pushed through the fear and then experienced God’s power amid the situation?

Leaders: Paul had reason to be afraid. After all, his missionary travels brought him into all kinds of trouble – verbal abuse, beatings, stoning, and prison just to name a few! Corinth was a thoroughly pagan city. There was no network of Baptist churches there to put him up for the night and make him casseroles! Paul was often in danger.

We don’t face the same kind of danger as Paul, not by a long shot. But we are often afraid to share Jesus with others. We are afraid we won’t know all the right words or the right answers to questions.

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We are afraid we will offend people. We are afraid people will think we are crazy or weak. We are afraid they will associate us with people who call themselves Christians but are nothing like Jesus.

- Read verses 4-5. What was Paul's part? What was God's part?

Leaders: *Paul again reiterates that he did not try to use wise and persuasive words. Instead, he depended upon the power (dunamis: "dynamite") of the Holy Spirit to show up. Paul is contrasting his "weakness" in verse 3 with God's power in verse 4. Paul had no power to transform anything. He simply was faithful to preach the gospel – the message of the cross – and the Spirit did the rest. Paul's part: he pointed to Jesus. God's part: the power of the Spirit changed minds, hearts, and lives.*

- How might we depend on God's power this week to point someone to Jesus? What is our part? What is God's part?

Leaders: *I don't know about you, but this message in verses 4-5 is a comforting reminder to me. I can start feeling like someone's acceptance of the gospel is all up to me. I have to somehow make it happen. But that's not true. My part is to faithfully and authentically point people to Jesus. God's part is to transform lives.*

The "so that" in verse 5 is important! The conversion of the Corinthians was a miraculous, mysterious thing. Paul couldn't control or instigate it. Paul knew that their faith should be founded upon God's transforming work in their lives, not his fancy words.

The same is true for us today. We are simply called to point people to Jesus. That may look a thousand different ways. You may get to tell what he is doing in your life. You may get to share the entire gospel story. You may not. You may plant a seed that someone else will water. You may water what someone else has planted. As with Jesus and Paul, some will accept this transforming message, others will not. Our part is to point to Jesus.

PRAY

- Pastor John challenged us to point someone to Jesus this week. Have a few people pray that we would pay attention to the Spirit, follow His lead, and depend on His power.
- Thank God for the semester of digging into God's Word together. Ask that God would continue to deepen our roots and show us how to rearrange our lives completely around Christ.

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Optional - Semester Wrap-Up

If you have some time left, review this semester's sermon series and ask your group how God has spoken to them or worked in their lives these past few weeks.

- Faithful: This series explored the God who is the foundation of our faith.
- Windows: We looked at the parables in Luke that show us what the Kingdom of God is like.
- Crux: We talked about keeping Christ at the center of our lives as our resource for life, our unity, our wisdom and our message.