

MEMBERSHIP CLASS: MARCH 1

INTRODUCE

Good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. 1 Corinthians 2. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible, so if you don't have one, grab one of the hard-backed black one under every chair. You can open your phone or tablet. 1 Corinthians 2.

If you open a black one from under your chair, 1 Corinthians 2 is on [page 952](#).

INTRODUCTION

So, I became a Christian when I was sixteen years old. And before then my church experience was limited.

- I can remember being very young and being at a Catholic mass...
thinking those little padded kneelers...
you know, to kneel for prayer...
were a good place to lay down to catch a quick nap.
- And then growing up,
my church experience was limited to what we call 'CEO'.
Christmas and Easter only.
We were CEO Christians.

- Now, my mom would feel a level of guilt every now and then, and she would forcibly wake us up early on a Sunday morning to take us to church, but what I found out much later in life... was that she would drop us off for Sunday School, and then to Target to shop for the hour, only to pick us up afterwards hoping that my brother and I weren't doomed to hell.
- And it wasn't until I was invited to Young Life and a church youth group... and had attended for a couple years... that I actually became a Christian.

But the church I went to didn't really preach through the Bible like we do. They did kitschy topical stuff.

- Like they did a sermon series called:
 - *How to Keep the Honey in the Honeymoon*
 - Gross!
- Or: *Submarine Christians – Those Who Surface Christmas and Easter*
 - That one was for my family.
- Seriously, one holy week, preaching on Jesus' trial, the sermons was entitled: *The Silence of the Lamb.*
 - I just puked in my mouth a little.

But, that was pretty much the extent of my church experience up until that point, and so, it's probably obvious that my knowledge of the Bible was pretty minimal.

But my senior year of high school, another friend invited me to join him at a Saturday night service at another church. So, I went, and when I got there the preacher did something foreign to me:

- he asked us to open up our Bibles to the book of Acts,
 - which I had no idea where that was!
 - So, I used the table of contents,
- but he proceeded to preach straight through a passage...
- it was the first time I hadn't heard a sermon on a topic...
- with a lame title!

So, I came back the next Saturday night and the preacher did the same thing. He asked us to open up to Acts, but then he just picked up right where he had left off, and started up again.

- And he did this week after week after week
- until he had made it all the way through the book of Acts,
- which is no small feat!

And in the lobby, they had tapes of his sermons you could sign up to receive...you remember tapes?

- If you're Gen-Z, think,
- Podcasts...
- in a rectangle shell,
- that you have to rewind.

And I didn't realize it at the time...

- but I was so hungry for that.
- The Bible!
 - And I found myself for the first time
 - intellectually stimulated
 - and satisfied as I dug into God's Word.

And church, that left a lasting mark on my life, and it's why we preach through books of the Bible at Fathom.

TRANSITION

But it's passages, like ours today, that I would skip over if I was a topical preacher.

- Because, upon first reading it,
- It can seem a bit challenging,
- and kinda evokes in me a bit of a "humph?"
- Like, I had to work HARD on this sermon this week.

EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

Now, remember what's happening in the Corinthian Church that's causing Paul to write this letter...these words.

- The Corinthians were pretty infatuated with the world.
- They loved the ways of Corinth...
- they loved the prestige of Corinth...
- they were becoming more and more enamored with the philosophers in Corinth.

They had bought into the world, and as a result, it began to affect the church.

- All kinds of arrogance had started to infiltrate.
- There were factions and divisions formed.
- The church was unhealthy.

And Paul is writing to combat this love of the world's wisdom. His main thrust in this letter thus far, and will continue today:

- is that the wisdom of this world is wrong!
- It's foolish!
- It isn't actually wise at all!

And the Gospel,

- though it can seem foolish to the world's eyes,
- is actually power,
- to us who are being saved!

So, let's see what Paul does next in this letter.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-9

[6] Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. [7] But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. [8] None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. [9] But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,

nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him” —

EXPLAIN: GOD’S WISDOM IS HIDDEN

So, Paul’s first point, as he discusses the wisdom of God as opposed to the wisdom of this world, is that **SLIDE GOD’S WISDOM IS HIDDEN**. We see that in verse 7. And there are really two ways of understanding this point.

HISTORICAL

First: there is a HISTORICAL part to this.

- At one point in history,
- the way God would save his people
- and undo the curse of the fall in Genesis 3,
- was hidden.
- It hadn’t been revealed.

Remember what we talked about a few weeks ago:

- the Jews weren’t looking for a messiah
- to come and suffer and die.
- The cross was a stumbling block.
- It was scandalous to them...
- because it was hidden.
- It hadn’t been revealed yet.

So, this is historical.

SPIRITUAL

But second, there is a SPIRITUAL side to GOD'S WISDOM BEING HIDDEN. Paul mentions the rulers of this age in both verses 6 & 8.

What he's referring to is both the Roman and the Jewish authorities who conspired to crucify Jesus.

- So, we're talking, The Roman Empire:
 - Pilate
 - and Herod
 - and Caesar.
- And we're talking the Jewish religious elites:
 - the high priest
 - and the scribes
 - and the Sanhedrin.

And we, as Christians, tend to demonize both the Romans empire and the Jewish religious authorities as bad guys when we read the Bible.

- But one commentator pointed out
- that they were the best government
- and the highest religion the world at that time had ever known.ⁱ

Do you remember high school world history class? What were the Romans known for?

- PAX ROMANA.
- Roman peace.
- And the Roman roads!
- The world had never seen such stability
- as it did under the Roman Empire.

And the Hebrews brought the first mono-theistic religion, that really, was historically foundational in most of the major world religions of today.

So, the very best and brightest of Jesus' day got together, and they crucified the Lord of glory. They missed Jesus, and in fact, rejected him.

ILLUSTRATION: FAILURE OF SECULARISM

And the same continues today. In our Western society,

- the best and the brightest
- of the world
- cannot get this wisdom of God either.

Mark Sayers, is a pastor and cultural commentator, and he talks about the secular vision in our world, and its failure.

The secular narrative is this: Religion is the problem in our world. That's the modern 'wisdom of this world'.

- If we can just rid the world of God
- and these religious delusions...
- and replace them with education...
- and technology...
- and tolerance...

then we can march forward into this secular utopia

- where everyone is happy,
- and getting healthier – eating superfoods and crossfitting, right?
- and we get along,
- and co-exist,
- and love wins!

And in many ways, that has happened in our modern American framework.
Ok? Secularism has largely been bought into.

The problem is this: secularism is not making good on its promises.

- Happiness is not on the rise.
- Depression and anxiety and suicides are at an all-time high.
- For all our connectiveness with technology and social media,
- loneliness is rampant!
- And for all our tolerance...
 - The *“let’s just get along”, “love wins”* rhetoric...
- our culture is more divided
- and entrenched
- and tribal than ever.ⁱⁱ

Rome, for all her power and glory, didn’t get the wisdom of God.

And America, for all her greatness, misses this, too.

Listen: **The wisdom of God is NOT a truth humans CANNOT fathom.**

But IT IS a truth which humans CANNOT discover by OURSELVES.

- This wisdom is hidden mystery
- because it can be known only
- through God’s revelation.
- And it is hidden from those
- Who would trust in
- the wisdom of this world.

TRANSITION

So, GOD'S WISDOM IS HIDDEN. This is what he means when he quotes the Old Testament in verse 9: **What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.**

The eye, the ear, and the heart are all illustrations in the Hebrew mind of sensory organs.ⁱⁱⁱ But it means that

- what we can see with our eyes,
- what we can understand with our ears,
- and what we can feel in our hearts...
- they cannot figure this stuff out.
- Something more is needed.
- We need something else to help us get God's wisdom.

Which leads us to verse 10:

1 CORINTHIANS 2:10-13

[10] these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. [11] For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. [12] Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. [13] And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

EXPLAIN: GOD'S WISDOM IS REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

Yes, GOD'S WISDOM IS AND WAS HIDDEN. And we cannot figure it out on our own...with our own minds and faculties. Something more is needed.

And that's my second point: **SLIDE** **GOD'S WISDOM IS REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT.**

- The only way we know God's wisdom
- is if the Holy Spirit reveals it to us,
- through the Word of God.
- If the Holy Spirit does not reveal it to you...
- you won't get it.

Now, Paul explains by illustrating, and using humans as examples. He says, **who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person?**

Which is essentially saying: nobody really knows what's going on in your mind/heart. Only you...your spirit. Right?

ILLUSTRATION: MY MIND

Case and point: does anybody in here know what I'm actually thinking right now? Any guesses?

- Do you think I'm thinking about this sermon?
- Taking a nap?
- Chipotle?

Listen, no one knows...except me!

And even if you guess it...you won't really know unless I confirm that to you. You don't know what kind of crazy might be going on in my mind right now!

- I could be thinking about my next point I'm gonna make...
- or what I'm gonna have for lunch...
- or why that person isn't here today...
- or why anybody in their right mind would want cats.

It could be anything! No one, except me, knows.

EXPLAIN: THE SPIRIT

So, no one knows the heart of God, except the Spirit of God.

- And the only way
- we know God
- and know God's heart
- is through the Spirit of God
- opening our eyes to the Word of God.

And then, look at verse 12, once again, **Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.**

Listen,

- if you love Christ,
- if you worship Christ,
- if you are drawn to Christ.

The ONLY explanation is that the Holy Spirit has awakened your heart to those realities.

- They were freely given to you.
- You didn't figure them out...
- or earn them.
- They were a gift.

And if you're here today,

- and you don't love
- or worship
- or are drawn to Christ.

The good news for you is in verse 13: **And we impart this in words!**

- The Holy Spirit may,
- this very morning,
- be opening your eyes for the first time
- to the wisdom of God.
- And revealing to you
- the wisdom of these spiritual truths.

EXPLAIN: THE DEPTHS OF GOD

And I just love verse 10. **These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.**

The depths of God! Oh, how I love that idea!

- It's actually what we based the name of this church on.
- That the depths of God are unfathomable!
- There is an inexhaustible depth to God!
- You'll never reach the bottom of this well.
- You can dig deeper and deeper and deeper still.

But the Spirit...He searches the depths of God. It reminds me of a beautiful prayer Paul prays in Romans 11:

SLIDE ROMANS 11:33–36

[33] Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

[34] “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

[35] “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

[36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

TRANSITION

Praise the Lord that **SLIDE** THE SPIRIT HAS REVEALED TO US THE WISDOM OF GOD, for without it, who could have known? No one.

- We would be dead. Lost. Hopeless.

Now, let's finish up this passage, and then I'll give us some more practical applications. Verse 14:

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16

[14] The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [15] The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. [16] “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

EXPLAIN: TWO PERSONS

At the end section, Paul really just breaks everyone down into one of two categories. **SLIDE** The **NATURAL PERSON**, or the **SPIRITUAL PERSON**.

So, first, the NATURAL PERSON is the person who has not had the wisdom of God revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

- We would say they are un-saved,
- or unregenerate,
- or lost.
- But they are natural.

And then there are the SPIRITUAL PERSONS.

ILLUSTRATION: SBNR

Now, we need to do a little work on this term,

- because of the world we live in,
- the word ‘spiritual’
- means something different
- than what was meant by Paul in the first century.

You've heard people say things like, *"I'm spiritual but not religious."*

- This is a rather new phenomenon
- where once synonymous terms,
- "religious" and "spiritual"
- have now come to describe
- seemingly distinct domains of human activity.

The Barna Group explains this accurately: *"The twin cultural trends of deinstitutionalization and individualism have, for many, moved spiritual practice away from the public rituals of institutional Christianity to the private experience of God within."*^{iv}

We have lots of people who would say they are "spiritual" in some esoteric, existential way...but that they aren't interested in defining that beyond themselves.

So, they're spiritual...whatever they mean by that. But they aren't interested in any framework around that spirituality.

And listen, Paul, would have clearly put MOST of the folks in this category in the "natural person" category. Ok?

Unless one explicitly believes in the Gospel: Christ and Him crucified. They are natural.

EXPLAIN: SPIRITUAL PERSONS

So, when Paul says SPIRITUAL PERSONS, he simply means,

- those who have the Spirit.
- Those who are Spirit-filled.
- Those who are saved.

So, he's talking to the church at Corinth, and calling them spiritual persons. He's calling them Christians.

And he ends with that great line, **we** [spiritual persons] **have the mind of Christ**. Which I think means this:

- you know!
- You know the things of God!
- They have been revealed to you!
- You are no longer in the dark.
- You are no longer lost.
- You are no longer natural.
- You have the mind of Christ.

APPLICATION #1

Now, there are two main applications I want to make from this passage for us. First: **SLIDE DON'T BE SURPRISED WHEN THE NATURAL PERSON ACTS NATURAL.**

I think this is something that, at least in modern history, Christians have seemed to forget. **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.** Ok?

The people in our lives:

- Our friends,
- Our family,
- co-workers,
- neighbors...
- who don't know Christ...

we need to ease up a little bit, and not be surprised when they behave like who they are.

Often, Christians expect non-Christians to behave in a way that is unrealistic...they aren't going to act like Christians, because they aren't Christians.

And for us to respond

- in anger,
- or frustration,
- or harshly

That's not how we should respond. Rather, we should respond

- with compassion,
- and patience,
- and prayer!

Prayer that their eyes would be opened. That they would be made *spiritual*.

ILLUSTRATION: F-BOMB

So, we have a number of people at Fathom who don't yet know Jesus. They are *natural*, ok?

- And if that's you,
- please know that you are so welcome here.
- Like I said in my introduction...
- I went to church for almost two years,
- just trying to figure stuff out,
- before I really started believing in Jesus.
- So, you're welcome here.

But I remember one guy...a husband of a gal who came to Fathom.

- And she just kinda dragged him along, ok?
- He wasn't here looking for Jesus,
- he was just here for his wife.

But I had lunch with him a few times, and we connected a bit.

- And he liked the pseudo-irreverent vibe
- I gave off in my preaching.

Interestingly,

- I actually connect a lot better
- with unsaved people than I do Christians...
- for whatever reason.

But I remember one Sunday, and I've shared this before,

- but one Sunday,
- as I was standing in the hall after church,
- this guy came out and walked past me,
- and he said, "Great *bleeping* sermon, Pastor."
- And then just kept going!

But he used the real word. The F-bomb. Ok!

- That's like the Gold Metal of cuss words.
- And he used it to his pastor...
- in church!
- I loved it!
- Kinda...

But listen, he's natural. DON'T BE SHOCKED WHEN THE NATURAL PERSON ACTS NATURAL.

Now, I told that story once before, and some of you came up to me after church and said the same thing jokingly!

- DON'T! ok!
- You're not natural...
- You're spiritual...
- So, you're on the hook!

So, that's the first application. Pagans gonna act like pagans.

So, don't freak out.

APPLICATION #2

Second application: I think Paul is saying this: **SLIDE START LIVING LIKE THE SPIRITUAL PERSON YOU ARE!**

This whole passage hasn't been ONLY to inform the church members of the theology of the wisdom of this world versus the wisdom of God.

- This has actually been an indictment on the Corinthians.
- Because they weren't acting like spiritual persons,
- but rather, like natural persons.

Paul is saying:

- *"you have the Holy Spirit, but you aren't living like it.*
- *What's happening?*
- *Why are you acting like the world?"*

This was a rebuke to them.

And for some here today, I think this is a rebuke to you as well.

- If you are in Christ...
- you are a Christian.
- Then you are spiritual.
- You have the Holy Spirit.
- And the mind of Christ.

And you should be growing up in your faith! You should be LIVING LIKE THE SPIRITUAL PERSON YOU ARE.

But so many Christians are not growing up. And yes,

- there are seasons of struggles
- and seasons of grappling with sin.
- But have you made any attempt to live out your faith?
- Have you made any attempt to grow up?
- Or are you stuck in the same patterns of sin
- and immaturity that you were when you were natural?

So many people in the church today

- are born again...
- they have their natural eyes opened
- and are given spiritual insights to the wisdom of God...
- they get saved.

But then they spend the next 40 years of their lives just staying in the same place.

- Never putting sin to death.
- Never moving forward in their progressive sanctification.
- Never growing into maturity.

And I would pose to you, that if that's you, you may have superficial faith... not genuine faith.

EXPLAIN: SUPERFICIAL VS. GENUINE

You see, in every congregation, including ours, there are people who are just caught up in the movement but have never really dealt with Jesus Christ.

They participate externally:

- they come,
- and get excited,
- and learn the songs,
- and pray the sinner's prayer,
- and get baptized,
- and maybe join a discipleship group...
- but it never represents
- a deep embrace of Jesus Christ.

Jesus tells a parable in Matthew 13 that illustrated this:

SLIDE MATTHEW 13:3b–6

“A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. [5] Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since **they had no depth** of soil, [6] but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since **they had no root**, they withered away.

Some seeds DID take root,

- and sprang up,
- but they had no depth,
- and they didn't last.

For some of you, this is a rebuke:

- You come to church once a month.
- And I make you feel guilty from time to time,
- So, you throw a little money in the offering box.
- But you're not going deeper.
- You're not growing with the Lord.
- You're not using the gifts God has given you to serve him.
- There is no objective evidence that you have a desire for God
- or that a supernatural change has taken place in your life.

For all intents and purposes, you are natural.

This is what was happening in the Corinthian church, and the message to them and to us is GROW UP!

CONCLUSION

Listen church, **it is God's will that you grow in your sanctification.**

- There are still areas in my life
- where I am acting like the natural person
- and not the spiritual person,
- and it is God's will for me to grow up.

It is time for us to grow up.

In every decision of your life, it's going to come down to one of two things:

- the wisdom of the world,
 - or the wisdom of God.
- To live naturally,
 - or to live spiritually.

Paul says, you have the Spirit in you. Choose now to live like it!

Let's pray.

BLANK SLIDE W/TRACK

REFLECTION

As we sit here a moment, before I pray, I want you to take a personal inventory: are there any areas of your life where you are choosing to operate as a natural person?

I think today would be a good morning for you to ask the Spirit, who has saved you, who has opened up your eyes, to convict you, and deepen you.

- Maybe it's how you deal with money...
- maybe it's how you spend your time...
- maybe it's a relationship you're in...
- maybe it's at work...
- maybe it's a sexual sin...

But in those areas, I think the Spirit would remind you that YOU KNOW. You have the mind of Christ. And today is the day to start living that out.

Father...

COMMUNION

We respond in 4 ways:

- Communion
- Tithes & offerings
- Prayer
- Singing

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

ⁱ N.T. Wright, Colossians and Philemon.

ⁱⁱ <https://thisculturalmoment.podbean.com/e/the-secular-salvation-schema/>

ⁱⁱⁱ David Garland, 1 Corinthians.

^{iv} <https://www.barna.com/research/meet-spiritual-not-religious/>