

“Restoring The Way of Wisdom”

1 Corinthians 1¹⁸-2⁵

The leaning tower of Pisa is known worldwide for its unintended tilt. The tower’s tilt began shortly after construction due to an inadequate foundation on unstable subsoil that was unable to properly support the structure’s weight. The tower would have eventually toppled were it not stabilized by major efforts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. From time to time Christians have also had to face the need for major re-stabilization work on the church’s foundational beliefs and behaviours, and the place they have turned to for wisdom on what to do is Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth.

Opening Question(s) – Choose one

- What was the least useful class you had to take in school? Why?
- If you could “boast” about one thing regarding yourself or your family, what would it be?

Study Questions

- 1) **Read 1 Corinthians 1:17 – 2:5.** What is “the message of the cross” (v.18, 23, 2²; cf. Mk. 10⁴⁵)? Why does it seem foolish to one group and powerful to another?
- 2) What does the cross have the power to actually do that the best experts,¹ of that day and ours, can’t actually deliver on?
- 3) The Corinthians felt intellectually and spiritually superior to others. What had they forgotten about their past and the reason God chose them (vv. 26-29)?
- 4) In Greek literature, characters “boast/glorify in” what gives them most delight. Odysseus gloried in his cunning, and Achilles in his strength. What does Paul suggest Christians should have as the focus of their delight (cf. 1 Pet. 2⁹)?
- 5) In verses 26-31 Paul pointed to God’s choice of the Corinthians as evidence of God’s way of power and wisdom. What additional evidence of God’s upside-down power and wisdom does Paul give in 2:1-5?
- 6) The Corinthians were measuring “truth and success” by how powerful, influential and articulate someone was. Paul had an outstanding background (Php. 3⁴⁻⁶) and education (Acts 22³)² that he could have used to raise the Corinthian’s estimate of him—but he didn’t. He had come “in weakness” and “resolved” to simply focus on preaching “Jesus and him crucified” (2²). Why?
- 7) Does Paul condemn careful study and preparation, or only the abuse of it? What’s the difference?
- 8) How do people today confuse the world’s power (and wisdom) with God’s power (and wisdom)?
- 9) What impacted you in today’s study that you plan to carry with you into this week?

¹ The ancient writer Aristides said that on every street in Corinth he met a so-called wise man, who had his own solutions to humanity’s problems.

² Note that Gamaliel was the most honored rabbi of the first century.