

Studies in 1 Corinthians

► LESSON VII: TOWARDS AUTHENTIC MINISTRY

Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1-8 (NLT)

1 When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters,^[a] I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan.^[b] 2 For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. 4 And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. 5 I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

6 Yet when I am among mature believers, I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world or to the rulers of this world, who are soon forgotten. 7 No, the wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God^[c]—his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began. 8 But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord.

Footnotes:

- a. Greek *brothers*
- b. Greek *God's mystery*; other manuscripts read: *God's testimony*
- c. Greek *But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery*

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. In verse 2, Paul says, “I didn't try to impress you with polished speeches and the latest philosophy” (MSG). Why do you think the apostle avoided using “lofty words and impressive wisdom” (a la the Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbis)? (cf. vs. 6)
2. The early church taught that being *saved* or *lost* was contingent upon how a person responded to _____ (See verse 2; cf. 1 Cor. 1:21-24)

3. Paul determined to “know nothing” when he was with the Corinthians “except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (vs. 2, NASV). What’s can we learn from this when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others?
4. Sometimes Christians can get caught up in entangling arguments over peripheral (secondary) issues in evangelistic conversations. Do you think this helps or hinders the impact of the message of the cross?
5. How would you describe Paul’s approach to ministry (vs. 3)? What was the motive behind this? (cf. 1 Tim. 1:14-16)
6. Which do you think Christian ministry could benefit from more of today: transparent humility or blustering self-confidence?
7. The real “punch” behind Paul’s preaching was the power of the Holy Spirit (verses 4-5). What could Paul be referring to here?