

1 Corinthians

2:6–3:4

Introduce

What is more important in your daily life, calculus or the multiplication table? Being able to read the STOP sign or being able to read your textbook? Knowing the boiling point of water in degrees Kelvin or knowing how to boil water? We are going to look at how what seems like simple knowledge in the spiritual realm can be more important than complex theological ideas.

Investigate

Background

Paul continues his extended appeal for unity among the Corinthian believers. He has already addressed the unity they have in Christ, contrasted the wisdom of men with the wisdom of God, and looked at Jesus as the source of life for each one of them. Now Paul is going to continue his discussion on the true wisdom of God and begin to rebuke the Corinthian believers for their undue focus on human wisdom.

Explore the Passage

[Have them read the whole section to themselves before reading each individual section as a group and addressing the questions.]

2:6-13

- Who are the mature? [The Corinthians would have all thought themselves mature, but as we'll see later in the chapter
- What is the wisdom that Paul imparts to the Corinthian believers? Why was it secret and hidden? Why didn't the rulers of this age understand this wisdom? *[It can only be revealed to us by the Spirit.]*
- Why is it crucial that we receive the Spirit from God? *[That we might understand the things freely given to us by God]* Why are these truths only understandable because of the Spirit's work in us?
- What is Paul's point in verse 13? How does it relate to what he said in the first part of this chapter and in the previous chapter about the nature of his preaching? *[Paul did not rely on human wisdom or the rhetorical forms of the orators to communicate his message. He had to rely on God to communicate spiritual truths related to redemption, through the Spirit's work, to people who had been transformed by the Spirit. Again this brings the glory to God instead of the messenger.]*
- What difference do these truths (the fact that the spiritual truths of the gospel can only be discerned through the work of the Spirit) make in the way that we think about our own evangelistic ministry?

2:14-16

- Who is the natural person? What does it mean that they are a natural person? What things are spiritually discerned that are not accepted by the natural man?
- How can a spiritual person judge/appraise all things? *[Because the Spirit allows them to make judgments about issues; especially pertaining to salvation]* Why is a spiritual person exempted from the judgment of man? *[Those who do not have the Spirit cannot make judgments pertaining to spiritual issues upon those who do possess the Spirit.]*

- What is the significance of us having the mind of Christ?
- What do these first two paragraphs have to do with the subject of unity Paul continues to address in the first part of this book? *[All believers have been given the mind of Christ through the Spirit and are able to comprehend and understand the things they have all been given in God. There is no distinction between believers, no class structure, none who have arrived or not arrived depending on which teacher they follow.]*

3:1-4

- What do we learn here about why Paul is addressing the whole subject of spiritual wisdom?
- What does Paul mean that they are like people of the flesh? What does this mean about their status before God? Are they still believers? Is Paul teaching a dual class system of believers, the mature and the carnal? Support your answer from the context of this passage.
- What would the Corinthian believers have thought Paul meant by “milk”? *[The simple message of Christ crucified]* What might the Corinthian believers have thought was solid food? *[Other issues they considered “deeper” issues which may have been causing the divisions in the church]* What kind of food did the Corinthian believers actually need? *[The milk of the simple and powerful message of “Christ crucified”]*
- How have you noticed a desire among students in Cru to move beyond the “milk” of the gospel to “solid food” of other theological or spiritual issues?

Discover the Big Idea

- What is Paul’s point in rebuking some of the Corinthian believers about this subject?
- What are the changes he wants to see in the beliefs and actions of the Corinthian believers?

Summary: Paul wants the Corinthian believers to act like the spiritual people that they are. He wants them to remember that they have all been instructed through the Spirit in the true wisdom of God. Instead of focusing on various issues that they saw as deeper spiritual issues, issues that were dividing them, he wants them to continue to focus on the “milk” of the message Christ crucified.

Respond

- What causes you to lose focus on the simple gospel message and instead desire to get into deeper theological issues?
- How can you find yourself forgetting the crucial “milk” of the simple gospel message?
- How can a renewed appreciation for what Jesus did for you on the cross help prevent you from giving undue attention to divisive issues?
- Take time to repent of thinking less of Jesus and more of your own wisdom and theological insight.