

## Study 3: Real Wisdom

### Thinking about Wisdom

Wisdom isn't a word we use much these days. What other words do we use instead?

What kind of people does our society think are wise?

### Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

#### Preaching Class?

What things does Paul avoid in his preaching (v1, 6)?

What does his preaching focus on (v 2)?

Why is it unhelpful to sound eloquent or wise or persuasive when you're speaking about the Gospel (v 5)?

Have you seen someone talking about the Gospel in a way that focussed on their eloquence and wisdom rather than on the message of the Cross. What was it like?



If you turn on the TV early in the morning then you'll see just how tempting it is to preach the Gospel with wise and persuasive words. The TV evangelists love to make slick speeches about how to get God to bless you and give you money. Lots of people find them wise and persuasive and eloquent. But the focus is always on the evangelist not the gospel. Paul wanted nothing to do with that kind of thing. He didn't try the flashy suit, the slick speeches or the get rich quick schemes.

His focus was on explaining the message of the cross clearly. He knew that lots of fancy extras would distract people from the main message and his preaching would be useless.



But this raises a question. If Paul wanted nothing to do with sounding wise and persuasive, does that mean you have to sound stupid and unconvincing if you want to speak about the cross?

### Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

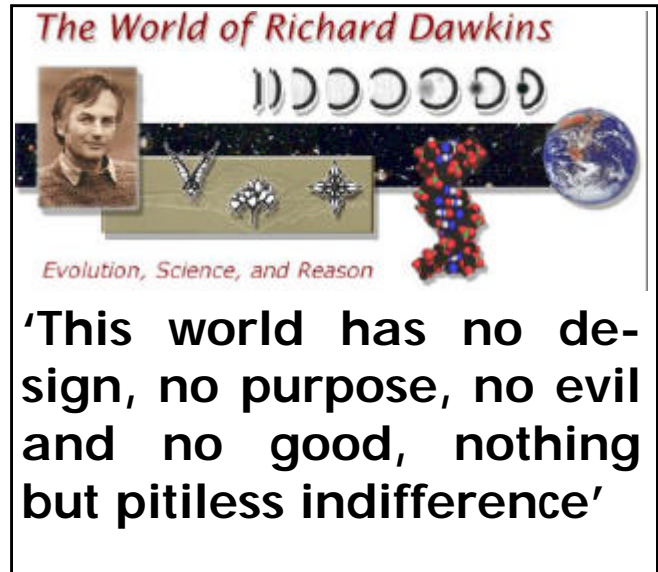
#### The Wisdom of this age

Paul says he's not stupid. He does speak about a kind of wisdom, but it's different from the wisdom of this age and of the rulers of this age.

Who are the rulers of this age and what's their future (v 6-8)?

How have they shown that they don't understand God's wisdom?

The rulers of this age are the kind of leaders who impress lots of people with their wisdom, but are only worried about this world. A current example might be Richard Dawkins, the Professor of the Public understanding of Science at Oxford university. He's the kind of guy who writes lots of books and gets quoted in the paper. But he's got no time for thinking about God's plans or what might happen outside this age. According to him, this world is all there is, and its got 'no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference. That kind of wisdom is persuasive for a lot of people. But it's going nowhere. And that's different to God's wisdom



**For our Glory**

What is God's wisdom destined for (v 7)?

Who is going to benefit from it (v 9)?

**Understanding God's wisdom**

The wisdom of this age is coming to nothing, but God's wisdom is going to be made obvious in the future. God's wisdom is that people who love him will "be glorified" because of the death of Jesus on the cross. It's great news, but none of the rulers of this age could discover it by themselves. However smart they are, they don't understand God's wisdom. But there is a way to understand God's wisdom. What is it (v 10)?

Paul uses a slightly complex analogy to explain how God's spirit can reveal God's wisdom.

Only the \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_ understands the \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_  
 In the same way,  
 only the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ understands the \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_

Paul's not trying to say that humans' spirits are like God's Spirit. He's just saying that in the same way no one knows what we're thinking except our own self conscious, so only God's spirit knows what he's thinking.

Who can understand God's wisdom (v 12)?

Some Christians have used this passage to claim that they've got a special understanding of God's wisdom and so other Christians should just accept what they say without judging them. What would you say to someone like that?

## Wise Preaching

Paul's preaching method of avoiding wise and persuasive words might have sounded a bit strange, but v 13 helps us to understand. What kind of language does Paul use in his preaching and why is it appropriate?

Paul says the spiritual man isn't subject to any man's judgment. Is a spiritual person free to do or say whatever they want? (Hint: see 1 Cor 4:3-4)

Just like in chapter 1, Paul finishes his argument with a quote from the Old Testament. The quote is a rhetorical question. What answer does he expect?

Who does Paul mean when he says we in v 16?

What do 'we' have?

## How wise are you?

We've seen that the Gospel is Spiritual wisdom which can only be understood by people who have God's Spirit. If you don't have God's spirit there's no way you can understand the mind of God. But if you've got the spirit then you've got the mind of Christ. You understand what God is thinking. You have his wisdom.

As we've seen, the Corinthians are being divided over who's got the wisest leader. How does Paul undermine the idea that some Christian leaders have got special access to more of God's wisdom than others?



How smart do you have to be to understand God's wisdom?

How can you get God's wisdom?

Why is it silly to boast about how much of God's wisdom you or anyone else has got?

Are there any Christians you look down on because you don't think they're as smart as you? How should you change your attitude?