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SERMON TITLE: **Wisdom Extraordinaire**  
SCRIPTURE: **1 Corinthians 1:18-31**  
DATE **July 31, 2022**

Online service at [www.fpcd.org/live-stream](http://www.fpcd.org/live-stream)

Read also Proverbs 8:22-31.

The Corinthian Church's chief, most outstanding skill was persuasive speech—"rhetoric"—and impressive knowledge. Often, people have knowledge, but they are not good at conveying what they know. Or, they have great presentation skills, but their words are empty. The Corinthians had both dynamic speaking abilities and knowledge.

This got them in a bit of trouble because they were very proud of their skills, valued commodities in the 1st Century. But they lacked any understanding of the Old Testament because they did not grow up in it.

Paul preached to them and they converted to Christ; so Paul founded the church, along with his assistants, Aquila and Priscilla.

The people of Corinth valued their achievements greatly and it showed in their church. Members had conflicts with one another; jealousies; they often misinterpreted God's approach to life and argued over whose point of view was right. In his letter, Paul comes directly against their false pride. If you listen between the lines as I read the passage, you will hear how their values clash against the values God holds for the church. Here goes. READ 1 Corinthians 1:81-25, 30-31

They were educated and really good at speaking. -- Paul says God doesn't care about that.

They could persuade an audience, like a good politician. -- Paul preached plainly and simply. He had a reason. He wanted the focus to be on Christ's power, not himself.

Paul also understood God's reasoning which was: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." God did this because "the world did not know God through their own wisdom" (v. 21).

To try and figure God out and learn what God is like from your own wisdom is futile. It is like coming up with your personal insight to solve the Seven Biggest Unanswered Questions from Physics. See how you do. Can you answer these?

1. What is matter made of?
2. Why is gravity so weird?
3. Why does time seem to flow only in one direction?
4. Where did all the antimatter go?

5. What happens in the gray zone between solid and liquid?
6. Can we find a unified theory of physics?
7. How did life evolve from nonliving matter?

To try and figure God out from your own wisdom is futile. It is like coming from your personal insight to figure out the Eight Mysteries of Philosophy:

1. Why is there something rather than nothing?
2. Is our universe real?
3. Do we have free will?
4. **Does God exist?**
5. Is there life after death?
6. Can you really experience anything objectively?
7. What is the best moral system?
8. What are numbers?

Human reasoning wants to come up with its own answers. But human reasoning will not lead us to know God; that is, to answer the Fourth Greatest Mystery.

Paul understood this. Therefore, he said, God chose to reveal himself through "our" (Paul's, yours and my) testimonies about Christ crucified. "The Power of the Cross."

God's point is that it has nothing to do with our performance or how smart we are or how well we speak. We can give the simplest testimony about Jesus and it will be sufficient.

Again, this is hard for us to fathom. One aspect, though, is that represented by the Corinthian church. They thought because of their knowledge and skills, that they were better than everyone else. Yet, if you depend on your own "smarts" to figure God out, then you would be inclined to brag on your accomplishments. You might think, *because I went to this school, or, I built this business, or, I hold this job, or my car is better than your car, I can figure God out from my own success.*

But God looks at it differently. God does not have "split" love or loyalty based on good looks, impressive accomplishments, distinguished lineage. God loves ALL types of people. Jesus did not love the Jews more than the Gentiles or the Samaritans. Jesus did not look for "top of the class" disciples. In fact, many of them were quite the opposite! They were the part of the class that made the top of the class the top!

God looks at the heart. So, if you are not "wise by human standards, nor powerful, nor of noble birth; in fact, you might consider yourself foolish, weak, low, and unworthy. Then I have good news for you! God chooses you!

God does not pay respects to those who boast in themselves. God looks favorably toward the ones who boast in the Lord.

This is wisdom extraordinaire.

Paul says wisdom is all about the power of Christ's crucifixion. Why is this so? Paul writes in Romans 5:7-8:

"Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

Do you struggle with feeling loved by God?

There are reasons why God does not approach us from our own worldly wisdom. We cannot reason our way to God; we must respond to God's love. Wisdom is not from the head as much as it is from the heart.

It is kind of repulsive to think of the cross as a reasonable means of saving us. It is like if, today, we approached the people in Dallas, a cosmopolitan metroplex with educated, successful, sophisticated people (like us in Duncanville!) and we said, "There's this guy. He went to death row and was executed. He rose from the dead and that death gives you access to God.

It sounds ridiculous; it seems far out; it smacks of someone "pulling the wool over your eyes." Really? A criminal who died, even unjustly?

**We cannot reason our way to God; we must respond to God's love.**

Remember in the garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve to rely on her own judgment? "You're smart! Think for yourself!" She did! And now we see the problem!

Some people look for signs or that miracle, wanting God to prove himself.

Other people rely on their own wisdom. That's their "truth." Today this is called postmodernism. The individual is the center.

Both approaches lower wisdom to the finite creature, rather than raising oneself to the wisdom of the eternal Creator. Do you want secure wisdom beyond what you have as a person? Then . . .

Lean on God's wisdom

- ✓ Don't go it on our own.
- ✓ Trust him.
- ✓ Seek him.
- ✓ Have faith.
- ✓ Be humble.
- ✓ Bow the knee.

Sometimes it looks weird to believe. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you odd," said Flannery O'Connor. It may seem foolish or weak or naïve to believe.

That's God's call, for God is the Creator. God has wisdom extraordinaire which God is willing to share with you. Seeking it and relying on it will make you—your family, your city, even the world—better. God's wisdom is the true strength that will make your family more loving, your city more neighborly, and leads to a peaceful world.

AMEN