

### Week 3 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Use what you find helpful and always feel free to modify what you see. This week's passage is incredible as it contrasts how radical the gospel message is in a world that appears to operate according to the forces of human intelligence, strength, and dominance.

**Text:** 1 Cor 1:18-2:5

**Icebreaker:** What is wisdom? Can you think of a time when you faced a decision where what was wise from one perspective may have seemed foolish from another?

1. Read all of chapter 1 through 2:5. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon this week?

2. From verses 18-25, what does Paul mean that the gospel message—"the word of the cross"—is foolish to those who are perishing?

The gospel's core message about a crucified king is utterly foolish to a world that values strength and dominance. The cross is a resounding defeat (on top of an unnecessary, foolish outcome) in the eyes of those who don't believe.

*Application:* Do you think this still rings true today? In your own experience, where or when have you seen that the gospel message is considered foolish by some?

3. From verses 18-31, is Paul arguing that God is opposed to wisdom or is he making some other point here? Explain what you think.

Silly question, right? Of course Paul is not arguing against wisdom! Human wisdom has been distorted ever since Genesis 3. The wisdom of this world often clashes with God's wisdom and brings a pridefulness that leads to self-exaltation rather than worship of God. Paul is arguing that only the wisdom of God is truly wise.

*Application:* How would our claim to salvation be different if it did depend on human wisdom?

Our salvation would be based on our own intelligence or critical reasoning skills. In other words, our salvation would depend on us in a way that Scripture does not support.

4. What do you think it means to "boast in the Lord" in verse 31? What else do people tend to boast in?

Boasting in the Lord means being convinced that the gospel is about the power of God overcoming the weakness and failures of humanity. Only God deserves credit for

salvation, so all we can boast in is God's work through Christ. For the second part, people tend to boast in anything but God! We boast in our own intelligence, our hard work, our appearance, our strength, our financial portfolios, etc., etc.

*Application:* What perspective do these verses give us on both the practice and the results of sharing the gospel message with others?

If we are convinced that the gospel is about God's power, then we should have a confidence that evangelism (sharing the message with others) is about God's power, not our own abilities. Do we want to be able to speak clearly about the gospel? Yes, of course. But the outcome of our conversations depends on God's work and the power in those conversations is contained in the gospel message itself. We are announcers or heralds of the message. God is the one who convinces and persuades the human heart to believe.

**5.** In 2:1-5, how does Paul describe the approach he took with the Corinthians when he was in their city (see Acts 18 for background)?

Paul was not exactly an impressive or imposing figure as he communicated the gospel. He intentionally did not try to impress others with his rhetorical skills, but was hopeful that his own weakness would prove to be a perfect contrast to the supernatural power of God expressed in the gospel message.

*Application:* Take time to pray as a group that we (individually and as a church) would not fall into the trap of trying to impress others into the Kingdom of God, but that we would aim to live in such a way that testifies to the "foolish" wisdom and "weak" power of God.