



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sermon Series: Welcome to Corinth, Part 2

Sermon Title: Our Primary Focus

Speaker/ Date: Armin Sommer/ September 23, 2018

1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5

Corinth was located in ancient Greece. Cosmopolitan. Pagan. Large middle class. The gospel took root there. The Corinthian church was both loved by God and loaded with problems. There was no central church building in Corinth. They met in homes. So they had different teachers. Each developed a loyal following. We always need to remind ourselves what our primary focus is to be.

Big Idea: Our primary focus must always be the cross of Jesus Christ.

Why? Because the cross is both power and paradox.

I. The Cross is Power

1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 2:14

The cross seems like so much foolishness to those who are perishing.

1 Corinthians 1:18 *but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

The word “power” is the word from which we get the term “dynamite”. There is an energy that is inherent to it. There is a mysterious power in the message of the cross.

The cross was the “altar” on which God chose to spill the blood of the 2nd person of the Triune Godhead to affect our salvation and to erase the record of my sin, to defeat the devil, and conquer death. There is power in the cross. It's the undeniable power to reconcile all things to Christ who "made peace through the blood of His cross." **Colossians 1:20.**

That's why Paul is so committed to its proclamation **1 Corinthians 1:17.**

The finished work of the cross and the accomplishment of the cross is to be the message of our gospel.

II. The Cross is Paradox

1 Corinthians 1:19–21

To people who are lost, the preaching of a Savior who died a slave's death on the cross was "for morons." Our message is essentially **unsophisticated**. Every person appeals to authority, but authorities come and go. Many popular philosophies of 10 years ago are now passé they all lead to dead ends. **Proverbs 16:25**

On the other hand, the unsophisticated message of the cross revolutionizes lives, heals marriages, restores ruined lives. This simple unsophisticated message of the cross embodies the power of God.

Its paradox is also tied to the fact that to some it's **Offensive 1 Corinthians 1:22–25**

Paul points out 2 major ethnic groups of his day that found Christianity to be silly.

The Jews repeatedly demanded that Jesus offer dramatic miraculous confirmation of his claims. But Jesus consistently refused. **Matthew 12:38–40**

To most Jews, the cross was ultimate proof, not of His divine sonship, but of a divinely pronounced curse. After all, **Deuteronomy 21:23** says, "*A hanged man is cursed by God.*"

The other predominant ethnic group was generically referred to as "**Greek**." To the mind of the sophisticated "Greek" the preaching of a crucified Christ was unthinkable. A suffering God? A criminal Messiah? A way to God not based on great philosophical minds? No way! **1 Corinthians 1:24–25**

There is both power and paradox in the cross. It's paradox that God would take an instrument of painful death and make it a message of eternal life. We must stay focused on the message of the cross for this territory that God has entrusted to us, and we will see God's power. The cross is our authority and our message. **1 Corinthians 1:26–31**

It doesn't matter what your background is. Who you are in Christ outshines what you were. **1 Corinthians 1:30**

Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **Paul had to correct the Corinthian church because they were divided over which teacher they followed. They made it more about following a teacher rather than Jesus. Have you ever been prideful in your particular Christian denomination over another Christian denomination- (Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Etc.) rather than being united in Christ?**
- **What, in your own words, is a paradox? Why is the gospel in this category?**
- **Paul tells us that the cross seems like foolishness to the world. Specifically, why is the cross NOT foolish to you?**
- **Give an example of when you saw the power of the cross displayed.**
- **Can the power of the cross work in an unbeliever's life? Explain, supporting your answer with biblical examples.**
- **How can we avoid viewing the power of the cross as something "magical" that can only be experienced when we use the right words or feel the right level of emotional high?**
- **What is it about Christianity that makes unbelievers get so hostile toward it?**