

CCLEB SERMON

NOTES

SUNDAY JUNE 2, 2024
1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-16

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WHY THE HOLY SPIRIT MATTERS TO THE CHURCH



Super excited for us to be Studying Paul's letter the Corinthians. Today we are going to look at "one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit matters to the church".

Paul's letter to the Corinthians is written to a recently formed gathering of new believers - and that "gathering" Paul calls in 1:2 "God's Church". This gathering of new believers is in Corinth, a highly educated and wealthy city in southern Greece and they seem to have it all.

Paul started this ministry in Corinth several years prior, lived with close friends and ministry partners, Aquila and Priscilla for 18 months, and preached and taught the Corinthians the gospel of the kingdom. Paul witnessed lots of growth and fruit, a great outpouring of power of the Holy Spirit. You can read about that in Acts 18. The Corinthians were real people that Paul had real relationships with.

After Paul moved on from Corinth to begin the work of the Lord in Ephesus he received a communication by letter or by messenger that not all is well in the Corinthian gathering - the church. Paul then writes a letter of instruction in response to help encourage the young believers back on track. We presume this letter to be lost as we don't have it. Paul then receives another communication in response to his letter revealing to him that there is more that Paul needs to say and some things he needs to clarify for the Corinthian believers. Particularly that the church in Corinth is beginning to experience problems and divisions in areas where there should be supernatural unity by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that rests on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The letter Paul writes in response to learning of these areas the Corinthians need to grow in, we refer to as 1st Corinthians.

We are in week four of this study of the letter to the Corinthians. If you have missed a week I would encourage you, to watch or listen to previous teachings as the content of the letter at times builds on previous chapters. The letter is written in five long essays that our modern added chapter divisions breaks up. The essays are Ch 1-4 Divisions & Problems caused by following man, not following Christ, Ch 5 -7 Divisions & Problems re: Sex, Ch 8-10 Divisions & Problems re: Food, Ch 11-14 Divisions & Problems re: their weekly gatherings, Ch 15 Divisions & Problems re: Understanding and applying the Resurrection to their lives and gatherings.

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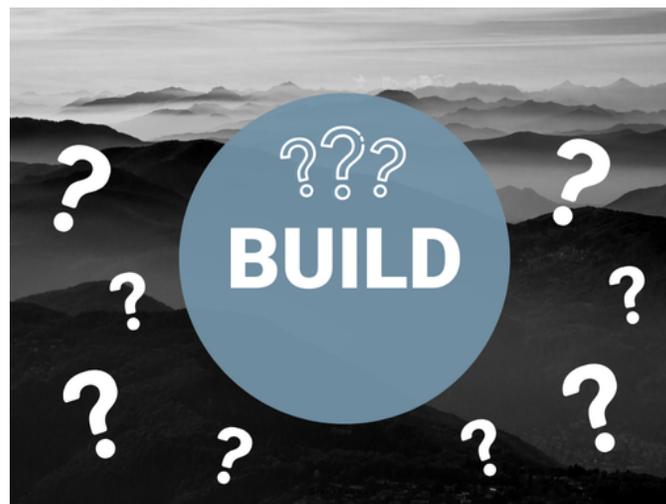
THE ESSAYS ARE:

- CH 1-4 DIVISIONS & PROBLEMS CAUSED BY FOLLOWING MAN, NOT FOLLOWING CHRIST
- CH 5-7 DIVISIONS & PROBLEMS RE: SEX
- CH 8-10 DIVISIONS & PROBLEMS RE: FOOD
- CH 11-14 DIVISIONS & PROBLEM RE: THEIR WEEKLY GATHERINGS
- CH 15 DIVISIONS & PROBLEMS RE: UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE RESURRECTION TO THEIR LIVES AND GATHERINGS

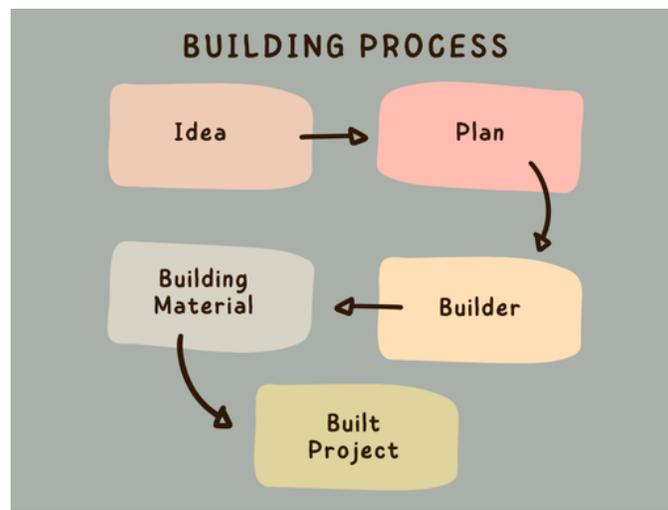
And with that background, let's begin with our text for today. Turn with me to **1 Cor 2: 1-5**

My son Korin, who is now a father, is and always was a “builder”. Anything he could put his hands on became “building material”. Snow was an endless supply of “building material.” So was “sand” at the beach. Once paper from our printer was discovered by Korin, it didn't take long for us to figure out that a ream of paper and cheap scotch tape would keep him busy for a long time. We even told family to buy that for him for gifts, a ream of paper and scotch tape. Korin soon figured out the strength of tube technology by rolling flat paper into tubes and taping it - and then the sky was the limit of what he could “build.” He even “built” a 7 foot hang glider once out of a ream of paper.... and then he jumped off our steps. He is still a “builder” today, but not just with physical materials. In addition to building things from wood, he also, for employment “builds” things for virtual reality worlds - what he calls “3D Modeling”. I have no idea what that really means but it sounds cool.

When you think of the word “build” what pops into your mind? For me I think of “building” like construction. Maybe build a wall. Or build a table, build “lego” creations. But one can build other things too like “build a legacy”, “build a company”, “build a family” etc. In a quick search of the OT it seems the most frequent things associated with the word “build” are “alter”, “house”, “city”, “wall”, which makes sense. But the first use of the word “build” in Hebrew - the word “bana” (baw-naw') occurs in **Gen 2:22**. “Build”. Our NLT softens the word to “made”.



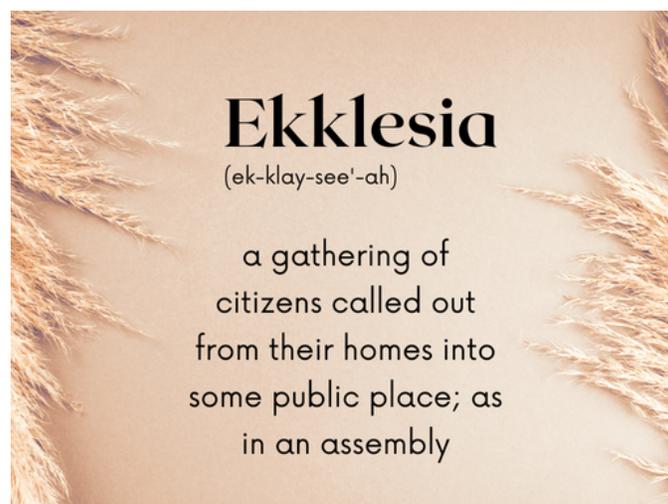
Now if you step back and look at the general “building process” of anything being “built”, there are some consistent steps and components to “building”.



There's a builder who has an idea, a mental picture of what they want built, usually driven by a need and or desire. The "builder" may have a plan by which to "build" from. And then the "builder" chooses "available material" to "build" with. And the actual "building process" is where the materials are skillfully shaped and joined in such a way that it results in the "idea" being "built". In essence the "idea becomes reality". In **Gen 2:22** we see God as the "builder", we see God's idea of Eve, and for "building material" God uses Adams' rib or side, and we see God's "idea" literally and symbolically "taking on flesh". And based on Adam's response when he sees her, in Adam's eyes Eve was "well built" - although in our culture "well built" often means "sturdy".

Hold on to those ideas associated with "build" and fast forward to Jesus' day. In **Mt 16:18b** in response to Peter confessing that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God", Jesus says to Peter "upon this rock, I will build my church". "Build my church." The "rock" is the "confession" that Jesus is the Messiah The Son of God. Peter, who Jesus named "Petros, meaning "the rock", was simply the first to confess it. So anyone after Peter who confesses that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God, is where Jesus "builds" his church. So we have a "builder" - Jesus - who has an idea driven by a need - and its Jesus who designs the plan for "build". And what it is that Jesus is going to "build" is his "church". That leaves only one question to answer - what "building material" does Jesus choose?

To further answer that, let's review what we know about the "church" that Jesus is "building" from **I Cor 1:2**. We are going to spend quite a bit of time today talking about a new testament understanding of "church" - as that is important for understanding the letter to the Corinthians. The definition of the "church", the "ekklesia"



So the “church” was real people that were “called by God to be his own holy people”, that are “made holy by Christ Jesus”. And they are “made holy” when they “call the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. To “call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” is a reference to “calling out for salvation or deliverance” - a regular theme of the OT, for example **Ps 107:6**. In Corinth these are real people, “God’s own holy people, who “confess that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God”, who are made holy by “calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”. They collectively are the church.

We see then that those in Corinth that are described above are “called by Jesus to gather”, to be an “assembly” if you will, that live as part of God’s family, God’s Kingdom on earth, the church. But why would God choose them as the building material for his church? What makes these people the ideal “building material” for the church that Jesus is building is one supernatural component that is true of all believers -- the presence of God’s Spirit in them. When the believers in Corinth “called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” to deliver them from their sins, their sins were paid for and consequently God’s Spirit instantly came into them and gave them new eternal spiritual life.

As it says in **John 6:68** it is the Spirit (God’s Spirit) that gives us eternal spiritual life...

The Holy Spirit is the unique component that all true believers have, that make the “idea” of “God’s church” possible to build. Thus because of the holy spirit in them, believers are the choice “building material.” That means that each and every believer has a place, and purpose, and responsibility in the “church” that Jesus is building.

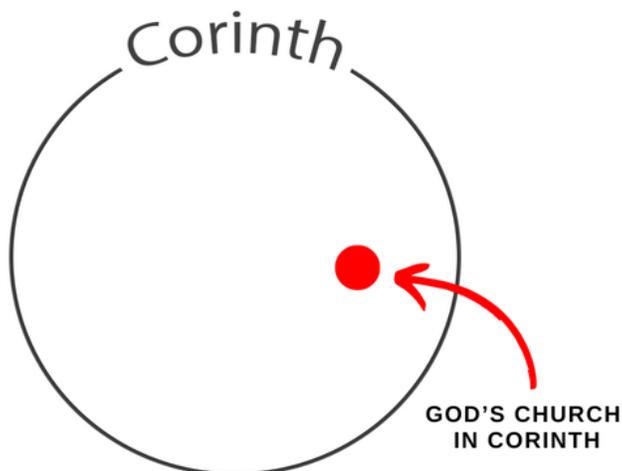
So continuing in the building analogy, in this world, where believers in Jesus currently have flesh and blood bodies, meaning we do not yet have our glorified bodies like Jesus does, God’s Spirit coming to live inside them is God “partnering” with them. **1 Cor 1:9**. That word “koinonia” is traditionally translated as “fellowship”- which in our culture means a potluck dinner.. food, fun, fellowship. The three “Fs” of Christianeze. But “Koinonia” is way more than that.



It means “partnership, community, intimacy, abiding with.” So as Jesus “builds his church” - thru his Spirit in believers, Jesus “partners” with the “building material” giving it the supernatural qualities needed for the church to be built and accomplish his purposes. His Spirit in them, “partnering with them”, gives the flesh and blood Christians the potential for supernatural hope, supernatural love that we will see in Ch 13, supernatural peace, and supernatural oneness - all things we learned from John 13 -17.

In addition, Jesus’ Spirit partnering with the flesh and blood Christians also gives them the supernatural “gifts of the holy spirit” that they need for the “church” to collectively accomplish what God wants the “church” to accomplish here on earth. We will talk extensively about what those supernatural gifts of the Spirit are and are not in chapters 12-13 and 14. And those unique “gifts of the holy spirit make it possible for the church to be “built” to the specs that Jesus wants it “built”.

His Holy Spirit in believers and thus the church, that gives them new life and supernatural gifts, also separates them from the “kingdom of darkness” that is perishing. Yet, the “church” is part of “Jesus’ Kingdom” here on earth.



Collectively then, the “Christians” are the “church” and the “church” is what Jesus was “building” in Corinth.

So in 1st Corinthians Jesus is “building” the church and the “building material” is believers indwelt by Holy Spirit and who are allowing God’s Spirit in partnership with them to accomplish what God wants. The “Church” –is designed by God for vibrancy, growth, much fruit, for power against the forces of evil, for truth, and oneness. Without the foundation of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in them, the gathering of Christians, the church– could not, will not be effective, and the kingdom will lack influence in the secular world. In essence the “church” will be yet another empty building. For this reason, in chapter one Paul was redirecting the believers – the church back to the foundation of Jesus and the cross for wisdom. Paul mentions Jesus Christ 17x in the first chapter. Chapter two is Paul also directing the Christians to the Holy Spirit for Wisdom and power. In both chapters, Paul is challenging their thinking.

We saw in Ch 1 that:

Greek culture in Corinth valued “worldly wisdom” and worldly philosophy” which Paul said in comparison to the cross was “foolishness”. In contrast the gospel of the Kingdom values God’s wisdom.

Greek culture also valued how much “influence” one had over others. The Corinthian version of how many “followers” one had on social media was based on how many people they could persuade in person, and thus make “followers”. And thus those who “persuaded well”, who were skilled in Greek Rhetoric – which is the “art of persuasion”, those who were eloquent, clever, and poised, they were the ones highly esteemed, highly valued and highly followed. In contrast, the Gospel promotes influence by servant leadership, and influence by sacrificial love.

The Greeks valued a “noble birth” –a “high birth”- that meant privilege, status, wealth, societal power. The gospel is the story of Jesus who was born “low”, his parents were peasants – common laborers, and Jesus was born in an animal manger. Yet look how much “influence” Jesus had and continues to have.

And so Paul finds the young church in Corinth divided because some of the Christians are holding on to the ungodly value system of the Greek culture.. and trying to hold on to the value system of Christ at the same time. It is clear that they were using the value system of the Greek culture, the wisdom of the world, to rate and choose the Christian teachers that came thru,

(1 Cor 1:12) Peter, Apollos and including Paul. And it seems that they gave Paul a pretty low rating. We know from **2 Cor 10:10** that they saw Paul's presentation as "weak" and his speeches as "worthless". Why? Because they were rating Paul with "dislikes" based on the value system of the world, not based on the value system of the gospel. And that was dividing the Corinthian church and has the potential to divide any church.

I've used the value system of the world to judge others, more than I confess - rate other Christians based on worldly values, degree, type of car, how well dressed, career, where they live, whether they wear flip flops or not.. it's awful, and so not the gospel, so not Jesus.

So if Paul is going to influence the young Christian believers in Corinth to be a more effective "building material" for Jesus to "build" God's church and have Godly influence and power, Paul is going to have to influence them in their thinking to return to the foundation of Jesus Christ and allow God's Spirit living in them, to change their values. Note I said "Paul is going to have to influence their thinking". It starts with "thinking", and "thinking" directs behavior. If your "thinking" is off, your "behavior" is off, yes it's that simple.



So look at how Paul influences their thinking when he recounts for them how he first engaged with them. **1 Cor 2:1-5**.

From a broad perspective this is Paul teaching them how to apply the gospel in a real life scenario. Paul knew and understood Greek culture and values. He was from a Roman province, steeped in Greek culture. Paul was incredibly well educated and trained. He after all was the product of "Gamaliel" - the president Pharisee of the Sanhedrin. In addition, we know that Paul was masterful in the Greek art of persuasion because both secular and Christian scholars attest to Paul's writings demonstrating a very high level of Greek Rhetoric. So for Paul to come in low, "not" using "lofty words and impressive wisdom", choosing to not use what he was trained in secularly, but rather focus just on Jesus Christ - that was clearly deliberate. This is part of Paul modeling the value system of gospel of Jesus Christ to the Corinthians. He says in **v3** that he even came to them in "weakness - timid and trembling". That phrase typically is interpreted as a demonstration of or reflection of humility. Let me also give a cultural reference here.

Keener says that phrase was used to describe the "weakness of someone's speaking delivery". Meaning it was used to describe someone who was not professionally poised in their delivery of speech - they were "weak, lacking confidence". Paul then says in **v4** that his preaching was "plain."

Let me give you an analogy to help see what Paul may have meant. If you are a skilled and experienced remodeler and were tasked with remodeling a house, a complete gut job, replacing, updating everything. You probably would be pretty confident in your ability to deliver. But if you were told you couldn't use any of the tools you normally use, how confident would you be? Might your response to the assigned task at that point look like "weakness - timid and trembling"?

It seems that essentially was Paul... he had all the tools he needed in his repertoire from his training and upbringing to go in strong and effective, and probably win a following... but a following for himself. But a following for himself was not his goal, nor should it be ours. Instead Paul wanted to win a following for Christ, so he engaged the Corinthians without the speaking tools he was comfortable with, without the polished techniques of persuasion the Corinthians were used to hearing.

Now in **v4** Paul tells us specifically why he a trained skilled speaker, choose not to use those techniques of persuasion with the Corinthians when he first met them. He tells us in **v4b** ... "rather than using clever.... " Again if Paul is going to influence the Christians in Corinth to be more effective building material for Jesus to build his church in Corinth, Paul would have to show them something else to rely on, something else to trust in that is more effective worldly wisdom. **v5** Paul says "I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but the power of God". And How did Paul do that? End of **v4** "...I relied on the power of the Holy Spirit." He relied on the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul modeled to them relying on the power of the HS.

If Paul had come in to Corinth with eloquent words, clever speech, and the expected poise and delivery the Corinthians expected and desired, would the Corinthians have seen anything different than what appeared to be just another "orator" expounding a new philosophy? If Paul had used that approach, he would have "reduced" Jesus and the power of the cross to level of the ranks of the many. But when Paul relied only on "knowing Jesus" and relying on "the power of the Holy Spirit", the differences between the power of "kingdom of darkness" and the power of "kingdom of Jesus" could be seen more clearly. Jesus has true power - power and it is evident the most in lives that are transformed supernaturally.

We know from the narrative and from Acts 18 that Paul's approach relying on the power of the Holy Spirit worked. How? Because many turned from the wisdom and power of the world and turned to Jesus, who is the wisdom and power of God. Paul spent 18 months with these young believers and two years later there is still a church for him to correspond with. What we learn here from Paul is that if Jesus is going to build his church using believers as building material, the building material is going to have to rely on the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. If the world is going to see the power of God thru us by transformed lives, God's church, it only happens when we rely on the Holy Spirit. If we are going to see the power of God in us, it only happens when we rely on the Holy Spirit. So in **v6-16** we then start to see a principle about the importance of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God thru the Holy Spirit. "The Wisdom of God is revealed through the Spirit."



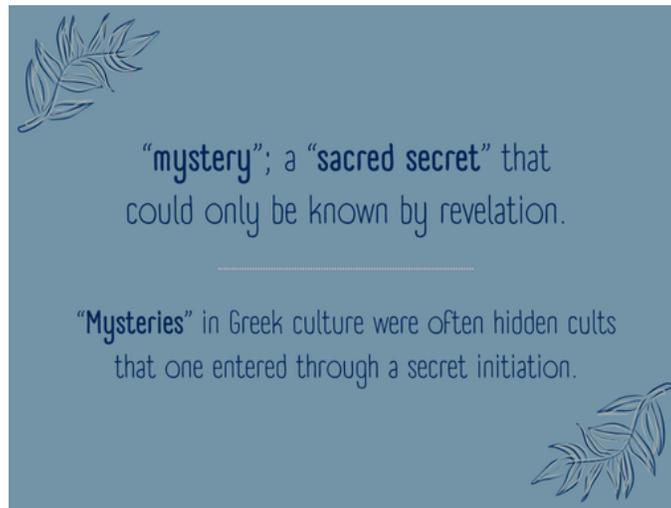
Paul begins in **v6a** (yet when I am among mature believers) by differentiating between the young "less mature" Corinthian believers and those believers that he calls "mature".

A "working definition" of "less mature" believers, derived from the context would be believers that rely on "earthly wisdom". But in **v6** Paul contrasts the "less mature" with those that he calls "mature". So what is the contrast from Paul's perspective?

V6b. The contrast is believers who rely on “Godly wisdom” rather than earthly wisdom.

In the end of v6 Paul subtly points out that the human sources of earthly wisdom are dead and forgotten. But Jesus is still alive and his words are life and his words are alive. Amen?

In **v7 -8** Paul goes on to further contrast worldly wisdom and its rulers, from Godly wisdom. What is Paul talking about here? Paul is talking about “Jesus”, the “words of Jesus” and “Jesus’ work on the cross”. Jesus is the “mystery of God”. Guzik defines the “mystery of God” this way.



But the “hidden wisdom” that Paul preaches is now “revealed” to all thru Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

The rulers of the world didn’t understand it, then or now as is says in **v8** – otherwise they would not have killed Jesus. This is a fulfillment of prophecy from Isa **64:4** that Paul quotes in **v9**.

v10 is where the Holy Spirit comes in. So what this is describing is that the Holy Spirit is the link between flesh and blood man, and the infinite wise loving God. The Holy Spirit partners with us to help us, teach us to understand God’s wisdom and its place in our lives. Look how beautifully the partnership is described in **v11 -12**. (after v11 “Makes sense right?”)

This means, and pay attention, that every believer, by definition, has God’s Spirit in them, thus every believer has access to understanding God’s wisdom. The potential is there. Its not just the educated, informed or spiritually privileged, its every believer.

Guzik says however, that not every believer “has equal spiritual wisdom (that comes with humility and time) Nor does it mean that every believer will understand all spiritual mysteries, hence multiple teachers.

But what it does mean is that there are spiritual truths from God that will only be learned and thus applied because believers have God’s spirit in them. These truths are not revealed by the world’s wisdom or spirit of the age, rather only by God’s spirit in them.

And it is the understanding of these truths thru God’s Spirit that connect believers to the mind and heart of Christ that allows believers to apply God’s wisdom in their life. And thus to apply Gods wisdom collectively in the church. That is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit matters to the church.

The end of **v12** calls this wisdom thru the HS the “wonderful things God has freely given to us”

For example of the wisdom God has freely given us compare resolving a conflict thru “crushing your opponent” or resolving the conflict thru “offering the forgiveness God offered you”.

Mt 6:12 “Forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sinned against us”. Which one, “crushing the opponent”, or “offering God’s forgiveness”, is most likely to work and results in true peace of mind and heart? The forgiveness of God. Forgiveness is a “wonderful gift God has freely given us” that we learn because of God’s spirit in us. It’s His wisdom that he gives us freely that we can know and learn, and apply to others because we have God’s spirit in us. And there are so many other free gifts of wisdom he gives us.

Paul is saying to the young believers, the church in Corinth, because you have God’s Spirit in you which is the key component of the building material Jesus is using to build his church, learn the wisdom of God, not the world’s wisdom, so that God’s wisdom can be applied in your life.

In **v13** Paul tells us more about how he communicates God’s wisdom to believers. In other words because Paul, who has God’s Spirit in him, can speak spiritual truths to other believers because they likewise have God’s Spirit in them. For that connection, that transfer of data to happen, both parties have to have God’s spirit in them. If only one does, the connection, the transfer won’t happen. This is why we pray that the Lord connects his words to the minds and hearts of the believers.

v14 Tells us how why it’s impossible to understand deeper spiritual truths until one has the holy spirit. (the phrase “aren’t spiritual means they don’t have God’s spirit). The Greek there means “natural man or materialist” who only lives in the present. The impossibility of understanding spiritual truths without the holy spirit is like someone on the receiving end of a coded message not having the “decoder” to make the message make sense. It would be all – as Thom would say – “gobbly goop”. Following the “encoded message” analogy then God’s wisdom and spiritual truths are “encoded” until the Spirit within the believer tells them – teaches them, what they mean and how to apply them.

Those who don’t have the Spirit in them can’t understand God’s message,... but nor do they want to. Those without God’s Spirit don’t want God’s wisdom or spiritual truths.

Now because believers have God’s spirit in them they can judge and evaluate everything in life thru the lenses of God’s wisdom and truth. **V15 -16**. Having the Spirit within that teaches and reveals God’s wisdom and truth then makes it possible for believers to evaluate situations in life.

And Paul goes as far as describing the believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit as one who “has the mind of Christ.” Emphasis on “mind, thinking”.

So as believers with God’s spirit in you, who are the “building material” Jesus is using to “build his church, thru the Spirit you can access the “mind of Christ” -or thru the flesh you can access the thinking of this world, which do you want?

So now let’s summarize 1 Corinthians so far and pull this all together in context. Paul is writing to young believers who are the Corinthian church that Jesus is building. These young believers have God’s spirit in them based on them believing in Jesus as their savior. Paul has learned thru a letter or messenger that some of these Corinthian believers are “divided” based on what Christian teacher they like best, Apollos, Peter, Paul etc.. They actually argued about it and divided. Shocking right? Now we know that if one’s thinking is off, then their behavior is also off. Paul indicates that they are “less mature” believers with the implied definition that they are still holding on to the value systems of the kingdom of darkness – that’s their thinking. And if their thinking is off then it can be assumed that some of them are engaging in actions more in line with the kingdom of darkness rather than the Kingdom of Jesus. We find that out to be true of some of them based on later chapters.

So in Chapter 1 Paul points out to them that their thinking is off, that the criteria that they are using to judge who they are going to follow is not based on Jesus Christ and the wisdom of the cross, rather it's based on the wisdom of the world. And then in Ch 2 Paul also teaches them in that their thinking is also off because their evaluation of Christian teachers is additionally not based on the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit.

[Both closing] Every single person who believes in Jesus has God's Spirit in them, and thus they are the "building material that Jesus uses to build his church, which means that every single person has purpose and place and responsibility in God's church. As Jesus is "building his church", the church, whether it was then in Corinth or now in Lebanon the church has to be built on Jesus Christ and the wisdom of the cross, and based on the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit, and that is possible because "we have the mind of Christ."

SUPPLEMENTAL

NOTES:

- **On OT use of the word “build”.** The most common word associated with the word “build” that I found in the OT was “alter”. This could be a really fun and interesting study on what “building an alter” meant and how it was done.
- **Words used to describe God’s work of creation.** In Gen 1 & 2 there are four words used for God’s work of creation.
 - “create” bārā’ Gen 1:1
 - “make” ‘āśā as in Gen 1:26
 - “Form” yāṣar as in Gen 2:7
 - “make/build” bānâ Gen 2:22

A more in depth study of why the words are different is needed by this teacher. However, it seems to indicate that the word used in Gen 2:22 bānâ references the creation process that uses already created material. Jesus’ salvation work pays for our sins, and that allows God’s spirit to live inside us which makes us “new creations”. As new creations we then are the “already created building material” that Jesus uses to build his church.

- **1 Cor 2:4** The Greek says “...in a demonstration” of the Spirit and of Power”. “Demonstration” was a form of Greek Rhetoric in which one persuaded thru a “demonstration.” The power of the Spirit could only be “demonstrated” if Paul was not relying on eloquence, clever speak, and poise to convince the audience.
- **1 Cor 2:7 “Mystery”** Etymologically, the word mystery is derived from the Greek verb myein (“to close”), referring to the lips and the eyes. Mysteries were always secret cults into which a person had to be “initiated” (taken in). The initiate was called mystēs, the introducing person mystagōgos (leader of the mystēs). The leaders of the cults included the hierophantēs (“revealer of holy things”) and the dadouchos (“torchbearer”). The constitutive features of a mystery society were common meals, dances, and ceremonies, especially initiation rites. These common experiences strengthened the bonds of each cult.

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