

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

## "THE COUNTERINTUITIVE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS" | 1 COR 1:18-31 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

### WARM-UP QUESTION:

***What are examples of things that appear foolish that in some ways are actually good ideas?***

### ***"Intro: God's Wisdom v Man's Wisdom" (1 Cor 1: 18-19)***

Paul uses the Old Testament to show God does things that many people think are foolish. **How does that make it difficult to follow God sometimes? How can that be encouraging to Christ-followers?**

### ***"The Word of the Cross" (1 Cor 1: 20-25)***

Paul shows how Jesus crucified doesn't make sense to the Jews or the Greeks for different reasons. **What are reasons our culture today doesn't understand Jesus dying on the cross to save the world?**

### ***"Consider your Calling" (1 Cor 1: 26-31)***

Paul reminds people that God chose them because they were weak and low so that they may boast in the Lord instead of themselves. **What does that show about God? How should that impact Christ-followers?**

### REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul reminds the Corinthians that God doesn't do things the way the world expects. His people need to remember that they were saved because they were messed up, not strong or wise. This means they need to be humble and follow Him even when it doesn't make sense. **In what areas of your life do you struggle with humility? How can you boast in the Lord this week? Pray that God will give you His wisdom so you can follow Him even when it appears foolish.**

# 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

10-22-23

## The Counterintuitive Message of the Cross

### I. Announce:

- A. **Slide1 Missions Prayer:** Please join us in TONIGHT from 6:30-7:30pm in Agape room to pray for our Missionaries and ministry partners.
- B. **Slide2 Demo Day: Do you own a hard hat?** If so, join us on October 27th and 28th from 7am to 4pm. We will have 2 **demolition days**, you can come to one or both, as we continue to **remodel the inside of the sanctuary**. If you can help, please **go on our website** and sign-up so that we know how many people will be there.
- C. **Slide3 Harvest Baked Goods:** In addition to the needs for candy and volunteers for our Harvest Festival [**\*We still need 30 volunteers\***], we are also in need of **baked goods!** Whether they are **homemade or store-bought**, please bring them to the church **on the day of the event** & we'll add *your delicious donation* to our baked goods table.
- D. **Slide4 Israel Relief:** My friend Guy (guide) is raising \$ to support the troops and civilians that lost everything. - A note from Guy ...
1. The state of Israel will take care of them, **but it will happen only after the war**. Right now they have nothing and they lost everything.
  2. **I am using a nonprofit that I am part of, and** I give you my word that 100% of the money will go to those that need it.
  3. There's also a lot of elderly that are sitting all alone in their houses near the Gaza Strip. Very few people are taking care of them cause it's **less "sexy"**. I would like to help those older people with **food supply**, and make sure the people can go and **visit them**, and make sure they are **not alone** during the war. Is.41:6 *Everyone helps his neighbor and says to his brother, Be strong!* [**Banner on App, Israel Support, any amount**]
- E. **Slide5 Prayer:**

### II. Slide6a Intro: The Counterintuitive Message of the Cross

- A. **Last week** the Corinthian church was **Elevating their human leaders**. This week they're **Exalting human wisdom**.

B. **Slide6b** Swindoll said, “*In the beginning God created man in His own image. The competition began when man insisted on returning the compliment!*”

1. Human intellect vs. Divine wisdom. No comparison.
2. The mind of an ant to the mind of a dolphin. No comparison.
3. PC vs. Mac. *Well you get the point.*

C. This is about: How God uses things we think are foolish.

1. You don't have to look any further than right here, I am the foolishness of the world and he's using me. *Ha!*
2. Paul contrasts and compares the **egocentric wisdom** of people, with *the eternal wisdom of God.*

### III. **Slide7a THE WORD OF THE CROSS (18-25) Read**

A. Debate, was the sport of the day. That was entertainment in Greece.

1. In first century Corinth, How did they rate a **good speaker**? They asked, *How was his form? Was he a good orator? Did he use rhetoric in his speech?* If he **didn't** they would dismiss him. If he **didn't** he wasn't sophisticated enough or cultured.

B. **Slide7b** But Paul knew it was about **the Message** not *the Messenger*.

1. Paul had been trained by *the best of the best*, but he must have *dumbed himself down* using **simple and clear** language.

C. The Message then, sounded absurd to the ancient Greek mind. *A Jewish messiah? Who lived and preached in the back waters of the Roman empire? Lacked any formal education? With the 12 following him also uneducated? Who ended up suffering and dying a criminals death on the cross? No*, if the gods sent someone he would be **Greek**, and **learned**, and an **orator**, and the brightest people would flock to hear him.

1. **And No** *There's nothing wrong w/being crazy-smart intellectual.* Paul was!

D. It's amazing who is sitting in this room this morning: *Republicans and Democrats. Wealthy and those scraping to get by. So many different backgrounds and cultures. So many different religious backgrounds.*

1. Here we have Jews & Greeks, coming together, under *Christ crucified*???

E. *Slide7c Foolishness?* What are we talking about? Think of the things in the Bible we don't have figured out, or come across strange to those especially outside the faith. *i.e.* Trinity. Virgin birth. Tithing. etc. [here's *an example* of how are bible looks foolish]

F. *Like, the story in Num 21*, of the snakes biting people in the wilderness. Israel *murmured* against God & Moses, so God sent poisonous serpents. The serpents *killed* a number of them & made many others *sick*. Moses was told to make a pole, put a bronze serpent on top, for people to *look at* to be saved from the snakes. That's foolish ... *Just kill the stinking snakes!*

1. *Slide7d* That story seems *silly*, **UNTIL** you get to the "WHY" in the NT. When Jesus explains, *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Jn.3:14,15 [oh ... it spoke to the cross of Christ]

2. As a **remedy** for their **sin**, God had Moses make a bronze serpent & **raise it on a pole for all to see**. If the people **looked at** the serpent with even a hint of faith in God's provision, they were healed.

3. This snake story was a striking **foreshadow** of Christ *bringing and being* *Slide7e* our **Snake Bite Kit!** Jesus came to **save** those who were **dying** of **sin** and who would **look to Him in faith** as He was **lifted up** on the cross.

a) Jesus **took** our **infected nature** upon Himself, **bore** our **venom**, & **imparts a new nature** to us. [not so silly snake story now w/a more complete understanding]

G. Or, *Imagine* if the story of *Christianity* was translated into our **modern day**:

1. You go up to share your faith with someone. They say, "Ok, tell me about your God."

2. Well, my God was born in Murrieta. He was born to a sophomore at Vista Murrieta High School, who was a virgin *but came up pregnant*. This virgin girl went camping at Lake Skinner campground and gave birth to God in a tent. Her son never made it to college, or to the big city. Never wrote a book, because he was busy putting on tires at America's Tires over on Madison (from High school till he was 30). He started doing miracles, like walking across Lake Elsinore. Another time He stopped in at In-N-Out on Diamond Drive, and with his lunch fed all of Storm Stadium, on a packed-out night. He brought a Wildomar-man back to life. And then one day at age 33 they gave Him a *lethal injection*. But, 3 days later he was seen walking the streets in old town Temecula, then at the Mall, then at the Murrieta library. Oh, and ... He's God! Want to accept Him?

- H. Slide8a How does the world evaluate people? On the basis of *intelligence, strength, power, economic standing, accomplishment, etc.* But none of these matter when it comes to **salvation**.
1. In fact they tend to be a *hindrance* rather than a **help**, because people need to come to grips with *their spiritual bankruptcy* before they can embrace *the free gift of salvation* offered by God's grace.
  2. We take *our reason, our understanding, and our logic*, and we submit it to Scripture and to the mystery of God.
- I. "*The word of the cross*" sounds noble to us. But to the unbeliever? They hear, the words of *the electric chair*, or the words of *lethal injection*. So, you mean to tell me *an instrument of torture brings me eternal life*?
- J. **Folly** = *moraino* where we get the English word, **moron**. Some people think we are **morons believing in an invisible God**. But their understanding of **salvation** is moronic/foolish. [it is strange, a **deity** dying for *me*?]
- K. (20) **Wise?** (unsaved Gentile Intellectual) **Scribe?** (Jewish Intellectual) **Debater?** (Gk Philosopher) [where are the ... influencers?]

1. This is often what *celebrities, actors, athletes, music artists, public speakers*, are to American Culture.
2. So just like in our day, the *pseudo-intellectualism* of Paul's day needed to be challenged with *the wisdom of God*.
  - a) They needed to come *face-to-face* with the meaning of the cross.

L. Slide8b Don't be ashamed of Jesus, nor proud of yourself.

1. We are not opposed to **Scholarship** - but scholarship should lead to Jesus. [any and every discipline should lead to Him]
2. We're not saying don't **read**. Read and love Jesus.
3. We're not saying don't **study**. Study and love Jesus.
4. We're not saying don't **be educated**. Be educated & love Jesus.
  - a) Paul is **not** denigrating *philosophers, scholars, and students* ... but he speaks against those who **use** the mind God gave them, to argue against the God who created them.

M. Slide8c (22) For **Jews** demand signs, and **Greeks** seek wisdom -

1. The sign that the **Jews** were looking for was *a Victorious Messiah*, who **conquers** their enemies, and **restores the glories** of David's kingdom.
2. And the **Greeks** were renowned for their *love of new ideas*, Acts 17:21 they *would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new*

N. (23) we preach Christ crucified - Christ demonstrates the paradoxical nature of Slide8d God's plan to save people from sin: *it requires a death to save people from death*.

O. (24) **But to those who are called** - oh so it's not me or what I do, it's **God** who **calls**? (I guess I can't hold any pride in that)

#### IV. Slide9a **CONSIDER YOUR CALLING (26-31)** *Read*

A. (26) **Consider your calling** - refers to God's call to be **saved** by *accepting His work through Christ and entering into a relationship with Him*.

1. In most first-century ad Graeco-Roman religions, **only people of noble birth or great wealth** were called for salvation; these people primarily

became rulers and priests. **But** Paul reminds believers that *God called all people to salvation*.

- B. **Slide9b** We've all seen art made from discards. *It could be old thimbles, piano strings, rusted clock gears, bent paper clips, scratched door hinges & cabinet knobs*. Each part is virtually worthless. **UNTIL**, the hands of a **craftsman** have turned the useless *odds/ends* into an extraordinary piece of art.
1. **God is such an Artist** that He can take and mold *our worthless lives* and turn them into *priceless works of art!*
    - a) **Slide9c** Paul says, sometimes we forget our "*junkyard beginnings*".
    - b) We think God performed a great work on us **because** we gave Him **high-quality material** to work with, **ha!**
    - c) **Out of His grace**, God stoops and saves *the nobodies, the nothings, the junk*. **Thus, the Artist, not the art**, should get the **honor/glory!**
- C. **Slide10a** **Note**: **not many**, but not, *not any* - some are saved by the letter "*m*".
1. **Some** are **wise** *by the worlds standards*, or **powerful**, or **of noble birth**.
- D. (29) **Pride is self-deification**. *For God so loved you ... but* not because you are intrinsically lovable!
1. **Slide10b** As the Lord told Jer. 9:23,24, *Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he **understands and knows me**, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.*
- E. (29) True religion is not about **us**, but about **Christ**.
- F. (30) **Slide10c** **in Christ Jesus** means? Gal. 3:26-28 *for in Christ Jesus you are all (what) **sons of God**, (how) **through faith** (faith = trust, place your faith in Jesus). 27 (results?) **For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ**. 28 **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free** (go I guess the Bible does weigh in on slavery), **there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus**.*

1. You are **all one in Christ**. There is no room for **prejudice**, no room for **pride**, no room for **boasting** in self.

G. If you think to yourself, *I wasn't that messed up*. Or, *I believe there was at least a little bit of something good inside of me, that caused God to chose me*. Then you will be **morally superior**, and you're not going to get along with anybody.

1. If on the other-hand you see that, **God chose you in spite of who you were, you will be happily humble**.

2. Your spouse asks, **why do you love me?** (be careful).

a) If you answer is *Well, because you're beautiful* (but *beauty fades*). *Because you take care of me* (that's utilitarian). The answer is, *Because ... I love you, because I chose to love you, and I'm never going to stop continuing to chose you*. [this is **God's love!**]

3. **Slide11** God choose **the foolish, the weak, and the low** ... and **that's you!**

a) If you come to Christ as a **nobody**, He will make you a **somebody** (*royalty, a child of God*). If you come to Christ as a **somebody**, He will lovingly humble you till you are a **nobody**, so He can make you a **somebody in Christ Jesus**.

H. *You don't need to share yur faith, just boast in the Lord*, to everyone you run into! :) )

I. Keywords: Christ, wisdom, cross.