

1 Corinthians 2:3 – 3:4

^{2:3} I was with you in weakness
and in fear and in much trembling,

⁴ and my message and my preaching
were not in persuasive words of wisdom,
but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
⁵ so that your faith would not rest
on the wisdom of men,
but on the power of God.

⁶ Yet we do speak wisdom
among those who are mature;
a wisdom, however, not of this age
nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

⁷ but we speak God's wisdom
in a mystery,

the hidden wisdom which God predestined
before the ages to our glory;
⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers
of this age has understood;
for if they had understood it they
would not have crucified the Lord of glory;
⁹ but just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen
and ear has not heard,
and which have not entered the heart of man,
all that God has prepared
for those who love him.'

¹⁰ For to us God revealed them
through the Spirit.

For the Spirit searches all things,
even the depths of God.

¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man
except the spirit of the man which is in him?
Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit who is from God,
so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,
¹³ which things we also speak,
not in words taught by human wisdom,
but in those taught by the Spirit,
combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God,
for they are foolishness to him;
and he cannot understand them,
because they are spiritually appraised.

¹⁵ But he who is spiritual [of the Spirit] appraises all things,
yet he himself is appraised by no one.

¹⁶ For who has known the mind of the Lord, that He will instruct him?
But we have the mind of Christ.

I was weak

message: not 'in wisdom'

but of the Spirit's power
your faith rests
not on human 'wisdom'
but on the power of God

message: 'wisdom' to the mature
not of the powers of this age

we speak God's true wisdom

God predestined this wisdom to us
rulers of this age don't understand
they would not have crucified Jesus
men don't understand

God has prepared all for us

God revealed them to us
through the Spirit

who knows the thoughts of God?
the Spirit of God

Spirit gives us knowledge of God

we speak what
the Spirit teaches

natural man does not understand
spiritual things

who knows the mind of the Lord?
we do [by the Spirit]

^{3:1} And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men,
but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.
² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food;
for you were not yet able to receive it.
Indeed, even now you are not yet able,
³ for you are still fleshly.
For since there is jealousy and strife among you,
are you not fleshly,
and are you not walking like mere men?
⁴ For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,'
are you not mere men?

you *were* men of the flesh
you *were* not able to receive

you *are still* of the flesh

are you not of the flesh, mere men?

are you not mere men?

Historical and Cultural Background

Paul's Argument

- In Greece, traveling 'Sophists' or philosophers would visit a city, and if they made a good impression, win citizenship, set up a school, and begin receiving male students for a fee. Students would then become devoted to their teachers, imitating their speech, walk, dress, etc. They would also debate students from other schools, engaging in verbal and sometimes physical attacks.
- Paul continues to argue that the divisions in the Corinthian church are inappropriate. They were not doctrinal or theological per se (if they were, Paul would have taken a different approach). They were about who was more 'powerful' and 'wise' as defined by Greek and Roman culture.

Greek 'Wisdom' vs. God's Wisdom

- In our day, we say 'YOLO,' meaning 'you only live once.' There is a worldview behind that saying (you unpack it). Similarly, the Greeks were fond of ideas and witty sayings that came from a particular worldview.

Jewish & Christian Worldview	Greek Worldview
Our physical bodies are good	Physical bodies house the immortal soul, which wants to escape the body
Expected 'resurrection' – the renewal of the physical world, including our bodies; God's true humanity will be raised from the dead	Expected 'disembodiment' – the separation of soul from body
Caring for the poor is important	Caring for the poor is not important since the body is not important
Sexual ethics are important and are derived from the Genesis creation story	Have sex with anyone since the body is not important (Epicureans), or don't get married and don't have sex because the body is corrupt (Stoics)
Death is the enemy of God's good creation; it will be overthrown in a new creation	Death is inevitable and is the end; no one comes back from the dead (cf. Homer)
History is linear, moving towards God's restoration of all things and resurrection of humanity	History is circular and repetitious; nothing new

- 'This age' (2:6) vs. the age to come: Judaism believed in a *linear story* and a *happy ending where good triumphs over evil*. It was based on their view that the one true God is 100% good. He would resurrect human beings, His original image bearers (Ezk.37:1 – 14; Dan.12:2). As a believer in Jesus, Paul believed that God had to first heal the corruption of evil in human nature – first in Jesus, and then in others who believe in him, by his Spirit (Dt.30:6; Isa.52:13 – 53:12; Jer.17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.36:26 – 36; Ps.51:9 – 10). Everything Paul says here about God's wisdom is anchored in 'the gospel,' that is, Jesus being resurrected, reigning, and returning (thus far 1:7 – 8; 17; 2:6 – 7).
- Greeks and Romans believed in gods who were both good and evil (i.e. arbitrary). In that view, there could be no happy ending for the world, only cycles and circles. Some philosophers believed that the human body (and the physical world) was evil and the human soul was good. In this case, again, there was neither linear story nor happy ending for the world. Their hope was other-worldly: Elysium, that corner of Hades that was pleasant for human souls. They did not believe in resurrection (bodily renewal and return to this world). In fact, Plato believed in cycles of reincarnation very similar to Hinduism.

Questions

1. Recall the argument Paul is having with the Corinthians. The Corinthian Christians have been picking among the 'alpha males': Paul, Apollos, Simon Peter. They've been projecting onto them their idea of the traveling philosophers who open schools and charge fees and get rich. Paul is arguing for unity in the body and in the mission, and being like Jesus. So this section is about Jesus vs. worldly power. Which do we want more? And can we make the godly choices when we have to?
2. What are all the contrasts that Paul makes in this section?
 - a. Paul compares his role as apostle (2:3) with the rulers of this age (2:6)
 - b. The wisdom of men and the power of God
 - c. The wisdom of God which *was* hidden but *is now* revealed through the apostles
 - d. The rulers of this age did not understand, but we understand through the Spirit
 - e. This age vs. the age to come
 - f. The Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the world
 - g. Human wisdom vs. the wisdom taught by the Spirit
 - h. Natural man vs. the man of the Spirit
 - i. Milk vs. solid food
 - j. Spiritual infancy vs. spiritual maturity

So let's understand this section by section!

3. Focus on 2:3 – 6. Theme: 'You didn't come to Jesus that way!'
 - a. What happened when Paul came to Corinth? What is the demonstration of the Spirit and of power? Notice that in 1:10 – 2:2, Paul said his preaching was not with signs. According to Luke's account of Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1 – 18), there were no miracles recorded. It is possible that Paul did not 'do miracles' in Corinth when preaching and establishing the church.
 - b. Gordon Fee, one of the leading scholars of the New Testament, and a Pentecostal minister, says that this is referring to the power of the Spirit in conviction and conversion. Fee's Pentecostal credentials are very significant in this case because Pentecostals are very interested in miracles and supernatural power, and would love to see it in Scripture whenever they can!
 - i. Fee argues that 'the Spirit and power' is an expression (an idiom called a literary *hendiadys*) where two things put together refer to one thing.
 1. Examples nowadays would include: 'moan and groan' or 'wheel and deal' or others. It may be repetitious, but that's part of the point.
 2. Examples of 'Spirit and power' being the same one idea: Romans 1:4 when Paul says that Jesus was declared Son of God with power by the Spirit raising him from the dead. Also, Paul in Romans 1:16 refers to the preaching of the gospel as the power of God for salvation. Paul regarded the Spirit as accompanying the preached word (as shown here in 1 Cor.2:13), so 1:16 is another instance where Paul equates the Spirit and power.
 - ii. On other occasions, God does do signs, like physical healing, to demonstrate His presence. So this is not to say that God never does signs. But it is to say that here in Corinth, Paul was probably just preaching.
 1. Why don't we tend to see those 'demonstrations of the Spirit and of power' today? Does God still want to heal? This will lead to an extended discussion, for sure. Wait on that until we get to 1 Corinthians 12.
 - c. Who were the rulers of this age that Paul is talking about?
 - i. Pontius Pilate: Roman governor (procurator) of Judea during the time of Jesus, who ordered his crucifixion
 - ii. Jewish leadership at Jerusalem: the Sanhedrin (70 elders who functioned as a type of supreme court); Caiaphas, Annas, and other chief priests (who ran the Temple, and were from a certain Sadducean family); Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers (experts in the Jewish law)
 - d. Why does Paul compare himself as an apostle with the rulers of this age?
 - i. He highlights his 'weakness' according to the cultural values the Corinthians hold, which was about 'power.' He was 'in fear' and 'in much trembling' because he was afraid of the synagogue retaliating against him; Jesus had to actually come in a vision and reassure

him (Acts 18:9; see my character sketch on Paul here:

http://nagasawafamily.org/paul_1corinthians.charactersketches.pdf).

- ii. He highlights his knowledge of Jesus by the Spirit as compared to their ignorance. Knowledge of the truth doesn't necessarily lead to worldly success, money, fame. So if you believe that it must, you will ultimately go down the wrong path. That's the path of the rulers who crucified Jesus.
 - iii. Illus: In the Harry Potter story, Dumbledore said that Voldemort saw everyone and everything through the lens of power. 'And his knowledge remained woefully incomplete, Harry! That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. Nothing. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped.' (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p.709 – 710) It's like if you see people in terms of helping your career. You won't really see certain things, like why he calls his sister every weekend, or why she is passionate about that helping that community.
 1. Leader: You might want to tell a personal story here, like this, if you can think of one! This is very important to the passage.
- e. Trace the theme of human wisdom vs. God's wisdom. What is the difference?
- i. Was Paul anti-intellectual? Was he just asking people to believe stuff regardless of whether it made sense? What does it mean to be 'not in human wisdom'?
 1. What conflict had been going on in Corinth about wisdom?
 2. What has Paul said so far in 1 Corinthians about human wisdom
 - ii. Human wisdom is exemplified today by slogans like YOLO. It's based on the idea that you start and end with your own experience, your own life, within the limits of your birth and death. Back in the day, Greeks had other wisdom slogans (Epicurean and Stoic), with not exactly the same starting points though. It is tied up with ideas about human power and self-actualization.
 - iii. God's wisdom is revealed by Jesus' resurrection, explained by the Spirit. It's based on the idea that you have one life to give Jesus, that Jesus shows us what a normative human life is, and what a normative human nature is, and that we will live forever in a resurrection body. So a slogan that would be true is not YOLO, but 'you only have one life to give to Jesus.'
4. Focus on 2:7 – 10. 'You're so much about worldly power, success, and probably money that you're acting like the politicians who killed Jesus!'
- a. What is the wisdom of God? Why does Paul speak it in a mystery (2:7)?
 - i. Mystery means 'a secret that is now revealed.'
 - ii. Notice that 2:7 parallels 2:10, where Paul says that 'For to us God revealed them through the Spirit.'
 - b. Why did God hide this wisdom until Jesus? Really the question is: Why did God hide Jesus until his birth and then 30 AD? Why is God revealing Jesus only now (to the Corinthians)?
 - i. It's a great question. My take is this: God was waiting for there to be enough people in Judaism committed to their Scriptures, committed to the diagnosis in Scripture that human nature was sick, committed to the cure found in Jesus, and committed to giving up their lives to tell their enemies about Jesus. It just took that long.
 - ii. For a much fuller attempt at explaining, see my essay *Why Choose a Chosen People?:* <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-why-choose-a-chosen-people.pdf>.
 - c. Is God revealing His wisdom only to a few people? Has He 'predestined' for 'us' to have this wisdom and not for other people to have it?
 - i. No, that's not the meaning of that word. For all those who died before Jesus, God held their spirits somewhere until Jesus went to visit them around the time of his resurrection (1 Pet.3:18 – 20; 4:6). He preached to them, and they had the chance to accept him.
 - ii. God had predestined fullness of life for the whole creation, starting from Genesis 1. Human beings were meant to play a key part in that. As Genesis 3:22 shows, if they had just eaten first from the Tree of Life, they would have become immortal in a glorious

state. Jesus now plays the role of the new Adam, the truly human one. So God is resuming His original plan.

- d. Why does Paul bring up the political rulers and make them the main point in 2:7 – 10?
 - i. Note that whenever Paul speaks of ‘rulers and authorities,’ he is talking about the unity of the church (Eph.1:20 – 23; 6:10 – 20; Col.2:15; Gal.4:8 – 9).
- e. Why would it be meaningful for people of Greek, Roman, Jewish, etc. background to be reminded that their ‘rulers’ had not known Jesus truly?
 - i. Rulers were supposed to embody the very best of their peoples?
 - ii. Rulers embodied the decisions of the peoples?
 - iii. ‘The rulers didn’t understand’ in 2:8a is parallel is to 2:9a, where Paul says that ‘men don’t understand.’
- f. Was it possible for the rulers to NOT crucify Jesus, in 2:8b?
 - i. No. They would have killed Jesus one way or the other because of their love of power. The issue is not killing Jesus vs. letting Jesus live. The issue is public crucifixion vs. private murder.
 - ii. Crucifixion was public, and that’s the point Paul is making. Jesus was (and still is) regathering all humanity under his lordship, so he was relativizing all other rulers. This provoked anger and jealousy. By crucifying him in a very public way, the most ethical community in the world (the Jews) and the best judicial system of the time (the Romans) conspired to publicly kill an innocent man. In so doing, they exposed themselves as false to their own ideals. Had they known that this was what they were doing, they would have found some other way to kill him quietly and secretly.
- g. So Paul is arguing that the Corinthians’ views of power ultimately lead them to idolize and imitate the rulers of the age. Who divides humanity up like the Corinthians? The rulers of the world do. Who judges power and wisdom like the Corinthians? The rulers do – their own political systems. And what did the rulers wind up doing? Publicly killing Jesus and embarrassing themselves.
- h. APPLICATION: If you were offered more money and power, which would you be willing to give up?:
 - i. Your health, like if you had to get only a little sleep, or do things that hurt your back, or breathe in bad air...
 - ii. A day of rest (the Sabbath principle)
 - iii. Your honesty, like if you had to lie
 - iv. Your friendship with others, like if you couldn’t be in meaningful friendships because you were always looking to use others
 - v. Your family, like if you had to work all the time
 - vi. Your time to learn Scripture and pray and worship Jesus
 - vii. Your faith, like if you were taken hostage by an anti-Christian group and threatened over your life
- i. Illus: What is the church called to be and do? Agents of reconciliation, like the pastors in Ferguson, Missouri who tried to bring all sides together:
<http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/watch/missouri-pastors-unite-ferguson-through-faith-319799363530>. Rev. Willis Johnson, who protested with others in the streets, and held back a young man from getting into an altercation with the police:
<http://www.npr.org/2014/08/14/340422502/ferguson-pastor-this-is-not-a-race-issue-this-is-a-human-issue>.
- j. Illus: When Christian faith spread to the African Nubian kingdoms, two warring kings came to Jesus at around the same time, reconciled their differences, and united their kingdoms!
- k. Illus: The World War I story of soccer between the trenches. *Silent Night*, by Stanley Weintraub, is the story of Christmas Eve 1914 on the World War I battlefield in Flanders. As the German, British, and French troops facing each other were settling in for the night, a young German soldier began to sing ‘Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.’ Others joined in. When they had finished, the British and French responded with other Christmas carols. Eventually, the men from both sides left their trenches and met in the middle. They shook hands, exchanged gifts, and shared pictures of their families. Informal soccer games began in what had been ‘no-man’s-land.’ And a joint service was held to bury the dead of both sides. The generals, of course, were not pleased with these events. Men who have come to know each other’s names and seen each other’s families are much less

likely to want to kill each other. War seems to require a nameless, faceless enemy. So, following that magical night the men on both sides spent a few days simply firing aimlessly into the sky. Then the war was back in earnest and continued for three more bloody years. Yet the story of that Christmas Eve lingered - a night when the angels really did sing of peace on earth.

Folksinger John McCutcheon wrote a song about that night in Belgium, titled 'Christmas in the Trenches,' from the viewpoint of a young British soldier. Several poignant verses are:

*'The next they sang was 'Stille Nacht,' 'Tis 'Silent Night', ' says I.
And in two tongues one song filled up that sky
'There's someone coming towards us!' the front line sentry cried
All sights were fixed on one lone figure coming from their side
His truce flag, like a Christmas star, shone on that plain so bright
As he bravely strode unarmed into the night.*

*Soon one by one on either side walked into No Man's land
With neither gun nor bayonet we met there hand to hand
We shared some secret brandy and we wished each other well
And in a flare-lit soccer game we gave 'em hell.
We traded chocolates, cigarettes, and photographs from home
These sons and fathers far away from families of their own
Young Sanders played his squeeze box and they had a violin
This curious and unlikely band of men.*

*Soon daylight stole upon us and France was France once more
With sad farewells we each began to settle back to war
But the question haunted every heart that lived that wondrous night
'Whose family have I fixed within my sights?'
'Twas Christmas in the trenches, where the frost so bitter hung
The frozen fields of France were warmed as songs of peace were sung
For the walls they'd kept between us to exact the work of war
Had been crumbled and were gone for evermore.'*

- l. For inspiring stories of Christian influence in 20th century non-violent reconciliation movements, see my paper, *The Role of Jesus in Revolution and the Pursuit of Justice*, <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-role-of-jesus-in-revolution-&-pursuit-of-justice-w-ppts.pdf>, telling the story of...
 - i. Leo Tolstoy in Russia
 - ii. Mohandas K. Gandhi in South Africa and India
 - iii. Ahn Chang-Ho in Korea
 - iv. The Black Church in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement
 - v. The Filipino People Power Movement
 - vi. Solidarity in Poland
 - vii. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa
 - m. For N.T. Wright's examples, see his lecture *God's Powerful Foolishness in a World of Foolish Power*, on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxMUL0foOA8> from 27 minute mark
 - i. South Africa, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, Truth and Reconciliation
 - ii. Fall of Communism, Pope John Paul II
 - iii. Cecily Saunders, founder of the modern hospice care movement in Britain
5. Focus on 2:10b – 16. Theme: 'Here's how we know Jesus and the truth about him.'
- a. Who is the Spirit of God? What is Paul's understanding of the Spirit? Why is this section so long? Paul contrasts the Spirit of God with 'the spirit of the world.' In Ephesians 2:2, Paul says there is a 'prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.' It's not that important whether or not Paul had 'the devil' in mind, or whether he

was just using rhetoric about 'the world' being about power and division, and the Spirit being about humility and unity.

- b. For the Jewish audience, they would have understood the Spirit to be the way the God who is above heaven and earth (i.e. He is transcendent) exercises His power in the world to bring forth new life. For example:
 - i. The Spirit of God hovered over the waters of creation and brought forth life (Gen.1:2).
 - ii. The Spirit of God was within Joseph to care for life (Gen.41:38).
 - iii. The Spirit led Israel through the waters of the Red Sea and brought them into a new life.
 - iv. The Spirit of God was within Moses and the elders to care for the Israelites (Num.11:23 – 29).
 - v. As Jewish Christians, they now understood the Spirit to be the Spirit of Jesus, who takes the new life of Jesus, in his new humanity, from within him and shares it with others. 'He will take of mine and will disclose it to you' (Jn.16:14)
- c. The Spirit knows the mind of God. Specifically, the Spirit tells us about Jesus.
 - i. Notice that Paul says that the rulers of this age crucified the Lord of glory (2:8b), not just a failed Jewish revolutionary. This is information we have by the Spirit. It is fairly important that that insight is the center of the previous chiasm in 2:7 – 10.
 - ii. It is also information we have by Jesus being resurrected. So the Spirit helps us interpret Jesus.
 - iii. Paul is also saying in B and B' (especially in v.14) that the natural man [i.e. the man without the Spirit] does not understand these things. It is an outsider perspective, in that the natural man is not *within* God by the Spirit.
 - A. Who knows the thoughts of God? The Spirit of God (10b – 11)
 - B. The Spirit gives us knowledge of God (v.12)
 - C. We speak what the Spirit has said (v.13)
 - B'. The natural man does not understand spiritual things (v.14)
 - A'. Who knows the mind of the Lord? We do by the Spirit (v.15)
 - iv. Paul is also saying that he, Apollos, and Simon Peter speak what the Spirit teaches. They are identical.
- d. How has the Spirit spoken? Expansion on verse 13
 - i. First, the Spirit spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament, to declare God's promises. Peter said so in 1 Peter 1:10 – 11: 'As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.' This is why the New Testament is built on the Hebrew Scriptures. Even in this very passage, Paul quotes from Isaiah 40:13 ('Who has known the mind of the Lord?') in 2:16 because that is about God coming to restore Israel from exile, and Paul says that God has come in Jesus to do that. And Paul quoted from Isaiah 64 – 66 as a whole ('Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man'¹) in 2:9, because that is about God's new heavens and new earth, and Paul is talking about our future resurrection so we can enjoy that new heavens and new earth in bodies that are fully healed and transformed. So the Spirit spoke in such a way that was public, not private. And what the Spirit said in the Hebrew Scriptures was confirmed by Jesus.
 - ii. Which is the second category: The Spirit has spoken through Jesus. Jesus interpreted himself publicly and taught people publicly. There were no secrets in the sense that one person was given special knowledge. So everything the Spirit said through Jesus could be cross checked. Especially what Jesus said about himself.

¹ I believe that Paul is taking Isaiah 64 – 66 as a whole and compacting it. In Isa.64:1 – 4, Isaiah longs for the Lord to rend the heavens and come down, doing something as unexpected and wonderful as He did for Israel long ago (64:3 – 4). But Isaiah longs specifically for a 'new heavens and new earth' (65:17; 66:22), which is exactly what Paul has in mind here in 1 Corinthians: resurrection.

- iii. And that brings us to the third category: The Spirit has spoken through the apostles, as they repeated Jesus and helped others understand him. Later in 1 Corinthians 7:10, Paul will say that he is explicitly repeating Jesus. ‘But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord...’ And repeatedly, Paul says that he is handing down what he was given:
 - 1. ‘And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you *the testimony of God.*’ (2:1)
 - 2. ‘For this reason I have sent to you Timothy...and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, *just as I teach everywhere in every church.* (4:17)
 - 3. ‘But to the married *I give instructions, not I, but the Lord....*’ (7:10)
 - 4. ‘And so *I direct in all the churches.*’ (7:17)
 - 5. ‘So also *the Lord directed* those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.’ (9:14)
 - 6. ‘To those who are without law, [I become] as without law, though not being without the law of God but under *the law of Christ.* (9:21)
 - 7. ‘Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to *the traditions,* just as I delivered them to you.’ (11:2)
 - 8. ‘For *I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you,* that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread...’ (11:23 – 25)
 - 9. ‘The things which I write to you are *the Lord’s commandment.*’ (14:37)
 - 10. ‘...Hold fast the word which I preached to you... *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,* that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...’ (15:2 – 4)
 - iv. So when Paul is talking about the Spirit giving him stuff to say, he is referring to *all of this.* Publicly said, publicly written, publicly passed on. Not private, not secret, not individual.
- 6. Focus on 3:1 – 4. Theme: ‘You won’t be able to understand more until you stop fighting, reconcile, and live a life of love.’
 - a. What is the natural man? What is the spiritual man? Why can’t Paul just say everything he wants to the Corinthians at once? How come he thinks they wouldn’t understand? They’re not ready, but why not?
 - b. If you don’t know the love of Jesus, you will just use Christian faith as a way to feel superior to, and write off, ...
 - i. that kid you never liked;
 - ii. white supremacists;
 - iii. your alcoholic father;
 - iv. Muslim radicals like ISIS, Hezbollah, Fatah, and Boko Haram
 - v. Or you’ll do something like make ‘knowledge’ into the greatest Christian virtue and treat as lesser other people who don’t ‘know’ as much
 - vi. Or you’ll make ‘power and influence’ into the greatest Christian virtue and treat as lesser other people who are not ‘powerful and influential’
 - vii. Leader: if you can recall a personal story when you did this, and share...
 - c. Truth can be dangerous for a young, immature Christian who doesn’t actually want to live out the love of Jesus.
 - d. Application: Tie back into the rulers of this age. They are passing away. But they care only about their position and power. Are you like them? Are you a politician? Or do you want to live by the truth?
 - i. Application: If you not say that you have a personal relationship with Jesus, consider how you are seeking to know the truth. If you say of Islam, ‘Islam must not be true because I like alcohol (since devout Muslims don’t drink alcohol),’ do you think that is a fair way to treat Islam? Of course not. So if you say of Christianity, ‘Christianity must not be true because I like _____, and Jesus is against it,’ is that a fair way to treat Christian faith? Of course not. It’s putting your own sense of power first.

- ii. Application: If you do already identify as a follower of Jesus, consider how the body of Christ around the world has to play a role in reconciliation, not giving into the powers, but proclaiming Jesus and the teaching of Jesus.