

# Studies in 1 Corinthians

## ▶ LESSON VIII: DISCERNING A SPIRITUAL REALITY

### Intro

The last lesson focused on verses 1-5, in which Paul described his approach to evangelism and ministry. Why do some people accept God's truth, while others reject it out of hand? The answer is found in verses 6-16.

### Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 (NLT)

**6** Yet when I am among mature believers, I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world or to the rulers of this world, who are soon forgotten. **7** No, the wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God<sup>[c]</sup>—his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began. **8** But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord. **9** That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”<sup>[d]</sup>

**10** But<sup>[e]</sup> it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. **11** No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. **12** And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

**13** When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.<sup>[f]</sup> **14** But people who aren't spiritual<sup>[g]</sup> can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. **15** Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. **16** For,

“Who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?”<sup>[h]</sup>

But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

### Footnotes:

- a.** Greek *brothers* **b.** Greek *God's mystery*; other manuscripts read *God's testimony*  
**c.** Greek *But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery* **d.** Isa 64:4. **e.** Some manuscripts read *For*  
**f.** Or *explaining spiritual truths in spiritual language*, or *explaining spiritual truths to spiritual people*  
**g.** Or *who don't have the Spirit*; or *who have only physical life* **h.** Isa 40:13 (Greek version)

## *Questions for Thought & Discussion*

**I.** Why did Paul reserve the “wisdom of God” to share with “mature” believers (vs. 6)? How does this thought tie in with Philippians 3:15 and Hebrews 5:12-13? What implications does this have for how we teach today?

**II.** Verse 7 speaks of the “mystery of God” (literally “God’s wisdom in a mystery”) that was once kept veiled from the world, but has now been revealed—how (verse 10)? Does 1 Peter 1:10-12 shed any light on the question?

**III.** Have you ever made a mistake on a test or made a major purchase that you later regretted because you simply didn’t have enough information to guide you? Verse 8 says the rulers of the world would not have crucified Jesus had they understood what truth?

**IV.** Paul quotes from a beautiful passage in Isaiah 64:4 to make a point in verse 9—what is it? How does the Old Testament enrich our understanding of the New?

**V.** The Greek philosophers and mystery religions of Paul’s day were highly sought because people believed they had the potential to unlock deep and mysterious truths about life, the universe, and the afterlife. In contrast to this, how do Christians access the deep truths about God (vv. 10-13)?

**VI.** Do verses 14-16 explain why many people look at our commitment to Christ as ridiculous? Why don’t more people believe in the Christian faith?

