

Title: God's "Foolish" Wisdom pt.2

Text: 1 Corinthians 2.10b-13

Theme: The ministry of the Spirit

Series: 1 Corinthians #9

Prop Stmt. You must have the Spirit of God in order to understand, desire and obey the things of God.

Helicopter parents is a recent term that describes parents who "hover" over their kids. Whether it's because they feel guilty over past failures, or because they think their kids have to have everything they did not have, or because they want to play "god" and make the world perfect for their kids – who knows. But helicopter parents drive school teachers nuts, they not only do their kids homework, some of them are writing their kids papers when the kid is in college. Now, let's take a family that has a serious case of helicopteritis (or a child-centered home). The child is being raised with all privileges and no responsibilities. Every morning the child has an outfit laid out ready to be worn. Every day, someone else picks up his room, makes his bed, prepares his breakfast with exactly what he wants, makes his lunch with exactly what he wants, makes his dinner with exactly what he wants. In order to ensure that he plays on the soccer team, dad cuts a deal with the coach and buys all new uniforms. In order to make sure he has friends, mom has a pool put in the backyard. The family goes on vacation, where he wants to go, and does what he wants to do. When going out to eat, the child always gets to pick. He gets whatever car he wants, and can spend as much money as he wants. When he runs into problems, his parents always bail him out. These series of short term decisions play very well toward the child's innate tendencies, because every child is born with a default setting of self-centeredness. Our self-worship or self-centeredness is a huge challenge anyway, but when a child is raised by helicopter parents, then he is actually led to believe that it is the job of everyone and everything in his world to cooperate with his self-centeredness.

Now, let's take this kid and marry him to a self-centered girl. She is just as vain and shallow as he is. She is demanding, manipulative, petty and always "right." We tell him, ok, by the way, you have to stop living for yourself and start living for her. That means that you have to deny yourself, always consider her needs to be more important than yours, provide for the spiritual, material and relational needs and by the way your parents are no longer helping you, you are totally on your own starting...now! – have fun! What are the chances of a happy marriage? Or, let's take this guy and put him in a leper's community in India and say, live for these needy people 24-7, is that going to work? Or, let's take this guy and ask him to write a book on how to be sacrificial charity.

This guy has no idea, no concept of how self-centered he really is. His idea of right and normal is for the world to give him what he wants. His idea of right, is really wrong. His idea of normal is upside down. What kind of a religion would you expect self-centered people to come up with? A religion that is man-centered. This guy needs for his entire operating system to be completely re-calibrated. His heart needs to be changed, so that he can see that his self-centeredness is in reality not the key to his happiness, but the path of destruction. How can you get a person to see that? Hold on to that question.

That scenario is a little like church. We are born with a sinful nature. The theological term of total depravity is an attempt to describe how thoroughly affected we are by sin and as a result how fundamentally self-centered we really are. How do people like that get along? They get along fine as long as they are all getting what they want. But, what happens when inevitably they do not get what they want? Welcome to Corinth. Here was a church that was running into problems, and these problems were revealing some things in their own hearts and lives that had to be addressed. Some of the problems sound a little familiar.

How do believers deal with the problem of division? 1-4

How do believers deal with the problem of immorality? 5

How do believers deal with the problem of lawsuits? 6a

How do believers deal with the problem of living in a sin-cursed world? 6b

How do believers deal with family issues (marriage, singleness, divorce, etc.) 7

Have any of these issues affected your life and family? Have any of these issues affected our church? Sure – all of the time?

So, how do believers deal with the problem of division?

1. We go back to the cross because the cross is the key to our understanding of how deep our problem really is, and how great and gracious Christ Jesus is.
2. We have to rely upon God's Wisdom.

This entire section is dealing with the problem of division in relationships by going to the heart of the problem. You have a problem because you are not living in a manner that is consistent with who you are. (explain)

Spiritual-----vs.----- Infants-vs.-Mature -----vs.-----Unspiritual  
(of the Spirit) (supposed to be of the Spirit) (not of the Spirit)

In this section, Paul is carefully and skillfully laying the theological foundation for dealing with the problem of division by showing why we have to rely upon God's wisdom instead of our own. The big idea is this: heavenly truth is naturally unknowable to the human heart. On our own, we cannot bridge the chasm between us and God. He is the Creator, we are the creation. Only God can bridge the gap, which He has chosen to do. In this passage, Paul is focusing on how the Spirit of God (3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity) bridges that gap by making known to us, things that would otherwise be unknowable. But the ministry of the Spirit is more than making things known to us, the Spirit of God makes the truths of God (particularly the gospel of Christ) believable and desirable to us. That is the Spirit of God changes our affections and gives to us an affinity for the truths of God. What do you think of when you hear the word – spiritual? Such as, "Oh that person is deeply spiritual." Popularly, the word spiritual means, mystically religious, and can encompass, Buddhism, TM, Hinduism, etc. Technically, those things are not spiritual because they are not of God's Spirit. That which is Spiritual, is of the Spirit.

Please keep in mind that you cannot separate the ministry of the Spirit from the message of Christ. God's Spirit takes God's truth and makes us aware of how personally important and ground-shaking significant this truth really is.

1. **Only the Spirit of God KNOWS the Heart of God.** (10b-11)

Paul's argument is that "like is known by like." Do you remember those great forays into forensics that you used to explore as a kid? Do you recall with fondness honing your logic and sharpening your rhetoric on the school bus? Does your memory serve you with reminders of how you used to widen your vocabulary in the line going to lunch and learn to think on your feet on the playground as you dove into point and counterpoint? Those great platforms for debate would echo with such momentous expressions such as: "You've got cooties." "Do not!" "Do so!" "Do not!".... "Oh yeah?" "Well, you're a \_\_\_\_!" (fill in the blank with whatever was the worst thing to be at that moment) And then would come the final two lines. "Takes one to know one!" "And you know them all." It sounds remarkably like Congress, doesn't it? But the fact is, there is some truth in that final line. In fact, that is the point of this passage. It takes one to know one. In proving this point, Paul uses an analogy of the human spirit vs. God's spirit. Follow the argument: Just as...

**A. Only a person can relate to another person.**

In this statement, Paul is not only making an obvious point, he is doing it in a rather subtle way in order to point out something else. Just as only the spirit of a human can understand the human, so too, only the Spirit of God can fully understand God. Only the human spirit can understand a human. God is on a different level than we are. Our spirit cannot understand God. In order for us to understand, we need – God's Spirit.

God created you as a human. You do not have the spirit of an animal, you have the spirit of human. Therefore, you do not fully understand animals because you function on a different level than animals. Now, don't miss the point that Paul is making here. Only a person can understand a person, because only a person has the spirit of a person. An animal does not have the spirit of a person. Now, this point is also true in a specific sense. Just as only a person can understand a person...

**B. Only the person's spirit knows the real truth.**

You may think that you know what is going on inside another person, but in reality, only that person knows. As much as I know you, or you know me, I will never know all of your thoughts, and you will never know all of my thoughts. And even then, although we know ourselves better than any other person knows us... Even then, the person's spirit does not know everything. Our hearts are so affected by our self-centeredness (remember that word depravity) we can deceive ourselves into thinking that we are doing something for the right reason when in truth we are doing something for the wrong reason. But that is not the main point Paul is making here.

OK, let's put this together. Only a person can know another person and only that person can really know what is going on inside himself or herself. On a human level, I am the only one who knows what is going on inside of me, unless of course, I choose to express those thoughts in words. Therefore, there is no way, that a human can understand the wisdom of God because we are human, not divine.

### **C. God's Spirit is Divine, not human.**

Apart from the ministry of the Spirit, we are incapable of understanding and comprehending the wisdom and the ways of God. The difference between us and God is more than the difference between you and another person. As an individual person, you have private thoughts that are known only to you, and no one else knows those. But other humans are capable of knowing those. The distinction that this text is making is proving that there is an infinite chasm that separates the things of God and the things of people. That chasm can only be bridged by God. It is God, the Spirit who bridges that gap and who brings spiritual life to the unspiritual person and awakens the soul to the beauty, the desirableness, and the logical and spiritual necessity of the gospel.

“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.” (10b) The Spirit does not search for the deep things of God as if He is lost and is looking. A better translation would be the Spirit searches OUT all things, even the deep things of God. His job is to reveal these things. He does because he knows them and why does the Spirit of God know these truths? It is because the Spirit of God is God. It is very clear from this verse that the Spirit of God is God, just as Christ is clearly viewed as being God from the title, “Lord of glory” that is in verse 8. This entire passage supports the critical doctrine of the Trinity.

What are the “deep things of God”? Paul is calling the deep things of God the secret wisdom of God. What is the secret wisdom of God? It is the plan of God to redeem and justify sinners through the death of His Son on the cross.

Therefore:

### **2. We have to have God's Spirit to understand God. (12)**

What is the point of verse 12? With the spirit of the world (an expression that refers to your natural condition) you cannot find God all on your own. This is the big idea of this paragraph. You have to have help. Without the help of God's Spirit, you would never know God if you met Him. Why not? Because in our natural condition, sin has so blinded us to truth, that we naturally reject the truth about God and then replace it with our own ideas. Now, I could launch into a lengthy speech about post-modernity and the rejection of absolute truth and the replacement of the truth about God with self-centered notions, etc. And many of us could find a measure of comfort in that speech because we profess to believe in the one, true God who has revealed Himself as Trinity and has given us the written revelation of His heart, plans and purposes in the Bible.

But, let's go back to the purpose of this section and the purpose of this book. Remember that the believers in Corinth were in a mess. They were practical atheists. Do you understand what I mean by that? They professed to trust in God, which means that they had the ministry of the Spirit within them. But, they were ignoring the wisdom of God and the ways of God in how they were attempting to solve the problems in their lives and relationships. So, in a practical way, they were living just like everyone else lived. There was no difference. Developing unity in our homes and in this church is a deeply spiritual issue. Unity comes from knowing, desiring and following the truths of God. You cannot know, desire or follow the truths of God without the Spirit of God. How do you explain the benefits and joys of moral purity to a person who really thinks that there is nothing more important in life than sexual satisfaction? How do you convince a person that being generous is important when that person really believes that the supreme goal in life is to accumulate as much as you can? How do you teach a couple to reconcile problems at the heart level, when at the heart level each one is living only for self? The person who lives according to the spirit of the world is living, practically, as if there is nothing beyond this physical world.

When I/we counsel individuals and couples, we know that the heart of conflict is a spiritual issue. It makes no sense to some people to forgive, to restore, to serve, to love, and to give. When I hold Christ up before a person and say, this is how we are to live and the person says, "yea, what will that get me?" I realize that this person may not be a follower of Christ, because there is no understanding and no affection for Christlikeness.

Are you hearing me? If you are refusing to work on your part of the problem or to carry out your responsibility to forgive, it may be because you need to get saved.

### 3. We have to cooperate with God's Spirit. (13)

This passage is a masterful stroke that is skillfully presented. Paul has just exposed the lofty spirituality of the Corinthians as being truly narcissistic and pathetic. Keep in mind that some of these people in the church at Corinth were now sitting in judgment on Paul, who had started the church. One of the reasons why they were looking down on him, was because, in their estimation, he was not a great orator.

2 Cor. 10.10 "For some of you say...in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." In the next chapter Paul says, "I may not be trained as a speaker..." (2 Cor. 11.6) Do get the picture? The believers were measuring the ministry of Paul based upon his delivery instead of his content and they were calling themselves spiritual! They were sitting in judgment of him because he did not measure up to them based on what was impressive to the world. But, in our text (v.13) do you see Paul's point? When I came, I taught in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words." In other words, the things that I taught, were the truths of God, that unless you were truly of the Spirit, you could not understand. What did Paul do? Did he try to wow the people? Did he try to impress them? If he did, he obviously failed. No, he taught them God's truth, realizing that those with the Spirit of God would resonate with those truths and would understand them, desire them and follow them. I think that what Paul is

saying in this verse is the same idea he expresses in v.4. His manner of teaching is consistent with the subject that he is dealing with. You cannot teach the real gospel by using shallow, manipulative, gimmicky means. That which appeals to the natural human condition of self-centeredness limits God to basically a cosmic being whose benign job is to make me feel fulfilled and forgiven may be a message that plays well to the religious consumerism of the day. But in this context where Paul has been clearly dealing with the gospel, he is clearly arguing that there is only one way to preach the truths about God's gospel and that is to use the means of the Spirit, which is the language of the Spirit. You have to preach these doctrinal truths in a doctrinal way, otherwise you forfeit the gospel. But just as the church needs to present the gospel in a manner that is consistent with the message, the church also needs to fully embrace the implications of the gospel, not only in bringing us to God through Christ, but in calling us to live like Christ in our relationships.

Someday I would love for us to landscape the west side of the Gathering space complete with a walking path, gardens, gazebo, all strategically placed so that in the summer we have an outdoor venue for people to come and enjoy an evening of instrumentalists playing, in the gardens, good books from the bookrack and good coffee and tea from the café. But, let's say that all of this is in place and you come one evening but in coming you close your eyes, hold your nose and plug your ears. All that has been provided for you does not benefit you at all. But, if someone opens your eyes, and shows you all of the plants, and points out their significance and then takes out your earplugs and draws your attention to the music that is being played, and you hear the water of the fountain then now you can see and hear all that was there all along.

That is what the Spirit of God does for us. He opens our eyes and ears to see and hear what God has done for us and enables us to see the path that God has provided for us to walk. To walk in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5.25) is to live according to His truth and to govern your relationships as such. We live differently than our world. We love differently. We forgive differently. We are led by the Spirit.