

## Spiritual Wisdom

### 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

#### Introduction

**Parking Secret:** Moved off campus when I was in college and parking passes were hundreds of dollars a semester (parking tickets from the city were only \$25 if you paid them in seven days, so as long as I got less than eleven tickets a year I was good). But street parking is hard to find. And one day I stumbled on a spot that no one else seemed to know about. It was like this beautiful treasure sitting right in front of everyone's eyes. It was there all along. This great parking mystery had a simple solution that no one knew.

- The gospel sometimes is like that. It is obscure until it is explained to you. But it's a secret right in the open for those that have eyes to see.

<sup>6</sup> Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— <sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. <sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. <sup>16</sup> "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. The Hidden Wisdom of God (vv. 6-8)

**Mature:** <sup>6</sup> Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>6</sup> Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων· <sup>7</sup> ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἣν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν, <sup>8</sup> ἣν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἔγνωκεν· εἰ γὰρ ἔγνωσαν, οὐκ ἂν τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης ἔσταύρωσαν. <sup>9</sup> ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται, ἼΑ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν. <sup>10</sup> ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>11</sup> τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ; οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδεὶς ἔγνωκεν εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>12</sup> ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν. <sup>13</sup> ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες. <sup>14</sup> ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ· μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται. <sup>15</sup> ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται. <sup>16</sup> τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν; ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.

- We've seen Paul talk about maturity before. "Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you" (Phil 3:15). But earlier in that same paragraph he says he hasn't reached full maturity (same word): Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own (Phil 3:12).
  - What this doesn't and cannot mean is that you have to graduate to some special level of Christianity to understand the deep things of God (e.g., JV vs. Varsity Christians).
  - It's talking about the natural path of "growing up" (not the inner sanctum of some secret society). He's looking for spiritual adults rather than infants.
- "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3-4) -or- "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Cor 13:11).
  - To "humble" yourself like a child is to understand and accept your status as a child (not to imitate childish behavior). \*I don't know if you've met any children but they're not really "humble" in attitude. They're humble in position.
  - Jesus calls us to childlike faith not childishness. We are God's children not perpetual infants. Even children are supposed to "grow up." I'm still my parents' child (position) but I'm a grown-up (behavior/attitude; \*hopefully).
  - Growing up in the faith is good! God has designed us to mature (our desire is to see all of our kids grow up; diapers, clothing, etc.). **We should maintain our childlike trust but develop Christ-like maturity.**
- For Paul, maturity is not human intelligence or power or even self-reliance. (Last week we showed how God confounds the wisdom of this world by choosing a seemingly foolish means (the cross) and a foolish people (Christians) to demonstrate *his power*. **True maturity is the ability to build your life on the crucified Christ and depend completely on him.**
  - There seems to be a dose of **irony** in these words because they are not acting like spiritual adults but worldly infants (cf. 3:1). They are not walking in Christlikeness but worldliness. **They think they are mature in the eyes of the world but in the eyes of God they are immature.**

**This Age and the Age to Come:** although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. The cross is **true wisdom from God** but it is different than the wisdom of the world.

- The unspiritual (will explain) do not recognize it as wisdom. *We talked about the foolishness of the gospel last week* (loving enemies, dying to save, last will be first, etc.).
- Here it highlights the power brokers of the current world. The rulers of this age, those who appear to control the wealth and authority (e.g., the billionaires, politicians, and celebrities).

- This age (the broken, fallen world, out of rhythm world—you and I included) vs. the age to come (“the day of the Lord, when all the wrong will be made right, lies will be made untrue”).
  - Jesus comes to do something different. He brings the age to come crashing into this age. So we live in this “time between the times” the “now and not yet” reign of God.
  - We become the “first fruits” of this new age. We live in this broken world in the strength and life we have hidden in Christ in the coming age (we’re singing a different song, living by a different story, a different value system). We’re tuned to a different radio station.

**Passing Away:** pass away All of this brokenness is going to pass away. How many of us are investing our time, mental energy, hopes, and dreams in things that will certainly pass away? Is your treasure stored in this world “where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal” (Matt 6:19)? **Are you living for temporary acclaim rather than eternal significance?**

- <sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (1 Jn 2:15-17).

**Secret Wisdom:** <sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret (μυστηρίω) and hidden wisdom of God. Again, this isn’t backroom secrets for the elite, because God has *revealed them*. Contra Scientology (higher levels for most dedicated, etc.) or Mormonism (secret rituals in the temple). That’s why we have such a high value of transparency in our church (God is light).

- Those things that are hidden to our natural senses are freely and generously shown to us by God. Christianity is not a puzzle that is hard to solve but a mystery impossible to grasp apart from God. It’s not a secret code that we have to crack but truth that can’t be discerned apart from God.
- It is not a hidden secret anymore, it is an “open secret.”
- The mystery or secret of the gospel is not meant to be hidden but to be revealed. One of the reasons some of you can’t talk about the mysteries of the gospel is because you aren’t in on their secrets (you haven’t experienced their truth).
- But(!) Jesus makes the opaque make sense. He freely gives us access to his power and plan.
  - It’s not secret tips to invest your money and get rich (if you’ll pay me) but secret wisdom of God that I want to tell you *freely*.

**Decree:** which God decreed before the ages for our glory. And God’s wisdom is not a last-ditch effort to fix what is broken, it was his eternal plan. The cross was not God’s afterthought. The church was not God’s plan B.

- <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through

the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him (Eph 3:8-12).

**Weakness of Rulers:** <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Because of sin, those who are not in Christ don't understand this. Those who had all the human wisdom and power are so blinded to the plan of God they killed his Messiah. The greatest religious minds and political leaders of Jesus' day got together and crucified God.

- Do you know how exhausting it is to fight against God's plan? (e.g., paddling canoe upstream and not going anywhere; you're just tired and didn't move; or Rip Current).
- For the powerful in this world, the one thing they need to come to God is the one thing they don't have—"nothing." Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise (1 Cor 3:18).
  - An elderly French woman had inherited a small, old religious painting on wood. In her 90s, she considered throwing it away as she prepared to sell her home. After all, it was a dusty, faded, unimportant painting simply hanging over a hot plate in her kitchen (as it had done for decades). As an auctioneer catalogued her belongings for her estate sale and suggested she ask an expert if it had any more value than that. It turns out, it was an early Italian primitivist painting from Cimabue (Chee-muh-boo-ay). It sold for \$27 million.
- This is the world with Christ. They have the most valuable treasure in front of them but they see it as worthless trash to be discarded (i.e., crucified).

## 2. The Revelation of the Spirit of God (vv. 9-12)

**Revelation:** <sup>9</sup> But, as it is written<sup>2</sup>, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— <sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

- From a human perspective, we can't imagine the beautiful eternity God has planned for his people. It's beyond our wildest dreams.
- But God has told us! We can't fully comprehend but we can truly know what eternal life with God will be like. All through the Bible God reveals the joys of the new heavens and earth where sin is no more and Jesus reigns.

God opens our imaginations to this reality through the revelation of his Spirit.

- "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord." Without the Spirit of God changing my heart, I can't see the beautiful plan that God has revealed in Jesus.
- This whole passage explains that human capacities are not enough to know God and his plan. I don't find God, he finds me. I don't discover his will, he reveals it to me. I am not a Christian because I figured out some secret, I am a Christian because God opened my

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<sup>2</sup> Possibly non-canonical or *agraphon*. The closest quote might be Isaiah 64:4. Origen says it is from the *Apocalypse of Elijah*—no longer extant—and it is similar to a *Gospel of Thomas* quote.

eyes to see him. I am a Christian not because of me (where I was born, what I prefer, etc.) but because of God.

- We live as Christians. We see the problems of the world as Christians. We read the Bible as Christians. We treat people as Christians. Because Christ has shown the light of the gospel into our hearts.

**Holy Spirit:** How has God opened our eyes? Through his Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For some of us, when you say “HS” it makes us a little nervous (you might think we believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Bible).

- One pastor calls the HS “the Forgotten God” (Chan). The reality is, that the HS is the closest person of the Trinity to us but the one we are often most ignorant of.
  - (1) We tend to ignore the HS altogether -or- (2) abuse the gifts of the Spirit for our own glory (like the Corinthians later in the letter).
- **The HS and the Bible are not at odds.** The Spirit inspired Scriptures and the Spirit who indwells every believer work together. The HS never contradicts Scripture and always glorifies Christ (Paul himself explains the work of the HS with \*at least\* three Scripture quotations in this passage).
  - I don’t think we overemphasize the Scripture (that’s impossible) but that we often underemphasize the Spirit.
- The Spirit is not an **impersonal force** or energy field, but a person of the triune God (that’s why we say “he” -not male- and not “it” and why “Spirit” is a much better word than “Holy Ghost”).
- This is the promise of God: **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules** (Ez 36:26-27).
  - The Bible tells us not to “quench the Spirit” (1 Thes 5:19).
  - The Spirit is a teacher, helper, and counselor to guide us into truth (Jn 16:13).
  - The Spirit can be grieved (Eph 4:29).
  - We are called to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18).
  - We are told to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16) whose fruit is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). **What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit?**

**Why the Spirit:** <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

- Who knows what you’re really thinking (only you do). Your spirit knows.
- Only God knows God. The only way to know God is if he reveals himself to us (like knows like; takes one to know one).
  - Science, technology, philosophy, religion, etc. will not get us to God. Only God can get us to God.

**Whose Are You?:** <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. If you are in Christ, then you have received his Spirit.

- Those who are not in Christ are still beholden to the spirit of the world. The culture, values, and allegiance of the world defines their identity.
- We belong to a different value system.
- This is the problem in Corinth, they have the Spirit of God but are living according to the Spirit of the world.
- Rather than listening to the Spirit, are you listening to the world? Are you being disciplined by the culture of our day or the personal God?
  - As followers of Christ our behavior concerning sex, generosity, political engagement, work, money, power, etc. should *look different* than the world.
  - “We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be” (Vonnegut).
- We have open access to the thoughts of God, why are we following the world? Too often we live just like the world. We spend our money and time just like the world. We let the values of the world rather than the values of the Spirit decide and determine our behavior and priorities.

### 3. The Mind of Christ (vv. 13-16)

**Spiritual:** <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

- We’ve turned spirituality into some astrological, foo-foo, thing rather than what it is in Scripture. In our day people are more concerned with your astrological sign and aura than with your doctrine.
  - To be “spiritual” is to be “from the Holy Spirit, to be led and directed by the Spirit of God.”
- Paul is saying, too often, we have put spirituality at odds with the cross, making it human. The Corinthians are more concerned with “philosophy than prophecy, with rhetoric than revelation” (Hays).
- “The Spirit that teaches understanding to the Christians is not some kind of spirit of field, forest, and meadow, nor is it a natural magic potency that produces enthusiasm; rather, it is the spirit of the crucified Christ... [This] spirit is to be measured by the cross, and it is therefore unavoidably a critic of all self-directed wisdom and likewise of all elite wisdom” (Schrage).
- “To be spiritual... is to [understand] the word of the cross in such a way that it has transformed [your] entire existence... to [a] cruciform life, a life characterized by self-sacrificing love, and where power is [shown] through weakness” (Grindheim).

**Two Types of People:** <sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

- There are two types of people: the “natural” (ψυχικὸς) and the “spiritual” (πνευματικὸς).

- The “natural” person puts themselves as the arbiter of God and his truth (e.g., human desires; some desires don’t need to be satisfied, they need to be crucified).
- They might understand facts in the Bible but can never understand the truths of God. Natural wisdom can tell you there is a God but only spiritual wisdom can show you the heart of God and allow you to submit to him.
- “The wisdom of God remains opaque to unspiritual persons with only their natural faculties to guide them” (Garland). **We shouldn’t expect “natural” persons to understand why we do what we do**, nor should we be embarrassed if they think we’re crazy.
  - The “unspiritual” will try stand above you as judge, but you don’t answer to them. You and I answer to God. We are not seeking the approval from the world but from God.

**Mind of Christ:** <sup>16</sup> “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

- With another OT quote (Is 40:13), Paul reminds us just how significant it is to have the Spirit of God in us. The “spirit of the Lord” (MT) and the “mind of the Lord” (LXX) is one and the same (cf. Phil 2:5; “mind of Christ”). Spirit and Christ are often used interchangeably (one God=three persons).
  - The gospel reminds us that Christ not only pays the penalty for our sin and establishes our residence in eternity with him, but lives in us now, transforming our hearts to be like him.

## Conclusion:

**Spiritual Living:** But for some of us, there is no relationship with God (e.g., legally married spouse but strangers under the same roof, parallel lives, occasionally come together vs. healthy relationship with spouse).

- We will tune into the news, podcasts, friends opinions, the latest Netflix show but we spend little to no time tuning into the “mind of Christ.”
- “It’s hard to get in shape spiritually if you only work out on Sunday” (Whitt), or frankly a couple Sundays a month if we’re lucky.

We are called to the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of this age; the Spirit of God, not the spirit the world offers; the revelation of God, not what the rulers of this age know.

- If this is going to happen then we are going to have to **grow** in our knowledge, love, and trust of the Spirit more than the world. We have to **make space** in our mind, hearts, and schedules for uninterrupted time with the Holy Spirit. We need to **comprehend** the plan and character of God to know when he is revealing himself to us. This is why reading Scripture and daily prayer and worship are essential (letters from the Spirit, conversation with the Spirit).