



Community Group

Talk Sheet

Starting Jan 22, 2012 Week 1

Stamford Campus

SERMON TITLE: “Social Intelligence”
1st Corinthians 2:1-5
Summary

This week we begin a series of messages on 1st Corinthians 2, a chapter that gets to the core of a most important issue, the way we THINK. In the first 5 verses, Paul demonstrates that a God-pleasing life of true social intelligence comes from filling your mind with God’s wisdom and then LIVING OUT OF YOUR MIND.

1st Corinthians is a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church that he planted in the Greek city of Corinth. And even though Paul was the founder, some of those church members were voicing criticisms against Paul and talking behind his back. The source of the criticism against Paul is summarized in two words from chapter 2, verse 1, “human wisdom.” But to understand, we need a little background on the City of Corinth.

Corinth was proud of many things, including its reputation for “Sophia,” the Greek word for wisdom. Corinth was loaded with philosophers who received high praise as “lovers of wisdom” and who promised that their superior knowledge would solve their followers’ personal problems; would make them richer and more powerful in life; and would help them gain the favor of the gods and through casting curses on enemies.

These promises seem like wild claims but what made them believable was that they came from teachers who were spell-binding orators with larger-than-life personalities. And just like the Town of Corinth was proud of its reputation for Sophia, the CHURCH in Corinth puffed with the same pride and looked down on Paul because he was no philosopher.

The truth of the cross is the centerpiece of Paul’s response to the criticism brought against him. Paul said that the real issue behind their criticism is not a “style” conflict it; is a “worldview” conflict. Paul argues that their conflict is the clash of two incompatible worldviews he calls human wisdom and God’s wisdom.

These two types of wisdom are two opposite ways of thinking about oneself, about others, about life and about relationships.

HUMAN WISDOM measures a person’s value based on their possession of certain status symbols and an impressive image.
Following HUMAN WISDOM leads to the thought pattern:
“Promote Self, Protect Image, Project Strength, Press Advantage”

The criticism of Paul is that he didn’t follow human wisdom. Paul didn’t try to impress people with his eloquence like the philosophers. Paul didn’t try to spin his message to get in with the power people. Paul didn’t promote himself and press advantage for his own selfish gain like the philosophers. Paul followed God’s Wisdom, not Human Wisdom. God’s Wisdom is Christ crucified, which is a much different worldview.

GOD’S WISDOM measures a person’s value based on the demonstration of God’s love in the cross and His offer of new life in Christ.
Following GOD’S WISDOM leads to the thought pattern:

“Admit Need, Adopt Humility, Accept Grace, Apply Love.”
The cross of Jesus teaches me how to think about God, myself and my relationships because

The cross of Jesus teaches me that God is perfect, but I am NOT
God’s Wisdom sets me free to Be Authentic in my relationships
God’s Wisdom Sets me free from relationship-destroying Pride

The cross of Jesus teaches me that, despite my imperfections, God loves and accepts me perfectly
God’s Wisdom sets me free from pandering for approval
God’s Wisdom sets me free from the Fear of Rejection
God’s Wisdom sets me free from jealousy, bitterness and anger

Paul fills his mind with God's Wisdom and lives out of his mind. Paul doesn't lash out against the Corinthians. Paul doesn't stalk off with a "well forget you!" attitude. Paul doesn't try put down Apollos or slam his sermons. No. Paul doesn't ACT in this way--because he doesn't THINK this way. Paul knows nothing except the cross of Jesus. Paul's mind follows the thought pattern taught by God's Wisdom: Admit Need. Adopt Humility. Accept Grace. Apply Love.

Paul's actions were marked by true social intelligence. Paul's mind was filled with God's Wisdom and he Lived Out of His Mind. And that is a POWERFUL way to live.

Possible Discussion Questions

1. Since this is the first group meeting since mid-November and your group may also be welcoming new members, take time for a quick (key word is "quick") check-in with each person prior to the sermon discussion. Have each person share along one of the following topics using a "headline:" 1) A personal and family update; 2) A spiritual update on what God has been doing in your life; 3) Have new members share a brief introduction on their family, work, spiritual journey, etc.
2. Open Bibles and have someone read 1st Corinthians 2:1-5. Pastor Steve gave an overview of the Proud City of Corinth. In what ways does the spirit of Corinth match the spirit of our Southern Connecticut culture? The Corinthian believers were infected by the spirit of the culture they lived in. In what ways is that true of us at Black Rock?
3. Paul was criticized for not acting upon the "Human Wisdom" thought pattern of: "Promote Self; Protect Image; Project Strength; Press Advantage." Paul would not conform to this way of living because he felt it would compromise the whole truth about Jesus' cross. How is that true?
4. Paul summarizes God's wisdom in verse 2 as "knowing nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." How does this mindset change my view of myself and my relationships?
5. God's Wisdom in the cross teaches us the thought pattern of: "Admit Need; Adopt Humility; Accept Grace; Apply Love." Can you give an example of how this could be applied to a relationship problem you have faced or are facing right now?
6. Look again at verses 3-5 and Paul's authentic words of vulnerability and his willingness to be himself--even honest with his weaknesses. What will it take for our group to break through into this kind of authenticity with each other? How can we move forward tonight by dropping our "image" and sharing our real struggles and real concerns.