

Small Group Study

True Wisdom

From the sermon series, "Living a Christ-Centered Life"



The Temple of Apollo, central to ancient Corinth

SCRIPTURE

Have a volunteer read the following scripture:

1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:16

INTRODUCTION

Author: The apostle Paul

Date: A.D. 53-55.

Theme: Christian lifestyle in a pagan society.

Historical Background: Corinth was a large, bustling, wealthy city. Because of its location, goods and people from around the world flowed in and out of its ports. It was a center for art, philosophy, and religion. It contained a number of pagan temples including large ones to Apollo (see picture above) and Aphrodite. The city had a reputation for vice, immorality, and debauchery. Paul spent 18 months establishing a church in Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). This letter, composed three of four years later, was written in response to reports Paul received concerning problems in the church.

Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. Who do you turn to when you need some wisdom: your spouse? A parent? Your pastor? A friend? Other?

2. What was the least useful class you had to take in school? Why?

3. What was the most useful class you had to take in school? Why?



Characteristics: The Corinthian church destroys the myth of the early church as the model for us to imitate! Seduction by the surrounding pagan culture and a hyper-spirituality had led this church into a host of problems. As a result, 1 Corinthians is full of information about *how* a Christian lifestyle differs from that of the culture as a whole. At points there is difficulty in understanding 1 Corinthians because all we possess are Paul's responses. Thus commentators differ on whether some passages in the letter are meant as Paul's advice, or if he is quoting from their letter before refuting that position (e.g. 7:1; 10:23). Structurally, the letter falls into two parts. Part one (ch. 1-6) deals with four problems reported to Paul (1:1), while part two (ch. 7-16) looks at a variety of issues about which the Corinthians had written to Paul (7:1).



Paul's Second Missionary Journey (A.D. 49-51)

QUESTIONS

Please feel free to adjust this study to fit your group's needs and to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to use all of the questions.

1. How does the world define wisdom? How has "God made foolish the wisdom of the world" (v. 1:20)?
2. Look at verses 1:22-25 again. What do the Jews seek? What do the Greeks want? What is "Christ crucified" to the Jews? To the Gentile Greeks? How does Christ fulfill what both groups are looking for?
3. How does this passage illustrate that God's ways are not our ways? What does this passage say to you about the wisdom of God versus worldly wisdom?
4. According to verse 2:14, who can't understand the things of God? Why?
5. When in your spiritual journey did the "mind of Christ" (v. 16) start to make a difference in your values, choices, and decisions?
6. The Corinthians were measuring "truth and success" by how powerful, influential, and articulate someone was. Is that still true today? How does that align with God's truth?
7. What can you do to exercise "the mind of Christ" more fully in your life?