

Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | July 17, 2022

1 Corinthians 2:6-16 | Wisdom

DAY 1

For this first week, we begin with one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament to think through. To help us in this journey, take this first day to read several different translations of this passage.

We'll provide you with three. We'd encourage you to pick an additional translation of your own (the NASB, NLT, The Message, NRSV, etc. are all good translations/paraphrases of the Bible).

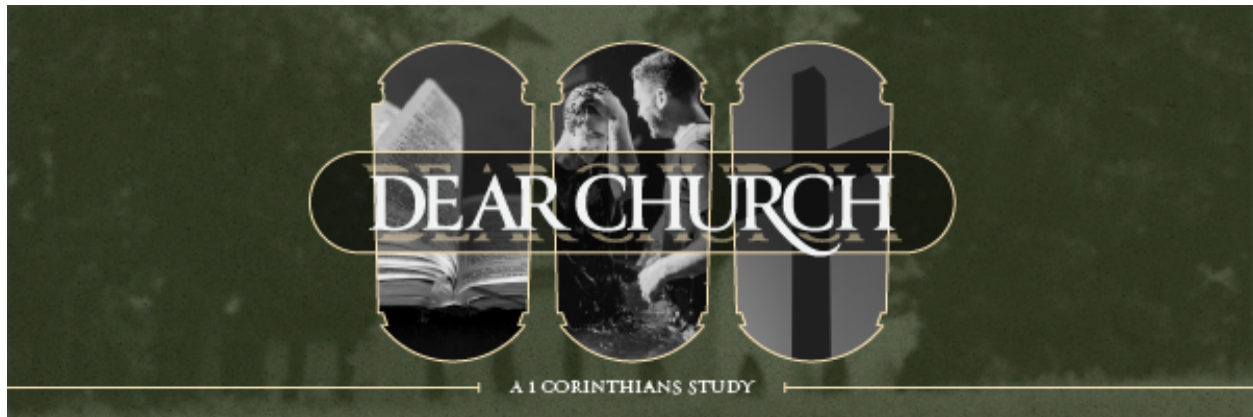
Read 1 Corinthians 2:2-16.

New International Version

6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

“What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived”—
the things God has prepared for those who love him—
10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but



considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for,

“Who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?”
But we have the mind of Christ.

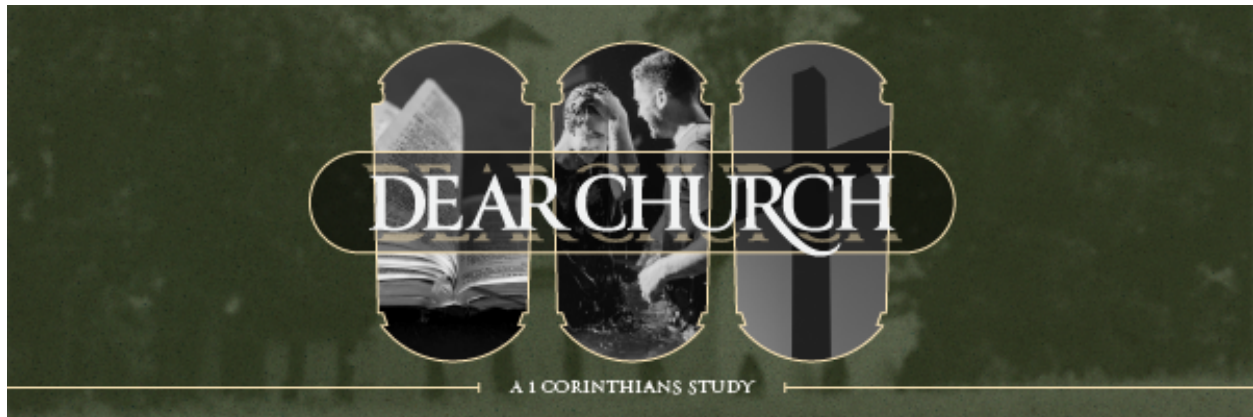
English Standard Version

6 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. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 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”—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 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. 12 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. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

14 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. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.



Translation from New Testament scholar N.T. Wright

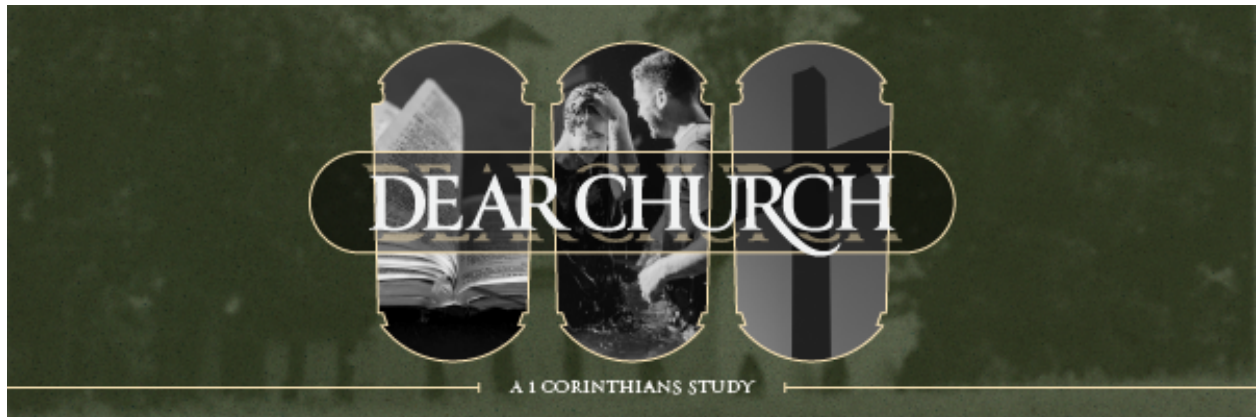
6 We do, however, speak wisdom among the mature. But this isn't a wisdom of this present world, or of the rulers of this present world, which is being done away with. 7 No: we speak God's hidden wisdom in a mystery. This is the wisdom God prepared ahead of time, before the world began, for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this present age knew about this wisdom. If they had, you see, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as the Bible says,

“Human eyes have never seen,
Human ears have never heard,
It's never entered human hearts:
All that God has now prepared
For those who truly love him.”

10 -and that's what God has revealed to us through the spirit! The spirit, you see, searches everything, yes, even the depths of God. 11 Think of it this way: who knows what is really going on inside a person, except the spirit of the person which is inside them? Well, it's like that with God. Nobody knows what is really true of God except God's spirit. 12 And we haven't received the spirit of the world, but the spirit that comes from God, so that we can know the things that have been given to us by God. 13 That, then, is what we speak. We don't use words we've been taught by human wisdom, but words we've been taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people.

What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main topic that Paul is writing about here? Explain.



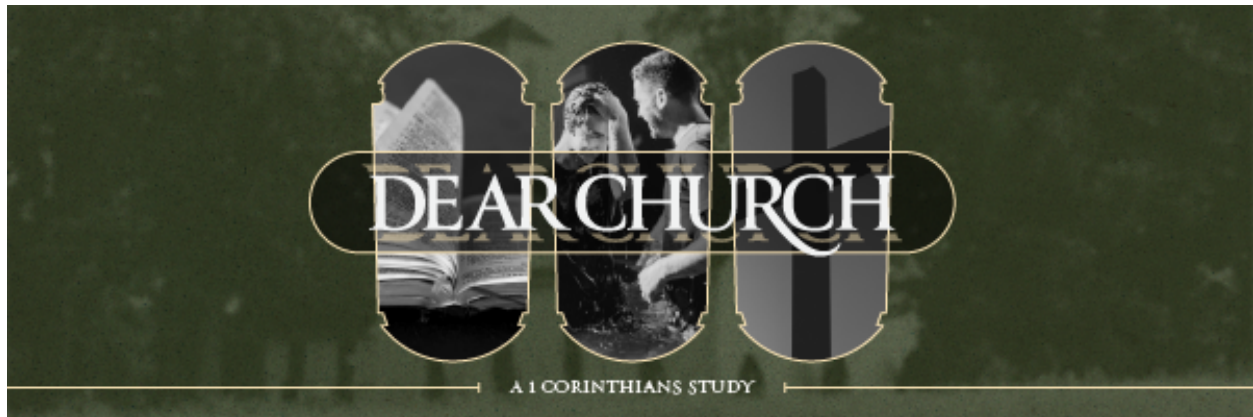
What words are repeated?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

What was confusing?

What was encouraging?

What's something to pray about as a result of your reading of this passage?



DAY 2

Okay. Let's dig into our text a little more. Since we're dropping down into this text without having done some of the background work (unless you've been taking really great notes in the sermons!), let's take a moment to think through where we're at contextually.

So, by way of recap, here's what Paul has talked about up until this point in his letter to the Corinthians:

- Paul has identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:1)
- Paul has identified who the people he wants to receive this letter are (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- Paul has given thanks for God's work in the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)
- Paul has encouraged the Corinthians to pursue unity, not division (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)
- Paul has talked about how God's wisdom is not like the world's via the cross, the church, and the method of preaching (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5)

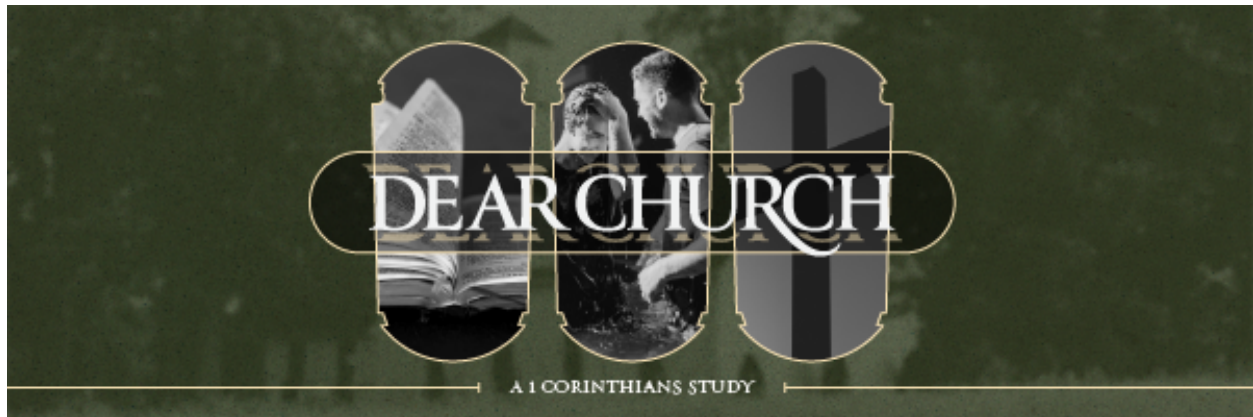
So, yeah, there's been a lot Paul has already written about. And, contextually, all the talk that Paul does about God's wisdom vs. the world's wisdom leading up to our passage today is done to serve as the *purpose* behind *why* the Corinthians should be unified, rather than divided as he encourages them to do in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 (notice the use of the word "for" meaning "because") in 1:18, 1:25, and 2:2).

Now, in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul is elaborating. He has just talked about not wanting to come to the Corinthians with words of wisdom. He didn't want to come like every other wise, sage-like person who rode into Corinth with big words, grand philosophies, and smooth rhetoric. Paul wanted to give the people of Corinth the essential gospel message: Jesus is God. Jesus died for sins. Jesus rose again.

But...that's not to say that he doesn't have any wisdom. He does. And...that's not to say that his message isn't wisdom at all. It is. His wisdom, imparted to him by the Spirit, is just different, unique, and wholly counter to the wisdom of the world. It's...well, you'll see.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-10a.

6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time



began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

“What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived—
the things God has prepared for those who love him”—

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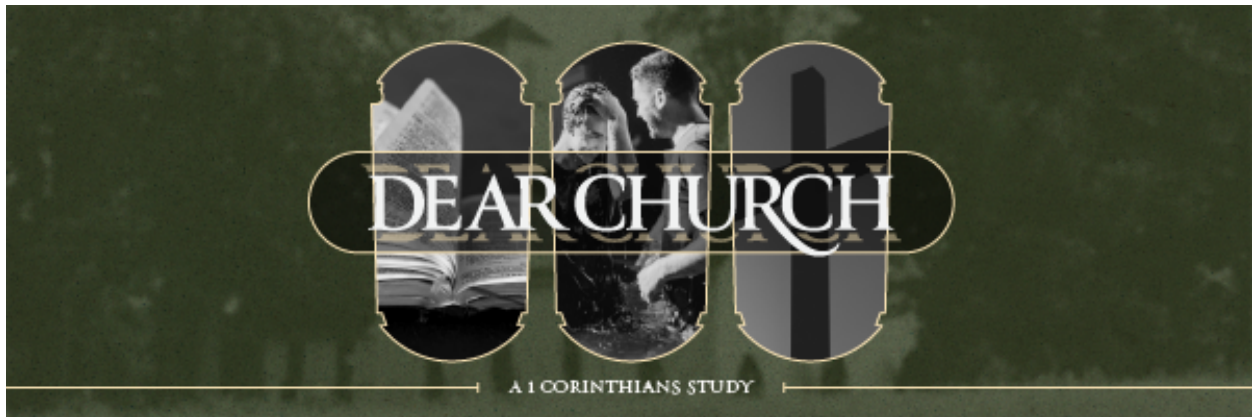
In verse 6, Paul says he has a particular kind of message and that it is for a particular group of people. How does he describe his message and who is his message to?

At first glance, who do you think are the “mature” in verse 6 that Paul refers to?

Gordon Fee, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians says,

“Since Paul says that he speaks this “wisdom” among “the mature” and that he could not so address them, it is thus often assumed that there are hidden depths of Christian truth that he did indeed possess but kept to himself in Corinth because of their lack of maturity. But the rest of the paragraph makes it clear that this would be a terribly unfortunate reading of Paul...The *teleioi* [“the mature”] of this verse are those who have received the Spirit (v. 12)...The argument of the whole paragraph, especially the language “for our glory” (v. 7), “for those who love him” (i.e., “us,” v.9), “revealed it to us” (v. 10), and “we have received the Spirit who is from God” (v. 12), implies that Paul is, as earlier, addressing the whole church and drawing them all into the orbit of what he is saying.”

So, the people that Paul is addressing here in this specific portion of 1 Corinthians aren't super-Christians (in contrast to immature ones), but rather Christians in general (in contrast to non-Christians).



We begin to see this if we read a little further because Paul lists two groups with which this “wisdom from God” is contrasted with in verse 6. Who are those two groups?

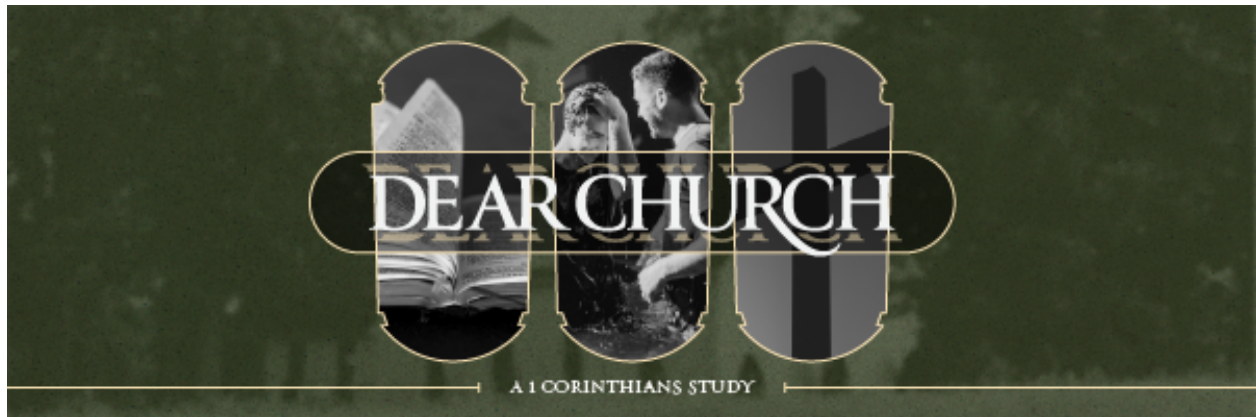
What does Paul say those two groups did to the Lord of glory in verse 8?

Read Colossians 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 15:23-25. What does Paul say in these passages about the rulers, powers, and authorities?

How do passages like Colossians 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 15:23-25 compare to what you read here in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10a? What is Paul’s point about the cross?

Now read Colossians 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3, 3:4, 3:9. Write out below what these verses say about the “mystery” of God? How is the “mystery” described?

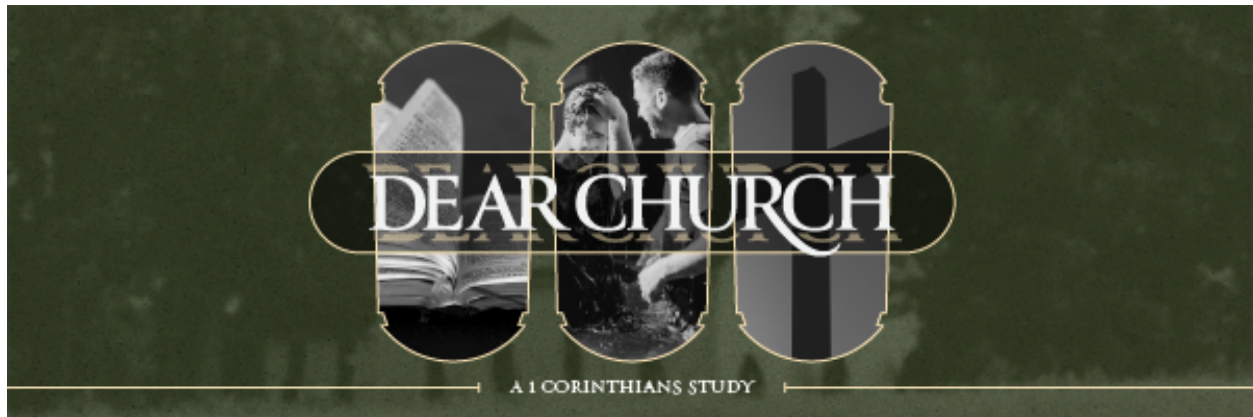
In contrast to the heavy amounts of philosophy and rhetoric that wise men would walk into Corinth espousing, we can sometimes be tempted to think that’s what Paul is talking about here with regard to wisdom. For example, when we read phrases like Paul saying, “We declare God’s wisdom, a mystery...” in verse 7, we tend to think that there is some ultra-secret spiritual reality to be had. But Paul’s message isn’t esoteric. It isn’t for the enlightened few. God’s work wasn’t done in a corner. Paul, in this passage, says that the wisdom of God is clear and “out in the open” so to speak.



Now re-read 1 Corinthians 2:10a. Something happens to this “mystery” and “wisdom” (aka “these things”) and it’s being done by a specific person. What happened to “these things?” and who did it?

RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER: Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.



DAY 3

1 Corinthians 2:10b-14: The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

Yesterday, we began looking at the wisdom that Paul came to Corinth preaching and speaking about. This is a wisdom from God and that is wholly different from the wisdom of this world or from the rulers of this world. And finally, we learned that this wisdom, once previously hidden mystery, has been finally *revealed* by God's Spirit.

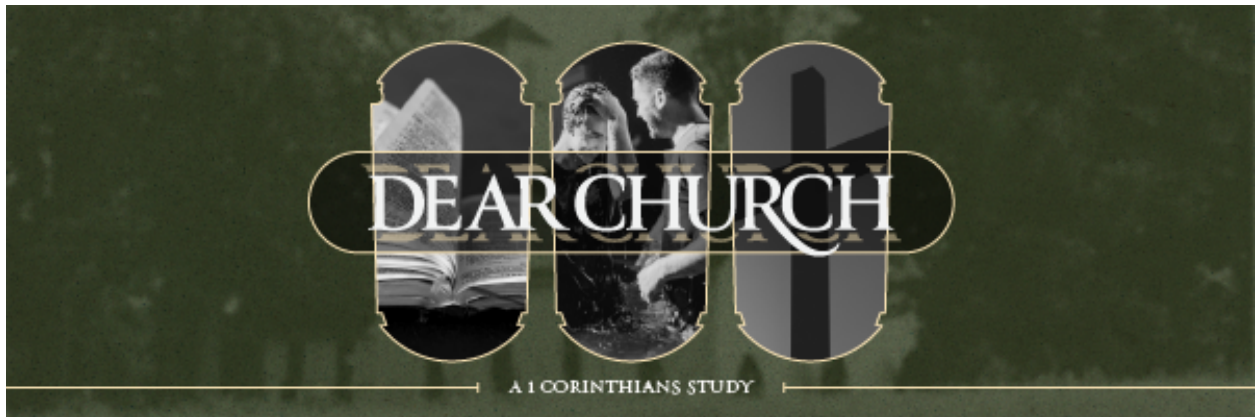
Now, Paul moves from the declaration of God's wisdom and how it is different from the world's wisdom to talking about the *disclosure* of God's wisdom.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:10b. What does the Holy Spirit "search" according to this passage?

Paul's point by beginning here with the Spirit of God being the Being who knows the things of God, is quite simply this: that "like is known by like." By this, Paul is arguing that humans, on their own, cannot know the things of God. Rather, it is the Spirit that knows the things of God. And the only way humans can know the things of God is by having God's Spirit in them. "Like is known by like."

Read Matthew 16:13-17. How does Peter's experience here demonstrate the idea that "like is known by like?"

As Paul continues, he cements his argument about discerning the wisdom of God in everyday human experience.



Jump back up to 1 Corinthians 2. According to verse 11, who or what knows a person's thoughts? How does this relate to who or what reveals the thoughts of God?

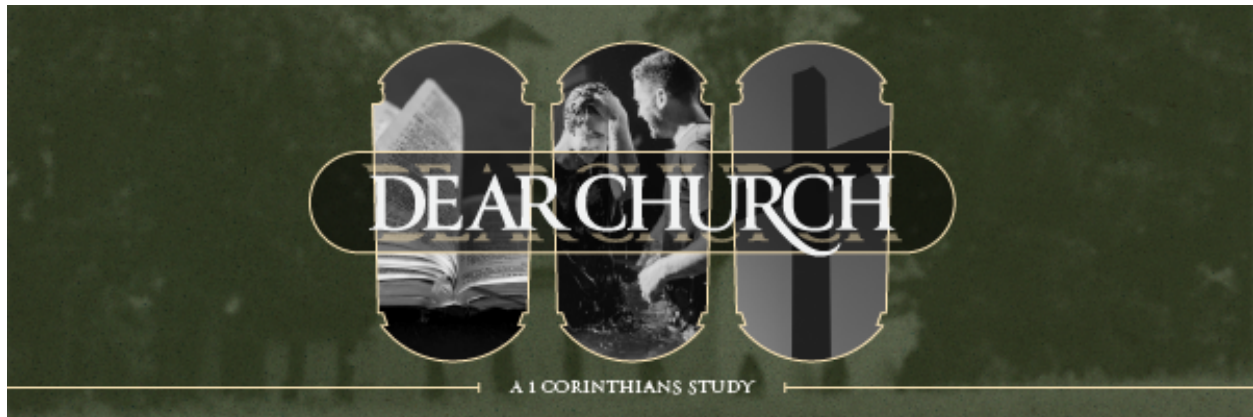
Now what does verse 12 say about how the thoughts/wisdom of God is understood?

Look up 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. What does Paul say here about unbelievers? What does he say God has done for believers in Jesus (verse 6)?

Now re-read 1 Corinthians 2:13-14. How does 2 Corinthians 4:4-6 relate?

RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER: Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.



Day 4

1 Corinthians 2:15-16: 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

Here we come to the final portion of our text. Take a moment to look over the past two days of study. Jot down the key points of Paul’s message from those two days in the space below:

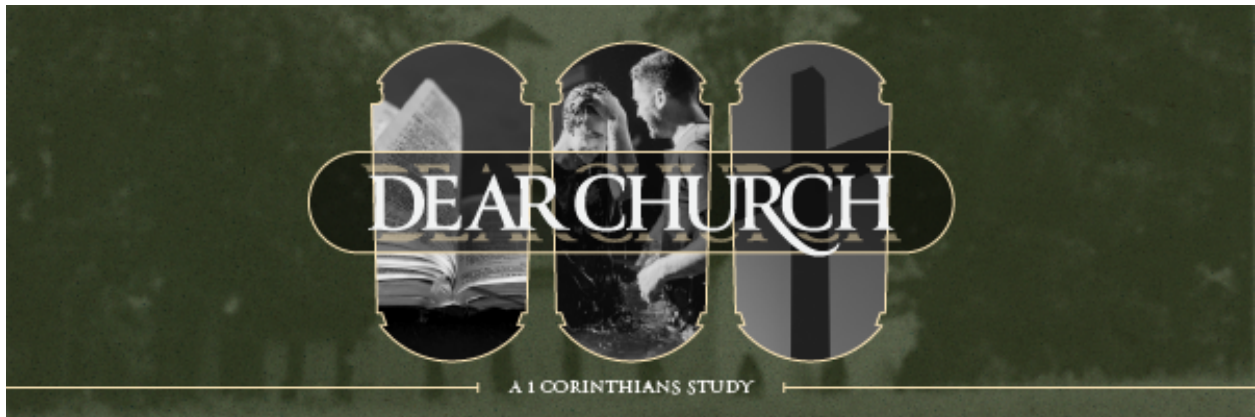
Re-read 1 Corinthians 2:15. What is the difference noted in this verse between the person who has the Spirit and the person who does not?

In verse 15, Paul says that the person without the Spirit is subject to *only* human judgments. What other *kinds* of judgments is the unbelieving person missing out on?

Here, Paul makes it very clear. The believer has an advantage over the nonbeliever. The believer can see and comprehend both the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. The believer can judge between both arenas. The unbeliever cannot. He or she can only see the wisdom of the world.

And to add insult to injury, Paul lands the plane on this note by quoting Isaiah 40:13. He asks rhetorically, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” A question like that can only have one answer: An emphatic “No one.”

After the Isaiah 40:13 quote in 1 Corinthians 2:15, how does Paul follow up his rhetorical question? What does he say at the end of verse 16?



Based on your study of this passage, HOW is it that believers can have “the mind of Christ?”

In your own words, what does it mean to “have the mind of Christ?”

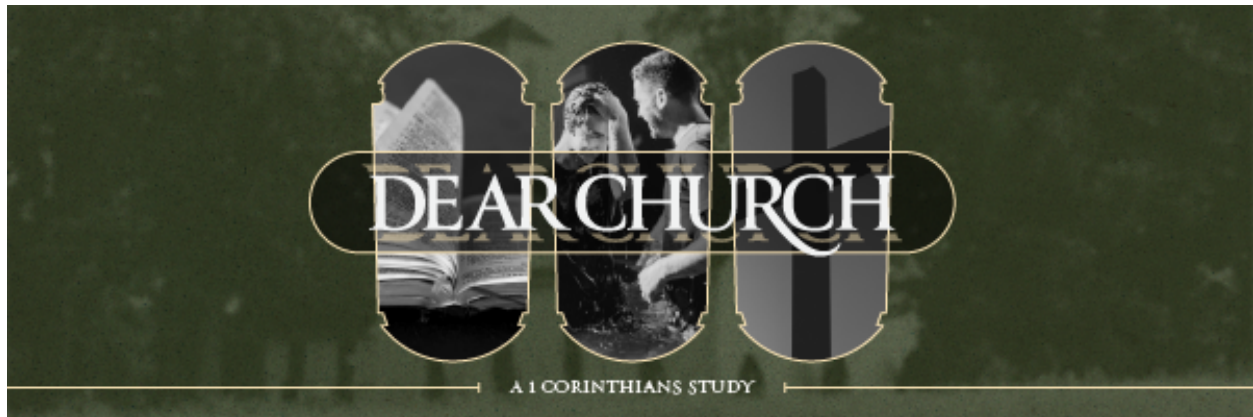
Read Philippians 2:5-8. What do you learn from this passage about having the “mind of Christ?” Jot down every element.

We are to have the same mind as that of Jesus. And this “mind” - or way of seeing the world or way of thinking - is something that we have but we need to cultivate.

How does Paul in Romans 12:1-2 and Colossians 3:1-2 tell you to cultivate the mind of Christ?

RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER: Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.



DAY 5

On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below.

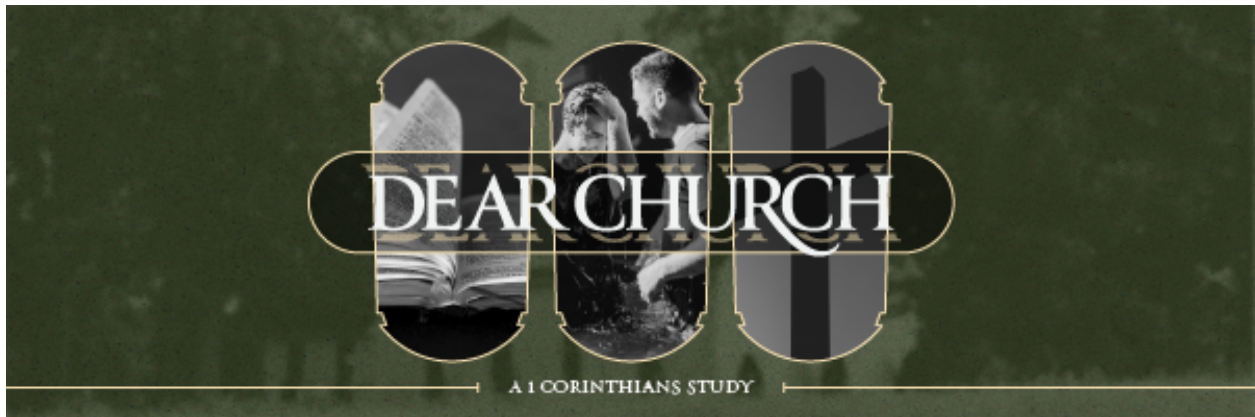
1 Corinthians 2:6-16: 6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

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“Who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?”
But we have the mind of Christ.

What did you learn this week that challenged you most?



What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

What did you learn about God?

What lingering questions do you have?

PRAYER: Write a prayer based on your reading and study this week.