

FEBRUARY 6, 2022
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
GOD'S "FOOLISH" PLAN
1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31
WINTER QUARTER WEEK 4 OF 13

Getting to Know Each Other Better

1. If your Life Group had a night of "Show & Tell," what would you bring?

My watch collection. I'd be jazzed to share about it and no one would probably be all that interested. Ha!

How about for you?

Renewed by Grace/Equipped as Disciples

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

For Questions 2 and 3, please reference verses 26-30a

2. If you're the Corinthians, how are these words landing on you? How are they encouraging you? In what ways are they helpful? Why do you think Paul wrote them, and what do you think he is trying to accomplish?

Remember the context and background to this book. (Sources: NIV Study Bible & ESV Study Bible.)

- It's been estimated that in Paul's day Corinth had a population of about 250,000 free people, plus as many as 400,000 slaves. That makes it about four times the size of Escondido.
- Corinth was the chief city of Greece.
- Its people were interested in Greek philosophy and placed a high premium on wisdom.
- Corinth contained at least 12 temples.
 - There was the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, whose worshipers practiced religious prostitution.
 - The Jews had a synagogue.
- Since it was a Roman colony, Roman law and customs were important, particularly among the upper classes, but "many 'gods' and many 'lords'" found a home in Corinth (8:5).
- The worship of these gods was fully integrated into governmental affairs, civic festivals, trade guilds, and social clubs, and everyday life in general.
- Corinth was also a destination for traveling professional orators who charged a fee for attendance at their entertaining rhetorical displays and advised people on how to advance socially.
- A self-centered insistence on their own rights (6:12; 8:9; 9:12; 10:23) at the expense of the weak (8:10; 11:22) and marginalized (14:16, 23) revealed that their own social advancement rather than the gospel's advancement was their top priority.

With no offense intended, I feel like Corinth had many Tony Robbins types coming into town, doing a seminar for \$250 (or whatever he charges) on "Living Your Best Life," and then moving on. It just feels like a somewhat big part of their culture was focused on who was popular, what the latest and greatest teachers were teaching, what the most current philosophical trends were and how people could keep moving up in the world. It seems like, and correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems like being a normal kind of person was not particularly valuable or something of

which to be proud. (Do you sense that from what Paul writes in this week's passage? I do.) It seems like it was clear who the somebodies were and who they weren't, and the culture valued the somebodies over the nobodies. Thus, people might feel they had to be worthy to be saved by God, which would be a works-based religious system. This would have been perpetuated by the many gods and many lords who found a home in Corinth and the crazy religion worked out around Aphrodite. Whoever comprised the Corinthian church, we know from 1:26-31 that they were pretty average and that they would have stood out because of that.

Given all of this, if you're a Corinthian, how does what Paul writes in 26-30a land on you? Without getting into all of how I'd respond to this question, I'll say that what he writes is good news and very encouraging. In God's economy you don't have to be somebody to be somebody. God takes average people, makes them His adopted sons and daughters, and uses them to turn the world upside down. That's pretty cool!

What are your thoughts on all of this?

3. Since you're not the Corinthians, but are indeed the Escondidoans, what principles and parallels from what Paul wrote are you able to pull over into your context and life situation? How do these truths help you in your walk? What do you think God is wanting to say to you through these verses?

Without getting into it too much, because this isn't a question that has a right or wrong answer, here are some initial thoughts I have as I think about my own context and life situation.

- Looking at verse 26, I can say I'm not wise by human standards (whatever those are), I'm not influential and I wasn't born into a politically connected family. I was born into an average family made up of people whose names the world will never know. I went to school with a ton of really smart people. I had to work harder than most to get the grades I got. But God chose me. Look at how many times the emphasis is on God's choosing in these verses -
 - "What you were before you were called..." (26)
 - "But God chose..." (27)
 - "God chose..." (27)
 - "He chose..." (28)
 - "It is because of Him..." (30)

God chose me, when I was average, when I was unknown and when I was uninteresting in a worldly sort of way, and He's going to use me to accomplish His purposes and plans. He's going to use you, too.

It's okay to be average. Average doesn't mean God won't choose you or that God can't use you. We don't have to worry about fame and fortune being a requirement for salvation or usefulness to Him and His kingdom. The world may think we're foolish. The world may think we're weak ("religion is a crutch"). The world may think we're lowly and despised. The world may think we're nothing. God says, "PERFECT, these people are perfect. I will choose them, save them and use them to get some things done!" Not only does God save perfectly average people, but He also uses us to accomplish His plans.

Those are some of my thoughts. What are yours and what are your responses to the discussion questions I've thrown out for you?

- 4. From verses 30b-31, please spend a few minutes as a group discussing the meaning and reflecting on the realities of what Paul writes. Christ Jesus is your righteousness, holiness and redemption. How can you express to your group what that means to and for you?**

A major theme of 1 Corinthians is the continuing development of holiness of character (progressive sanctification). Here is a longer quote from the ESV Study Bible -

At the root of much of the immorality and idolatry in Corinth, moreover, lay a lack of appreciation for the holiness that God requires of his people. Though the particulars of the Mosaic law were no longer to define the boundaries for God's people (7:19), the law's underlying theme that God's people were to be "set apart"—a people marked off from their culture—remained in place (5:1–2, 13; 7:19; 10:1–5). In addition, the dwelling of God's Spirit within each believer (6:19) and the new unity that believers have with the resurrected, living Christ (6:14–17; 15:30–34) implied that the Corinthians needed to make a clean break from the moral impurity of their culture.

Up against the many religions of the city which undoubtedly taught that righteousness and redemption were earned by good works, or by how much you knew, or by how successful you were in the world, or by how often you visited a temple prostitute (yuck!), the Corinthians received a message of grace. We have received that same message. You may have friends or family members who think they have to earn their way to God, or have a certain special mystical knowledge to know Him, or that they believe He is with them because they are successful or influential. What's it mean for you to know that He chose you and that your righteousness and redemption are a gift that you receive through your faith in Christ?

Then there is the issue of holiness (and righteousness, too). The Corinthians (and the Escondidoans) have been declared holy and righteous (imputed righteousness) by faith in Christ. But that declaration is just the beginning of the journey, not the end. The good news that Christ Jesus is our holiness and righteousness is that we are still those things even when we blow it. Thank goodness for that! But being declared these things is also a call to holy and righteous living, something the Corinthians struggled with (as well as the Escondidoans). Paul will move into his calls for holy and righteous living. For now, we can bask in the fact that Christ is our holiness and our righteousness and that God didn't require us to live a way we could never live before He chose us and saved us. How can you express what that means to and for you? Does it inspire and energize your desire to live a holy and righteous life? If so, how so?

Sent in Love

- 5. What's one way you can live differently this week as a way of applying these verses?**