

Wisdom from the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Our Father, thank you that you are the speaking God. We couldn't know you by ourselves, but in your grace, you speak to us, you speak to us in your words, you speak to us into our hearts by your spirit. So please, would you do that now? Take my words, and would they be your words in all our hearts, and would we be changed and encouraged and see your glory? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. And CK is going to come and read from 1 Corinthians.

Good morning, Watermark. Yeah, let us turn our pamphlets and Bible to 1 Corinthians 2, and then we can read about the encouraging passage talking about the wisdom from the Spirit.

Great. In verse 6, we read, Yet among the mature, we do not impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages of our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But it is written, what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of men imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him. These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 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.

Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

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.

[2 : 32] The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

This is the Word of God. Okay, great. Well, thanks, CK, for reading. Yeah, continuing One Corinthians in our series. Now here at Watermark, we often say we don't want to be a big church or a fancy church. Although, to be honest, we'd love to be a big church, right? If that means people are being saved and people are hearing the gospel and, right, God is at work. In that sense, we'd love to be a big church. I mean, maybe not as big as this one, biggest church in the world, Yoido, full gospel church in South Korea. But, you know, in the Bible, think of Acts 2 and 3,000, people putting their trust in Jesus in one go, right? Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing?

That's what we want. But how do we become big? How do we get so many people saved? And I guess many of us, yeah, many churches, we look for the silver bullet, right? What is the one thing that if we do this, then we can reach people? And usually people think, well, if we just become like the world, if we do what the world does, then the world will come and they'll be attracted.

In some ways, that's what the Corinthians were doing, right? They lived in a world where, well, it's the philosophers and the public speakers who are these great, who are so popular. And so, they loved Apollos because he was such a great speaker. I mean, someone that was selfish, right? If Apollos is such a great speaker and I follow him, then, well, clearly I'm also great, I'm popular. But some of it, I think, is just a good desire, right? If we have a great speaker, people will come and people will be saved. And that's what we want, right? We'd love more people to be saved.

[4 : 32] But does it work like that? That's the thing. As we've seen in the past few weeks, Paul says, well, you've got it all wrong. The gospel is rather upside down. The gospel is unimpressive.

Sound okay? Yeah. The gospel is unimpressive. The church is unimpressive. Guys, you've got it all wrong. The church isn't meant to be impressive. God is meant to be impressive. And actually, that goes even further down as he continues on the same theme. Now, he's not saying, hey, the gospel

really is foolish. It is wisdom. Verse 6, yet among the mature, we do impart wisdom. Right? I mean, the gospel, it's super sophisticated. It makes sense of everything. Right? Right? We've been reading in the Bible reading plan. We've been reading Romans. It's one of the greatest letters ever written. Right? The truth of God. It's wonderful. And yet, we study it. But actually, we misunderstand if we think, look how great and impressive this is.

And that is what this passage is about. Because Paul writes this contrast between, well, the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. And there's one important thing that I hope you can pick up as I read verses 6 to 10. Well, what is the contrast? Well, 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, but we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this. For if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 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, these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. It's not just the source, the world, and God. I mean, well, what is the big thing about, you know, this? It is revealed by the Spirit, right? The gospel is revealed by the Spirit.

[6 : 42] That's what he says. Look, this is something that is hidden and secret, verse 7. And no one understood it. You know, none of the elites back then understood it, right? Otherwise, they wouldn't have crucified Jesus, but they did. They didn't get who Jesus was. They didn't see the gospel. And so they crucified him. No, it's hidden and secret, but it's now revealed, right? Verse 10, it's revealed by the Spirit. And of course, in some ways, that must be true, right? The truth about God, the truth about eternity and God's plans. I mean, how can a human being know that? We are so small, we are so limited and so finite. How can we ever know the truth about God? We're talking about the infinite creator.

I mean, Paul makes that point, right? Who can do this? Well, again, in verse 10, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's faults except the spirit of that person which is in him? So also no one comprehends the faults of God except the Spirit of God. It makes a lot of sense, right? Only, you know, only someone inside me knows what's going on inside me. You know, only the Spirit knows what God's plans are. And so if we want to know God's plans, well, it needs, the Spirit needs to reveal that. We don't know it. It's just too much for us. Of course, they are wonderful plans, right? That's what he says. Verse 9, what God has prepared for those who love him, right? It's no eye has seen it. We can't even imagine it. God, you know, he has an incredible plan. He has this amazing salvation and that he's revealed that.

You know, sometimes you watch a movie and you kind of, you know where it's going, right? It's very predictable. And then it happens. Yeah, I could see that coming. It was a bit boring. Imagine standing before Jesus one day, the new creation. No one will say, ah, I saw that coming. That is a bit boring, right? This will be so wonderful. That is what God has revealed. And he didn't need to, right? God could have just told us nothing. And yet he has revealed it. The gospel, you know, the truth, it's being revealed by the Spirit. But why is that important? So we have this now, verse 12. Now we have not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit. And we have the Spirit and he's revealed and we understand and now we teach it.

So what? Why is that important? Well, we need to bring this back to the Corinthian situation. But to do that, first a little question, who is this about? Who is verses 12 and 13 about?

It says, we have received the Spirit that we might understand what God has given us. Who is that speaking about? All Christians have the Spirit. The thing is, sometimes we need to think, okay, we, who is we? Because we, you can use in two meanings, right? If I say, we will have coffee after the service, that is me and you. But if I say, we have three daughters, I don't mean all of us, right? That's just me and my wife. So if Paul says, hey, we have received the Spirit and God has revealed it to us, who is he talking about? Well, if you read through these chapters, actually, let's look at some of these verses, right? Who is here in this passage. Well, what does, what do we do? Verse 6, we impart wisdom. Verse 7, we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God. Verse 13, we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom. So this is people who impart words. They're their teachers, right?

[10 : 41] Other places in the passage. 1 verse 23, we preach Christ crucified. 3 verse 9, we are God's fellow workers. You are God's building. 4 verse 1, this is how people should regard us as

servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. And so he's talking, we, who is we? We is the apostles. We are, is the leaders, right? Because after all, that's what the Corinthians were about, right?

I follow Paul. I follow Apollos. And just to be, and what do they do? The apostles, they have the Spirit. That God has revealed the truth to them. And then verse 13, well, we impart this in words taught by the Spirit. And just to be clear, so this is not about Christian experience. This is about, you know, the apostles having the truth about God. So it's about what people call the doctrine of inspiration. The fact that the apostles, you know, how can we trust these guys? How can we, how can they tell us about God? Well, when they're just people, well, God gave them the Spirit to reveal that to them. Here's a definition from someone, a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness. And the apostles, they have the Spirit. And that's how they can, you know, how they can know the truth, how they can communicate the truth. And of course, we no longer have the apostles these days.

Instead, if we want to listen to Paul, we have one Corinthians here, right? That's the idea. They didn't, back then they didn't have the New Testament yet. So they have the apostles kind of live in person. And we have it now in the Bible. It's actually the same as Jesus said in John 14.

I don't know if you know this verse. It's the same idea. The helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will remind you, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I've said to you. It's the same idea, right? I'm going to give you the Spirit so you know everything.

[12 : 49] That's important because it means we can trust the Bible, right? Maybe you're here, you're not a Christian. How can we trust this book? How can we trust this book written by a bunch of humans?

Well, the Bible would say, well, because they had the Holy Spirit. God made sure that they wrote exactly what's true, that it's got divine trustworthiness. It's just as reliable as what God would say, right? So, you know, we have a reason to believe it. It doesn't make it true, but at least, you know, they could write the truth. But this is about Christian leaders, right?

Just to go back to what Paul was talking about. Hey, Christian leaders, they just have the Spirit. It's been revealed to them by the Spirit. But why does that matter? Paul is not here just to explain inspiration. That's not his point. Why does Paul tell them, hey, you need to know, you know, that this is revealed? Well, the thing is, something that's revealed is very different from human wisdom. Because what is the thing about human wisdom? It's something that we discover, right? It's something that we work out. So like the philosophers, they are these really smart people who kind of put things together and work things out, right? But they are the clever ones. Or quantum mechanics. That's something that humans discover. And so that kind of wisdom makes you impressive. And that's what they wanted. You know, we want someone impressive, right? But someone that's revealed is very different. I mean, what did you do to have something revealed to you?

Nothing, right? Revelation doesn't make you special. I mean, just to give a silly example, how many of you know what my wife's least favorite soup is? Right? No one, right?

I think there's only a handful of people in the whole universe who know this. I know it. I know it very well. Because she told me. And I forgot. And a few months later, I made it for her. And she reminded me. So I won't forget it again. But how do I know that? Well, she just told me, right? It's not that I made this amazing mathematical equation in five dimensions. And I worked out that she doesn't like tomato soup, right? She just told me. And so it doesn't make me special. There's nothing impressive about knowing this. And that is the thing. You know, you've got the wrong idea about Christian leaders. They're not these really impressive, smart guys. It's just people that God chose and gave the spirit and told the truth. There's nothing impressive about Apollos. I mean, Apollos tells these amazing things. But that doesn't come from him. You've got the whole wrong idea about Christian truth and Christian leaders. It's just revealed. When you, revelation is a gift.

[15 : 46] And the special one is the giver, the Holy Spirit. It's not the recipient. The Christian isn't special. The Christian leader isn't special. And so if you're trying to go after impressive leaders, you've got the whole wrong idea about how Christian truth works. It won't connect to people because it doesn't make you impressive if you think about it. Now, what does that mean for us?

I think one big thing, I think Christians should be really humble about our beliefs, right? If it is a gift, you know, be humble. Now, of course, as a Christian, you know the truth. You know how the universe works. You know the life and purpose and meaning of everything, right? Because God has revealed it to you, right? You have more wisdom than all the professors in the world.

Except that that's not because you are smarter than anyone. You're just more blessed than everyone, right? And so you should be humble and thankful, certainly not arrogant.

The thing is, Christians sometimes get that wrong, right? Especially if you go online, social media, there's so much arguing, especially sometimes atheists and Christians, and they're arguing. And atheists, yeah, they always play the intelligence card, right?

Hey, we follow the evidence, and we're the smart ones. And you Christians, well, either you don't understand the evidence or you ignore the evidence. That's why you believe your Christian things, right? Despite all the evidence, you believe this. Well, you must be stupid, and we are smart.

[17:24] That's basically their message. No wonder they're so popular, right? Everyone wants to be an atheist, because they're seen as the smart people. But some Christians, they go against that. And no, no, no, we are the smart ones, right? You haven't considered this evidence. And, you know, science has Christian foundations. Without God, you can't do science, right? So, you know, we are the smart ones, basically. And that's true. You can't do science without God and everything. But the whole attitude is wrong, right? The whole attitude is basically, well, if you are really smart, then you'll be like us. As if, you know, you're a Christian by your smartness, by your works. Actually, we are Christians by grace, right? Everything we know, all the truth we know, it's just a gift. And so we should be humble.

And I think it should be reflected in how we talk to people and our attitudes, right? That makes sense. It just grace is the opposite of human achievement, right?

More than that, what other ways we can apply this? Certainly, if this is a revelation, it means it needs to be shared. I mean, of course, it was revealed to the apostles. We have it now in the Bible. But the only way other people are going to get to know it is if we tell them about it, right?

If we show them the Bible. Even the smartest people in Paul's day, they couldn't work out the truth. Nowadays, again, no one can work it out if it wasn't for Christians telling them.

So, hey, Father's Day, one of the things you should be doing is telling your kids the gospel, right? Because they're not going to work it out by themselves. They can go to the best school in Hong Kong and to go to the best university and they'll get seven PhDs. They can't work out the gospel by themselves, right? No one can understand God apart from the spirit of God, right? So they need you to tell them about Jesus. I think that's a very simple application. Of course, with humility, humility, right? It's so easy to tell your kids, hey, we are better because we know the truth.

[19:36] No, with humility, with grace, with the gospel. But we need to tell them. And that's even more so as we look at later, at the rest of this passage. Because the passage, it does talk about normal Christians too, not just the apostles. Where are normal Christians? Well, they're at the end of verse 13.

We impart this in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. Those who are spiritual. It's a whole chain, right? The spirit reveals and then the spirit helps them teach. And then it goes to people who listen, who have the spirit. It's all the spirit doing all the communication in a way, using humans. But the gospel is for spiritual people. And what he's saying is the gospel is only understood by the spirit. It's not just revealed by the spirit. It's only understood by the spirit. Let's read verses 14, 15. The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him. And he's not able to understand them because they're spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

You can hear the contrast between the natural and the spiritual person. The natural person, he doesn't accept it. He can't accept it. He can't understand it. That's the problem.

It's folly to him. Now, of course, what is a spiritual person? I don't know what you think. Sometimes we think of the kind of new age, this kind of person. That's not what Paul means. He's also not talking, I don't know, charismatic versus reforms, right? It's natural versus spiritual.

It's someone without the spirit versus someone with the spirit, right? Someone who is, well, I'm not a Christian versus someone who is a Christian. That's the contrast. But the thing is, yeah, without the Holy Spirit, people can't understand it. Naturally, by ourselves, people, it's not just that we can't know it. We can't even understand it because it's spiritually discerned.

[21 : 45] Now, Paul doesn't explain here why. Other passages in the Bible tell us a lot about it, right? Like the problem is, actually, it goes back to the fall, right? It goes back to Adam and Eve, where human beings turned away from God. And since then, we've been corrupted, corrupted in our minds, in our hearts, in our wills. I mean, we see that with sin, right? How every human being ends up sinning.

No matter what you do to them, they will keep on sinning, right? There's all this basic selfishness in each of us. But it's not just that. It's also our understanding. It's kind of corrupt. So here in Ephesians, right? They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God that is in them because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

And you can hear this kind of this distance from God, this alienation from God that leads to darkness and ignorance. The Bible talks about us being blind, that we need to have our eyes opened to understand the gospel, to understand spiritual truth, because our hearts are just biased against it without that. I think that's what he's saying. Now, if you're here and you're not a Christian, maybe that sounds offensive to you, right? You hear that and, well, you can't understand it. That sounds, that doesn't sound good. Just to say, we need to remember the previous point, right? This is about grace. How do, why can Christians understand it and people who are not can't? That's not because Christians are better or superior. It's a gift if God opens your eyes.

And it's a simple, so I'm Dutch and so I can speak in Dutch. And none of you guys can understand it. Right? The only person who can understand it is Henrike. Can she understand it because she's superior to you? She is so much better than all of you, so she can understand it and you can't.

[23 : 41] Well, no, right? She's just, she's got the gift of being Dutch. Right? That's, it's not something she's done. It's just, it's a gift from her parents. And in the same way, you know, the fact that, you know, if God has opened your eyes, it doesn't make you better. And if God hasn't opened your eyes, it doesn't make you worse. It doesn't make you inferior. So don't take this as something offensive when it says that, you know, people need to have their eyes opened, uh, to, uh, to understand the truth. Although it can sound pointless, right? You're here, you know, someone brought you to church and then the Bible says that eventually you can't understand it. Well, why did you bring me here? I don't know if you think that. Well, sadly that sometimes happens.

Sadly, sometimes people come to church, they know there's something, but they don't get it. And they come for months and months and they still don't get it. And they stop coming. And that's really sad. The thing is, we don't know when God will open eyes that that's God's work, right? He might do that. Maybe he will do that today. Maybe we'll do it next week. Please keep coming. Right? So we, the best thing we can do actually is just pray. If you, if you come here and you, yeah, you hear a lot about Jesus, but it just doesn't make sense. You don't see why you should believe in him. Why don't you pray? Just ask God. I don't understand it. I don't get it, but I want to please open my eyes. Please help me see why Jesus is so special, why I should believe in him. Just pray that, pray that honestly and trust that God will answer. Well, but what does that mean for us Christians? Why this truth that it's only by the spirit? Well, one thing that Paul mentions, well, don't feel judged, right?

Don't feel judged. Verse 15, uh, the spiritual person judges all things, but is himself judged by no one to be just by no one. I mean, if you've got the spirit and your eyes are open, yeah, you can see both sides, right? You can see everything. In some way you can evaluate everything. But the thing is, you shouldn't be judged by, uh, well, you don't feel judged by people who don't understand the gospel. I mean, it's so easy to feel inferior as a Christian, right? All your colleagues think that you're nuts and your family thinks you believe nonsense. And on YouTube, it's full of atheists saying that you're stupid. And no wonder we want to feel impressive. No wonder we want to build a really impressive church to say, no, no, we're not. But you know, we don't need to bolster our self-esteem without the spirit. People just can't understand the gospel. So don't feel judged and don't, don't, don't worry about it. Just ignore it. I mean, imagine I give a sermon in, in Dutch and then you give me feedback. Well, I didn't understand any of that. That was so unclear.

Do you think I should take that seriously? No, because right, you can't understand Dutch. It's very same. Only Henrike would listen to, right? Does that make sense? Yeah. Don't feel, judged if people can't understand what you believe. And don't worry about it.

At the same time, well, there's no need to make the church more impressive, right? That's a bit pointless. If people can only understand by the spirit, if it's only the spirit who needs to open people's eyes, why should we make the church really impressive? Now, we want, we want to move venue. We'd love to have a better building that's more accessible because we want people to come

and hear it. They need to hear it. But an amazing new building is not going to save anyone, right? We, we upgrading the music team. Let's give a million dollar guitar to Jeremy, you know, gigawatt sound system, 10 background singers. It's not going to save anyone, right?

[27 : 33] We don't need to make the church impressive. Actually, it's just the spirit that's going to do it. And without the spirit, no matter what we do, right? So Corinthians, you, you, you're, you're really, you want Apollos, you want an impressive speaker, you know, by itself, that's not going to do anything.

It's only the spirit. And so if it's only the spirit, yeah, what should you do? Well, pray, right? If we need to, we need the Holy spirit to open blind eyes. That's far more important, right? These things are spiritually discerned. We need to pray. We need to ask the spirit. We need to cry out to him. It's only by the spirit people will understand. And none of our techniques and none of our impressive things will do anything. That's such an important lesson, right? We have, uh, we put our confidence in the wrong things often. Oh, if we just did this, then no, no, we just need the spirit and we need to pray.

And, and tell people and trust God to do that. Again, that's another word for fathers on father's day. Are you praying for your kids? Right? So maybe you take this really seriously. You go through every book of the Bible and Calvin's institutes and other books and great theology. If you don't pray, you know, without your kids eyes opened, they can't understand the gospel. So please pray for your kids. Almost pray more than you teach. I think that's some people find it easy to teach what we need to pray. But I know how that sounds, right? As we finish up, when I say it's all God's work and there's nothing we can do. I mean, I like control. I like doing things myself, right? And the fact that, well, it's out of my hands, it's all God's doing, right? It's God who needs to open eyes. It's God who needs to reveal. And, and I can't do it. That feels disempowering, right? Isn't it much better if we had something to contribute to this? Well, can you see that actually this is just the same thing that it's about grace? And how are we saved? Well, we're saved by Jesus. And he died for us on the cross. He paid for all our sins. He did everything. And we need to do nothing because if we had to do something, we would mess it up. Isn't it so wonderful that Jesus did everything? But there's not just salvation.

it's also how come we, how do we come to know this? How do we come to believe it? Again, if we had to do it, we would mess it up, right? If we would have to, yeah, we'd have to help people believe it would depend on us. Actually, we'd mess it up. No, God does everything. He does the revealing. He does the opening eyes. He does the, he inspires the words, right? That's what he does.

And so everything about our salvation, not just the work on the cross, but even how we come to believe it's all God's word because it's just so important. He doesn't want it to go wrong. It's all grace. And actually, if we realize that we can rest in it, right? Isn't it so wonderful that the growth of the church is not about us. It's not on our shoulders. It's God doing it. And we can just pray and rely on him. And that's wonderful. So why don't we do that now? Why don't we close our eyes? Why don't we pray? And then we'll celebrate the Lord's Supper after that.

[30 : 57] Our Father, we look to you. We thank you that everything ultimately is grace. Even knowing the gospel, believing, it's all your work by your spirit. And we thank you for that because we are sinners. We are limited. We can't do anything right. Father, please open our eyes to this truth. Help us to trust just in you, just in your work by your spirit. Help us not to think that we can do anything, that we, by anything of our works, we can bring people to you. We can save them. We can attract people. It's just you by your spirit. We want to be a church that only trusting you, that's prayerful, even for ourselves, for those around us.

We don't want to, yeah, we can't impress them into the kingdom. We can't argue them into the kingdom. We need your spirit. So please do that work. Please use us. Use our words. Use the people. Yeah, use us with the people you've placed us next to at work or at university or anywhere. But please do your work by your spirit and help us to look to that and to rest in that and to thank you for that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.