how [not] to find true wisdom

1 Corinthians 2:1–3:4

How do we discern what's true wisdom?

Dodgy discernment in Corinth:

- Hanging onto the values of the surrounding culture
- Travelling philosophers - “sophists” (wisdom-practitioners)
  - spectacularly eloquent, impressive, entertaining
  - could speak about any topic with confidence

- They are judging Christian teachers by similar standards
- So Paul and his teaching don’t come out well
  - he was weak and unimpressive (2v1-5)
  - his teaching wasn’t “meaty” enough (3v2)

Paul's answer:
"You're judging teachers and ideas in the wrong way"

How God's wisdom is shared (2:1-5)

How God's wisdom actually works (2:6-13)

How we recognise God's wisdom (2:14-3:4)

How God's wisdom is shared (2:1-5)

Not human impressiveness
but the Spirit revealing the crucified Christ

He wants their faith not to rely on him as the preacher, but on what he was preaching about.

How God's wisdom is shared (2:1-5)

Not human impressiveness
but the Spirit revealing the crucified Christ

NOT: "I spoke a simplistic summary of the gospel and refused to engage with people's questions"

“Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”

Acts 18:4

“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.”

2 Corinthians 5:11

How God's wisdom is shared (2:1-5)

Not human impressiveness
but the Spirit revealing the crucified Christ

NOT: "I spoke a simplistic summary of the gospel and refused to engage with people's questions"

“Paul resolves to provide a transparent window onto the cross: not to parade himself.”

Anthony Thiselton

How God's wisdom is shared (2:1-5)

Not human impressiveness
but the Spirit revealing the crucified Christ

NOT: "I spoke a simplistic summary of the gospel and refused to engage with people's questions"

NOT: "I didn't use words to win you over to Christ I just did miracles instead"

"Paul is not contrasting the power of miracles with the power of wisdom (as if he was happy to indulge the Jewish demand for signs but not the Greek demand for wisdom); rather, he is contrasting the power of God's spirit (at work in the message of the cross) with the power of mere rhetoric and human cleverness."

David Starling

How God's wisdom is shared (2:1-5)

Not human impressiveness
but the Spirit revealing the crucified Christ

➡ We don't need to impress anyone,
we just want to communicate Christ

How God's wisdom actually works (2:6-13)

The Spirit revealing the crucified Christ
as good news we could never have guessed

the wisdom of this age / God's true wisdom

“Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.”

Proverbs 3:7

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

Proverbs 9:10

How God's wisdom actually works (2:6-13)

The Spirit revealing the crucified Christ
as good news we could never have guessed

God's wisdom is centred on the "mystery" of what Jesus has done for us…

…so we can only grasp it if God reveals it to us himself by his Spirit

How we recognise God's wisdom (2:14-3:4)

The Spirit grows in us a mindset based on the crucified Christ

We need to evaluate everything from the perspective of the crucified and risen Jesus

How do we discern what's true wisdom?

- ➡ We pray and depend on the Spirit's help
- ➡ We learn to evaluate everything from the perspective of Jesus

"How well does this fit with the message of Jesus & the cross as we find it in the Bible?"

our assumptions & intuitions



judging

the Bible's teaching

the Bible's teaching



judging

our assumptions & intuitions