

## Living by the Spirit

### 1 Corinthians 2

Elder Kevin Laser, August 29, 2021

Thank you for coming to church this morning and for coming to hear the Word preached because that's what we want to do. We want to hear from God. I was praying this morning and just thanking the Lord for the opportunity to take the Word and explain it and help us to understand it and to study it and to look at it. Then, obviously, for us to internalize it so that we put it into practice in our lives, which is sometimes a hard thing to do. Today, we're going to look at first Corinthians chapter two, and we're going to look at the whole passage this morning. So I invite you to turn there as we start today.

I want to ask you some questions as we start. And the first question is, have you ever been in a situation where you're sharing the gospel with somebody, you're trying to share the Truth with somebody, and they're not quite getting it? Their eyes are perhaps glossed over a little bit? Or perhaps they're just like, it just doesn't look like it's quite sinking in. It doesn't make sense to them perhaps. Have you ever been in that kind of a situation? I think we all have to some degree probably. Or maybe you know somebody who's not a Christian, and you want to share the Gospel with them. Your heart is burdened to give them this Good News. And you want to explain to them about Jesus, how He died on the cross, and how if you repent and put faith in Him, that then they're forgiven, and they're saved. But you begin to think, what words would I use? What would I say? How would I explain myself? I mean, the Gospel is so big, it's so gigantic, it's so deep, it's so enormous. How in the world can I if I've only got three or four minutes, maybe five minutes? How do I do that? What words would I say? How in the world can I explain these deep, deep truths of God? I just don't have the right words to say. Do you ever have that thought sometimes? I just don't speak well. I know so and so. They can speak well. They're pretty eloquent with their words. They're always really, really confident. They can explain the things of God really well. They know how to say things just right. But not me. Right? That's how we feel sometimes. And I think we've all found ourselves thinking that way about ourselves. Most of us aren't really great speakers and we struggle actually to share the Gospel. Sometimes, we longed to share it, but we feel inadequate. This morning, we're going to examine what Paul says in First Corinthians chapter two, about how to be wise, and how to speak with wisdom.

I remember many years ago, I joined an evening Bible study and I was really excited about joining this Bible study because it was focused on evangelism. The Lord has given me a desire to evangelize and to tell people about Jesus. So I wanted its tools. I wanted to be equipped. So as we started going into this class, I started learning all these great things about how to evangelize, and what is the Gospel and how to, you know, unpack it and how to explain it. And the teacher had had a great passion and a love for the Gospel and people's souls and he loved Jesus. He always found a proactive way of sharing the Gospel with others and I admired that about him. I like that. And I wanted more of that. And we talked about how do we start? And how do we guide the conversation towards the Gospel toward truths of Scripture with people? And we looked at what is the Gospel? It's, like I said, so rich, and so deepened, and we examined all the parts of the Gospel, so that we understood what it all entails, what makes the Gospel the Good News that it truly is? And how in the world can I present it in a way that's persuasive to people? How in the world can I make it convincing? Those are the things that I was hungry for. And we spent weeks looking into that. And then one class the teacher introduced us to a fellow by the

## Living by the Spirit

name of Ray Comfort. And he had an approach of sharing the Gospel that I found really helpful, and I actually found attractive. There are many ways of sharing the Gospel. But this was one particular way that I was learning at the time I truly found helpful. I liked that Ray was win-some in his approach. I liked that he used Scripture. I like that he asked questions of people. And he used those questions, to, in a sense, get them to give permission for him to share the Gospel. I found out later that Ray had videotaped a lot of these conversations, and he put them on YouTube. As soon as I found that, I was every night watching his little five-minute to ten-minute clips on sharing the Gospel. I was just hungry for, how do I share more confidently? How do I share persuasively? How do I share in a way that makes sense to the people? I was hooked and I wanted to become just better at sharing the Gospel.

So I would watch Ray on these videos, I'm marveled at how persuasive he was. His words always seem to be so convincing. And sometimes I would actually get discouraged, because I thought to myself, I could never be like that. My words just don't come out like that. He always had sort of a nice clip or a nice comeback. And he was always filled with such grace with every response, and I was, I was amazed at that. Yet, sometimes I was discouraged that, well, that's not me. I'm not sure if I'm ever gonna get to that place in life. But it didn't take long though. I actually began to memorize his approach, and to internalize some of the methods that he used. I thought, okay, maybe I could do this, after all, maybe there's hope for me still.

On the last day of class, the assignment was, we're not going to come to the church building to do what we usually do. We're going to go downtown, it's going to be on a Saturday or sometime, and we're going to talk to people, we're going to share the Gospel, we've learned all this stuff, we've got the tools, we've got the arsenal, we're gonna go do it now. Hold your thought, because at the end of the sermon I'm gonna tell you how that went, okay? We'll have a little pause here. If I were to take a survey, my guess is that you would probably relate to me in a lot of that 'feeling inadequate,' struggling, having a tough time getting the right words out. Just being sort of confident about things isn't quite always there. We're all sort of in the same boat, aren't we? Well, that leads us to First Corinthians chapter two, which is what I want us to look at today. Because this is where Paul explains in the chapter, how he shared the Gospel with the Corinthians. And in the chapter he contrasts the difference between speaking with worldly wisdom and with Godly wisdom.

In the questions that we're gonna focus on this morning, there are three questions that I want you to sort of think about, how we're going to come to answer them is, we're going to answer them throughout the sermon this morning. The questions are these. What does it look like to speak with Godly wisdom? That's the first question. Secondly, how does speaking with Godly wisdom, compare and contrast with worldly wisdom? There are two different kinds. How do they compare and contrast? And thirdly, how can you and I grow to become more wise so that we are speaking more with Godly wisdom, whether it's at home, whether it's with our colleagues, whether it's I'm getting together with this person just to share the Gospel.

Paul previously had visited current Corinth, and now he was actually writing them a letter to address a lot of concerns that he had with the church. There was sin that was creeping in. There's a lot of troubles that were in the church. It was, frankly, a messy situation. Paul says that, when he came previously, he didn't come with worldly, persuasive speech. His words were not flowery. They weren't lofty or superior. He had no fanciness about his speech that persuaded them toward the Gospel. He came with no worldly persuasiveness. His speech was in fact, I would say unflattering. There's nothing particularly attractive about his speech. It wasn't eloquent, he wasn't trying to impress them with his speech, with his words. And his words had no worldly wisdom that actually convinced them of the Gospel. He wasn't slick with his words or particularly artful with what he said. He simply

## Living by the Spirit

delivered God's Word. He humbly yet constantly presented God's Truth to them. And Paul wasn't a great orator, nor did he dazzle them with his speech. His power didn't come from his own persuasiveness, his own wisdom that he had within him in terms of how to present, how to package it. It didn't come from that at all.

Often, we think that to convince people of the Gospel, we must be impressive with our speech. We have to package it just right in a particular way. Maybe if we're eloquent enough, then we'll get it done. Then they'll get it. Maybe if I present things like the world would, then maybe it'll be more convincing to them. But Paul's telling us here that impressive or fancy language doesn't transform lives, worldly persuasiveness doesn't give power to the Gospel. The Gospel packaged in worldly wisdom doesn't persuade others, that never will and never can. Eloquence of speech doesn't open someone's eyes to the Truth. Did you know that eloquence of speech doesn't open their eyes to the Truth? Our own words of wisdom or power can never persuade somebody towards the truth.

In contrast to speaking with eloquence or worldly wisdom, consider Jonah. I find him one of the most interesting characters in the Bible because in Jonah chapter three and four, he says something really interesting. He'd been commissioned by the Lord to go and call the city of Nineveh to repentance. And he goes, begrudgingly. He's got his heels in the gravel, and he's making a mark the whole way. And he's not thinking about, oh, I got to package the presentation right. I got to get my speech, you know, I got to polish it. I got to make sure that I give them the whole Gospel, you know, the whole Message of God. He's what I would call a minimalist. He was like, alright, God, I'm giving the minimum. Because what he says in Jonah chapter three verse four is remarkable. He says this, "yet 40 days, and Nineveh will be overthrown." You count the words, less than 10 words. He gives the Gospel Message in less than 10 words, and maybe he said more, but we've only got 10 words to go on. So I'm sort of assuming he's a minimalist here. And he's still sort of has his heels in the gravel. You know what verse five says? The verse right after those eight words, it says, "and they believed." Now maybe it took them a while. We don't know the details. It didn't maybe happen instantly. But it does say, "they believed."

Now, here's Jonah; he didn't package it with ambition, he didn't package it with, 'I'm here to represent my Lord.' He was... do I need to say more? You see, his call to repentance had no worldly persuasiveness or eloquence. In the same way as Paul, the power of Jonah's words came not from some special superiority or some special speech or some wisdom or presentation, it came from the Holy Spirit working through the truth that was presented. Jonah's simplistic preaching is an example for us of how the power of the Holy Spirit changes people's lives. We often worry and concern ourselves with, well, what am I going to say? How am I going to say it? What if I stumble over my words? What if I say the wrong thing and they're never gonna be able to be saved? Because I said that one wrong word, you know, whatever... those are our fears, aren't they? Am I getting it just right? We forget that our wisdom, that the Gospel, the power of the Gospel is not in our wisdom, it's not in our words and our packaging and our presentation. Now, don't get me wrong. We need to plan, we need to prepare, we need to study, we need to know, we need to represent our King as best we possibly can. But it's not that, that saves people's lives. It's the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the truth that we present to them.

Paul comes to the Corinthians did you notice he says, "in fear and trembling and in weakness." He had come from Philippi, where he had been beaten, he had been imprisoned and then he was in Thessalonica. From there he ran out of the city and then when he visited Athens, he was scoffed at. That's why he says he came, you know, "in weakness and fear and trembling." It wasn't that he was fearful of the Corinthians. There's nothing there to be truly fearful of, but he encountered a lot of resistance. And when he came to Corinth that's how he felt, he was

## Living by the Spirit

physically exhausted. He was emotionally drained and spiritually...he was beaten up. And so he comes in a sense with 'I don't know what I got to give to you.' He just had that weakness about him. He was worn down and maybe he was tempted to be discouraged and think, hmm, maybe I should change my method. Maybe I should package things differently. What's the success so far? Maybe I should teach something different, right? Do we ever get tempted to think like that at times?

Well, I love how Paul begins in verse two in this chapter, because he says, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Christ, and Him crucified." That's how it starts. And in fact, just to give you a little bit of how the book ends in a sense. I say this chapters a little bit of a bookend as he starts with that and then he ends with that because he says in verse 16, "but we have the mind of Christ." He starts with Christ; he ends with Christ. And then in-between here he's talking about spiritual wisdom and how to have that. And he talks about the Holy Spirit in there several times. Here Paul states what I think is very much his goal in life. He boils everything down to this focus, this purpose. He desires to know nothing except, "Christ crucified." He wants everything in his life to have the fragrance and the aroma of Christ in his life, including a speech. It's this, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ that he puts his focus on. He says in verse eight, he calls Jesus, "the Lord of Glory." Paul makes 'knowing Christ' His ultimate determination and nothing is gonna stop him whatsoever. Paul has surrendered his life to Christ. And he says, in fact, in Galatians chapter two verse 20 he says, "I have been crucified with Christ and it's no longer I who live, but it's Christ who lives in me." Paul found the fulfillment of life and that is knowing Christ Jesus. Even though he talks about Christ at the beginning and he talks about Christ at the end, he talks actually so much more about the Holy Spirit in this one particular chapter. So I want to actually step aside from this chapter just for a moment because we need to understand something in terms of who the Holy Spirit is. What His role is in our lives and in our being wise.

We believe what it says in Deuteronomy chapter six verse four which says, "hear oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one." We believe that there's one God. Although He's one, there are three persons in the one true God. We often call this the Trinity or the triune God. There's the Father, there's the Son and there's the Holy Spirit. They are each fully the one true God in every possible way and none of Them are merely a part of God such that we can separate Them like you possibly could ingredients in something you're about to make. This is a deep mystery and yet it's a beautiful mystery that is beyond our ability to fully fathom and comprehend. There is one God and there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are equal. They're equally omniscient, which means They equally know all things. They are equally omnipotent, which means They equally have all power over all things. They are equally omnipresent, which means They're equally able and always are in all places to see all things at the same time, with no effort whatsoever. They are equally eternal, meaning that all of Them have never had a beginning and They will never ever see an end. They are equally un-changing. We can improve over time, but the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot improve. They started... They didn't start, They always have been perfect and They always will be perfect and They have no need to change. We need to be sanctified but God is not needing to be sanctified, He is our sanctifier. Each of them is fully God, never being merrily part of God. You can't take Them and add Them together to become GOD. Because they are all God. They're not parts. You see, let's take a look at Them each and in particular here.

The Father designed and organized how mankind would be redeemed. He put into motion complex events, actions and prophecies that would culminate in the life and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source, He is the sender and He is the planner of our salvation.

## Living by the Spirit

Jesus being the son of God, obeys the Father by leaving heaven and coming to earth with the purpose of dying for our sins. His life and His death was the means by which we would be redeemed, we would be forgiven, we would be pardoned and we would be justified. His mission was to be the Light of Truth in bodily form and to redeem us. He came to seek and save the lost. You see Jesus put into action the plan of the Father.

Then we come to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who applies our salvation. He is the one who resurrected Christ from the dead and gives us life and lives within us, the believer. It says in Romans chapter eight verse 11 this, “but if this Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” The Holy Spirit, you see, draws us to Jesus. He is the one who opens our eyes to see that we are a sinful people and that we're dead in our transgressions. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives the gift of salvation to us and He makes each of us a new creature in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts, and He is the one who converts. He convicts us of sin, and He opens our eyes to see that Jesus alone is the WAY the TRUTH and the LIFE and that there's no other way except through Christ. He is also the one who moved and spoke to the prophets who wrote the Bible. He gave them all the words and He ensures that Scripture is going to be preserved through all generations. I really like what Zacharias says about God. In Luke chapter one verse 70 he says that, “God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began.” And in Peter, I like what it says, Second Peter chapter one verse 20-21 says this, “but know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture,” no prophecy whatsoever, none of the Bible here whatsoever, “becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will but men moved by the Holy Spirit from God.”

It was the Holy Spirit who used imperfect men to write what is true and what is perfect. These words are from God, the Holy Spirit. In fact, they're inspired, they're inerrant and they're infallible. You see, the Bible is from God, it will never fail you and it has no errors. There's no accusation in the entire world or in all of history where it could approach the Bible and stick or put a crack in the foundation of Scripture, no accusation whatsoever. Being the one who applies salvation in our lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith, and He enables us to do good works. I like what Charles Spurgeon says, he sums it up really beautifully when he says, “All the good that has ever been done in the world is worked by the Holy Spirit. And as the Holy Spirit honors Jesus Christ, so Christ puts great honor upon the Holy Spirit.” If you and I try, either as a church or as individuals, to do without the Holy Spirit, God will soon do without us.

But in first Corinthians chapter two Paul talks about two kinds of wisdom, worldly wisdom and spiritual wisdom or Godly wisdom. One comes from man and the other comes from the Holy Spirit. Paul says that there's a wisdom of this age that permeates and this wisdom of the ages has been from the beginning of time, and it will go to the end of time. It's that worldly wisdom, it is manmade and building our lives on that kind of wisdom is like building a house on the sand. There's no foundation, it's gonna sink, it's gonna flop, the waves are gonna come up high and it's just gonna collapse on itself. It's unstable and it's shifting. The world though, thinks that they're wise. Worldly wisdom starts with oneself and it focuses on oneself, it doesn't start with God and doesn't aspire to give God any glory. It doesn't confess that God is the source of wisdom. It says, ‘we're the source of wisdom.’ The Corinthians thought, in fact, that they were wise in a lot of different ways. And Paul decides that this is the time to confront them through this letter about their worldly wisdom. You see, the Corinthians had adopted worldly wisdom and it crept into the church. Things needed to be cleaned up.

## Living by the Spirit

Let me show you several ways that worldly wisdom infected the Corinthian church and how we need to guard ourselves, our lives and this church that we're a part of, from that kind of worldly wisdom. We're going to take a bit of a summary if you may over a lot of the issues that Paul addressed regarding the worldly wisdom that crept into the Corinthian church. You see, early in the book of Corinthians Paul calls out those who are causing divisions among the church by claiming to say, I'm following Paul or I'm following Cephas or I'm following Christ or I'm following... There was beginning to be divisions and factions, the unity of Christ was beginning to not look like the unity of Christ in the church any longer. They began to divide over which spiritual leader, which man they were gonna follow. After they began to separate the body of Christ by claiming, hey, I'm a follower of so and so and I'm so and so and I follow so and so. Really, it's 'I need to be following Christ.' So Paul admonishes them here because they put a mortal man as their head and leader in a way such that they were not following Christ and they were not striving for the unity of the body of Christ. They allowed the preferences of leadership to produce quarrels within and among themselves about who they should follow. And so he admonishes them and monitors them. Paul chastises them and he says, "has Christ been divided? Paul, has he been crucified for you? Were you baptized into Paul?" He's saying, think about this guys who's our leader, who's our head. He's the one that we need to say we're following. We don't need to put some mortal man on the top and say, that's my man. We need to worship Christ. As he started at the beginning of the chapter, worldly wisdom puts a man on a pedestal focusing on following a mortal man. But spiritual wisdom says that Christ is our head and He is the one we need to follow.

In chapter three, Paul points out that some of them were building their lives on the foundation of wood and straw and hay. It's an unstable foundation with no eternal value. He reminds them that we need to be careful of what we're building our lives out of. Worldly wisdom says put yourself first. Pursue pleasures, money, fame, etc., pursue the temporal things. There's endless amounts of pleasure and comforts and trinkets in this world. The worldly wisdom says fight to get to the top, cut corners if you need to. Worldly wisdom says put yourself first don't deny yourself, isn't that what most commercials are all about? You deserve, you deserve... But spiritual wisdom says put others first. It says deny yourself. It says pick up your cross. And when you're doing that, you need to be following Christ. The wisdom of God has no worldly appeal my friends.

Paul's comment in verse 3:15 is sobering because it says this, "if any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet as through fire." You see, he's talking about you and me... Christians. He's not just talking about the world out there. And he points out that even many Christians are wasting their efforts by building so much of their life out of sticks and hay and straw. They're enraptured. They're focused on the pleasures of this world. They're building their lives out of things that aren't going to last. At the end, when it comes time for judgment, it's not going to stand to judgment. There are so many things in life that are vain and will produce nothing for Christ, no fruit for Christ.

In contrast, Paul says to build our lives out of gold and silver and precious stones, the things that will last. In other words, the things that are rooted in God, the things that are important to God, the things that are eternal, things that will spiritually last. He wants us to invest in those things. He wants God's priorities to be our priorities. Then in chapter four, Paul reminds us that the world thinks that Christ and His death is foolishness. Absolute foolishness. Worldly wisdom says let's all coexist, let's just get along. Let's all agree that all religions are okay, let's have peace. Everyone can have their own religion, just don't be dogmatic that yours is the right one. The

## Living by the Spirit

world looks at the Christians and thinks that denying yourself and putting all your hopes in some guy that died on the cross and you say He was resurrected? Rubbish. That's foolishness. That's worldly wisdom. Worldly wisdom says, we're all good at the core and we just need to draw that goodness out. If we draw that goodness out, we'll make this world a better place. Scripture says we don't start good. We need to be born again. We need to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Godly wisdom says that we're all wretched, dead in our sins and desperately in need of a Savior. Worldly wisdom also says that strength is superior to weakness. But Paul says in Second Corinthians chapter 12 verse nine that, "the power of God is perfected in our weakness." The world preaches self-sufficiency, you can do it, you've got it within you. You don't need anybody else. I'm cheering you on. Press on, you're gonna make it. Don't give up. You're gonna succeed. You, you, you, you. Did you get that? It all starts with you, and it all focuses on you. It's all about you. That's the world's philosophy. But the Bible says that we are desperately helpless, and we're helpless without His grace. He is the vine, and we are the branches. You see, because apart from Him, we can do nothing.

Speaking of marriage, in several chapters he talks about this. The world says marriage is a thing of the past and commitments aren't all that necessary. We can define the boundaries of sexual expression, which is not limited by marriage of one man and one woman. A family doesn't need to start with a married man and a woman. The world says, we can define the family and they do that in the face of the fact that God established it at the beginning of time. Sexual immorality was occurring in the Corinthian church, and Paul told them to take that worldly philosophy out of their lives. Put off the old way of thinking and living and put on the new self. He called them, instead, to live lives of purity and holiness and faithfulness. Now, worldly wisdom says this also, it says you wronged me, and I'll get you back. Right? Evil for evil. But that foolishness even crept into the marriages, if I may be so bold as to say, because Paul said it. He says, when some spouses were depriving the other spouse of marital intimacy and pleasures, he says, that's wrong. We don't say, you've done me wrong, therefore, I do you wrong. That's not what the Bible says.

On a different note, there were current Christians in Corinth who had some serious conflict, and it got so bad that they decided to take each other to court to sue each other. The world says, if you've been wronged by somebody, take him to court and get your pound of flesh or a million dollars. Jesus, on the other hand, says that we're not to focus on preserving ourselves. In fact, He says something absolutely shocking. In Matthew chapter five verse 40 he says, "and if anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let them have your cloak also." Can you believe that that's what Jesus said? But He means it and that is Godly wisdom. Now that doesn't mean that we're to be absent minded and to let people run over us and walk over us and treat us like a doormat willy nilly. No, that's not what He's saying. But He is saying here that there is a bigger more eternal purpose in life than preserving our lives. We need to die to ourselves, we need to love others, we need to put others first. He calls for us to sacrifice our lives for the love of others.

But I want you to see what Paul says regarding this whole suing each other thing because it's rather interesting. He talks about some bigger topics than just the suing aspect of things. I'm gonna read for you first Corinthians chapter six verses one to six where Paul says, "Does any of you when he has a case against his neighbor dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to form the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you anyone wise, who will be able to decide between brothers and sisters? But brother goes to

## Living by the Spirit

the law with brother and that before unbelievers?" He says, you should be ashamed of yourself. We're Christians, we're going to be judging angels. We're going to be judging this world. I'm not sure what that all entails. But that's what he says. And he says, if we have that high privilege in the future, how come we can't get along and solve our own conflicts within the church? Isn't there anybody wise enough here, who knows Scripture enough to basically bring reconciliation?

But he continues because he says in verse seven, "actually, then it's already a defeat for you that you have lawsuits with one another." And then he says this again... shocking statements. "Why not rather suffer the wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? On the contrary, you yourself do wrong and defraud." In other words, what you're doing is wrong. And this to your brothers and sisters, you're fighting within family here. Romans 12:19 says, "never take your own revenge beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.' But if your enemy's hungry, feed him, and if he's thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."

Now, I remember an interesting situation. When I was about eight or nine years old, we had moved to Chilliwack and I was the new kid on the block and there was a bully in the neighborhood. He didn't really beat us up, but he was always intimidating and didn't treat us really nicely. I'm sure I told my mom, my mom was obviously concerned. So one day when he was in the neighborhood, there was sort of a park behind our house and we didn't have a gate behind us, and so it's pretty easy to see the kids playing back there. And so one day with her Godly wisdom, she said, You know what? Hey, Scott, why don't you come, you want a freezy? We're gonna have some freezies here on the back deck. And so are you interested? And he's like, "sure." He came over and had a freezie with us. So summer, hot afternoon, we're sitting on the steps, I go up to the back deck on the BC box house, and we're just eating our freezies. I don't remember what we said, I don't remember what my mom said. I don't remember all the details. But I do remember that after that, he didn't really bug us anymore. My mom had the wisdom to know that you overcome evil with good, and it's always left a deep impression in my life. I just want to encourage you with that.

Worldly wisdom says, if somebody does error, stick it to them. Godly wisdom says, seek peace, seek reconciliation, overcome evil with good. And if necessary, I might even add, if necessary, leave room for God's wrath. Worldly wisdom says that there's no rules on marriage, and therefore the man is not the head of the family. Society strives to eliminate the structure that God has established. In contrast, Paul states in First Corinthians chapter 11, verse three, he says, "I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." This structure is beautiful, because it comes from God. It comes from God Himself. It comes from God, where the father is like the head of Christ. And that's the beautiful thing. And because the husband is called to love his wife sacrificially as Christ loves the church, this gives God glory, and it should foster harmony in marriage. As the head of the family, it doesn't make the husband more important, it doesn't make him more superior. It doesn't make him more valuable than the wife, and it doesn't give him any right to abuse or take advantage of her at all, ever. But it is a beautiful thing that is spiritually wise and contrary to worldly wisdom. The world says, if you see an opportunity to provide for yourself, go for it. In fact, the Corinthians were doing that if you remember, they were having the Lord's supper and it was a big meal. It was a big sort of a feast, perhaps one of the main meals of the day. So a lot of them were getting aligned first and getting a large plateful and getting a nice big glass of wine and they were filling themselves up. And frankly, some of them were getting drunk. They were putting themselves first and then there's others that were hungry, there's no food left. There's no drink left. They really took more, more than their fair share. The world says, Put yourself

## Living by the Spirit

first. But God says put others first, don't be selfish. And even though this isn't the focus of Paul's talking about the Lord's Supper, the world says, be a glutton get drunk. But God says, don't be a glutton that's a sin. He says don't get drunk. That's a sin to.

Another wisdom thing, the wisdom of the world says eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow. We're all gonna die. Just focus on the here. Now don't worry about the future too much, this afterlife stuff. We haven't seen it. Don't worry about it. Just focus on what you can see. In fact, delight yourself on the here and now for that's all there is. But the wisdom of God says that even though this body dies, everyone who is dead will one day be resurrected. In John 5:28, Jesus says this, "don't be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and they will come out. Those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, and also committed the bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment." The world says, we haven't seen the future on the other side of death. Don't worry about it. Just deal with it when you get there. But we know God already says, there is a resurrection coming. Praise the Lord. Living just for the here and now is short sighted and foolish. But Godly wisdom says, seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness and He will give to us everything that we need.

So as you can see, these are several of the issues that Paul addressed with the Corinthians. Read the book of First Corinthians. It's all there, more details for you to read. Worldly wisdom though had really crept into the church. And Paul confronts them with spiritual wisdom. At the beginning of Corinthians, he instructs us in how to speak with Godly wisdom, by depending upon the Holy Spirit, and not worldly wisdom. And throughout the book, he models that with the words that he uses, in the spiritual wisdom... the Godly wisdom that he gives them, to correct them and put them back on the path of life that they need to be on.

I remember back in the early 90s, I went to Bible school in Cape Canary. Cape Canary Bible school, a little place called comfort in Texas, probably about 5000 people that live there, probably even less. And I was excited to go there. It was, you know, getting away from home, I was 19 or 20. And, it was great. I was just all excited and at the beginning of this Bible school term, the director gave us a welcome speech. So we were all gathered together, sort of like we are here now, and he welcomed us and gave all the details. And one of the things he said particularly stuck out to me in a weird way, because there's lots of things that he said, but it was something that he said that had to do with my safety. And he said, in Texas, here, there's a lot of different animals that you may have not seen. Most of us weren't from Texas so we didn't know you know about scorpions and tarantulas and armadillos and black widows and different things like that. And you know, he said, watch out for those different things, not the armadillos so much, we hunted them down. But he said, watch out for the others, they're poisonous, they can do harm. And then he said, but you need to watch out for the coral snake. And he didn't say this at that time. But I've learned since that it's one of the most venomous snakes in the world, among the top 10. It's even more venomous than a rattlesnake. Now, it's not famous and not as popular than a rattlesnake, because of a rattlesnake, they're pretty efficient at delivering the venom. They're quick, and they can do it well. But a coral snake is not efficient at delivering the venom. However, their venom is far worse than a rattlesnake. And so he says, you need to be able to identify what a coral snake looks like. He explained what it looks like and he gave this little saying that I'll never forget. He said, you need to know how to identify one, because there's a lot of counterfeits, you got three colors black, red, and yellow. If it's in a certain order, then it's a coral snake. But if it's in a different order, it's nonvenomous, it's nonpoisonous, you don't need to worry about it so much. It's this kind that you need to worry about. He said, this is the statement, he said, red touch yellow, kill a fellow. And he said, red on black, venom lack. I'll never forget that, I only actually remember the first part. And I never did see a coral snake. I did almost touch a black widow one time, and I did actually collect some tarantulas. But we need to, in

## Living by the Spirit

the same way that he was warning us about the danger of the coral snake, we need to know the danger of worldly wisdom. We need to be able to identify it and distinguish it and be discerning so that we're not adopting it, and basically putting it on the shelves of our life. Because when we do, we begin to use it, we begin to follow it, we begin to think it's okay.

Remember, at the beginning, I was telling you about how we were going to go out evangelizing. Well, it was great. Yes, I was nervous, very nervous. But you know what, I found that as I got talking with people, people were actually open to talk about the Gospel. People didn't, you know, have rotten eggs in their pockets that they were gonna throw at me. They may not have liked the conversation at times. But they were willing, they were gracious, they were civil. And I found that the more I took time to explain the Gospel, the more it actually made sense to them. I would say, well, does that make sense to you? Is that understandable? You know, there's a logic to what I was explaining to you. And people were understanding that. I don't remember a particular person who I talked to, I just remember the overall experience, it was actually a very positive experience. Not so much because I had something amazing to say in terms of my own persuasiveness, but because I had Truth that was going to change people's lives.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter two verse 14 to 16, he says, "The natural man does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but he himself is not subject to anyone's judgment. For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." So I got a question, I got some questions for you. How can we speak with Godly wisdom? How can we be persuasive? How can we be convincing? When we talk to others about the Gospel and to share the Truth with them? I said, we must remember these three things. First of all, we must remember that we have God's Word, and we can fully trust His Word. When we're sharing the Gospel and giving the Truth. That's what we're unpacking. That's what we're delivering. That's what we're putting on the table, not our persuasiveness, not our ability to dazzle them with our words, but God's Word. Secondly, we have God's Word, which comes with the power of the Holy Spirit. When we deliver God's Word and share God's Word and expand, like, help them to see it. The power of the Holy Spirit comes with that. God's word says, "My Word will not return to me void." It's not like we just hand it out and we hope that, well, yeah, we do hope, but the power of the Holy Spirit accompanies the Truth, it does. And we have to know that, we have to remember that. We can be encouraged by that. Thirdly, we have the Holy Spirit living within us. When you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, took up residence within you. And you've got the Holy Spirit to lead you and to guide you and to empower you, and to give you understanding and insights of Scripture so that you can explain it and share it with people.

You see, the Holy Spirit has written the Bible through the prophets, and we are told to use it to examine all things. We have the mind of Christ. And as we saturate our minds with His Word, we are transformed to the image of Christ. We begin to see things from His point of view. And when we share the Gospel in Truth, we have the power of the Holy Spirit working through us. Our call to persuade others, it doesn't depend on a worldly way of thinking or our own persuasiveness. If we do our persuasiveness, we will always be lacking. Rather, our persuasiveness needs to be rooted in knowing Christ, depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit, and staying faithful to His Word. God's Word is sharper than a double-edged sword penetrating deep into the soul. And He says that His Word will not return void. When we're trying to persuade others toward Christ, we need to remember that it isn't our wisdom that convinces them, instead it's the power of the Holy Spirit that persuades

## Living by the Spirit

through His Words. And that's what Paul did with the Corinthians, as we looked at this morning, and that's, my friends, my brothers, my sisters, what we need to do. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we are so humbled to think that You would take us lowly sinners, people who are dead in their sins, and that You would redeem us. That You would save us and that You would give us the calling of being Your ambassador. That You would take up residence within us by the Holy Spirit, to strengthen and to give us power. I pray Father that we would be wise people, that we would be holding to Your Word. And just be proactive in sharing the Gospel with others. Thank You for the great gift of the Holy Spirit and the power that we have with Your Word, Lord. In Jesus name, amen.