

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: 1 Corinthians

The Secret: The Hidden Wisdom

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 07.31 – 08.01.10

In 2006, the book *The Secret* reached the New York Times best sellers list at a frantic pace, partly because of the hype that was created around the book. The fact that there is this secret that has been in existence throughout all the ages of time and that only a special few have the opportunity to understand it or to know it. That's the premise behind the book. The book was catapulted to the top of the best sellers list through book clubs, Oprah Winfrey featured it on her book of the month must read. It was also featured in a number of publications and magazines. Of course there was worldwide media frenzy that was pushing what was going to be an upcoming movie in relation to the book. However, about halfway through 2006 the critics began to tear the book apart. And I'm not talking about the critics from the church looking into this book, but, rather the secular critics. They started to tear into it like only critics can do. In fact, one secular critic said that it is one of the most deceptive books ever published. It's a book, actually that does not reveal any great ancient secrets. It's a book that is based on the idea of positive thinking which was popular in the 1940s. It had its heyday in the 1960s and we still see remnants of it today.

The criticism by the end of 2006 made *The Secret* the most highly criticized book of the year. But I want to use it as a platform this morning because this book really is the essence, the apex of human philosophy. It is itself a demonstration of what man will do when left to themselves to discover their own purpose, their own identity and ultimately their own Gods. If you bought the book then you know what I'm talking about because about halfway through you're probably flipping it over and reminding yourself exactly how much money you spent on this book to discover the secret when there really is no secret whatsoever. The problem with books like this is that it's based purely in human idealism. It's based purely in human thought, conjecture, concepts and philosophies.

But we use the book this morning to propel us to think about what happened two-thousand years ago when the little Roman province called Corinth because in Corinth there too were the people of God inundated with philosophy. Now, you know enough about Corinth and the background by this point in our study of 1 Corinthians that you understand that the entire Roman Empire was infatuated with philosophy; with human wisdom. In fact, more philosophers came out of the Roman Empire era than any time since. You go through the ruins to this day, even the ruins of Corinth and the cities around it you find these statues created in marble, carved in granite to all kinds of philosophers of their day. The problem with the church in Corinth was that this human philosophy, this sense of infatuation, infatuation with human wisdom was seeping its way and undermining the church and it was causing great division. So, Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians to help correct those issues and he lays a foundation at the very beginning, the very first couple of chapters with a major premise. We've learned this premise. What is Paul's premise? That human wisdom will not lead to truth; that essentially human wisdom will not lead especially to truth about God. And, what was the message that Paul brought to the Corinthians and the Corinthian believers? He was bringing the message – the simple message of the Cross of Christ; of the redemptive plan of God.

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The problem is that much of the Roman Empire, much of the Greek world was looking at this very simplistic message, this simplistic concept and saying this is the philosophy of God? And they were saying this, in comparison to what we have created on our own is folly, is foolishness. People today consider the redemptive plan of God, a Savior dying on the cross for humanity to be somewhat simplistic; to seem foolish. But what does Paul say in chapter 1, verse 18? What they believe is foolish we, as believers, as followers of Christ understand it as the power of God.

Now, what do people do when they reject God? Well, they turn to their own philosophies. They turn to their own ideas. That's what Paul works on. That's what Paul runs into head first in these first couple of chapters. That's what we're going to look at today as we close out chapter 2. What I want you to do is take your bibles. Turn with me to the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter 2. We are in verse 6 through 16. If you don't have a bible it's important that you follow along with the bible so there should be one close to you that you can get. Turn to page 953 and you will be at the text that we're going to be studying verse by verse this morning.

What we see in this section is the ending argument of Paul of the superiority of God's Word. We've looked at results of God's Word, the power of God's Word and now we're going to see the source of God's Word. We're going to see how the wisdom of God was given to us and why it humbles us that God revealed this truth to those of us who follow Him. What you're going to find out in this passage is that this is a remarkable section of scripture. I have to be careful when I say that because I've notice I'm in a pattern that every time I come across a section of scripture I say this is a great passage of scripture. I found if I'm saying that too often people stop believing you. But listen. This isn't a great passage of scripture. This is a remarkable passage of scripture. The reason why I say that is because we're going to learn two things. You can see the movement in the text. You can see that Paul hangs his thinking on two concepts.

Number one - that you can not discover God on your own. That's the first. And that number two – God reveals himself to those whom He chooses. Those are the two things that we're going to look at.

Now before we get to the first one let me read the text so that we can together understand at least in a big picture where Paul's going. Verse 6 he says, yet among the mature we do impart wisdom. He's speaking of the wisdom of God. 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, no 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.

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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 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, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person, verse 14, 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. 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.

First movement in the passage – you can not discover God on your own. Point number one. You and I, no matter how much we would like to can not fancy God, can not understand the depth of God through any other ability other than if God himself reveals it us. Look at verse 6. Yet, among the mature, Paul says, we do impart wisdom. Now, let me take this apart. The word mature somewhat bothers me here. I wish the translators of the ESV would use a different word because this is the word **teleios** and it can be translated two different ways. It can mean the idea of maturity. It can mean the idea of complete. It can mean the idea of perfect. If you have the King James Version you understand that. It can mean the idea of fully grown. That's one concept that that word can mean.

It can also mean, simply – a believer. Simply the idea that once you become a follower of Christ you are redeemed. You are a believer. The problem with the way the text was written here is that it gives the idea that you have to be some super Christian. You have be filled with some super ability to understand the knowledge or the wisdom of God. But that's not what the sense of the text is telling us. We learn that from the context. Clearly Paul is saying to us that he is imparting the wisdom to believers. He says, yet among the believers would be another way of saying this, we do impart wisdom. The word impart is to talk or to talk much. It's the word **lalao**. It's the idea that Paul was going on and on about this – the idea that the wisdom of God is given to believers. That's exactly what we've seen in scripture, haven't we?

In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 8-9 it says He, God lavished upon us, His followers, His believers wisdom, insight, making known to us the mysteries of His will. You and I, because we are followers of Christ we understand certain things about God. Those things were revealed to us – the mystery of God was revealed to us. Now contrary to the world's wisdom we can not discover God, who He is or what He's like on our own. Are you starting to understand that? Is it starting to register that where Paul is going to take us is that we have received a very special gift? I don't want you to miss this early on as we begin to dissect this passage is that as believers you and I have received the wisdom of God. Not everyone receives that wisdom. You have been set apart to understand what many people from birth to death will never understand and yet because of God's grace and mercy and His love for you

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He has given you the ability to understand the deep things of what it means to follow after God.

Now, let me give you a couple of illustrations of...I remember two conversations I've had. One was many, many years ago with an agnostic. The other was not that long ago with a believer, a Christian right here in our parking lot. Both were extremely similar in at least the sense of the conversation. The agnostic, which by the way, an agnostic is someone who believes that there is a God, just doesn't believe that there is a personal God. This is different from the atheist who doesn't believe that there is any God or no God exists whatsoever. The agnostic said to me, well, I do not believe a personal God exists and I said in return well, it's irrelevant what you believe. It does not matter whether you believe a personal God exists or not. I wouldn't expect you to believe a personal God exists. I would not believe a personal God exists because you can not know if a personal God exists unless God, himself reveals himself to you.

Now, think about that in light of what the next conversation was out in the parking lot. I was having a theological conversation with a believer and he said this. He said well this is what I think God is like. And he went on to tell me what he thought God was like. And I again said to him it is irrelevant what you think God is like. It's actually irrelevant what I think God is like because what ultimately is truth is that we can not know what God is like unless He reveals it to us and He has in the scriptures. He's revealed truth to us. It's like the bible studies. Have you ever been to a bible study and you're sitting around and someone opens the bible and they start reading a passage of scripture. And then they say what do you think this means? And then people start going around the room and they say I think this means and they go on with their hypothesis. Well, the reality is I don't care what you think this means. Actually, this means you don't care. You don't care what I think. You want to know the truth. What does the truth say? We can't understand, follow this, we can't understand the truth until God reveals the truth to us. This is going to be Paul's driving point.

Notice how he develops this line of thought in the later half of verse 6. He says 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. Now, let's work through this concept. Age is the Greek word **aion** which means time, eternity, forever, perpetuity. It's the idea of this forever existence of knowledge that has gone on in time. It's like that golden thread that runs through that The Secret was talking about. That is you can just understand this wisdom of the ages then it will give you prosperity and health and relationships and happiness and reveal all of these things to you. What Paul is saying is I didn't get this from human wisdom. I didn't get this from this mysterious wisdom of the ages of time. Not only that but I didn't get it from any rulers of this age, leaders, thinkers, philosophers. He says they are all doomed which is an interesting set of words. He says they are all doomed to pass away. The idea here is the word or the concept of useless. Do you hear what he's saying? All the great thinkers, gurus,

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shamans, philosophers combined. All of their contribution to knowing truth, knowing God and Paul is saying it is worthless. He said I didn't get this wisdom from them.

Verse 7, but and you need to know this is the strongest adversative conjunction in the Greek text. What is an adversative conjunction? It expresses the opposition basically So if I said this is really cold but this is really hot that's an adversative conjunction. He's trying to make a point here. He's saying I did not get my wisdom from the ages or from these rulers, but verse 7, we impart, we teach, we give you, we talk much about a secret and hidden wisdom of God which God decreed before the ages for our glory. What is he talking about? Is there some secret, hidden wisdom within the pages of this book? Is there some type of Davinci code that we have to unlock? Is there something about this that is an enigma that it is undiscoverable? What does he mean here? No. Listen. What he's saying is that you will not understand it unless God gives you His Spirit to understand it. In fact, it is hidden from us until God reveals it to us.

To prove that point all you have to do is come over to Matthew chapter 13 because this is not a new concept for scripture. This is actually the very teachings of Jesus. Paul is essentially repeating what Christ once taught His disciples. In Matthew chapter 13, verse 10 the disciples are sitting around and they're asking Him why do you speak I parables and so Jesus gives us the purpose of parables. Look at verse 11. Jesus answers them and says to you. To who? To the disciples; to believers. To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven but to them, who's the them? It's those who are the unredeemed. Those who are not believers. To them it has not been given. And then this is remarkable, verse 12. For to the one who has, that's you as believers, more will be given and he will have an abundance but from the one who has not even what he has will be taken away. In other words, what you know of God, what you understand of His Word, what has been revealed more will be given to you and it will become abundance. You will begin to know God in an intimate way. But those who think they know God, that will be taken away. Verse 13. This is why I speak to them in parables because seeing, they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand. Jesus actually quotes from the book of Isaiah.

Now, Paul gives an illustration of this. Flip back over in 1 Corinthians, verse 8. He says, none of the rulers of this age understood this, what's the this? What's he saying? The this is the mystery. What is the mystery? The redemption of God; the cross of Christ. He says, none of the rulers of this age understood this. How do you know that's what the mystery is? Well, look, 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. Paul quotes Isaiah 64:6, the same passage that Jesus is using.

Now, let me just stop right here and get sidetracked for a moment because many people I have heard through some time, misapply, misunderstand this passage, especially believers. Believers like to pluck this passage out of scripture and says look, this is what heaven is

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going to be like. Look what God has prepared. No eye has seen or ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared and they get this fanciful idea that God has prepared this heaven and that they can not even imagine. Now that might be true but that's not what this passage is speaking about. This passage, don't forget is in the middle of a contrast between what has been imparted to believers and what has not imparted to unbelievers. So, there's a contrast between believers and unbelievers here. Paul is in the midst of talking about unbelievers and what they do not know and he says about them – what no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined. How do you come to an understanding of God? Through your eyes, through your ear, right? Through some kind of empirical understanding, right? Paul is saying no eye, no ear has ever, in and of themselves been able to understand what God is like. No empirical evidence is going to give you that.

Also, no intrinsic evidence. He says nor the heart of man imagined. In other words, the unbeliever in and of themselves know God. But, God has prepared for those who love him an understanding and we see that in verse 10. Now the movement of the text begins to change and we're going to become very rapid here so hang on.

This is the second point. God reveals himself to those whom He chooses. And we see that verse 10. These things God has revealed to us. Who is us? Points back to verse 6 in the passage. To the mature. To the believer. Teleios. It goes back to that main concept. He says, to us, to those whom God has called to Himself, the believer. He has revealed. This word revealed, an interesting word means to remove a veil or a covering. Strong's Biblical Dictionary defines it as to reveal a thing previously secret or unknown to us. Do you understand that? It's as if there was a veil. We could not fully understand it.

Who does this? Well, look in the middle of verse 10. 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. Who reveals to us the things of God? The Spirit of God. Why does the Spirit of God reveal these things to us? Because He's the one that best knows God. Do you see how this works in scripture? Who knows you better than anybody else? You do, right? Who knows me better than anybody else? I do. I know myself better than you do. You know yourself better than anybody else does. The scriptures are just saying who knows God better than anybody else in the universe but the Spirit of God? Who has revealed to us the truth of God? God, the Spirit of God. Isn't that remarkable? Who is communicating with you about God? God is. God is revealing. God is the one who is taking on the aspect of revealing this to Himself.

Now, how does He do this? Watch this. It just keeps getting better. Verse 12 and 13. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that – this is a purpose statement. In other words it answers the question why – that we might understand the things freely given to us by God. Why has God given us His Spirit? Why has God

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revealed Himself to us? So that we might understand the things freely given to use by God. And then Paul says and we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom. Back to that same concept. But taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. How did we receive this? By the Spirit. You and I have received something. Get this. Don't miss this. You and I have received something from God. Not everyone receives this. Verse 14 tells us that the natural person, who's that? That's the unredeemed person. That's the person who does not embrace God in faith. The natural person does not what? What does it say? Look at your text. Accepts the Spirit of God for they are what? Folly, foolish. It's exactly what Paul says in 1:18.

If you want to know why jot this down in the side of your bible or in your notes. Titus 1:15. Titus 1:15 tells you why the natural person will not accept the things of God. It says here in this text that he is not able to understand them because they are spiritual discerned which means they are unclear. Now, can a person read the scriptures? Yes. Can the people exegete the scriptures? Can they parse the verbs; can they take apart the nouns? Yes. Can they take apart the nouns? Yes. Can they study the scriptures? Yes. But they will not come to a full understanding of this.

Classic case in point are the Pharisees. The Pharisees spent their lives studying the scriptures and yet what happened? They missed the central message. They were spiritually discerned which means it was unclear to them. You, on the other hand, verse 15, the spiritual person judges all things but is himself to be judged by no one. In other words God and God only is your judge in the matters of spiritual things because God takes responsibility to teach them to you. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? In other words, only God but, verse 16, we have the mind of Christ. Do you get that? You have received the mind of Christ. That means you can understand the things of God. You can not understand God on your own unless He chooses to reveal these things to you.

Here's yet the result. And I've said this many times. That's the problem with staying in one place for too long. You tend to repeat yourself so I'm about ready to repeat myself. There are really only two groups of people in this room. There are those who are the spiritually discerned – things that are just not clear. They're still chasing after things of the world. They're still conjuring up God in their own image. They're still trying to see God by their own standards and through human wisdom. And then there are those who those things of God have been revealed.

Now, let me speak to those of you who are here and you're not sure if you fully understand God. Good news. We all started in that exact same place. We all started there until God revealed himself to us. But if you're here and you're not quite sure if you are following the true God; if you've embraced Jesus Christ as the one true Savior; if you're hear and you're saying it seems like the things I'm learning about God are different from the things I've always thought about God. Maybe you are spiritually discerned but there's this welling up of

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desire in you. Guess where that desire is coming from? It's coming from God. He's in the process of revealing himself to you. Embrace that. Dive headlong into that. You are receiving a gift that not everyone receives. There are scores, hundreds of thousands of people go about their daily lives who really don't ever think about God. They really aren't that concerned about God. And yet for some reason you have an interest and you have a desire to know. God is revealing himself to you. He's giving you that interest. Embrace that.

For those of you who clearly are sitting here and saying I remember the time when God revealed himself to me. I remember when the truth of the Word of God became real and I received that and accepted that and I'm now following after Christ. My question to you is - are you embracing that to it's fullest? You have received the divine wisdom that the whole world searches for, God has freely given it to you. Don't squander it on things of much less value in life. Dive into the truth of the Word of God and you will find out that you will never reach the end. It will become an insatiable thirst but it's a thirst that is a good thirst. As you discover and God reveals more and more about himself. Don't squander the fact that for the short period of time that you've been given in life the God of the universe has so chosen to reveal himself to you.

Let's pray together.