

ANSWER TWO: SEEING GOD'S SIMPLE AND HUMBLE PEOPLE 1 CORINTHIANS 01:26–31

Introduction

Christian Believer: The second answer to division is seeing God's simple and humble people. The Corinthians needed to remember who they were. Not too many had come from among the wise, the powerful or the noble. Therefore, they had no excuse for acting snobbish or for criticizing and ignoring others. They were only what God had made them. Their knowledge, rank and power did not attract God, and such things would not now secure any special favours from God.

Every church and believer needs to take the message of this passage to heart, for one of the most tragic characteristics of modern society is its pride and self-sufficiency. Modern society proclaims a doctrine of humanistic philosophy, that is, that man is supreme. The result is a world that is about to explode under the pressure of...

- self must be pleased above all else
- one has the right to do his own thing
- self image brings wholeness
- they owe me
- might makes right
- colour and race determine status

The world's crying need is for man to see that the only answer to division is *reconciliation* with God and with each other, and the only way to be reconciled is to live lives that are simple and humble.

- I. God does not call many outstanding people (v. 26).
- II. God calls simple and humble people (vv. 27-28).
- III. God has one purpose: to eliminate man's boasting (v. 29).
- IV. God's real wisdom is Christ (vv. 30-31).

I. 1 Corinthians 01:26 *Believers are not the Outstanding People*

God does not call many outstanding people. The Corinthians were boasting and taking great pride in their wisdom and understanding, gifts and abilities. God had gifted them with every conceivable spiritual gift, and they were especially enriched with the gifts that dealt with speech and knowledge. The gifts of speech and knowledge are the primary tools of the...

- preacher
 - teacher
 - educator
 - ruler
 - politician
 - businessman
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In fact, speech and knowledge are two of the primary tools of any leader, and they are gifts that *stand out* and are clearly visible and noticed by everyone. The person gifted with knowledge and speech is often a leader who is in the limelight.

The point is this: these two gifts, speech and knowledge, are especially subject to the temptation of pride. Apparently the Corinthian church had yielded to the temptation of pride, that is, of feeling superior because of...

- the gifts and abilities they had.
- the knowledge and wisdom of their leaders.
- the unusual gifts of knowledge and speech (prophecy, tongues, teaching, eloquence and charisma).
- the pastors and leaders God had sent their way (Apollos, Peter, Paul).

Paul says, “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called” — look at yourselves. Look at your church, at the type of people God calls.

1. God does not call many who “were wise by human standards”: the educator, the teacher, the philosopher, the politician — all who seek the wisdom of this world instead of the wisdom of God. The wise by human standards are those who pursue and live for the human, fleshly wisdom of this world. Few of these are ever saved. Some are, but not many. Men do not discover God by the wisdom of this world.

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

1 Cor 1:18-21 *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” Who is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.*

1 Cor 8:2 *The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.*

Prov 3:7 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.*

Prov 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Isa 47:8-9 *“Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.’ Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells. You have trusted in your*

wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.'

2. God does not call “many influential” men of this world: the great, the powerful, the rulers, the wealthy, the business leaders, the politicians, the influential. Of those who are wrapped up in the positions, wealth and authority of this world, few are ever saved. Some are, but not many. Men do not have influence with God because of who they are. Their earthly position and power have no bearing upon God's acceptance of them.

1 Cor 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Prov 28:26 He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

Ezek 28:4-5 By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries. By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud.

Hos 10:13 But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors.

Oba 1:3-4 “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who lives in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD.

Zep 2:15 This is the carefree city that lived in safety. She said to herself, “I am, and there is none besides me.” What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.

3. God does not call many of “noble birth” men: the high bred, the upper class, the well-born, the nobility of society, those of respected heritage, those with noble roots.

Thought 1. Possessing earthly knowledge, influence and nobility do not make a person acceptable to God. Such things may be esteemed by men, but they are not esteemed by God. This fact bothers men, for they think who they are and what they have done should have some bearing on God's acceptance of them. However, this is the very thing that keeps so many from ever becoming acceptable to God: pride, self-sufficiency, self-attainment, self-righteousness, self-centredness — whatever men may choose to call it. Men are saved by the grace of God, not by self-effort. All men stand on an equal footing before God, no matter their status.

Gal 6:3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Prov 20:6 Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?

Isa 24:4 The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish.

Jer 4:22 “My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.”

II. 1 Corinthians 01:27–28 *Believers are the Simple and Humble*

God calls simple and humble people. Note the word “chose” (exelaxato): the fact that men do not save themselves, but God saves them is stressed four times in the words “called” and “chose” (v. 26, 27, 28). God is the One who takes the initiative in saving men. It is God...

- who *does not call* many outstanding people.
- who does call the simple and humble people.

The point to see is this: God's choice is not arbitrary, not without reason. He knows why He chooses the simple and humble over the outstanding. God has His reasons, and He explains His reasons in this passage.

1. God chooses the “foolish things [people] of the world to shame the wise.” Note the term “foolish things” is used instead of “foolish people.” Many of the wise in the world look upon those who have little or nothing as things. They look upon them as nothing more than tools for the rich and powerful to use as they wish. God chooses the ignorant, the unlearned and the disadvantaged over the wise of the world. Why? To “shame” (kataischune) the wise. The wise feel self-sufficient in their education, knowledge and wisdom. They feel little if any need for God, and often question if there is a living and true God who is sovereign. Common sense and logic tell us that such an attitude of arrogance could never be acceptable to God. Not because He denies men the right to ask and think through legitimate questions, but because most of the wise of this world are not sincere enough to genuinely study the truth of God which has been revealed in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures. And, too often, the few who might seek the truth study secondary sources (books about the Bible) instead of studying the primary source, the Bible itself. Too many seek for God through what men say instead of letting God speak for Himself.

It is because of such pride, arrogance and close-mindedness that God chooses few of the wise in this world. In fact, God does exactly what most men would do: He chooses those who humble themselves before Him, confessing Him to be God and asking Him to save them. The result, of course, is that the wise of this world are shamed, and their shame will become ever so visible and embarrassing when judgment comes.

2. God chooses “the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” By weak is meant those without position, influence or wealth. The weak are the less important, the insignificant, the more dispensable. It is a person without any authority or influence whatsoever. It may be the common labourer, the simple worker, the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the child, the aged, the deformed, the diseased or the helpless. God saves the weak person, not the strong person. Any person who stands before God erect, with his chest out, professing his position, authority, wealth and diligent work,

will be *rejected* by God. In fact, God will shame and put to shame such an attitude of *arrogant might*. He will only accept the person who comes to Him in weakness and cries for His help.

3. God chooses the lowly things and the things which are despised. Again, note that people are looked upon as “things” and not as persons. The lowly are in contrast to those who are in the upper class of society. The lowly and the despised would include the lower classes of society: the lowly, the contemptible, the ignoble, the vile, the criminal, the immoral, the depraved, the dirty, the distasteful. It is such people that God chooses instead of the upper classes of society. Why? Again, because of pride, arrogance, self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency. More of the upper class are unwilling to give all they are and have to Christ and His cause. They want some religion and some charitable causes, but they are unwilling to surrender their lives to a *Lord* who demands their total allegiance.
4. God chooses the nothings to nullify the something of this world. There are people in this world who are overlooked and bypassed and considered totally insignificant and useless. God chooses His people from among them as well, and He does it to nullify, dethrone, and bring to nothing all those who think they are something in this world.

Thought 1. Again, God does not deny or forbid man's right to think through and ask honest and sincere questions. On the contrary, God wants man thinking and learning. He is the One who gave man a mind for the purpose of reasoning and discovering the truths of the universe He created.

- 1) God expects man to gain dominion over the universe, to conquer and control the destructive forces of nature as much as possible.

Gen 01:27-28 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

Psa 8:6 *You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:*

Mat 25:14 *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.”*

1 Tim 6:20 *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.*

Luke 19:13 *So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’*

- 2) God expects man to reason with Him, but He expects an honest and seeking heart and the subjection of one's life to His Lordship once the truth is revealed.

Isa 1:18 *“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*

Isa 55:1 *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”*

Mat 11:28 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

Rev 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

Thought 2. God sent His Son into the world to save those who confess...

- that they cannot save themselves from sin, death and hell.
- that they want to live with God eternally and serve Him as Lord.

Mat 21:31 *“Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.”*

Mark 2:17 *On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Luke 7:47 *“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”*

Luke 15:2 *But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

Luke 23:43 *Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

III. 1 Corinthians 01:29 God's Only Purpose

God has one purpose for saving only the simple and humble people — to eliminate man's boasting. Think for a moment: think of all the evil and meanness and ugliness in the world on any given day. In fact, come closer to home: think of all the evil and meanness and ugliness in any one city on any given day...

- the cursing
- the stealing
- the negative thoughts
- the selfishness
- the immorality
- the anger
- the abuse
- the harsh speaking
- the corruption
- the fights
- the arguments
- the deception
- the murders
- the immoral thoughts
- the cheating

The list could go on and on, and it all happens every day. In addition, think how few people ever think about and acknowledge God and how little thought is given to Him even by those few. No matter his education, wisdom, science, technology, power and heritage, man never has and never will be able...

- to control sin and evil in the world.
- to bring peace, assurance and control to the human heart.
- to change the selfish hearts of men into hearts of love and sacrifice.
- to bring eternal life to a man beyond his few short years on this earth.

Now for the shattering question: What right does man have to glory? Why does man consider himself wise and mighty and noble? Why does man want to act...

- self-sufficient when he cannot control his own earthly behaviour, much less his destiny?
- wise when what he learns is ever changing and being discarded or modified and developed, and he cannot even control what he learns?
- powerful when he cannot even stop a simple virus from downing his body, much less accidents, diseases and death?
- noble, as though he were better than others when he is nothing but flesh and bone as all other men, and his ideas of upper and lower class are nothing more than *ideas* in his mind that are soon destroyed by God in death?

The question to the honest and thinking man of the earth is not, "Why does God not choose those who dwell in such superficial thoughts and behaviour," but "What is man that you are mindful of him? (Heb 2:6)."

Man does not deserve God's attention, much less His salvation. But God loves man, so He gives us both His attention and salvation. However, God does not put up with the foolishness of man's depraved wisdom and ridiculous claims to *self-sufficiency and self-righteousness*. Man does not control his destiny. All he has to do is look at the behaviour of men, and then look at the grave and be honest and thoughtful about the facts, and he has to confess his need for God.

This is the reason God has chosen to do the very opposite from what man thinks. He chooses as His followers and servants the people who are the very opposite from whom man chooses. God saves those and uses those whom men bypass, ignore, neglect, abuse and misuse. Why?

1 Cor 1:19-20 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Who is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

1 Cor 1:29 So that no one may boast before him.

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Prov 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Thought 1. Note that some of the outstanding people of the world are saved. Some are truthfully honest and do think and search the Scriptures and God for the truth. Therefore, God saves them. God does not save a lowly person because he is lowly. He saves a man because the man's heart is humble.

Mat 18:4 *“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Mat 23:12 *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

Prov 16:19 *Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.*

Prov 29:23 *A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honour.*

Isa 57:15 *For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

Micah 6:8 *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

IV. 1 Corinthians 01:30–31 Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God

God's real wisdom is Jesus Christ, His only Son. Note “of Him” (ek autou); that is, *out of God*, out of His nature of love and salvation, He chooses you to be in Christ” (see *Position in Christ*, Rom 8:1). Again, the stress is that it is God who saves a person; the person does not save himself, no matter how capable he is or how much good he may do. How is God able to save men? By Christ. God took Christ and *presented Him* to the world as the wisdom of God.

1. Christ is the wisdom of God given to the world so that men might know the way, the truth and the life of God. God sent Christ to earth as the Word (logos) of God. He was the perfect expression of what God wanted to say to man. Everything Jesus Christ

said and did was exactly how God wants man to speak and do. Jesus Christ was the Word of God to man (see *The Word*, Jn. 1:1-5)

- a. God sent Christ to earth as the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.

Col 2:3 *[Christ] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Col 2:9 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

- b. God sent Christ to earth as the Revelation of God. God wanted man to see exactly who He is, what He is like, and how He expects man to live. Therefore, God revealed Himself to man in the person of Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

John 14:9-10 *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."*

John 10:30 *"I and the Father are one."*

John 10:37-38 *"Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."*

- c. Christ was the very embodiment of the glory of God.

2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

What all this means is that a man must come to Jesus Christ if he wishes to know God, for Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God revealed to the world. God has given His wisdom to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ...

- God's wisdom has spoken to the world.
- God's wisdom has revealed itself to the world.
- God's wisdom has lived before the world in human flesh.

Man now knows the way, the truth and the life of God. Man is now without excuse.

2. Christ is the righteousness of God. Righteousness shows just how wise God really is. Man is not perfect, but imperfect and unrighteous. Therefore, man by his very nature cannot live in God's presence, for God is perfect and the very embodiment of righteousness. How then can man ever become acceptable to God and be allowed

to live in God's presence? Jesus Christ is the answer, for He is the righteousness of God; that is, God sent Jesus Christ to earth to live the *perfect, ideal* and *sinless* life. Jesus Christ never sinned, not even once. Therefore, He stood before God and before the world as the Ideal Man, the Perfect Man, the Representative Man, the Perfect Righteousness that could stand for and cover the righteousness of every man.

When a man believes in Jesus Christ — really believes — God takes that man's faith and counts it (his faith) as righteousness. The man is not righteous; he and everyone else knows it. But God counts his faith and belief as righteousness. Why would God do such an incredible thing? Because God loves His Son that much and God loves man that much. God loves so much that He will take any man who honours His Son by believing in Him and count that man's faith as though it were the real thing: righteousness. Very simply stated; Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God. He is the only way a man can become righteous and acceptable to God.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

Heb 7:25-26 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

1 Pet 2:24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

3. Christ is the holiness or sanctification of God. Holiness also shows just how wise God is. Holiness means two things.
 - a. Holiness means to be set apart unto God. Jesus Christ set His life apart to live for God, and He lived for God perfectly and righteously. Therefore, His act of holiness is able to stand as the Ideal, Perfect and Representative holiness for man. When a man believes *in* Jesus Christ, God takes that man's faith and counts it for the man's holiness. God counts the man as one of His, as *set apart* unto Him.

Heb 10:10 And by that will [God's will], we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Heb 13:12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

1 Pet 1:2 Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

- b. Holiness means sanctification: to live a holy and righteous, pure and clean life. When a man believes in Christ, God does a most marvellous thing. God puts the Spirit of Christ — the very life and energy and power of Christ — into the heart and life of the new believer. God sends the Spirit of Christ, who is the Holy Spirit, to actually live in the body of the believer. Therefore, the believer has a supernatural power to live for God. As he follows in the footsteps of Christ, living more and more like Christ did, he becomes more and more holy or sanctified — more and more set apart to God, living a more holy life than the day before.

1 Cor 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

1 Cor 6:18-20 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

2 Tim 2:21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Heb 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

1 Pet 1:15-16 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

4. Christ is the redemption of God. Redemption shows the wisdom of God to the world. As the Ideal, Perfect and Representative Man, whatever Jesus Christ did would stand for man. Therefore, when Jesus Christ died, His death became the Ideal and Representative death for all men. This is what is meant when Scripture says that Jesus Christ died for man. He died as the Perfect and Ideal Man, as the Substitute and Representative Man for all men. As the Ideal and Perfect Man, He was able to bear the punishment for every man's sins. Through His death Jesus Christ redeems (delivers) us from sin, death and punishment. He is the *redemption*, the deliverance of God for this world.

Rom 3:24 And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Col 1:14 *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

Heb 9:12 *He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Rev 5:9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

5. The purpose of God in sending Christ to earth was to stir men to praise God instead of boasting in their own wisdom and self-sufficiency. (Cp. Jer. 9:23-24.) ■