

LUCKY LEMONS ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

1. TEACHING MANUSCRIPT

“Wisdom from God” | 1 Corinthians 1:20-25; 2:9-11; 2:12-16
Bowdon Baptist Church | Dr. Bobby Gaines | Sunday, July 26, 2026

THE BIG IDEA

Wisdom is not knowing more about God. It is deciding more like Him.

Do not put this on the board before class and do not announce the title. The board stays blank until the end of Section 1. The whole opening depends on them not knowing where you are going.

THE SIGNATURE VERSE

“But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)

THE THURSDAY PRAYER

Lord, help me see this passage before I try to explain it. Help me love these people before I try to teach them. And help me make much of Christ rather than myself. Amen.

HOW THIS MANUSCRIPT IS BUILT

There is roughly 45 minutes of material here. Everything marked ★ is the 30-minute core spine, which is what actually gets taught if you start at 10:00 like you did last time and the room needs to breathe.

Teach the spine. Add from the unmarked material as the clock allows. Do not decide at the podium.

The cut ladder

Starting at	Do this
9:55	Teach the whole thing
10:00	Cut “If This Letter Came to Bowdon” in Section 1. Cut Monday Test 2
10:05	Also cut the <i>psychikos</i> word study. Say “a person running on human equipment only” and keep moving
10:10	Teach the spine only, then land

The landing never gets cut. If you have four minutes left, you skip whatever is in front of you and you land the plane.

The through line: This lesson has one job beyond the text. Every section has to come back to ordinary decisions. There is a beat at the end of each section called The Monday Test. It is the same question every time and that repetition is the point.

TIMING

Minutes	Segment
0:00-0:04	★ Cold open: three PhDs and a bad decision
0:04-0:15	★ Section 1: 1 Corinthians 1:20-25. Why smart people decide badly
0:15-0:27	★ Section 2: 1 Corinthians 2:9-11. You cannot get inside a mind
0:27-0:39	★ Section 3: 1 Corinthians 2:12-16. What you already have

0:39-0:45

★ The landing: the mind of Christ

What you need: blank whiteboard, Bibles open the whole hour, three readers assigned before class, the printed graffito (large), handouts at the door.

THE MANUSCRIPT

★ COLD OPEN (4 minutes)

Do not introduce the passage. Do not say the title. Walk out and ask the question.

Say word for word:

"I want to ask you something before we open a Bible this morning. Have you ever watched somebody with three PhDs make the dumbest decision you have ever seen in your life?"

(pause. Let them react. Somebody will laugh. Somebody will nod hard.)

I have. I have spent my whole working life around courtrooms and financial markets, and I have watched incredibly educated people make incredibly foolish decisions. When I first started out around the federal court system, I assumed every lawyer who walked through that door had to be a genius. They passed the bar. They had the degree. It took me about a year to figure out that some of the smartest credentials in that building were attached to some of the worst judgment I had ever seen. And if I am honest with you, I have seen that same fellow in the mirror.

Now flip it. Have you ever watched somebody who never finished high school make one of the wisest decisions you have ever seen? Somebody who could not diagram a sentence but who looked at a situation everybody else was overthinking and said the one true thing nobody else would say?

(pause)

Why does that happen?

(Take thirty seconds of answers. Do not correct anybody. Just repeat one back so they know you heard it.)

Here is what I want you to know this morning. That is not a personality quirk. That is not luck. There is a reason for it, and it is one of the most important things in the New Testament, and Paul is about to explain it to us in about six verses. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 20."

READER 1 • 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 (ESV)

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

(English Standard Version. See the translation note at the end of this manuscript.)

SECTION 1: WHY SMART PEOPLE DECIDE BADLY

1 Corinthians 1:20-25 (11 minutes)

If this letter came to Bowdon (60 seconds)

Cut first if you are behind.

Say:

"Before we go a word further, let me put you in that room. Corinth was a boomtown. Torn down by Rome, left in ruins a hundred years, then rebuilt from scratch. Which means there was no old money in Corinth and no old families. Everybody there was somebody's grandson who showed up with nothing. And in a town like that, you do not inherit status, you earn it, and the way you earned it in Corinth was by being clever. Traveling speakers came through like a concert tour. People paid money to hear a man make an argument beautifully, and they picked favorites the way we pick a team. So imagine Paul's letter showing up in Bowdon, except in our version

everybody in town keeps score on who is the smartest person in the room. That is who he is writing to. Not people who are indifferent about wisdom. People who shop for it."

★ What Paul actually says (3 minutes)

Say:

"Now look at verse 20. Paul lists the three smartest kinds of people his world had. The wise man. The scribe. The debater. In our language that is the professor, the lawyer, and the guy who wins every argument on Facebook. And he asks one question about all three of them. Where are they? Not, are they wrong about everything. Not, is education bad. He is asking a narrower question, and it is the question from our cold open. With all of that horsepower, did any of them find God? Verse 21 answers it. In the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom. Read that slowly. The world's wisdom did not fail because it was stupid. It failed because it was pointed the wrong direction. You can be the smartest man in Corinth and still be looking for God with a tool that was never going to find Him. (pause) That is your answer to the cold open. Smart people make dumb decisions when they are using the right instrument for the wrong job. A man can be brilliant with a wrench and still not be able to fix a broken marriage with it."

★ The story nobody expects (4 minutes)

This is the historical centerpiece. Hold up the printed image before you explain a word of it.

Say:

"In 1857, workers in Rome were digging out a building on the southwest slope of the Palatine Hill. It had been part of the imperial palace complex, a training school for household servants. And on one of the plaster walls, somebody a long time ago had scratched a drawing. A man stands with his hand raised the way you would if you were worshiping. In front of him is a figure hanging on a cross. Arms out. Feet fixed. Exactly what you would expect. Except the figure on the cross has the head of a donkey. And underneath, scratched in Greek, three words. Alexamenos worships his god. (pause) Let me be careful with you the way I try to be every week. [PROBABLE, not certain] Most scholars date this around the year 200 and most believe the crucified figure is meant to be Jesus and that Alexamenos was a Christian who worked in that building. It is not Scripture. It is not proof of anything. But it is very likely the oldest surviving picture anybody ever drew of the crucifixion of Christ. And it is a joke. Somebody drew it to make fun of a coworker. (pause) Now look at verse 23 again. Paul did not say the world might find the cross foolish. He said it would. A stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. Two hundred years later, some bored kid in Rome proved him right with a nail and a piece of plaster."

★ The Greek word, and only one (90 seconds)

Say:

*"The word in verse 23 for foolishness is **morōtē**. You already know it. We get the word 'moron' from it. Paul is not being delicate. He is saying that to the world this looks moronic. God's plan to save everybody was to let the Romans execute a carpenter in a way so shameful that polite Romans did not say the word out loud in mixed company. And then verse 25 turns the whole thing over. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The weakness of God is stronger than men. Do not skip past that. God does not say His wisdom beats our wisdom. He says His foolishness beats our wisdom. He is not comparing His best to our best. He is comparing what looks like His worst to our absolute best, and He is telling us it is not close."*

"God's foolishness has never lost an argument."

(pause. Do not explain it.)

★ THE MONDAY TEST (90 seconds)

Now write the Big Idea on the board.

Say:

"So what does that change on Monday morning? Here it is. If the world's wisdom could not find God, then the world's wisdom is not going to be enough to run your life either. And most of us are running our lives on it. We are making decisions the way our coworkers make decisions, the way the internet makes decisions, the way our own gut makes decisions, and then we wonder why we feel like we are guessing. (write on board) Wisdom is not knowing more about God. It is deciding more like Him. That is what this whole lesson is about. Not Bible trivia. Decisions. The ones you will actually make between now and next Sunday."

SECTION 2: YOU CANNOT GET INSIDE A MIND

1 Corinthians 2:9-11 (12 minutes)

Transition:

"Which raises the obvious question, and it is the one I could not get away from all week. If God's wisdom is that far above ours, how would anybody ever get it? You just heard that the smartest men in the smartest city could not climb up to it. So how does a tired mama in Bowdon who got four hours of sleep last night and lost a shoe on the way here get the wisdom of God? Chapter 2 answers it. Read it for us."

READER 2 · 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 (ESV)

9 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"—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

11 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.

(English Standard Version.)

The myth-bust (3 minutes)

Keep this if you can. It is the single most useful correction in the lesson.

Say:

"Verse 9 is one of the most quoted verses in the Bible and one of the most misused, and I want to fix it this morning, because fixing it makes it bigger, not smaller. You have heard verse 9 at a funeral. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, no heart has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him. And nearly every time you have heard it, somebody was talking about heaven. Wait until you see what is waiting for you up there. Here is the problem. Read the very next word. Verse 10 opens with these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. Revealed. Past tense. Already done. Paul is not saying you have to die to find out. He is saying you already found out. The thing no eye had seen and no ear had heard and no human heart had ever cooked up was not a mansion. It was the plan. A crucified Messiah. The gospel. And God did not make you wait for it. (pause) Now hear me. Heaven is real and it is better than we can imagine and I will happily say so at your funeral. But that is not what verse 9 is doing. Verse 9 is the setup. Verse 10 is the payoff. And the payoff is that the secret got told."

★ The verse the whole lesson stands on (4 minutes)

Say:

"Now verse 11, and this is the one, so stay with me. Paul asks a question. Who knows a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit? Think about what he is claiming. You have been married thirty years. You know how he takes his coffee. You know what that particular silence in the truck means. You know his face before he opens his mouth. You still do not know his thoughts. I have been married a long time, and I can promise you there are mornings Beth looks across the kitchen at me and has no earthly idea what is going on in there. (pause for the laugh) Some mornings, neither do I. (let it land, then go quiet) Nobody gets inside another mind. Not by love. Not by study. Not by twenty years of paying close attention. The only one who knows what is inside a man is that man, unless he decides to tell you. And Paul says the same is true of God. Nobody comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. So think about where that leaves us. If God had stayed quiet, we would not have a little information about Him. We would have nothing. Every religion, every philosophy, every three-in-the-morning thought you have ever had about what God might be like would be a guess made from the outside by somebody who cannot see in. (pause) Unless somebody on the inside decided to talk."

The illustration nobody else can give them (3 minutes)

This is yours. Do not generalize it.

Say:

"I spent twenty-seven years working around the federal court system, mostly on the administrative side, and one crime I got very familiar with in that world was insider trading. Here is what makes it a crime. It is not that a man made money. It is not even that he was greedy. It is that somebody on the inside knew something the

public could not know, and somebody with access revealed it to him. And you cannot research your way to information like that. There is no book, no degree, no amount of study that gets you inside another mind. Somebody on the inside has to tell you. That is verse 11. And here is what Paul is telling this church. The Spirit of God, the one who knows the depths of God, is the one God sent to tell you. God gave away the inside information."

"You are not smart enough to figure God out. You are loved enough to be told."

THE MONDAY TEST (90 seconds)

Cut this one first if the clock is tight. The Section 1 and Section 3 versions carry the thread.

Say:

"So what does that change on Monday? It changes where you go first. When something hard lands on you this week, and something will, your instinct is going to be to go get more information. Research it. Ask around. Read one more article at eleven o'clock at night with your phone two inches from your face. None of that is wrong. But notice what it is. It is all outside information. And Paul just told you that you have access to the only inside information there is. Wisdom is not knowing more about God. It is deciding more like Him."

SECTION 3: WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

1 Corinthians 2:12-16 (12 minutes)

Transition:

"Now the part that is about you specifically. Not about God in general. About what is in your possession this morning, sitting in that chair. Read it for us."

READER 3 • 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 (ESV)

12 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.

13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

(English Standard Version. Note: this matches your signature verse, slide, and handout wording.)

★ Verse 12: the transfer (3 minutes)

Say:

"Verse 12. We did not receive the spirit of the world. We received the Spirit who is from God. And look at the reason Paul gives. Not so we would feel special. Not so we would win arguments at Thanksgiving. So that we might understand the things freely given us by God. Freely given. Nobody in this room qualified for this. You did not test in. The Spirit of God did not pull your transcript. Some of you are sitting here this morning tired and feeling about two inches tall, quietly convinced that the people who really understand the Bible are the ones with the leather study Bibles and the highlighters and the seminary degrees. I want to tell you something as a man who has spent his whole working life in classrooms and who has three letters after his name. The Teacher you have does not grade on ability."

Verse 14: the word that unlocks it (3 minutes)

Cut the Greek if you are behind and keep the tractor.

Say:

"Verse 14 is the one people stumble over. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. They are folly to him and he is not able to understand them. That sounds harsh, so let me show you the word. In Greek it is psychikos. It does not mean stupid. It does not mean uneducated. It comes from the word for soul and it means a person operating on human equipment only. Mind, feelings, willpower, experience. Everything you were born with and nothing you were not. Here is the picture. You can hand a man the finest tractor manual

ever written, and if he does not believe there is an engine under that hood, he will read every page and learn nothing. The manual is not the problem. Where he started is the problem. That is psychikos. Not a dumb man. A man reading with the hood down.”

★ Verse 16: the claim (3 minutes)

Say:

“And then Paul ends with a line that should stop us cold. He quotes Isaiah. Who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct Him? In Isaiah that is a rhetorical question. The expected answer is nobody. Not one soul. The whole point of the question is to make you feel small. And Paul answers it anyway. But we have the mind of Christ. (pause. A long one. Let it sit.) Not we are working toward it. Not we might get there someday if we read enough books. We have it. Present tense. Every person in this room who belongs to Jesus. That is not a claim about your intelligence. It is a claim about your access.”

★ THE MONDAY TEST and the discussion question (3 minutes)

Say:

“So what does that change on Monday morning? Everything, if we let it. Think about one decision you are carrying into this week. Just one. A conversation you have been putting off. A kid. A job. A number in an account that is not where it should be. Something you have been chewing on at red lights. Now be honest with yourself, and I am going to be honest with you first, because I do this too.”

The question. Ask it, then be quiet. Count to ten in your head.

“Have you been researching that decision, or have you been asking Him about it?”

(If nobody talks, you go first, and you go first honestly with a real one.)

★ THE LANDING (6 minutes)

This never gets cut

Say word for word:

“I want to close by telling you what this passage says about God, because that is the whole point of it. We have spent forty minutes on wisdom. But look at what God actually did with His. He had all of it. Every bit. And He was under no obligation to share one word of it with us. He could have stayed silent and been perfectly just, and we would have spent our whole lives guessing at Him from the outside like a man trying to read a mind through a window. Instead, He talked. He sent His Son to a cross that looked so foolish people scratched jokes about it on a wall in Rome. And then He sent His Spirit to move into ordinary people, farmers and mamas and mechanics and clerks, and start explaining it to them from the inside. (pause) That is not how a God behaves when He wants to be admired from a distance. That is how a God behaves when He wants to be known. (pause) Now here is where I want to leave you. You have heard it your whole life. You have seen it on a coffee cup and a bumper sticker and about four hundred movies. Follow your heart. Folks, your heart will tell you what you want. It will tell you loud and it will tell you fast and it will tell you at eleven o'clock at night when you are tired and you have not eaten. What your heart will not tell you is what is true. Paul says you have something better than your heart. You have the mind of Christ. (pause) And that means every decision you make this week can be run through His wisdom instead of your own. Not just the church decisions. The Tuesday afternoon decisions. What you say to that person. What you do with that money. Whether you make that call you have been avoiding. Wisdom is not knowing more about God. It is deciding more like Him.”

The one thing (60 seconds)

Say:

“So here is your one thing this week. Not five things. One. Take the decision you just thought about, and before you research it, before you text the group about it, before you get a fourth opinion, ask Him first. Out loud if you can. God, You know what I do not know. I am asking You before I go asking everybody else. That is the whole assignment. Ask first.”

The quiet moment (30 full seconds)

Say:

"Let's be quiet for a second before we pray. Nobody look up. Nobody talk. One question between you and God. What have I been trying to figure out on my own?"

(thirty full seconds of actual silence. It will feel like three minutes to you and it will not feel long to them. Do not rush it.)
Alright."

★ THE PRAYER

"Father, we thank You that You did not stay quiet. We would never have found You. We could not have. You knew that, and You told us anyway, and You told us at the cost of Your Son. Thank You for a cross the world calls foolish and we call home. Thank You for Your Spirit, who moved in and started explaining. This week, before we go running off looking for answers, remind us to come to You first. And Lord, whatever each of us just named in the quiet, You already heard it. You already know what to do with it. We are asking You before we ask anybody else. In Jesus' name, amen."

The invitation line

Say it as they are gathering their things, not from the front.

"Next Sunday we stay in this letter, and Paul finally starts talking my language. Planting. Watering. Who actually makes anything grow. And then he says something that ought to make every one of us a little nervous. He says there is coming a day when everything you built with your life goes through fire, and only what survives it counts. I want you in the room for that one. Bring somebody with you. There is a chair."

DIG DEEPER

Optional. Fenced so nothing has to be cut on the fly.

Extra history

- **Corinth's rebuild.** Destroyed by Rome in 146 BC, in ruins about a century, refounded by Julius Caesar in 44 BC and populated largely by freedmen. No inherited status, so status had to be performed. That is the engine behind the whole wisdom problem in this letter.
- **Why crucifixion was unspeakable.** Roman writers treated it as unfit for polite conversation. It was used primarily on slaves, rebels, and the worst criminals. [PROBABLE] That is exactly why the graffiti works as a joke.
- **The Alexamenos details.** Found 1857 (some sources say 1856) in the Paedagogium on the southwest slope of the Palatine, a facility tied to the imperial household. Held today in the Palatine Museum in Rome. Dating estimates run from the late first century to the third, with around AD 200 most commonly cited. [SPECULATION] A second inscription found nearby has been read by some as "Alexamenos is faithful." Lovely if true. Do not teach it as fact.
- **Isaiah 64:4.** Paul's quotation in 2:9 does not match any known Greek or Hebrew text exactly. [PROBABLE] He is quoting loosely from memory or from a source we no longer have, which was ordinary practice.

Extra Greek

- **skandalon** (1:23, stumbling block). Originally the trigger stick of a trap. Not a pebble you trip over. Something set deliberately in the path that springs when touched.
- **eraunao** (2:10, searches). Used of investigating and examining thoroughly. The Spirit is not skimming the depths of God. He is at home in them.
- **pneumatikos** (2:13, 15). The counterpart to *psychikos*. Not a person who is more religious. A person with a second source of information.
- **anakrino** (2:14, 15). A legal examination word used of pretrial investigation. [INFERENCE] Worth noticing how often Paul reaches for courtroom vocabulary in this letter.

Alternate opener, banked not used

"If This Letter Came to Bowdon." The full modern-parable version, where a letter arrives addressed to a small west Georgia town that keeps score on who is the smartest person in the room. Not used this week because the cold open question is doing the work and the graffiti is doing the picture. A 60-second version of the Bowdon framing survives inside Section 1.

A NOTE ON THE PRINTED SCRIPTURE

The passages are printed inline at each reader's cue so you never have to flip.

The printed text is now the **English Standard Version (ESV)**. The original manuscript used the World English Bible (public domain). This version has been updated with the ESV text of the three passages for personal teaching use.

One difference worth knowing: 2:16 reads "we have the mind of Christ" in the ESV (and in your signature verse, slide, and handout). Say it that way.

Readers are assigned before class starts, never volunteered for from the front.

Companion files: teaching kit (outline, slides, leader notes, questions, challenge, Did You Know, bulletin blurb), one-page handout, mobile handout, promo kit.

— Updated with ESV scripture blocks for personal use only —