

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY EIGHT

The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

You will not drift from the truth if the cross remains your focus. By that I mean all that the cross represents, all that it symbolizes. It will reduce your pride to zilch, to nothing. It will lift up the person of the Savior, and your whole life will be transformed, and you will again run in the right direction.

—Charles R. Swindoll

FOOTBALL enthusiasts the world over will forever remember Roy Riegels' flub in the 1929 Rose Bowl. The play began, and the ball fell to the grass, but Riegels snatched it up. Then, unknowingly, he ran in the *wrong direction!* He helped the opposing team and earned the name "Wrong Way Riegels."

Christians can do the same. In the stress of the moment, we can take our eyes off the goal of living for Christ and go the opposite way—the way of the world instead of the way of Christ. What should we do when we've turned the wrong direction? We should follow the simple advice of the ancient proverb: No matter how far you have gone on a wrong road, *turn back*.

"Turn back!" is what Riegels' teammates were yelling at him, and it's the message Paul wrote in bold script to the wayward Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5, Paul corrected the Corinthian church who took their eyes off the cross of Christ and were running the opposite direction. Let's dig into this passage and discover the course-correcting principles the Lord has for us.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In the passage of this *Searching the Scriptures* study, Paul urged the Corinthians to return to the cross after they were swept up in the world's values. Use this time to pray for the Spirit's empowerment through this study—that He would fill you with confidence in and reliance upon God's power through the cross.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Prior to 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5, Paul addressed the Corinthian factions. Each group treated its spiritual teacher like the famous Greek rhetors. “Apollos is the best!” “No, Paul is better!” They used spiritual teachers to brag, to splinter the church of God, and to exalt themselves.

It will help to grasp the thrust of Paul's argument by first reading *1 Corinthians 1:11–17*. Summarize Paul's concern below.



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According to 1 Corinthians 1:17, what would cause the preaching of the cross to lose its power?

Next comes one of Paul's most forceful discussions on the power and centrality of the cross in ministry and in our lives.



Observation: The Foolishness of the World

In our first step of Bible study, we start with the text. We observe it. We don't go straight to the commentaries or what our favorite teacher says about the passage. We go to the passage alone. Ideally, we use multiple translations. As we read, we utilize our observation tools to look for key components in the text such as what's emphasized and the logical flow of thoughts.

Begin by reading *1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5*, carefully tracing Paul's argument.

Understand the Significance of the Cross

What did Paul emphasize in 1 Corinthians 1:18–25? How did he convey this emphasis?



The Cross We Proclaim

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Consider the Truth of Your Calling

What emphasis did Paul make in 1 Corinthians 1:26–31? How does 1:26–28 logically connect with 1:29–31?

This congregation is not made up of the brightest and the best in the world's eyes. I get the idea that it would be helpful for us to realize that we represent, in the world's eyes, that which is foolish, that which is weak, that which is base, and that which is despised.
—Chuck Swindoll

Hear the Honesty of Paul's Confession

After asking the Corinthians to consider their own experience with Christ, Paul told them to consider how he ministered among them. What did Paul emphasize in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5?

Paul, although as capable as a silver-tongued Greek orator, chose to express the gospel simply. Paul wanted the Corinthians to focus on the facts of the message, not his manner of speaking.



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5



Interpretation: The Wisdom and Power of God

During interpretation, we determine what the author intended his audience to understand and do. We want to know the theological foundations of Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians and what error the Corinthians made that led them to go in the wrong direction.

Contrast what the Jews and Greeks sought which led them to misunderstand the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:22–23).

How does the cross teach us about God's power and wisdom?

First Corinthians 1:18–2:5 logically follows and expands Paul's statement in 1:17: "For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power." The Corinthians valued what Paul considered worthless. Research and explain what that was. How would clever speech have emptied the cross of power had Paul relied on it?



The Cross We Proclaim

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

If you are among the ranks of the young and up-and-coming preachers in the making, hear this message: Your job is to declare the cross forcefully and courageously and consistently, so that no one will boast before God. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Remain in Me

Above, we learned how Christ's death on the cross does more than offer us forgiveness from sin. It offers a free ticket for us to ride the train of God's wisdom and power. Jesus' statement in John 15:1–17, on living by the power of God, complements Paul's statement to the Corinthians. Read [John 15:1–17](#) and explain how we are to remain in Jesus and bear spiritual fruit.

Say it with me: "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. We will continually run the wrong direction, score for the wrong side, and operate in the flesh if we shift from His power to ours. —Chuck Swindoll

As Christians, we never move beyond the fact that Jesus laid down His life for us, shaming the wisdom of this world and proving stronger than human strength. Through Jesus, God has triumphed over the way determined by this world and placed Christians on a new track entirely, and that track leads in only one direction: toward the cross of Christ, the power and wisdom of God.



Application: Run the Right Way

From Paul's correcting the Corinthian church's errors, Chuck Swindoll derives three application principles to help us internalize the truth of the passage. Think of application as the process of our Bible study where we set the diamond in the ring prepared for it. This step is vital in completing our encounter with God in His Word. The Spirit empowers us to live new because He has made us new.



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1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

Principle One

Remember the pit. Paul told his readers to remember their state when God had first called them. Not many were wise, powerful, or rich. We no longer boast in zip codes or bank accounts, degrees or acclaim because once Jesus brought us to the land of the living, we found those things to be pits of death.

In what did you formerly boast, or what do you currently feel tempted to boast in? How has this passage taught you to boast only in Christ?

Principle Two

Refuse the praise. Show courtesy as applause comes, but don't let it inflate your ego. Christ determines your breath and brainwaves. He deals out His Spirit and your faith. All comes from Him, and all the praise goes to Him. In what situations do you receive praise? What does it look like for you to graciously and humbly accept praise while ultimately directing the honor to Christ?



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1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5

Principle Three

Rely on the power. Sophisticated wisdom of the world, far-reaching influence, and awe-inspiring skill do not contribute to our spiritual growth nor that of others. The cross has the power. The Spirit channels it. We get our flesh out of the way in order to display God's power and wisdom. In what areas of life do you believe the Lord is prompting you to rely more on His power?

Each day, as we study passage by passage, we come to marvel at the mystery of God's ways. Such ways were not always obvious, logical, or inevitable to people in the Bible, nor are they always obvious to us. But we can know without a doubt that God sent Jesus in apparent weakness and foolishness to save the world according to His divine strength and wisdom. He used a scandalous object of torture and death—the cross—to make all things new.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the cross. In Jesus' name, amen.



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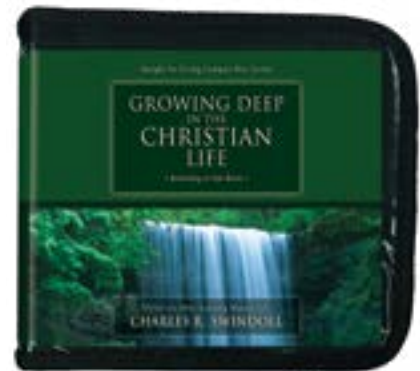
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

