

Résumé of Those Called

“Where is your university?” asked Dominique, after signing her book and giving it back to the waiting woman.

“It’s a Christian online school, and I used your book as a reference in my project and paper about the journey and necessity of healing emotions,” replied Jamie. She had been an absorbed audience member who shared her appreciation and some of her revelations after reading Dominique’s book, *The Mighty Counselor*. The author threaded her spiritual transformation and growth with Scripture and years of walking with and depending on the Holy Spirit. Dominique’s book had become a best seller in Christian circles.

“I am in my third year at the university here in St. Louis as an English major with a concentration in creative writing,” Dominique said.

“What? I thought you were a college professor or something,” said Jaime, her jaw dropping. “You are brilliant. I love your writing.”

Dominique smiled as other people began to lean into the conversation. “The Lord gifted me with a skill of writing, and I’m in school sharpening it. I enjoy writing, but I never saw myself as an author or guest speaker. The Lord let me see that all the time He invested in me was to help other people. Everything wonderful you see in myself and my work has been the work of the Holy Spirit!”

1. *Describe a time when you had to make a decision between a more worldly choice and a more godly one. What did you decide?*

2. *What are some of the outcomes you have seen in others or experienced yourself from taking a more worldly path?*

3. *What are some of the outcomes you have seen in others or experienced yourself from taking a more godly path?*

The Power of God

1 Corinthians 1:18-21, KJV

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1 Corinthians 1:18-21, NIV

¹⁸For 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. ¹⁹For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent

I will frustrate.”

²⁰Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For 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.

The Corinthian recipients of this letter were called to be God’s saints, His holy people. But prior to God’s call upon their lives, as non-believers, they thought His ways were foolish and that their ways were wise (see Prov. 12:15a).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the message of the Cross is foolish to people who are perishing in their sins. The Greek for “perish” is *apollymi*, which means to destroy fully, or to kill. It also indicates a state of being absolutely lost. For people who continue to see the Gospel message as foolish, when they die physically, they will find themselves eternally separated from the Lord. However, such is not the case for those who respond in faith to the

preaching of the Cross. To them, the Gospel is the power of God that saves and gives them the hope of eternity.

To support his point, Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14. God always has and always will tear down worldly wisdom and bring human intelligence to naught. Whether people consider themselves to be wise in general, teachers of the law, or sage philosophers, God has turned their worldly wisdom into foolishness. That's because in their puffed up, prideful wisdom, these people did not know God.

Therefore, it pleased God to use what those who are perishing considered to be foolish, namely the preaching of the Cross, to save those who by faith believe the Gospel.

4. *What is the message of the Cross to the perishing? To the saved?*

5. *How does God deal with those who are wise in their own eyes?*

6. *What did it please God to do?*

The Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 1:22-25, KJV

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25, NIV

²²Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Instead of believing in the Gospel message for salvation, many people, such as the Jews and Greeks, seek after something quite different. Rather than believing upon the Lord, the Jews demanded a sign from Him to prove He is their Messiah (see Matt. 12:38-40 and 27:39-42). Paul notes that the Jews' attitude was that they would believe a proposed statement or idea if a miracle were shown to them.

On the other hand, the Greeks looked for worldly wisdom. Paul found this out in Athens (see Acts 17:16-34). After he presented the message of Jesus to the Areopagus council, some believed, but most either mocked him or just wanted their curiosity satisfied by inviting him back.

Apart from faith in Christ, people will never truly find what they yearn for because Christ being crucified for our sins is either a stumbling block (scandalous or offensive) or just plain foolishness to many. But for those who have received and answered God's call, whether Jew or Greek, Jesus is both the power and the wisdom of God. For even His "foolishness" (vs. 25) is "wiser than human wisdom," and His "weakness" is "stronger than human strength."

7. What do the Jews demand and why?

8. What do the Greeks seek after and why?

9. Who is Christ to those who have heard and answered God's call?

The Call of God

1 Corinthians 1:26-31, KJV

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the

1 Corinthians 1:26-31, NIV

²⁶Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the

world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Paul then asked the Corinthian believers to consider their own calling. In so doing, they would see the truth that not many people who are wise in the ways of the world, impressive in the eyes of others, or born among the social elites receive or respond to God’s call on their lives.

God’s people can rejoice because our strength and wisdom are not from ourselves but from Him. This is why God’s people have nothing to brag about in themselves. It is by God’s gracious call that people come to Christ by faith and access God’s infinite wisdom. Christ is now our righteousness, sanctification, our redemption. We who once wallowed in our own folly and sin are now made holy in Him. So let us boast in God and not in ourselves.

10. *What did God choose to confound the ways of the world?*

11. *What did God do for us by calling us to His Son Jesus Christ?*

12. *As a result, how should we respond to Him?*

Is Education Worthless?

Today's Scripture could lead some to think that non-Christian thinkers and culture have nothing of value to offer. In the matter of salvation, no other religion, philosophy, or good idea, no matter how well-intentioned, can equal God's wise plan. Yet, most of us want our medical care provided by the best qualified trained professional, regardless of his or her religious beliefs.

It is possible to learn in these areas from non-believers. In his sermon in Athens in Acts 17, Paul demonstrated the evangelistic value of such knowledge by quoting from Greek philosophers in an environment where people were obsessed with acquiring new knowledge.

A thorough education in both the Bible and secular culture can open similar doors for us to speak credibly to non-Christians who value education. It also helps us guide family and friends who are struggling to know how to apply a Christian worldview to some of the latest ideas and trends. Like Paul, we may find some truthful, well-expressed ideas in the culture that we can use as a bridge to guide others toward God's wisdom in the Bible.

At the same time, we do need to heed biblical warnings that the world's wisdom will come to nothing. Instead, we spread the news of what God has done through Christ to save the world—a wise plan that no human being could have devised or carried out.

13. *In your opinion is it best for Christians to avoid non-Christian sources of information and entertainment? What observations have you made of believers who make different choices in this area?*

14. *Has education been an important part of your life? How has it affected your personal relationship with Jesus, and your witness to others?*

15. *How has your life been blessed by Christians who do not have much formal education? Is education essential for all believers? Why or why not?*

Practice Boasting in God's Wisdom

It's natural to feel satisfaction when we work or study hard and achieve difficult goals. But when this turns into feelings of self-sufficiency, it becomes a spiritual problem. To overcome this, celebrate God's role in your victories to transform self-boasting into boasting in God's wisdom.

► *Think of the last time you felt really good about an accomplishment, large or small. How did God equip, support, and encourage you from beginning to end of that project? Have you thanked Him and congratulated Him on His work in you?*

Achievement:

God's role and your thankfulness:

KEY VERSE

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

—1 Corinthians 1:28-29, KJV

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

—1 Corinthians 1:28-29, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of February 6 through February 12

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Galatians 4:1-7—God's Children and Heirs.
- Tues.** Exodus 19:1-8—A Holy Nation.
- Wed.** John 15:1-14—Abide in Christ.
- Thurs.** John 15:15-27—Chosen by Christ.
- Fri.** Leviticus 19:2-4, 9-18—Be Holy.
- Sat.** Leviticus 20:22-26—Keep God's Statutes.
- Sun.** 2 Timothy 1:3-14—Kindle God's Gift.