

# THE SPIRIT REVEALS

## 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-3:9

By Steven Edelman

My daughter Halle approached me this week the day before her birthday and told me she didn't want to grow up. She wanted to stay eight forever! I have to admit, there is a part of me that doesn't want her to grow up. She is in that stage that things are fairly easy. It takes significantly less effort than an infant. We don't have the drama and pressures of the teenage years...mind you we do see foreshadowing of it ;) BUT, if I could freeze her in that state forever... She would miss out on so much! Not only would she miss out, I would miss out as well. God willing, I would miss her greater life achievements, her graduation, her wedding day and her first child. Are we not just like that in how we relate to God? We settle into our current condition and get comfortable. Our lives are filled with foolish immaturities that halt our development in Christ and we miss out! Today we will look at the role of the Holy Spirit in pursuit of spiritual maturity. Since the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel we need to pursue maturity in Christ.

### **Since the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel:**

#### **1. We must discover the wisdom of the cross for maturity. (v2:7-10)**

As we will be looking at 1 Corinthians, a little background is necessary to help us understand what Paul is saying in this text. He is writing to the Corinthian church to address their immaturity. The irony is that the Corinthian church is a gifted and talented collection of people who possessed wisdom and eloquent speech. But there are behaviors that are causing disagreement and disunity. They are caught up in rivalries and favoring different leaders because of their gifting. "I follow this leader because they are more eloquent in speech! I support this leader because they have a better "bedside manner" than the other!" Leaders got caught up in their own performance and became prideful. **If I were to sum up their problem in an image it would be a bobble head!** They thought too highly of themselves. Paul responds to their pride filled heads to help them grow up.

In this particular text, we will start with how the Spirit of God revealed wisdom for us. Wisdom, as defined in the dictionary is, “the worth of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment.” We all value experience, knowledge, and good judgment. However, Paul is playing with the definition of wisdom in order to prove a point. He is saying, **wisdom, as you understand it, is not sufficiently maturing your relationship with Jesus!** But rather, the Holy Spirit reveals wisdom in the gospel so that we may grow and be revitalized!

***a) His wisdom is found in the gospel. (2:6-7)***

Let’s read 1 Corinthians 2:6–7 “<sup>6</sup>Yet among the mature **we do impart wisdom**, although it is **not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age**, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup>**But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.**” We often play a game of hot and cold when our kids can’t find something that we have hidden that is obvious to us but not them. I think Paul is doing that with the word wisdom. Pay attention to the word wisdom.

- i) The **mature convey** or communicate it. (Paul is referring to the spiritual mature.)*
- ii) It’s not wisdom, **as you know it**. (Different than the world.) - Warmer*
- iii) **If you don’t have it** you are doomed. - Getting Hotter.*
- iv) A **secret and hidden** wisdom. (It was not known by man and is now revealed)*
- v) Which God decreed and **planned for us** before you were born! – **HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE GOSPEL! NOT ABOUT HUMAN WISDOM!***

***Take a look with me again. (Repeat)***

Paul is saying if you want real wisdom that surpasses your human wisdom you better look to what Jesus did on the cross for you. He is talking about what we would call the gospel. The gospel is that the King of the universe gave His son to be executed so we would have life. Paul identifies the major defect in the Corinthians, which we also share. The heart of the gospel got lost in their productions; show boating of knowledge and relationships. They didn’t deeply know and live in the wisdom revealed to them by the Holy Spirit because they were immature. He then parallels the Corinthians with previous rulers that didn’t get it...the rulers that killed Jesus.

Verse 8 says, “*the rulers of this age* did not “understand” this” (God’s wisdom). The word “understand” translates to “to know.” As a result of not knowing, the rulers **actively opposed the message by crucifying *the Lord of glory*. Ultimately, God redeems their foolishness and provides a way to revitalize us, through Christ’s death.**

But don’t be too quick to slam those leaders that sought Christ’s demise. Have we not all seen brilliant men and woman discard the wisdom of the gospel? ***The problem is not intellectual inability; it is the condition of our heart, which produces foolish immaturities.*** It’s not something we can obtain on our own. Understanding and knowing God is beyond our nature, meaning it is super-natural.

Super-natural. Enter the Holy Spirit. **REFER TO LAST WEEK / SERIES**. The Holy Spirit is in the business of revitalizing...this is a great story that paints a beautiful metaphor of that.

Max Lucado writes, “For 51 years Bob Edens was blind. He couldn't see a thing. His world was a black hall of sounds and smells. He felt his way through five decades of darkness. And then, he could see. A skilled surgeon performed a complicated operation and, for the first time, Bob Edens had sight. He found it overwhelming. "I never would have dreamed that yellow is so...yellow," he exclaimed. "I don't have the words. I am amazed by yellow. But red is my favorite color. I just can't believe red. I can see the shape of the moon--and I like nothing better than seeing a jet plane flying across the sky leaving a vapor trail. And of course, sunrises and sunsets. And at night I look at the stars in the sky and the flashing light. You could never know how wonderful everything is.”

The Holy Spirit is like a skilled surgeon who gives us the ability to see Jesus clearly. Who reveals a beautiful maturity so that we can experience life to the fullest! When you find the gospel it surpasses human knowledge and it transforms your life. The Holy Spirit is like a parent who has a greater understanding than a child and provides a path for their child so they learn and grow. Paul is saying maturity starts

by discovering the gospel so you can be fed. Maturity starts when you realize you need Jesus.

*Paul David Tripp says, “Biblical literacy is not to be confused with Christian maturity. Homiletic accuracy is not the same as godliness. Theological dexterity is very different from practical holiness. Successful leadership is not the same as a heart for Christ. Growth in influence must not be confused with growth in grace.”*

Mature believers recognize and live out God’s wisdom of the gospel. What Jesus did on the cross needs to infiltrate every area of our lives until you grow in your maturity.

**Application:** Is the cross your solution to your conflict? Is it the means to finding unity? Then you are mature. Is the cross your solution to your marriage and family difficulties? Is it the means of reconciliation? Then you are mature. Is the cross your solution as you go through life’s difficulties? When your pride and selfishness show up do you apply the cross? Then you are mature. We never move on from the cross of Christ—only into a more profound understanding of what Jesus did for you!

Since the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel, we must discover the wisdom of the cross in our pursuit of maturity.

### ***b) His wisdom is an unfolding mystery (2:7-9)***

1 Corinthians 2:7 says, <sup>7</sup>“But we impart **a secret and hidden wisdom of God**, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.” Meaning God’s wisdom (gospel) is a mystery. Throughout His Word, God has revealed Himself in stages and means...and we by no means have seen the final revelation. The message says, “God’s wisdom is something mysterious that goes deep into the fabric of his purposes. You don’t find it lying around on the surface.” It’s not the latest message from a talk show or revealing of technology. It’s not something you can control or orchestrate. It’s the unpredictable rain in a dry season that brings life, joy, and love.

Those “who know God” are **not** changed by means of their cleverness or performance. The Holy Spirit draws you to Jesus so He can nourish you to maturity. How the Spirit does this is a mystery. I know I have had people in my life that I had essentially written off...there was no way God was going to change them. Through different circumstances and some mystery...the Spirit’s WORK... they were changed by God and not by our own doing.

Bryan Chappel gives an illustration, which I slightly altered to emphasis the Holy Spirit: “during college one of my friends became a Christian. And the other, after he became a parent and had a child who was diagnosed with cancer, also became a Christian. Both became Christians. I thought, “How did that happen? Was it something I said? Was it something a preacher at church said?” How could I say that? Here were people who were walking after idols, totally self- consumed. They turned from themselves to serve the living and true God. Scripture says they turned from idolatry to serve the living and true God. How did that happen? Was it because of some words, little puffs of air out of my mouth, some vocalization of syllables? How does that happen? Is not the Spirit of God like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces? This happened not by anything in me, but by the wonder of the Spirit that is committed to us. He has such power that even when I recognize my weakness, my feebleness, my frailness, my lack of adequate instrumentality, I say, “Thank you, Lord, for Your Spirit that takes the burden off of me.”

**Our job is not conversion, but exchanges with others that reveal Christ through His Spirit. The gospel is unfolding in dark and unexpected places as the Spirit works.** Trusting Him for understanding and cultivating this love relationship with Him means that we will grow in greater and greater understanding of wisdom. ***Without the Spirit of God, we will remain foolishly immature.***

As we have seen, the Spirit reveals the gospel and we need to start with the cross to reach maturity. Secondly, since the Spirit reveals the gospel, we must practice discernment in our pursuit of maturity.

### **Since the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel:**

#### **2. We must practice discernment in our pursuit of maturity. (2:11b)**

Paul draws a thick and heavy line between things that are human and the things that are of God. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 2:11b which says, “So also **no one comprehends the thoughts of God** except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> 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 to us by God.”

**To be able to comprehend the wisdom of God, we need the Spirit.**

#### **a) A self-seeking life cannot discern the wisdom of God. (2:14)**

*The wisdom of the world is different than the wisdom of God. The wisdom of the world is far more down to earth ... and far, far dirtier. **The wisdom of this world involves jealousy, quarreling, and following human leaders.** In the passages quoted above Paul is writing to a church in Corinth troubled by conflict, human pride, and divisiveness. **The wisdom of this world embraces greed, power, ambition, and self-interest.** This “wisdom” is deceptive and comes up repeatedly in the pages of the New Testament, in what Jesus and the apostles said.*

Along this line, there was an interesting article “[Higher social class predicts increased unethical behavior](#)” published in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The authors performed seven different studies looking at the relationship between **social status** and **unethical behavior**.

“As our findings suggest, the pursuit of self-interest is a more fundamental motive among society’s elite, and the increased want associated with greater wealth and status can promote wrongdoing. Unethical behavior in the service of self-interest that enhances the individual’s wealth and rank may be a self-perpetuating dynamic that further exacerbates economic disparities in society. It isn’t that the poor are inherently more ethical, but that status conveys a sense of entitlement. The Science

report notes: “When participants were manipulated into thinking of themselves as belonging to a higher class than they did, the poorer ones, too, began to behave unethically.” A self-seeking life cannot discern the wisdom of God and leads to darkness.

*Kim Kardashian – Posts nude pictures of her in the name of empowerment of woman. Really she is marketing herself! The wisdom of the world says, “Do whatever it takes to gain attention and social status.” It’s easy to pick on the celebrities.* Unfortunately, the wisdom of the world shows up not only in the world but in church. We see it in our preferences in our music styles and preaching styles. Do you have a preferred pastor or staff member? Who is a better singer? Who is better at comedy? Who is better at reading scripture? Who brings the best dish to the potluck? Pride can so easily make it’s way into our hearts and foolish immaturities take over. We need to be so careful in praising a person for their skill rather than giving God the praise. Flattery can so easily turn into posturing for glory. Too often we seek the “spotlight...to be heard, to be agreed with, to be liked.” We seek THAT and not the advancement of the gospel. We need to go back to gospel because we are all dispensable.

*“God is not looking for the powerful and the successful and those who are able communicators. Instead, He looks for the person who has a broken and contrite spirit. Those individuals, whether they are extroverted or introverted, humorous or melancholy, are regularly in the quiet place bowing before God’s Word with a trembling heart and seeking fresh enabling from the Holy Spirit. They have been brought to see that they did not make themselves, nor did they save themselves. They are totally dependent upon God’s grace (Isa. 66:2).” Alistair Begg*

As we have seen the wisdom of the world is not the same as the wisdom of God.

**b) We need the mind of Christ for discernment. (2:16)**

Paul’s point in all these passages is that “the work of the Spirit remains inseparable from the work of God as revealed in Christ. They are connected. At the end of verse 1 Cor 2:16 it says, “But we have the mind of Christ.” When we start to think like Christ, we are able to determine what is from God and what is not. We are able to filter the

difference between what is true and what is going to pull us away. As the Spirit works in the parts of our mind that are self-seeking our thinking starts to put others first, for the sake of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 14:20 is clear: **“Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be *mature*.”** If we are thinking like Jesus, our mentality of people and position changes. 1 Corinthians 3:5 “<sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? **Servants** through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.” There can hardly be any space for “jealousy or competition” when you view yourself as a servant. **For among pastors and leaders, we all share the same (low) status. When we praise people rather than God we have problem. What is the difference between praise and encouragement?**

*Praise focuses on perfection. Encouragement produces progress and improvement.*

*Praise focuses on performance. Encouragement gives meaning.*

*Praise leads to pride or despair. Encouragement fosters acceptance and support.*

When we seek praise, we are more likened to Satan himself who tried, AND FAILED to claim the throne of GOD! But, when we put our efforts into worshiping Jesus and not our preferences, we find unity, maturity and the power of God!

The Holy Spirit is the one that helps you filter out the things of the world.

The Holy Spirit helps you think in a mature manner.

The Holy Spirit gives discernment that brings unity because we are no longer concerned with our wants and needs. We are concerned about what Jesus wants.

*(Unity in the church 1:10-17 & 3:1-23)*

C.H. Spurgeon says, **“Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right.”**



## Since the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel:

### 3. We must be led by the Spirit to grow in maturity. (3:1-8)

#### a) *The immature.*

*To be led by the Spirit into maturity we need to grow up spiritually speaking. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, “But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup>for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?”*

The *people of the flesh* (3:1), literally means those made of flesh, that is, weak or baby Christians, those unfamiliar to walking in the Spirit. They are willfully rebellious Christians, who thus prolong spiritual babyhood and invite God’s fatherly discipline. Paul’s description of the Corinthians here is “highly ironic in a congregation that touted and prized its spiritual giftedness. Proof of their worldliness, Paul says, can be seen in the fact that *there is jealousy and quarreling among you*, characterizing their corporate life.

*“Examples of selfish jealousy: 1. Jealous of another’s possessions, wealth, assets – (greed, coveting). 2. Jealous of another’s position, placement, job, advancement. 3. Jealous of another’s authority, power, leadership. 4. Jealous of another’s recognition, abilities, talents, skills. 5. Jealous of another’s accomplishments, achievements, success. 7. Jealous of another’s intelligence, logic, knowledge. 8. Jealous of another’s personality, social standing. 9. Jealous of another’s relationships, communication, intimacy, marriage. 11. Jealous of another’s age, youth, maturity, experience. 12. Jealous of another’s looks, appearance, beauty, health. 13. Jealous of another’s clothes, style, sophistication. Did any of those jump out at you...make you uncomfortable or defensive? That’s the Holy Spirit.*

*Bryan Chapell says, "No growing occurs, however, without the realization that we cannot progress in our faithfulness to God without the supernatural work of the Spirit. This acknowledgment keeps us from pride in our maturity, or from too hasty judgment of others' spiritual condition."*

***b) The mature.***

The Spirit leads the mature into a place of growth. 1 Corinthians 3:6 says, <sup>6</sup> "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." Spiritual maturity has nothing to do with our performance, age, appearance or achievements, but it's a matter of a close obedience relationship with God that shapes our character. The spiritually mature are more concerned about the inward than the outward. They train for strength daily. They seek truth and apply it. They are listening and carrying out His instructions. *The mature are no longer living as infants who need milk. They are no longer living for their flesh or self-seeking gratification. The mature are closely living with and connecting to Jesus. In obedience, the Spirit nourishes them so they may grow!* We cannot make excuses for ourselves and assume that maturity belongs to the spiritually elite.

*If the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from your life today would you know the difference? Would anything change in your life? Take a minute and sit on this...look through your day, your interactions, your activities, your thought life, the decisions you make and the priorities you set. And now take the Holy Spirit out of the picture...how are things left...what does this look like? It should look very different.*

*"I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain." A.W. Tozer*

Paul says in Colossians 1:28 “It is He whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all *wisdom*, so that we may present everyone *mature* in Christ.”

I quote, “A father or mother in the faith is someone who has learned through spending the time, through relentless passion, a deep yearning that is consistent. You finally start to get it. You have regular communion with him. You know the One who is from the beginning. Put it this way: You’re babies until you understand the difference between grace and works. You’re adolescents until you understand everything is necessary that he sends and nothing can be necessary that he withholds. You stop blubbering about the hardness of life. You learn how to live according to the bare Word of God.

Lastly, you become a father or mother in the faith when you start to learn the disciplines of prayer and communing with him, so you regularly are seeing his glory. . . . Spiritually, people very often want spectacular things. They want great preaching. They want a great church. They want miracles. They want to see dramatic things happening in their lives.

They don’t like the routines. They don’t like praying and reading their Bible every day. They don’t just like learning the truth. Don’t you see the spiritual baby-ness in you? You’re unstable. You’re indiscriminating. You’re easily fooled. You tend to be exhibitionistic. You tend to like the spectacular, and you don’t like the grind. These are marks of the average Christian. These are the characteristics of the average church congregation. All I’m urging you to do is to humble yourself and encouraging you to say, ‘Yes, this is true of me, but I’m going to outgrow it.’” Principles of Christian Growth

The Holy Spirit takes the experiences of Jesus . . . His incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension . . . and brings them into our own experience so we may leave our foolishness behind. Our lives are filled with foolish immaturities that halt our development in Christ and we miss out! Since the Holy Spirit reveals the gospel we need to pursue maturity in Christ!

To sum up Paul is saying. Ask the Spirit to give you life! Then grow up! Or will you remain an infant? Let's take a moment to ask the Spirit of God where we need to grow up! Ask the Spirit to lead you this week into maturity so you can experience the fullness of God.

### **Worship team**

*Prayer from Augustine:*

*"Breath in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy."*