

# connect 360

TEACHING GUIDE

# *Correction & Counsel*

A STUDY OF  
1 & 2 Corinthians

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*Correction and Counsel (1 & 2 Corinthians)—Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

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# How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents, and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.

5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)
6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class, and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

**Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online.** Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or e-mail [baptistway@texasbaptists.org](mailto:baptistway@texasbaptists.org) to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

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***FREE!*** Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org). Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

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# Correction and Counsel

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DATE OF STUDY \_\_\_\_\_

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# lesson 1

## The Cross: Wisdom or Foolishness?

### MAIN IDEA

The gospel confounds human wisdom.

### QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Why does the gospel seem like foolishness to some people?

### TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to place their trust in God's wisdom and the provision of the cross



## Bible Comments

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### Understanding the Context

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Corinth was a cosmopolitan city with citizens of many different religious beliefs and philosophical approaches to life. Many Corinthians worshiped pagan deities, participated in immoral behavior, and overemphasized social status. Self-centered fulfillment was a conventional approach to life. Although the Corinthian culture provided an openness to new ideas and religious beliefs, the corruptive influence of the culture created a challenging environment for new Christians to stand firm in their faith.

Paul spent one-and-one-half years in Corinth around A.D. 50–51, planting a church there during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–11). He worked with Priscilla and Aquila, Jewish Christians from Rome who had recently arrived in Corinth (Acts 18:2). Although the church grew numerically, the members struggled to grow spiritually. Their spiritual immaturity, combined with the corrosive elements of Corinthian culture, caused problems within the church: divisions, immorality, misuse of freedoms, disorderly worship, and more. Paul was ministering in Ephesus when he received reports about the problems that were destroying the unity and witness of the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Paul was particularly concerned about the way the Corinthian Christians had divided into factions by pledging loyalty to different leaders (1 Cor. 1:12). Each group was trying to demonstrate its superiority over the others with some claiming unique wisdom or knowledge. Instead of uniting in humility, prideful ambitions were causing the church to split into factions. Paul understood that he had to help them work toward unity by calling them back to the foundational message of the gospel: Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:10, 23).<sup>1</sup>

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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### God's Wisdom is Greater than the World's Wisdom (1:18–25)

**1:18.** How we see things depends on our vantage point. Paul grouped people into two broad categories: “those who are perishing” and “those who are being saved.” From the perspective of those who are perishing, the message of the cross looks like complete foolishness. To proclaim that someone’s death as a condemned criminal brings salvation, makes no sense to them. However, for those who understand the true meaning of Christ’s death on the cross, this event conveys the power of God to save individuals from their sins.

**1:19.** To support his claim of salvation, Paul quoted the prophet Isaiah (29:14) when he declared God would destroy the wisdom and intelligence of this world. The prophet spoke those words of judgment on a people who honored God with their words but not their hearts. In their wisdom, the leaders of Jerusalem had allied with Egypt. That alliance backfired by sparking an Assyrian invasion (Isaiah 30:1–3). The Corinthians, in their earthly wisdom, were likewise seeking an advantage by aligning themselves with one Christian leader against another, resulting in division and a fractured church.

**1:20.** Paul used rhetorical questions to contrast the wisdom of this “age” or “world” with God’s wisdom. The first three questions may have been referring to three different representatives of earthly wisdom (e.g., a philosopher, a Jewish legal expert, and a skilled speaker), or perhaps different aspects of worldly wisdom (i.e., a wise person who demonstrates that wisdom through intellectual writings and reasoned arguments). In either case, these types of wisdom are part “of this age.” Worldly wisdom is shortsighted; God’s wisdom is not. The most-lauded manifestations of human wisdom are mere foolishness in comparison to God’s immeasurable wisdom.

**1:21.** God came into the world in weakness—as a human being—to identify with us. He then suffered in weakness on the cross to atone for our sins. We come to know God through faith. Sophisticated arguments and reasoning fall short. Religious rituals and adherence to legalistic requirements fall

short. All must enter through the door of faith. In this way, salvation is available to all people. Intellectuals, experts in religious rituals, and the wealthy do not hold an advantage. God has provided access for everyone to have a saving relationship, to personally know him.

It was “well-pleasing” to God to use the weakness of preaching to convey the means of salvation. The “foolishness of preaching” refers to both the method of communication and the message itself. Preaching at its core is basic proclamation, not the rhetoric of trained experts. The message is also simple: salvation comes through faith by accepting the forgiveness offered through Christ on the cross.

**1:22–23.** Many Jews in Paul’s day were expecting the Messiah to come with signs of power to liberate them from the Romans, just as Moses had freed the people of Israel from the Egyptians. For these Jews, Christ’s death on the cross was a sign of weakness, not power. They viewed his form of death as making him cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23). Instead of a means of salvation, the cross became a stumbling block to them. However, God chose to work through the weakness of Jesus’ death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice to liberate us from the debt of our sins.

Paul highlighted the Greeks as the perceived high point of wisdom for all Gentiles. The Greeks prided themselves on wisdom led by their philosophical giants—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They believed their reasoning ability was sufficient in all matters. They could not rationalize Jesus’ death on the cross as a way to an everlasting relationship with God.

**1:24.** Some Jews and Greeks, however, were able to see the crucified Messiah from a different perspective, through a different lens. Rather than using the lens of political power or philosophical reasoning, some were able to see the cross through the lens of faith. They experienced forgiveness and salvation through Christ’s suffering.

**1:25.** God knew sin was the real enemy, not the Roman empire, and that the only way to defeat sin was through Christ’s atoning death. No human army, political power, or philosophical school of thought can defeat human sinfulness. Genuine salvation comes through a faith relationship with God. This salvation is available to all by accepting the forgiveness that comes

through God's demonstrated love on the cross. As such, the crucifixion of Jesus became the most potent, life-transforming event possible.

## God Works through the Humble (1:26–28)

**1:26.** The word “calling” in this verse could refer to the Corinthian believers' station in life when called to salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2), or it could apply to their station in life according to Greco-Roman societal standards. Paul reminded the Corinthians that few of them held places of high status. They were not academics. They were not in positions of power. They were not part of the nobility. With a few exceptions (the former synagogue leader Crispus, the city treasurer Erastus, and the business professional Phoebe), most of the Corinthian Christians were everyday people.

**1:27–28.** By repeating the same verb three times in these two verses, Paul emphasized how God “chooses.” Even though God could select those viewed as most significant by the world's standards, instead, he chooses those regarded as insignificant—the foolish, weak, lowly, and despised—to shame the ones who claim wisdom, power, and prestige. God nullifies all worldly sources of pride by choosing to work through those without such attributes. God consistently chooses the weak of this world to accomplish his purposes, whether that be the people of Israel over stronger nations (Deut. 7:7), the younger brother over the elder brother (Genesis 27:1–35), or the lowly over the proud (Ezekiel 17:24). The incarnation itself is a demonstration of turning worldly powers and expectations upside down (Luke 1:52).

## Boast in the Lord (1:29–31)

**1:29.** People cannot take credit for what God accomplishes. God takes away any reason for us to boast about ourselves and our abilities. No human being (“flesh”)—neither Jew nor Greek—has a basis for personal boasting in God's presence. Even those of higher standing within the Corinthian church had to humble themselves and depend on God for their salvation.

**1:30.** God has provided the status we need through Christ Jesus, who is God's wisdom for us. The wisdom of Christ differs from philosophical intelligence.

The wisdom of God in Christ imparts “righteousness, holiness, and redemption.” Achieved righteousness has legal connotations, meaning those united with Christ receive an acquittal instead of punishment for their sins. Holiness or sanctification implies we are purified through Christ, enabling us to be in God’s presence without condemnation. Redemption describes the deliverance we receive through Christ because he paid the ransom to release us from captivity to sin.

**1:31.** The only basis for boasting is found in what God has done for us. We thus boast “in the Lord.” The word “Lord” used in this verse could be a reference to God as the giver of these gifts or more specifically a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose giving of himself on the cross provided the means for us to receive the gifts of righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Perhaps Paul had both usages of the word “Lord” in mind. He quoted from Jeremiah (9:23–24), which instructs people not to boast in human wisdom, strength, or wealth but rather to boast in knowing God.

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### Focusing on the Meaning

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In the years since the death and resurrection of Jesus, the ostensibly powerful and wise continue a cyclical pattern of rising and falling. The Roman Empire crumbled, along with many other nations. Different manifestations of philosophical thought have risen in popularity only to be replaced by new philosophical approaches, which are in turn replaced by others. However, the message of the cross continues to have a tremendous impact on those who accept God’s life-transforming gift of salvation and commit their lives to loving God and others. What seems like weakness and foolishness is the most effectual and eternal wisdom ever.

Despite the fact Christians have the most effectual message that never fades in its divine wisdom, we often struggle with the temptation to align ourselves with temporal powers or the philosophical flavor of the day. However, no political party or government can save us. Material wealth and possessions cannot save us. Human reasoning has its limits. Philosophical schools of thought fail to cure the condition of human sinfulness—or survive the test of time.



When Christians yield to the temptation of temporal powers and understanding, their actions compromise the power and the wisdom of the gospel message. The frail condition of Western European Christianity should serve as a lesson to all Christians around the world. Empty cathedrals and poorly-attended, state-subsidized churches are a testimony to the danger of wedding our faith to political powers or parties.

Christians must also guard against internal divisions stemming from personal pride. Rather than claiming superiority over others through attachment to popular leaders, worship styles, or theological systems, we need to humble ourselves and boast only “in the Lord” (1:31). God continues to confound human reasoning and perceived strengths by using the epitome of weakness—death on the cross—to provide authentic relationship with him. By humbly sharing the simple message of how Christ works in our lives, we make the gospel accessible to all, no matter one’s station in life.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. To start the lesson, write this question on the markerboard: “When have you felt foolish?” Encourage class members to pair off and respond. After a few minutes, encourage volunteers to share their responses and why those situations made them feel foolish. Talk about why people don’t like feeling foolish—and how far they’ll go to avoid it.
2. Direct class members to silently read through the “Introduction” section of the *Study Guide*. Draw two columns on the markerboard or a large sheet of paper. Encourage learners to think of words that relate to the world’s idea of a “savior” and record the answers in one column. Direct learners to suggest how the world sees Jesus and record those responses in the other column. Say, *It’s understandable that the world thinks we’re foolish, but today’s lesson will remind us why trusting Christ is the wisest move a person can make.*

### Guide Bible Study

3. Before class time, collect several college textbooks. During the Bible study, use the information from the “Understanding the Context” section of this *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* sidebar “A Picture of Corinth” to set the stage for this unit’s lesson. Show class members the textbooks. Ask, *What subjects did you enjoy in school and why? In what subjects would you consider yourself an expert?* Discuss responses. Say, *One purpose of textbooks is to help students become experts in a particular topic.* Encourage a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 1:18–25 aloud. Talk about how much emphasis most people in Corinth placed on wisdom and how that affected their attitude toward the gospel. Say, *God isn’t looking for the most ingenious individual or the most educated person; he’s looking for obedience.*

4. Before class time, hang two posters on opposite sides of the room: one labeled “First” and the other “Last.” Say, *I’m going to ask a question, and I want each of you to move to one of the signs, depending on your answer. Ask, When in grade school, were you most likely to be picked first for a game or last?* Direct class members to move to the sign that describes them. After everyone is in place, allow one or two volunteers to tell why they chose that particular sign. Direct class members to return to their seats.

Say, *We can understand the angst of those picked last.* Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 aloud and encourage learners to think about how the people of Corinth viewed the Christians in that city. Highlight Paul’s repeated use of the words “not many” and talk about how the Corinthian believers were low on the social totem pole. Say, *But with God, there’s a big difference between “not many” and “not any.” He chooses those who might appear foolish if they commit to him. In fact, He loves using our weaknesses to demonstrate his strength.* Challenge class members to think of times they have seen God work through their weaknesses—and to trust him to use them again in the future.

## Encourage Application

5. Before class time, enlist the help of someone who knows how to work a Rubik’s Cube. To apply the lesson, recruit another volunteer to try to work a shuffled cube. Talk about what is so confusing about the Rubik. Then, allow the guest to work the cube. Say, *What seems confusing or foolish to us makes perfect sense in the hands of someone who knows what he or she is doing.* Talk about how that relates to the foolishness of the gospel. Say, *What seems foolish to the world makes perfect sense when filtered through the purposes of God.*
6. As time allows, discuss the “Questions” from the *Study Guide*. Challenge learners to trust God’s wisdom rather than their own—or the wisdom of the culture. Say, *When things get crazy, remember that God has accomplished everything through the cross. It may not make sense to the world, but God has everything under his control.*

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. During the lesson, group learners into pairs and give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil. Challenge them to make a list of oxymorons. Explain that an oxymoron is a phrase that seems contradictory. Say, *Common examples are “jumbo shrimp” and “deafening silence.”* After a few minutes, let each pair report on their work. Talk about what makes an oxymoron so interesting. Say, *What seems to make no sense at first can make a lot of sense in the end.*
2. Explain that the lesson begins a study of 1 and 2 Corinthians with a look at a spiritual oxymoron: “foolish wisdom.” Use information from the *Study Guide* sidebar “A Picture of Corinth” and the *Teaching Guide* section “Understanding the Context” to set the stage for this study. Say, *As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he challenged them to demonstrate foolish wisdom.* Challenge learners to identify ways they can see past the “foolishness” of the gospel and trust God’s wisdom each day.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Ask, *What are some ways unbelievers think they can get to heaven? Ask, Why are those easier to accept than the cross of Jesus?* Discuss responses. Say, *Most of the other ways involve doing things ourselves. Our culture often applauds self-made people, so self-made salvation makes sense to many.* Enlist a volunteer to read aloud 1 Corinthians 1:18–25. Ask, *How does the world respond to God’s plan for salvation?* Write the word “foolish” on the markerboard. Say, *The word “foolish” summarizes how most unbelievers feel about God and his people.* Ask, *How can we help unbelievers overcome their stumbling blocks?* Write the responses on the board. Encourage class members to make these action steps a part of their lives each day as they minister to others.
4. Enlist a volunteer to stand in front of the group. Ask, *If you had to describe this person with one adjective, what would it be?* Record the responses on the markerboard. Note that everyone was positive.

Encourage a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 aloud. Ask, *How did Paul describe the Corinthians? Write the responses on the board. Contrast the lists. Say, While we said upbeat things about our classmate, Paul described the cynical way the world viewed the Corinthians. Unbelievers thought the Christians were stupid and weak. God often uses weakness for his glory. That’s what his wisdom is all about, and it’s how we take part in what he’s doing in the world.*

## Encourage Application

5. Place class members into groups of three or four. Direct the groups to read the “Case Study” sidebar in the *Study Guide* and discuss how Mike feels and how they could minister to him. After a few minutes, allow the groups to share their responses. Say, *Even though we’re 2,000 years removed from the Corinthians, many people still believe Christianity is foolishness. But God calls us to trust his wisdom and to reveal Jesus to those who need him—whether they realize it or not.*
6. As time allows, review the “Questions” in the *Study Guide*. Encourage class members to embrace the foolishness of God’s wisdom and rely on the power of the cross. Challenge learners to live it out in the real world each day. Close with prayer.

## Notes

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from the New International Version (2011 edition).