

A photograph of a highway interchange under a clear blue sky. A large green sign with white text is mounted on a metal pole. The sign reads: "Why does Mount Barker need to hear the gospel?". In the background, a white car is driving away on the highway. There are hills and trees in the distance, and several streetlights are visible along the road.

**Why does  
Mount Barker  
need to hear  
the gospel?**

three studies for  
individuals, groups  
or one : one

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# Welcome to ‘Why Does Mt Barker Need to Hear the Gospel?’

This series of studies accompanies the teaching series of the same name at Trinity Mount Barker in June & July 2013.

These studies are intended to be done before the sermon on the same passage, although of course, you can do them any way that is helpful to you!

If you’re using these studies in a Bible Study Group, try to make sure you’ve read the passage and done your preparation before you meet. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but also to the other members of your group.

Leaders’ Notes are included at the beginning of each study. If you’re using these studies 1:1 or on your own, you may find it helpful to refer to the notes as you work your way through.

If you’re a Bible Study Group Leader, please don’t feel that you need to work your way through each question in every study. With such a wide variety of ages and personalities in our church, we have included a number of different types of questions, including some which reflect on the same points, just from a slightly different perspective. Please choose the questions most appropriate for your group.

If you’re doing these studies individually, why not let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you’ve finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God’s Word.

Always surround your time looking into God’s Word with prayer, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God’s people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Recommended Reading:

1 Corinthians - Tyndale New Testament Commentary - Leon Morris

The Message of 1 Corinthians - The Bible Speaks Today - David Prior

# Leaders' Notes

## Introduction

Corinth was a Greek city, visited by the Apostle Paul on his second "Missionary Journey" around 49 - 51 AD. He spent 18 months there after his time in Athens. Around 5 years later, Paul writes 1 Corinthians, most likely from Ephesus. He writes in response to some questions the church had raised (7:1) and also to address situations in the church that have come to his attention.

The city was situated between two harbours on a narrow isthmus. Because the seas around the isthmus were particularly stormy and dangerous, vast amounts of cargo were transported across the isthmus and through Corinth every year. This made Corinth a vitally important trading city, and a hugely cosmopolitan city, filled with sailors and merchants from all over the known world.

Corinth was also known for its pagan religions, especially its temple to the goddess Aphrodite, whose temple stood over the city on a mountain. As we read the letter, it becomes clear that the sexual immorality and religious one-up-manship which so dominated the city, had also found expression in the church.

Yet despite all the flaws in the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul is still able to call the church there "sanctified" (1:2), the holy ones of God!

## ... Because Mt Barker needs the power of God

### 1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5

#### Key Verses

1:18 For 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.

1:30 It 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.

#### Key Theme

The message of God's salvation is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive. A crucified saviour?! A free gift?! The message of the

cross removes all boasting and shows us that salvation is God's work, not ours.

## Notes

1:1 Notice that there is no thanksgiving or commendation in the introduction to this letter as we see in some of Paul's other letters, i.e. Philippians. Yet Paul is still able to call the Corinthians "sanctified," literally "made holy" and he identifies them as "the church of God." They are still God's church despite their many failings!

1:18 Paul comments that the preaching of the message (literally the logos) of the cross draws one of two responses - either regarded as foolishness, or it becomes the means by which people are saved.

1:26 One of the problems facing the Corinthian church was their warped ideas of maturity and spirituality. In this section Paul speaks about what real wisdom and maturity look like. The Corinthians had forgotten where they had come from and what they were like before they encountered the power of God in the message of the cross.

2:1 - 5 In these verses Paul shows from his own experience, the reality of what he has just been speaking about.

1:30 Notice how everything for Paul is tied up in Christ! He needs nothing else for righteous, holiness or redemption! Christian people now have these things by virtue of their unity with Christ.

"The Greek phrase translated "because of him" in the NIV "expresses both the source and cause of their being in Christ. ... The emphasis falls on God's gracious act of election." - Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 1 Corinthians.

## **... Because Mt Barker needs the power of God 1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5**

Can you recall a time when you appeared foolish to others?

How did you feel?

What did you want to do to get out of that situation?

What are some of the objections your friends have to the Christian faith?

Who is the wisest person you know?

How is their wisdom demonstrated? Through what they do? What they ask? What they say? What they don't say?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:1 - 3**

Have a quick look at the introductions to some of Paul's other letters. What do you notice about the introduction to 1 Corinthians?

Why do you think Paul identifies himself as an apostle in his introduction?

## **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:5**

How is the message of the cross “the power of God” (v 18)?

Why does the wisdom of God seem foolish to the world?

How does the message of the cross make boasting in worldly status or achievements worthless?

Why can Paul say that God “made foolish the wisdom of the world” (v 20)?

How does God’s way of saving people “shame the wise” (v 27)?

Paul observes (or celebrates!) that in Christ, Christian people have “righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

What does this say to you about the central place Christ has in God’s plans for his people?

In verse 18 Paul identifies two different and opposite responses to the preaching of the message of the cross.

How have you seen those same two responses as the good news of Jesus is spoken?

Since the message of the cross of Christ is the power of God, what impact could we, under God, expect to see in our region as people hear the gospel of Jesus?

Is it a fear of “foolishness” or something else that stops us speaking the message of the cross into our region?

What reasons do we have for being humble, rather than boastful when we look at our own lives and ministry?

What might it look like for Christians in our church to “boast in the Lord” ( v 31)?



# ... Because Mt Barker needs a work of the Spirit

## 1 Corinthians 2:6 - 16

### Key Verses

2:14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

### Key Theme

Understanding God's plans and purposes for redemption, God's "wisdom" and "mystery," comes only through the Spirit of God. Understanding and salvation comes as people encounter Jesus in the Scriptures and the Spirit brings the Word of God alive to them. Evangelism is therefore principally spiritual work, not rhetorical or communicative work. We know that the Spirit of God must never be divorced from the Word of God, so if people are to understand the message of God, they need to have the Word of God brought to bear on their lives.

### Notes

2:7 "Mystery" in the New Testament denotes not something that cannot be known, but something that has previously been unknown but has now been made known. See for example, Romans 16:25, or Ephesians 6:19.

2:9 No human sense or facet or thinking enables us to grasp what God has in store. It is spiritually revealed.

2:10 "to us" comes first in the Greek sentence, a position of emphasis. Paul is underlining the fact that his message and the message of any Christian who speaks the gospel is not learned, or discovered or made up or found inside us. It comes from outside us, to us.

Notice also that since the message comes to us and is "revealed" once again (as in chapter 1) there is no grounds for boasting. There's no point in boasting when someone else has done it all for you!

2:13 The true message revealed to Paul and other Christians by the Spirit of God, they pass on to others.

It is quite remarkable that Paul actually says, when we as Christian people speak the message of Jesus to others, the Spirit teaches us the words to say!

“The Spirit’s activity extends to providing the actual words used, and is not confined to the supplying of general ideas.” - Leon Morris, Tyndale NT Commentary..

2:14 Paul’s word translated “accept” is the word used to speak of welcoming a guest. The person without the Spirit, does not welcome the message that the Spirit of God brings. In fact such a person cannot even understand the message brought by the Spirit of God.

2:16 Notice that in Isaiah 40:13, which Paul quotes, it is the mind of Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel which is spoken of. Yet, so clear is Paul’s understanding of the godhead that he immediately calls into view the mind of Christ.

## **... Because Mt Barker needs a work of the Spirit**

### **1 Corinthians 2:6 - 16**

As a child, how did you feel when you were told “You’re too young. You won’t understand.”?

Can you describe a time when you thought you understood a concept or task but realised you didn’t only when someone explained it to you?

What frustrations have you experienced in talking to other people about Jesus?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 2:6 - 16**

What does Paul identify as the significant differences between God’s wisdom and “the wisdom of this age”?

In what ways is the message of God described in verse 7 “hidden” (NIV) or “secret” (ESV)?

How does Paul describe his ministry and the ministry of any Christian who speaks the message of Christ?

This passage isn't the total of the Bible's teaching on the Spirit of God, but what is the purpose explicitly stated here as the reason for the giving of the Spirit?

In verses 12 - 13, what is the Spirit's role/roles in our efforts to share the good news of Jesus with others.

We know that the Corinthian Christians were divided and arguing over who was the most "spiritual." From what Paul says in this chapter, how do divisions and arguments between Christians demonstrate a lack of spiritual maturity?

What does it mean for Christian people to "have the mind of Christ" (v 16)?

From this section, what can we determine about the way Paul went about sharing the good news of Jesus with people?

What might be Paul's reasons for telling the Corinthians that people cannot understand or accept the message of Christ unless the Spirit is at work in them?

If you could depend on one of your senses (touch, sight, hearing, etc) to determine the truth about God, which sense would you choose and why?

How would you feel if suddenly you were no longer able to discern the truth of God?

How does your reflection on that scenario help you understand the situation of people who don't know God?

A friend tells you they are “on a spiritual quest.” How does 1 Corinthians 2 shape the way you seek to help your friend?

If people need a work of the Spirit of God in order to understand the message of Jesus, what does it look like for us to speak the good news of Jesus into our region?

What can we do in order for people to benefit from the work of the Spirit and understand the message of forgiveness in Jesus?

# ... Because Mt Barker is God's field

## 1 Corinthians 3:1 - 15

### Key Verses

3:7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

3:9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building

### Key Theme

The spread of the good news of Jesus is God's work. We are God's co-workers, but even Paul and Apollos, great leaders though they were, and with significant ministry, are just servants. The tasks identified in God's field, planting, watering, etc, are essential, but the workers are interchangeable. It's God who will bring growth because the world, including our local region, is his field!

Does the planter create the seed? No! Does the one who waters make his own water? No! Both just work with what God has provided for them, in God's field, and are used by God to bring the growth. It is the same as we seek to speak the good news of Jesus into our region.

The success of the spread of the gospel doesn't depend on those who speak, preach, witness, or evangelise. That success depends on God.

### Notes

3:1 In this section, Paul returns to a theme from chapter 1; factions and divisions in the church

3:5 - 7 The foolishness of dividing into factions and elevating particular leaders is shown here. It is God who brings the growth!

The servant language demonstrates that although the tasks in mission are essential, the individual workers are interchangeable.

3:8 Notice the responsibility that each person should take for their

work, each one should build with care.

3:9 The three phrases in verse 9 each have “God’s” at the beginning, the place of emphasis. Literally the verse reads “God’s we are co-workers. God’s field. God’s construction.” Paul really cannot emphasise enough that the spreading of the message of Jesus is God’s work, that he draws us into as his “co-workers.”

So the workers are interchangeable, (i.e. 5 - 7) but each worker is equally valued to God! We are not just cheap labour to the Lord!

3:11 Notice that although in later verses Paul speaks of different building materials, there is only one foundation. That is Jesus.

3:12 The point of listing the different building materials is not for us to try and identify each one; gold is planting churches, silver is ministry with children, etc, etc! There is a comparison between valuable and worthless. Paul pictures a worker trying either to build something worthy of the foundation, or putting in little effort and little personal cost.

Do we hear the warning about what lies in store for the Christian who would seek to escape from God’s building project as cheaply and with as little effort as possible?!



## **... Because Mt Barker is God's field**

### **1 Corinthians 3:1 - 15**

As a child, who was your favourite hero or superhero? Why did you admire them so much?

Who was someone was (or currently is!) significant in drawing you to the Christian faith?

How have you seen God at work in a situation over a long period of time?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 3:1 - 15**

What problems arise when Christians start to divide into factions behind different leaders?

What are the implications of saying the Corinthians are only ready for "milk" and not "solid food" (v 1)?

What is the evidence of this?

What is implied by saying that Paul and Apollos are “only servants” (v 5)?

If it is God “who makes things grow” (v 7), should we still work hard to take the good news of Jesus into our region?

Consider the two metaphors in verse 9, “God’s field” and “God’s building.” What characteristics of God’s work in the world are captured by these two images?

How does the truth behind those images fit with the earlier part of the verse, that we, Christian people, are God’s “co-workers”?

What is the lesson for us in Paul’s comparison of building materials in verses 12 - 15?

How does this section help us guard against the temptation of thinking that we, or any of our leaders are indispensable to God?

How does this section help us guard against the temptation of thinking that we can sit back and contribute nothing or very little to the work of God's mission?

How could you write verse 6 in your own words to reflect the people and situation in our own church, group and region?

How do you think about speaking the gospel to our region, in the light of verse 9?

What building work in our region are you involved in?

What is your role?

What role are others playing?

What role ought we be praying for God to fill?

How do we make sure that in God's work, each one of us is building "with care" as Paul insists in verse 10?

How does being mindful of "the Day" (v 13), the day of Christ's return (i.e. 2 Corinthians 1:14) help you think about your role as God's co-worker in the work of the gospel?







Trinity  
Mount Barker   
a Trinity Network Church

Office: 9 Hampden Rd  
Mount Barker  
South Australia 5251  
08 8398 2827

[info@trinitymountbarker.org.au](mailto:info@trinitymountbarker.org.au)  
[facebook.com/TrinityMountBarker](https://facebook.com/TrinityMountBarker)  
[www.trinitymountbarker.org.au](http://www.trinitymountbarker.org.au)