



*Forgive
Luke 17
Making Judgements and Dealing with the Conflict*

- **PRAYER BOARD**
- **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Forgiveness: 2/10th, 2/17th (Gone), 2/24th, 3/3rd, 3/10th

1. **Forgiveness as Worship:** *The Six Challenges of Forgiveness in Luke 17 (add Communion notes to this: Communion = celebration of forgiveness, Communion is worship.)*

Forgiveness is not ‘a choice’ for Christians:

- #1.) LIVE a lifestyle that does not cause others to stumble (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42)
- #2.) GUARD your heart.
- #3.) GUARD your heart so you can rebuke while taking no offense
- #4.) Living as a forgiven person comes with responsibilities.
- #5.) ASK for supernatural help
- #6.) **Forgiveness is an act of duty....forgiveness is an act of Worship**

2. *What Forgiveness Is/What Forgiveness is Not*
3. *The Role of Anger in Forgiveness: Is it legitimate?* **THE BLESSING OF ANGER**
4. **Forgiving Oneself** (*Understanding Your Salvation*) – *Begins with understanding GRACE*
 - I. The Tension of Self Esteem (Pride V.S. Self Love? Acceptance? Embrace? Respect.)
 - II. What Give Us Value?
 - III. Resiliency

Understanding you are on purpose Psalm 139:13-16 **I.Am.On Purpose.**

5. **Living IN Equity**
Filling our Jesus sized spaces with people instead of Him. Causes us to need them too much and stops healthy conflict. Leaving our Jesus sized spaces empty. Causes us to island ourselves off and begin the walk down the road of isolation.
6. **Good Grief** [2/10]
7. **Boundaries in Forgiveness** [2/17]
8. **Endings: The Wise, The Foolish, The Evil** [2/24]
9. **Making Judgements and Addressing the Conflict that ensues: Peace Maker v.s. Peace Lover**
10. **The Art of Relinquishing Control** [3/10] Love yr Enemies notes from MNBS
 - **Celebrating Communion as an ACT of FORGIVENESS** [*slaps us with forgiveness each time we enter into this ordinance*].

*Have you ever wondered if God really sees you?
Have you ever wondered if God really can love you?
Have you ever wondered if God could really forgive your horrible past?
Have you ever felt worthless even though you love Jesus?*

If we ever have, then we do not understand what happened when we met Jesus at Salvation.

Come, find out what Jesus' love really does:

Soteriology – a.k.a. The Salvation Principle

Beginning March 17th, Pr. Orleen and the Wednesday Night Crew as we unpack the meaning of our SALVATION.

Soteriology is the branch of theology dealing with the study of salvation. The term comes from the Greek soterion, “salvation,” and is also related to soter, “savior.” **Soteriology** relates to several other branches of theology in that it asks who is saved, by whom, from what, and by what means.



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I. Making Judgments, do Christians do?

- ? As a Christian, is it ok to Judge someone's behavior?
- ? As a Christian, is it ok to Judge someone's character?

Matthew 7: 1-5 esv

"Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 3:1-4

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ 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? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

Three types of People:

- Natural (2:14), those without Christ, still living in the lost condition in which they were born
- Spiritual (2:15), believers in Christ who have been born of the Spirit and in whom the Spirit of God lives and is producing growth
- Carnal (3:1), believers who remain immature in the faith because they don't allow the Spirit to work in their lives.

Judgements will look different in each of their lives

e.g. Caring for the drug addict that lives next door

Proverb 26:4-5

*Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.
⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.*



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?How can they both be right? Do they not contradict each other?

Definitions of Judge:

- 3. assess:** to assess the quality of something or estimate probabilities Each proposal has to be judged on its own merits.
- 4. consider or reckon:** to form an opinion of somebody or something, especially after thought or consideration She was judged to have the best qualifications.
- 5. estimate:** to measure by guesswork, using the eye or some other sense as a rough guide You can't always judge people's ages by their voices.
- 6. condemn:** to criticize or condemn somebody on moral grounds

Definitions of Judgment:

- 5. discernment or good sense:** the ability to form sound opinions and make sensible decisions or reliable guesses someone with shrewd commercial judgment
- 6. opinion:** an opinion formed or given after consideration a snap judgment
- 7. estimate based on observation:** an estimate of something such as speed or distance, made with the help of the eye or some other sense
- 8. judging of something:** the judging of a case or a contest
- 9. divine punishment:** a misfortune regarded as a divine punishment for folly or sin (archaic or humorous) defeat regarded as a judgment from God for the leader's pride
- 10. logic act of making a statement:** the mental act of making or understanding a positive or negative proposition about something, for example, in "a chihuahua is a dog" or "a lobster is not an insect"

? Is it humanly possible to go one day w/o making judgments?

- So, do we answer a fool or not?
- Does the judging HELP someone or not?
- As a Christian, is it ok to Judge someone's behavior?
- As a Christian, is it ok to Judge someone's character?

To be honest, we judge all the time. When do we use judgement to motivate, induce, instigate action?

When we cannot help another:

- 1.** When we are upset over something someone has done.
When you are agitated...don't.
- 2.** When we are personally and emotionally involved.
When you are involved...don't.
- 3.** When we desire to punish or get even.
When you are tempted by revenge...don't.
- 4.** When there is envy or jealousy in our heart.
When you feel jealous...don't.
- 5.** When our own self-esteem is connected.
When you need to put them in their place...don't.



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- *When do you ignore a situation hoping it will pass?*
- *When do you confront?*
- *What do you use as your litmus test?*

Seven REASONS to confront:

1. When the person causing the problem is not willing to accept responsibility for the problem.
2. A moral boundary was crossed.
3. Long Term relationship.
4. Dignity has been violated. (Not ego hurt)
 - Part of wholeness includes an abiding sense of respect toward yourself.
 - The wrong deeds committed against you in some way robbed you of your dignity.
 - Forgiveness is possible only as you recoup that dignity, and often this can happen only as you stand up and speak out on your own behalf.
5. The Holy Spirit tells you to.
6. To repair a broken relationship.
7. To establish or re-establish self-respect.

WHY DO GODLY CONFRONTATION? (Seven Simple Reasons)

1) Preserves Love

Latin term for confrontation means to turn your face toward, to look at frontally
Confrontation preserves love by weeding it.

Proverbs 27:6

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

2) Resolves Alienation

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

¹¹ We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. ¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³ In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

3) Empowers

The ability to make choices and changes in a relationship = power.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

4) Solves Problems

- A. What is ignored, tends not to be solved
- B. We change when the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of change.
- C. Solving develops a focus and an agenda. Measurable goal. A specific behavior, not a trait.

5) Builds Growth

By making us aware of what we are doing and how it affects others. (Eph. 4:15 again)



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6) Clarifies Reality

Helps others see WHO we really are.

When you are afraid to tell someone the truth you:

- *Withdraw from them*
- *Character of the person get distorted as there is no TRUE feedback*
- *Your perception of that person follows the distortion and not the truth*
- *The relationship gets fed distortion and grow into more unhealth*

7) Help You Avoid Being Part of the Problem (enabler)

Ezekiel 3:18-19

If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹ But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.



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NotES

As you forgive, you are committing to a long-term mind-set of personal wholeness.

“It is God who does the forgiving, but often He chooses human beings as the channel of His forgiving grace.”

(This is not on handout)

Offense Gauge: Differing Offenses, Differing Relationships = Differing Responses

Question #1: Did it engage your sense of dignity/value? (not ego)
(I am better than you, you are not valuable...)

Question #2: What is the value of the relationship?
Mistake all people are sane and rational...permanently unaware.

Unkind Comment from Cousin at family reunion
Unkind Comment from Sibling/Friend
Unkind Comment from Spouse

Level 1 = Engage them **physically**.
see if they respond (poke)
Humor: “That was low” and laugh
Give the LOOK, and walk away

Communicating your displeasure with body language and perhaps words.

Level 2 = Engage them **mentally**.
“I disagree”
“That was unkind”
“That was inappropriate”

Level 3 = Engage them **totally**...Stop Now!
Verbalize appropriately these comments will not be tolerated.
Once that boundary has been established, walk away every time they try again.
Emotional safety = choose not to be with that individual
You work up to removing yourself emotionally & physically

THE MORE YOU DEFEND YOURSELF...THE MORE POWER THE OTHER PERSON FEELS OVER YOU.

{I. Making Judgments, do Christians do?}

II. Two hindrances to making sound Judgments:

1.) Being unaware of bitterness



2.) Being unaware of the consequences of bitterness
(or our ability to deceive ourselves)

TWO hindrances to making sound Judgments:

- 1.) Bitterness
- 2.) Self Deception

1.) Being unaware of bitterness

Ephesians 4:26-27(NKJ) ²⁶ “Be angry, and do not sin”:

Anger...Four Stages

Irritation	Frustration	Hostility	Rage
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Rage + Time to fester = Bitterness [Anger not dealt with]

? As a Christian, how do you admit to bitterness?

Signs of Bitterness Checklist:

- It bothers me when I see that the wrongdoer seems to be progressing with a normal life.
- I wish my feelings and boundaries would be more openly respected by the one who did me wrong.
- Reminders of my past pain and frustration seem to come at me too frequently and intensely.
- It bothers me when others don't realize the extent of my anguish.
- Compared to others, I seem to be lagging behind in my efforts to live a contented life.
- I still feel controlled by my past problems. They just don't seem to go away.
- I am more subdued and withdrawn than I used to be, and I don't like it.
- Others seem to expect me to just shake off my past problems and move on.
- There are times when I still yearn for vengeance against the person who wronged me.

How do I deal with bitterness?

Alicia Britt Chole

Anger/hurt as a precious = bitterness OR Push into the heart of Christ = Character

So HOW do we push bitterness into the heart of Christ?

Three steps:

A. Learn what Scripture says about Forgiveness:

- What does 1 John 1:6 say about forgiveness?

“If we claim to have fellowship w/Him but yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.” (NIV)

⁶ nIf we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (NKJ)



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- ? A/DA "The greater the sin you must forgive, the greater the measure of the Spirit that will come to you."

Luke 7:47 (Forgiven much = Love much. Forgiven little = love little)

⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom

little is forgiven, the same loves little."^(NKJ)

⁴⁷ So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. † But the one to

whom little is forgiven, loves little."^(NAB)

- Proverbs 19:11 says what regarding overlooking an offense:

¹¹ Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. (RSV)
Another thing we can do to push this pain into the Heart of Christ?

B. Confess

- James 5:16a

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.^(NAB)

(Confess your sins one to another) How would this apply to bitterness?

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Confession keeps us honest, it keeps us real. (NOTE: Helps us process through the stages of grief.)

Hebrew: yadah /yaw·daw/ v.

114 occurrences:

"praise"	53 times,	Cast	1 time
"give thanks"	32 times,	Cast out	1 time
"confess"	16 times,	Shoot	1 time
"thank"	5 times,	Thankful	1 time
"make confession"	2 times		
"thanksgiving"	2 times		

Greek: homologeo /hom·ol·og·eh·o/] v. (homos = same leg = to say)

24 occurrences;

"confess"	17 times
"profess"	3 times
"promise"	1 time
"give thanks"	1 time
"confession is made"	1 time
"acknowledgeth"	1 time

1 to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent.

2 to concede. 2A not to refuse, to promise. 2B not to deny. 2B1 to confess. 2B2 declare. 2B3 to confess, i.e. to



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admit or declare one's self guilty of what one is accused of.
3 to profess. 3A to declare openly, speak out freely. 3B to profess one's self the worshipper of one.
4 to praise, celebrate.

Believers are called to say the same thing about sin God says—to see sin as God sees it.

A theological understanding of confession includes both an acknowledgment of specific sins and a recognition that sin needs to be forgiven.

CONFESSION: AGREEING WITH GOD = IT KILLS BITTERNESS

Another thing we can do to push this pain into the Heart of Christ?

C. Releasing the individual as Christ did.
 Luke 23:34 “Then Jesus said, Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Can I do this with the people that have hurt me?
 Can I resign myself to the fact they may not get caught and found out and that does not matter to me?
 Can I resign myself to the fact the nobody may ever know what they did?
 Can I desire for them to be blessed as if they had done no wrong?

Four Consequences when we choose not to forgive:

1. The Holy Spirit is Grieved. (Ephesians 4:30-32)
NLT
³⁰ And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.
³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
2. You are left to yourself.
 Proverbs 14:14
 “The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.”
 (NKJV)
3. You force God to become your enemy.
 James 4:1-4
 “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”
4. You keep your sins.
 Matthew 6:15
 “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (NIV)

THERE IS NO PRACTICE AS FOUNDATIONAL TO YOUR CHRISTIAN WELL BEING AS FORGIVENESS.

THERE IS NO ACTION YOU CAN TAKE, MAKE YOURSELF DO, THAT WILL ENHANCE & DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST THE WAY EMBRACING A LIFESTYLE OF FORGIVENESS CAN.



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THERE IS NO ACTION SO DANGEROUS TO RUINING YOUR RELATIONSHIP W/CHRIST AND PULLING THE FOUNDATION OUT OF THE MINISTRY HE HAS DESIGNED AND CALLED YOU TO, AS

When do you ignore a situation hoping it will pass?
When do you confront?

What do you use as your litmus test?

Sample REASONS to confront:

1. When the person causing the problem is not willing to accept responsibility for the problem.
2. A moral boundary was crossed.
3. Long Term relationship.
4. Dignity has been violated. (Not ego hurt)
 - 8)** Part of that wholeness includes an abiding sense of respect toward yourself.
 - 9)** The wrong deeds committed against you in some way robbed you of your dignity.
 - 10)** Forgiveness is possible only as you recoup that dignity, and often this can happen only as you stand up and speak out on your own behalf.

Box demonstration: (each box indicates a boundary drawn)

Set up the Offense gauge – Unkind Comment from Cousin at family reunion
Unkind Comment from Sibling
Unkind Comment from Spouse

Question #1: Did it engage your sense of dignity? (not ego)
(I am better than you, you are not valuable...)

Question #2: What is the value of the relationship?
Mistake all people are sane and rational...permanently unaware....retarded

Salsa response index:

Mild = Engage them physically.
see if they respond (poke)
Humor: "That was low" and laugh
Give the LOOK, and walk away

Communicating your displeasure with body language and perhaps words.

Medium = Engage them mentally.
"I disagree"
"That was unkind"
"That was inappropriate"



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Hot/Spicy = Engage them totally...Stop Now!

Verbalize appropriately these comments will not be tolerated.

Once that boundary has been established, walk away every time they try again.

Emotional safety = choose not to be with that individual

You work up to removing yourself emotionally & physically

THE MORE YOU DEFEND YOURSELF...THE MORE POWER THE OTHER PERSON FEELS OVER YOU.

5. The Holy Spirit tells you to.

6. To repair a broken relationship.

7. To establish or re-establish self respect.

NO – DO NOT USE

Preparing for the confrontation in 5 steps:

1. Establish you have constructive intentions. (Lord, you know my heart...Psalm 139)

Spend time in prayer. Organize you heart with the Lord. (How...read through Truth scriptures)

TRUTH.

Saints should worship God in, John 4:24
serve God in, Josh. 24:14; 1 Sam. 12:24
walk before God in, 1 Kin. 2:4; 2 Kin. 20:3
esteem, as inestimable, Prov. 23:23
love, Zech. 8:19
rejoice in, 1 Cor. 13:6
speak, to one another, Zech. 8:16; Eph. 4:25
execute judgment with, Zech. 8:16
meditate upon, Phil. 4:8
bind, about the neck, Prov. 3:3
write, upon the tables of the heart, Prov. 3:3.
The fruit of the Spirit is in, Eph. 5:9.
approve themselves by, 2 Cor. 6:7, 8.
Kings are preserved by, Prov. 20:28.
They who speak, show forth righteousness,
Prov. 12:17
are the delight of God, Prov. 12:22.
Is according to godliness, Tit. 1:1
Is sanctifying, John 17:17, 19
Is purifying, 1 Pet. 1:22
Is part of the Christian armor, Eph. 6:14
Revealed abundantly to saints, Jer. 33:6.
Abides continually with saints, 2 John 2
Should be acknowledged, 2 Tim. 2:25
Should be believed, 2 Thess. 2:12, 13; 1 Tim.
4:3
Should be obeyed, Rom. 2:8; Gal. 3:1
Should be loved, 2 Thess. 2:10
Should be manifested, 2 Cor. 4:2

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2. Formulate your thoughts. (Letter)

Get your thoughts organized. Write them out in a letter. (See worksheet)
There should be NO mind reading expected in relationships, be specific.

Cover:

A summary of the good aspects of your history with the other person.

A brief, factual summary of the circumstances that produced the conflict...clarify the problem.

Stick with behaviors, not character traits.

Your understanding of the legitimate aspects of the other person's perspective and feelings.

A description of your feelings of hurt or anger or confusion without accusations...use "I" statements.

A description of the constructive changes you would like to see in your relationship.

A description of the adjustments you will make (if necessary) as part of the reconciliation process.

3. Set up a time to speak. (Stay away from 'We need to talk')

- A. Preserving everyone's dignity is your boundary.
- B. Stay away from special days or holidays.
- C. Bring a support person.
- D. Stick to the subject. (Bring your letter and read or make notes from your letter.)
- E. Acknowledge your anxiety, yet don't let it weigh you down.
- F. Be realistic. (You are not here to persuade or sell them your feelings.)
- G. Refrain from invalidating tones. No pleading, no condescension.
- H. Finish your explanation, then be quiet to allow time for absorption.

4. Listen to Counter-Confrontations

- A. Be prepared for the confrontation to be met with denial. What will your response be?
- B. Do not attempt to force agreement.
- C. ABSOLUTELY be neutral in your responses to their defensiveness.
(Empathize with their feelings, but return to the issue. The enemy of transposition-blaming YOU for their behavior.)
- D. The more you defend, the more powerful the other person feels over you.**

5. Be prepared to live with the Consequences

- A. What's the best that could happen? (Thankful heart.)
- B. What's the worst that could happen? (Leaving it at the cross.)

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." Prov 13:12

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NOTES:

1 Cor 2:15

ARE WE TO JUDGE ALL THINGS?

2:15 Paul's claim about judging all things (1 Cor. 2:15) sounds rather presumptuous. Is he urging believers to become moral policemen, passing judgment on everyone and everything around us?

Yes and no. Paul was challenging the spiritually immature believers at Corinth to grow up by applying spiritual discernment to the world around them. In this passage he mentions three categories of people:

- natural (2:14), those without Christ, still living in the lost condition in which they were born;
- spiritual (2:15), believers in Christ who have been born of the Spirit and in whom the Spirit of God lives and is producing growth; and
- carnal (3:1), believers who remain immature in the faith because they don't allow the Spirit to work in their lives.

Spiritual people "judge" all things that come their way (2:15) in the sense of scrutinizing, examining, and investigating spiritual value and implications. This is not something that we should do merely as individuals, but also corporately with other believers. For example, in the workplace Christians in various occupations need to band together to explore how the faith applies to particular vocations. By analyzing work situations in light of Scripture, we can discern what the issues are and how we might respond with Christlikeness.

"Judging all things" has nothing to do with damning others, but with recognizing and doing what God would want. Instead of pride, it calls for humility, since God will be the final Judge of everything we do (2 Cor. 5:10)¹

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-15 (VERSE 15). [GREAT NOTES!]

COMMENTARY

Paul begins with "the approach," which is composed of four closely related cameos. The first of them has to do with his inner spiritual condition.

1. 2:3 And I was with you in PAUL:
weakness
- and in much fear and Fear and Trembling
trembling,

As observed previously, this statement has often been read in an anti-intellectual fashion. The common assumption is that Paul tried "the intellectual approach" in Athens. There he delved into Greek philosophical sources and tried to relate the gospel to them. The experiment was a failure. He was not able to start a church. The fallout of that failure was that he left Athens depressed and headed for Corinth. On the way he decided on a shift in his methodology. Instead of trying to connect with pagan sources, he opted to give up on "the wisdom of men" and rely totally on "preaching Christ and his cross." His decision was blessed by God, and in Corinth he was able to found a church. Conclusion: In proclamation do not try to relate to the intellectual or spiritual heritage of the audience; just preach Christ.

Consciously or unconsciously, this is a widely held popular view. But is it accurate? As noted in section 1.2, "The Wisdom and Power of God: The Cross," Paul's hymn to the cross engaged both the Greek mind (by debating with Pericles) and the Jewish mind (by interacting with Is 50:5-11). With considerable theological and rhetorical skill he did both at the same time. This demonstrates that his presentation of the

¹ [Word in life study Bible](#). (1996). (electronic ed., 1 Co 2:15). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

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gospel in 1 Corinthians is steeped in Greek and Jewish scholarship. Related to this fact is the question, Did he fail in Athens?

The philosophical guild in Athens was the intellectual center of the entire Greco-Roman world. Leading Roman families often sent their children to Athens for advanced education. To have received a hearing in that bastion of Greek learning was a huge victory in itself. The intellectual center of the Islamic world is al-Azhar, in Cairo. That venerable university is more than a thousand years old and is revered from Indonesia to Morocco and beyond. A few years ago, His Grace George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was invited to address al-Azhar. All of us who were involved in ministry anywhere in the Islamic world were thrilled and electrified by the very fact of the invitation. Archbishop Carey and his presentation were well received, and Middle Eastern Christians were overjoyed. No, he did not “start a new church” in the shadow of al-Azhar university. No one expected that he might. The event was judged by all to be a great success.

The fact that Paul was able to attract the attention of the philosophers of his day in Athens and was then *invited* to address them on Mars Hill was a stunning achievement. His speech set a direction for the church’s witness to the Greek world that came to full flower with the Greek apologists of the third century. The Greek Orthodox Church emerged from that effort. Paul received a hearing, planted a seed, set a direction and moved on.

On many occasions in Christian history the gospel first took root among the poor and the disenfranchised. Yes indeed, Athens was the intellectual center of the Mediterranean world, but Corinth was the largest international commercial city in the eastern Mediterranean. The faith could move out across the region from Corinth in ways that would not have been possible from Athens. Paul must have understood this. If then discouragement over failure was *not* Paul’s mood as he left Athens and approached Corinth, what did he mean when he wrote 2:3?

Initially Paul knew that Corinth was not Athens. Quoting Greek philosophical sources would mean nothing to Corinthian dock workers. Furthermore Paul approached every person and place “in weakness,” not in power. This was central to the theology of mission in the early church. There was no attempt to establish a power base, raise an army and conquer territory as a first step to evangelization. The apostles were not Spanish conquistadors. Yes, Constantine conquered as much territory as he could and used his political and military power to advance what he understood to be “the gospel.” In the seventh century Islam used that methodology as it burst on the Middle Eastern world with a conquering army. Charlemagne followed Constantine’s lead. But Paul went to what is now Greece and Turkey in total weakness. For Paul “fear and trembling” meant that he went in humility, trusting in the grace of God, not in earthly power or in his own abilities or good works. In Philippians 2:12 Paul commands his readers to “work out your own salvation with *fear and trembling*.” “Fear and trembling” was not a special psychological condition experienced by Paul uniquely on the road from Athens to Corinth; but it was for him the appropriate spiritual attitude for all Christians as they fulfilled their callings.

2. ⁴and my speech and my message

were not in plausible words of wisdom, PAUL’S MESSAGE:

but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, Spirit and Power

3. ⁵that your faith might not rest

in the wisdom of men YOUR FAITH

but in the power of God. In the Power of God

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Figure 1.3(2). Cameos 2–3 (1 Cor 2:4–5)

Paul is here summarizing and repeating ideas he first presented in his hymn to the cross (1:17–2:2). As observed, “no plausible words of wisdom” did not mean ignoring contacts with Greek thought or the skillful use of polished rhetoric. Here, he adds to that picture by noting that his “speech and message” involved “demonstrations of the Spirit and power.” Clearly the “charismatic gifts” were an important aspect of his presentation of the gospel. Some of the details of these Spirit-filled meetings are described in chapter 14, where he mentions revelation, knowledge, prophecy, teaching, edification, encouragement, consolation and mysteries in the Spirit. Along with these aspects of worship he also mentions speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, the working miracles and gifts of healing. The cold logic of the Sophists and the Epicureans was not the fabric of his presentation of the gospel, but instead his witness was full of “demonstrations of the Spirit and power.” He wanted the Corinthians’ faith to rest on the power of God and not on the wisdom of people.

Paul concludes his introduction by pointing to a different kind of wisdom that he imparts to the mature. He writes:

3.	^{2:6} Yet wisdom we do impart among the mature, wisdom, not of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.	YOUR FAITH Wisdom This Age Cannot Understand
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Neither the intellectuals nor the political rulers of the age had access to the wisdom Paul presents. They were passing away. What Paul has to say falls into the category of the wisdom of God that is anchored in saving events in history, that are permanent and *do not* pass away. The daring of this cameo is often overlooked. Paul was writing to a Roman colony that worshiped Caesar as God. Were their gods passing away? Caesar Augustus died in A.D. 14 and was quickly deified by the Roman Senate with the title “Divus Augustus.” Honoring Divus Augustus was part of the imperial cult, and that cult had a huge temple facing the central square of Corinth. The rebuilding of the city of Corinth had proceeded for almost a hundred years when Paul was writing. It is impossible to imagine that the imperial cult was without influence in Rome’s largest colonial city. Paul’s language is daring and electrifying. Having gained his readers’ rapt attention, he proceeds to present this hidden wisdom of God now revealed through the Spirit. With the “approach” completed, Paul is ready to open his new topic with a “jump up to the bar.” For ease of reference the entire prophetic rhetorical template with its seven cameos is repeated.

4.	⁷ But we speak <i>God’s</i> <i>wisdom</i> <i>hidden in a mystery,</i>	GOD’S WISDOM Hidden in a Mystery
5.	<i>That which [‘en] God</i> <i>decreed</i> <i>from the ages for our</i> <i>glory.</i>	GOD DECREED For Us

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- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 6. | ⁸ <i>That which</i> [<i>en</i>]
<i>none of the rulers</i> | NOT
UNDERSTOOD
BY PEOPLE |
| | of this age <i>understood</i> ; | |
| 7. | they would not
have <i>crucified</i> | THE CROSS |
| | for if they had understood,

the <i>Lord of glory</i> . | |
| 8. | ⁹ But, as it is written,

<i>“That which</i> [<i>α</i>] <i>eye has not seen, nor ear heard,</i>

<i>nor the heart of man</i>
<i>conceived,</i> | NOT
UNDERSTOOD
BY PEOPLE |
| 9. | <i>that which</i> [<i>α</i>] <i>God</i>
<i>prepared</i>

<i>for those who love him,”</i> | GOD PREPARED

For Us |
| 10. | ¹⁰ for <i>to us God</i> has revealed

<i>through the Spirit.</i> | GOD’S WISDOM

Revealed Through the Spirit |

Figure 1.3(3). God’s wisdom: Hidden and revealed (1 Cor 2:7–10a)
RHETORIC

This particular rhetorical template contains a special feature. Four occurrences of the Greek relative pronoun (that which) are skillfully placed to introduce four balanced cameos. Reduced to its simplest expression the seven homilies are as follows:

1. God’s wisdom: Hidden in mystery
2. *that which*: God decreed—for us
3. *that which*: Rulers misunderstood
4. The cross of the Lord of glory
5. *that which*: no one understood
6. *that which*: God prepared—for us
7. God’s (wisdom): Revealed through the Spirit

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Figure 1.3(4). Summary of homily (1 Cor 2:7–10a)

In the magnificent hymn on wisdom and the cross (1 Cor 1:17–2:2) examined earlier, Paul presents seven cameos which he then repeats backward. That hymn opens, centers and concludes on the preaching of the cross. Here Paul is again discussing *wisdom* and the *cross*. Except in this text he presents one series of seven cameos rather than two. The cross again appears at the center, tying this homily to 1:17–2:2. As before, the beginning, the middle and the end are profoundly related.

COMMENTARY

The previous hymn discusses the cross and wisdom. Here *wisdom* is mentioned at the *beginning* (4), the *cross* is discussed in the *center* (7) and *wisdom* is implied at the *end* (10). Paul concludes, “To us God has revealed [his wisdom].” Also at the beginning, the middle and the end are three affirmations of deity. These are: *God* (4), the *Lord of glory* (7) and finally the *Spirit* (10). That is, this homily reflects stirrings of reflection on the Trinity. Paul is already thinking in Trinitarian ways. As we will see, this is followed in the next homily by a striking number of carefully constructed affirmations related to the Trinity.

In addition to this whiff of the Trinity, *God* appears in the first two cameos (4, 5) and again in the last two (9, 10). These four cameos tell us four things about God:

- God hides
- God decrees
- God prepares
- God reveals

In addition to this series there is a careful balancing of ideas in the paired cameos. The first (outer) pair is composed of 4 and 10, which reads:

4.	^{2:7} But we speak <i>God’s wisdom</i>	GOD’S WISDOM
	<i>hidden in a mystery,</i>	Hidden in a Mystery
10.	¹⁰ for <i>to us God has revealed through the Spirit.</i>	GOD’S WISDOM Revealed Through the Spirit

Hiding and *revealing* are matched. In the first (4) we read of how God *hid* his wisdom “in a mystery.” The reader inevitably asks, What mystery is he talking about? Hints of an answer come in this homily and in the homily that follows. The center of this homily (cameo 7) is the cross, which is undoubtedly the heart of the mystery that Paul has in mind. Then in cameo 10 Paul speaks of God *revealing* that mystery *through the Spirit*. Again, the reader is stimulated to ask, What revelation does he have in mind? The answer appears in the center. Paul is discussing the revelation of God’s mystery in the cross and in the person of the crucified one who was not merely a Galilean carpenter—but rather the *Lord of glory*.

“The Spirit of God” is known in the biblical tradition ever since the Spirit of God moved “over the waters” at creation (Gen 1:2). But who can understand the *cross* of “the Lord of glory”? Truly, this is a hidden mystery! Here the divinity of Christ, the wonder of his suffering and the mystery of glory revealed are all involved, and all three are deeply embedded in the mystery of the Trinity. This mystery continues in the second pair of cameos which are:

5.	^{2:7b} That which <i>God decreed</i> from the ages for <i>our glory</i> .	GOD DECREED For Our Glory
9.	^{9b} that which <i>God prepared</i> for <i>those who love him,</i> ”	GOD PREPARED For Us Who Love Him

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There is measured progression through the four affirmations concerning the actions of God. God first *hides* (4) and then *decrees* (5). Having *decreed* (5) he must *prepare* (9). Finally comes the *revelation* (10). This is the movement of a lover who initially *hides* his intentions regarding his beloved. He then *decides* to win her. Next he must *prepare* what he is going to do to achieve his goal. Finally he *reveals* his intentions by proposing to her.

This pair of cameos describes the “decree” of God as being “from the ages.” The incarnation and the cross are not unexpected interruptions in God’s plan. They are not ghastly mistakes. They are not “plan Z” after all else has failed. In Paul’s mind, they are the result of God’s eternal plan.

Comparison with Islam and rabbinic Judaism may be helpful. In Islamic thought the Qur’an is eternal in the mind of God. In the early Middle Ages a movement of Islamic scholars (called the *Mu’tazalin*) argued for a “created Qur’an.” Their ideas were eventually rejected and they were killed. No, insists Islam, the Qur’an, like God himself, is eternal. In the same manner, rabbinic thought held the view that the Torah was uncreated. God used the Torah as a guidebook for the creation of the world. Paul had no concept of an eternal book, but he presents a God who possesses *eternal wisdom*, which was a hidden mystery “from the ages.”

Furthermore, Islamic thought has always seen the cross as an event that could not have happened because God never allows his prophets to be overcome by their enemies. The prophets may struggle for a while, as did Muhammad at Mecca. But then the Prophet moved to Medina where he was vindicated by the acquisition of political and military power. That vindication continued as he won all his military battles. Both the Greek and the Jewish world had problems with the cross, which they saw as weak and foolish, as Paul admitted (1:22–23). But, no, Jesus was “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). And what was a part of the purpose of this amazing plan?

God decreed the cross from the ages (cameo 5) “*for our glory*” and prepared it (9) “*for those who love him*.” The same balancing of the active and the passive noted in the opening and closing of the hymn to the cross in 1:17–2:2, recurs here. There, Paul writes “I was sent” and at the same time he affirms “I came.” In this text (5) *God acts* “for our glory.” In the balancing cameo (9) we find that this divine act was “for those who love him.” *God acts*; believers *respond with love*. Their loving acceptance of the mystery is a critical component in the divine-human relationship.

The phrase *for our glory* is itself mysterious. Later Paul affirms that the faithful will “judge angels” (6:3). On the day of judgment believers will participate with God as members of the court and judge not only people but also angels! This may be part of what Paul has in mind in this text. But beyond that possibility is the fact that behind the Greek word *doxa* (glory) is the Hebrew word *kabod* (weight). In Middle Eastern culture, a “weighty” person (*rajul thaqil*) has to do with wisdom, balance, stability, reliability, sound judgment, patience, impartiality, nobility and the like. Latin has preserved these ideas and attached them to the word *gravitas*. Glory has to do with *gravitas*! Every family, community and church desperately wants and needs such a person to guide them, comfort them and help them solve their problems. God’s plan for all ages has to do with the cross and with the emergence on the other side of the cross of men and women who embody these qualities. Indeed glory (*gravitas*), for those who love God, flows from the cross of “the Lord of glory.” This leads to the third pair of cameos with its center climax [see fig. 1.3(5)]:

6. ⁸ *That which* [‘en] *none* of NOT UNDERSTOOD BY
the rulers PEOPLE

of this age *understood*;

7. for if they had understood,

they would not have THE CROSS
crucified

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the *Lord of glory*.

8.

⁹ But, as it is written,

“That which [a] eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

nor the *heart of man* NOT UNDERSTOOD BY
conceived, PEOPLE

Figure 1.3(5). Cameos 6–8 (1 Cor 2:8–9)

The content of cameos 6–8 is striking. Paul does not blame the Romans (Pilate) or the Jews (the high priest) for the crucifixion. Does this text contain echoes of “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34)? Quite likely. Paul could have dumped blame on either or both of these communities and their leaders. Again we sense that Paul is fully aware of his readership. This letter was primarily addressed to Greek and Jewish Christians living in a Roman colony. After all Paul was both a Roman and a Jew. He proclaimed the truth of the gospel without blaming his readers or their leaders. The text has no hint of anti-Semitism. The refusal to look backwards to the perpetrators of the cross in 1:17–2:2 is repeated here. The passion was the eternal plan of God “from all ages.”

Indeed, the mystery of the crucifixion of the Lord of glory was so amazing that *no one* had “seen” or “heard” or even imagined it. Nor could they have dreamed that it could produce “glory” (*kabod, gravitas, weight*) in the hearts of those who love him.

It is no mistake that the Scripture quotation chosen by Paul for this homily (8–9) is a free rendition of Isaiah 52:15 which in turn is one of the opening verses of the suffering servant song of Isaiah 52:13–53:12. In Paul’s mind that song was obviously an important key to understanding the mystery of “the Lord of glory” on a cross, which creates glory for those who love *God, the Lord of glory and the Spirit*.

SUMMARY

This homily touches on many themes. Six of them can be summarized as follows:

1. Here Paul continues to clarify and present his message. In Corinth he did not jettison his concern to build bridges for communicating the gospel to the Greeks and the Jews around him. Yet, as everywhere, he was sensitive to this new audience to which he came in weakness, not with worldly power.
2. God hides, decrees, prepares and then reveals the mystery of the crucified Lord of glory. It is an eternal plan, not an accident of history.
3. *God’s* mystery is about *the Lord of glory*, and that mystery is now revealed through the *Spirit*. Paul is thinking in Trinitarian terms.
4. As the eternal plan of God, the cross can produce glory, *doxa, kabod, gravitas* and weight for those who love God.
5. Pilate (the Romans) and the high priest (the Jews) are not blamed for the cross. Pilate and the high priest did not understand what they were doing—indeed God’s plan was beyond the understanding of anyone.
6. The suffering servant of Isaiah stands behind the cross of Jesus. A quotation from the first is quoted to explain the second.

In the next homily Paul continues his discussion of the mystery once hidden and now revealed [see fig. 1.3(6)].

This carefully constructed, theologically dense passage has puzzled interpreters for centuries. These reflections will concentrate on illuminating its rhetorical structure and its unmistakable emphasis on the Trinity.

RHETORIC

Like Isaiah 28:14–18, with great skill, a number of rhetorical features are here interwoven into a single homily.

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Initially the homily is composed of five cameos linked by means of ring composition. Second, there is a balancing of *parable* (1) and *Scripture* (5). As previously observed, in prophetic rhetoric, the center of ring composition is often filled with a parable/metaphor, a nature miracle or a quotation from an earlier sacred tradition. The text before us opens and closes with mini-ring compositions (cameos 1 and 5). Each of these two cameos has an A-B-A structure. In the first (1) the center is filled with the “parable of the human person.” While in the last (5) the center contains a quotation from Isaiah 40:13. Paul understands exactly what he is doing rhetorically. The climax of the homily as a whole appears in the center.

1. ^{2:10b} For the *Spirit* searches all things,

even the *deep things* of God. SPIRIT/DEEP THINGS/OF
GOD

¹¹ For what person *Parable of*
knows a *man’s thoughts*

except the *spirit of the* Man/Thoughts/Spirit
man which is in him?

So no one knows the God/Thoughts/Spirit
thoughts of God

except the *Spirit of God*.

2. a.¹² And we, not the spirit of WE RECEIVE
the world we receive,

b. but the *Spirit* which is The Spirit from God
from God,

c. that we might understand We Understand Things from
the things from God God

d. *graced* upon us. Graced upon Us

3. ¹³ And this we impart WE IMPART

not in teachings of Teachings of Spirit
human wisdom by
words

but in teachings of spirit To Spiritual People
to spiritual people,

spiritual things interpreting.

4. a.¹⁴ The natural person does NATURAL MAN—NOT
not receive RECEIVE

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	b. the <i>things</i> of the <i>Spirit</i> of <i>God</i> ,	The Gifts of the Spirit
	(for they are folly to him),	
	c. and he is not able to understand them	He Cannot Understand Them
	d. because they are spiritually discerned.	They Are Spiritually Discerned
5.	¹⁵ The <i>Spiritual One</i> discerns all things,	
	but is himself discerned by no one.	SPIRITUAL ONE DISCERNS ALL
	¹⁶ “For who has known the mind of <i>the Lord</i>	<i>Scripture</i> related to
	so as to instruct him?”	Mind of the Lord (Yahweh)
	But we have the <i>mind of Christ</i> .	Mind of Christ

Figure 1.3(6). The wisdom of God: Revealed through the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10b–16)

COMMENTARY

Once again it seems appropriate to examine the matching cameos side by side, beginning with the first and the last of the five cameos [see fig. 1.3(7)].

Cameo 1 opens with “the Spirit searches all things.” This is matched in the first line of cameo 5 where “the *Spiritual One* discerns all things.” The parallel between the two adds weight to the idea that “the *Spiritual One*” referred to in cameo 5 is the Holy Spirit, and *not a spirit-filled believer*. Indeed Paul is reflecting on the Trinity in both cameos. This is evident in the first cameo, which opens with:

^{2:10b} For the *Spirit* searches all things,
even the *deep things* of *God*.

The phrase *deep things* is borrowed from popular Gnostic thought. Paul uses this language to build a bridge from his thought world to the world of his readers, but he is careful to see that the traffic flows from his mind to theirs.

1.	^{10b} For the <i>Spirit</i> searches all things,	
	even the <i>deep things</i> of <i>God</i> .	SPIRIT SEARCHES ALL
	¹¹ For what person knows a <i>man’s thoughts</i>	<i>Parable of</i>

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except the *spirit of the man* which is in him? Man/Thoughts/Spirit

So no one knows the *thoughts of God* God/Thoughts/Spirit

except the *Spirit of God*.

5. ¹⁵ The *Spiritual One* discerns all things,

but is himself discerned by no one. SPIRITUAL ONE
DISCERNES ALL

¹⁶“For who has known the mind of *the Lord* *Scripture* related to

so as to instruct him?” Mind of the Lord
(Yahweh)

But we have the *mind of Christ*. Mind of Christ

Figure 1.3(7). Cameos 1 and 5 (1 Cor 2:10b–11, 15–16)

Without such bridges, communication is virtually impossible. What then does Paul mean by “the deep things”? The simplest answer is that he is talking about the Word of God that broke into human history in the person of Jesus and his cross. This was the climax of the previous apostolic homily. The “deep things of God” are not philosophical ideas withheld from common folk and available only to the initiated few (Gnosticism), but rather the mystery of the incarnation and the cross. Thus the subject of this opening statement is a threefold way of talking about God who is: the *Spirit*, the *deep things* of God (i.e., the Lord of glory), and *God*.

Continuing in cameo 1, Paul presents the first Christian parable on the Trinity:

^{2:11} For what person knows a *man’s thoughts*
except the *spirit of the man* which is in him?

This parable has three parts: the *man*, his *thoughts* and his *spirit*. I am a person, and my name is Ken Bailey. I have thoughts. These thoughts are a part of me, and in a deep sense they represent me. Because you are reading this chapter, you are engaged with some of my thoughts. You cannot know me without knowing my thoughts. My person and my thoughts are one, and yet they are not identical. Also I have a spirit. My family and good friends know what my spirit is like and can describe it better than I can. Touch my spirit, and you have touched me. They are the same, and yet in some indefinable way they are not the same. All three of these realities—the person Ken Bailey; his thoughts, which are revealed through his words; and his spirit—function together even though it is possible to partially understand them in isolation from each other. Where did this wondrous combination of “three in one” come from? Are we not made in the image of God (Gen 1:27)?

In 2004 I was invited by the archbishop of Canterbury to join an international bridge-building conference of fifteen Muslim scholars and fifteen Christian scholars. We met for a week in Doha, the capital of the Sheikdom of Qatar in the Arabian Gulf. One evening an Egyptian Muslim scholar joined my Christian friend and me at dinner. During a lull in our conversation, she asked, “Gentlemen, can one of you explain the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to me? I have been trying to find an explanation that I can understand for

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twenty-five years and have failed. Can you help me?” After negotiating with my friend as to which of us would venture to answer this serious, friendly question, I offered a brief discussion of the text before us with its Pauline parable of the human person. I told my questioner that in the Qur’an one can read about “God,” “the Word of God” and the “Spirit of God.” The Islamic tradition has chosen not to reflect on how those three Quranic descriptions of the divine come together. That choice is their privilege, and I respect their freedom in that decision, I told her. But in the Christian tradition we also have *God*, his *Word* and his *Spirit*, and we have chosen to reflect on how these three form a unity. Greatly relieved the professor replied, “At last! Someone has given me an explanation of the Trinity that I can understand. I am so grateful.” I quickly assured her that thanks were not due to me, but to St. Paul, who gave us the text (with its parable).

After this remarkable opening Paul continues,

^{11b}No one knows the *thoughts* of God
except the *Spirit of God*.

Here the same trilogy reappears. The three elements are *God*, his *thoughts* and his *Spirit*. Paul confirms that his parable of the human person indeed refers to the mystery of the nature of God, who is three in one. The “thoughts” of God have to do with the Word of God, who became flesh in Jesus. In short, this cameo contains three affirmations of the Trinity that include a parable. What then of the matching cameo (5)?

5. ¹⁵The *Spiritual One* discerns
all things,

but is himself discerned by no one.	SPIRITUAL DISCERNS ALL	ONE
--	---------------------------	-----

¹⁶ “For who has known the mind of Yahweh		<i>Scripture</i> related to
---	--	-----------------------------

so as to instruct him?”		Mind of the Lord (Yahweh)
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But we have the <i>mind of Christ</i> .		Mind of Christ
---	--	----------------

As noted, “the Spiritual One” is best understood to refer to the Holy Spirit (not a “spiritual” believer in Jesus). Indeed, the Holy Spirit “is discerned by no one.” What is the nature of “God the Father”? Answers to this question can be found in the Hebrew and in the Greek Scriptures. What is “the mind of Christ”? The Gospels and the Epistles give a great deal of information to help us answer that question. But what is the *nature* of the Holy Spirit? We can see and experience the *work* of the Holy Spirit, but do we know the *nature* of the Holy Spirit? That Spirit remains mysterious (Jn 3:5–8).

In cameo 5 Paul borrows from the Greek Old Testament (lxx) translation of Isaiah 40:13 and affirms that the “mind of Yahweh” is also unknown. But all is not lost—we have the “mind of Christ.” The unknown “mind of God” is now revealed through the “mind of Christ.” The “spiritual one,” the “mind of Yahweh” and “the mind of Christ” come together. The unknown has become known. The mystery of the wisdom of God is unveiled—thanks to the triune God.

Continuing an examination of the matched cameos in this homily, we turn to cameos 2 and 4 which appear side by side in figure 1.3(8).

2	a.	¹² And we, not the spirit of the world we receive,	WE RECEIVE
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	b.	but the <i>Spirit</i> which is <i>from God</i> ,	But by the Spirit from God
	c.	that we might understand <i>the</i> <i>things from God</i>	We Understand Things from God
	d.	<i>graced</i> upon us.	Graced upon Us
4	a.	¹⁴ The natural man does not receive	NATURAL MAN—NOT RECEIVE
	b.	the <i>things</i> of the <i>Spirit of God</i> ,	The Gifts of the Spirit
			(for they are folly to him),
	c.	and he is not able to understand them	He Cannot Understand Them
	d.	because they are spiritually discerned.	They Are Spiritually Discerned

Figure 1.3(8). Cameos 2 and 4 (1 Cor 2:12, 14)

Reflection on the Trinity continues. In cameo 2 Paul writes about the *Spirit from God*, who reveals *the things from God*. What things from God is he talking about? Granted, the text is mysterious, but it is possible to understand that those things from God refer to the gospel: the reality of God in Christ and the power and wisdom of the cross that is the subject under discussion from 1:17 up to this text. That gospel, that event with its message of “Christ crucified,” is indeed “graced upon us.”

Cameo 4 presents the same Trinity but with a negative application. “The things of the Spirit of God” are *not received* by the natural man. An extra phrase that reads “for they are folly to him” appears here. This phrase has no balancing line. It may be in the text because it echoes the center of the hymn in 1:17–2:2 where the cross is presented as “folly to Greeks.” Not only is the cross folly, but the very idea of the Trinity and the incarnation are also folly to the Greek mind. Is Paul not speaking to the whole church, both then and now?

These two cameos are also matched in other ways. In Isaiah 28 we noted the parallels between the interior lines of one cameo to the interior lines of another. Here Paul uses that same style with admirable skill. The common elements in the four lines that appear in each cameo are

- a. Receive versus not receive
- b. The Spirit
- c. Understand versus not understand
- d. Graced (given) and discerned (understood)

Far greater minds than mine have nobly struggled to understand this passage. To unlock a few treasures may be the best that anyone can hope to accomplish. It is evident that in 2a Paul is describing himself and those around him as having received the Spirit from God. In 4a he discusses “the natural man” who is unable to understand the things of the Spirit of God. Paul and his friends do not receive “the Spirit of the world” (2a) and the “natural man” does not receive “the things of the Spirit of God” (4a-b). Paul and his companions are

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able to understand “the things from God” (2c) while the natural man “cannot understand them” (4c). Those spiritual realities are *given through grace* (2d); at the same time they must be *spiritually discerned* (4d).

In the first of these (2d) the believer is the *passive recipient* of grace. In the second (4d) the reader discovers that the recipient must play an active part in *accepting* the grace that proceeds from the Spirit. Logic and reasoning are not enough. There is a component in the gift of grace that equips the believer to understand the things of God. Paul moves in a world that cannot be reconciled to the worldview of the Enlightenment. We are back to the cross that the world sees as weak and foolish, but for those who are being saved—it is the power and wisdom of God.

The center of this homily (3) is as follows:

3.	^{2:13} And this we <i>impart</i>	WE IMPART
	not in teachings of human wisdom by words	Not Human Wisdom
	but in teachings of spirit to spiritual people,	But Spiritual Teachings
	spiritual things interpreting.	To Spiritual People— Spiritually

In this climactic center Paul becomes “missional.” It is not enough that people acquire “spirituality” and wallow in it. For Paul there *are* deep things of God (1, 5), and we (not the natural person) *receive* the things of the Spirit of God (2, 4), but also “*we impart*” these “teachings of the Spirit to spiritual people” (3). The phrase *human wisdom* occurs only here in the center, and it is contrasted with “teachings of spirit” that are presented to spiritual people.

Summarized and seen rhetorically these same five cameos are

1. The Spirit, God, his thoughts.
2. *We receive understanding* from the Spirit.
3. *We impart teachings* of spirit to spiritual people (not wise words).
4. *Natural man does not receive* the things of the Spirit.
5. The Spirit, God, the mind of Christ.

It is no accident that the “missional” component of the homily is in the climactic center. All of this is given for the purpose of *imparting* these revealed mysteries of the Spirit, through the Spirit to others (cameo 3).

This seems convoluted to our Western Greco-Roman minds. But any reader steeped in ring composition expects to hear a series of ideas that comes to a climax and then (with a difference) is repeated backwards. For such a mind, this homily is well-organized in a clear and convincing way.

Consistent logic is not enough. Paul is interested in imparting the *mind of Christ* that is the hidden *wisdom of God* revealed through the *Lord of glory* and *his cross*.

SUMMARY

1. Paul discusses the Trinity six times in this homily (1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 4, 5). The human person is Paul’s parable of the Trinity (1). The “natural man” (without the Spirit) cannot understand these mysteries.

Summarized, these appear as follows:

	SPIRIT	CHRIST	GOD
(1)	The <i>Spirit</i> (searches all)	Deep <i>things</i>	of <i>God</i>
	The Spirit (knows)	The thoughts	of man (parable)

*Forgive
Luke 17
Conflicts and Judgements*

	The <i>Spirit</i> (knows)	The <i>thoughts</i>	of <i>God</i>
(2)	From the <i>Spirit</i>	<i>Things graced upon us</i>	from <i>God</i>
(4)	The <i>Spirit</i>	The <i>things</i>	of <i>God</i>
(5)	The <i>spiritual One</i>	The mind of <i>Christ</i>	Mind of <i>Yahweh</i> (Scripture)

Figure 1.3(9). Paul’s discussion of the Trinity in cameos 1–5

2. Human knowledge and wisdom (rationality) are not enough. “Teachings of Spirit” that go beyond human knowledge are necessary.
3. The *Spirit* (alone) is insufficient. The Corinthians thought the Spirit (pneumatology) was all they needed to understand God. Paul’s response is, “No, through the Spirit you receive *God’s gifts*, but not *God’s thoughts/ mind*. For this *mind of God* the *mind of Christ* (Christology) is required.”
4. Grace is “given” as a gift and yet that gift must be received (spiritually discerned) by the believer.
5. The mystery of the Trinity and the cross are folly to the natural man.
6. The believer is responsible to *receive, understand* and finally *impart* the mysteries of God to others.

Paul has now reached a critical moment in his first essay with the introduction of the missional element into the discussion. They are to “impart” all of this to others. Because of this mandate, Paul turns to a second discussion of Paul and Apollos, who are not competitors but rather coworkers in this weighty task of communicating the gospel to others (3). To that discussion we now turn.²

² Bailey, K. E. (2011). [*Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*](#) (pp. 106–119). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.