

**LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS
for the Week of April 2, 2017**

**BEAUTIFUL ORTHODOXY:
The Wisdom of the Cross
1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

1. If someone asked you, “What is the central message of Christianity?” what would you say? Why?
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 and 2:1-4.** What is the central theme of Paul’s message to the Corinthian church?
3. Why does Paul say “the message of the cross is *foolishness* to those who are perishing?” What does he mean by this?
4. How has God “made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1:20.) What does Paul mean by this? Is he saying we should reject and/or deny all intellectual learning and secular education?
5. **Read Deuteronomy 21:22-23.** Why was the crucifixion a stumbling block to Jews? How did Paul deal with this difficulty? Why would the crucifixion be foolishness to Gentiles?

6. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to a dysfunctional church. The church in Corinth did not know how to survive, much less thrive, in the hedonistic, narcissistic culture that was first century Corinth. The Corinthian culture tended to boast in all that served a person's self-exaltation. Popular philosophies, powerful personalities, impressive presentations of oratorical skills and intelligence, as well as excessive demonstrations of wealth and power determined the degree of esteem a person or group would receive from society. The underlying problem at Corinth was their failure to grasp the true meaning of the cross of Christ. How do Christians today tend to confuse the world's power with God's power? How can we tell when we are doing this? What is the result of such confusion?

7. What does it mean to live a "Cross-shaped life"? **Read Galatians 2:20 and 6:14.** What are the practical implications of living such a lifestyle? Name some specific ways this will impact and change our relationships at work, at home, and with our neighbors in our day-to-day lives. **Read Mark 10:41-45 and Philippians 2:3-11** for some ideas.

8. Jesus says in the Gospel of John, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). But why would it be necessary for God's Son to die in such a peculiarly horrible way in order to show us this greater love? Paul says preaching Christ crucified is a "stumbling block" (Greek: *scandalon*, from which we get our word, "scandal"). How does this message continue to scandalize modern people today? How should we respond to this as loving and sensitive Christians while also refusing to compromise the Gospel?

9. Eight months before his execution in a Nazi prison camp, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross ... (Christ) is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matthew 8:17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering . . . That is a reversal of what the religious man expects from God." How do you respond to this? Does this sound like wisdom or foolishness to you?