BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS
1 CORINTHIANS: LESSON TWO: Chapter 2: 1 - 16

Primary Bible source: NKJV. Primary expositor resource: David Guzik, Dir. of Calvary Chapel Bible College & Bible Expositor

Other resources: William Barclay, Warren W. Wiersbe, F. F. Bruce, Irving L. Jensen

http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_author.cfm?AuthorID=2

Regarding Verses 1 – 16...

1. List the main point of this chapter.
   *Only through the Holy Spirit indwelling in us can we truly know the deep meanings of God’s Word.*

2. What verse(s) do you see as key to this chapter? Explain why.
   *Latter part of verse 4 and verse 5. Also, verse 13.*

Regarding Verses 1 – 5 ...

3. In your own words, what is Paul’s intention within these verses?
   *To show the congregation at Corinth that he/Paul was a witness of the power of the Holy Spirit. He wanted them to see a demonstration of that power and not a performance of Paul.*

4. In Paul’s pre on-the-road-to-Damascus experience we know him as the zealous, ruthless, bold, and educated crusader for the Jewish elite. Explain why, in verse 3, Paul says he was “with [the Corinthians] with much weakness, fear and trembling”

   *It is possible that because Paul’s very recent preaching in Athens did not bear any fruit that he now realized how dependent he is now on the power of God. Paul was not brimming with self-confidence. Knowing the need and his own limitations made him weak and afraid. Yet it kept him from the poison of self-reliance, but letting God's strength flow. (Guzik)*

   “So great was his sense of weakness and fear, and so profound his lack of trust in himself that he quaked, he trembled. Those are the secrets of strength in all preaching.” (Morgan)

5. Paul made a conscious decision to preach to the Corinthians in simplistic terms (v4). Why do you think he chose this approach to preaching?

   *Paul is not rejecting preaching, even persuasive preaching (his sermon before Agrippa in Acts 26 is a remarkable example of persuasive preaching). Paul is rejecting any reliance on the preacher’s ability to persuade with human wisdom. (Guzik)*

   *Paul’s preaching may not have been impressive or persuasive on a human level, but on a spiritual level it had power. (Guzik)*
Final point:  a. Preaching strategies centered around the wisdom of men - around emotion, entertainment and human personality - may yield response, but not results for the kingdom of God.

i. Many people use slick, entertaining, or even deceptive means to “lure” people into the church, and justify it by saying, “we’re drawing them in and then winning them to Jesus.” But the principle stands: with you draw them with is what you draw them to.

b. If someone’s faith is in the wisdom of men, and not the power of God; if someone can be persuaded into the kingdom by human wisdom, they can be persuaded out of the kingdom by human wisdom also. (Guzik)

Regarding Verses 6 – 8 ...

6. Paul states in verse 6: “we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, or the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.” What does Paul mean by the use of the word, mature?”

Paul does use the word mature for mature believers in passages like Ephesians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 14:20, and Philippians 3:15. An immature person (such as a baby) doesn’t have the discernment to know what is good to eat and what isn’t.

7. What kind of wisdom is Paul referring to in verse 7?

It is the hidden wisdom that is now revealed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul preaches

8. Why didn’t/couldn’t the rulers of this age understand the heavenly wisdom that was being preached to them? (v8)

It came to them in a mystery; a “sacred secret” that could only be known by revelation—not understood by the rulers of this age. (Guzik)

Regarding Verses 9 – 13...

9. Why is it non-believers are not able to comprehend the deeper meanings of God’s Word through seeing and hearing, that is, by being taught?

God’s heavenly wisdom is only known to those who are saved thereby having the Holy Spirit lead us to a deeper understanding.

As for “the deep things of God:” In their love of human wisdom, the Corinthians proudly thought Paul was just dealing in “the basics” of the gospel. Paul insists that his message gets to the heart of the deep things of God.

This does not mean every believer has equal spiritual wisdom. And it does not mean we will understand all spiritual mysteries. It does mean every believer can understand the basics of the Christian message, which is unattainable (and undesirable) by human wisdom. (Guzik)

10. What do you think Paul means when he speaks of “the deep things of God’s Spirit.”

As examples, justification, sanctification, New Covenant, adoption, etc.
Regarding Verses 14 – 16…

11. Explain the ‘spirit’ comparison Paul uses in these verses.

He is comparing the ‘spirit’ of the natural man vs. the Spirit of God. Every believer has access to this spiritual wisdom.

This does not mean every believer has equal spiritual wisdom. And it does not mean we will understand all spiritual mysteries. It does mean every believer can understand the basics of the Christian message, which is unattainable (and undesirable) by human wisdom. (Guzik)

William Barclay states there are two kinds of men: those who are sensitive to the Spirit (in Greek, having pneuma) and those who are focused on the physical aspects of life (the Greek word, psyche i.e., there is nothing beyond life here on earth)—to this latter man he cannot know the deeper meanings of the Spirit.

12. What is Paul saying in verse 16, and how can we apply this thought to our daily lives?

It is easy to become so involved in the world that there exists nothing beyond it. We must pray to have the mind of Christ, for only when he dwells within us are we safe from the encroaching invasion of the demands of material things. (Barclay)

“… this seals Paul’s argument concerning the inscrutability of spiritual things except to those who have the mind (His spirit) of Christ. “(Bruce)

TRUE OR FALSE QUESTIONS

1. F  Paul came to Corinth ‘on-a-roll’ based on his preaching successes in Athens (Acts 17: 16 ff).

2. T  Paul was totally dedicated to preaching ‘Christ-crucified and Him only.’

3. T  Verses 1 – 5 tell us that it is possible that ‘human wisdom in preaching’ can be persuasive to some thereby deluding their understanding of the Gospel message.

4. T  Verse 6 indicates Paul understood the difference in preaching to mature and immature believers.

5. T  The hidden (secret) wisdom ‘which God ordained before the ages’ (v7) is the plan of redemption and salvation through Jesus.

6. F  If anyone is a keen listener and very intelligent, it is possible to know the deeper things of God’s Word.

8. T  No natural man (non-believer) is equipped to judge a spiritual man.

10. The term, God’s Spirit, is the same as the ‘Holy Spirit.’

DIGGING DEEPER

Several times so far in this first letter Paul states that he preaches and knows ‘Christ-crucified and Him only’. What is your view of what this meant, then, and now, in our church(es).

Explain why God allows His plan of salvation to be such a “mystery?”