

1 Corinthians

Divisions at Corinth

Interpreting the Text:

1. How does Paul's thanksgiving provide a sort of allusion to the focus of his letter (1:1-9)? Do the themes suggest a generic greeting or the setting of an expectation for the church in Corinth?
2. Paul immediately states his concern at the beginning of the letter, citing evidence that the church has created division based on which apostle of Jesus they claim association with. Based on your understanding of Paul's other letters and Jesus' teachings from the gospel, why might this be a problem for the young church? Why do you think Paul is so concerned for the Corinthians?
3. Paul refers to "foolishness" throughout the opening of this letter. How should we understand that word as it is used in these first two chapters? How is Paul juxtaposing "foolishness" with the quotation from Isaiah in verse 19, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart?"

Applying the Text:

1. Professors Bartlett and Attridge discuss the question of fault for the current struggles the Corinthians find them in: is it their own failing, a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching, social status, or something else? How has your church addressed moments of division, based on teachings from scripture or something different? What challenges led to that division?
2. Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christ crucified is the "wisdom of God" and the cross is the center of all Christian confessions. Do you find this an easy statement to sit with, or does it challenge you? How does Paul's focus on the crucifixion make you think about your own faith?