

7 QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER BIBLE UNDERSTANDING

1 CORINTHIANS 1:27-29

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27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 ESV

1. WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE ORIGINAL READERS?

If you start with today you're twenty centuries too late.

Paul is revealing to the Corinthian believers a deeper truth about the motivations behind why God works the way He works in our world. It is a stark warning against the dangers of pride and boasting.

Paul uses strong language to convey God's motives. The Greek word for "foolish" is *moros*, where we get the word "moron" from. God chose the weak, those bereft of power or ability to do much of anything. The words for "low and despised" can be understood as nobodies treated with contempt by the world. Think of how many Americans think of illegal immigrants: nobodies, despised, unwanted in this land. That's a picture of what Paul is describing. God chooses these types of people to bring "shame" to those valued, honored, glorified in this world. God loves using underdogs. But why?

So that no "flesh" (the word translated "human being" and a common antonym of the Spirit) may boast before God. God hates pride. It's the sin that cast Lucifer out of heaven and the attribute that invites God's active opposition to our lives (James 4:6). The word for "boast" is elsewhere translated in the Bible as "glory." God's glory is foundational not just to this passage but to God's interactions with humanity. God desires His glory to be exalted and magnified. When any human tries to glorify themselves instead

GREEK WORD OF THE WEEK

ἐκλέγω (*eklegō*) is the Greek word translated "chose," utilized three times in these verses. It means to pick out for one's self, choose out, from preference, favor or love. The same word is used when Jesus tells the Twelve that he "chose" them as disciples (Luke 6:13, John 15:16, Acts 1:2). A word picture would be a kid going to the candy store and picking out his favorite kind or a woman going to the car dealership and choosing her favorite car to buy. Wrapped up in this word are deep traces of affection and intention.

2. WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?

Scripture without context makes no sense.

The context for 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 is a personal letter Paul wrote to believers in a large, prosperous city where it would have been easy to allow pride in their earthly comforts to cloud out God's deserved glory. In the same way, these believers were probably ashamed of their many past sins, and Paul wanted to remind them that imperfection is not a disqualification to be used by God. In fact, it's a prerequisite.

3. WHAT TIMELESS TRUTHS ARE THERE?

Since the Word doesn't change it still matters today.

- God hates pride and actively works against those who glorify themselves and not God.
- God loves using underdogs.
- God chose us with deep affection and intention.
- Imperfection is not a disqualification to be used by God; it's a prerequisite.
- God's chief concern is His glory and it needs to be ours as well.

4. WHERE ELSE IN SCRIPTURE DOES IT SAY THIS? *The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.*

6 Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." *James 4:6 ESV*

16 You did not choose (*eklegō*) me, but I chose (*eklegō*) you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. *John 15:16 ESV*

9 "My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. *2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV*

5. HOW DOES IT APPLY TODAY? *Information without application becomes stagnation.*

- Any thought that God can't use you because of your past is a lie from the enemy.
- God chose you on purpose for a purpose.
- A person or a church filled with pride will never be used by God in significant ways.
- Our greatest strength comes when we do not rely on our own strength but on God's power.
- Humbling ourselves is something we can never stop practicing in our own lives.
- A church of 'nobodies,' full of marginalized and miscellaneous sinners, is a church perfectly positioned to change the world.

6. HOW SHOULD THIS CHANGE THE WAY I LIVE IN COMMUNITY? *The Bible comes alive in me when I live it in community.*

- What's your favorite underdog story? What underdog stories do you see in the Bible? How are you an underdog in your world?
- What are some specific ways that you can cultivate and practice humility in your personal life?
- What are some specific ways that your church can cultivate and practice humility as a whole?

of God, God works to shame them and bring them to nothing. God will not share His glory with another. In the end, God is God, and we are not. We would do well to remember that.

7. HOW CAN MY LIFE GET BETTER BECAUSE OF THESE VERSES? *If I trust God and step in faith, what kind of life will God create?*

We should be both empowered and humbled at the same time by these verses. Many times we discount ourselves from God's service because we believe our past mistakes disqualify us. In fact it's just the opposite. God loves using underdogs! Our lives should be brimming over with hope for the future because God has declared that He absolutely loves using messed up, broken people like us to change

the world. Our doubt should be replaced with confidence and our shame should be replaced by anticipation, and above all, we should glory in the greatness of our God who would use people like us.