

“One Body, One Spirit”
An Orthodox Christian Sunday School Curriculum based on the Books of I and II Corinthians
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Education Ministry

Feedback on this lesson plan is welcome and encouraged [HERE](#).

Title of Lesson:	Lesson Number:	Key Verse(s)	Grade Level
What is Real Wisdom? The Wisdom of This World is Not the Wisdom of God!	2	1 Corinthians 1:21 1 Corinthians 2:13 1 Corinthians 1:20-31 1 Corinthians 2:13-16	PreK K-1st Grade 2nd-3rd Grade 4th-6th Grade Junior High ✓ Senior High

Lesson Length: 30 minutes (main) + 15 minutes (extension)

Key Ideas in this Lesson:

1. The wisdom of the world, or the wisdom of man does not come from being enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The wisdom of man is not always, or necessarily, evil, but it is limited in two ways. Firstly, it is limited by the laws of nature. Humans apprehend things based on what we can see (empirical knowledge based on science) and academic knowledge (what we understand based on mathematics, logic, and philosophy). Secondly, human wisdom is limited because it is separated from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because of sin, disobedience, and pride. The wisdom of man often causes division, factions, and is used for evil and personal gain. This separation from God can only be resolved through repentance, forgiveness, and union with Christ, all of which is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who illumines the mind, bestowing wisdom and understanding.
2. The Wisdom of God is that knowledge which allows us to see possibilities beyond the limitations of empirical and academic knowledge. We can “know” that Christ is risen from the dead by faith and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, even when it can’t be “proven” through science and philosophy. Empirical and Academic knowledge can bring us close to faith, as when St. Thomas had to see the nail prints in Jesus’ hands as well as the print of the spear which was thrust into His side, but it was faith that prompted Him to proclaim, seeing Jesus Christ risen in the upper room, *“My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:24-29)

Key Vocabulary and Phrases in this Lesson:

1. **Wisdom, the Wise** – Wisdom is defined as the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment, and it plays a crucial role in making sound decisions and understanding complex situations. The wisdom of the world or the wisdom of man is limited to what can be proven scientifically or philosophically, but the Wisdom of God is a “higher” knowledge, a knowledge revealed by the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), He is also the Wisdom of the Father. (1 Corinthians 1:30)
2. **Scribe** – In St. Paul’s day, and in Israel, the Scribes represented the academic, intellectual class.
3. **Greeks** – Paul sometimes uses “Greeks” as a synonym for “Gentile.” Greek culture, however, was arguably obsessed with worldly wisdom, science, and philosophy. Their wildly complex and mythical ideas of the pantheon of gods in their religious system may have contributed to a reactionary emphasis on the rational.
4. **Stumbling Block** – The death of the Messiah was a stumbling block to the Jews because they believed His kingdom would be earthly, and restore their power and independence as a nation. Their preconceived notion would not allow them to accept a Messiah who died and established a kingdom that is not of this world.
5. **Foolishness** – For the Greeks, crucifixion followed by resurrection from the dead did not align with their empirical or academic reality; thus, they deemed it to be foolishness. For Paul, foolishness equated to unbelief, even atheism. As the Psalmist said, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” (Psalm 14:1)

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Suggested Essential Question(s) for this Lesson:

- 1. What is the difference between the Wisdom of God and the Wisdom of Man?**
- 2. How do you balance the value of human wisdom against the saving power of God’s Wisdom?**

To prepare for this lesson, you will need:

Audio/Visual	Printed Materials	Craft/Activity Materials
Computer, tablet, or phone to display: (Optional) “The 12 Lessons of 1 Corinthians” song and lyrics	Bibles (preferably the Orthodox Study Bible [OSB] or a New King James Version) Which Saint Is It? matching worksheet, one per student Which Saint Is It? answer key, one copy (Optional) What is Real Wisdom? worksheet, one per student (Optional) What is Real Wisdom? answer key, one copy	Cell phone. Pens and pencils.

Opening Prayer:

Open with prayer. Suggestions include **The Lord’s Prayer** or the **Prayer Before Reading Scripture**.
 “Illumine our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Your gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Your blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto You. For You are the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto You we ascribe glory, together with Your Father, Who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Opening Activity: (5 minutes)

Open the discussion with this question.

Ask:

1. How long do you think it would take to manufacture a cell phone from raw materials to a finished factory product?

Display your cell/mobile phone in front of the class and repeat the question. You may have to prompt or make suggestions, but you want them to come up with a timeline from when the metals were mined, the mined materials shipped to production plants, parts manufactured, parts shipped to an assembly plant, product or cell phone assembled and finished. Of course, without looking it up, we can’t know for sure how long that timeline would be on one specific phone, but ask them to guess. One month? Three months? One year? Any of these answers could be correct.

2. How did you come to this conclusion? (Answers could include: I have learned in school, an article or book I read, logical thinking, and so forth.)

Point out that their conclusions are based on the wisdom or knowledge of the world. This could be termed empirical

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knowledge (which is science) or academic knowledge (which is math, logic, and philosophy).

Ask:

1. What if I told you God made this particular phone; how long would it take Him? (Hopefully, you won't have to prompt an answer, although you may have to hint at it. The answer given by the class will hopefully be things like:
 - In a moment.
 - In an instant.
 - On whatever timeline He chooses, God can do anything.)
2. How did you come to that conclusion? (Of course, the answer is faith, belief in God.)

Point out that faith and belief in God comes by being enlightened by the Holy Spirit. It is not blind faith, it is not foolishness, it is the Wisdom of God which comes through knowing Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Instruction: (15-20 minutes)

Note: Prior to class, carefully read all of 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 so that you are very familiar with the text and able to introduce the lesson as well as summarize sections from the text that may not be read during the lesson.

A. Initial part of the lesson

Distribute Bibles and introduce Lesson 2, where we begin to look at the text of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, specifically Chapters 1 and 2 as Paul begins to address some of the issues that have arisen in the Church at Corinth.

In Chapter 1, we see that these divisions are rooted in intellectual pride. These divisions are dividing the church around different opinions and teachers. Culturally, Corinth prided itself for its intellectual discourse, a discourse that relied on earthly wisdom, the wisdom of the world, or as Paul calls it, the wisdom of the flesh. Paul wants the faithful in Corinth to adhere to and embrace his original teaching. It is the proclamation of the cross of Christ, Christ crucified, Christ risen from the dead.

Believing that salvation and the Wisdom of God comes from death and resurrection made no sense to the Jews or the Greeks of Corinth; nevertheless, Paul proclaimed this truth as the Wisdom and Power of God.

Review Lesson 1, the introduction to First Corinthians:

- Point out that Paul was the Apostle and founder of the Church in Corinth. As such, he had the authority to address their divisions, their pride, and their drift from the gospel which he had preached to them.
- Read again 1 Corinthians 1:1-2.

Summarize 1 Corinthians 1:3-9:

- Paul prepares them to hear his admonition and correction by “battering them up,” so to speak; reminding them that they have been given the grace of God, wisdom, knowledge, and a good testimony or witness in Corinth.
- It is a good practice, when correcting someone, to say something good about them as well.

Continue by summarizing 1 Corinthians 1:10-18:

- Paul is letting them know in no uncertain terms that he wants there to be “no divisions” among them.
- The theological camps that have developed in the Church around different teachers, church leaders, and opinions is at the root of these divisions, and the Faithful are taking pride in the camps they identify with.
- In many ways, this intellectual pride (my point of view is better than your point of view) is at the root of all the problems addressed through this epistle. Paul identifies that some segments in the Corinth Church have

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decided that they are wiser and more spiritual than others in the Church, so they feel superior and think they have license to not follow all of the teachings and practices that Paul had laid out when they first believed.

Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Explain:

- The gospel message which Paul preached was pleasing to God because it required faith and illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- No amount of intellectual ability would, in the final analysis, bring a person to belief in Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. That death and crucifixion is the path to heaven made no sense to the Jews or the Greeks, both of whom were relying on their own intellects.

To reinforce these points, ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 2:13.

It is the Holy Spirit that illumines the mind and reveals wisdom to us.

Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 1:20-31.

This key passage is challenging the Faithful not to concern themselves with the criticism of the Jews or the mockery of the Greeks. They cannot understand how Christ could bring about life through death, yet Paul stands firmly on his preaching, “We preach Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) crucified.”

Paul is calling the Faithful of Corinth to stand firm, to stand with him on this truth. Why? Because Christ is risen from the dead and He has trampled down death by death. Paul knew this personally because he had encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, heard His voice, and was blinded by His Holy Light. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul believed. (Acts 9:1-9)

Ask a student to read 1 Corinthians 2:13-16.

Summarize the preceding verses:

- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 reflects that Paul didn’t get caught up with intellectual prowess, eloquent speech, and philosophical rhetoric; rather, he preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 2:6-12 teaches us that Paul’s words are received by those who are spiritually mature. His gospel delivers the wisdom of God “in a mystery.” The mystery is a mystery of faith and true belief, not the result of some rational thought process.

The main point here is that Paul is making it clear in verses 13-16 that he is not teaching “man’s wisdom,” but is presenting that “which the Holy Spirit teaches.” It doesn’t matter what the world thinks or how they judge the gospel, because those who believe have “the mind of Christ.”

B. Second part

Ask:

1. What is the difference between the Wisdom of God and the Wisdom of Man? (Comments and answers you are looking for include:

- The Wisdom of God is found by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The wisdom of the world is limited to what we can know through empirical and academic knowledge.

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- The Wisdom of God allows us to see possibilities, believe in miracles, and find the way of salvation. The wisdom of the world inhibits our ability to believe in God, our need for God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and so forth. This is mostly because of sin, our separation from God, and not possessing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- The Wisdom of God brings about unity, community, and communion. The wisdom of the world brings about division, factitiousness, and separation from true communion.
- The Wisdom of God is personified in Jesus Christ, Whom the scripture calls the Wisdom of the Father.)

2. How do you balance the value of human wisdom against the saving power of God's Wisdom? (Comments and answers you are looking for include:

- Balancing one's growth in earthly wisdom and our growth in Christian Wisdom can be difficult. The wisdom of the world is not all bad, much of it is actually good and helpful as we live our life in this world. As Christians, however, we also are living our lives in the kingdom of God, where spiritual growth, Godly wisdom, and true faith become certainty and spiritual wisdom.
- We have to balance education, reading, and academic growth with educating ourselves in the faith, prayer, worship, participation in the sacraments, Christian love, and humility.)

St. Paul, in chapters 1 and 2, carefully reminds the faithful that they are in Christ; they have been given grace, wisdom, knowledge, and are a testimony for the truth. Because of this, they must avoid divisions and adhere to the gospel which he preached from the beginning.

The gospel centered on the cross, Christ crucified, the resurrection, and His sacrifice for our salvation. For unbelievers with intellectual pride, this was a hard teaching, but for those who had received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, this teaching was the Wisdom and Power of God.

Closing Activity: (5-10 minutes)

Distribute the Which Saint Is It? worksheets and pens. Students will compare the lives of St. John Chrysostom (Patriarch of Constantinople) and St. Olga (of Alaska). After giving a brief amount of time to complete the worksheet, ask, “What did these two saints have in common?”

Point out that, despite their very different backgrounds, particularly in terms of education, opportunity, and influence, they are both revered as saints because they each possessed the Wisdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Optional: Review the 12 Lessons of 1 Corinthians song for Lesson 1; add Lesson 2.

To extend this lesson for additional time...

Additional activity ideas:

1. *What is Real Wisdom? worksheet.* Students will complete the worksheet to reinforce the lesson. Turn this into a game by setting a timer or forming teams. Refer to the Answer Key when everyone is finished and review the answers together.

Background Resources for Teachers:

- Teachers may find General Teaching Strategies and Classroom Considerations included in the back of this packet to be a beneficial resource while preparing for this lesson.
- Teachers are encouraged to read Chapters 1 and 2 of 1 Corinthians in the *Orthodox Study Bible*, paying special attention to the footnotes.
- Fr. Stephen De Young discusses Chapters 1-2 of 1 Corinthians in the Whole Counsel of God podcast:

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[1 Corinthians, Chapter 1 | Ancient Faith Ministries](#)



[1 Corinthians, Chapter 1, Continued | Ancient Faith Ministries](#)



[1 Corinthians Chapter 2 | Ancient Faith Ministries](#)



[1 Corinthians, Chapter 2 and 3 | Ancient Faith Ministries](#)



What is Real Wisdom?

The Wisdom of This World is Not the Wisdom of God!

1. St. Paul is addressing many things in First Corinthians. At the start of his letter, he begins by letting them know how _____ he is for the grace of God which has been given them, their knowledge of God, their spiritual gifts, and their testimony or witness for Christ in Corinth.
2. St. Paul, in Chapter 1, pleads with them that there be no _____ in their community, the community of the Church in Corinth.
3. St. Paul reminds them that their _____ lies in the message of the gospel which he preached. This message is centered on the _____ of Christ. He says we preach Christ _____.
4. St. Paul states that the message of Christ's death, by means of the cross, was a _____ for the Jews, and _____ to the Greeks.
5. St. Paul reminds the faithful in Corinth that the gospel of Christ is believed by those who are wise in God by the power of the Holy Spirit; it is not believed by many who are only _____ in the flesh (those who possess the wisdom of the world), not believed by many who are _____ (the rulers of the world), and not believed by many who are _____ (those respected for their worldly wisdom and knowledge).
6. St. Paul says at the end of chapter one of First Corinthians that Christ Jesus has become for us, "_____ from God."
7. In Chapter 2, St. Paul reminds us that God's truth about our salvation and the *"things He has prepared for those who love Him"* has been revealed to us by the _____.

What is Real Wisdom?

The Wisdom of This World is Not the Wisdom of God!

Answer Key

1. thankful
2. divisions
3. wisdom (or knowledge), cross, crucified
4. stumbling block, foolishness
5. wise, mighty, noble
6. Wisdom
7. Holy Spirit

Which Saint Is It?

Draw a line from the Saints' names to facts about their life.

	Raised by a prominent and influential mother with a Father who was a high-ranking military officer. Persecuted by the rulers of the Byzantine Empire; died in exile. Had thirteen children.
St. John Chrysostom	Lived in a remote area with little surrounding population or opportunities for education, personal position, or gain. Possessed the Wisdom of God and by the Power of the Holy Spirit; canonized a saint.
St. Olga (modern saint recently canonized)	Came from a poor family, but gave generously to those who were poorer, often giving away their children's clothes to the needy. Educated in Greek Philosophy, Classical Greek, Greek and Roman Law under the most famous pagan rhetorician of his time, Libanius. Native of Yupik origin. Held high position in the Church of the Capitol City of the Byzantine Empire.

Which Saint Is It?

Answer Key



