

## **Introduction**

I'd like to begin this first sermon in the *Mind of Christ* series by asking you a question. What are the ten most important things that you know? If you thoughtfully made a list of those, I wonder what they'd be? I've actually done that. I don't have time to share all ten but I will share the first. God exists and is as the Bible reveals Him to be.

That introduces us to the first essential characteristic of the mind of Christ. It's informed and that's what I'm preaching about today. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 2:6-10, 14-16.

## **What Information Is**

Let's start with what information is. It's the facts of reality. It's the things that are so. Consider the following. You'll eat 80,000 pounds of food in your lifetime – if you haven't already. The earth's rotation slows down two thousandths of a second every 100 years. Most people start showing aging at age 40. And the Empire State Building has 1860 steps from street level to the observation platform. That data illustrates what information is. It's the facts of reality. It's the things that are so.

Now, some information is obviously more important to us than other information is. By more important, I mean knowing it impacts our persons and lives more dramatically. How many of you knew the four pieces of information I just gave you? None of you did. How many of you have gotten along just fine without knowing them? All of you. Here's a fifth piece. This past week, my dental hygienist explained that brushing hard sideways over and over again causes grooves in our teeth that can eventually become cavities. Let me ask you a question in that regard. Knowing which piece of information would make the greater difference in your life? Unless you're trying to decide whether to take the stairs or elevator to the top of the Empire State Building, it's the fifth. It's true. Some information is more important to us than other information is.

## What Information Does

Now that we know what information is, let's examine what it does.

Look at verse 8 in that regard. Paul mentions "the rulers of this age." They are the Roman and Jewish leaders who crucified Jesus. Paul explains why they did. It's because they didn't understand God's wisdom. Specifically, they didn't know Jesus is "the Lord of Glory," meaning the worthiest of all. Notice the causal connection here. Cause - they didn't know that Jesus is "the Lord of Glory." Effect - they crucified Him. If they had known, Paul implies, then they wouldn't have crucified Him.

That shows what information does. It provides the framework for making and carrying out decisions. We choose to do things, in other words, upon the basis of what we know is so. I now know that brushing my teeth a certain way cause grooves. So, I made and am carrying out the decision not to brush them that way. The information the hygienist gave me provided the framework for deciding that.

What information does reveals two grave dangers in life. The first is lack of information. We don't know what is so. We saw in verse 8 that was the problem of those who crucified Jesus. They lacked information. They didn't know what is so, that He is the Lord of Glory.

There's an old saying that "What we don't know won't hurt us." But as verse 8 shows, that's wrong. The truth is that what we don't know usually will hurt us. When I went to college, my t-shirts and dress shirts were as white as snow but by the time I went home for Christmas break they were as dingy as dust. My mom then told me something I didn't know. Washing whites and darks together makes the whites dark.

I learned the hard way. Lack of information will hurt or, if it's important enough, even destroy us. As God Himself declares in Hosea 4:16, "**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.**"

A second grave danger in life is misinformation. We think something is so but it isn't. What we think is so but isn't can hurt or even destroy us. A secularist once told me that he's going to heaven and explained why. "**God is love,**" he said. He, like many people apart from

Jesus, thinks that God's love consumes all of His other qualities including His justice and wrath. They think that He acts only in His love when they die. But that isn't so. They're misinformed and in this case, it's fatal.

You now know what information does. It provides the framework for making decisions. Consequently, being informed favors making good decisions. But being uninformed or misinformed favors making bad decisions.

### **Examine All Things**

That makes our calling clear. Be informed. If we want to live abundantly and well, we have to be sufficiently and correctly informed.

Paul tells us how to be just that in verses 14 and 15. It's by "appraising" things. The Greek word translated "appraise" means "to scrutinize" or "to examine." It means to analyze something. We analyze something by doing two things. First, we identify its details. And second, we determine the implications of those details. That, in essence, is how we get informed. We examine or analyze things.

What things? Paul tells us in verse 15. It's "all things." That means everyday things like nature, activities, events, processes, human behavior, institutions, objects, cultural artifacts, and more. All those things are sources of good information about important matters in life. So, we need to examine them.

When I was practicing law, I had a client whose ex-wife's husband was trying to adopt his two children. He called me the day before the hearing and told me he had just gotten laid off at work. **"I'm nothing but a loser,"** he said, **"And besides, the judge is going to give my kids to him anyway."** He was feeling so badly about things by then that he decided not to defend the case and didn't show up the next day at the hearing. A week after the magistrate approved the adoption though, he called me up and asked me to appeal it. He regretted not showing up, he said, and wanted his kids back.

I didn't just experience my client's behavior. I also examined it.

I identified its details and determined their implications. Detail - he wasn't "nothing but a loser" and the magistrate might very well have ruled in his favor. Implication - the first inclination of hurting people is to exaggerate the tragic element of their situation. Things are rarely as bad as they first think they are. Detail - he decided not to show up because of the way he felt but he felt differently the next week. Implication - feelings often aren't rooted in reality and thus shouldn't be the basis of the decisions we make. We should decide with our heads not our hearts. Those are two of the most important pieces of information I've ever learned. I've applied them beneficially to others and me many times over the years.

Notice what I did. I examined or analyzed an everyday thing, human behavior. I identified its details and determined their implications. Most people don't do that. They go through life just experiencing things. But we have to examine them as well if we want to be informed.

We don't always have to do it ourselves though. Other people also examine things and sometimes speak or write what they know as a result. So, we study what they speak and write. There's another piece of information I know about feelings. They're evoked by thoughts and thus can be reasoned with. I didn't get that information from my own examination. I got it from Dallas Willard's. I read it in his book *Renovation of the Heart*. Knowing and applying that information has dramatically improved my life, which makes me realize this. All of us need to choose good masters or teachers from whom to learn.

Anyway, that's how we get informed. We examine "all things."

### **Examine Revealed Things**

Those "all things" of course include what God Himself reveals to us. In verses 6-8, Paul writes about "**the hidden wisdom . . . not of this age.**" Then in verse 9, he writes about "**things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man.**" His point is that some information isn't discovered. It's

revealed. Who reveals it? The Holy Spirit does, verse 10 says – in the Bible. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible and discloses things in it that human beings can't discover on their own.

Examples abound. Take life after death, for instance. A survey asked 1000 people the one thing more than any other they'd like to know. The most given answer was what happens to us after we die. John 5:28-30 tells us. We'll be resurrected and live forever in either heaven or hell. No human being could discover that. It had to be revealed and was. Or take the condition of life sought for by human beings down through the ages. Everyone, including the most brilliant psychologists and sociologists, want to know where it's found. John 10:10 tells us – in, and only in, a quietly transforming friendship with Jesus. No human being could discover that. It had to be revealed and was.

You get the idea. Some information couldn't be discovered. It had to be revealed and was – by the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

And you know what? That revealed information is the most important of all. I told you that I made a list of the ten most important things I know. Not one of the ten was discovered. Each of the ten was revealed – by the Holy Spirit in the Bible. According to *U.S. News and Report* magazine, Princeton is the top university in the United States. Suppose that you that graduate from there with a degree in Medicine, Business, Engineering, or Law. The 10 things on my list are far more important than all the information you will have learned at Princeton put together. Or as I've said it many times before, the Bible gives us the best information about the most important matters in human life.

It only makes sense therefore that we have to know it in order to live well. And that the only way we can know it is to examine it. That means to study it. If you and I want to live well, we have to know the Bible. And to know the Bible, we have to study it.

I explained in detail how to do that during our *Word of God Month* in June. Remember what I told you. First, see the forest. Get a general overview of the Bible. I gave you three handouts in that regard, copies

of which are on the table in the narthex by the hallway. Seeing the forest enables you to do the second thing – see the trees. The first step in seeing the trees is to learn how to interpret and apply the Bible. I’m beginning a Sunday school class in December titled *Wordworms* that will teach you just that. The second step is then to actually interpret and apply the words, sentences, and paragraphs that make it up. A good Bible commentary, like *The Tyndale* series, will assist you in doing that.

If you faithfully study the Bible, you will know the best information about the most important matters in human life, which will provide the framework you need for making and carrying out the best decisions, which will cause you to live abundantly and well.

## **Conclusion**

You can do that though only if you’re spiritual. Paul mentions two kinds of people in verses 14-16: the natural and the spiritual.

Natural people are those who have made and carried out the decision not to follow Jesus. Paul explains the consequence of that in verses 8 and 14. They can’t understand the revealed things. Those things in fact are “foolishness” to them. Chris Matthews from *Hardball*, for instance, was mocking Sarah Palin for her Biblical beliefs. He declared, his voice laced with sarcasm, that if McCain and she are elected, they’ll probably start teaching things like creation in public schools. **“Imagine that,”** he derisively said. That revealed thing, he thinks, is dangerous and absurd.

My heart grieves for natural people like Matthews. Satan and their own disposition to sin have blinded their minds. They’re uninformed and misinformed about the most important matters in life.

But it’s different for spiritual people. Spiritual people are those who have made and carried out the decision to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit is in them because they have and empowers them to know and understand the revealed things. So, make and carry out the decision to follow Jesus. Also examine all things, especially the revealed ones. Your mind will eventually be like the mind of Jesus if you do – informed.