

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read I Corinthians 1:18-25 aloud.

1. This passage talks about two groups of people who have a hard time embracing the story of Jesus. Who are these two groups? Verse 23 says the cross is “scandalous” to Jews and “moronic” to Gentiles. The Greek text uses the words “scandal” and “moron.”

Why did ancient Jews struggle to believe in Jesus? What was the scandal associated with Jesus?

Rejected by Jewish leaders.

Died as a criminal.

Scripture (Gal. 3:13-14) calls crucifixion a curse from God.

Did not rebuild the Jewish nation, as they expected.

The difficulty of believing the resurrection – dead people don’t come back.

In our society, what punishment compares to the cross? What would think of a friend who idolized a person who died that way?

2. For the Greeks, how would the story of Jesus be a problem? *Many of the same struggles as the Jews, plus they had a view that gods towered over humans, not served them. How crazy is it to think of a God who dies in order to fix mistakes made by humans?*

How does Jesus compare to Greek gods?

Greek gods occasionally took on flesh, but it was temporary and for personal gain (e.g., Zeus wanting to sleep with an attractive woman). They did not love humans, but saw us as pawns. They would never make a sacrifice for the good of humanity.

3. Why do people struggle to embrace the story of Jesus today? *Avoid the useless “America is so wicked” discussion. There are valid reasons that honest and thoughtful people find it hard to believe in Jesus...*

- *Did he really exist? Did he really do those things the Bible says he did, or did his followers embellish the stories?*
- *How do you know he rose from the dead? That doesn’t happen.*
- *Following Jesus would call me to make changes in my life.*

How could we respond to such questions with the spirit of Jesus? *Tell them to quit being stubborn or they will go to Hell. [NOT!]*

What are some ways that Christians make it hard for others to believe in Jesus?

- *If the story of Jesus is true, why do Christians exhibit the same values, attitudes, actions, and problems as non-Christians?*
- *Jesus was loving and accepting, so why are his followers angry, judgmental, and argumentative? Why do Christians love money and ignore the poor?*

4. Why do you follow Jesus, in spite of the objections?

How has living for Jesus caused you to appear foolish? Which of your choices could be called foolish?

Giving away your money, denying yourself pleasures, living with integrity when it costs you, investing in worship, serving and ministry.

5. The cross appears foolish or scandalous to outsiders. How does the cross help you?

How does the cross show the power and the wisdom of God (24)?

How does the cross show the love of God?

How does the cross help you face suffering or injustice?

How does the cross help you deal with weaknesses?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What is one way you could let the cross re-shape your life?

- a. Relationships.
- b. Decisions about work or money.
- c. An attitude or belief that is not like Jesus.
- d. How I am using (or not using) my free time.

Resources

Bible notes

- If you want to dig a little deeper to see why the cross was offensive to the Jews, go to Galatians 3:13-14. Deuteronomy 21:23 says that anyone who is hung on a tree is cursed – how could the messiah be cursed? Gal. 3:13-14 explains that Jesus took on that curse so that we might avoid our curse of sin.
- Some of the translations use the word Greeks, others use the term Gentiles. What I Cor. 1 is pointing out is the Jews and non-Jews have trouble embracing the cross.

Prayer ideas

Invite the group to meditate on the cross. Start with silent prayer, then read Matthew 27:27-54 aloud. Allow more time for silent prayer. Close with a song like “When I survey the wondrous cross” or “Amazing Love.”

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

This one is heavy but the kids may surprise you with insight you would not expect, so give it a try.

When have you known someone who died? What was that like?

Read Philippians 2:5-8 aloud

Why did Jesus die on the cross?

How did his death affect us?

Act or Art (ask the kids to do art or a skit): What is a situation where it might be hard to serve another person but you do it anyway?



September 28, 2008

LIFE Group Guide

I Corinthians 1 – Challenges to following Jesus

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **Obstacles to following Jesus, and why we follow him anyway.**

Steve Flatt will be our guest speaker, and his message is “The foolishness of the Cross,” based on I Corinthians 1. This is a rich and powerful passage. It will bless your group to consider it.

There are legitimate reasons that people struggle to believe in Jesus, and some of them have been a challenge for 2000 years. We do not dismiss these challenges to faith, because some of us have wrestled with them. But God has led us through the struggles to faith. Pray that we will live in such a way that others will see Jesus living in us.

Leadership tip: The most important part of being a Christian leader is your heart. You can learn techniques for leading a group, but God can not make full use of your gifts unless you give yourself to him completely. Take time for daily prayer and surround yourself with good influences.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ Which Georgia Bulldog should win the Heisman this year?
- ❖ A memorable moment with a cat was...
- ❖ Who eats the leftovers at your place?
- ❖ What is something you know about the ancient Greek gods? *You studied them in high school, and you watched Hercules.*