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Learning from God's Foolishness

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?...For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth...It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:20, 25-26; 30-31 NIV)

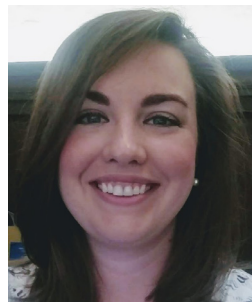
It's back to school time, one of my favorite seasons of the year. I enjoy this special time of the year when we celebrate learning and the potential for growth in knowledge. As a Christian instruction librarian, however, the season comes with its pitfalls. Self-assured and self-reliant, I flit between classrooms flaunting the ease of using online resources, seamlessly showcasing research skills to students and faculty. Inevitably, thank you notes full of profuse praise follow my visit, which I store in an "atta girl" folder in my email. I don't claim to have all the answers, but, in a shallow attempt to earn their trust, I sure act like I do when I want to impress faculty and students with my capabilities.

It's easy to over-value the praise and attention from the intellectuals of this world. Our desire for their attention makes us boastful of our abilities. If we happen to gain momentary praise, we might ignore giving glory to God

for those gifts. Sometimes, our over-emphasis on worldly wisdom causes us to ignore critiques or ideas from those whom we perceive as not wise, influential, or of "noble birth"—those co-workers, faculty, or students without "expertise" or the "right" credentials.

To cherish our worldly knowledge over the wisdom of God is pure foolishness. We are weakest when we try to earn earthly accolades for our abilities without giving praise to our Creator who gave us our gifts. Paul encourages us to turn from prizing worldly wisdom over the wisdom that comes through faith in Christ Jesus. Through humility—of which Jesus was the perfect exemplar—we have the only wisdom that matters. Better than gaining knowledge that will make us celebrated in this world, the voice of God through this Scripture from 1 Corinthians directs us to cherish the embodiment of true wisdom and strength—our Savior. The knowledge of Christ's redemptive grace is the only wisdom we hold of which we should boast. We are given many blessings and opportunities for learning and sharing our knowledge with others. In boasting not of our own abilities, but in our true wisdom of Jesus, we will be the wisest of all. Let's go into the world and teach others exactly that.

—Rachel B. Dankert



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