

GOD USES ORDINARY PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 1:10-31

Introduction

[From Illy]... YOU ARE NOT A NOBODY!

Chuck Swindoll has a challenge for you: "Pull a sheet of scratch paper out of your memory bank and see how well you do with the following questions:

1. Who taught Martin Luther his theology and inspired his translation of the New Testament?
2. Who visited Dwight L. Moody at the shoe store where he worked and spoke to him about Christ?
3. Who was the elderly woman who prayed faithfully for Billy Graham for over 20 years?
4. Who financed William Carey's ministry in India?
5. Who found the Dead Sea Scrolls?
6. Who followed Hudson Taylor as head of the China Inland Mission and gave it remarkable vision and direction?
7. Who disciplined George Mueller and snatched him as a young man from a sinful lifestyle?

"Before you excuse your inability to answer the questions by calling the quiz 'trivia,' better stop and think. Had it not been for those unknown people--those 'nobodies'--a huge chunk of church history would be missing, and a lot of lives would have been untouched.

God uses "nobodies" to accomplish great things for him.

In Corinth we have a church which was divided because they were focused on the importance of the people they were following. Look at vv. 10-13 – go through briefly...

[From Illy]... "LOOKING UNTO JESUS"

Lyman Beecher Stowe tells how on one occasion Thomas K. Beecher substituted for his famous brother Henry Ward Beecher at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York. Many curiosity seekers had come to hear the renowned Henry Beecher speak. Therefore, when Thomas Beecher appeared in the pulpit instead, some of the people got up and started for the doors. Sensing that they were disappointed because he was substituting for his brother, Thomas Beecher raised his hand for silence and announced, "All those who came here this morning to worship Henry Ward

Beecher may withdraw from the church; all who came to worship God may remain."

What was Paul's attitude toward this emphasis of the importance of their human leaders? First, he urges them to solve their conflicts – vv. 10-17. But then, in the following section he begins to teach a principle which, if properly understood, would soon do away with this bickering over the various leaders they were holding up.

I believe that the principle is actually outlined in the heading that is in the NIV & ESV – "Christ the Wisdom and Power of God" – you see, the focus of our message must be Christ and the focus of our adulation and worship must be Christ. Paul makes both of these points as he shows us the foolishness of going after human wisdom.

God Uses a Simple Message – vv. 18-25

- A. The message is the cross, v. 18 – foolishness to those who are perishing, but the power of God to those who believe.
- B. The wisdom is from God, not man, v. 20 – God is not impressed by the brilliance of a scholar, but by the heart that is in tune with Him.
[From Illy]... ON HIS KNEES
When Dr. Harry Ironside was a young preacher, he visited the aged Alexander Fraser. His heart was warmed and moved as this saintly man talked of the deep truths of Scripture. When Ironside could restrain himself no longer, he asked Fraser, "Where did you learn these things?" "In a little sod cottage in the north of Ireland," was the reply. "There, with my Bible open before me, I would kneel for hours at a time and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to my soul and open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I could have learned in all the colleges and seminaries in the world."
- C. The means to salvation is the preaching of the Word, v. 21 – the foolishness of preaching. God's ways are incredible – that He would take a simple farm boy like me and use me to preach the life-changing word of God, but that's the way God does things.
- D. The message is the cross, v. 23-24 – Paul repeats the truth that the message is centered in Christ's death on the cross. It is not a complicated message. It is so simple and yet because of that simplicity people stumble over it.

God uses a simple message – for one simple reason – so that anyone can receive it. You don't need a college degree to understand the message of salvation. You don't have to be a genius to know Jesus. The problem is that sometimes we clutter up the message with all kinds of other things.

[From Illy]... WORTH KNOWING

J. C. Massee told of a friend who traveled a great distance for an interview with a distinguished scholar. When the man arrived, he received a cordial welcome. Before being seated, he said to his host, "Doctor, I notice that the walls of your study are lined with books from the ceiling to the floor. No doubt you have read them all. I know you have written many yourself. You have traveled extensively, and doubtless you've had the privilege of conversing with some of the world's wisest men--its leaders of thought, its creators of opinion. I have come a long way to ask you just one question. Tell me, of all you've learned, what is the one thing most worth knowing?" Putting his hand on his guest's shoulder, the scholar replied with emotion in his voice, "My dear sir, of all the things I have learned, only two are really worth knowing. The first is, I am a great sinner, and the second, Jesus Christ is a great Savior!"

God Uses Ordinary People – vv. 26-31

Go through vv. 26-31

- not many wise, powerful or noble
 - He uses the foolish things to shame the wise
 - He uses the lowly to bring down the important
- God is not concerned with intelligence but with the heart.

[From Illy]... SIMPLE IN MIND BUT USED OF GOD

Homer Rodeheaver, the well-known composer and song leader, said that while he was affiliated with Evangelist Billy Sunday, he participated in a campaign where a mentally retarded boy came to sing each night in the choir. "Joey was not very bright," said Rodeheaver, "but he never missed any of our meetings and wouldn't leave until he shook my hand. Sometimes I was rather embarrassed by the way he constantly hovered around me, and I secretly wished he would discontinue the practice. Then one evening a man came with a warm handshake, saying, 'I want to thank you for being kind to my son Joey. He's not right mentally, but never has he

enjoyed anything so much as singing in the choir. He worked hard during the day doing simple chores for people so he could contribute to the collection. Through his pleadings my wife and my five other children came to this evangelistic campaign and have now received Christ. Last night his 75-year-old grandfather, who has been an atheist all his life, was saved, and tonight his grandmother also came forward. Now our entire family is converted!" Rodeheaver admits that he felt rebuked that he had been annoyed by the presence of the boy. He realized once again that God often chooses "the weak things" to accomplish His greatest miracles.

Sometimes we forget that God uses the simple things – He uses ordinary people to accomplish his work. Why?

1. So that we cannot boast. We are only the instrument that the Master uses.

[From Illy]... IN THE MASTER'S HANDS

A renowned violinist announced before a concert that he would play one of the world's most expensive violins. His first composition was played flawlessly, and the audience was thrilled at the performance.

After taking his bows, the musician suddenly smashed the instrument, completely demolishing it. The audience was horrified—that is, until the violinist explained that he had been playing a cheap violin that he had picked up the day before at a pawn shop.

Then, picking up the expensive instrument, the virtuoso began to draw the bow across the strings. The sound was beautiful, but most people couldn't tell any difference between the music from the expensive violin and the cheap one. The quality of the instrument was secondary to the skill of the violinist.

It's something like that in our service for the Lord. The Master can take ordinary instruments like us and produce beautiful music from our lives. Our service is not so much dependent on us as it is on Him. He uses ordinary people, so that we cannot boast.

2. So that His power and wisdom will show through. That way He will get the glory – see *2 Cor. 4:7*.

Conclusion

God uses a simple message—the message of the cross. And he uses ordinary people to bring that message to sinners who need salvation.

Close with the story of John 3:16...

JOHN 3:16

In the city of Chicago, one cold, dark night, a blizzard was setting in. A little boy was selling newspapers on the corner, the people were in and out of the cold. The little boy was so cold that he wasn't trying to sell many papers.

He walked up to the policeman and said, "Mister, you wouldn't happen to know where a poor boy could find a warm place to sleep tonight would you? You see, I sleep in a box up around the corner there and down the alley and it's awful cold in there, of a night. Sure you be nice to have a warm place to stay."

The policeman looked down at the little boy and said, "You go down the street to that big white house and you knock on the door. When they come out you just say 'John 3:16' and they will let you in."

So he did, he walked up the steps to the door, and knocked on the door and a lady answered. He looked up and said, "John 3:16."

The lady said, "Come on in, Son." She took him in and she sat him down in a rocker in front of a great big old fireplace and she went off. He sat there for a while, and thought to himself, "John 3:16.... I don't understand it, but it sure makes a cold boy warm."

Later she came back and asked him "Are you hungry?"

He said, "Well, just a little. I haven't eaten in a couple of days and I guess I could stand a little bit of food."

The lady took him in the kitchen and sat him down to a table full of wonderful food. He ate and ate until he couldn't eat any more. Then he thought to himself "John 3:16.... Boy, I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a hungry boy full."

She took him upstairs to a bathroom and a huge bathtub filled with warm water and he sat there and soaked for a while. As he soaked, he thought to himself, "John 3:16...I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a dirty boy clean. You know, I've not had a bath, a real bath, in my whole life. The only bath I ever had was when I stood in front of that big old fire hydrant as they flushed it out."

The lady came in and got him, and took him to a room and tucked him into a big feather bed and pulled the covers up around his neck and kissed him goodnight and turned out the lights. As he lay in the darkness and looked out the window at the snow coming down on that cold night he thought to himself, "John 3:16.... I don't understand it, but it sure makes a tired boy rested."

The next morning she came back up and took him down again to that same big table full of food. After he ate, she took him back to that same big old rocker in front of the fireplace and she took a Bible and sat down in front of him and looked up at him and she asked, "Do you understand John 3:16?"

He said, "No, Ma'am, I don't. The first time I ever heard it was last night when the policeman told me to use it."

She opened the Bible to John 3:16, and she began to explain to him about Jesus. Right there in front of that big old fireplace, he gave his heart and life to Jesus. He sat there and thought, "John 3:16. I don't understand it, but it sure makes a lost boy feel safe."

You know, I have to confess I don't understand it either, how God would be willing to send His Son to die for me, and how Jesus would agree to do such a thing. I don't understand it either, but it sure makes life worth living!!

Author Unknown --- Submitted by G. Rios --- New Mexico

Read more at

<http://motivateus.com/john316.htm#Dxc3AOJFHxejmHXo.99>

Such a simple message, but God in his wisdom uses ordinary people like you and me to proclaim that simple message of the cross. And though it seems foolish to the world it is the power of God for salvation to those who believe.

Invitation to believe...