

People God Uses

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

In the previous passage, Paul wrote about God's wisdom through salvation as revealed in the cross, which is foolishness to the world. Now, Paul writes about God's wisdom in the kind of people He chooses to call and to use. We live in a very qualification-oriented culture. Whether buying a car, applying for a job, borrowing money, or enrolling in college, you must meet certain qualifications. What qualifications does God require in the people He uses? Paul explains in this passage. First ...

God uses ordinary people (1:26-28)

Paul begins: *For ye see your calling, brethren (1:26a)*. People are not saved because they wake up one morning and all on their own say, "I think today I'll become a Christian." No! First, God speaks to us, *calling* us to a new life. How does Jesus express this fact in John 6:44a?

God draws people through the preaching, teaching, sharing, and living of His Word. There is a human responsibility to respond, but first, there is the element of divine *calling*. But what is the basis of God's *calling*? Paul may have mentally surveyed the membership role of the church at Corinth, because he then writes *that not many of you were wise men after the flesh (1:26b)*. This means we are not required to have college or seminary degrees before God calls us to serve Him. Therefore, we don't have to be brilliant or highly-educated for God to use us.

Of those included in the list of people God uses, *not many* are *mighty (1:26c)*. This refers to people with political or financial influence. Also, most of the people God uses are not *noble (1:26d)*. This refers to those who are not in the highest social class. So, if you were born, or grew up, on the "poor side of town," no problem!

What kind of people did Jesus first call to be His twelve disciples? How are two of Jesus' most prominent disciples—Peter and John—described in Acts 4:13b?

Most often, God doesn't use wealthy or highly-educated people. We know He **can** use those kinds of people because Abraham, Job, and David were all enormously rich. Solomon was both rich and famous. Paul was highly educated. But, most often, God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Therefore, what does Paul write in 1:27a?

The word translated *foolish* (MŌROS, mo-ros') means mentally dull or slow. This description is from human perspective, not God's. You don't have to have an Ivy League degree for God to use you.

Prior to Billy Graham, the most successful evangelist in history was D. L. Moody (1837-1899). Mr. Moody was won to Christ by his Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimball. During his ministry, D. L. Moody filled the largest halls and convention centers in America and Great Britain, winning tens of thousands to Christ. He was a former shoe salesman, uneducated and often criticized for his very poor grammar. His ministry lives on today through the Moody Church and Moody Bible Institute, which he founded in Chicago.

God uses people who seem to be *foolish* in the eyes of the world. He also chooses *the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty* (1:27b). This means he chooses the powerless to shame the powerful. Rome tried to conquer the world with power and military might. They also tried to use their power to destroy the early church. Today, the church of Jesus Christ numbers in the hundreds of millions and the mighty Roman Empire is extinct. The cross of Christ has always had, and will always have, enemies. Why, according to 2 Timothy 3:12?

Paul continues by writing, God chooses *base things of the world* (1:28a). The word translated *base* (AGENĒS, ag-en-ace´) means “no genealogy” or “low born.” It refers to common, ordinary people with no impressive pedigree. They are not part of the “well-to-do” you could call them the “deplorables.”

Things which are despised (1:28b) refers to people whom the world looks down on with contempt. This includes people like Matthew, a dishonest tax collector who would be *despised* as a pimp is today. The *things which are not* (1:28c) refers to people who are viewed as nothing, such as the very poor or slaves. God uses people like these *to bring to nothing things that are* (1:28d). In other words, God uses people considered by the world to be nothing *to bring to nothing* what the world considers important.

What does the world consider important? Power, position, prestige, possessions, and pedigrees—all of which mean **nothing** in eternity without Christ! In Mark 8:36, Jesus expresses this truth with one of His most famous rhetorical questions. What is it?

You can attain all the world has to offer and still be nothing, because in the end you lose the only thing of real eternal worth—your soul. God is not looking for people with fame or fortune; He is looking for ordinary people who have faith and will allow Him to use them. Don't insult God by thinking He can't use you, because **God uses ordinary people** and ...

God uses humble people (1:29-31)

God's choice of the people He uses has nothing to do with their abilities, social status, wealth, or human achievement. God uses very ordinary people to do extraordinary things *that no flesh should glory in his presence* (1:29).

God uses people who know they do not deserve to be in His kingdom. He does so because such people know anything they accomplish is because of God's grace, love, and power. God can't stand boasting and haughtiness. Chapter six of *Proverbs* lists seven things God hates, or that are an abomination to Him.

These are the **real** seven deadly sins. The first thing in this list is found in Proverbs 6:17a. What is it?

This means eyes lifted up in arrogance. Do you think God was giving us a signal about the kind of people He uses when He chose to let His Son be born in a barn into a carpenter's, or handyman's, family? When Jesus chose His disciples, He didn't choose celebrities; He chose simple, common men.

Everybody is on the same level at the cross. There are no "luxury boxes." Socially, financially, and educationally, we are all the same in Christ, so no one might boast before Him.

To dispel any pride, Paul writes, *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus (1:30a)*. God alone makes it possible for us to be *in Christ*, or saved. It is by God's grace alone. How does Ephesians 2:8 express this truth?

Christ is made unto us wisdom from God (1:30b). In Christ, we receive God's *wisdom* to replace our own. In Christ, God's wisdom is ours for the asking (Jas. 1:5). This is because Christ is God's *wisdom* personified.

In Christ, we also receive *righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1:30c)*. The word *righteousness* refers to our right standing before God. *Sanctification* (HAGIASMOS, hag-e-as-mos') is the process of becoming holy. It refers to separation from the sinful things of the world so God can use us. *Redemption* refers to our eternal salvation.

Listen! In Christ, we **receive** God's *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. We cannot boast because we can't get any of that by ourselves. However, in Christ, we receive all four, and so much more! Therefore, paraphrasing Jeremiah 9:23-24, what does Paul write in verse 31c-d?

The reason you can only *glory* in the fact you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is because God drew you to Him and saved you by grace alone. That's the only kind of person God can use. If you want to be a person God can use, you need to know **God uses ordinary people and humble people**.