

A painting of a church with a bell tower and a cross on top. The church is surrounded by trees and a grassy area. The entire scene is overlaid with thick, dripping paint in various colors including orange, red, blue, and dark brown. The paint drips are most prominent on the left and right sides of the image.

1 Corinthians

MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST

18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved. 19 For it is written,

**I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and I will set aside the intelligence of the intelligent.**

...

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? 21 For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached.

...

22 For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. 24 Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, 25 because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

...

26 Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. 27 Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

...

28 God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, 29 so that no one may boast in his presence. 30 It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption— 31 in order that, as it is written: **Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.**

...

2:1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, announcing the mystery of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom. 2 I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

1 Corinthians

**MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST**

In 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5, Paul presents three paradoxes of the cross that reveal it as the unifying center of the church.

- 1. The Message of the Cross (1:18-25)**
- 2. The People of the Cross (1:26-31)**
- 3. The Preaching of the Cross (2:1-5)**

17...Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied of its effect. 18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18

**For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and I will set aside the intelligence of the intelligent.
(Quoting Isaiah 29:14)**

1 Corinthians 1:19

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? 21 For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached.

1 Corinthians 1:20-21

1 Corinthians

**MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST**

“The wise, the scribes, and the debaters may be applauded by society, but they have got nowhere in their relationship with God since God has made their wisdom foolish.”

– Thomas Schreiner

22 For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 1:22-23

**Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God,**

1 Corinthians 1:24

1 Corinthians

**MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST**

because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

1 Corinthians 1:25

Cross-Shaped Narratives to Live By

OTHERS-INTEREST OVER SELF-INTEREST (Phil. 2:3–4)

Cultural Narrative: Prioritize your needs, guard your comfort, look out for yourself.

Cross-Shaped Narrative: Look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others.

HUMILITY OVER HYPOCRISY (Matt. 7:5)

Cultural Narrative: Call out others' faults to secure moral high ground.

Cross-Shaped Narrative: Deal with our own sin before pointing out another's.

EAGER FORGIVENESS OVER BITTERNESS OR PAYBACK (Eph. 4:32)

**Cultural Narrative: Hold a grudge, make them pay,
protect your dignity.**

**Cross-Shaped Narrative: Forgive one another, just as
God forgave us in Christ.**

HOLINESS OVER INDULGENCE (1 Cor. 6:9–20)

Cultural Narrative: Your body is yours to do with as you please.

Cross-Shaped Narrative: You are not your own—you were bought at a price.

EDIFICATION OVER EXPRESSION (1 Cor. 12–14)

Cultural Narrative: Express yourself and seek the spotlight.

Cross-Shaped Narrative: Use your gifts to build others up.

LOVE OVER IMPRESSIVENESS (1 Cor. 13)

Cultural Narrative: Impress with ability or charisma.

Cross-Shaped Narrative: Without love, even the greatest acts are empty.

The second paradox of the cross is this: The People of the Cross. (1:26-31)

1 Corinthians

**MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST**

26 Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth.

1 Corinthians 1:26

27 Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. 28 God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, 29 so that no one may boast in his presence.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

30 It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—

1 Corinthians 1:30

“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

– Tim Keller

**in order that, as it is written: Let the one who boasts,
boast in the Lord.**

1 Corinthians 1:31

1 Corinthians

**MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST**

**The third paradox of the cross is this: The Preaching
of the Cross. (2:1-5)**

1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, announcing the mystery of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom. **2** I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

1 Corinthians

**MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST**

3 I came to you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,

1 Corinthians 2:3-4

so that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:5

1 Corinthians

MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST