

## BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

**Sermon:** “Ordinary People” from the “Call Stories” sermon series

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

### Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing about the divisions within the church and how God’s way of thinking is not like the world’s way. In these verses, Paul is appealing to the Corinthians to reject the world’s standards of wealth and boasting. While we can spend a lifetime accumulating knowledge and wealth from the world, it is useless without a personal relationship with Christ. Understanding and living out the gospel message will transcend us above the world’s values!
- In vv. 26-29, Paul writes, “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.” In other words, no amount of human effort or intellect can be a substitute for, or gloss over, Christ’s work on the cross. This is our call to faith!
- The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Paul’s threefold repetition (*chose*) is rhetorical antistrophe (repeating a phrase at the end of a line...). Paul here develops the three examples from v. 26—the wise, the powerful and the honored aristocrats.” Also, we can see similar sentiment in verse 29 to that of Jeremiah 9:23. This sets up Paul’s quoting Jeremiah 9:24 in verse 31.
- In vv. 30-31, Paul writes, “In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” Salvation is accomplished from a crucified Christ, which is revealed to humble believers, those with faith like a child, (Luke 18:17) rather than the proud, wealthy and those that cling to the world’s standard of value.

### Key take-aways from the Sermon

- This is a new sermon series called “Call Stories”, in which we are going to consider the stories of people called by God.
- Today’s Scripture passage is a letter from Paul to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a prosperous, yet morally corrupt, city in antiquity. The letter opens with Paul addressing a community with odds with one another. There was a preoccupation with power and influence, which made its way into the early church there.
- To help minister to this group, Paul draws a contrast between what the world deems wise and powerful, and what Christians deem wise and powerful.
- Imposture syndrome: feeling like we don’t belong due to our insecurities. Regardless of these feelings, God has called and chosen YOU!
- We are not saved by Christ for *what we do*...we are saved because of *who we are*!
- Paul is directing us not to deny what is good in our lives, but to claim it and proclaim God’s power in our lives. To celebrate God’s provision and power in our lives!
- We can turn any insult, or even compliment, directed toward us into a chance to praise God! Consider that some of the criticisms and insults that we have experienced are a limited understanding of who God is and who God calls, on the part of those who hurt us.
- The scope of who God will choose and call is limitless! In the text, Paul is ensuring that the Corinthians understand that God doesn’t just call the powerful and elite but looks to empower and equip all that He calls. ALL of us!
- “But what use is a religion that only produces characters in history books? Was there not room for more *ordinary glory*? Civil Rights activists inspired me, but the people who changed my life were regular members of my congregation.” Esau M.
- Each of us embody a more ordinary glory and bring the mess of our lives to the cross. We are all set apart for a particular calling!
- Ordinary glory: God has called the saints as they were and calling us today just as we are. You may not be called to worldly “greatness”, but you are called to live into your ordinary glory!

### Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- In verse 27, Paul writes of God choosing “...things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.” What does this mean? Why is this important?
- Is there any way that we can earn our salvation? If not, what must we do?
- How can we encourage and support one another to put our faith in Christ, rather than the ways of the world?
- In what areas of life do you feel a sense of “imposter syndrome”? Why? How can you overcome this?
- Consider what you sense God has called you to do. What do you think is holding you back from this call? How will you overcome this?

