



Slow Wisdom

General note: I have not suggested watching Ruth's videos as part of these studies, as I think some of the ideas she touches on very briefly will take a bit of time and effort to understand and discuss together. If anyone is interested in them, they can all be found at: baptist.org.uk/Groups/437898/Slow_Wisdom_Session.aspx

Week 1 – Experience of discernment

Purpose – to clarify the function of the Church Meeting and begin to explore how every believer can participate in discernment.

- 1) What is your experience of Church Meetings in Baptist churches? (**For clarity:** this is the meeting we tend to call the Members' Meeting, *not* the Sunday service.)
- 2) A Baptist Church Meeting is not like any other committee meeting. It is not a democratic gathering where the idea with the most votes wins. It is an opportunity for all the members of the church to collectively discern God's will.

Does that reflect your experience and expectation of Church Meetings?

- 3) What does the word 'discernment' mean?
- 4) Read 1 Corinthians 2:11-16.
Take some time to unpick the passage verse-by-verse to understand what Paul is saying. Some of it is very difficult; saying 'we don't understand this bit' is absolutely OK.

I've put a breakdown of how I understand it on the next page so you can see my process. (**Note:** the word translated 'judges' and 'judged' in v. 15 is the same Greek word that is translated 'discerned' at the end of v. 14.)

- 5) In v. 12 Paul says, "Now **we** have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that **we** might understand the things freely given us by God." Who do you think 'we' is? (See also 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Romans 8:15.)
- 6) Paul's quotation in 1 Corinthians 2:16 is from Isaiah 40, and he quotes it again in Romans 11. Read Isaiah 40:12-14 and Romans 11:33-34.
What is the answer to the questions in those passages?
- 7) In 1 Corinthians 2:16, Paul makes an astounding claim: no one can understand God's mind, and yet we – Christians – have the mind of Christ! What does it mean to you that we have the mind of Christ?
- 8) How does that change your understanding of what should be happening at the Church Meeting?

Breakdown of 1 Corinthians 2:11-16 – Jennie’s worked example

¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.	No one can understand the thoughts of any other person. And only God’s Spirit can understand God’s thoughts
¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.	But – amazingly – we have been given God’s Spirit – the Holy Spirit (HS). God gave us the HS to enable us to understand the things he, God, tells us.
¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.	We (Paul and the apostles? Or all believers?) tell others the things God tells us. We don’t do it because we’re really wise/clever, but because the HS shows us how to explain spiritual truths. (These can only be understood by ‘spiritual people’ – people who have received the HS.)
¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.	People who haven’t receive the HS can’t understand spiritual revelation. It sounds bonkers to them, because it needs to be understood by the power of the HS.
¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.	People who have received the Spirit discern/judge all things themselves, but are not discerned/judged by anyone [I’m not sure what this means – JH]
¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.	No one can understand God’s mind well enough to be able to teach him, and yet, we do have his mind (since the Lord = Christ = God). [Perhaps this sheds light on v. 15 – someone with the HS can discern things, but no one can discern/judge that person; in the same way, someone with the mind of Christ can discern things, but can’t discern/ judge Christ – maybe?]