



FOOLS

# fools

There has been a movement that began over 2,000 years ago. It was started when Jesus invested in 12 men. Then after His death and resurrection, 11 of those men unleashed this movement in the world around them and the world has never been the same since.

When you look around at the world though it is often hard to see the effects of this movement. And definitely when we read scripture we often long for and wonder why we do not see moves of God like we read about in His word. There are many reasons for this but I think that one is that we have strived to hard to be normal. We try to blend in and fit in and therefore are not standing out as a light for Christ like we have been called to.

I have thought this for a while and then believed it even more when I read how Paul described him and his fellow workmen. He called them fools. They stood out so much and lived in such contrast to the world that they did not understand. So there was no better way to describe themselves then as fools. We need more fools in the world. This is why this study is devoted to understanding what it means to be a fool and what that life looks like. Here is how the study will break down.

LESSON 1: FREE IN CHRIST

LESSON 2: ON A MISSION

LESSON 3: OPEN HEARTS AND OPEN EYES

LESSON 4: LOVING COMMUNITY

LESSON 5: SELFLESS

I hope this study will bring you as much joy and conviction as it did for me in writing it. And I hope that it will spark a movement in the lives of those who you study it with that will spread all over the world.

# fools

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In the mid 1970s two men came together and started a revolution that would not only change the world but also the way we live in it and interact with it. These two men were Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs. They founded Apple computers with the crazy vision that the computer would be something that ordinary people would use and that just about every person would own one. What is strange about this vision though is that everyone thought they were crazy. Time and again people, including those that ran the major technology companies of the day, would say, "What would ordinary people want with computers?" Well they stuck with it and not only founded a wildly successful company but also changed the world.

But there was an even greater revolution that happened 2,000 years ago. This happened when Jesus, the Son of God, came to Earth to die for our sins and show us how to live. He lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose from the dead so we can be forgiven and have a relationship with God. Along the way Jesus invested in 12 men, 11 of which would go on to lead a movement like we have never seen that completely changed the course of history. They too faced incredible opposition but were just crazy enough to believe that Jesus was who He said He was, He did what He said He'd do, and that they must be obedient to do what He commanded. And in the process the world was turned upside down and our lives have been changed.

One of the people who come along side those 11 men and join in this movement was Paul. In case you do not know who Paul is, he was formerly known as Saul and had been a leader in the Jewish church. He had devoted himself to killing Christians and ending this new movement. On his way to do just that, kill Christians, Jesus appeared to Saul in a great light and asked him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul was blinded. But in the process of meeting Jesus his life was changed. His name was changed to Paul and he would go on to spread the Gospel all over the known world, planting churches and writing most of the New Testament.

In one of these writings Paul referred to himself and others who were doing the work he was doing as “fools.” In case you do not believe me you can read it for yourself.

<sup>9</sup> FOR IT SEEMS TO ME THAT GOD HAS PUT US APOSTLES ON DISPLAY AT THE END OF THE PROCESSION, LIKE THOSE CONDEMNED TO DIE IN THE ARENA. WE HAVE BEEN MADE A SPECTACLE TO THE WHOLE UNIVERSE, TO ANGELS AS WELL AS TO HUMAN BEINGS. <sup>10</sup> WE ARE FOOLS FOR CHRIST, BUT YOU ARE SO WISE IN CHRIST! WE ARE WEAK, BUT YOU ARE STRONG! YOU ARE HONORED, WE ARE DISHONORED! <sup>11</sup> TO THIS VERY HOUR WE GO HUNGRY AND THIRSTY, WE ARE IN RAGS, WE ARE BRUTALLY TREATED, WE ARE HOMELESS. <sup>12</sup> WE WORK HARD WITH OUR OWN HANDS. WHEN WE ARE CURSED, WE BLESS; WHEN WE ARE PERSECUTED, WE ENDURE IT; <sup>13</sup> WHEN WE ARE SLANDERED, WE ANSWER KINDLY. WE HAVE BECOME THE SCUM OF THE EARTH, THE GARBAGE OF THE WORLD, RIGHT UP TO THIS MOMENT.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:9 - 11 NIV

WHAT DO YOU THINK PAUL IS SAYING IN THIS PASSAGE?

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS MORE LIKE THE APOSTLES OR LIKE THE CHURCH IN CORINTH?

At first reading of this passage I assumed Paul was jealous of the other Christians and the “good” life that they had. I thought that somehow Paul was worn out and needed a break, or had decided that the work he was doing was not worth it anymore. I mean he says that he is a fool and that the others are wise. That means the other Christians are living the right way, correct? But then I remembered how when we come to Christ things are different. That we live in complete opposite to the way the world thinks that we should live. I realized that being a fool is a good thing. What allowed me to believe this even more was reading Paul’s next letter to the Corinthians.

IF WE ARE “OUT OF OUR MIND,” AS SOME SAY, IT IS FOR GOD; IF WE ARE IN OUR RIGHT MIND, IT IS FOR YOU.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:13

Paul clearly explains that if he is out of mind, living in such a way that the world does not understand, then he is living for Christ, but if he is living in such a way that pleases men he is in his right mind and not following Christ.

Paul and the apostles were fools, and they changed the world for Christ because of it. We need more followers of Christ who are fools, because our world is in desperate need of change again.

- Your generation is more connected than any generation in history yet at the same time is more isolated. And rates of depression, suicide, and addiction continually arise because of it.
- There is more wealth and resources in the world than ever before and yet more poverty and suffering at the same time.
- At the current rate, studies show that only 4% of your generation will follow Christ.

These are not good trends. But as followers of Christ we do not see things the way they are but instead the way they could and should be. And if we become fools for Christ I believe that the latter will become more than just a dream. They will become a reality.

In the next few lessons we will dig into this idea of being fools for Christ and see exactly what that means. And to begin with we start with what any life for Christ must begin with, meeting Jesus.

#### READ ROMANS 6

##### 1. IN CHRIST WE ARE FREE.

This is the number one key to living a life as a fool for Christ. When we come to Christ we are free. Take a moment to write down the verses that say we are free in this passage. We will go into detail in a moment about how we become free and what exactly we are free from, but for now I just want it to begin to sink in that once you come to Christ you are in fact free.

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## 2. THIS FREEDOM COMES ONLY THROUGH SALVATION IN CHRIST.

### WHAT DO PEOPLE USUALLY SAY OUR FREEDOM COMES FROM?

In my experience, living in the United States, people say that freedom comes from the Bill of Rights or having the right laws in place from the government. While these are not necessarily bad things they are not true for a follower of Christ. Our freedom comes from Jesus death on the cross and resurrection. What is so great about that is our freedom cannot be taken away.

This is hard for us to grasp, living where many of us live, but it is the truth. Just look at people from other countries that live for Christ and face persecution. You never see them asking for laws to be changed or for religious freedom of any kind. They always just pray that God's name be glorified and that they get the opportunity for another day to continue the work he has called them to. This is because they truly understand that their freedom comes from following Christ and being obedient to His will. Let's begin to look at how Paul explains this to us.

Let's do things differently. Let's start at the end and then work our way back from the top. In verse 23, Paul clearly explains the Gospel and how we get our freedom. He says that the wages of sin is death. What this means is that because you and I have sinned we deserve death. That is what we have technically earned because of what we had done in this life, whether our sins were big or small. But God did not want that for us. So He sent His only son Jesus to die in our place. Because of this we have the opportunity for a free gift that we could do nothing to earn, because regardless of how many good things we do we can never get to God or freedom. But Christ made the way, through His work on the cross for us to cross over into light, life, and freedom. That's it clear and simple. But in case it is not clear yet, let's go back to the top and make sure we fully understand.

Verse 1-7: When we come to Christ we die to our old ways of living. The old person is literally gone and can never come back. So we do not have to worry about being enslaved ever again, because we have a new life and are a new creation. I cannot stress this point enough. Do not buy into the life from Satan or anyone else that you are that old person. When temptation and trials come remember that you are a new creation in Christ and you do not have to go back to your old ways of living. Baptism paints a perfect picture of this. We are lowered and our old life dies with Christ and is buried, and then we are raised to walk in newness of life.

Verses 7-14: We get life. This life is not just in Heaven but begins now. We get to live in a new way. Not the ways of the world, living in sin, but instead we get a purpose, to live like Christ. We are also free from sin. It is strange to think about but this scripture says we literally have the power to be free from sin. Will we stumble from time to time? Yes, we will never be perfect on this earth. But we can and should strive for it because in Jesus we have been given the freedom and the power to live a life we never dreamed imaginable, a life without sin. And since sin does nothing but destroy our lives and the lives of those around us, we should desperately want that life that is free from it.

Verses 15-22: We should never abuse this freedom we have been given. Yes, God's grace is limitless. Yes we can never lose our salvation. Yes when we mess up God will forgive us and restore us once again. But this is not a license for us to just go live however we want to. Because Christ gave everything for us we give everything for Him. We owe Him our all and should gladly give it. So in essence we become slaves to Christ, which is really no slavery at all. It is actual the ultimate freedom.

## BUT DO WE GET FREEDOM FROM?

### A. FREE FROM SIN.

We can see clearly in this passage that we are freed from sin. It no longer has a grip on our lives. Will we be perfect? No. But we can never buy into a lie that says that we must settle for a life of mediocrity where we are trapped in sin like everyone else. We must believe that we are free and can live for more than what the world says is possible.

### B. FREE FROM DEATH.

Remember that the gift of God is eternal life? Therefore we are free from death. Because once this life ends the next one begins. This is an incredible thing because it means nothing can stop us. Just look at Jesus. The Pharisees and Sadducees thought that if they could just kill Jesus they could kill His movement. But death couldn't stop Him and the grave could not hold Him. And it has been the same way for His followers ever since. Not even death can stop us from doing the work of God. Which brings us to our last freedom.

### C. FREE FROM FEAR.

Once we come to Christ we no longer have anything to fear. Because as scripture says, we have not been given a spirit of timidity or fear, but one of power, love, and discipline. Just take the two biggest fears in the world, public speaking and death. Jesus told His disciples that when the time came that they would be brought before the courts that they should not fear because the Holy Spirit would give them the words to say (Matthew 10:19). Notice something here. Jesus never said I will keep you from troubles and difficult times or that we would always be “safe.” But instead He said He would be with us so we have nothing to fear. Now take the second fear, death. As Christians we can say, “What can they do? Kill me? My life is not my own anyways and I have eternal life, so in a way they cannot kill me if they wanted to.”

It is crazy to think about it but it is the truth. And we get this freedom and emboldened spirit when we come to Christ. You can see this fact in the apostles. They were scared and hiding when Jesus died and then when He rose from the dead and they experienced life changed, they were never afraid again. Instead they faced the most difficult situations imaginable for the sake of making sure the Gospel was spread all over the world.

### 3. THIS FREEDOM IS NOT JUST FOR US.

All of this is great and means so much for us. This truth of the freedom we get and how we get it turns us loose to be fools for Christ and change the world around us. Which is maybe the most important thing that we need to remember. This freedom is not just for us. God so loved the world, not just our corner of it. We have to remember that Jesus did not just die for us but also for the world around us. There are others, who are like we were. They are waiting for hope and freedom and just do not know where to find it. We have a responsibility to go out to them and take this gift of eternal life and message of freedom to everyone we can.

Because any time that we see someone struggling with sin or making choices that we do not understand there is a reason. It is because there is a hole in their life that they are trying to fill with everything they can find. But what they do not realize is that the only thing that can fill that hole is a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. So when we see people making those decisions and seemingly throwing their lives away, it is not time to reject them or push them away. Instead it is time to go to them and tell them that we have what they are looking for.

SO AS WE CLOSE I HAVE TWO QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

1. DO YOU HAVE THIS FREEDOM?
2. WHO DO YOU NEED TO TAKE THIS GIFT OF FREEDOM TO?

# fools

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

## SESSION ONE

1. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS A FOOL FOR CHRIST? WHY OR WHY NOT?
2. WHAT DO YOU THINK THINGS WOULD LOOK LIKE IF WE BECAME FOOLS FOR CHRIST?
3. WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM BEING FREE?
  - A. FROM SIN?
  - B. FROM DEATH?
  - C. FROM FEAR?
4. WHO DO YOU NEED TO GO TELL ABOUT THIS GIFT OF FREEDOM?
5. TAKE SOME TIME TO WALK BACK THROUGH ROMANS 6 TO ALLOW STUDENTS TO WRESTLE WITH ANY SCRIPTURE THEY DO NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND OR TO SHARE WHAT TRUTHS JUMP OUT AT THEM.