

HOLY FOOLERY:
THE 'ONE-UPPER'
WITH SHEL BOESE

for reflection & discussion: (NT Wright, Others)

If you didn't use last week's icebreaker, use it...

Paul uses the analogy of marriage in his role with the church and God. In the Jewish world of his time most marriages were arranged by parents (still common for those of us from South Asia). Paul uses the image of a bride with cold feet after everything and everyone agreed. What is one of your favourite stories of things gone wrong at a wedding? Think about books, movies, or weddings you've attended or heard about.

1. Read the text (2 *Corinthians* 11:16-33). How is Paul playing the fool and teasing the Corinthians, but at the same making his own point (16-21)?
2. Paul is aware, in the Corinthian Letters, that the young church is in danger of being sucked into the ordinary cultural life of their city and district. The teachers have been moving that direction by recommending themselves and wallowing in a culture of fame, success, and showy rhetoric.
3. In 21-33, Paul lists accomplishments and honours that one would not expect from someone boasting. Why does he list out these experiences?
4. In ancient Rome, the corona muralis "crown of the wall" was the highest military honour given in the empire to the one who went first over an enemy's city wall. Brave courage to the point of foolish endangerment. Torture defenses awaited such a man. If surviving, the soldier had to make it back to Rome, swear and oath to truthfulness, before claiming the honour. In 11:31-33, Paul is using this practice but turning it upside down. How is he doing that?
5. Somehow the church today, like in Corinth, has to learn to stand normal cultural values on their head, to live an upside-down life (which is really the right-way up) of true followers of Jesus the Messiah. In what ways could we, individually and as a community, turn the world's values upside-down? (Think of your life. Where is it more like the world than Jesus? If you want authentic discussion, start close to home, not other's sins and conformities.)
6. If you are only ever talking about others' sins, mistakes, and struggles in home church, you are missing the power and point of your own growth and deliverance. How is Paul showing us authenticity? Why do we struggle to name our own lives before others? How easily are you distracted by judgment of others instead of judging yourself before others first?
7. What weaknesses can we boast in? How might we do this?

Pray: Spend time praising God for his upside-down gospel and that he uses our weaknesses for his purposes. Confess the tendency to boast in the things that the world admires.

Do you have a friend (or acquaintance) that always has a better story than the one you just told? They are a one-upper! Religious one-uppers look down on you and others. Their identity and power thrives on one-upping, yet they live a lie.

This Sunday, we look at one-uppers being one-upped by an ugly, awkward, and weak man. And we learn where the real power for living comes from: the downward path.

THE MAP: Outline and Opening

ONRAMP

DRIVE: Through The Text

3. Embracing Fools 2 Corinthians 11:16-21

a. Please, Embrace Me Like A Fool 11:16

- Paul, "I'm not only going to expose the character of the false apostles, I'm going to show you what character and skills really matter in the economy of God."
 - It's an upside-down Kingdom, and our cultures are always a mix. Let's not assume all good.

b. Paul Adopts a Foolish Strategy 11:17-18

- The Holy Fool is taking on the brokenness of prideful humans to show the deeper truth. Like God does in taking on Godself the violence of Israel in the Old Testament and all of us, on the Cross.

c. The Corinthians Foolish Tolerance 2 Corinthians 11:19-20

- “I’m going to enter the mess to get you to see it as a mess.”

- This is what God always does—meets us where we are at. Paul is being more like Jesus than any human trying to pretend they are perfect and polished here.
 - THIS IS CRUCIFORMITY.

- To be clear, they didn’t see the false-holiness-rules-crowd as enslaving, exploiting, taking advantage, insulting, and physically violent, but Paul is telling us that the “Jesus + leaders” are actually doing this.

d. Paul Dares to Boast –in Spite of His “Weakness”! 2 Corinthians 11:21

- “Too weak”?! “We need truth!” By which they mean: pompous, aggressive, insulting statements against others, that bind people while claiming to free them. AKA The Woes...
 - Jesus saved truth-bombs for the religious to try to break them free. He welcomed in table fellowship the notorious sinner, holiness caught over inclusion vs. shouted across the street.

4. Paul’s Countercultural “Fool’s Speech” Part 1 2 Corinthians 11:22-29

a. Introduction: Questions of Identity 11:22b-23b

- We learn more about those seeking to wrench the church to a different place than Jesus at the centre...

“BUT wait, there’s more! They claim to be better Christians because of their words, and living lives with perfect boundaries? They claim the blessing of God on their money, home, and health? Well, let me tell you the real prosperity gospel...”

b. General Characterization of Trials 1 11:23c

c. List of Specific Trials 11:24-25

d. List of Dangers 11:26

e. General Characterization of Trials 2 11:27

f. Anxiety about the Churches 11:28-29

5. Paul’s Countercultural “Fool’s Speech” Part 2 2 Corinthians 11:30-12:10

a. Midpoint Transition and an Oath 11:30-31

b. Paul’s Escape From Damascus 11:32-33

- *Corona muralis*

OFF-RAMP/FINAL DESTINATION: Take Away



connect

- need prayer?
- ask questions
- get information
- make comments
- meet with pastor Shel or Josh
- sign-up for our weekly e-newsletter
- join a Home Church