

It's Hard for Me to Understand

(James 2:1-13)

I know some people who are very intelligent and can communicate to others in all areas of life, but I know some who are very intelligent and add nothing to other people's lives – these normally run with the wrong crowd and have an unscriptural worldview. But what I have learned and experienced myself is that when life gets tuff (and it will) these types of people slowly but surely back away and look for new friends.

I think that God gets a little sick with people who feel that they are superior to others. In fact, if you were to visit the great cathedrals in Europe, you'd think the apostles were larger-than-life stained-glass saints with shining halos who represented an exalted degree of spirituality. But actually, as one writer said, "They were very, very common men."

Now if they were so very common, what qualified those men to be apostles? Well it wasn't any intrinsic ability or outstanding talent of their own – they were Galileans. They were not the elite. In fact, Galileans were considered low-class, rural, uneducated, people. They were commoners, nobodies. But those nobodies would become the preeminent leaders of the fledgling church.

The twelve were like the rest of us; they were selected from the unworthy and the unqualified. They were, like Elijah, men "with a nature like ours" (James 5:17). They did not rise to the highest usefulness because they were somehow different from us. Rather, their transformation into vessels of honor was a divine work and their incredible influence is a result of the divine message they preached.

Do you ever become discouraged and disheartened when your spiritual life and witness suffer because of personal sin or failure? We tend to think we're worthless nobodies and left to ourselves. But be encouraged – worthless nobodies are just the kind of people God uses. One scholar of the Greek language put it like this, "If you think about it, that's all [God] has to work with – worthless nobodies"

But have you ever stopped to consider why that's true? Listen to this: God chooses the humble, the lowly, the meek, and the weak so that there's never any question about the source of power when their lives change the world. It's not the man; it's the truth of God and the power of God in the man. Next time you're reading through the gospels or the book of Acts, take a few minutes to consider the work of God in the apostles. They were slow to believe, slow to understand, and had horrendous memories! Sound familiar?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, and you will find God's question and answer concerning this matter. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

That is the very reason there were no philosophers, no brilliant writers, no famous debaters, no distinguished teachers, and no men who had ever distinguished themselves as great orators among the twelve Christ chose. They became great spiritual leaders and great preachers under the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was not because of any innate oratorical skill, leadership abilities, or academic qualifications they had. Their influence is owing to one thing and one thing only: the power of the message they preached.

On a human level, the gospel was considered a foolish message and the apostles were deemed unsophisticated preachers. Their teaching was beneath the elite. They were mere fishermen and working-class nobodies. That was the assessment of their contemporaries and that has been the majority opinion of the genuine church of Christ throughout history and to this very day – note: 1 Corinthians 1:26.

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