

David Minh on the Wisdom of God vs. the Wisdom of Man

18For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written:

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

20Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

22Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Graduate students aren't really smarter than anyone else. We've just been in school for longer and when we're done we'll make less money. Perhaps that's our foolishness.

In my experience, scientists don't pick on the cross nearly as much as they pick on the creation account in Genesis. Even before I started graduate school, I attended a workshop in San Diego hosted by among others, my advisor. In the middle of talking about an enzyme, he paused and asked, "Is anyone here a creationist?" At the time I was sympathetic to intelligent design, but now I say let science inform science and let faith inform metaphysics; I don't think the exact process of how God created the universe has a large bearing on the state of mankind. Unfortunately, the fundamentalist insistence on seven twenty-four hour stages of creation in spite of much scientific evidence has given the Christian movement a black eye in the face of many scientists and other rational thinkers.

Jesus' promise in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," seems like utter foolishness in the eyes of the world. In academia, there is pressure to seek first your research. Yet, in my personal experience I find that when I seek God's kingdom first – putting time into community service and ministry, spending time with God in prayer and reading scripture, being bold in talking about Jesus, and giving a fraction of my salary to church and charity – I am happier and other things like research seem to come easily. Conversely, if I get caught up with research and career goals or anything else, it makes me nervous and unhappy no matter what objective success I have. None of these are evil in of themselves but I still need to consistently remind myself to put God first. Jesus' injunction to seek first the Kingdom runs counter to the worldly wisdom of pursuing your own goals, but I believe that it is ultimately wiser.

