

Pastor Yucan asked me to write a short testimony about the wisdom of God appearing foolish in the eyes of the world. I am a graduate student and a doctoral candidate, so I work in an environment that is filled with the world's wisdom. At times, I feel a little foolish for believing that the Bible is the literal Word of God, or in religion at all, since so much of religion and man's spiritual nature is not subject to intellectual proof, and so many of my colleagues refuse to believe in anything which their intellects cannot grasp and conquer.

I think, however, that the Bible, despite its intellectual inconsistencies and at times mystifying passages gives much more solid guidelines for how man should relate to his fellow man than all of the wisdom of the humanities and social sciences, which have been developed through much study spanning centuries.

A key area in which this is true is the arena of social analysis, which in the past forty years or so most commonly focuses on race, or class or gender and how one or more of these intrinsic features of a group is used by other human beings to oppress that same group on account of their intrinsic characteristic. While this method is very effective at exposing the injustice of one group as perpetuated against another, it is utterly incapable of devising a solution to overcome the oppression it reveals.

For example, to use an example close to me, I was taught in school about how white males have historically oppressed blacks as a group, first by enslaving them and then later by abusing them and denying them their civil rights and equality under the law. I saw that this was very likely to be true, having had encounters as a very young man with white males who called me nigger, who spit on my brother simply because of his dark skin, and who otherwise showed contempt towards myself and my brother even though they did not know us and we had done absolutely nothing to merit any ill treatment.

The solution to this dilemma, however, was for me merely to be suspicious of white males that I did not know, especially if they had a Kentucky accent like the ones who had treated me so badly. Granted, I counted many whites among my friends (almost impossible to avoid since my brother and I were almost always the only people of color in the rural Kentucky communities we lived in from the time I was ten until I finished high school), but until I was satisfied that they were not the "wrong sort" of white, I did not trust them nor did I give them any opportunities to hurt me. I grew to hate Southerners, to hate the South, and despise any traces of the Southern accent or heritage that I might see around me. To the world, this would only seem prudent.

However, what Jesus said was that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). He said that to fulfill God's commandments to us, we had to love God with all our heart, with all our spirit, with all our strength and with all our minds, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Luke 10:26-37). When asked who qualified as a neighbor, Jesus answered by telling a curious tale. A Samaritan, a member of an ethnic group considered degenerate and morally inferior to the Jews among whom Jesus was speaking, was traveling along a road and happened upon a man who had been beaten, robbed, and left essentially to die on the side of the road. While more important members of the Jewish community merely passed the man by and left him to his fate, the Samaritan, who was considered ethnically inferior to the Jewish man left on the side of the road, not only rescued the man and took him to medical care, but paid for

Testimony on God's Wisdom vs.  
the Wisdom of the World

the man's food and board while he healed, and promised to spend more if the recovery took longer than expected. This is wisdom in God's eyes, according to Jesus, and it would appear very foolish to the world. What if the Jewish man had reacted to his benefactor with embarrassment at having been rescued by his moral and spiritual inferior? What if he had spurned the gift so freely giving, or even been outwardly polite but inwardly condescending, as I have occasionally seen even among the most enlightened of people when encountering a group they find inferior? This would have devastated me, but it was not a consideration for the man in Jesus' story; this is not the way that He wanted us to think about ethnic division or questions of "superiority." Rather, what we are called to do is to love our neighbor without first counting the cost, to behave with dignity even it is neither recognized nor appreciated by those around us, and to trust God to exact vengeance or to execute justice in cases where we have no authority over our fellow human beings (Deuteronomy 32:35).

While this may seem quite foolish to the world, which seeks to punish every injustice with vengeance, this sort of foolishness is an antidote to the world's wisdom. The sort of justice that the world would promote only heightens people's awareness of their differences, and acts as a barrier to demonstrating God's love to others. If I saw a white man with the Confederate flag on his pickup truck lying next to it on the freeway, bleeding from his wounds, I might be tempted to pass him by, or even to think that it served him right to be in pain. But this is not the example that Jesus set through his life and ministry, nor the message that he conveyed to us from his Father. And worse it would leave me with a conviction in my conscience knowing that I did what was wrong to satisfy old hatreds or misperceptions. The hatred and fear that I developed as a child have long since dissipated; I lived in the South for another 11 years after I left home for college, and have grown to understand that even white males with Southern accents and strong Southern cultural traits have more in common with me than I'd ever imagined. To me, this is one of the most important examples of the wisdom of the world and how it relates to the foolishness of God.