

## INTRODUCTION

I think most of you here tonight would like to be used of God. You want to serve God. A lot of times you couple that desire with your excuse, "Well, I can't sing like Gerald Barker," or "I can't preach like Billy Graham." "I can't teach the bible like Chuck Swindoll." We have all of these excuses that we give to God.

Tonight we are going to see how God can turn nobodies into somebodies. Sometimes average, ordinary Christians like you and like me are awed by super saints. We like to hear men like Tom Landry stand up and give their testimony because he's so successful in the coaching world. A couple of years ago I had the privilege to have breakfast with him at the same table at a big Fellowship of Christian Athletes breakfast, and he stood up and shared his testimony, and you could have heard a pin drop. Everybody was listening to every word that he said. And I thank God that he can use men like Tom Landry.

But then the rest of us who haven't accomplished what he's accomplished, we look at him, and sometimes we get a little discouraged. We get a grand case of spiritual inferiority feelings, "I'm nobody." I've got good news for you tonight: God delights in using nobodies.

Several years ago, I was the camp pastor at the National Fellowship of Christian Athletes Camp at Black Mountain, North Carolina. There were several professional athletes there, and one who had just graduated from the University of Tennessee who was going to play with the Philadelphia Eagles was a guy named Reggie White, who is now called the Minister of Defense, because he is a committed Christian ordained Baptist preacher.

I really enjoyed being with Reggie for those days, he is quite a character. He got up there, all 300 pounds of him, and moonwalked across the stage and did a bible rap, going all the way from Genesis to Revelation. And those high school athletes just loved it. One night when Reggie spoke, and I spoke, and there was some other testimonies. We gave the invitation. A lot of the coaches and workers there were counseling these young high school athletes at the invitation. I was counseling with one high school athlete. I don't even remember his name or how old he was, but I do remember he had tears in his eyes and he was ready to start living for Jesus.

I suspected that something that big old strong Reggie White said had really influenced him. So I asked, "What was it that Reggie White said that really touched you?" And the guy looked at me and said, "Well it really wasn't anything that he said." He said, "It was that guy in the wheelchair that really got to me."

Earlier on the program that night we had had the testimony from a young man who had been injured playing high school football and was paralyzed and in a wheelchair. Yet he was working as a trainer on a college football team. And he shared his testimony. And this healthy, strong high school athlete said to me, "It was that guy in the wheelchair that really got to me."

That's just the way God works. Sometimes God will overlook a big 300-pound professional

football player, and he'll use a guy in a wheelchair instead. Tonight, we're going to see the kind of people that God delights to use in his ministry.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31. "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

I want to talk to you about the kind of people God can use. I thank God for every Tom Landry and Reggie White who stands up and gives a testimony for Jesus Christ. But instead of being intimidated by those kind of people, you need to be encouraged to understand that those people are the exception to the rule. God wants to use common, ordinary people just like you and like me.

## **I. GOD'S PLAIN PEOPLE**

Let's consider God's plain people, the kind of people God chooses. Paul makes an amazing statement. "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth." (vs. 26) Paul is writing about the foolishness of the preaching of the cross.

Here is the amazing thing: God has chosen a message that to the world is pure foolishness. Not only does he use a foolish message, he chooses feeble messengers. You take this foolish message and feeble messengers, and put it together, and the power of God is released. You think he'd do just the opposite, that He'd get the brightest, smartest, most gifted, most athletic, strongest people on earth to serve Him. But that's not what this says.

Verse 26 says not many of you are wise. That word actually means you are like morons, the word fool is there. You're not influential. You're not of noble birth. When God started looking around to choose his servants, he chose very plain people. I need to make three quick qualifications about this before we go on, because a lot of people read that, and they say, "Oh well, I can relax. That means I don't have to better myself. I don't have to study. I don't have to try to improve myself because God can use me just as dumb and ignorant as I am."

### **A. Not "many" doesn't mean not any.**

Let's make three qualifications. When God said not *many*, it doesn't mean not *any*. There's a big letter difference there. He didn't say any wise influential noble; he says not many. Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon as a great Christian lady. She was born into English nobility, yet she was a committed Christian. She said, "I have been saved by the letter 'M'." And she

quoted this passage of scripture. Because it says not many of noble birth were chosen and she was a woman of noble birth. And she was thanking God that he can use some people like that. God doesn't eliminate all of those; he just doesn't choose many of them.

### **B. There is no excuse for laziness and mediocrity.**

Understand that this is no excuse for laziness and mediocrity. Sometimes people read this passage, and say, "Oh, God wants to use foolish people. He wants to use people who aren't very wise. I just won't study. I won't try to improve myself. I'll just coast along."

I came from a part of the country in south Alabama where for a number of years there was an opposition to educated ministers. Any minister who went to college or seminary in some areas of south Alabama was looked on with suspicion, because the people felt like education ruined them.

In those days, a lot of the preachers were proud of the fact that they were uneducated. I remember a man named Dr. Guffin, whose son was in my church in Gardendale and was head of Howard College Extension. It was his job to go around to all of these annual association meetings and try to encourage all of the preachers to get education and get involved in the Howard College Extension Program.

He was on the program of some little church there in South Alabama, and they knew what he was going to talk about, and some of the preachers didn't like it. So just before he got up to speak about preachers getting education, one of these leading antieducation preachers stood up and prayed a prayer just like this. He said, "God, I thank thee that I am ignorant. And I pray that Thou wouldst make me ignoranter. Amen."

When Dr. Guffin got up, what he said is as good as gold. "Brethren, that is a prayer that God answered even before it was prayed." Just because God can use foolish people and people that aren't wise, doesn't mean that you shouldn't strive to improve yourself. The bible says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly and handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV)

### **C. God changes the ordinary into the extraordinary.**

And then here's the third qualification. God changes the ordinary into the extraordinary. He takes ordinary people and transforms them into the extraordinary. Once God chooses you, you may be ordinary. But you won't stay ordinary. God will change you. Paul is saying that your relationship is more important than your scholarship. He's saying that your faith in God is more important than your fame and that availability is much more important than any ability that you may have.

Have you ever heard somebody stand up and before they sing a song, they'll say something like, "I haven't had a chance to rehearse and my throat's hurting. But bless God, I'm just going to do the best I can for Him." I hate to hear that, because I think when you're singing for God or

doing anything for God, you don't need to apologize. Just stand up and in the power of the Holy Spirit make yourself totally available to him and do the best you can. Never apologize, do the very best that you can.

## II. GOD'S PERPLEXING PLAN

Let's consider God's perplexing plan. Why does he choose the kind of people that he does? Verses 27 says it is to shame the wise. He chose the weak things to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, and the things are not to nullify the things that are.

We have a tendency to believe that God looks out at his collection of servants and says, "Okay, not many wise, not many influential." God didn't end up with these kinds of people. The bible says God *chose* these people intentionally because He has an amazing plan.

### A. God chose fools to shame the wise.

Dr. Henry Ironside was a great preacher. One day, he was on a train with a group of believers who were singing songs of praise. A man sitting across from him looked at them and said, "You must be Christians." And Dr. Ironside said, "Yes, we are." And the man said, "Well, I think you're acting like a bunch of fools." And Dr. Ironside said, "Yes, we are. We are fools for Christ's sake, whose fool, are you?"

Everybody is a fool for something, and sometimes people look at us and Christians are a bunch of fools for doing something like that. But God chooses people that world calls fools to shame the wise.

One of my favorite characters from American Christianity is Dwight L. Moody. Moody was a shoe salesman in Chicago when he was a young man. One day, a Sunday school teacher named Edward Kimball, walked into that shoe store, witnessed to him and led him to Christ. Once Dwight L. Moody became a Christian, he started a Sunday school for boys. I'm talking about the down-and-out boys with no parents you see running around most large cities. And they didn't have anywhere to go to school.

He enlisted about 20 or 30 of these boys and tried to take to them to the church where he was a member, and they didn't want him. They didn't want those little boys in their church dirtying up the church and making trouble. So he started his own Sunday school.

Although Dwight L. Moody was never ordained as a preacher, God used him as an evangelist to shake America and even England. He was very uneducated. Most people would look at him and call him a fool—but God used him. I never heard Dwight L. Moody preach of course, but it was said that Dwight L. Moody had such poor grammar and elocution that he would say the word Jerusalem with one syllable. You try that. I guess it kinda came out Jrslm, or something like that.

In 1882, Moody was invited to Cambridge University to speak to the students. They were ready to boot him off the stage because he was such a backwards kind of speaker. But Ira Sankey, his music man, got up and played the organ and sang some of the songs and there was something about his music that calmed the crowd down. And they decided that would give him a chance.

And at Cambridge University, where they are so careful about correct grammar and everything else, Dwight L. Moody stood up and said, "Don't never think that God don't love you for he do." And that was the title of his message that day. Although his grammar was terrible, the heart that he had for God was so strong that on that day many of those students came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Why does God take somebody like a Dwight L. Moody, a fool, and use them? Because the bible says it is to shame those who are wise in their own eyes.

### **B. God chose the weak to shame the strong.**

The Power Team is a group of young Christian that go around putting on strength exhibitions in churches and civic auditoriums. They're the ones that break blocks of ice, and blow up a hot water bottle until it bursts. They do all these feats of strength and show their muscles. And then they give their testimony about Jesus, and that's pretty effective.

I saw them on television one night, and I got the idea that we ought to come up with an after-church fellowship led by our staff and we can call it the Powerless Team. We could wear t-shirts and go out there and do feats of weakness. And then we could give our testimonies. You may think that's funny, but the truth of the matter is God has to work a lot harder to use a Power Team than he does somebody that's not very strong. Because he chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

I could give you a lot of Bible examples, but here is one. We all know the story about David and Goliath. That song "God Don't Care" by Carman has a little rap in it that goes like this: "Well, David must have just been in his teens when he faced Goliath of the Philistines. He was armed with just a slingshot and some stones. Goliath was a giant and strong as a tank and when he looked at men their stomach sank and there stood little David all alone. But with faith in God, he flung that stone and much to their surprise, he killed that monster with a rock that nailed him between the eyes. Then he decapitated his fallen foe and made sure that he was dead and showed everyone there he was someone who really knew how to get ahead."

Think about little David. Here is Goliath standing on one side of the valley saying, "I am the champion of the Philistines! Send me your champion." You know who would have gone, don't you? Saul, because the bible says Saul stood head and shoulders above all the other Israelites. If most of them were about six feet tall, Saul was about 6'6" or 6'7".

Granted, Goliath was nine feet tall, but the Philistines had their giant. The Israelites had their giant, and everybody looked at Saul and it was unanimously agreed that Saul should go down there and fight that guy. But Saul didn't have any courage. So young David came along and said, "Why are you guys letting that scoundrel make fun of the God of Israel?" He said, "I'll go." They thought he was crazy.

When they tried to put Saul's armor on him, it just swallowed him up. But David said, "I don't need any of this," and walked down to Goliath without a sword, without a shield, armed only with his slingshot and some stones. Remember what Goliath said? "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" (1 Samuel 17:43 NIV) I can picture what Goliath planned to do to David. He was going to take one leg in one hand, one leg in the other hand, and turn the boy into a wishbone. Then he said, "I'm going to feed you to the birds." So David twirled his slingshot, and the last thing Goliath saw was a rock that kept getting bigger and bigger, until, "WHAM!"

If Saul, the giant of the Israelites, had gone out and defeated the giant of the Philistines, Saul would have gotten the credit. But because a little boy went out and conquered a giant, who got the glory? God got the glory.

David said, "I'm going to show you today that there is a God in Israel." And God empowered him. God was doing exactly what Paul is writing about here. He is choosing the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

### **C. God chose nobodies to cancel the big shots.**

In the third part of His plan, God chose nobodies to cancel what I'm calling the big shots. "God chose the things that are not" (vs. 28) "Are not," means things that are nothing. These are people who have never been in Who's Who. They haven't even been in Who's Not. These are not people who had their name misspelled in the bulletin. Their name never was in the bulletin; it will never get in the bulletin. That's what it's talking about, people that are just absolutely nobodies to shame the celebrities, the VIPs, the big shots.

Several years ago when I was pastor of a church in Alabama, we had a series of meetings where we invited big shots on different nights. A famous singer, a world-famous Christian magician, and they would do their thing, and then I would preach. We had lots of people come, and a lot of people got saved. But one night I couldn't get anybody to come and fill in.

We had five nights of meetings and four nights were already lined up with super big shots that I thought were going to be great. Finally, for that one night, I called over to Pell City, Alabama and asked this girl named Leigh Pitts, who was a ventriloquist to come and do a little something before I got up to preach. If you had asked me before the week started what night was going to be the weak night of the whole deal, I'd have said, "Everybody is going to be great except this little ventriloquist."

Well, everybody else was great. And when Leigh got up with her little puppet, she did a good job, but she wasn't a great ventriloquist, and she wasn't all that funny—but then she gave her testimony. And she talked about how she was born into a family, the victim of incest. And then she talked about how even as a child she had been the victim of child abuse and had a horrific childhood. Finally, her parents abandoned her. She ended up with a Christian family who took her in and cared for her.

If there was anybody who ever met the qualifications for what Paul is talking about here;

somebody who is a nobody according to the world; it was Leigh Pitts. God's Spirit fell on that place that night. I got up and I didn't even preach. I just gave the invitation. More people got saved that night than all the other nights combined.

After it was all over, I said again, "Lord, you've got such a great sense of humor, here I am making a terrible mistake thinking this was going to be the weak night of the services and it was the very best." Why? The way God chooses to do it.

### **III. GOD'S PERFECT PURPOSE**

What is God trying to do by choosing these plain ordinary people? It is his perfect purpose, "So that no one may boast before him." (vs. 29) It's because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God, righteousness, holiness, redemption. Therefore, it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord," Alright?

#### **A. Why? In order to rebuke our pride.**

Let me give you three reasons God does it this way. First is to rebuke our pride "so that no one may boast before him." (vs. 29) God doesn't want people to serve him and then stand up and say, "Look what a good job I did." God wants to choose people who are so plain and ordinary and unphysically gifted that when God uses them, He will get all the glory. We like to brag and strut around like these wrestlers on television, talking about how good we are.

Did you hear about the woodpecker that was out in the woods pecking on a pine tree during a thunderstorm? CRACK! A flash of lightning split that pine tree in. Naturally, the woodpecker was a bit dazed. But as soon as he got his senses back, he flew over to some of his fellow woodpeckers and said, "There it is guys. Look what I did."

Have you ever done something for God and God blessed you? Didn't you want to point out to your friends what you did? But *you* didn't do it. God did it. And God doesn't want any of us to boast before him. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

#### **B. Why? So we will realize the source of our power.**

The third part of His purpose is so we will realize the source of our power. "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." (vs. 30)

If any of you want claim to be wise, God says it's not your wisdom, it's the wisdom of Jesus. You want to claim to be righteous? No. It's his righteousness. You want to claim to be holy? No. It's His holiness. You want to claim that you're worthy of being redeemed? No. He is your redemption.

A.J. Gordon was a great preacher from Boston attending the World's Fair. As he was walking across a pavilion, and he saw a gaudily dressed oriental man standing at a water pump,

pumping furiously. And the water was gushing forth in a torrent. Gordon watched him for awhile, noticing the guy never got tired, he just kept on pumping.

Finally, Dr. Gordon decided to investigate the man who had that kind of strength. So he walked across the pavilion, and as he got closer to the figure, he realized it was not a living man at all. It was a wooden dummy with a hinge on his wooden arm and the pump handle attached to his hand. And then realized it wasn't a pump at all. The faucet had been built on top of an artesian well. And the water was gushing forth making the handle go. Dr. Gordon suddenly realized that the man was not pumping the water. The water was pumping the man. And he made a tremendous application to the Christian life about that.

May times as Christians, we try to pump it and get it going ourselves. And when we do, all we do is just get tired. But Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 7:38 NIV) When you're operating in the power of the Holy Spirit; you don't have to pump the water, the water pumps you. Trust His power rather than your own. God chooses weak, ignoble, foolish people, so we'll realize that our power comes from him alone.

### **C. Why? To bring us to the point where we will render unto Him praise.**

The final thing he wants to do is bring us to the point where we will render unto Him praise and glory. "Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" (vs. 31) Don't ever talk about what *you* have done. Talk about what God has done. Has God used you in the past? Maybe to teach a Sunday school class, to sing, to disciple people. Maybe to organize some kind of ministry?

Never look at what you've accomplished with a sense of selfish pride. Instead, acknowledge what God did. If it worthy and it is eternal, you didn't do it anyway. God did it. If you're not serving God anywhere, I remind you that all the excuses you lift up to God—I'm not smart enough, I'm not talented enough, I'm not eloquent enough—He just marks off.

God can use anybody who is willing to be available under Him. The good news is, God can use a few smart people, a few VIPs, a few celebrities. The good news is God delights in using ordinary people just like us.

## OUTLINE

### I. GOD'S PLAIN PEOPLE

"Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth." vs. 26

- A. Not "many" doesn't mean not any.
- B. There is no excuse for laziness and mediocrity.
- C. God changes the ordinary into the extraordinary.

### II. GOD'S PERPLEXING PLAN

"He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him." vs. 28-29

God chose:

- A. Fools to shame the wise.
- B. Weak to shame the strong.
- C. Nobodies to cancel the big shots.

### III. GOD'S PERFECT PURPOSE

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" vs. 30-31

Why? In order to:

- A. Rebuke our pride.
- B. Realize the source of our power.
- C. Render unto Him praise.

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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