**BCM Bible Study: Sept. 4/5, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5: Wisdom and Power**

Looking Back (10 minutes)

Last week we said that as a body of believers, we **lack nothing** and have been **given everything**. Despite this, we are often tempted either to believe that we are insufficient or to think too highly of ourselves.

* This past week, did you experience envy or pride? What triggered this?
* What does this experience reveal about you and the way you view yourself?
* In what way does the gospel speak into this area of your life?

The Expression of the Problem - Division: **Read 1 Cor. 1:10-16**

* What is the issue that Paul is addressing?
* Why is this unacceptable for Christian community? (v.13)
  + What nonessential issues have you seen divide the Church? In what way have you seen this division impact the growth and witness of the church?

The Root of the Problem – Power: **Read 1 Cor. 1:17-25**

* What does Paul say in these verses about the “wisdom of the world”? (vs.20-21)
* What is the wisdom of the world?
  + For the Corinthians, this wisdom had to do with obtaining knowledge and eloquent speaking (as evidence by their desire to align with Paul, Apollos, etc.). This knowledge and eloquence created division because it was being used to advance in social standing inevitably at the expense of others. ***The wisdom of the world is all about being great and being made much of.***
  + How do you see this sort of wisdom at work in our society?
* What is the outcome of the wisdom of the world?
  + The wisdom of the world actually separates us from God. (Time permitting, see Rom. 1:18-25 for a parallel passage) Paul makes this point in v.19 by quoting a passage from Isaiah. **Read Isaiah 29:13-14**.
  + What do Isaiah and Paul say is happening when we try to live by the wisdom of the world?
    - Have you ever walked through a season of the empty worship described in Isa. 29:13? What was that experience like?
* Paul says that the power and wisdom of God and the cross is the weakness and foolishness of man – what does that mean? What is his message?
  + “Power of the cross” seems like an oxymoron. It one sense, it is the moment of God’s greatest weakness – Jesus is being humiliated and killed. But at the same time, it is the moment of triumph over sin and death. This is completely backward from the wisdom of the world which finds “victory” in self-promotion at the expense of others. In contrast, Jesus shows us that true victory and “power” in the Kingdom of God is found in the way of the cross: sacrifice and servitude for the sake of others. In the cross and resurrection, God destroys the validity of the wisdom of the world. This is what Isaiah said God would do in Isa. 29:14.
* In what ways is it tempting for you to want to be made much of in your schoolwork, job, social circles, etc.? How do you go about seeking this attention and praise? (i.e. posting on social media, putting others down, talking about your accolades, etc.)
  + In what ways is it tempting for you to want to be made much of within Christian community?
  + Do you find that it is difficult to do things without telling others you have done so? If so, why do you think that is difficult to do?
* Instead of living by the wisdom of the world, we are called to live by the way of the cross. Read these passages: **John 13:1-17, 2 Cor. 12:9-10, Matt. 5:38-48, Phil 2:1-11**
  + According to these passages, what does it mean to follow the way of the cross?
  + What out of these passages was most challenging to you? What can you do to try to be obedient to the Lord this week?

Remaining Humble

* At this point it should be acknowledged that what is being asked is very difficult. How can we be expected to maintain such a lifestyle? Paul gives us the means to do this: **Read 1 Cor. 1:26-31**
  + What is Paul saying to the Corinthians?
  + In what way does this passage speak to you? Have you ever experienced God saving you from a desperate state?

The Power of the Cross

* Aside from being difficult, another reason that we don’t like to live by the way of the cross is that we struggle to think it is an effective way to reach people with the gospel. We may think that we need to be smart, trendy, engaging, etc. In other words, we think that it is our own abilities that will bring people to Christ.
  + In what way are you tempted to fall into this way of thinking?
  + According to what we’ve said and read today, why is this backward thinking?
* Read what Paul says about this and how he lived his life: **Read 1 Cor. 2:1-5**.
  + What is Paul’s means of proclaiming the gospel?
  + How can you emulate this?

Conclusion and Challenge

* If you were to apply today’s message to your life, what would look different? What do you want to do differently this week?
* Fostering daily humility can be an uphill battle. Because of this, challenge the people in your family to do one the following (Leaders, either choose one or let them choose one):
  + Do something ***anonymously*** for someone else. Send them a gift, write them an encouraging note, take them breakfast, etc.
  + In an effort to take yourself out of the spotlight, don’t post on social media for a week. Don’t make a post saying you aren’t going to post - that just draws attention!