**BCM Bible Study: Sept. 18/19, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 3:18-4:16: Servants of Christ, Heirs of Glory**

Looking Back (20 minutes)

Go over the exercise that you emailed out last week. Ask people to share what they marked down and anything they realized about themselves as they filled it out. As people share areas of weakness, ask how they think their life would look different if they started to view that area through a spiritual lens.

All Things Are Yours

* To begin, give a 1-minute recap on the message of 1 Corinthians so far. Give a brief synopsis on the difference between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God.
* **Read 1 Cor. 3:18-4:1**
  + Recall that the Corinthians were attaching themselves to leaders in an effort to be seen as great. What does Paul mean when he tells them - “all things are yours”? (v.21)
    - The Corinthians have all that they need or want in Jesus. They do not belong to the leaders; the leaders “belong” to them because leaders are servants of the people (4:1). In fact, everything in creation belongs to us *because* we are coheirs with Christ. Because we are in Christ, we will be victors with him when he returns and we carry his authority with us through the Holy Spirit. Once again, we cannot be proud of this – he is the one who achieves all things. (3:6-7) This is a call both to humility and to stop striving for importance by human standards.
  + What would it look like to stop striving for personal greatness and instead live a life that proclaims Jesus?
    - How do you feel like you are doing with this? In what ways do you like/want to be known as great? How does the idea of being in the background/out of the spotlight sit with you?
  + **Read Romans 8:16-17, 37-39.** In what ways do these promises help you to walk in the way of humility?

Servants of Christ: **Read 1 Cor. 4:1-7**

* It is clear that the Corinthians are making judgements between the leaders (i.e. Apollos is better than Paul.) What does Paul say in the face of this attitude? What is Paul’s standard for judging himself?
  + Paul calls himself a servant of Christ and a steward of God’s mysteries (things revealed to us by God.) Therefore, the Corinthians’ view of Paul matters little relative to God’s view of him. God’s judgement of Paul is based on Paul’s faithfulness with regard to the things that God has revealed to Paul.
    - In what way might Paul’s ministry have been different if he had allowed the opinion of the Corinthians to determine his actions?
    - What are the primary voices that you allow to determine your worthiness or value? In what way can those things/people shape your actions?
    - What are the challenges to letting the voice of God be the only one that determines your value and your life’s meaning and direction?
* In what way is v.7 a challenge to you?
  + Is it hard for you to believe that you don’t have anything that you didn’t receive? (v.7) Why?
  + American culture says that if you work hard you can be/have anything. The flipside of this is that if someone is lacking, we tend to assume that person is lazy. In what way is this antithetical to what the Bible says? How does this idea create pride?

**Read 1 Cor. 4:8-16.** Paul is using some serious irony and sarcasm here in v.8! What is his message in these verses?

* Most of the Corinthians were not actually wealthy, but they found self-importance by viewing themselves relative to other people. In doing so, they are not imitating Christ, who became a servant to all. They are living by the world’s wisdom, trying to exalt themselves.
  + Do you struggle with comparing yourselves to others? Does this typically make you feel good or bad about yourself?
  + Instead of finding value by comparing yourselves to others, what would it look like to imitate Paul’s example in being a servant to others?

Conclusion and Challenge

* I find this quote helpful: “The Spirit does not impart wisdom out of thin air, for the Spirit and the cross go together. The mind of Christ is not exercised by thinking about nothing. Rather, those who are spiritual habitually turn to the cross as Paul did in the face of divisions in Corinth in 1:18-2:5. For the cross is where we find Christ’s mindset on such behavior.”
  + True wisdom comes from listening to the voice of God and finding value in being his son or daughter. When we do not listen to His voice, we fall into all kinds of traps: we try to be great by our own strength, let other voice shapes our lives, and find our value by comparing ourselves to others.
  + **Challenge**: Make an appointment to be alone with God before the next time you meet as a group. Take out your phones before the group adjourns and literally make a 30-minute appointment in your calendar. During this time with God, be alone and turn off your phone. You can sit quietly, read your Bible, walk, pray out loud, or write a prayer. If you find that your mind wanders, say this phrase to re-center your attention on God: “God, I want to know you and be present with you.”