**BCM Bible Study: Sept. 25/26, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 4:14-5:12: Living Under Christ’s Authority**

Looking Back (10 minutes)

Ask who followed through on the appointment they made with God.

* What did you experience during this time? How did you feel afterwards?
* Did you feel distracted or anxious during this time? What does that show you about yourself?
* If you didn’t follow through on the appointment, what kept you from doing so? What changes do you need to make to be able to spend time with God?

Paul the “father”: Recall that Paul had been pleading with the Corinthians to set aside striving for greatness to become a servant to all. **Read 1 Cor. 4:14-21.**

* Paul calls the Corinthians his children and talks about himself as their father. Why does he do this? What message is he trying to convey in doing so?
* What is your general feeling about authority figures? Do you tend to willfully submit, or do you resent authority?
  + Depending on your upbringing, the image of a “father” can be either a good or a bad thing. Those with overbearing, abusive or absent fathers may hear this term with a negative connotation. Those with a loving and gentle father may hear this term with a positive connotation. It is important to identify how this term makes you feel because God is called our Father.
    - In what way does the word “father” impact you? Why?
    - How has your past influenced the way you interact with authority now?
    - In what way has this influenced the way you interact with biblical commands?
* Sometimes we think of God as a strict authoritarian who demands things from us. Sometimes we think of God as loving, forgiving, and accepting, someone who deals with us graciously. In reality, God calls us to obedience, but our obedience is fueled by our realization of his love for us and the grace that he has shown us. As such, even his discipline is for our good. (See Heb. 12:4-11, time permitting)
  + In what ways do you have an unbalanced view of God’s character? How has this impacted your relationship with him?

Defiling the Church: **Read 1 Cor. 5:1-13**

**NOTE**: We will be talking about the importance of personal sexual morality in chs. 6 and 7. If comments arise relating to what is sexual immorality and what isn’t, feel free to defer down the road. This chapter is not so much focused on the nature of sexual morality as how to interact with people who are living in persistent and flagrant sin.

* What is the issue Paul is addressing and how has the church responded?
* Paul insists that the church hand this person over to Satan! This means: “putting him outside the sphere of God’s protection within the church, and leaving him exposed to the satanic forces of evil…” (Blomberg, *NIV Application*)What are Paul’s reasons for doing this? (v.5)
  + **Reason 1: For the rehabilitation of the person.** The language here is harsh but note the purpose in v.5. The hope is that this experience would cause the person to repent and turn back to Christ. Church discipline is never meant to be punitive, but redemptive.
  + **Reason 2: The integrity and witness of the church.** The church is meant to shine the light of Christ to the world. If there are people in the church who are living in persistent sin, the witness of the church is diminished.
  + **Reason 3: For the good of other believers**. The influence of these people may spread through the community. (vv.6-8)
* In verses 9-13, Paul makes an important distinction – what is that distinction?
  + We have often heard it said that we should not judge people – what does Paul say about that in these verses and v.3? What does this mean?
    - While we cannot determine someone’s final judgment, the church is called to hold standards of conduct for the internal affairs of the church. Behavior indicates the state of someone’s heart. If a Christian’s behavior betrays a sinful heart, it is our duty to call out another out of sin.
  + How can we go about determining if something is sinful behavior or not?
  + Do you shy away from interacting with other Christians in this way? Why?
  + What would it look like to do this well?
  + Do you respond well to correction? What do you think is the root of your response?
    - **NOTE:** There are a few points of debate surrounding vv.9-13. One is the extent to which we exclude people from fellowship. The best guidance I can give is that when we take these steps, while we don’t exclude them from every sphere of life or even from worship services, the intimacy of relationship must change. Second, we are tempted to say, “I do the things listed in v.11!” In one sense, that may be true and these verses should cause us to repent. But also pay attention to the state of your heart – are you repentant? Remorseful? Frustrated with yourself? Those are actually good signs, but please ask for help if you feel stuck in sin. The mindset in view seems to be willful, persistent sin.
* How does Paul say that we should interact with nonbelievers?
  + The church cannot impose rules on those who have not submit to Christ. However, this does not mean that the church should stay silent about the way culture is straying from God. There is a balance – we do not run away from the world, but must not affirm sin.
  + Jesus, of course, did this perfectly. What interactions of Jesus help guide our interact with nonbelievers? (If people struggle to think of examples, consider: John 4, Luke 19:1-10, Mark 2:13-17)
  + How then should we interact with nonbelievers? What does it look like to love them well?

OL Time (10 minutes)

Allot some time for the OLs to share about the upcoming Great Exchange. Communicate beforehand with your OL about how much time they need and be sure to honor that. This week, the challenge will be to participate in the Great Exchange on Wednesday, October 2. We will be signing up for time slots at 6:33 on October 1. If they cannot do that, the challenge is to have an intentional conversation with a non-Christian where they seek to listen to and understand that person’s story as it relates to their spiritual beliefs.