**BCM Bible Study: Oct. 29/30, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 8: Love and Knowledge**

Looking Back:

* Ask people to share about their “Relational Priority Assessment.” What did they learn about their relational priorities? Do they want anything to change?
* Take a minute to do a spiritual check in with everyone. You could ask, “How is everyone doing spiritually right now? Are you feeling connected to God? Distant from him? Why?”

Love vs. Knowledge: **Read 1 Cor. 8:1-3**

* In v.1, Paul is calling out a phrase that the Corinthians evidently said: “We all possess knowledge.” What does Paul go on to say about that statement?
  + Take another look at v.2. What does Paul mean? Put this statement into your own words.
  + For the Corinthians, “knowledge” was a primary value. What is Paul’s primary value?
* In v.3, Paul flips the Corinthian statement from v.1 on its head. Instead of thinking that they had attained some knowledge, he tells them that true *knowledge* comes from *being known* by God. Remember what he said earlier: **Read 1 Cor. 2:6-7, 13-14.** 
  + What is humbling about the truths that Paul is explaining? In what way is this contrary to the way we typically think about knowledge?
  + In what way have you seen knowledge, whether general knowledge or knowing things about God, lead to pride and arrogance?
* Being known by God is expressed by love.
  + How can we avoid this pitfall of knowledge that leads to arrogance?
  + Paul makes an important distinction in v.3. He doesn’t say, “Whoever loves God knows God.” He says, “Whoever loves God *is known* by God.” Why is this distinction important?
  + Do you feel like you are known by God? Why or why not?
    - Are there areas of your life that you sense that you tend to hold back from him? What is standing in the way from you being more known by God?

Food Sacrifices: **Read 1 Cor. 8:4-6**

* Paul now turns to apply these truths to a specific issue. In Corinth and other Roman towns, meat was sacrificed to idols. This meat was then sold in the town marketplace. This led to a moral dilemma for the church: Was this food tainted? Could Christians eat it? How should they Christians interact with this issue?
  + What is Paul’s basic argument in vv.4-6?
    - **Note:** Paul will discuss the danger of interacting with demons related to idolatry in ch.10. At this point, the basic thrust of his argument is that there is only one God; these others “gods” are fake nothings made by human hands.
* **Read 1 Cor. 8:7-8**. What is Paul saying in these verses?
  + Verse 8 states the objective truth: Because there is one God and idols are nothing, this food in and of itself does not bring us closer to or further away from God. But some do not possess this *knowledge.* (Notice that key word in v.7) What is it that “defiles” (v.7) the act of eating for these people?
  + Paul addresses this same issue in Romans and ends the account with a striking verse: **Read Romans 14:23**. (Scott’s personal note: This has been of the most important Bible verses for me personally. I encourage you to ruminate on it and think deeply about the implications of it for the Christian life.)
    - In what way does Paul define sin? Is this different from how you typically think about sin?
    - How then should we live? How does this idea influence what it means to live by faith every day?

Love Over Knowledge: **Read 1 Cor. 8:9-13**. In addition, read the parallel account in **Romans 14:20-23**.

* Who is the “weak” brother or sister that Paul refers to?
* What are Paul’s guidelines for acting around the weak brother or sister?
* The issue of meat sacrificed to idols is not an issue for most of us (though it still is parts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia). To discover parallel issues, it is helpful to consider what action could be disagreed upon as to whether or not they are sinful or acceptable. What are some parallel issues that you can think of?
  + Some examples: alcohol, modern modesty standards, yoga, secular music, premarital physical boundaries, etc. Know that some are insistent that some of these issues are not up for debate and *are* or *aren’t* inherently sinful. We need to respectfully hear those voices.
  + How does Paul’s ethic of love guide us to interact with these things? In what way is this countercultural?
* The issue of alcohol is significant during college (and beyond for many), so let’s address that issue specifically as a sort of case study:
  + How do these verses guide the way we think about and use alcohol?
  + How have you seen the insistence of rights based on knowledge harm others?
  + When have you seen alcohol handled in a healthy way?
* In vv.11-12, what reasons does Paul give for living in this other-centered way?
  + As a Christian, you are joined/one with Christ. **Read 1 Cor. 6:15-17**. We need to remember that other Christians are joined with Christ in the same way. How does this shape the way we think about and treat other believers?

Conclusion:

* How does this issue hit home for you? Think of a way that you can choose love over knowledge/choice/freedom this week.
  + Leaders: Ask people to share what comes to mind and write down the responses. Tell people that you want to do this together and follow up next week to see how it went. Consider texting them during the week as a reminder.