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

**1 Corinthians 9: Servant to All**

Looking Back:

* Start off by following up from the challenge from last week. It was: “Think of a way that you can choose love over knowledge/choice/freedom this week.”
	+ In what way did this issue arise for you this week? How did you respond and what did you learn about yourself in the process?

Our “Rights”: Begin by giving a recap of the message from ch. 8. If you don’t understand ch. 8, ch. 9 won’t make any sense! This is a sample summary: “There are a lot of things that we have the freedom to do in Christ. However, some people feel less free to do these things; they feel guilty when they do them. Because of that, we should always consider others over and above ourselves. If others feel guilty about doing certain things, we shouldn’t do them for their sake and for Christ’s sake. We should choose love over freedom, choice, and rights.”

* **Read 1 Cor. 9:1-2**. What is Paul saying here? In what position does he put himself in relation to the Corinthian Christians?
* **Read 1 Cor**. **9:3-12a** (stop at the word “nevertheless” or “but” – whatever word your translation has for the turning point) What is the point of this barrage of questions? What is Paul trying to communicate?
	+ In 1st century Corinth, philosophers and religious teachers would travel around and survive mostly through the support of others. In contrast Paul, at many times in his ministry, famously choose to make tents instead of accepting large amounts of support. Because Paul was refusing their support, the Corinthians were questioning that he had the same level of authority as these other traveling teachers. A good teacher would require large pay – it showed the value of what he was saying.
	+ From this perspective, Paul acknowledges that he indeed “deserves” their support. But he doesn’t only argue this from the perspective of other traveling teachers. What other metaphors does he employ to prove this point?
		- **Note**: The statement about the ox is a confusing one, even for Bible scholars. Basically, the gist of the argument is that the law commanded that the ox be allowed to reap the benefits of threshing – it was doing work, so it was allowed to eat. How much more should the apostle reap the benefits of his work.
	+ What do you often view as your basic rights in your relationships with others? What have you come to expect from others based on how you have treated or helped them?

Setting Aside our “Rights”: **Read 1 Cor. 9:12b-18**

* What is Paul’s basic stance here? Why does he insist on not making use of his rights?
* The word “boasting” comes up a couple of times in this passage. He does not actually mean prideful boasting, but is talking about God being glorified in human weakness. **Read 1 Cor. 1:26-31, 2 Cor. 12:7-10**.
	+ To not make use of his rights was foolish and even self-demeaning by human standards, but how does this actually strengthen and authenticate his message?
	+ How might it take away from his message if he were to take full advantage of his rights?
* Paul takes great pride and joy in being able to present the gospel free of charge, without asking for anything in return from the other person.
	+ What are your general feelings about sharing the gospel?
	+ Why might you feel differently than Paul? What stands in the way of this type of joy?
* **Read 1 Cor. 9:19-23.** These verses give the practical application of what Paul has just said. What is his message?
	+ Few people are in Paul’s situation where they would be paid for their ministry to others. If you aren’t in this type of position, what are some things that could get in the way of others accepting the gospel? How can you offer the gospel to others “free of charge”? In what way have your relationships become transactional?
	+ What does it look like to become all things to be all things do all people without stepping into sinful behavior?
		- **Note:** Please note that these verses do NOT excuse sinful behavior for the sake of evangelism. Remember that these verses come in the context of ch. 8, which discusses matters of moral neutrality. Non-conviction and evangelism are *never* justification for sin.
	+ How would this principle change some of your existing relationships?
* Christians will often have a critical stance towards culture, and often, the criticism is justified! But here, Paul points out an important balancing point that not all of culture is inherently evil. Rather, some aspects of culture can be affirmed while other things can and should be criticized. In essence, what Paul is saying is that the gospel is best heard when it comes from a critical voice within the culture rather than a critical voice that is entirely removed from it.
	+ What can we affirm about our culture? Criticize about our culture?
	+ How does Jesus model this kind of engagement with culture?

Run the Race: **Read 1 Cor. 9:24-27**

* These verses about training like an athlete certainly apply to fighting sin, but Paul is using this metaphor in the context of the evangelistic principle he has been discussing. With that in mind, what is Paul saying about what is takes to live in the way he is describing?
	+ When you think about living out the principles of this chapter, what sounds exhausting or difficult to you?
	+ **Read Hebrews 12:1-3**. What do these verses tell us about running the often difficult race of faith?

Challenge: In an attempt to become all things to all people, identify someone (a non-Christian) with whom you want to connect more. What would it look like for you to step into their world and connect with them on something that they care about?