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

**1 Corinthians 12: Love at Work in the Church Part 2**

Looking Back:

* Catch up with everyone’s Thanksgiving break!
* Start off by following up from the challenge from last time. Did anyone find a way to love or serve someone else? If so, what was that experience like for you? If not, what stood in the way for you?

Spiritual Gifts

Two weeks ago, we looked at two ways in which church members were not acting in love towards one another. This week, we will look at a passage about spiritual gifts, but the issue is still love. **Read 1 Cor. 12:1-11**.

* To understand vv.1-3 it is important to know that idol worship would have sometimes involved utterances (like speaking in tongues). Because of their background in idol worship, some Christians were concerned about speaking in tongues, so Paul gives a litmus test. What is that test?
	+ It is important to recognize that there are spiritual powers at work that can express themselves in ways contrary to Christ. There can even be impressive things that happen in the name of Christ that are actually leading people away from Christ. **Read 1 John 4:1-6**. When trying to assess spiritual things, how can you tell whether or not they are of the Spirit?
		- Consider this: “The devil is not in the habit of bringing people to Christ, promoting faith, sanctification, unity, and evangelical doctrine.” (Craig Blomberg) Discuss how each of these can help the discernment process.
* According to 1 Corinthians, where do spiritual gifts come from? (v.11)
	+ We cannot gain or achieve more or different gifts – the Holy Spirit gives each person gifts. Paul gives one list of gifts here and we find similar lists in other locations: **Read Romans 12:6-8**, **Ephesians 4:11-13**.
	+ Have you seen any of these gifts at work in the church? How did they impact others?
		- **Note**: Ch. 14 talks more about speaking in tongues, so we will focus on that subject in the spring.
	+ Do you know what spiritual gifts you have been given?
		- If so, how do you know? If not, how do you figure it out?
* There are a variety of ways that you can discern your spiritual gifts, but there is no substitute for simply serving in the church and paying attention to how God seems to use you most effectively (as defined by our discussion on vv.1-3).
	+ How have you served the church? How have you seen God use you?
	+ If you haven’t served in the church, what do you think could be a starting place for you?
* What is the purpose of spiritual gifts stated in v.7? That leads into the issue that Paul is addressing in the rest of the chapter…

One Body, Many Members: **Read 1 Cor. 12:12-20**

* What analogy does Paul use in these verses to help us understand the importance of the diversity of gifts? What then does it mean to have unity in diversity?
* **Read 1 Cor. 12:21-26**. What seems to be the issue that Paul is addressing?
	+ What spiritual gifts are typically most valued in the church? Which ones do not get recognition? (**Leaders**, feel free to use the Biblical lists or the gifts assessment we uploaded on the BCM DL website if your group struggles to think of gifts)
	+ Do you feel like the gifts you have are honored and valued appropriately? Why or why not?
	+ Some gifts, like administration, quiet service (the person who does things that go unnoticed), hospitality, mercy, giving, etc., are overlooked in favor of the more expressive gifts like teaching, preaching, wisdom, evangelist, etc. What would it look like to elevate the less appreciated spiritual gifts and be more balanced about the gifts that are typically elevated?
* **Read 1 Cor. 12:27-31**. These verses can create some confusion in light of what Paul has been saying. How do we make sense of this in light of everything Paul has said in this chapter?
	+ We must notice a few things. First, the reason Paul makes a list is debated. Some think this is the order of gifts needed for building churches. Others insist that the list is in the order of which gifts have the most broad impact on the church.But regardless of how it is interpreted, it simply doesn’t make sense for Paul to say everything he does in ch.12 and then suggest that some gifts are somehow more important than others. I believe that it is critical to note that speaking in tongues is listed last. As we will see in ch. 14, speaking in tongues with no interpretation had become a major issue in the Corinthian church. Therefore, it seems that Paul is purposely placing this last to reverse the way the Corinthians were thinking about things.
	+ V.31 is also potentially confusing. How can Paul tell the readers to seek the higher gifts after everything he has just said? A key to answering this question is to consider its **literary context**. What comes after v.31? What is the “most excellent way”?
	+ What would it look like for you to act out your spiritual gifts in love?

Conclusion

* Since this is the last meeting of the semester, I am offering a challenge for the break. Distribute the spiritual gifts tests and ask people to take time to do one before you get together in January.