**BCM Bible Study: Jan. 22/23, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 13: Love at Work in the Church Part 3**

Looking Back:

Catch up on everyone’s Christmas break. In additional to general catching up, consider asking these intentional questions:

* + In what ways did you experience the love and presence of God this Christmas?
  + Do you feel that the break was spiritually replenishing for you?

Spiritual Gifts

Recall that before the break we read 1 Corinthians 12, which is a chapter about spiritual gifts. For a refresher, **Read 1 Cor. 12:4-11**. We asked each person to take a spiritual gifts inventory over the break. Take some time to discuss the result using these questions.

* + What were your results? Were you surprised in any way?
  + How have you seen your gifts at work in your life so far?
  + Spend time affirming how you can see God’s gifting in each person.

The Way of Love

Today’s chapter is the famous “Love Chapter.” We will read this chapter in full, starting with 12:27 in order to appreciate the context. **Read 1 Cor. 12:27-13:13**.

* What is the overall message of this chapter?

Now, we will walk through the chapter, re-reading it in sections. **Read 1 Cor. 12:31-13:3**

* How does love intersect with exercising spiritual gifts?
* What does it look like to do the things that Paul is talking about without a spirit of love? Have you experienced this?
* How would you describe the difference between self-focused action and loving action?
* **Read Matthew 23:23-28**. What is Jesus’ message to the Pharisees in these verses?
* In Christ, we have been given a new heart and are righteous before God. At the same time, we still have a tendency to live in selfish, unrighteous ways. What does it look like to become increasingly pure of heart, as Jesus is suggesting in these verses?
* In all this we see that actions can be misleading. You can do dramatic things in the name of God and still be missing the mark. What then does it look like to live an authentic Christian life?

**Read 1 Cor. 13:4-7.** While the context of these verses is spiritual gifts, the way of love described in this chapter should be applied to all that we do.

* Have you experienced any of these attributes of love? How did that impact you?
* Which of these attributes is most difficult for you to live out?
* Consider this quote: “Love is what God in Christ has shown and done for others in their helpless plight and hapless estate as sinners. In love we take God’s side, share his outlook and implement his designs; and we treat our neighbors as we know God has treated us.” (Craig Blomberg) **Read Romans 15:5-7**.
* In order to grow in love, you must consider how Christ has loved you. Looking at the attributes of love in these verses, which ones have you experienced from God?

**Read 1 Cor. 13:8-13.**

* Look again at 1 Cor. 1:7. When will the gifts cease? [Answer: when Christ returns and we see him face to face and are fully known (v.12)]
* Some use these verses to suggest that certain spiritual gifts will cease at a certain point in history. But seeing “face to face” and being “fully known” make it difficult to interpret the passage that way. These things will only be so when Christ returns – that is when gifts will cease.
* Knowing this, what is the purpose of the gifts?
* What are some differentiating attributes of childish and mature ways of living?
* A part of the message of this chapter is to walk through life with a sense of humility and knowing that we don’t know everything. We only see in a mirror dimly. (v.12) One aspect of maturity is treating others with respect and love, knowing that you are finite and imperfect.
* How does it strike you to fully know God as you have been fully known? How well do you feel that you know God now?
* Paul speaks frequently about faith, hope and love as the most significant of Christian qualities. But love, he says, will be the guiding value throughout eternity. God’s character is the definition of love and when he returns, the world will finally be full of perfect love. To see things through the lens of love is to see things with an eternal perspective. What facets of your life do you struggle to view through a lens of love?

Challenge

Challenge your family group to memorize 1 Cor. 13:4-7. End your time by praying with and for one another.