**BCM Bible Study: February 5/6, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 14:20-40: Love at Work in the Church Part 5**

Looking Back: Check in to see if anyone intentionally sought to uplift others with words or a passage of Scripture. What was this experience like for you?

Recap: Give a brief recap on last week’s Bible study, explaining the issue of how speaking in tongues was being practiced in the church.

Corporate Worship:

Last week we saw that Paul’s main concern in corporate worship was that others be built up. **Read 1 Cor. 14:12, 17-19**.

* What have you experienced in corporate worship that is encouraging and instructive to you?
* What have you experienced that is distracting and unhelpful?
* How many of these things do you think are personal preference vs. objectively helpful/unhelpful for all people?

Paul will now expound on why he has determined to bring an indictment against the church regarding their practice of speaking in tongues: **Read 1 Cor. 14:20-25**.

* In order to understand 21-23, consider this interpretation: Verse 21 quotes Isaiah 28:11, where God’s word of judgement against Israel came from a foreign people and foreign language. Paul is using this incident to explain that tongues can be a “sign” of judgment for unbelievers, who hear Christians speaking in tongues and think they are out of their mind. Tongues, used improperly, can unnecessarily turn unbelievers away. Prophecy is a “sign” to believers in that it convicts us of sin and calls us to holiness.
* Have you experienced something like what Paul is describing in v.25? What was that like?
* Paul is describing conviction in v.25. How can you tell the difference between shame and conviction?
* What reason does Paul give in verses 24-25 for preferring prophecy in the presence of unbelievers?
* In these verses, Paul says that tongues, used improperly, can unnecessarily turn unbelievers away. But sometimes even the most appropriate Christian behavior will result in unbelievers turning away from God. Can you think of any examples? (sex before marriage, underage drinking, radical obedience, etc.) How do we differentiate between these things and what Paul is describing?

**Read 1 Cor. 14:26-33a** (stop at the period after “peace”)

* Describe the kind of worship gathering that Paul is promoting here. Is there anything that is different from how you have seen things done in corporate worship?
* Paul’s description does not mean that worship gatherings lacked emotion, it simply prefers order over chaos. This is because the community is more valued than the individual, and order better serves the group as a whole. How could this principle impact the way we plan and engage in corporate worship?

Verses 20-33a bring up the important topic of being sensitive to unbelievers who may have come to a worship service.

* What principles have we read that suggest that we need to be sensitive to unbelievers in worship services?
* What principles have we read that suggest that we need to have a concern for building up, encouraging, and instructing other believers?
* How can we balance these things when we worship together? How can we go about not watering down content while also being hospitable to the unbeliever?

Cultural and Worship: **Read 1 Cor. 33b-38**. These verses are challenging to understand. In chapter 11, Paul seems to allow women to speak and prophesy in church so long as they do it in an appropriate way. Because of this, it is difficult to see how Paul could absolutely forbid them from speaking here.

An important question to think about is: What does this section have to do with everything else Paul has been talking about? The context of Paul’s command is speaking in tongues, and specifically the interpretation of prophecy in verses 29-33a. It could be that Paul is insisting that the final voice on judgment of prophecy come from men. Remember in ch. 11 that Paul had specific directions regarding how men and women wore their hair or headwear. The reason for such instructions was that acting contrary to a cultural norm in the name of Christian freedom, when it caused confusion or difficulty for others (even if the other person is not technically in the right), was to act unlike Jesus. Jesus laid down his freedoms and privileges for the sake of others and so too should we. In a similar vein, it would have been at odds with the culture for a woman to take such a leading role in the church. It could be that doing so was bringing unnecessary shame on the husbands (note the word “shame” in v.33).

* What are some current cultural norms that impact the way we act in worship together?
* What cultural norms need to be ignored in order to worship authentically and respectfully together?

Take a look at the NIV and ESV versions of v.33. Since there was no punctuation in the original Greek, the translators had to make a choice. How does the two versions impact the way this section reads?

* While the meaning may differ slightly, the overall message is the same. What is Paul’s message in verses 33-38?
* Have you seen or experienced the tendency to always look for the “new” or “exciting” thing with respect to faith? What was this looked like?
* How does Paul try to balance out this viewpoint?
* The Christian faith is one of both recognition of authority (in people and the Bible) and ability to personally interact with and experience God. How do these two things interact?

Conclusion: **Read 1 Cor. 14:39-40**

* How does Paul summarize what he has said?
* What have you learned in chapter 14? Has your viewpoint been challenged or changed?
* Challenge: Reach out to an authority figure in your life and tell them what they have meant/mean to you. This can be a text, phone call, letter, email, or in person.