**BCM Bible Study: August 28/29, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9: Introduction and The Problem of Disunity**

Getting Started (15 minutes)

* Start by introducing yourself and giving others an opportunity to do the same. You could ask them to share a variety of things about themselves (major, hometown, etc.), but consider including one of the following:
  + Ask them to share why they decided to join a BCM family
  + Ask them to share what they are hoping to get out of being in a family group
* Take a minute to set the tone for the semester. Communicate your personal goals and hopes for them as a group and as individuals. This is a good opportunity to set the bar high for attendance and commitment. You can say something like “My hope is that everyone will prioritize this time together each week, because I think the more consistent everyone is, the better we get to know one another, and the more we will grow together.” Be excited – that is infectious!

Introduction (share this with your people!)

Corinth was a pivotal port city within the Roman empire because it was the connector between the Aegean and Adriatic seas (boats were pulled over a 3-mile isthmus! see [map](https://bible.org/assets/netbible/jp2.jpg)). Because of its importance for trade, Corinth was 4th largest city in the empire and was comprised of both Roman citizens and resident immigrants. It was seen as the gateway and connector to the east and was home to a melting pot of religions and cultures. Corinth was home to the numerous significant temples and shrines (most notably Aphrodite) and the religiously-motivated Isthmian Games drew crowds from all over the empire. Worship of the gods was integrated into every aspect of life – this caused Christians many issues.

It is because of Corinth’s size and cultural influence that Paul left Athens to start a Christian community there. (Acts 18 recounts this story) The church in Corinth was comprised of a substantial number of Jews, but was mostly populated by Gentiles. Though there was some wealth in the church, most Christians were poor, which gave them less societal power.

The significant problem for the Corinthians church was **unity**. The unity of the believers was compromised by a number of factors:

* Theological issues: baptism, leadership, the resurrection, spiritual gifts, etc.
* Cultural factors: new believers struggled to make a clean break with former outlooks and customs, whether it related to sexuality or making heroes out of famous public speakers.
* Sociological factors: Concern for climbing the social ladder was significant in Corinth. This issue would create division between socio-economic classes within the church.

The Corinthians had written a prior letter(s) to Paul (see 7:1, we don’t have this letter) about these and other issues, so 1 Corinthians is Paul’s response. It is also clear that Paul had already written them prior to this letter (see 5:9). While 1 Corinthians will touch on a wide range of issues, all of Paul’s message is founded on the principle that ***unity that is based on common identity in Christ***. Imitating his self-sacrificial love (11:1) would conform the community to the image of Christ.

Lacking Nothing, Given Everything: **Read 1 Cor. 1:1-9**

The greeting and thanksgiving portion of Paul’s letters are not merely niceties to begin a letter – they will set the theological tone for what Paul is about to say.

* Looking through the passage again, what does Paul say in the passive tense? (i.e. **called** by the will of God, **sanctified** in Christ Jesus)
* Keeping in mind that the Corinthians were a status-hungry people, why does Paul communicate in this way?
  + Paul wants the Corinthians to remember that everything they have comes from God. They have not accomplished anything on their own. In what way is this mindset contradictory to our American culture? To college culture?

Let’s look into some of the specific things that Paul says:

* Look again at verses 2-4 and 8-9. What is the basic message and reminder of these verses?
  + These verses serve as a reminder to those who think highly of themselves. Instead, they are sanctified (made holy) not by their own actions, but because of Jesus. They have received grace, not earned it; Jesus alone will sustain them.
    - It is easy to take pride in our spiritual achievements, personal devotional life, personality, or talents. Why is this attitude contradictory to the gospel?
* Look again at verses 5-7. What is the basic message and reminder of these verses?
  + These verses serve as a reminder to those who do not think they are/have enough. It is evident that the Corinthians had expressed to Paul that they felt this way. In response, Paul tells them that they have been given *all* that they need.
    - Have you ever been tempted to think that you are lacking in all that you need to follow Christ or be a part of the community?
    - What spiritual gifts or traits of others do you lack that cause you to envy others?
* **Read 1 Cor. 12:4-6.** Why does God give each person unique gifts and strengths?
  + We all very badly want to be important and of value. Fundamentally, each person is this way because God has made them, equips them, and wants to be in relationship with them. He has not made one person or gifting to be more important than anyone – we are all equal and need one another.
  + What gifts and strengths do you have? How can they be used in the way that Paul describes?
* **Read 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:6-7**. What problem had the Corinthians fallen into? What is the root of their problem?
  + What giftings and personalities do you think are undervalued in Christian community? (Maybe you feel undervalued!) What can you do to value these individuals?

Conclusion

As a body of believers, we **lack nothing** and have been **given everything**? Which part of that statement resonates most with you? Why?

* This week, try to notice the tendencies we have talked about today. Notice the times when you are tempted to envy others or fall into spiritual pride.
* Next week, we will follow up to see what everyone noticed and experienced.