**Shadow Rock UCC – Adult Spiritual Formation**

**May 10, 2020**

**I Corinthians Study, “Listen Up” Chapters 9-11**

I Corinthians Listen Up
by unlisted YouTube video, summarized in bullets below

* These chapters have a lot of good stuff about spiritual freedom, which was something the church at Corinth was particularly interested in.
* The selection we’re looking at more closely this week is about the approach Paul chose to take when teaching and preaching within that community.
* No stumbling blocks! The weekly lesson materials will include an excerpt from the chapters for that week. No need to find and dust off your Bible or try to remember where this particular book is located.
* In the first century, the congregation at Corinth would have gathered together and heard Paul’s message together. In a culture in which most people were not literate, they would have heard this correspondence read aloud, so I will read the passage for the week aloud on the video. Consider how the experience of hearing something is different from reading.

I Corinthians 9: 19-27

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings

Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I discipline my body, so that after proclaiming the Gospel to others I myself should not be disqualified.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

* What do you make of the first paragraph? Paul describes himself among the Corinthians as a kind of chameleon… blending into the groups of people around him. Is this dishonest at all?
* Paul’s desire to reach others with the truth and freedom of the Gospel is so strong that he de-emphasizes his own identity in order to “speak the language” of those around him so that they might hear his message. What do you think about this tactic?
* Have you ever had the experience of trying to blend in with others for the sake of something important? How did it feel?
* The second paragraph is a metaphor, in which Paul compares his work of evangelism specifically and the life of faith more generally to a race. “Run in such a way that you may win it.” This is a strong voice of encouragement. Where are you giving and receiving encouragement in these days?
* Imagine these words being read aloud, and with feeling. When is the last time you spoke with a similar voice of conviction?