**Growing in Grace, Growing in Community: Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians**

***Spiritual Authority: What happens when we reject it?*** 1 Corinthians 4:6-21

The Corinthians had grown arrogant over what leaders they followed and the “special” brand of doctrine they emphasized or applied, all at the expense of both love and unity. The bottom line, though, was that they had gotten away from the two foundation stones of written revelation and apostolic authority. The clamor for “something new and relevant” is not new. The sign outside one local church reads, “Our faith is 2000 years old, but our thinking is not!” But our thinking, all of it, should grow out of our faith. Our thinking should be rooted in and informed by our faith. We do not adorn or improve on The Faith by our thinking, as Paul is about to tell the Corinthians: “Don’t go beyond what is written and what Jesus and the Apostles taught!”

❖ Disregarding spiritual authority leads to tribalism. vv. 6, 7

Leaving revelation and the apostles behind brings pride and new divisiveness.

❖ Disregarding spiritual authority leads to arrogance. vv. 8-13

Forsaking apostolic authority (and examples) can lead to thinking we’ve “arrived.”

❖ Disregarding spiritual authority leads us to ignore godly examples. vv. 14-17

We know godly leaders by how their lives conform to their message.

❖ Disregarding spiritual authority leads us to reject accountability. vv. 18-21

Once we leave “The Faith” behind, we forget that it will judge us.

**Growth Principle #5: The spiritually mature Christian humbly serves within the boundaries proscribed by God’s written authority (The Bible).**

***1. Why do we forget what God has said?*** Genesis 3:1-5

The hotbed of pride is doubt, or the casting aside or minimizing God’s view of things. So “going beyond what is written” is both a symptom and a cause of arrogance. This attitude pretends to know more than God, and uses that supposed knowledge to manipulate others. All cults and heresies begin precisely here. Think, for example, of how Mark 16:17, 18 has been twisted, misapplied, and abused.

***2. Who do we think we are, and what are we here to do?***

Many professing believers today, as in the first century, say that because they are “reigning with Christ, they are therefore entitled to riches, comfort, and universal healing. “We’re King’s Kids,” and so we should live like we are.” Paul pokes fun at this idea (4:8-13), reminding them of the plight of the true followers of Jesus, that is, suffering with Christ. Jesus said clearly that His Kingdom was “not of this world,” and so when we attempt to use the Gospel or the name of Jesus to make ourselves comfortable or wield political power, we subvert the message of suffering for others that He exemplified.

Paul argues that it’s not about boasting, but about true power--not political power, but life-changing power. This is the power to resist temptation and serve others in the fullness and fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, and self-control. Our task is not controlling others or establishing ourselves as another persecuted minority. It is being willing to suffer with Jesus so we can reign with Him. Romans 8:1-17; 2 Timothy 2:12. We are called to take up crosses, not find hot tubs.



***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. Am I content with God’s word, or am I always looking for “deeper truths” or higher understanding? Is the Bible enough, or am I drawn to stories of miracles, new “prophecies” or the appearances of a saint? Is the Bible my authority? How does it affect my life?

2. What is the temptation in believing “we’ve arrived” and are therefore entitled NOT to suffer? How does the unwillingness to suffer (or even not knowing we should) cut the nerve of service? What are the symptoms or proofs that Jesus has acted with power and changed a life?