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

***Thanks-Giving: How giving reflects our faith and the character of God -*** 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

 In only four short verses, one paragraph, the Apostle Paul helps the Corinthians understand the basics of giving. In a later letter, which we call Second Corinthians, he has to amplify that teaching and encourage them to fulfill their giving pledges, but nothing is introduced there which is not foreshadowed here. Beautiful in its simplicity and profundity, there is no more practical note on the discipline of giving than these words.

❖ Our giving should be purposeful. “. . .for God’s people.”

❖ Our giving should be based on God’s principles. “. . .what I told the Galatian churches.”

❖ Our giving should be regular. “. . .on the first day of every week.”

❖ Our giving should include everyone. “. . .each one of you. . .”

❖ Our giving should be proportional. “. . .a sum of money in keeping with his income.”

❖ Our giving should be accounted for and accountable. “. . .men you approve.”

**Growth Principle #19: The spiritually mature Christian gives generously through a local church to further God’s Kingdom by meeting the needs of others.**

 **1. Generosity is the will of God. Philippians 4:18**

 “I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”

**2. Generosity is an expression of faith in God’s promises. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5**

 “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.”

 **3. Generosity is an imitation of God and a sign of grace. 2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:15**

 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. . .Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

**4. Generosity is a participation in the Kingdom of God. 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

 “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

**5. Generosity is a heart issue, an indicator of our priorities. Matthew 6:19-21, 24**

 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”