Messy Grace **– wk 22 – Until Next Time**

**Corinthians written by the Apostle Paul to a church he planted 5 yrs earlier. Weird stuff was getting back to him. A challenge to grow up!**

**Paul has been correcting some wreck-lessness in their life**

**Overview chart or video. Paul’s final instructions – until next time.**

**500 verses on prayer (that would tell you it’s important) Little less than 500 on faith. When it comes to money and our material possessions there are over 2000 in the NT. Wow! Interestingly enough – we often avoid or ignore them. It was always front and center – it is a heart issue.**

**Today 1 out of 2000 - 1 Corinthians 16:1 Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. (follow examples of those you respect) 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.**

**Living A Generous Life: Pro 3:9-10, Mark 12:41-44, Numbers 18:26-29, 2 Corinthians 8:12-13, 9:6-15, Deuteronomy 26:12-13, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Psalm 37:25-26, Proverbs 11:25, Philippians 4:15-19, Ephesians 4:28, Malachi 3:10**

**The Ancient Tithe**

* **A family responsibility - Everyone in the family participated**
* **The best not the leftovers – Tithe = 1st ten percent**

**The top portion or resources – “Tithes and offering” They are different. Offering = free will gifts above the 10%.**

* **Based on what God provided - 10% equal sacrifice**

**In OT 33% - three tithes and a gleaning**

* **Given to support the kingdom ministry**

**Temple, priest, and poor – The priests were to live off a tithe**

* **IN the NT – the picture was of giving all – no limit.**

**A tithe and an offering were the beginning of generosity**

**THE TITHE BECAME A TIP: Generosity Has Become…**

* **An option instead of an obligation**

**Optional amount – a tip. And only sometimes times - and only for the few. Shockingly was not optional. Known by their gen. Ps 37:25-26.**

**Avg Christian gives 2.5% to church, it’s really a “twoth”**

* **An emotional response instead of a spiritual discipline**

**You give to what your moved by – if not you don’t give.**

**Tragedy giving, nothing wrong - but for some that is the only time…**

**We tend to give to the best fund raiser presentation - Selecting only personal interests - heart strings. Giving to causes rather than to God. \*\* There’s a whole industry for this**

* **Based on what’s left over**

**When I can and when it’s convenient. After my needs first. Some are taking what belongs to God and spending on yourself and your kids.**

**God has called us to be… based on that 1 out of 2000 passage**

* **Purposeful givers**

**1 Corinthians 16:1 Now about the collection for the Lord’s people:**

**Believing it makes a difference and is w/ purpose. (Jerusalem church)**

**It reflects our attitude - 2 Corinthians 9:7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (Cheerful givers)**

* **Regular givers - 16:2 On the first day of every week…**

**Sunday - regularly – Make is scheduled and Systematic – it is amazing when we plan on it, it gets done. (Every gym is filled in January)**

**We give that opportunity every Sunday just as the Bible says.**

* **Universal givers - 2 …each one…**

**God has called us all to be regular givers – not just a select few.**

**Avg church 9% carry the burden of the church finances.**

* **Proportionate givers**

**2 …of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income…**

**Equal sacrifice – we all do our part - about the devotion not the dollar.**

**The more blessed we become, the more generous we should be. Statistically biggest % of giving in middle income. The wealthy give less proportionality. (2 Cor 9:10-11 - Blessed to be a blessing)**

* **Intentional givers**

**2 …saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made…**

**If it is done regularly on purpose – no need for the “catch ups”**

* **Trusting givers**

**3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.**

**Trust it will be used accordingly, trusting the delegated handlers and that it will get to where it says and for God’s purpose.**

**Some give with strings attached – that is giving to your cause.**

**WHY GENEROSITY MATTERS: God owns all we have, and our generosity reflects that we understand this.**

**Generosity sows the seeds of contentment, gratitude, & eternal blessing - and breaks materialism and comparison off our backs.**

**At this - Paul gives some final personal requests. Revealing to us The Truth About Open Doors - and it’s not quite what you’d expect**

**1 Cor 16:9 …because a great door for effective work has opened to me…**

**A door Illus? - Will of God – how to know… Can’t get more in the middle of God’s will than being an apostle? Clarity and direction - writing bible… Surly he knows how to know God’s will…**

**1 Cor 16:5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. (Paul is all about relational ministry – no flybys)**

**LIFE IN THE CENTER OF GOD’S WILL – is not what you expect.**

**Uncertainty – “Perhaps… I hope to… if the Lord permits…”**

**The normal Christian experience is not always crystal clear**

**The reality is - God’s hand is best seen in the rearview mirror**

**Many of you struggle for clear directions – it is more like looking out a dirty window – or driving on the fog.**

**8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, (Spring- why?) 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.**

**Powerful Opponents**

**Notice a great door opened – and yet there was opposition.**

**An open door does not mean it will always come easy – there are those who will try to stand in the way and stop you – resist you.**

**An open door doesn’t mean smooth sailing Open doors are not decided by if there is no opposition, but by spiritual fruit.**

**1 Corinthians 16:8-9/ Exodus 4:21/ Exodus 23:27-30/ Judges 1:19**

**(check out the next think) 10 When Timothy (spiritual son of Paul’s – a pastor in Ephesus) comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, (why would he be afraid) for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. 11 No one, then, should treat him with contempt. (despise him) Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers. (Why can’t we be like the NT church? We are - Did not always get along.)**

**Power Struggles**

**Even Paul’s hand-picked leaders / messengers were not always liked or well received. The power struggles – looked down on (1 Tim 4:12)**

**Paul says, you better treat him nice. Right in middle of God’s will**

**(In the middle of God’s will…)12 Now about our brother Apollos: (popular among Corinth, great teacher) I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, (So I am sending him to hell) but he will go when he has the opportunity. (whatever, he’ll go when he wants to)**

**Disagreements**

**Paul had a game plan – send Tim and Apollos to help them get back on track. Apollos says no. Well – I tried. Get there when you can.**

**13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; *(act like men)* be strong. 14 Do everything in love. (he is telling them to be careful, be brave, be mindful)**

**Consistency**

**In the middle of God’s will – we can’t let our guard down spiritually.**

**IF things are going well – be ready the enemy will be on your heels.**

**If we do the right thing – we’ll always end up in the right place. It may not seem like all the time – but we will. Be consistent in doing what you know is right! (Acts 16:22-39, 23:10-33, 2 Tim 4:16-18)**

**When you feel like everything is going great – it is all easy sailing from here – be on your guard the enemy prowls…. / When you feel like quitting – when you’re not appreciated – when you get no thanks you’s, when you feel exhausted and discouraged – stand firm in the faith! / When you are afraid of what you see in front of you and it seem impossible – be courageous and strong! / When you feel attacked keep on loving!**

**1 Cor 16:15 You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord’s people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, 16 to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. 17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.**

**Accountability**

**Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus – the three men who brought news of Corinth to Paul and would be returning with this letter.**

**They told Paul the what’s up and were to return with instruction. Paul says – listen and follow their instruction – you need them.**

**If you want to grow in God’s will – accountability. No lone rangers!**

**Until next time – 1 Cor 16:19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. (Corint church started in their house – now working w/ Paul – still planting churches in their home) 20 All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. (Custom)**

**21 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. 22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! (Talking about poser Christians – those who talk of commitment but have not genuine relationship with Him.) Come, Lord! (Maranatha! – powerful!! One of the earliest Christian phrases) 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24 My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**Until next time 3 things:**

**1. Walk in generosity**

**Be one who is quick to let go and sees the need around you. This greatly reflects the heart of God in us.**

**Generous in our resources and our grace for others!**

**2. Walk in God’s will**

**The ups and downs – the obstacle and setbacks – stand firm!**

**Through prayer, God’s word and godly accountability.**

**3. Keep looking to Jesus!**

**His power – his strength – his grace – his forgiveness - his return!!!**

**1 Corinthians 16:13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14 Do everything in love.**

**So, until next time – Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!**

**Guest speaker next week!**

**Youth camp prayer!**