

## Maturity

**Opener:** What's something you've gotten better at as time has gone on?

**Scripture:** But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup>This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people."<sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:1-16

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people (*grace to us*). <sup>12</sup>It (*grace*) teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives (*grace through us*) in this present age (*the age of grace*), <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:11-14 (parentheses added)

When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious—that you, LORD God, might dwell there. Psalm 68:18

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

### Discussion Questions

1. Grace is often defined as God's unmerited favor, and it is, but is it more than that? How would you define the grace God gives us? How is grace apportioned in a way that relates to service in His kingdom? Eph. 4:7; Titus 2:11-14
2. Eph. 4:8-10 refers to Ps. 68:18 which describes a victorious military leader returning home leading a procession of POWs. Spoils of war are awarded to the victor, who in turn showers the spectators with generous gifts. How does this analogy describe the grace given to us due to Christ's death and resurrection?
3. By God's grace spiritual gifts are given to each believer. In fact, scripture names 19 spiritual gifts, including the five listed in Ephesians 4:11. How do vs. 12-13 explain why gifts are given?
4. Do you know which spiritual gifts you've been given? Why is it important to identify them? 1 Peter 4:10
5. Unity is critical to the life of the church. How is unity related to God's grace? What does it mean for the church to be unified? What doesn't it mean? How does unity in the church reflect God's nature? Eph. 4:13
6. If you've been in a church that's split or been seriously affected by conflict, how did it impact its members and reputation? What are some practical things we can do to promote unity and maturity in Christ?
7. What happens as we mature in Christ according to Eph. 4:13-16? What happens when truth is not spoken with love? Why do churches tend to attract likeminded leaders and congregants? Is that a good thing?

**Wrap Up:** It is impossible to overstate how important grace is. Grace is God's enabling favor to us and through us in this present age. We have access to God—that's His grace to us. Because of that access we can plug into what He wants us to do and become—that's His grace through us. Without grace there would be no unity, maturity, gifts, or ministry in the church. It shouldn't surprise us that the last word in God's word is about grace. "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." Revelations 22:21