

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 - Spiritual Maturity

1Co 3:1-4 ESV But I, **brothers**, could not address you as **spiritual people**, but as **people of the flesh**, as **infants** in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for **you are still of the flesh**. For while there is **jealousy and strife** among you, are you not of the flesh and **behaving only in a human way**? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," **are you not being merely human**?

3 Kinds of people identified in Chapter 2 & 3

1Co 2:13-15 ESV And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, **interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual**. 14 **The natural person** does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The **spiritual person judges all things**, but is himself to be judged by no one.

1. Vs 2:13- 14 (those who are spiritual) **The Natural Person** - one without the Holy Spirit
2. Vs 3:1 **Spiritual People**
3. Vs 3:1 **People of the flesh**

Who are the people of the flesh?

- they are **brothers**
- **infants** in Christ
- Not ready for solid food
- Still of the flesh
- Behaving only in a human way (i.e. being merely human) (jealousy and strife)

The tragedy of never progressing spiritually “even now you are not yet ready”

- Past Tense - “I fed you” --- “You were not ready”
- Present Tense **“Even NOW** you are not ready” --- **“You are STILL** in the flesh”

It is **OK to be an infant** in Christ when you are first born again --- But **you should not stay there** --- It would be a tragedy to remain as people of the flesh, long after we should have grown

There is a natural progression from infant to little child, to young men to fathers - the same should be true of our progress as Christians

- 1Jn 2:12-14 ESV I am writing to you, **little children**, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, **children**, because you know the Father. 14 I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

There was a time in my life...I spent most of my day in bed, I was incontinent, I could not feed myself..but I was a baby

God's intention is for maturity - which means becoming like Christ

Mature manhood is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

- Eph 4:11-13 ESV And he **gave** the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry, for **building up** the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,**

We have been predestined to be conformed to his image

- Rom 8:29 ESV For those whom he foreknew he also **predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Marks of a spiritual person

A spiritual person's behavior will reflect the work of God and the Holy Spirit

- For while there is **jealousy and strife** among you, are you not of the flesh and **behaving only in a human way**?
- The assumption is if they were mature, this jealousy and strife would not be ruling their lives

A spiritual person will embrace the wisdom of God and sound judgement

- 1Co 2:6 ESV Yet **among the mature** we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.
- 1Co 2:13-15 ESV And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, **interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.** 14 The **natural person** does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The **spiritual person judges all things**, but is himself to be judged by no one.
- Jas 3:13-18 ESV Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 **But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts**, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 **This is not the wisdom that comes down from above**, but is **earthly, unspiritual, demonic.** 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the **wisdom from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

A spiritual person acknowledges the teaching regarding spiritual gifts

- 1Co 14:37-40 ESV If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, **or spiritual**, he should acknowledge that **the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.** 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. 39 So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order.

A spiritual person has concern about the spiritual well-being of others

- Gal 6:1 ESV Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, **you who are spiritual should restore** him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

A spiritual person becomes intentional about their growth in the LORD

- 1Pe 2:1-2 ESV So **put away** all **malice** and all **deceit** and **hypocrisy** and **envy** and all **slander**. 2 Like **newborn** infants, **long for the pure spiritual milk** [***KJV Desire the sincere milk of the word***], that by it you may **grow up into salvation--**
- **PUT AWAY --- LONG FOR or DESIRE milk of the word --- THAT YOU MAY GROW is intentional**

Seeking the maturity of others is the aim of our ministry (our teaching and our prayer)

Col 1:28 NIV He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that **we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.**

Col 4:12 ESV Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, **that you may stand mature** and fully assured in all the will of God.

What about you?

If you were forced to judge yourself today? Would you most identify with

The Natural person? - prayer of salvation

The Spiritual Person? - continue to allow Him to work in you to be conformed to the image of Christ
Of the Person of the Flesh?

- If it is because you are a newborn babe - praise God and keep growing to be a child, a young man and a father
- If it is because you have not grown - and you remain a person of the flesh, then **PUT AWAY** the things that are stunting your growth, and desire the milk of the word that you may grow.