

Text: I Corinthians 2:14 – 3:4

Title: “Spiritual Babies to Spiritual Adults”

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION - How many of you, when you were children, had a place somewhere in your house where you measured how tall you were? And occasionally, maybe on a birthday, you stood up to that place and your mom or dad marked your height on the wall. And you could look back and see how much you’d grown since your last birthday. We do that because it’s expected that after a child is born they will grow.

Well the same thing is true in our spiritual lives. When a person is born again spiritually, the Bible explains that we ought to grow up ... to mature in our life in God.

Open your Bibles to I Corinthians 2:14. I’ll just remind you that the church in Corinth had some major-league problems. And we’re going to see today that at the root of it all is their lack of spiritual growth. Stop to think about how many of life’s problems could be solved, or even avoided, if we were living from a level of spiritual maturity where we acted and reacted like Jesus.

Before we get to that, you need to see the big picture here. And it starts with the fact that there are ...

1. TWO DISTINCT GROUPS OF HUMAN BEINGS

- **Natural people (2:14)**

1 Corinthians 2:14 - The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

We’ve been talking about the wisdom of God ... that is, the answers God has as to the big question, “What makes life work?” God’s answers to that are summed up in the Gospel and in the truth of His Word. The problem is that most people aren’t getting the answer because of the condition of their life.

In v.14 that kind of person is called “the man without the Spirit.” Actually, I like the way the NASB has this ... “the natural man.” He’s referring essentially to the person who has never received Christ. But it tells us more. The word means literally “soul man.” That is, this is a person whose life is driven by their own mind, will and emotions ... the soul.

This is basically all the natural equipment we have when we come into this world through the natural process of human birth.

Now, the spirit is the mechanism that enables a person to commune with God. And in a natural man, the spirit is dead; therefore he or she doesn’t have any way of communing with God.

That's why it says in v.14 that the natural person "does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The person without Christ is without the Spirit, and therefore cannot receive signals from God about living. So all they can do is pick up the signals of this world through their own mind and soul.

And that's the first category of human beings ... natural people. But there's another category...

- **Spiritual people (2:15-16)**

We read about them in vv.15-16.

1 Corinthians 2:15-16 - The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Now this person is a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. When a person is saved, the Spirit of Jesus comes to live in a person, giving life to something that was dead apart from Christ ... the spirit. And now with our spirit alive, we have the ability to connect with God through the Holy Spirit.

Now we as Christians may not always be open to the Spirit, obeying the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and led by the Spirit. But we are nonetheless "spiritual people."

As a "spiritual" man or woman, a Christian now has the capacity to receive and understand the truth, the wisdom of God.

When it says in v.16 that we (believers) have the mind of Christ, it means that we now possess the Spirit who enables us to understand the mind of the Lord about all matters.

So you can see that there's a big difference between the natural person and the spiritual person. What kind of person are you? You're one or the other. Have you received Christ? If you haven't then you are trying to operate your life without power and without directions. But if you have received Christ, you have His Spirit living in you to give you the power and the direction to live as you should.

But we also see that there are ...

2. TWO TYPES OF SPIRITUAL PEOPLE

- **Spiritual adults (3:1)**

1 Corinthians 3:1 - Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual...

Paul says, "You're spiritual, in that you are saved. But I couldn't really speak to you as a mature Christian." So one type of believer (spiritual person) is a maturing believer. This is the person

who not has the capability to discern truth, growing in their understanding of the Lord and putting God's Word into practice in their lives.

Unfortunately, Paul said, I couldn't address you like I should be able to address a maturing Christian. Why? Because they were the second type of believer ...

- **Spiritual babies (3:1)**

That's the second kind of Christian (or spiritual person). They're saved, but it still doesn't show very much.

1 Corinthians 3:1 - Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.

Again, the NASB has a better translation here. It says they are, "men of flesh ... babes in Christ."

"Men of flesh" refers to people whose behavior still resembles the world ... still dominated by the desires of the sinful human nature.

Note: Actually, this is where every new Christian starts. We start off as babies in Christ ... immature. We still think like the world, because that's the way we've been trained to think. Spiritual things are difficult for us to grasp at first because we aren't trained yet.

KEY - It's not a sin to be spiritually immature, because that's where every new Christian starts.

It's not a sin to be spiritually immature. It's a sin to remain spiritually immature.

Now, let's look a little more closely at spiritual babies. That's where we all start, but it isn't to be the state we remain in all of our Christian life.

3. SPIRITUAL BABIES...

- **Talk spiritual baby talk (3:1)**

1 Corinthians 3:1 - Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.

In other words, Paul says, "You're 'spiritual' in that you are saved. But I couldn't speak to you as a spiritual person because you're still babies. You communicate with baby talk.

ILLUSTRATION – Now it's been about twenty-five years since Nan and I have had babies around the house. But with our granddaughter Caroline coming along, we're being reminded of baby things again ... like baby talk. Isn't it amazing how excited we get over baby talk. Watch this.

VIDEO – Show video clip of Caroline's baby talk.

And if you want to see something really funny, you should have video of Nan and me talking back to Caroline mimicking her baby talk.

Now this is all great fun. But can you imagine the heartache if you were to shoot video of her when she's eighteen years old and she's still talking like that. It wouldn't be funny. It would mean that something terrible has happened in her development.

One thing about babies is that they are easily bored. It's hard to keep their attention for very long. But as they grow, their attention span gets greater. So you can begin to carry on more complicated conversations with them.

And the same thing is true spiritually. At first, you talk spiritual baby talk to a new Christian. But then as their spiritual attention span grows, you can have more complicated conversations with them about the things of God.

Note: I realize that there is a tremendous amount of boredom in church. I fully understand that I must not make "boring" what God has made "exciting." God forgive us preachers for doing that. I want to make the truth as interesting to you as I can make it.

But to be honest with you, the reason many of you are bored with church is for the same reason that children are bored sitting at the dinner table while adults are having a conversation. You're not interested in what interests mature people.

And some of you feel like I've insulted you in saying that. I don't mean to. I just want to challenge you to grow.

Spiritual babies talk spiritual baby talk. They also ...

- **Eat spiritual baby food (3:2)**

1 Corinthians 3:2 - I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

Now babies can only handle a particular kind of diet, and you have to be careful what you feed them.

ILLUSTRATION – Now we've been reacquainted with baby talk, and with baby food. Have you seen what they're wanting us to feed babies these days. I was in the grocery store the other day and I picked up a few of these that were most interesting. Show baby food jars.

Now, it wouldn't surprise you to go into a restaurant and see a mom or dad feeding their baby this rot. But it would really surprise you to find the same parents feeding it to a teenager, or to an adult. Baby food is made for immature digestive systems, not mature digestive systems.

Back to the situation with the Corinthians ... Paul said when I first started teaching you, I had to give you milk. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, that's the way you have to start with new Christians. But if they grow as they should, they should be able to handle a little heavier diet of spiritual truth.

But that wasn't the case in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 3:2 - I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

Just stop for a second and think about the level of your spiritual maturity ... your spiritual diet and appetite. One good gauge of this is what you do with the Word of God during the week. When is the last time you opened the Bible you hold in your hand? Was it the last time you were in church? If that's the case, you're being spoon fed, when you ought to be feeding yourself on the food of God's Word.

There's something else about spiritual babies. They...

- **Exhibit spiritual baby behavior (3:3-4)**

They talk like babies, they eat like babies and they act like babies.

ILLUSTRATION – Again, we expect babies to act like babies. If you go over to the nursery right now where our volunteers are helping out with worship care, you'll see this in every room. Those that are old enough to play with toys can be pretty selfish about those toys. And one of the first words we learn is the word "mine!"

Immature Christians, baby Christians, can exhibit the same kind of behavior.

1 Corinthians 3:3-4 - You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

"Jealousy" is the attitude of craving what another person has.

"Quarreling" is the action that results from the attitude.

You know what he's saying here? He's saying that the real measure of spiritual maturity is not how many sermons you listen to, or how many Christian books you read, or how many times you go to church in a week. All of those can be part of spiritual maturity, but a spiritually immature person can still do all of that.

No, the real measure of spiritual maturity has to do with the way you treat other people. Spiritual maturity is happening when the Spirit of God can take the truths of God's Word and use them like a scalpel to do surgery to cut away the selfish aspects of our lives to where we start treating others the way Jesus would treat them.

CONCLUSION

I remind you that it's not wrong to be spiritually immature. That's where we all start. It's wrong to stay spiritually immature.

Spiritual maturity has nothing to do with chronological age. You may be 15 or 50 or 75, but that doesn't necessarily say anything about your spiritual maturity.

We never arrive. We're always growing. Is your walk with God and your love for others noticeably different from where it was a year ago, five years ago?

Here's the exciting thing: God wants you to grow, and that's the reason that He gives the Holy Spirit. The good news is that God doesn't just leave you on your own. He helps you grow.