

I Cor 3:1-4:21

Corinthians, Session Three

Spiritual Immaturity Divides (3:1-4)

“Mere lapse of time does not bring Christian maturity” (Barrett). How then do we grow?

What are the indicators of spiritual readiness? Not being ready?

“Are you not being merely human?” (v. 4) reminds me of when Jesus asks, “Don’t even tax collectors do that?” (Mt 5:46) We are called to a higher standard. Describe it.

Leaders Who Are a Team Unify (3:5-23)

In v. 9, Paul switches imagery from field (v. 6-9) to building (v. 10-17). Both involve process. Is any part of the process more important than another? Independent from another?

The Day = Last Day = Judgment Day. What is the purpose of the fire in v. 13?

What work qualifies as gold, silver or precious stones?

What work qualifies as wood, hay or straw?

“These verses urge us to take with full seriousness both the certainty of eternal life and scrutiny which the Lord will bring to our daily service as Christians... This is both a warning and an encouragement: God’s temple is holy and you are that temple” (Prior, 60). Note the “you” is plural in v. 16 and 17. How does that change or deepen the meaning?

What do you make of the threat to destroy in v. 17?

Paul quotes Eliphaz in Job 5:13 and 5:12 in v. 19 and 20.

Unpack this all-encompassing statement: “You are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

Faith Stewards (4:1-5)

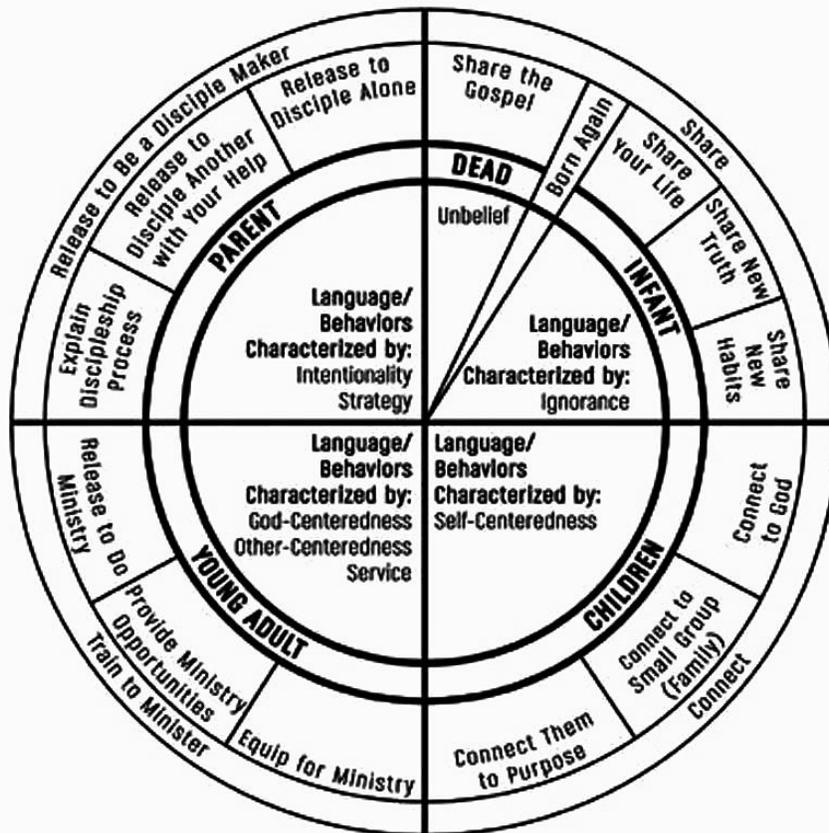
“Greek and Roman philosophers (eg Plato and Socrates) regarded conscience as passing final judgment on a man. For Paul, only God can do this. The essential ground for Paul’s clear conscience is the act that God ‘justifies the ungodly’ (Rom. 4:5) by virtue of the cross of Christ” (Prior, 63).

What makes for proper judgment?

Humble Servants (4:6-13)

“At the heart of the boasting at Corinth was the conviction that they were really a successful, lively, mature and effective church. The Christians were satisfied with their spirituality, their leadership, and the general quality of life together. They had settled down into the illusion that they had become the best they could be. They thought they had ‘arrived’. Paul readily acknowledges that he would love to be set fully free in Christ, together with the Corinthians...He would love to be beyond all the persecution, the batterings, the depression and sheer slog of being fools for Christ’s sake. They may have arrived, but he has not.” (Prior, 65).

“For people, like the Corinthians, who are concerned for their own status, reputation and popularity, authentic Christian ministry is immensely difficult to accept, let alone to embrace. The truth that God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness gets through to us very slowly” (Prior, 66).



The Five Stages of Discipleship

Spiritual Parents (4:14-21)

“Children often make loud claims in a boastful way: it is a reflection of their immaturity. There is a lot of talk, and not very much power to put the big words into action. So Paul ends these two chapters in the same mood as he began—with a strong (and strongly felt) plea to Corinthians to stop boasting and to grow up: the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.”