



# REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

## *Weekly Bible Study*

### Two Kinds of Christians

Key Verses: [1 Co 3:1-9](#)

#### I. Carnal Christians

Although when we become saved we are placed or baptized into Christ's body ([Ro 12:5](#); [1 Co 1:30](#); [12:13](#)), we are not thereby all equally mature. In Corinth Paul recognized that many of the believers were not growing and called them "carnal" Christians. "And I, brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" ([1 Co 3:1](#)). As "babes in Christ," carnal Christians have had the new birth, but they have not grown spiritually. Therefore, these immature believers must be fed baby food as were the Corinthians ([1 Co 3:2](#)).

1. The reason there is so much baby food made available to Christians today is because there are so many Christians who are just that, babies! If Christians would only grow up and work for God instead of being crybabies who only want to be fed, our world would probably experience a great spiritual revolution. The reason why so little is done for God is because babies cannot work. They just complain and cry for comfort!

2. One treatment for carnal Christians is to feed them the solid spiritual food that they need to grow. To treat such a Christian constantly like a baby will perpetuate his or her state of immaturity. One might ask, who is the blame here then? Ultimately it is the individual, and partially the Spiritual leaders (Pastors and

Ministers) are partially responsible for the infantile state of Christians today insofar as they have diagnosed their people as babies and have, consequently, only given them elementary truths. The result is that their congregations remain unfruitful for Christ.

Carnal Christians are also those whose bodily care is their greatest concern. The Greek word for carnal is *sarkikós*, derived from *sárx*, flesh, body. Flesh is the old man in us who was crucified together with Christ when we believed ([Ro 6:6](#)), and he remains there during our entire Christian life, raising his ugly head to claim pre-eminence over the new creation we have become through faith in Jesus Christ ([2 Co 5:17](#)).

Even Paul sometimes felt so defeated by the old man within him that he called himself, *sarkikós* ([Ro 7:14](#)). He diagnosed the state of the Corinthian Christians from his own experience, and we should also discern the same struggle between the flesh and spirit in ourselves.

Another symptom of Christian babyhood is attachment to the humans who nurture them. In Corinth, the believers became followers of Paul, Peter, Apollos, etc. We are also baby Christians if our allegiance to any human Christian leader or denomination comes before our obedient and humble attachment to Jesus Christ.

Paul tried to bring the Corinthians to their senses by asking them who, after all, was crucified for them, Paul or Christ? (See [1 Co 1:13](#)). Likewise, we must not put those preachers whom we see and hear closer to our hearts than Jesus who died for us and now lives, making constant intercession for us ([Heb 7:25](#)). If we put Christ first, we will start to grow into spiritual adulthood.

A carnal Christian is one who places any particular doctrine or practice that distinguishes him or her from other Christians as the basis of his acceptance of and fellowship with them. Apparently, the Corinthians took pride in their baptism ([1 Co 1:13-17](#)). It is not through water baptism that we become brothers and sisters, but it is through our common redemption by Christ Jesus. While he chided the Corinthian Christians for being carnal babies, observe how Paul in the same breath called them brothers ([1 Co 1:10; 2:1](#)). Our brotherhood rests solely in our union with Jesus Christ ([Eph 4:4-6](#)), and not in our baptism, as important as that may be.

The Corinthians were also filled with an attitude of spiritual superiority, which is another mark of an immature Christian. When Paul addressed them as he did in [1 Co 12:1](#), he really intimated that they were ignorant of spiritual gifts. Similarly today, a carnal Christian learns to do something "in the flesh" then calls it a spiritual gift. This person must guard against the ensuing spiritual pride which accompanies such a work. Endeavoring to prove that one has more gifts than others is certainly a sign of spiritual babyhood

## II. Spiritual Christians

These believers are exactly the opposite of the carnal Christians. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. . . ." ([1 Co 3:1](#)).

The spiritual Christian, no matter how much he accomplishes for Christ, realizes that it is God who gives the increase ([1 Co 3:6](#)). That verb *auxáncō*, "to give increase" ("to cause to grow," NASB; to "make things grow," NIV) is very important for us to understand in [1 Co 3:6](#). It is growth which is brought about by a factor or a cause other than oneself. A seed is placed in the ground, it is watered, and it grows. In the regularity of the experience, we are tempted to conclude that there is self-generation. But it is not so.

We must always recognize that it is God who puts life into the seed, and it is God who makes it grow. A manmade seed with all the same constituent parts, placed in the ground and watered, will never grow. A spiritual Christian is one who recognizes and bows to God's power in all of the demonstrations of life. He recognizes that he is the zero after the one and that without the one coming first, he will always be a zero.

A mature Christian is one who never considers himself as having arrived. He is constantly growing; the moment he stops growing he is reverting to the status of carnality. In [1 Co 3:9](#) there is a word translated "building." It is *oikodomē*, which means a building in the process of being constructed. "For we are laborers together with God: . . . ye are God's building." He never finishes with us till our last breath. When we allow Him to keep on building us, we are spiritual. Interestingly enough, *oikodomē* is the same Greek word used in [2 Co 5:1](#) to represent our eternal house in the heavens. The quality of our home in heaven will be determined by the quality of our lives as Christians on earth. What better incentive could we have to become less carnal and more spiritual!

***What kind of Christian are you--Carnal or a Spiritual Christian? To thy own self be true.***