



# Blueprint for the Church:

## *Live the Gospel!*

Small Group Study Guide



### 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-4

## Turn From Childish Ways

Paul has concluded a look at the wisdom of God, the Gospel, and the work of the Spirit in revealing this wisdom and in the church having received the Spirit “so that we may know the things freely given to us by God”. And this is the difference between believers and non-believers.

Believers have received the wisdom of God, the message of Christ and Him crucified and all that is connected to such a rich doctrine and truth. Non-believers see this message as foolish and are unable to accept it. Paul now makes a transition back to his original concern of what was occurring in the Corinthian church which goes contrary to the Blueprint for the Church. Our text for this study looks at this key transition in his argument.

1. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, Paul differentiates between the natural man and the spiritual man. In this passage, he identifies the spiritual man as the one who has received the Spirit; in other words, he is a believer. Now in 1 Corinthians 3:1, Paul says he cannot speak to them as “spiritual men”, but he calls them brothers and refers to them as infants in Christ; these are clear references to them as being believers. So, how is Paul using the word “spiritual” in this verse which differs from his use in verse 2:15?
2. The reason Paul says he cannot address the Corinthian believers as “spiritual men” is because they “are still fleshly”. What does it mean to be “fleshly”? What are characteristics of a Christian who is still “fleshly”?
3. John MacArthur has stated that the “one word that best characterized the flesh, our humanness, our Adamic nature, is selfish.”<sup>1</sup>
  - In what way is jealousy a form of selfishness? Give an example.
  - In what way is strife or division a form of selfishness? Give an example.

<sup>1</sup>John MacArthur,  
*The MacArthur New  
Testament Commentary:  
1 Corinthians* (Chicago:  
Moody, 1984), p. 68.

Don't Forget:

*Discuss the Sermon Notes from this week*

<sup>2</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), p. 128.

4. It has been stated that the main thrust of Paul's thinking in this passage is that "spiritual people are to walk in the Spirit. If they do otherwise, they are 'worldly' and are called upon to desist. Remaining worldly is not one of the options."<sup>2</sup>
- Do you agree or disagree with this summary of the passage?
  - If you agree with this assessment, how does this speak against those who create a classification of and excuse those Christians who are called "carnal Christians"?
5. Based upon what is said in this passage, how would you attempt to encourage and exhort a believer who is acting in a way that reflects the ideas, passions, priorities and values that the world holds?

<sup>3</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), pp. 290, 293.

6. The issue in focus in this passage is not that they have not progressed to a deeper understanding of doctrine, but that they are "being childish". In other words, they were in principle focused on Christ but in "practice they were focused on the interests of self."<sup>3</sup>

- In what specific ways can childishness become evident in the church?
- How is this childishness destructive to the unity and harmony of the church and go contrary to God's Blueprint for the Church?
- How does this childishness detract from the mission of the church in giving glory to the name of the Lord?

**BIBLE MEMORY:**

*For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?*

*1 Corinthians 3:3*

7. Mark on the scale below where you see your current spiritual state of being: more childish or more mature:

Childish

Mature

What are some specific areas of "childishness" that you need to repent and turn from in your daily walk?

**For Next Week:**  
**Prayerfully meditate and study the following: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9**