THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE

G. Michael Cocoris

How many types of people are there? Hippocrates, the father of medicine, said there were four types of people: choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholy. Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist, said there were two: extroverts and introverts. Solomon, in his God-given wisdom, named a number of different types of people in the book of Proverbs, including the wise, the fool, the simpleton, the scoffer, the scorner, the lazy, etc.

Spiritually, how many types of people are there? As a general rule, Christians divide people into two classifications: believers and unbelievers, saved and lost, the heaven-bound and hell-bound. That is true, but the apostle Paul spiritually divides people into three spiritual categories. What are the three types of people from a spiritual point of view?

The Natural Man

The Type The first type is the natural man. Paul says of him, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14a). According to Jude, he does not *possess* the Holy Spirit (see Jude 19, where "natural" is translated "sensual").

The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. The Greek word translated "receive" means "to receive, accept, receive kindly or hospitably (A-S). It carries the connotation of "welcome." It is the usual word for receiving a guest (Morris). In the context of this passage, the things of the Spirit of God are the wisdom revealed by Him in words. Paul explains why he speaks the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:6), that is, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), to the spiritually mature.

The Explanation Paul further explains, "For they are foolishness to him." (1 Cor. 2:14b). The natural man does not welcome or receive the wisdom revealed by the Holy Spirit because he considers it foolish. The Greek word translated "foolishness" means "dull, insipid, tasteless, stupid." The unsaved man considers the preaching of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18) and the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10) to be foolishness.

Paul adds, "Nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14c). The unsaved man does not have the ability to grasp the wisdom of God (Job 28). The Word of God is spiritually discerned. It requires characteristics that he does not possess. The process is beyond him. A person must have the Holy Spirit to comprehend the truths of God.

The issue is not that he does not or he will not; it is that he cannot. Nor is the issue that the unsaved person cannot understand the facts of the message of God. He does not have the capacity to examine them and draw correct conclusions from them. His evaluation is eschewed. The Word of God is to him silly nonsense. The natural man's attitudes and appetites are not right.

Vance Havner said, "The wise Christian wastes no time trying to explain God's program to unregenerate men; it would be casting pearls before swine. He might as well try to describe a sunset to a blind man or discuss nuclear physics with a monument in the city park. The natural man cannot receive such things. One might as well try to catch sunbeams with a fishhook as to lay hold of God's revelation unassisted by the Holy Spirit. Unless one is born of the Spirit and taught

by Him, all this is utterly foreign to him. Being a Ph.D. does not help, for in this realm, it could mean 'Phenomenal Dud!"

A real love letter is ridiculous to everyone but the sender and the recipient.

Shortly after color television was introduced, a viewer wrote a letter to his local television station complaining that the pictures were still coming to him in black and white. Accusing the management of deliberately misleading the public, he demanded an apology. The broadcast official explained to the disgruntled customer as kindly as possible that color pictures could not be picked up on his ordinary black-and-white set. The difficulty was not in their transmission but in his receiver. Likewise, the difficulty is not with the wisdom of the Word of God but in the ability of the natural man to receive it.

The Maturity

The Type The second kind of man is the spiritual man. Concerning him, Paul states, "But he who is spiritual judges all things" (1 Cor. 2:15). The spiritual man is the spiritually mature (Constable). Paul's point in this passage is that he speaks wisdom to the mature (1 Cor. 2:6). Galatians 6:1 confirms this view. The spiritually mature are to restore the fallen. Not all who have the Spirit, or even all in whom the Spirit works are equipped to do that. The mature, on the other hand, are.

The spiritually mature judge all things (2:15). The word translated "judge" in verse 15 is the same as was translated "discern" in verse 14. The natural man cannot discern the wisdom of the Spirit of God. The spiritually mature discerns all things, that is, in this context, the wisdom of God. The spiritual man not only sees the Son, he sees everything else by it.

Some things are microscopically discerned because they are invisible to the naked eye. Some things are telescopically discerned; they can only be discerned through a telescope. Some things are spiritually discerned; the world's greatest intellects are of no avail in fathoming or understanding spiritual matters unless the Spirit of God illuminates them. The spiritual man has the equipment and knows how to use it.

"Yet," Paul says, "he himself is rightly judged by no one" (1 Cor. 2:15). Again, the word "judged" is the word "discern." "No one," no doubt, is limited to the natural man. Thus, the spiritual man is a riddle (Lightfoot), an enigma (Morris) to the natural man because he cannot discern spiritual things or the spiritual man.

The Explanation Paul supports his claim that no natural man discerns the spiritual man ("for"). "For "Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). He quotes Isaiah 40:13 and asks a question. The "we" here, as is the case throughout the passage, refers to Paul and the other inspired teachers, not to all believers (1 Cor. 2:6, 7, 10, 13). By the way, here is another case where Jehovah of the Old Testament is equated with Jesus of the New Testament.

Paul's logic is that no one can instruct the Lord. We have the mind of Christ and, therefore, no one can instruct, discern, or judge us. The Holy Spirit, who knows the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), had revealed the words and wisdom of God to Paul and others (1 Cor. 2:12). Therefore, Paul could say that he had the mind of Christ, and beyond that, that no natural man could judge him, for to do so would be to instruct the Lord.

If the President told some of his plans and purposes to an aid, and the aid spoke the mind of the President, to criticize what the aid said would be to criticize what the President had said. People

do not understand the mature believer because the Word is in him and they do not understand the Word of God.

Spiritual maturity is Christ-like maturity. Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Lk. 6:40). In Romans, Paul said that God has predestinated us to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). In Galatians, Paul said that he labored "until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). In Ephesians, Paul said that the body (the church) is to be built up until we all come "to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ … speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Eph. 4:13, 15).

Christ-likeness is being full of grace and truth. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17). Peter exhorts us to "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Christ-like, spiritually mature believers are characterized by knowledge of the truth. Jesus was full of truth (Jn. 1:14). Peter says, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge" (2 Pet. 1:5). Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Mature believers know what they believe and why they believe it. Actually, there are levels of knowledge and levels of maturity. For example, when it comes to knowledge at level one, a person can describe a particular doctrine. At level two, the person can demonstrate it. At level three, he can defend it.

For example, believers with level one knowledge of salvation know that to be saved, one must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but they can't go beyond that; they cannot take a Bible and show you where it says that. Believers with level two knowledge of salvation can show you in the Bible where it says that. Believers with level three knowledge of salvation can defend the doctrine of salvation by faith by showing that the Bible teaches is not by works. Now, can you do that with the doctrine of eternal security?

Christ-like, spiritually mature believers are characterized by love and grace. Jesus was full of grace (Jn. 1:14). When Paul describes love, he begins with two positive attributes: patience and kindness (1 Cor. 13:4). Some people are patient by temperament. They were born patient. Some people become more patient the older they get. Age tends to make people more patient. Some people are patient as a result of the work of the Spirit of God in their lives.

Christ-like, spiritually mature believers are characterized by enduring trials with joy. The writer to the Hebrews says, "For the joy that was set before Him, (Jesus) endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4).

Christ-like, spiritually mature people are characterized as fishers of men. Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost (Lk. 19:10). So if you follow Jesus, you will be like Jesus, meaning you will fish for men. He said, "Follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men" (Mt. 4:19). In the New Testament, witnessing is telling people that they witnessed the resurrection of Christ. In that sense, we are not witnesses, and we do not do witnessing. The closest application to it is that we give our testimony. The New Testament tells us to announce the gospel (the English translation is "preach the gospel").

The key word in this description is "characterize." Christ-like spiritual maturity is not having a little knowledge, doing acts of kindness occasionally, or enduring one or two trials without complaint or witnessing to a few people. Christ-like spiritually mature believers are characterized by these things. Being full of the knowledge of truth, being loving and gracious, enduring trials with joy, and fishing for the lost are habits. These things are second nature to a mature believer. Love manifests itself in service (Mk. 10:45; Gal. 5:13). Part of love is loving your enemies (Lk. 6:27-28, 32-33). Part of service is seeking to see people saved (Lk. 19:10; Mt. 4:19).

The Immaturity

The Type The third kind of man is a babe. Addressing the Corinthians directly, Paul says, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). In other words, they were immature. The Greek word translated "carnal" means "associated with or pertaining to the flesh." A babe is an infant. This is not a charge against them or a rebuke. Babyhood is inevitable.

Since they were babes, Paul says when he was there, "I fed you with milk and not with solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2). What is milk and what is meat? Apparently, in this context, milk is Christ crucified because Paul says that's what he preached when he was there (1 Cor. 2:2), and what he preached was milk (1 Cor. 3:2). Meat is what he did not give them (1 Cor. 3:2), so it must be the wisdom (1 Cor. 2:6), the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), which he only gave to the mature (2:6).

With the words "and even now you are still not able" (1 Cor. 3:2). Paul indicts the Corinthians. The Greek text says, "But neither yet now," an emphatic expression. Being a babe is all right when firstborn, but these believers should have outgrown that stage long ago.

The Explanation Paul explains, "For you are still carnal" (1 Cor. 3:3). Paul is saying, "You are still carnal; you are still babes." His proof is, "For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). There is a progression in this verse: envy or jealousy produces strife, and strife results in divisions (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul accuses them of walking like mere men, that is, like natural men (1 Cor. 2:14). Paul's proof ("for") that the Corinthians were behaving like unsaved men is "For where one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (1 Cor. 3:4). Earlier, Paul had mentioned four factions in the church (1 Cor. 1:12). Why he mentions only two here is not clear. His point, however, is that the party spirit among them demonstrated their carnality.

Christians in America today are more eager to hear what a man of God says than they are to hear what the Word of God says. They will travel many miles to hear their favorite preacher, but they won't walk across their living room to pick up their Bible and dig into it for themselves.

Spiritually immature believers are not Christ-like. They are characterized by a lack knowledge of the truth. Consequently, they are unstable. They are "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:14). In some cases, they have not added integrity (virtue) to their faith (2 Pet. 1:5).

Spiritually immature believers are characterized by not being loving and gracious. They are full of envy, jealousy, strife, and divisions. They are impatient and unkind.

Spiritually immature believers are characterized by not enduring trials with joy. They murmur, grip, and complain. They blame shift and play the victim.

Spiritually immature believers are characterized by not fishing for men. They are silent when they should be speaking about the things of the Lord.

The key word in this description is "characterize." Spiritually immaturity believers are characterized by ignorance of spiritual truth, impatience, anger, bitterness, wrath, jealousy, malice, and unconcerned and silence toward unbelievers. They are selfish instead of sacrificial. They are overcome instead of being overcomers. There are levels of spiritual immaturity. So, just conquering some of these things does not mean that you have reached spiritual maturity.

Oscar Wilde remarked, "You're only young once; you can be immature indefinitely."

Summary: From a spiritual point of view, there are three types of people: the natural, the spiritually mature, and the spiritually immature.

The natural do not know Christ. The mature are Christ-like and the immature are more like the natural than Christ.

To move from natural to babe, trust Christ. How does an immature person become mature? Most pastors try to produce spiritual maturity by preaching about the characteristics of maturity and exhorting people to practice those characteristics. While there may be some benefit to that, it is not exactly what the New Testament teaches. You do not have to beg, exhort, or threaten mature people to be mature. There is a place for those things, but those things by themselves are not the solution. If that is all that happens, then an immature person's practice is a characteristic of maturity once in a while, and then they lapse back into immaturity.

The missing element in growing from maturity to immaturity is food. Peter says, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." (2 Pet. 2:2). How do babies grow? Do they grow up by their parents telling them what adults do? Yes, there is an element of truth to that, but if that is all that were done, the baby would not go to spiritual maturity; it would die of starvation. Babies grow by drinking milk! Spiritual babies grow by drinking the spiritual milk of the Word of God.

So why don't more spiritually immature people become spiritually mature? That is where the illustration breaks down. In the case of a baby, the natural hunger cries out for milk. Spiritually, desire is commanded. According to Peter, it is sin that is killing your desire.

I don't like vegetables. I decided that good health dictated that I eat vegetables. So I began to eat vegetables and developed a taste for them to the point of missing them!

By the way, if you do not think you need to grow, the Bible has a word for you—deceived!