



1 Corinthians 3:1-4

(1) And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. (2) I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; (3) for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? (4) For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?

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The Corinthians identified with spiritual leaders (wrongly-identified "benefactors"; see [Luke 22:24-26](#)) more than with [God](#), and this carnality was creating division. The apostles clearly recognized that God had apportioned the Christian sphere among specific domains, and so church members within the domains *should* look to the leader God had provided for them ([II Corinthians 10:12-16](#)). The problem, however, was that the Corinthians were staring solely at the human governments that God had put into place—and He *did* put them into place—rather than looking to the One above them all.

This, too, is a type of Nannyism: a mental delegation of responsibilities to human government of what belongs only to God. The fact is, we are all impressed by the strong horse. We all want to be on the winning team. We all rally around a leader who appears to be going places and accomplishing great things because we subconsciously anticipate that he can also take care of us and carry us along with his positive momentum. The Corinthians were focusing on human leadership because of what they felt the leaders could do for them. If, instead, they had been focusing on God, they would have accepted the leadership He had provided for the domain in which they found themselves and kept on working on growing, overcoming, and developing spiritual character.

Obviously, Paul did not contribute to their condition—he was trying to disabuse them of it by pointing out that it was causing the Body to fracture—but from his other writings, it is plain that other, false ministers were promoting Nannyism by seeking a following rather than pointing people to God. We can see a similar effect today when church leaders stir up fear over the coming Tribulation but then offer assurances of safety and God's favor (Nannyism) simply because one is a member of the "right" church—regardless of whether one ever develops character, makes strides in overcoming his human nature, produces the [fruit of the Spirit](#), or grows into the image of the Father and the Son. When we have nothing to struggle against, and the consequences are chronically muted (if only in our minds), we become complacent, and our spiritual health atrophies.

If one's father is king, governor, town mayor, or the school principal, the temptation exists to behave as if the normal rules of life do not apply. Likewise, if one's spiritual leader has become the "strong horse" or one's church has become "the winning team," there is the same tendency to forget oneself and behave as if there will never really be any consequences. This may seem agreeable in the short term, but if it is not arrested and reversed, it will do incalculable damage to one's character.

— David C. Grabbe

To learn more, see:

[The Nanny Church \(Part Three\)](#)

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