

God-given growth

Notes on the Bible readings

- Paul begins to reprimand the Corinthians by comparing them to babies who are not yet weaned. He has heard that there is quarrelling and jealousy, and he sees this as childish and inappropriate behaviour. He believes that the Corinthians ought to have known better, but appears to excuse them because of their immaturity in the Christian faith.

- Paul returns to the theme of disunity, this time in order to counteract those who claim to belong to factions, following Paul or Apollos. He uses an analogy from farming: it is not always the same person who looks after a crop, but each has a part to play and all have value. Thus, Paul emphasises the unity of Apollos and himself as role models for the Corinthians, but it is only God who gives the growth.

- Paul concludes this section by referring to the Corinthians as servants. This enables him to highlight the importance of working together and working for God.

- In the Gospel reading, Jesus also addresses the theme of living in unity. He revisits and reinterprets the Ten Commandments, indicating his authority and teaching about relationship at its deepest level. Jesus wants everyone to live a moral life and be people who can always be trusted to be truthful.

- Both Paul and Jesus, in different ways, are emphasising the need for us to fully rely on God and for him to be the influencer in our relationships, choices and growth in faith.

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Questions for reflection

- ▶ How might you use this image to represent God-given growth?
- ▶ How does spiritual growth compare to physical growth?
- ▶ Who/what has played a part in your spiritual growth?



A prayer of approach

*We come to you today, loving God,
asking for your blessing on:
our worship, our prayers, our fellowship, our relationships,
and our role in the community and in the world. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*We pray for all those whose growth has been stifled.
For children abused, neglected, criticised and bullied:
For those in war zones, whose lives and homes have been destroyed.
For those suffering from illness, whose choices have been taken from them.*

We pray for churches, communities and nations where division and prejudice have undermined trust and where pain and discord go unhealed.

*We pray for animals captured and caged, for those who never feel the sun on their back and whose lives are cut terribly short.
We pray for ourselves, in every area of our lives, where we have not grown into the people we could be. Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Loving God,
there have been many seeds planted in the garden of my life.
Some have died, some have flourished.
Some have brought joy, some pain.
Some I have cherished, and some I have neglected.
Some I have valued, and some I have taken for granted.
As I look back, and as I go forward, may I learn from mistakes
and embrace new challenges – to your glory. Amen.*

Live your faith

Find out about seed-funding projects and see if you can support one of them. Follow the progress of the organisation you are supporting.