

Pressing on & growing up



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Apollos watered it, but
God has been making it
grow."
1 Cor 3:6*

Progressing in our Christian life...

Growth is a strong theme in the New Testament. On an individual level we are encouraged to press on to maturity. On a corporate level, God's people are being built into a temple.

Being a Christian is not a static thing. It's dynamic. There is movement. There is "progress" – a word familiar to us in the title of John Bunyan's famous book. Growth is not automatic. It involves our participation and cooperation.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow." (1 Cor. 3:6) Peter wrote, "Crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." (1 Peter 3:2). So, it's a collaborative effort and something we should actively seek.

In nature growth goes in spurts. I remember back in my schooldays doing an experiment in my biology class. We measured the growth of a geranium plant over a period of time. For a while it was quite rapid. Then it levelled off. Then it became more rapid again. We plotted a graph and it was S shaped. Growth in nature involves

alternating expansion and consolidation. I think it works much the same in the Christian life. But it is possible to get stuck which is not a good thing because God intends that we should be fruitful. Fruit bearing is one of the marks of a disciple. The graph should not be horizontal for too long.

One thing that God sometimes does to help us get unstuck is to give us something to do. Perhaps a new area of responsibility or a new opportunity. Quite often we don't feel up to it. Gideon, it seems, had that problem too. When we are out of our comfort zone, we have to depend on God in a new way. We are challenged to dig deep and really apply things we have learned.

Challenges help us to grow. There aren't any verses in the Bible telling us that the Christian life is a breeze! (I know there's that verse in the Bible where Jesus says, "My yoke is easy!" – but the thought there is "kind" or "comfortable" as opposed to "cruel". Jesus does not exploit.) Sometimes, we need to press on and overcome difficulties. Paul makes comparisons with military life, warfare and wrestling. We certainly need to make a real effort.

If you're facing a challenge and finding life heavy going, be encouraged! This is a situation in which God can help you grow. Take particular encouragement from the fact that if you play your part God will give the increase! You will emerge a little more like Jesus and stronger – positioned to be more fruitful and successful in the things that God has called you to do.

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