

A Time of Prayer: Listen

November 2024 Edition

LISTENING FOR DIVINE SPARKS: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR NOVEMBER 2024

To facilitate group meetings in person or on Zoom, this month’s Bible study is also offered as [PowerPoint slides](#) that can be downloaded and modified.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Grant that, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, we your followers may be joined together in unity and peace, and that we may be a holy temple acceptable to you. We pray that as we, and others, plant seeds and bring water, you will bless our efforts and bring forth a bountiful harvest. May your hand be upon every seed that is sown and every drop of water that is poured. We trust in your faithfulness to bring growth and abundance in all areas of our lives and the lives of our parishes. Thank you for providing the inspiration and means for fulfilling your promises. In Jesus’ name, **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 3:4-13a “Only God Gives the Growth”

<i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i>	<i>The Message (MSG)</i>
<p>5 ...what then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. 9 For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.</p> <p>10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building</p>	<p>Who do you think Paul is, anyway? Or Apollos, for that matter? Servants, both of us—servants who waited on you as you gradually learned to entrust your lives to our mutual Master. We each carried out our servant assignment. I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but God made you grow. It’s not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow. Planting and watering are menial servant jobs at minimum wages. What makes them worth doing is the God we are serving. You happen to be God’s field in which we are working.</p> <p>Or, to put it another way, you are God’s house. Using the gift God gave me as a good architect, I designed blueprints;</p>

on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 the work of each builder will become visible

Apollos is putting up the walls. Let each carpenter who comes on the job take care to build on the foundation! Remember, there is only one foundation, the one already laid: Jesus Christ. Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually there is going to be an inspection.

LECTIO DIVINA

Ask someone to read the NRSVA translation of the passage aloud.

Allow for several minutes of silence as each bible study participant contemplates the passage, As the passage is read a first time, notice which word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) catch their attention. The group can decide how long the period of silence should last, but in the *Lectio Divina* tradition, it is substantial (a minimum of 3-5 minutes is suggested, perhaps working up to a longer interlude).

Invite participants to briefly share with one another those word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) stirring them. Encourage participants to avoid interpreting or expanding on them at this time, but simply to state them out loud. Explain that time for reflection and discussion will follow later in the prayer time.

Have another person read the MSG translation of the passage aloud, followed by a second period of silence and invite participants to share again. This time, ask participants to notice which word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) catch your attention, but also consider what idea(s), feeling(s) or reflections may emerge.

Have a third person re-read the NRSVA version aloud again, followed by a final period of silence and invite participants to reflect on what they think is being drawn to their attention by the Holy Spirit. There are no right or wrong answers. Consider the following questions:

- *What is “God’s field” in our context and in our place of service?*
- *To what kind of work is the Lord calling us, our congregation and our diocesan church as we hear this passage today?*
- *What are we planting and watering? Who is involved in this?*

CLOSING PRAYERS

O Holy God, you breathe your life-giving Spirit into this parish and diocese and call us to join together in mission for the spreading of the Gospel: show us the people to whom we should go and the path we should travel; help us to understand the deep longings of their hearts, and enable us to feed them through the living presence of Jesus Christ our Saviour, in whose power we set forth and in whose Name we pray. Amen.¹

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

CAPTURING THE DIVINE SPARKS KINDLED

- Consider the four steps helpful in identifying and capturing any divine sparks that have come up:
 1. Listening
 2. Capturing
 3. Sharing
 4. Acting
- Consider whether there were sparks kindled during this prayer session. Ask a participant to write down any important ideas that emerged and ensure that there is group consensus around what is captured.
- Who do these sparks need to be shared with at this time? Find a way to share the insights gained with those who need to hear them.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

- Brian Peterson, Professor of New Testament at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC reminds us [in this commentary](#) that “even these messed-up Corinthians, these people of “flesh,” these babies in faith (3:1), are still the temple, the inner sanctuary [and that] God dwells in their midst, in the fellowship and faith that they share.” In other words, we have a part to play in building God’s kingdom but we need to remember that it is God who gives the growth.

¹ Prayers from “Litany for the Mission of the Church” (Episcopal Church’s *The Book of Occasional Services*, 2018.)