

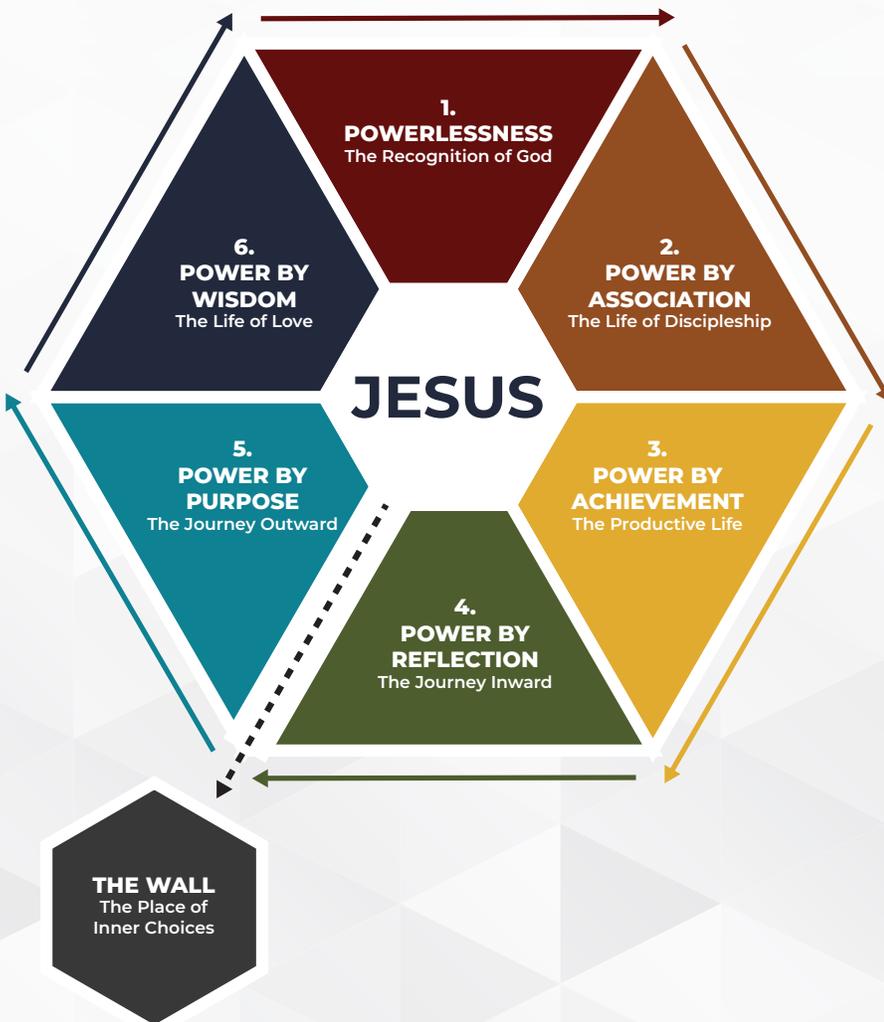


Identify Challenges & Encourage Members in Your Connect Group



DISCIPLESHIP 101

STAGES OF FAITH From the book *The Critical Journey*



Discipleship is a life-long journey and not a one-time event. As the Holy Spirit guides us into deeper understanding of who God is, the development of our faith often follows through similar stages. There are times where we tear down mistaken beliefs about God and self, as well as times where we build and experience deep encounters with Father, Son, and Spirit. Understanding the hallmarks and challenges of these stages can help us walk alongside and encourage other believers in grace and truth. This graphic outlines the stages of faith and can be a helpful tool in identifying the challenges and beliefs about God that members of your connect group are working through.

STAGE 1 POWERLESSNESS: RECOGNITION OF GOD “WE BELIEVE”

Characteristics

- » A sense of awe and need for a savior and greater meaning in life.
- » A sense of innocence and openness.

How we get stuck...

- » If we stick to a sense of worthlessness or ignorance and don't believe we are really beloved.

How we are led forward...

- » Connection to a group of strong believers.
- » We begin participating in ministry.



STAGE 2 POWER BY ASSOCIATION: LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP “WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT GOD”

Characteristics

- » Meaning comes from belonging.
- » A sense of rightness and security in our faith.

How we get stuck...

- » If we become rigid in righteousness and following the rules, we develop a “we against them” attitude.

How we are led forward...

- » We recognize our uniqueness and identify giftedness.
- » We recognize what we can contribute to our group, church, system, etc.



STAGE 3 POWER BY ACHIEVEMENT: THE PRODUCTIVE LIFE “WE ARE ABOUT DOING THINGS FOR GOD”

Characteristics

- » Uniqueness in community, sense of belonging to a church and being part of the Body, greater responsibility in some areas of our lives (work, home, church).

How we get stuck...

- » If we become overly zealous in “our way” or become weary in well-doing.
- » If we are self-centered or view our lives as performance.

How we are led forward...

- » We lose a sense of certainty (things we thought worked don't anymore).
- » We experience faith or personal crisis.
- » We begin looking for direction & seeking guides.



STAGE 4 POWER BY REFLECTION: THE JOURNEY INWARD “WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A NEW WAY TO DO THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD & OTHERS”

Characteristics

- » Life or faith crisis, loss of certainties. The things that worked aren't working anymore. Search for direction, not answers.
- » Pursuit of personal integrity in relationship to God. 'Doing' changes to 'being,' God is released from the box. This sometimes looks and feels like losing faith.

How we get stuck...

- » If we always question everything and are consumed by self- assessment, become immobilized, don't keep moving.

How we are led forward...

- » Let go of self-centeredness.
- » Accept God's purposes for our lives.
- » Seek wholeness through personal healing & pilgrimage.
- » Be willing to commit to whatever it takes.



THE WALL: “THINGS JUST AREN'T WORKING ANYMORE... THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE”

Characteristics

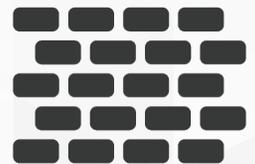
- » It is “the realization that fixing others, overhelping others, codependency, or excessive enabling of others is not selfless service. They betray a sense of low self-esteem, a desire to control. You cannot go through the wall working 60 hours a week. It requires solitude, and listening to the Voice of Truth.

How we get stuck...

- » RESISTANCE AT THE WALL: strong egos, self-deprecators, guilt/shame-ridden, intellectuals, high achievers, doctrine-focused, people-pleasers.

How we are led forward...

- » GOING THROUGH THE WALL INVOLVES: discomfort, surrender, healing, awareness, forgiveness, risk, acceptance, love, closeness to God, discernment, melting, molding, solitude and reflection.



STAGE 5 POWER BY PURPOSE: THE JOURNEY OUTWARD “LEARNING TO LIVE OUT OF A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PLACE”

Characteristics

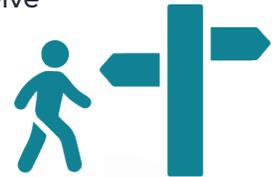
- » Surrendered to God, a renewed sense of God’s acceptance, a sense of deepening relationships, sense of calling, vocation or ministry. Concern and focus on others’ best interests. A deep calm or stillness.

How we get stuck...

- » On the other side of the wall we are not stuck. However, others might perceive you as not diligent or focused on the “essentials” or practical concerns.

How we are led forward...

- » Not striving, just letting go.
- » Seeing God in all of life and allowing the Spirit to transform you.



STAGE 6 POWER BY WISDOM: THE LIFE OF LOVE “IT’S ALL ABOUT GOD”

Characteristics

- » Living in obedience to God, wisdom gained from life’s struggles, compassionate living for others, detachment from things and stress, life abandoned.

How we get stuck...

- » On the other side of the wall we are not stuck. However, others might perceive you as separate from the world, that you neglect yourself and that maybe you’re “wasting your life.”

How we are led forward...

- » Continuous dependence on and connection with Father, Son, and Spirit.



*adapted from the Critical Journey by Janet Hagberg & Robert Guelich