

Session 6: Stages of Spiritual Maturity

In this session we're going to build off of the previous session to help someone move from a decision to follow Christ, to growing and maturing as a follower of Jesus. (If you haven't already listened to the podcast on Discipleship Through Intentional Relationships, that's okay, but make sure you go back and review it.)

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Just as a child grows and matures through the various stages of life, followers of Jesus also grow through various stages of spiritual maturity.

To help us better understand these stages of spiritual maturity, think about it in terms of life stages like Infant, Child and Young Adult. This can help us further explore where people are in terms of maturing as a believer.

- **Infant:** People in this stage have accepted Christ but haven't moved much past that point. They can be new believers, or they might be stagnant, long-time Christians. Life is generally all about them and their needs.
- **Child:** People in this stage are growing in their relationship with God and are also beginning to grow in their relationship with other Christians. They are applying God's word in their lives and are allowing others to walk beside them in their journey following Christ. However, it's still mostly about *them*—their needs, comfort, etc.
- **Young Adult:** People in this stage are making a big shift from being self-centered to more others-centered, and from being self-reliant to God-dependent. They are beginning to understand their roles as givers, rather than takers—ministering to others, putting others first—being doers of the word. They are Kingdom minded and desire to glorify God with their lives.

Using the grid below, answer the following questions to help you better identify the characteristics and behaviors of each stage of spiritual maturity.

- What does the person look like in each stage? (column one)
 - Beliefs, motives and behaviors (be specific).
 - What do they believe about God?
 - How would they describe their relationship with God?
 - What motivates them?
 - How would they describe their purpose in life?
 - How do they spend their time, money and energy?
- Personal Growth Plan - Areas of spiritual growth. (column two)
 - Know Jesus.
 - Learn by reading and studying God's word.
 - Pray – talk to God, listen, develop an intimate, personal relationship.
 - Apply what you're learning.
 - Trust Jesus.
 - Challenge false thought processes, narratives, and values.
 - Believe God's good news.
 - Become a disciple of Jesus.
 - Follow Jesus.
 - Live in community with other followers.
 - Love others by serving them in practical ways.
 - Give generously to God's purposes.
 - Help others follow Jesus.
 - Invite others into your life, home, group, and church.
 - Share your story and God's good news.
 - Disciple others by modeling, teaching, equipping, and releasing.
- What do they need to do to grow in each area? (column three - Their Part)
- How do you help them grow to the next stage? (column four - Your Part)
- How is God involved with you and them? (column five - God's Part)

	Beliefs, Motives & Behaviors	Growth	Their Part	Your Part	God's Part
	(Describe the person in this stage.)	(Areas in which they need to mature and grow - Personal Growth Plan)	(What do they need to do in order to grow?)	(How do you help them grow?)	(What's God doing with you and with them?)
INFANT		Know Jesus Trust Jesus Follow Jesus Help others follow Jesus			
CHILD		Know Jesus Trust Jesus Follow Jesus Help others follow Jesus			
YOUNG ADULT		Know Jesus Trust Jesus Follow Jesus Help others follow Jesus			

- What are the basic components of discipleship?
 - Intentional relationship (doing life together).
 - Learning God's word.
 - Wrestling with it (What is God saying? What does this mean for them?).
 - Involving others (classes, resources, experiences, relationships).
 - Acceptance/change (head to heart).
 - Application - walking it out, obedience, serving (heart to hands).
 - Investing in others - becoming others-centered.
 - Release - rite of passage (sending them out/disciples making disciples) .

- Who are you currently discipling?
 - What is your sphere of influence?
 - We should always have a "Bob" in our lives (love relationship with non-believers).
 - As leaders, we focus primarily on those we are leading (group members).
 - The people in our groups are really the ones on the front lines. Their sphere of influence is the world.

- How many people can you effectively disciple?
 - Jesus addressed the crowds, invested in the 12, and had a deeper relationship with three.
 - Small-group leaders need to know their group members.
 - Be able to identify where they are in the process of spiritual maturity and what they need to move forward.
 - Work with them to make a personal growth plan (PGP) to help move them forward.
 - Review and update the PGP regularly.
 - Some will press into this process more than others. Remember this: encourage everyone, but invest most of your time with the ones who are willing to make the journey with you—go with the goers.
 - It's probably not reasonable to expect a small-group leader to disciple everyone in their group at a high level. Help everyone in your group develop a PGP, but go deep with just a few. Your biggest investment will likely be in your apprentice leader.
 - It was never a matter of quantity, but rather a question of quality—disciples of Jesus Christ who are making disciples for Jesus Christ who will continue to reproduce. That's God's method and model. Let's follow it!

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the value in being able to evaluate where someone may be in the process of spiritual maturity?
2. As a leader, in what ways can you encourage the spiritual growth of your members who may be at different stages of spiritual maturity?
3. Have you identified someone in your group who you want to have a discipleship conversation/relationship with? If so, what is your plan for helping them progress in spiritual maturity?