

Stages of Spiritual Development

Galatians 3

“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” 11Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”¹ 12The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” 13Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” 14He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”

5 Facts about the Laws of God:

- 1. The laws of God are perfect, but not empowering (Romans 7:12, Galatians 3:10).**
- 2. The laws of God were given to set a necessary standard (Galatians 3:19).**
- 3. The laws of God were not able to bring salvation (Galatians 3:11,21).**
- 4. The laws of God were meant to puff us up and then humble us (Exodus 24:7, Romans 7).**
- 5. The laws of God were to lead us to rely on God’s grace (Galatians 3:24, John 1:17).**

(Chart#1)

- But this was the TRACK that God laid.

- This was the COURSE that God established.
- Start at Law, End in Grace.
- We are to progress from LAW to GRACE.
- We NEED the Law, but aren't to get jammed up at the Law. (It's like we need an elementary school education, but we aren't to stay there forever).

I wanted to further break down this TRACK that GOD LAID FOR US.
I want to zoom in a little on THIS COURSE that God established for humanity to journey.

- I want to present a road map to spiritual maturation.
- We will be able to see our starting point, our finish line, and where we are now.

We are Calling this message "Stages of Spiritual Development."

I want to share 6 steps to Spiritual Maturation.

(Chart #2)

- ***Failure: Poor decisions, sins, bondage, depression, disappointment, victimized, awakening to our limitations, humiliation, loss, trials, etc.***

(Chart #3)

- The key is not to put a period where God puts a comma.
- When we are spiritually matured/developed, there is a godliness to our lives- in that we are able to effortlessly manifest God to others.
- That's what salvation is really about:
 - Not just joining a club.
 - Not just signing off that we agree with these fifteen points.
 - Not just calling our Christians.

- Becoming Jesus to the world around us. (The Goal is Godliness)
- **“For the Son of God became man so that we might become God-like” - St. Athanasius**

(Chart #4)

We all want to go from innocence to godliness, but that's not how it always plays out.

It seems like there is a bridge - it's not a fun bridge, it's not a short bridge, but it's a necessary bridge.

On this bridge we are:

- *Inflated with pride,*
 - *Deflated by failure,*
 - *Emptied in humility,*
 - *And Filled by grace.*
- You experience more of God's salvation on this bridge.
 - You experience a death and resurrection as you walk the bridge.
 - You become more fulfilled as you walk the bridge.
 - You become more loving as you walk the bridge.

From what we know, for the last 6,000 years, human beings have been walking this bridge...starting with our first parents, Adam and Eve....

1. Adam and Eve

- *Began in innocence. (remember a time when life was perfect, not a care in the world, all we knew was safety and security.)*

- *Pride set in. (remember feeling invincible, they end up Eating of the forbidden fruit was all about EGO and PRIDE).*
- *Failure happened. (they are so ashamed of themselves, older son kills younger son).*
- *Humility was developed. (they see they are fragile, Eve experiencing pain in childbirth, Adam experiencing frustration in his work, they are aging)*
- *Grace was given. (They experienced God chasing them down when they were running away. God covers them up with clothes from a slain animal).*
- *Godliness was achieved? (hopefully).*

2. David

- *Began in Innocence. (Has faith to go to war with the giant, idealistic not realistic.)*
- *Pride set in. (He doesn't need to go to war, or keep the rules)*
- *Failure happened. (He commits sins, He loses his sons, his honor, and his kingdom)*
- *Humility was developed. (He develops a prayer life)*
- *Grace was given. (God restores the Kingdom to David)*
- *Godliness was achieved. (David is more merciful and gracious towards his haters)*

3. Peter

- *Began in innocence (young 20 something, successful fisherman).*
- *Pride set in. (He claims he will never deny Jesus or fall, and his devotion is supreme).*
- *Failure happened. (He denies Jesus three times)*
- *Humility was developed. (He realizes he's unqualified)*

- *Grace was given. (Jesus re-commissions Peter, and Peter writes, “God gives grace to the humble” - 1 Peter 5:5)*
- *Godliness was achieved. (Peter manifested God- his shadow heals...(2 Peter 1:3), “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him...”*

4. Mary Magdalene

- *Began in Innocence.*
- *Pride set in. (Eden...I am Eden...I can do anything...)*
- *Failure happens. (She has seven demons living in her. Perhaps a severe mental illness. Possibly a prostitute, as tradition says)*
- *Humility was developed. (As she lived in torment.)*
- *Grace was given. (She gets delivered and is first to witness the resurrection of Jesus)*
- *Godliness was achieved. (She is considered a saint by the Catholics, Orthodox, and Lutherans).*

5. Paul

- *Began in innocence. (Roman Citizen as a Jew, powerful privilege)*
- *Pride set in. (He’s positioned to be a leading, respected Rabbi. He’s the cream of the crop in the religious circles. He’s intelligent. He’s devout. He’s not broken laws externally).*
- *Failure happens. (He had climbed the top of the ladder only to find it was leaned up against the wrong building. He realized he was a champion in the wrong game. He thought he was pleasing God, but realized he had been tormenting God- all this time.)*
- *Humility was developed. (He called himself the least of the apostles. He studied arduously, realizing that even though everyone thought he was the smartest, he was so ignorant...”*

- - *Grace was given. (Paul says, "I am who I am by the grace of God" - 1 Corinthians 10:5).*
- *Godliness was achieved.*

For each of the 5 characters we used as references, failure was not a coffin, but a catalyst.

- It was not something they would be proud of, but it was purposeful and necessary for them.
- It was an essential part of their journey.
- They walked the bridge.

(Back to Chart #4)

(Chart #5)

- *The law was meant to lead us into grace.*
- *Causing us to fall into grace.*
- *As we grow spiritually, we experience more of God's Kingdom and walk in greater godliness.*

"Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matthew 21:31)

(Back to Chart #5)

The religious leaders (Pharisees) were stuck in Stage 2, not that they didn't fail, but they denied it. They got jammed at Stage 2.

(By the way, the modern-day pharisees aren't necessary in the synagogues, they can be in our churches. I've seen one in the mirror before.)

WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING TOTALLY IRONIC?

The tax collectors and prostitutes were already at Stage 3, so ready they were closer to Stage 6, than the religious leaders!

The prodigal sons older brother was stuck in Stage 2. The younger brother was much further along, even after ALL his failure, he had been walking the bridge.

WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING ELSE IRONIC?

- The pharisee and the older brother thought they were at Stage 6.
- If you think you are at Stage 6, most likely you are at Stage 2.

LAW is Needed in Stages 1-3

- There is a place to convict people with the law.
- Those who think they are still innocent when they aren't.
- Those who are proud.
- Those who are oblivious to their own sinfulness and shortcomings.

The reason Jesus was the harshest with the Pharisees was not because He hated them. It was because He loved them, and He was trying to help them progress from Stage 2 into Stage 3.

They were in a delusion.

He wanted them to come to grips with reality.

They were pretending to be living at Stage 1 and 6, but were really at Stage 2 and 3, yet denying that their other foot was in 3!

GRACE is Needed from Stages 4-6

When you are at Stage 4, we don't need the brutal hammer of the law but the comforting arm of grace.

This explains Jesus was so gracious and tender to those who knew they were at Level 3 and 4, like the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8), because He was trying to bring them into level 5-6.

The law is to teach you the fear of the Lord.

Grace is to bring you into the love of the Lord.

All Needed.

(Back to Chart 5)

We must not get stuck anywhere.

You know that someone got jammed up at 2, when:

- They act all innocent.
- They know how to throw stones at others.
- They lack compassion, humility, and tenderness.
- They are still self-sufficient, still self-righteous.
- They usually only like hanging out with others at their level. Birds of a feather, flock together.
 - They ostracize and throw stones at those who are at Stage 3, and want to crucify those who live at Stage 5-6.
- These (those suck at Stage 2) are those who give Christianity a bad rap.
- Those who live at Stages 5-6, make people thirsty for God.

Jesus made fun of the Pharisees that they travel the world and find one convert and make him a devil just like them.

- Those who live a Stage 2, are not attractive.
- They are pretty irrelevant.

Hypocrisy and judgmental-ism are two sides of the same coin, and that's their currency.

Sadly, the two most common descriptions of Christians from those outside our circles: Hypocritical and Judgmental.

That is somewhat accurate, because that's what you experience from people who got stuck at Stage 2 of their journey.

JUST IF they can only meet someone at 5-6, whose been through some 3-4s, it would be a completely different experience.

- Humility and Graciousness are the two sided coins of their currency.

Those who are at level 2 are irrelevant.

Those who are at level 5-6 are most relevant.

What's more powerful than someone who has walked the bridge, who wants to take you by the hand and say, "It's going to be OK, you are going to make it!"

This is why a novice is not yet ready for ministry.

This is why only those who are spiritual (more in level 5-6), can restore someone who is stuck in Level 3.

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." (Galatians 6:1)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)

Jesus said that we unless we die we can't bear much fruit.

The dying happens usually around 3 and 4.

“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (Luke 7:47)

Jesus said those who are forgiven much, loves much.

- Not those who are *innocent*.
- Not those who been transported from innocence to godliness without ever walking the bridge.
- But those who have been arrogant than awakened.
- Been high and been low,
- Those who have been clean and dirty.
- Those who have been honored and humiliated
- Those who felt over-confident and those who felt shameful.
- Those who were idealistic and yet now more realistic.
- Those who were ambitious and now are compassionate.
- Those who have been healthy, sick, then healed.
- Those who have been bound and free.
- Those who have beat up others and those who have been beaten up by others.
- Those who have known happy days and those who have known depression.
- Those who have WALKED THE BRIDGE- they can love much, love deeper, love freely, love effortlessly.

In level 1-3, we know conditional love.

In the higher levels of 4-6, we learn unconditional love.

There is more fulfillment, joy, and self-enjoyment as you progress into Stages 4-6.

Ted Haggard (Show picture), was leading 14,000 member church and 30 million evangelicals. He didn't like himself when he had to pretend to be 1

and 2, and 6. Sometimes people want you to be a little arrogant because they take it as confidence.

Being a notable leader is also very challenging, almost a set up for becoming very dysfunctional, because people don't want you to ever fail in anything.

- You are only allowed to live in Stage 1 and 6, and sometimes display some arrogance which will come off as confidence.
- God wants them to walk the bridge, but they can't.
- Then a dichotomy forms, acting perfect on the outside and yet broken on the inside.

After his big public failure, he lost just about EVERYTHING he ego created — and he has never been more healthy and whole.

I believe He's more free and godly than ever.

I heard him say in an interview, *"I like myself better now that when I was on top of my game- a powerful leader, yet hiding my sins, and unable to admit my brokenness."*

- We may value innocence over godliness.
- We have more respect for someone who never failed, than someone who walked the bridge and became godly.
- We think the greatest achievement in life is a flawless record and clean reputation.
- Maybe it's godliness.
- The goal of salvation is becoming GODLY.

- The message is always **"Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).**

- Change the way you think, elevated consciousness is required if you can go to the next level.

- Those in pride, need to learn failure.
- Those in failure need to learn humility (not denial).

- Those in humility need to learn grace.
- Those in grace need to learn godliness.

(Chart #6)

At Stage 3, the nutshell cracks open, so the essence of who they are - the best version of themselves- their true selves- can finally emerge.

The shell is our appearances, our reputation, what others think, our accomplishments, what others think, EGO.

The nut is who God made you to be. It's you - EGO. It's you without having to PROTECT or PROVE yourself.

It's a confident you.

It's a restful you.

It's a godly you.

The nut is more relevant than the nutshell.

The shell is inedible.

(Back to Chart #3)

Stage 3 is not the end of the world, it's just the end of the caterpillar, and cocoon time, ready for higher levels of consciousness and godliness.

The purpose of the law was not to lead people to get stuck at level 2, but level 3.

In Genesis 32, Jacob wrestled with God and he ends up getting his hip pushed out of place, and walk with a limp for the rest of his life. Then he receives his new name "Israel", after he seemingly lost the wrestling match.

- You may wrestle with the righteousness of God, we got into the bought because we think we can do it, in us being - idealistic and ambitious.
- Then you get beat up by the law, realizing you can't master the law, the law will leave you so beat up and beat down, you feel like you can't fight anymore.
- That's when grace can tell you who you *really* are.
- That's when you find your true self. From that moment on, you don't live with self-righteous flare, but you walk with a limp.
- That's when godliness happens.

Those who are at level 6, rarely believe they are 6.

I've never met a godly man tell me "I'm a godly man."

I've had those in level 2, claim to be in level 6 though and they say, "God matured me fast...He did a special accelerated work in me."

(Back to Chart 6)

When we are young and immature we want Power (knowledge, correct, prospering, reputation, fruitful, anointed, gifted, talented, successful, etc.)

As we mature we want love.

John the Apostle.

When he was young, he wanted power and positioning. He got his mom to ask Jesus if John can be his right hand man. He was in stages 1-2.

At the end of his life he had one main message, "Let's love one another." He went from wanting power, to wanting love.

- Ambitious to Compassionate.
- Arrogant to Godly.
- No longer pursuing what doesn't matter, and pursuing what really matters.
- No longer trying to protect self or prove self, but just being himself.

Law and Grace are like two Parents.

(Chart 1)

Parents need to lay down laws for their kids, especially when and as they are young. There are Laws that need to be preached and enforced.

Good parents can be demanding.

Good parents let their kids know the world doesn't revolve around them.

But there also needs to be unconditional love and acceptance.

In Scripture, we see both sides of God, not contradictory, but complimentary- He's both the stern parent (LAW) and the most compassionate (GRACE).

He calls us to standards, but in His compassion, He cause all things to work together for good (Romans 8:28), even our failures.

(Back to Chart 4)

“And we know that in ALL THINGS (innocence, arrogance, failure, humility, grace, godliness) God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

I want to speak to those who maybe are feel stuck at Level 3.

It's part of the process.

It's part of the journey.

Just keep walking the bridge.

God was not shocked.

He wants you to continue to journey with Him into greater godliness.