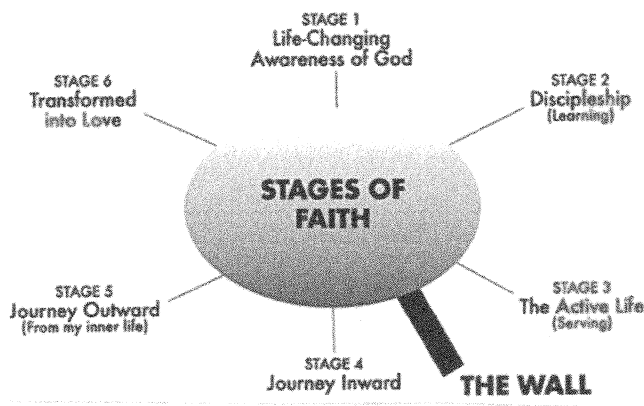


Our FAITH Journey at Hope Reformed Church

Walking with Jesus, Walking with Others, Serving God, Serving Others



Journeys involve movement, action, stops, detours, delays and trips into the unknown. We are on a journey led by God. The invitation is to understand this process and to cooperate with it. Clarity comes from knowing what is happening to us and what we can anticipate down the road. Comfort comes by recognizing that these stages are normal to most everyone and a part of being human. God is in charge of our growth. He starts it and maintains it.

Let's take another look at the Stages of Faith:

Stage 1: Life-Changing Awareness of God...This stage, whether in childhood or adulthood, is the beginning of our journey with Christ as we become aware of His reality. We realize our need for mercy and begin our relationship with Him.

Stage 2: Discipleship...This stage is characterized by learning about God and what it means to be a follower of Christ. We become part of a Christian community and begin to get rooted in the disciplines of the faith.

Stage 3: The Active Life...This is the 'doing' stage. We get involved, actively working for God, serving Him and His people. We take responsibility by bringing our unique talents and gifts to serve Christ and others.

Stage 4: The Wall and the Journey Inward...Notice that the Wall and the Inward Journey are closely related. The Wall drives us into an Inward Journey. In some cases, people feel compelled to move into an Inward Journey that eventually leads them to the Wall. It has been said that perhaps 85% of evangelicals do not get thru the Wall. Often our image of God doesn't allow for such a difficult experience.

Stage 5: The Journey Outward...Having passed thru the crisis of faith and the intense inner journeywork necessary to go thru the Wall, we begin once again to move outward to 'do' for God. We may do some of the same active external things we did before. The difference is that now we give out of a new, grounded center of ourselves in God.

Stage 6: Transformed by Love...God's goal, is that we be made perfect in love, that Christ's love becomes our love both toward God and others. We realize love truly is the beginning and the end. By this stage, the perfect love of God has driven out all fear and the whole of our spiritual lives is finally about surrender and obedience to God's perfect will.

THE WALL

- Confrontation between your will and God's will
- Might appear thru a personal crisis that has turned your world upside down
- We don't know where God is, what He is doing, where He is going, how He is getting us there or when this will be over. Darkness, helplessness, weariness, a sense of failure or defeat, emptiness descends upon us.
- A period of uncovering our deepest secrets, wounds, fears and insecurities

- There is a difference between the Wall and trials. The trials we encounter each day are not the Wall or 'the dark side of the soul'. Trials are traffic jams, annoying bosses, delayed flights, car breakdowns, fevers and barking dogs in the middle of the night. Walls are David fleeing a jealous king for 13 years in the desert. Walls are 11 disciples at the crucifixion—confused, disoriented when all their dreams are shattered. Walls are Job losing his 10 children, health and possessions in a day!
- It can be difficult to discern precisely when we began the journey thru the Wall and when we might actually be on the other side.
- We may encounter Walls more than once in our ongoing relationship with God. We see this, for example, in Abraham waiting at the Wall for 25 years for his first child with his wife, Sarah, to be born. He hits another Wall when he has to let go of his eldest child, Ishmael. 10-13 years later God led him again to another Wall—the sacrificing of that long-awaited son he loved, Isaac, on an altar.

How to grow in this stage: Keep trusting God even when you don't feel Him, pray for clarity to know what God is asking of us and the courage to do it.

God's Word: Genesis 22:1-15 Jonah 2:1-10 Luke 24 2 Corinthians 11:24-29 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD

- A second awakening
- False layers and our unhealthy attachments inside must be burned away. Only then will we be able to actually taste and see that the Lord is good. Only then will we actually surrender to His will and not our own.
- We often have God in a small box. The Wall blows open this box and we begin to see God for the sovereign, mighty, loving, good God that He is.
- A search for direction, not answers
- We become aware that God wants a deeper, fuller, richer relationship with us.

How to grow in this stage: Don't be too proud to seek spiritual guidance, have courage and patience with yourself, read the Bible through your new-found perspective.

God's Word: James 1:2-4 Job 42 Luke 22:42 Luke 1:28 Proverbs 3:5-6