

JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

**COACHING PEOPLE
IN THE STAGES OF FAITH**

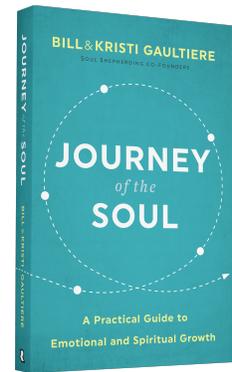
BY BILL & KRISTI GAULTIERE



JOURNEY OF THE SOUL: COACHING PEOPLE IN THE STAGES OF FAITH

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Founders of Soul Shepherding



Introduction

Jesus is our Way-Maker and perfect trail guide who says to us, "Come, follow me..." (John 14:6; Matthew 4:18-20).

Christian coaching, spiritual direction, counseling, and discipling are opportunities to serve as trail guides to help others follow Jesus and become more like him (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Problem

"Believe and do what is right" is a common but *insufficient* approach to personal growth:

- Does not adequately involve emotions, heart (will), soul, relationships, and habits (Mark 12:30-31)
- Depends on human will power that falters (Colossians 2:20)
- Leads to legalism, image management, and hypocrisy (e.g., Pharisees; Mark 7:8)
- Fosters discouragement, anxiety, frustration, and emptiness
- "One size fits all" method of growth does not address different stages of faith

Premise

A clear and psychologically sound model of the stages of faith is needed as an assessment and coaching tool to help people grow emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.

Stage Theory

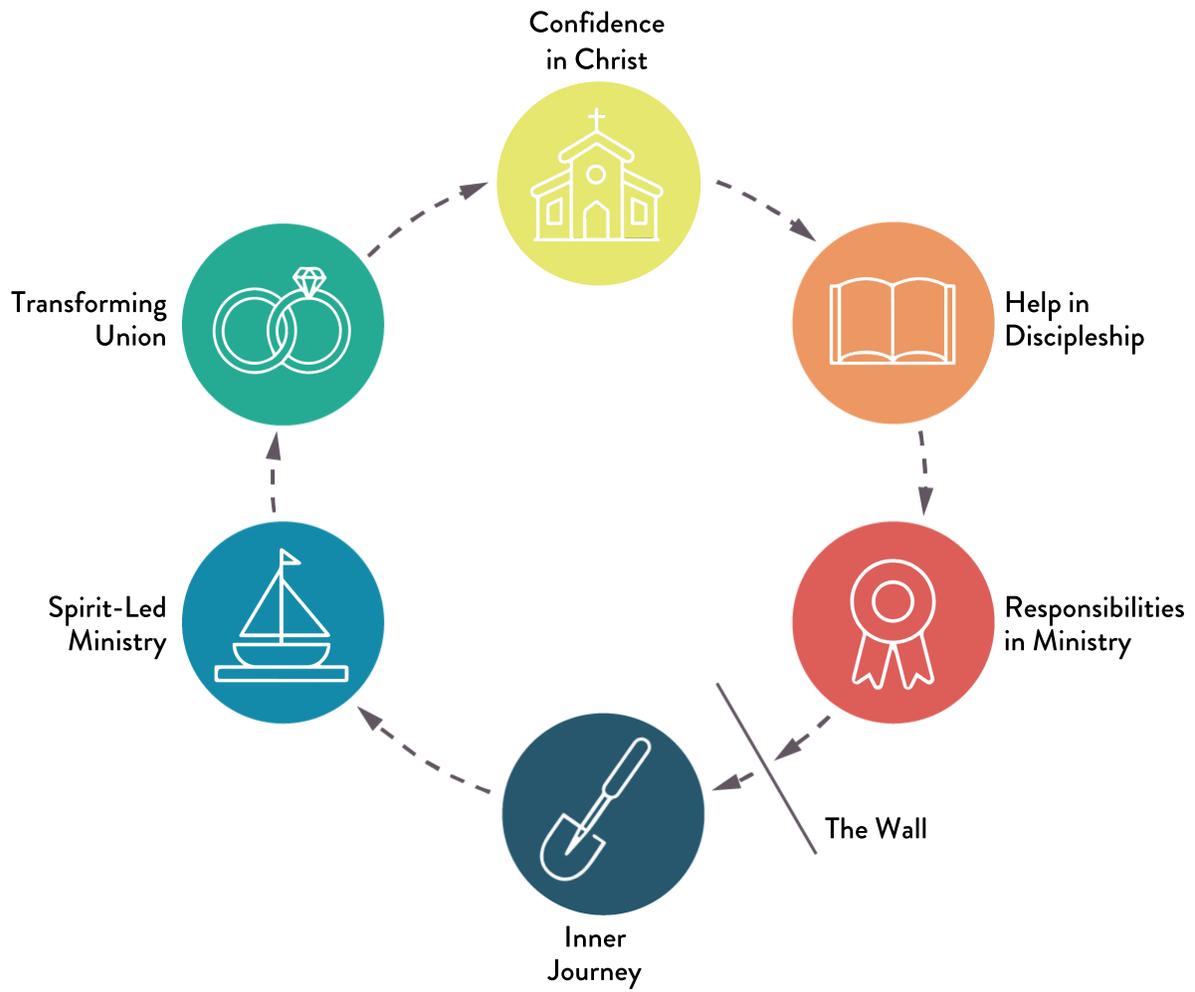
- Psychosocial identity (Erikson), faith in God (Fowler), and spirituality (Teresa) develop in related stages that are predictable (1 John 2:12-14).
- Each stage has different needs, trials (roadblocks), experiences of grace, and best-fitting spiritual disciplines for growth.
- We have a home stage, though we often are experiencing more than one stage.
- Progression in the stages is not linear, but a back and forth spiral.
- It's important to celebrate each stage as an opportunity to love God and people well (Mark 12:30-31).
- At any stage, or before we begin our faith journey, we may get stuck at The Wall, which can spur our transition into the Second Half of the journey.
- Be careful not to expect people to do disciplines for two stages beyond them.
- At later stages we can benefit from disciplines for previous stages but may get bored.
- Often we gravitate to groups or churches with lots of people in our stage.

The CHRIST Stages Model

"There is no journey to God outside the journey that Jesus made" (Henri Nouwen, p. 54).

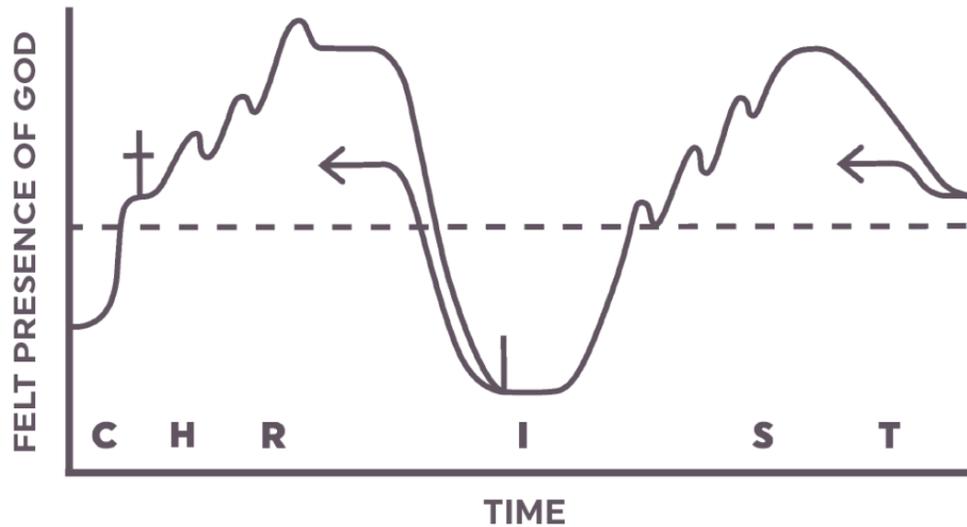
The CHRIST stages of faith are a developmental model of emotional and spiritual growth that draws on Scripture and integrates Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, Fowler's stages of faith, and Teresa's stages of spiritual growth. It's been field-tested for over a decade in teaching, counseling, coaching, and spiritual direction ministry.

The CHRIST Stages



Consolation & Desolation

- Consolation = feeling God's presence or blessings (e.g., Psalm 42:8)
- Desolation = not feeling God's presence or blessings (e.g., Psalm 42:9)



- The graph of an *average* journey is like a two-hump camel, with a steep desolation at The Wall, but each person's journey is *messy*
- Many people encounter The Wall more than once
- Most people do not get through The Wall and if they do it's probably in mid-life or older (Scott Peck)
- Some "old souls" experience the later CHRIST stages *before* mid-life

Coaching in the CHRIST Stages



C Stage: Confidence in Christ

- **Cognitive style:** experiential and imaginative (like young children)
- **Conflict:** soul splits (torn between 2 worlds) vs. sticky love (secure attachment, e.g., Psalm 63:3)
- **Key question:** What temptations are you struggling with?
- **Empathy:** may feel guilty for shortcomings (sins) or insecure about God's love
- **Soul care practices:** church, nature, Bible stories (and other stories and testimonies), confession of sin and forgiveness, prayer requests, thankfulness
- **Church ministries:** hospitality, children, worship, sharing testimony, and serving



H Stage: Help in Discipleship

- **Cognitive style:** concrete and linear (like school aged children)
- **Conflict:** legalism (and other misinterpretations of Scripture) vs. being pastored to understand and apply God's word to your life (Romans 12:1-2)
- **Key question:** What are you learning from the Bible (church or small group)?
- **Empathy:** may have lots of questions and vacillate between zeal and discouragement
- **Soul care practices:** Bible reading (daily), small groups, being disciplined/mentored, spiritual warfare (resisting Satan's lies and accusations), memorizing Bible verses
- **Church ministries:** discipling students or new believers and Bible teaching

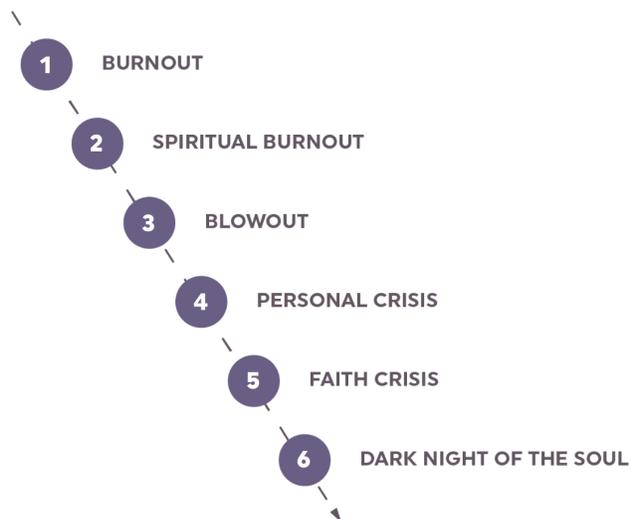
R Stage: Responsibilities in Ministry



- **Cognitive style:** conventional and identifying with authority – or rebelling (like a teenager)
- **Conflict:** unhealthy/false identity vs. healthy/true self
- **Key question:** What is a spiritual gift that you enjoy using to love God and others? (Romans 12:6)
- **Empathy:** may feel low self-esteem, on the sidelines, or too busy/stressed
- **Soul care practices:** doing ministry/work projects to help others, developing spiritual gifts, strengthening identity in Christ, setting and achieving goals, praying for others, tithing, sharing the gospel
- **Church ministries:** serving or leading others



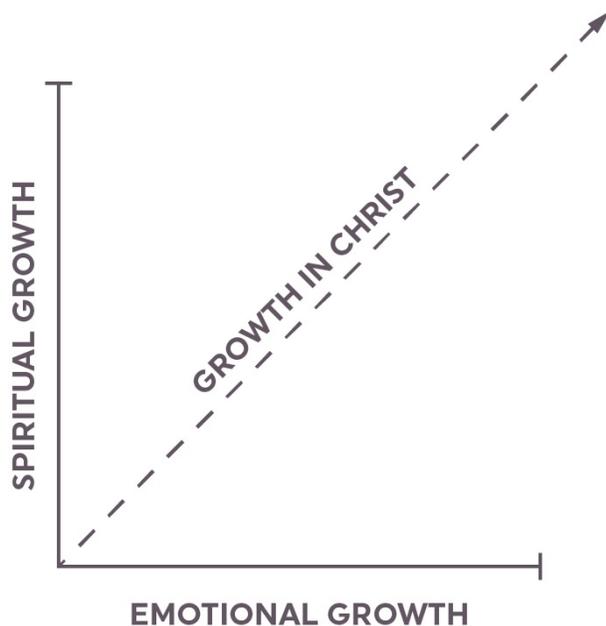
The Wall (Transition)



- **Cognitive style:** questioning authority and norms and being open-minded (like a young adult or in midlife crisis)
- **Conflict:** distrusting God (James 1:6-8) vs. receiving Jesus' empathy (Mark 9:24)
- **Key question:** How are you feeling in your relationship with God (or church)?
- **Empathy:** may feel spiritually dry, stuck, resentment from overworking, compassion fatigue, doubts about God, or isolated from caring Christians
- **Soul care practices:** asking for empathy, praying Psalms of lament, meeting with a counselor or spiritual director, setting boundaries (to do less work or ministry), labyrinth, reading stories of people overcoming trials, Stations of the Cross, prayer of relinquishment
- **Church ministries:** music, poetry, art, recovery, and serving people in need



I Stage: Inner Journey



- **Cognitive style:** self-reflection and intrinsic beliefs (mid-life)
- **Conflict:** denial of emotions, needs, or sins vs. deeper experiences of God's love (Psalm 32:3, 11)
- **Key question:** What are you longing for in your relationship with God?
- **Empathy:** may feel distress, tired, unfulfilled desires, or increasing love and devotion to God
- **Soul care practices:** praying the Psalms, soul friendships, meeting with a counselor or spiritual director, self-assessments (e.g., Enneagram), healing prayer, Lectio Divina (Scripture meditation), quiet prayer, fasting (while feasting on Scripture), devotional classics, Sabbath rest
- **Church ministries:** care, spiritual formation, and counseling



S Stage: Spirit-Led Ministry

- **Cognitive style:** integrating paradoxes and transcending limits (older adult)
- **Conflict:** Dark Night of the Soul (intense and/or chronic desolation; Psalm 13) vs. surprise blessings to share
- **Key question:** How do you sense the Spirit of Jesus guiding you? (Galatians 5:25)
- **Empathy:** may feel frustrated or disillusioned with church (or Bible) or more mature than other Christians
- **Soul care practices:** acting with Holy Spirit, abandoning outcomes to God, listening to God in Scripture and daily life, quietly abiding in prayer for self and others, doing good deeds in secret, serving as a wounded healer, blessing competitors
- **Church ministries:** spiritual direction, leading retreats, and being an elder



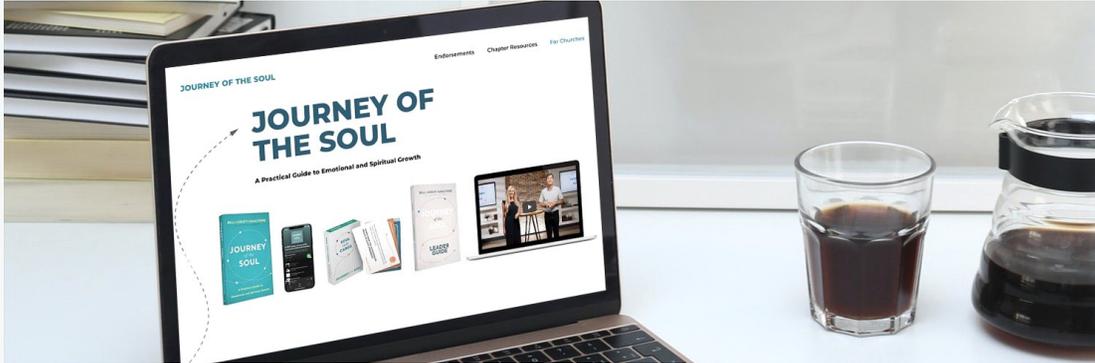
T Stage: Transforming Union

- **Cognitive style:** universalizing compassion for all people (mature adult)
- **Conflict:** diminishing the centrality of Jesus vs. practicing God's presence (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- **Key question:** How are you identifying with Jesus?
- **Empathy:** may feel different (or odd) or not understood by others
- **Soul care practices:** turning activity into prayer, contemplation, appreciating the Trinity, staying engaged in church, blessing those who mistreat you, joyful sacrifices of love
- **Church ministries:** being a loving, prayerful presence for all people in all stages

Models of the Stages of Faith

Soul Shepherding	Apostle John (Bible)	Orthodox (Ancient)	Teresa's Mansions (16th Century)	Erik Erikson's Psychosocial	James Fowler's Psychology	Brueggemann (Psalms)	The Critical Journey
Confidence in Christ	Spiritual Children	Awakening	1: New Beginnings 2: Divided Life	1: Trust vs. Mistrust 2: Anatomy vs. Shame & Doubt 3: Initiative vs. Guilt 4: Industry vs. Inferiority	1: Intuitive & Projective	Orientation	1: Recognition of God
Help in Discipleship			3a: Following Jesus	5: Identity vs. Role Confusion	2: Mythic & Literal		2: Life of Discipleship
Responsibilities in Ministry					3: Synthetic & Conventional		3: Productive Life
The Wall (Transition)	Spiritual Young Adults	Purgation	3b: Aridity			Disorientation	4: Journey Inward The Wall
Inner Journey			4: Discovering the Love of Jesus 5: Longing for Oneness with God	6: Intimacy vs. Isolation	4: Individuative & Reflective		
Spirit-Led Ministry	Spiritual Fathers & Mothers	Illumination	6a: Dark Nights of the Soul 6b: Passion for God	7: Generativity vs. Stagnation	5: Conjunctive	Reorientation	5: Journey Outward
Transforming Union		Union	7: Life of Love in the Trinity	8: Integrity vs. Despair	6: Universalizing		6: Life of Love

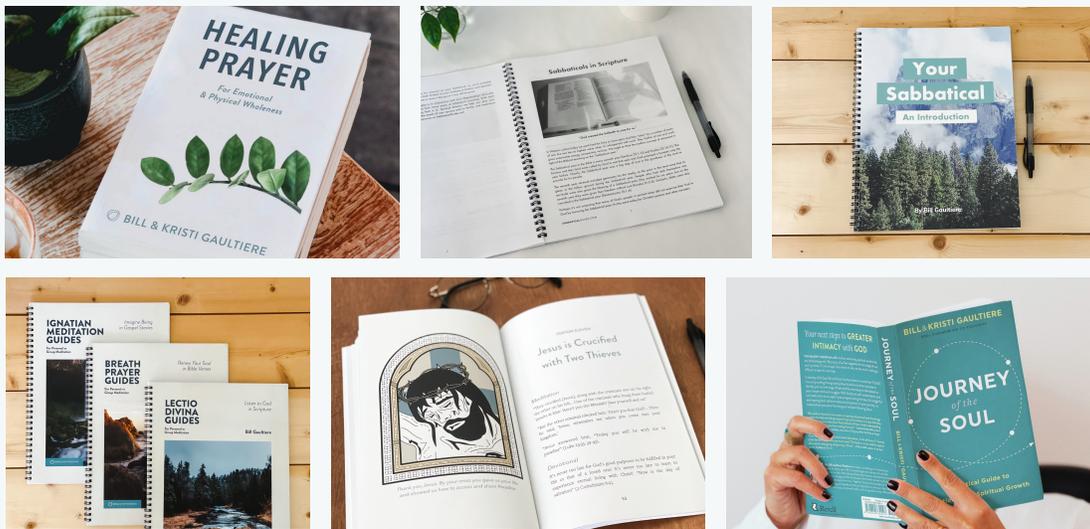
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