JOURNEY INWARD, JOURNEY OUTWARD: EXPLORING THE STAGES OF FAITH

WEEK TWO: SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2020
STAGES OF FAITH: Week 2

1. Review of Week 1
   - What is the shape of our spiritual development?
   - Stages 1 & 2

2. Deeper dive into individual Stages of Faith
   - Stage 3
   - Stage 4 / The Wall
   - Stage 5
   - Stage 6

3. Small group discussion time

Next Sunday @ Middle Hour

Going Deeper: Informal Stages of Faith discussion
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SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: The Map versus the Journey

The Map:
What we think is going to happen if we learn everything about stages of faith.
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: The Map versus the Journey

The Journey:
What actually happens in our lives
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: The Map versus the Journey

Our spiritual journey is something that God is doing, not us.

God is the gardener

We are the plant

The Church is a trellis
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: Differences are a good thing

BODY OF CHRIST

In a God-transformed context, we all have a role, and our differences make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could it smell? God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. 1 Cor 12: 17-18
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: Spiritual Disciplines

“So if it’s all God’s work, then is there any way to participate in this process and ‘help’ it along?”

• Value of learning the stages
• Spiritual disciplines:

INWARD: meditation, prayer, fasting, study
OUTWARD: simplicity, solitude, submission, service
CORPORATE: confession, worship, guidance, celebration

~Richard Foster, “Celebration of Discipline”
The six stages of faith

1. Awe
2. Zeal
3. Responsibility
4. Honesty
5. Authenticity
6. Surrender

A particular “superpower” shines out from people at each stage.

- Stages flow differently for everyone
- More than one stage may feel like home
- Can’t truly understand future stages
“CAGES”

• Sometimes we are stuck for too long in one stage and we become trapped – then the stage becomes a cage
  • Often unconscious, others see it better than we do
  • This is different from simply behaving badly, which we all do

• Handling others who are caged with compassion
THE SIX STAGES OF FAITH

Week 1 (Last Week)

1

2

3

4

The Wall

5

6

Week 2: Today
THE RECOGNITION OF GOD
Faith is the discovery of God.
Main Theme: Finding self-worth in God

Superpower of this stage: A sense of awe
• Delight and amazement in something or someone much larger than ourselves (e.g., when witnessing a miracle, or realizing we are truly loved)

Crisis of transition:
To move to Stage 2, we must accept that we are worthy of belonging/love/participation, and reduce the isolation of our faith journey
STAGE 2: QUICK REVIEW

THE LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Faith is learning about God.

Main Theme: Letting go, submitting

Superpower of this stage: A sense of rightness, zeal

• “I found it!” Zest, new conviction, and relief

Crisis of transition:

To move to Stage 3, we must begin to take personal risks by stepping into challenging new activities, and must identify and accept our own giftedness
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STAGE 3: THE PRODUCTIVE LIFE
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Characteristics of this stage

• Responsibility (Superpower of this stage)
  o Taking on a specific role in the community (visible or invisible)

• Uniqueness in the community
  o Accept we can do specific things well, be of service to community
  o May feel called to develop new gifts (boredom can be this inner call)

• Value placed on symbols
  o Visible honor or rewards for faithfulness, experience of “success”

• A spiritual goal reached
  o Developing a spiritual skill and sharing it (maybe not as public)
STAGE 3: THE PRODUCTIVE LIFE

Caged at Stage 3:

• Overly zealous - try to force others onto our path so we can feel more successful
• Weary in well-doing - burning out, “others disappoint us”, our work doesn’t feel impactful
• Self-centered - trying to do it all ourselves, not relying on community or God
• Life as performance - can’t let ourselves be weak or fearful, upholding leader image
STAGE 3: THE PRODUCTIVE LIFE

Transitioning from Stage 3 to Stage 4:

1. Lose our sense of certainty - let questions come instead of denying
2. Experience a faith or personal crisis - anguished questioning of former truths
3. Feel abandoned - sense a loss of God (v. alarming part of journey!)
4. Look for direction - solitary, but still try to enlist others’ support

Crisis of transition: Must let go of success, accept vulnerability
STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD
STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD

Characteristics of this stage

• Pursuit of personal integrity/honesty in relation to God
  (Superpower of this stage)
  o Discovering difference between who we are others want us to be
  o Intensely personal, difficult to share, hard to feel a sense of belonging

• Life or faith crisis
  o Doesn’t appear to be an extension of faith and growth
  o Faith doesn’t “work” anymore; foundation blocks crumble

• Loss of certainties in life and faith
  o Inner hunger increased, but we doubt our faith achievements thus far
STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD

Characteristics of this stage

• Search for direction (personal, dynamic), not answers (anonymous, static)
  o Seeking peace from our mental/spiritual anguish

• God released from the box
  o God is not who we thought — but is much more available personally

• Apparent loss of faith
  o Others accuse us of being “weak”, “wrong”, “misguided”, “selling out”
STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD

Stages 2 & 3

Stage 4

God

others

self

God

Stage 4’s are “vertical people”
STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD

Caged at this stage

• Always questioning
  o lingering doubt, can’t commit

• Consumed by self-assessment
  o remain closed, trying to find self, not faith

• Immobilized
  o must admit to God that we give up, lean into our fears
“The dark night of the soul.”

Richard Rohr: “Gerald May said that God has to work in the soul in secret and in darkness, because if we fully knew what was happening, and what Mystery/transformation/God/grace will eventually ask of us, we would either try to take charge or stop the whole process. No one oversees his or her own demise willingly, even when it is the false self that is dying. God has to undo our illusions secretly, as it were, when we are not watching and not in perfect control, say the mystics.”
THE WALL
Our Will Versus God’s Will

Types of Resistance:
• Strong ego
• Self-deprecator
• Guilt or shame-ridden
• Intellectuals
• High achievers
• Doctrinaire
• Ordained
THE WALL
Our Will Versus God’s Will

Going Through the Wall:
• Discomfort
• Surrender
• Healing
• Awareness, Forgiveness, Acceptance, Love
• Closeness to God
• Discernment
• Melting, molding
• Solitude and reflection
STAGE 4: THE JOURNEY INWARD

Transitioning from Stage 4 to Stage 5:
1. Let go of spiritual ego/self-centeredness
2. Accept God’s purpose for our lives
3. Seek wholeness through personal healing and pilgrimage
4. Be willing to commit to whatever it takes

Crisis of transition: Must find peace by giving up the search for self, allow for a new certainty in God, be open to the cost of obedience

WE MUST GO THROUGH THE WALL.
STAGE 5: THE JOURNEY OUTWARD
STAGE 5: THE JOURNEY OUTWARD

Characteristics of this stage

• A renewed sense of God’s acceptance leading to authenticity (Superpower of this stage)
  o Honestly see our limitations but also God’s unconditional love
  o Wholeness looks a lot like weakness; God uses our brokenness

• A new sense of the horizontal life
  o The concentrated darkness and battles of Stage 4 are over
  o We reach out to others from a sense of fullness, loved and loving

• A sense of calling, vocation, ministry
  o Feel called by God, not an organization or human spiritual leader
  o We engage in ministry without ego
STAGE 5: THE JOURNEY OUTWARD

Characteristics of this stage

• Concern and focus on others’ best interests
  o Winning/losing, accomplishing are secondary; shift focus off ourselves
  o We will go out of our way to sacrifice for others, but at God’s leading
  o We do not burn out at this stage; respond better to rhythms of grace

• A deep calm and stillness
  o We feel a longing to be quiet and still inside, listen ~ even when busy
  o Quietness comes from deep understanding, wisdom
“Caged” at Stage 5

At this stage, we are not truly caged – these only appear to be caged behaviors to others at earlier stages!

- Seemingly out of touch with practical concerns
- Apparently careless about “important” things
STAGE 5: THE JOURNEY OUTWARD

Moving from Stage 5 to Stage 6

1. No striving, just evolving, growing deeper
   o more of God, less of us

2. Seeing God in all of life
   o still small voice in everyday life experiences

3. Being God’s person
   o developing into a more full representation of my true self

Crisis of Transition: Vocation is satisfying; being whole is enough
STAGE 6: THE LIFE OF LOVE
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Characteristics of this stage

• Christ-like living, total surrender to God (Superpower of this stage)
  o Obedient to God’s call, even to the point of pain and death
  o Moving in tune with the Holy Spirit so natural that we often don’t notice it

• Wisdom gained through life’s struggles
  o Still experience pain/shock, but simultaneously know God’s humor, comfort
  o We know miracles occur more frequently through pain than through joy

• Compassionate living for others
  o Not lacking conviction or anger, but willing to love and help in the midst of it
Characteristics of this stage

• Detachment from things and stress
  o The more of God we have, the less of everything else we need

• Life underneath or on top are equally accepted
  o Feel close to God doing either the most menial or most prestigious things
  o Can say or do preposterous things, deliberately give up our lives in service

• Life abandoned
  o Seem to disregard our needs, not care for ourselves
  o All is secondary to God’s direction, day by day
STAGE 6: THE LIFE OF LOVE

“Caged” at this stage
As with Stage 5, at this stage we are not truly caged – these only appear to be caged behaviors to others at earlier stages

• Separation from the world - look totally out of touch
• Neglect of self - may live a simple life
• Apparent waste of life
“St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) recognized that the human person is a microcosm with a natural affinity for, or resonance with, its macrocosm, which many call God. She often used the word *viriditas*, the greening of things from within, recognizing a readiness in plants to receive the sun and to transform it into energy and life. This energy is the soul and seed of everything, an inner voice calling you to “Become who you are; become all that you are.”

The inner shows itself in the outer, and the outer reflects the inner, the individual reflects the cosmos, the cosmos reflects the individual.”

~Richard Rohr
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THE SIX STAGES OF FAITH

Questions for Contemplation and Discussion:

1. How can understanding the Stages of Faith help me treat someone in my life with greater empathy?

2. How might First Pres Berkeley use this Stages of Faith teaching to become a more inclusive, empathic, and spiritually vibrant church?