

7 Stages of Spiritual Growth – Part 1

Exploring the 7 Stages of Spiritual Growth – my notes and summation from the book Mansions of the Heart by Thomas Ashbrook, which is based upon his translation/thoughts from the original writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross who were Christian mystics from Spain and lived at the same time as the great reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin. Eugene Peterson describes the great reformers as “mountain people” scaling the heights and taking in the horizon, while Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross were “valley people” who tilled the valley floor to promote growth. Please read Ashbrook’s excellent book for greater development and details on this topic. For our purposes now, this summation should suffice to get you started. At the end I’ll include a bibliography of Spiritual formation resources.

“Authentic Discipleship” is not merely an intellectual learning effort, but includes the balanced life in the Spirit... with Biblical Literacy, Spiritual Formation, and Leadership Development. These 7 stages of Spiritual Growth focuses upon personal Spiritual Formation and mapping one’s own Spiritual Journey. It represents the “Lifelong Transformation of the whole person into the Image of Christ [Imago Christi]” in the context of a deep relationship with God.

1. Dead-end Roads to Spiritual Growth:

- a. God simply wants me to be Holy – the notion being that God’s primary purpose in our lives is the increase virtue within us. In this context Spiritual transformation is all about character, sanctification, godliness, integrity, fruits of the Spirit, and holiness.
 - i. While not an unreasonable goal it is a dead end because we never get there in this life. The goal is always moving further ahead of us usually always just out of reach.
 - ii. The more we know about ourselves and the more we understand the distance to Christlikeness, our failures and sin dominate our consciousness leading to discouragement and despair rather than true transformation.
 - iii. Holiness is a great virtue and God desires to affect in our life, but as a goal of discipleship it remains a dead end.
- b. God wants me to be a better worker – the focus becomes my usefulness to God.
 - i. God doesn’t use us because He needs us as if He lacked something, but because He desires relational intimacy and work is a way of getting us done, not getting the job done.
 - ii. God is more interested in our state of “being” and how that plays out in our world when we really don’t even think about it.
 - iii. The goal of being purposeful, of doing good things and finishing well are good things, but an inadequate goal for Spiritual Transformation. Wanting God Himself is better than wanting to work for Him.
- c. God wants me to be whole – personal wholeness is another ‘mythical goal’ of spiritual growth.

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- ii. **Second Mansion – “Struggle – Between a rock and a hard place”**
 - iii. **Third Mansion – “Following Jesus”**
 - iv. **Fourth Mansion – “Discovering the love of Jesus”**
 - v. **Fifth Mansion – “Longing for Oneness with God”**
 - vi. **Sixth Mansion – “The passion of God’s love”**
 - vii. **Seventh Mansion – “A Life of Love in the Trinity”**
- b. **There are 6 categories [or rooms] which relate to the growth factors [or issues] that affect your advancement at each level.**
- i. **“Your heart’s desire” in relationship with God.**
 - ii. **“Key activities” in response to God.**
 - iii. **“Changing patterns of prayer” in communication with God.**
 - iv. **“Jesus’ initiatives” which draw us into deeper intimacy with God.**
 - v. **“Schemes of the enemy” which attempt to destroy or thwart our growth in God.**
 - vi. **“Keys for growth” that helps us cooperate with God.**
3. **1st Mansion:**
- a. **Beginning of your faith journey in Christ.**
- i. **Imago Dei – being made in the image of God opens an initial spiritual view of reality. There is a natural and a supernatural reality – for each we have senses that enable us to interact with these realms.**
 - ii. **Pre-Christian – God beckons to humanity – and some hear His call and start to respond. This initial quickening and awareness moves us to a decision – to accept God’s offer, or trust our own strength and judgment.**
- b. **Life in the 1st mansion.**
- i. **The discovery of God’s love, recognition of our limitations and need for God’s Grace, accepting God’s forgiveness on His terms.**
 - ii. **Jesus emerges as Savior, and in time we become aware that He must be Lord as well.**
 - iii. **Prayer is the beginning of Spiritual growth – prayer and reflection are the door of entry into the 1st mansion.**
 - iv. **We begin to learn what it means to be ‘in’ the world, but not ‘of’ it.**
 - v. **We are mainly focused on getting God’s help – both to obtain what we think we need/want such as worldly success and pleasure that we have not been able to achieve on our own.**
 - vi. **The ability to discern good from evil is clouded by our attachments and desires. Our identification is caught up in what we have and what we do, not our identity in Christ.**

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- vii. It will take time and significant Spiritual growth before we discover that God is the center of everything – our life, our hopes, our dreams... because He profoundly loves me.
- viii. A changed mind and heart has not yet resulted. We accept that we are saved by Grace, but our motivations and lifestyle have yet to be transformed [1 Cor 3:1-3; James 4:1-4].
- ix. We are baby Christians needing milk and initial discipleship [Eph 2:8-9; Rom 10:8-9, 12:1].
- c. The 6 Rooms:
 - i. Our hearts desire:
 1. Initially we enjoy satisfaction of God’s Grace, and the initial recognition that God brings His Spirit to guide us to Him.
 2. We came to God for help, and He has provided it... though we don’t realize how extensive the gift is.
 3. We have embarked on a lifelong desire for belonging, security, and happiness and God whets our appetite for more.
 - ii. Key activities:
 1. The initial work at hand is the identification and slow process of removing overt external and internal sin from our life.
 - a. The Bible is the guide for moral and ethical behavior – there are indeed absolute truth and right & wrong.
 - b. Moderns tend to focus on behavior modification and rarely get much further of deeper than that.
 - c. Post-moderns tend to accept a more relative outlook to moral and ethical matters depending on the particular community values – whether Christian or not.
 2. Reading Scripture and prayer are the two most common initial disciplines that are developed.
 - a. Scripture reading is often in the context of a church sponsored class to teach basic theology, or in the relationship of a mentor/discipler.
 - b. Prayer is taught as conversation with God... as with someone who loves us. Internal communication of the Spirit prompts us to move in one direction or another, though we scarcely recognize it.
 3. Changing patterns of prayer:
 - a. Our focus tends to be on our self in the world and that which we think we need.
 - b. Prayer tends to be asking for stuff from God or for some particular blessing we desire.

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- c. Prayer tends to be random and spontaneous when a need arises.
 - d. Prayer in the 1st mansion is more like rubbing the bottle and hoping the genie will grant our wish. With maturity in later mansions do we learn to allow prayer to conform us to God.
4. Jesus Initiatives:
- a. As we begin this journey, God has already heavily invested Jesus and the Spirit [2 of the Trinity] into directly fostering our fledgling relationship. As new believers, they work in ways we don't know and can't fathom to encourage growth and protection.
 - b. God continues to reveal Himself, and prayer becomes a more natural response.
 - c. Grace is the free gift of God... not based on our merit or working. We have a role in cooperation with the Spirit, but God anchors our growth in His Nature – Phil 1:6, 2:12-13.
5. Schemes of the enemy:
- a. Attacks against our faith are primarily focused on our doubts, temptations, and minor rebellion.
 - b. As we move from Spiritual toddler to child, to adolescent, to adult – the attacks become stronger and more sophisticated... as does our strength and ability to stand against them.
 - c. Temptations are relentless and generally encourage our sense of unworthiness. This is a form of truth & deception – we are unworthy, God knows we are unworthy too. We need to embrace our unworthiness and thank God while expecting more from ourselves.
 - d. The main temptations are to encourage us to grasp what God has intended for us in an inappropriate fashion, thus spoiling the pleasure/joy God would have us enjoy in a more appropriate manner.
 - e. Evil reinforces the lies of the world to keep us from noticing the Light of God and seeking Him more deeply.
6. Keys for growth:
- a. Bible study is a critical part of our Spiritual growth. The Word is food for the Spirit... and encourages forming an entirely new worldview.
 - b. Clear Biblical teaching and understanding doctrine correctly helps form a clearer knowledge of Who God really is [both Biblical literacy and Spiritual formation].

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- c. Interaction with a Christian community helps provide a framework for proper self evaluation, trust and honesty.
- d. Critical Christian friends aid us in believing/standing with us in what God is doing. Grace is more gracious in a relational context.
- e. Nurturing small groups within the greater community further encourage growth, and provide a safe place to experience God.
- f. Increasing self-knowledge of who we are in Christ is another important key to growth.
- g. The Spirit aids in revealing and illuminating God's Truth within our life and social context.
- h. We need intentionality in pursuing God within a Godly context.

4. 2nd Mansion:

- a. While the 1st mansion tends to be more definable and pragmatic, the remaining mansions are ever more a mysterious wilderness.
 - i. Experience in the mansions is toward greater mystery and wonder, but this is not a lineal progression. It is more of an interconnected spiral where we move in and out... exploring further ahead and moving back into more comfortable territory until we're ready to live more consistently in the next mansion.
 - ii. The Spirit beckons us ever onward... as Aslan said at the conclusion of the final book of the Chronicles of Narnia... "Further up, and further in!"
 - iii. The 2nd mansion is still the condition of a relatively new Christian, but considerable Spiritual growth has taken place.
 - iv. There is an earnest desire to live according to God's desires for our lives. Denial of self and following Christ take on new significance.
 - v. However, the pull of the world and the flesh are still strong.
 - vi. We also experience new levels of spiritual attack from the enemy who wants to derail our progress and minimize the damage we can do in advancing God's Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.
 - vii. There are new deceptions that emerge, and faith begins to emerge through the struggle to live by the Spirit and also walk in the Spirit [Gal 5:16-25]. This struggle typifies the 2nd mansion... growing beyond the adherence to rules toward being a living sacrifice.
- b. Life in the 2nd mansion:
 - i. Your heart's desire:
 - 1. Is now divided... despite our deepening faith we often find ourselves engaged in worldly pastimes – where sources of pleasure, security, significance, etc. are divided between the world and God.

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2. The struggle is between serving one of two masters – and as the tension mounts we realize our mixed motives and are becoming more aware of our choices.
 3. Our life has become the battleground between light and darkness, between the Divine and the world or the secular & profane [Gal 5:17].
- ii. Key activities:
1. As we attempt to live a more intentional Christian life, the concrete circumstances of life are a testing of our faith.
 2. Bringing our reluctant body and mind into conformity with God’s Will is an ongoing struggle – balanced with an increasing desire to listen to and obey God.
 3. Slowly we experience transformation... 2 steps forward & 1 behind, 1 step forward and 2 behind.
 4. Incremental growth is evident, but so is the distance of how far we need to go.
- iii. Changing patterns of prayer:
1. Prayer is still mainly discursive – telling God what the problem is and how and when to fix it, but intercession is growing as a priority.
 2. We are becoming more receptive to the Spirit’s promptings and Grace, and sense God communicating with us at times in prayer as well as through outward circumstances.
 3. Prayer also heightens the sense of the battle ground we are caught up in between God and evil, and adds confusion as we attempt to decipher how the evil we find ourselves in supports the notion of a true and Holy God who is leading us through it... not into it.
 4. Spiritual Warfare is now becoming more real – evil influences and the lies they speak are more apparent, but we are not yet outraged by it... our sense of identity as a child of God is still too childlike.
 - a. Preparation – Eph 6:10ff
 - b. Discernment – 1 Cor 12:10
 - c. Active resistance – James 4:7
 5. We pray as we live... we live as we pray.
- iv. Jesus initiatives:
1. God continues to call to us through all circumstances, some of which we are aware of.
 2. We continue to be inspired by the Word of God, and illuminates areas of needed growth and healing.

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3. **Jesus continues to shepherd us and guide us into righteousness and transformational life.**
- v. **Schemes of the enemy:**
1. **We are in a crucial period in our Spiritual growth – and as such we are becoming a greater threat to the kingdom of darkness. Intensified attacks of lies and deceit about what is real, where we'll find pleasure, happiness and security to derail authentic discipleship.**
 2. **Moods and appetites are the norm through which we are wooed to accept a less confrontational Spiritual life.**
 3. **Temptations and the opportunities to sin abound along with the guilt and shame that accompany knowing we are not who we ought to be.**
 4. **The reality of Spiritual warfare – is not taken seriously by most churches that are uncomfortable with the ramifications of a Spiritual life of authentic discipleship.**
 5. **Discouragement, shame, hopelessness can emerge as dominant themes in this stage of our Spiritual growth.**
 6. **At this time we need the help of intercessors, mentors, discipleship coaches, and shepherds who are more mature to encourage us and call attention to the true nature of the attacks. Those who retreat into themselves are in real trouble here.**
- vi. **Keys for growth:**
1. **Perseverance is a primary key here... and prayer a primary component. We need to be taught about what is happening, to understand that we are caught up into something much bigger than my own life and the happiness I want to find.**
 2. **Biblical literacy is of primary importance as it provides the basis for the Kingdom principles for which we need to live.**
 3. **Relationship with Christ is everything... He is the Victor! The battle is already won... though we remain in the trenches.**
 4. **We need to be encouraged that this time of heightened attack and the resultant failures we sustain are part of the growth we need to weather and emerge from. Mentors, coaches, shepherds are crucial for advancing through this time.**
 5. **This is a period where we are being tested... we need to hold true to Him who called us. When we fail we need to repent... even when we are distracted by shame and desire. This is a hard and dangerous time... in which we need to intentionally weather and conform our thought life and our physical life.**

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6. When these struggles occur... rather than complaining we should respond – “isn’t that wonderful? Remember when that would not have bothered you at all? Don’t you see how far you have grown?”

5. The 3rd Mansion:

- a. Following Jesus is no longer a half-hearted hope, but emerges as a life choice.
 - i. Discipleship has now come to exemplify our life. Where much is written about the early phases of Spiritual growth, and this middle area is pretty much as far as most churches can envision, we now enter into the fat part of authentic discipleship.
 - ii. “Considerable Discipleship” now exemplifies our life – for most people this takes many years... even decades to emerge.
 - iii. Perseverance as an act of our will cooperating with God’s Will has now brought fruit to bear.
 - iv. While the last mansion seemed like a life of conflict, confusion and failure, now we are immersed in diligent work of keeping on... the treadmill of life and the dryer side of discipleship is now the norm.
 - v. A balanced life of discipleship – regular church attendance, ministry involvement, more consistent prayer, concerted effort to live a Christ-like life, and a genuine desire to please and honor God are evidences of considerable Spiritual growth.
 - vi. Most people don’t get this far, and most of those will go no further – but this is just the beginning of when the Christian life really gets interesting.
- b. Life in the 3rd mansion:
 - i. Your heart’s desire:
 1. We become convinced that life with Jesus is the only way to live. Faithfully following Biblical principles has become a way of life of discovery in God’s faithfulness and grace.
 2. Scriptural worldview and moral/ethical values have replaced their worldly counterparts.
 3. We are more aware of sin and grace, and seek to purge sin from our life. We are sinners saved by grace, who now realize they are saints who sometimes sin.
 4. Faith has become relatively stable, we have an inner assurance of God’s salvation, and we have a personal knowledge of God’s love and goodness.
 - ii. Key activities:
 1. Faith has become the center of our life and activity. We are very active in our local congregation, regular Bible study, and participate in Christian education opportunities beyond the local church.

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2. Stewardship has replaced compulsion as the motivation for faithfulness. We see ourselves as part of God's Kingdom and seek to advance it. We have discovered our Spiritual gifts and fruit of the Spirit is manifest.
 3. Charity and mercy are important aspects of life, as is representing Christ as His ambassador in our community results in more controlled and deliberately godly speech and behavior.
- iii. Changing patterns of prayer:
1. Prayer life has deepened... reflecting an ongoing sense of the presence and activity of God both in formal prayer times and in our daily life.
 2. Prayer is still mainly discursive... that is talking to God, but with a deepened quality and level of communication from reflective reading and Scripture meditation.
 3. We are now more in communion with God... speaking to Him but also attentive for His speaking to us. Thus true communion with God is emerging.
 4. 3rd mansion prayer that leads to the 4th mansion:
 - a. Adoration – a healthy appreciation of God's Greatness and Wonder leads us into a state of adoration... where we can't help but express true love and gratitude for God. Worship takes on whole new levels of depth and wonder.
 - b. Confession – a healthy appreciation of God's perfection leads to a heart that readily confesses its shortcomings and need of Grace. The closer you get to God's perfection, the more aware of your own imperfection. When we recognize we have fallen short, we readily confess and where appropriate seek recompense for our failures.
 - c. Thanksgiving – gratitude overcomes our lamentations... though we know God wants us to honestly come before Him with our hurts and hopes, we know He already knows and desires the best for us... which leads to increased thanksgiving. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is an expression of our longing, not our disappointment.
 - d. Supplication – ask... seek... knock are the basis of godly supplication. This is also the easiest part of 3rd mansion prayer... knowing we need and that God longs to give fully is at the heart of supplication. Seeing the needs of others and standing in the gap for them is an indication of our heart's alignment with God's.
 5. Prayerful communication with God is becoming the norm... but finding Spiritual joy in the intimacy we enjoy with God is yet before us.

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6. Once we have entered into a more disciplined life of discipleship, pride and presumption are two major impediments to our continued Spiritual advancement. Ministry activities are another area of impediment as we tend to focus too much on doing things for God rather than enjoying our time with God. Effective ministry comes out of aligning our hearts with God's and seeing need through His eyes, and hearing His Call to arms.

iv. Jesus initiatives:

1. God is actively empowering us in our called ministry, He supplies strength so we can live a Christian life, and He is calling us into deeper personal intimacy with Him.
2. In times of intense prayer we sense His love and get glimpses into His heart and character.
3. Peace will pervade that speaks more of God's presence with us than the solution of the problem at hand.
4. We more intensely desire to be aligned with God and seek to do His Will.
5. Humility emerges as we know we are inadequate for any calling God issues... whether in work or in life in general, God's presence and greatness goes before us and draws us deeper to Himself.
6. Longing turns to increased working and diligent activity, which alone doesn't satisfy... but draws us into a growing sense that there is more intimacy with God to be had.
7. Longing can mean greater frustration but these are also signs of deepening Spiritual growth.

v. Schemes of the enemy:

1. Pride and distractions of doing stuff based on performance are 2 primary tactics to thwart continued Spiritual development.
2. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with a more actively programmatic approach to church life, doing more is not as helpful as abiding in God and allowing His love, mercy, grace, and hope to flow through us.
3. The enemy would have us believe that we are necessary and keep us so busy 'doing' that we neglect 'being' – this is a sure road to burnout and discouragement.
4. Along these same lines we tend to inflate our own importance and significance, and focus more on the measurable quantitative performance aspects of ministry instead of the qualitative aspects of Spiritual transformation.

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5. As we take our eyes off God and seeking His will and grace in abiding in Him, we are subject to all sorts of failures including ethical and moral ones. It is never about us... it is always about Jesus.

vi. Keys for growth:

1. If we are so busy that we cannot make time to do another thing, we are too busy to allow God to take us further on in this wonderful Christian Spiritual adventure.
2. Prioritizing is key for growth, as is time management.
3. Mentors and coaches need to remind us to stop relying on our own effort... even in regard to prayer and ministry, and seek God. If we are not becoming more responsive to God and aware of His presence, we are in trouble.
4. Even though the 3rd mansion is a season of learning to follow God in ministry, God is also calling us into a new level of knowing Him and in His love.
5. Detachment is a discipline we need to learn – lest we fall into the trap with the “Rich young ruler” who was too attached with what he thought was important to set it aside for what God was telling him should be his priority.
6. The church today is full of pastors who are so focused on having people available to do things and get ministry done, that little thought is given on their continued Spiritual growth and development beyond the work at hand.

6. The 4th Mansion:

- a. Here is the dimension of spiritual growth where God makes Himself and His love more known.
 - i. A subtle but significant transition occurs from the third mansion to the fourth where we experience the Gospel message of forgiveness, love and hope not only through answered prayer, blessings, and deliverance from distress. We become increasingly aware not only of His providential blessings in our life, but also in our inner feelings and growing awareness of His Presence.
 - ii. This is an inner working of His Spirit... we begin to fall in love with Jesus.
 - iii. Jesus is not only as an ideal, or the reality of His Personal expenditure on our behalf, but we love Him for Himself... for Who He is.
 - iv. We experience profound touches of His Love and Presence... the supernatural nature of God becomes tangible relationally and emotionally.
- b. Life in the 4th mansion:
 - i. Your heart's desire:

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1. Becomes increasingly relational engagement as we develop a divinely bestowed passion for knowing, loving, and seeking God.
 2. God has now enflamed our heart... we are driven less by obligation or expectation, being a blessing to others, or even doing the right and Godly thing [though they remain in part].
 3. We become aware that we are more than “a sinner saved by grace”... we realize that we are God’s beloved and have heard God’s Call as the Lover to the beloved.
 4. We become increasingly aware that we are “saints who sometimes sin” – and we experience a hunger and thirst for Jesus that we hardly knew before.
 5. What was begun as moments of prayer has now transcended into a life of responsive prayer.
- ii. Key activities:
1. There is integration and balance of our outward life and inward life – active ministry and obedience is developing out from our inner life of prayer and reflection.
 2. We become better aware of our calling and giftedness, and more selective about our ministry and life work... busyness and quantitative work give way to strategic and qualitative work.
 3. Increasing awareness of Jesus results in a greater knowledge of the grandeur of God. As God becomes greater, we see ourselves as weaker and more dependent on Him.
 4. There is a greater sense of withdrawal from the things of the world, and a greater alignment of heart and mind with the Kingdom of God.
 5. There is an improvement in all our virtues... more by nature but still with effort... as our identity aligns with God.
 6. Now that we are learning to discern the heart of God in prayer, we find greater discernment about His call to service.
 7. Greater intimacy with Trinity brings greater self-insight and awareness, and a greater commitment to service, love, and compassion to others, and a greater sacrifice for the sake of Jesus.
- iii. Changing patterns of prayer:
1. Prayer changes more dramatically and is the better diagnostic of spiritual growth and development.
 2. Times of intimacy and touches of God’s love result in the desire for increased intimacy and seeking His presence in prayer.

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3. There is a shift from conversational prayer where we consciously talk with God [probably to God is more correct], toward reflective prayer and the beginning of “infused prayer” – where God sets the agenda and we respond to His leading.
 4. Instead of asking Him [often telling Him] how things ought to be done and for His blessing on our plans... we realize our presumption and release the initiatives to God.
 5. Christian ‘meditation and reflection’ is focusing on God through Scripture, the beauty of nature, etc. It is seeking insights, wisdom, and reality in light of what God has done and thereby seeing who He is.
 6. Christian ‘contemplation’ is focusing on God alone... it is simply beholding Him for the wonder, majesty, and beauty He is. It is seeking wonder and beauty in God Himself.
 7. ‘Abiding prayer’ is this prayerful focus on God in personal relationship... it is communion with God.
 8. ‘Reflective prayer’ is the conscious alignment of our mind and heart with God... it is placing ourselves upon the Spiritual highway to be caught up with the Spirit.
- iv. Jesus’ initiatives to draw us deeper:
1. God encourages us to become more open and available to Him... by providing gentle awareness of His loving presence – both in prayer and in our daily walk.
 2. We experience greater insights and realizations... moments of illumination and revelation encourage us to remain in His presence and attentive to Him.
 3. Communion in the Spirit is truly spiritual communication, not an intellectual activity. Biblical literacy is a foundational activity that prepares and sharpens our minds, but spiritual formation is also a foundational activity that sensitizes our hearts and prepares us for relational intimacy. The two work together in a wonderful transformational collaboration.
 4. As we become more aware and comfortable in this collaboration, the Spirit increasingly allows us to hear or to become more intuned what God is saying to us.
 5. The heart – which is the center of being in Hebrew philosophy, once completely distorted by sin in this broken and unredeemed world – is beginning to be healed... to become a more fitting abode for the Lord of creation. This is part of a lifelong recreating process [Ex 36:26-29]. This is the entering into God’s rest... His Shalom where we are made whole.

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6. **Supernatural experiences become more common, and we look for evidence of God in daily activities as a result of this increased intimacy and wholeness.**
 7. **We learn discernment and more purposefully identify with God's purpose and priorities.**
- v. **Schemes of the enemy:**
1. **Distraction is a major scheme of the enemy as we fall in love with Jesus. Being busy and harried keeps us from pondering and exploring the spiritual world God beckons us into. Anything that prevents us from periods of focused contemplation and silence is evidence of this distraction tactic.**
 2. **As real intimacy with God increases, we become dangerous to the enemy who works through anything that keeps us overly busy and gets us stuck or stalled in our growth.**
 3. **Shame is another line of attack... the enemy will bring recollections of our failures to mind in vivid detail and we agree with the accusations... I'm not worthy of God's love, I'm not worthy of His Grace. To the extent we focus on the sinner we know we are, we fail to see the saint God is creating. We need to purposefully accept Grace and accept God's love in a dependent submissive manner.**
 4. **If we pay attention and see these attacks for what they are, we can immediately confess and recognize the freedom God grants us. It is a choice... do I accept the deception of what the enemy says of me? Do I accept a confused image of what I say of myself? Or do I accept the reality of what God says of me? The conflict is a sign of growth... so rejoice!**
- vi. **Keys for growth:**
1. **Spiritual growth in the 4th mansion comes primarily through times of solitude and silence with God.**
 2. **Abiding in the Spirit is a reality we are encouraged to partake of... what we do in contemplation carries with us through our daily lives.**
 3. **The spiritual disciplines of prayer and contemplation drive spiritual growth. Richard Foster says, "the classical disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths ... they invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm."**
 4. **Changing patterns of prayer:**
 - a. **To contemplate God is to enjoy His presence... to see His beauty and grace... and be in awe and enamored by Him.**
 - b. **Beholding Jesus is to more clearly see and enjoy the wonder of the incarnation and the grace He purchased.**

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- c. **Contemplation is to turn our attention to God... to seek His face amid the beauty and distractions of a world going on around us. It is not called a “discipline” for nothing, we must purposely pursue it.**
- d. **Understanding contemplation, meditation, and spiritual warfare are essential activities. Recognize there is much information and misinformation on these subjects... seek help from a more experienced and mature disciple.**
- e. **Spiritual hunger begins to call us... to drive us... to infuse us with the reality of God’s presence. We have moved beyond the “doing” and into the “being” of discipleship... but it is purposeful and it takes effort on our part, we need to cooperate with what God is doing.**

See Part 2