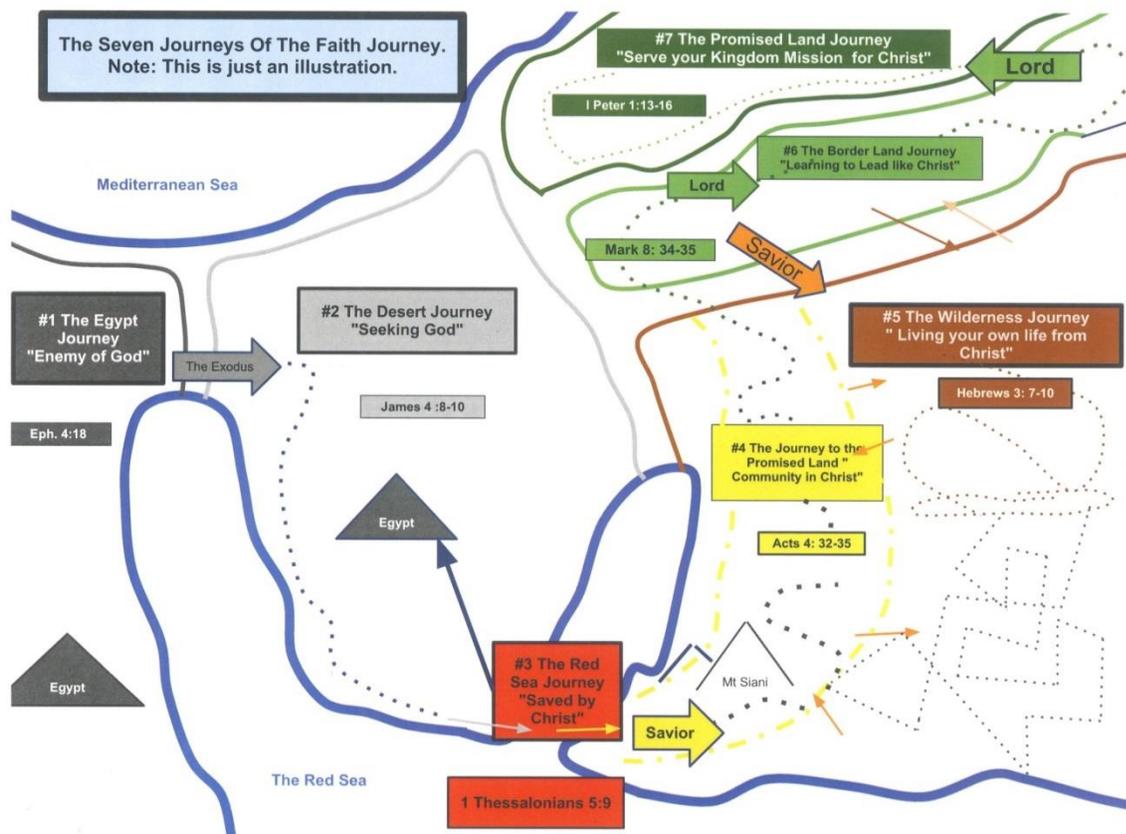


LD – Mentoring & Coaching – 4.2 – Assessing the 7 Stages of the Faith Journey

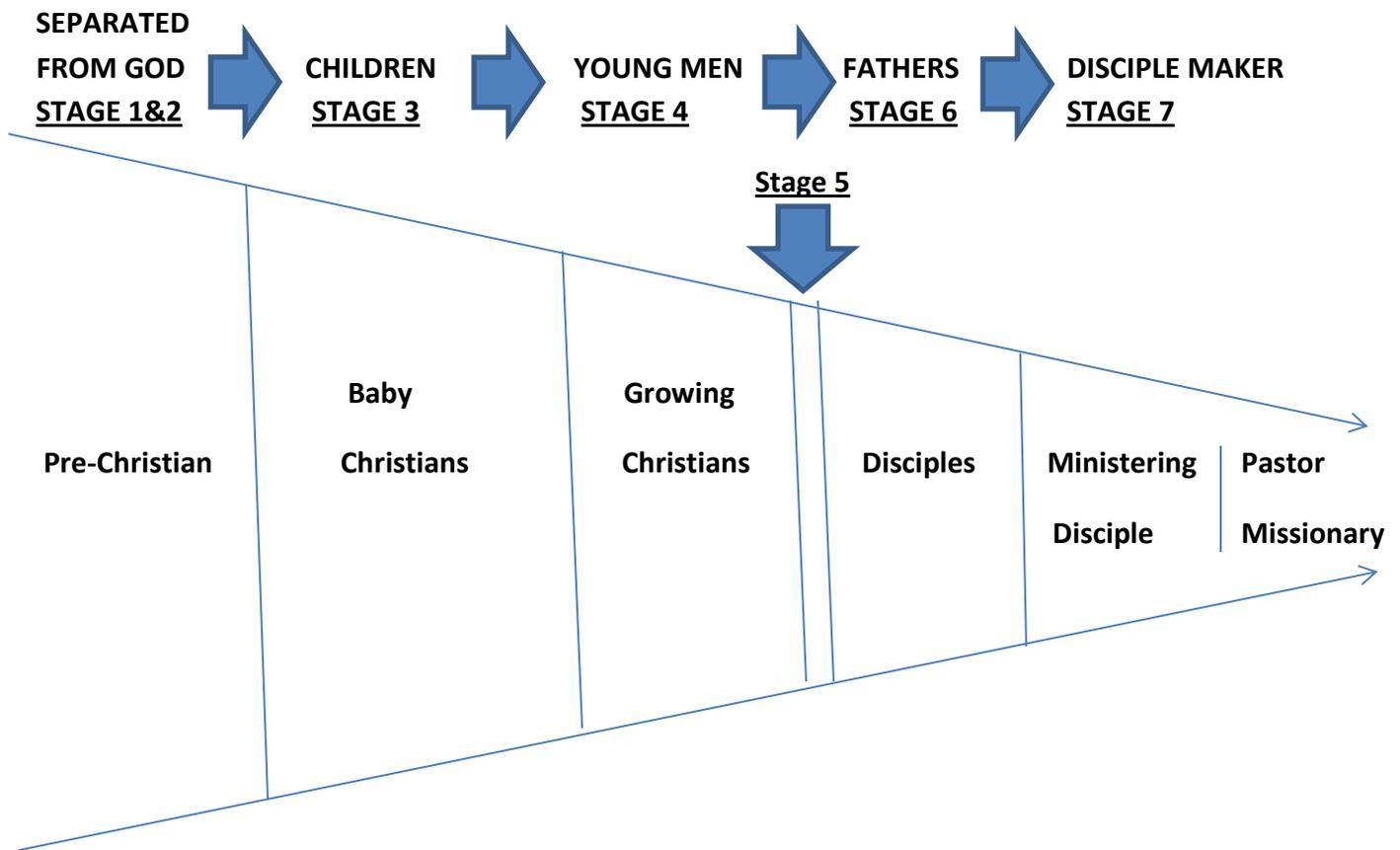
Our Faith Journey begins when we start to ask ultimate questions and seek answers to these questions. Questions such as “Why am I here?” “What is the meaning of my life?” “Is there life beyond physical death?” “If there is a ‘God’ how do I come to know ‘Him/her/it?’” These are the contemplative questions inquiring minds have asked throughout the ages. Along the way toward maturity and understanding, we pass certain common signposts and often we don’t realize we have passed them until later when we look back at our path and the choices we’ve made along the way. The purpose of this article on the “7 Stages of the Faith Journey” is to provide a more cogent basis for Mentor-Coaches [Journey Guides] who are working with individuals in the discipleship process to see: 1) a bigger picture and higher goal of discipleship than what is generally understood; 2) to help identify where those we are mentoring are on their own particular journey; and 3) to provide discipleship resources for these individuals based upon where they are now to help them move forward with confidence. The hope of “The Journey” is to spur disciples on to ever higher levels of spiritual growth, intimacy, and dependence upon God, and their confidence in engaging others.

The “Journey Map” and the descriptions below are a visual aid that the individual and their Mentor-Coach can use to identify where they are on their journey and provide a more effective way forward:

A) THE JOURNEY MAP:



B) The Navigator Funnel + The Journey Stages Identity – Model for Intentional Christian Maturity progressing from Separate from God to mature Ministering Disciples:



C) CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP DEFINITION:

1. **Christian Discipleship** – The process of becoming a disciple of Jesus involves a holistic integrated process that includes:

- Biblical Literacy** – Developing the Mind of Christ [aka ‘head’ or cognitive/IQ]
- Spiritual Formation** – Developing the Heart of Christ [aka ‘heart’ or emotional-relational/EQ]
- Leadership Development** – Developing the Mission of Christ [aka ‘hands’ or ministry]

Where many discipleship methods focus almost exclusively on the component of knowledge and wisdom... which are of course foundational and very desirable, a better objective is to cultivate all three components – mind, heart, and mission. To this end, Christian Disciples love Jesus and earnestly look for Him, we long to be like Him, and we live to serve Him and advance the Kingdom of God. “God’s ultimate purpose is that His Son might be exhibited in me” – Oswald Chambers. [Proverbs 23:12; Ecc 2:26; Hab 2:14; Luke 1:77; John 4:23; Rom 12:1; 1Cor 13; 2Cor 3:17-18].

2. **A Christian Disciple** – is an individual who is being progressively transformed into the character and likeness of Jesus. This is a Transformational Process:

- It involves both mind and heart

- b. It results in the progressive crucifixion of the sin nature
 - c. It enables the deliberate submersion of the self in Christ
 - d. It is demonstrated in the living evidence of spiritual fruit [Gal 5:19-23].
3. Christian Disciples are Spirit driven believers who are engaged in advancing the values of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. They live life in community where faith, worship, expectations, responsibilities, and hope are defined and experienced. Individual discipleship contains components of vertical relational interaction – between the disciple and God, and horizontal relational interaction – between disciples within community... and results in outreach to those who as yet haven't experienced such a relationship with God. Disciples are all about expressing relational intimacy with God and with others, with the priority of "being the Church" [e.g.: substance issues of lifestyle, nature and character formation] rather than "doing church" [e.g.: form issues including what, where, when, and how corporate church is done].
4. By definition – discipleship is the progressive movement from my being in control of my life through the aspects of my intellect, will and emotions to becoming progressively transformed with God increasingly working out through my life as I identify with His mind, heart, and mission.
5. There is a major discussion that is occurring in the community of discipleship leaders – the top 3 issues are that have emerged are:
 - a. Most evangelical terms employed regarding Christian maturity exclude discipleship as defined above, and when discipleship is even mentioned at all spiritual life is all but ignored.
 - b. Most discipleship conversations focus on Jesus as savior... He is my friend who rescued me from sin and death, but as friend He doesn't expect too much of me; instead Scripture presents Him as King and Lord to whom I lay down my life as a living sacrifice out of gratitude and dependence.
 - c. Evangelism is seen as a transactional-contractual decision with the expectation of freedom from hell and suffering; rather than a developmental relational experience that leads progressively to maturity and a life of purpose and service as ministers and ambassadors of the Gospel.

D) DESCRIPTION OF THE 7 STAGES OF THE JOURNEY: In assessing the Seven Stages of the Faith Journey, there are some characteristics that are fairly consistent. Here is a brief breakdown of the characteristics of each of these stages – please refer to the Journey Map above:

1. **"The Egypt Journey" – Separated from God:** at this stage we are "Separated from and ignorant of God" – Scripture says that we are "enemies of God" at this stage, but a better view I think is that we have no understanding of our need of God or of a desire to even consider God, much less to want to know Him. This stage is a picture of relational disconnection and self-absorption that is so destructive. We are for the most part alone and unaware of our own need for God's help. This stage is marked by darkness and despair, and wanting nothing to do with God.
2. **"The Desert Journey" – The Seeker:** at this stage we are open to the concept or we may even be attempting to "Seek God." This involves an engagement of ultimate personal existential questions, and

the dawning awareness of the possibility of the existence of an ultimate being [God]. At this stage we are open to explore and finding out what is “Truth and/or Spiritual life” but as yet we have no knowledge or understanding of God or of a relationship with Him. There are two primary aspects that are often associated with this stage:

- a. Exploration – asking serious questions of myself and the notion of an ultimate reality.
 - b. Spiritual conceptual introduction – fostered by others encouraging us to move forward in our faith journey:
 - i. Becoming aware that there are different concepts of God and remaining uncommitted.
 - ii. The early stages of evangelism where seeds are planted that develop into a vague awareness of God. As these evangelistic seeds begin to grow I become more open to the possibility of God not only existing but potentially wanting me to know Him.
3. **“The Red Sea Journey” – The Saved:** at this stage we have moved into an engaged or what Christians refer to as a “saving relationship” with God, having received Jesus as Savior. Not unlike the Jewish community who were freed by God through Moses from slavery in Egypt, we have trusted Jesus to free us from our slavery to sin and death resultant from the Fall. We accept by faith what God has done for me, and I begin to learn to walk the Christian path of faith. Characteristics of this stage includes the following:
- a. Awakening – a dawning awareness of the material versus the Spiritual reality:
 - i. Mind – a mind that has been sensitized or made alert to the spiritual reality. This is more of a general consciousness rather than a fully enlightened awareness.
 - ii. Heart – a kindling of a personal desire for love in light of a greater reality who offers it to me.
 - b. Awareness of my Personal Need – a more objective observation of myself and the world, and a realization that I need help:
 - i. Broken mind – I can’t make intellectual sense of my own reality let alone figure out the spiritual dimension. I have come to recognize my need for help in approaching or achieving some form of spiritual enlightenment.
 - ii. Broken heart – the realization that I am not happy with who I am, and need help.
 - c. Conviction – The Spirit reveals my personal failure that I am not the person I need to be nor can I become that person... I realize I am lacking and lost and desperate:
 - i. My need and my failure to be the person I want to be and need to be bring me to the point of action.
 - ii. I realize that I need help, and I am ready to accept the help God has offered on His terms.
 - iii. My need is strong as I am torn between despair and hope.
 - d. Salvation – I choose to accept the Gospel that God has already provided to move me from despair and death to hope and life:
 - i. I surrender to God and accept His gift of Grace through the mediation of Jesus’ atonement.

- ii. The choice is made and True Spiritual Life has been kindled by the Holy Spirit, but I barely understand what is happening.
4. **“The Journey to the Promised Land ” – The Believer in the Community of Christ:** at this stage not unlike the above Jewish community we are on our way toward God’s “promised land” of life and eternity in Christ. We have a Savior in Jesus at this point, but Jesus has not yet become Lord and King of my life. As a consequence, my life demonstrates inconsistent and erratic growth that is typical at this early stage. It seems I want more, but settle for less because I don’t want to let go of my old ways which provide a comfort zone for me. This stage is often one step forward and two steps back; then two or three steps forward and one back. Characteristics of this stage includes the following:
- a. **Exploration – into a more serious Search for Biblical Truth and meaning:**
 - i. I embark on a more serious contemplation to know more about God and how I may experience the ultimate reality.
 - ii. God is being revealed to me and I am confronted with an opportunity... a choice to begin to know and follow Him.
 - iii. Revelation – Biblical truth is being made known to me as I study God’s Word.
 - iv. Inspiration – God is opening my heart in enabling my growing understanding of His revealed truth.
 - v. Illumination – God is opening my eyes as reception of Biblical truth opens my mind & heart and initiates not only a new understanding but also begins to produce the beginnings of a transformational change in my priorities and character.
 - b. **Spiritual Life Intimacy – has now been initiated and is developing, but is usually inconsistent.**
 - c. **Study and Discipleship Training – I become more intentional about putting in the effort to study and get involved in a discipleship community, and I learn to become more cooperative with what God is already doing in my life. Those who do better in this stage are known to have:**
 - i. Entered into a formal discipleship training process where the Word of God and spiritual practices of prayer and service are being developed.
 - ii. Entered into Christian community life in small and medium groups where life is shared, accountability reinforced, and genuine relationships develop.
 - iii. Entered into the process of Sanctification – which is a life-long pursuit of learning truth, in knowing and loving God, and being progressively transformed by Him.
 - d. **Conformation – my life is becoming increasingly reflective of Jesus’ nature and character which is being formed within me:**
 - i. As I engage in more serious discipleship my heart, mind, and life are being more closely conformed to Jesus... His life values and priorities begin to take shape as I change from the inside out.
 - ii. Spiritual Fruit is becoming more observable in my life. It is a slow process, but I am consciously aware of and cooperating with the work of the Spirit living in me, and I sense His hand on me.

5. **“The Wilderness Journey” – The Disobedient Living my Own Life:** at this stage we have been saved by Grace and either have been or are continuing to be involved in a faith community in the local church but instead of Spirit dependence I am trying to grow and obey in my own strength; or alternatively I’m trying to have both the world and the Kingdom of God at the same time. I have a savior, but I am still the lord and master of my own life as I’ve not yet submitted my life and future to God. Characteristics of this stage include:
- a. I am not yet committed to or engaged in living the life God has for me and have not accepted the invitation God has placed before me of becoming His servant and do life on His terms.
 - i. The notion of a living sacrifice resultant in knowing Him in dependent intimacy is still foreign to me.
 - ii. There are times that my actions fall into old patterns, and I am frustrated with my claim of faith and my inconsistency in living it out... which causes me to doubt my conviction.
 - iii. This is the stage where faithful guidance in mentorship and coaching are most crucial.
 - b. The reasons most are stuck here in this stage include:
 - i. A faulty understanding of who God is and what His purposes are; and thus the transforming nature of His love for me is not adequately understood or believed.
 - ii. I don’t really know or believe my true identity in Christ... of who God says I am.
 - iii. I’m still burdened by personal woundedness and spiritual strongholds that frustrate growth. We often presume these woundings and strongholds have been addressed, but we need spiritual healing at the deepest levels. The underlying issues include:
 - 1. Unforgiveness of old hurts and failures.
 - 2. Lack of Nurturing by parents and faith community.
 - 3. Abandonment by those who should have loved and cared for me.
 - iv. I’m still unaware of the basics of Christian discipleship. I try to do things in my own strength rather than in the fellowship of brothers who are on the journey with me.
 - v. Spiritual Oppression – prevents me from entering into God’s loving presence with confidence... I hear and believe the lies of the enemy because of an underlying:
 - 1. Spirit of Rejection
 - 2. Spirit of Unbelief
 - 3. Spirit of Rebellion
6. **“The Borderland Journey” – The Disciple Learning to Live and Lead like Christ:** at this stage I am emerging from the wilderness and on the verge of moving into the Promised Land. At this stage we are maturing as disciples of Jesus who is becoming Lord of our life as we are engaged in a community of disciples. We understand that God wants to be Lord and King and we are more consistently involved in a deeper form of discipleship and service, but as yet we are inconsistent in living that reality out. I want to be a disciple, but I still have a tendency to want to be the lord of my life. Surrender to Jesus’ Lordship is growing as a desire but is incomplete, and I haven’t yet moved into my mission in advancing the Kingdom of God. Characteristics of this stage include:

- a. **Transformation – understanding that God doesn't want merely behavioral change, but wants me to become the creation He always intended me to be... it is not merely becoming better, but becoming amazingly different through Grace. It is not just me trying to be different, but cooperating with allowing God to transform me.**
 - i. **As I read scripture and interact with the fellowship of faith my mind and heart are being changed, I sense God is at work in me.**
 - ii. **This is a life-long process of progress and failure as Jesus' Nature is being formed within me as I consciously seek to follow and obey Him.**
 - iii. **The truth of Romans 12:2 becomes a reasonable reality - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**
 - b. **Intimacy and Dependence – as transformation and conformation take hold it is increasingly easy to purposefully engage with increasing intimacy and dependence on the Spirit:**
 - i. **The more I seek God, the more real He becomes to me and the greater intimacy I enjoy in Him and with my discipleship community.**
 - ii. **Greater intimacy generates greater dependency, and I find more evidence of God's interaction in my life and the world around me.**
 - iii. **My identity is taking shape as a child of God and disciple of Christ... and the Kingdom of God as my true home.**
 - iv. **As I grow in spiritual dependency I develop a greater expectancy of finding God actively involved in my life and in the world, and learn to listen more closely for His Voice and Leading.**
7. **"The Promised Land Journey" – The Minister of Grace: at this stage I have found my Kingdom Mission and I've come to depend on Jesus and the indwelling Spirit to the extent that my character and identity are obviously more reflective of Jesus' and with Spiritual Fruit plainly evident. At this stage I have understood God's invitation to serve Him and have decided to accept that invitation and I am serious about developing the skills and giftedness necessary to move forward with it in confidence.**
- Characteristics of this stage include:**
- a. **Passion and Calling – the things that motivate me are the things that God cares about... this is not merely obedience, but a fundamental transformation of my identity as an Ambassador of the King.**
 - i. **As the maturing process continues, I find I am becoming more passionate about my relationship with God and more concerned with His calling and purpose.**
 - ii. **I am aware that I am a disciple of Jesus, and I see myself and the world more in terms of advancing the Kingdom of God, rather than of settling for the kingdom of man.**
 - iii. **I am aware of living in the tension and conflict of being perfected in the spirit while living in a fallen material world that won't be perfected until Jesus' 2nd coming.**
 - iv. **I see myself more clearly as a Living Sacrifice and accept my role as a Spiritual Warrior... I**

am a disciple of Jesus.

- v. Life is more of an adventure as I know I am not in control of my destiny, and I see God intervening to direct me into my mission field. The result is heightened sense of awe and wonder as I'm caught up with what God is doing in advancing His Kingdom.
- b. **Spiritual Unity** – I am deliberately and more consistently pressing into God in prayerful love and dependence. I seek God not merely to get the things I want or think I need, but rather to enjoy His Presence. Relationship with God becomes my reality and the motivation of my life:
 - i. I develop greater reliance on the Resurrection Life of Jesus, which brings me into Oneness with the purpose of God.
 - ii. There may be many things that are still hidden from my understanding, but they will not come between God's Heart and my heart.
 - iii. If I identify something coming between me and God, I don't look for explanations merely from my mental reasoning faculties, but rather I seek where the Spirit can illuminate and remedy the problem.
 - iv. My heart is being drawn closer to God's as my spiritual nature is more fully submitted to God, which also brings clearing vision and understanding of His purpose for me and my purpose in serving Him.

E) DEVELOPMENTAL RESOURCES for MENTORS & COACHES: There are common questions that apply to each of these stages, whereby we may promote a methodology to encourage self-awareness and encourage growth.

Developmental Resources to intentionally engage:

- Discovery – orientation map and choices.
- Equipping – discovering my ministry potential.
- Training – stage specific development – meeting my needs where I am now.

Journey Guide Ultimate Questions:

- Where am I on the journey?
- What is my identity on the journey?
- Which relationship am I most dependent upon on the journey?
- How do I move forward with confidence?

Discipleship Resource Choices:

1. **Stage 1 & 2** may be joined together – Book Resources for me to figure out what is going on:
 - a. **Operation Timothy – Book 1 - Questions**
 - b. **The Journey – The Quest for Faith and Meaning**; Os Guinness; 2001
 - c. **The Universe Next Door – A Basic World-View Catalog**; James Sire; 2004
 - d. **Wild at Heart – Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul**; John Eldredge; 2001
 - e. **The Reason for God – Belief in an Age of Skepticism**; Timothy Keller; 2008

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2. **Stage 3** – Resources for me to move beyond myself and into the bigger picture God has invited me into:
 - a. **Book Resources** – Read any of the books included in stage 1 & 2 that you haven't already done so... additional readings include:
 - i. **Operation Timothy – Book 3 - Perspectives**
 - ii. **Discipleship Essentials – A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ**; Greg Ogden; 2007
 - iii. **Mere Christianity**; C.S. Lewis; (originally 1949) 1999
 - iv. **Basic Christianity**; John Stott
3. **Stage 4** – Resources to grow intentionally:
 - a. **Book Resources Include:**
 - i. **Waking the Dead – The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive**; John Eldredge; 2003
 - ii. **Crazy Love – Overwhelmed by a Relentless God**; Francis Chan; 2008
 - iii. **Prayer – Does it Make any Difference?**; Philip Yancey; 2006
 - iv. **The Screwtape Letters**; C.S. Lewis; (originally 1948) 1982
 - v. **Know Why You Believe**; Paul Little; originally 1967
 - vi. **The Sacred Romance – Drawing Closer to the Heart of God**; Brent Curtis & John Eldredge; 1997
 - vii. **Epiphany – Discover the Delight of God's Word**; Chuck Smith, Jr; 2003
 - viii. **True Spirituality – Becoming a Romans 12 Christian**; Chip Ingram
 - b. **Web Resources** – Authentic Discipleship Resource Web Site: www.authenticdiscipleship.org
 - i. Leadership Development/Discovering your leadership Gifting/
 1. 0.2 – Discover Your Motivational Gifts
 2. 0.3 – Family Atmosphere Survey – 15 Questions
 3. 0.4 – Finding Your Spiritual Gifts
 4. 0.6 – Free Enneagram Personality Test
 - ii. Leadership Development/Discipleship Studies/
 1. 6.1 – Who is God?
 2. 6.2 – Jesus' Mission of Redemption
 3. 6.3 – Spiritual Warfare
 - iii. Biblical Literacy/Gospels [read the Bible text in conjunction with articles]
 1. 1.1 – Introduction
 2. 1.2 – Matthew
 3. 1.3 – Mark
 4. 1.4 – Luke
 5. 1.5 – John
 - iv. Biblical Literacy/Early Church Development:
 1. 2.1 – Acts [Historical]
 2. 2.2 – Romans – Parts 1 & 2 [Theology]
 - v. Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Disciplines
 1. Prayer Introduction – Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines
 2. Prayer – Part 1
 3. Prayer – Part 2

- vi. **Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Maturity:**
 1. 2.1 – Maturity of a Disciple
 2. 2.3 – Marriage and Transformation
4. **Stage 5** is all to itself – The Wilderness is a very tough place to be, but almost all of us go through it at some time – Resources for me to move beyond my pain, woundedness, strongholds and stumbling blocks are primarily regarding spiritual healing:
 - a. **Book Resources** – Read previous books as recommended by your Mentor/Journey Guide:
 - i. Forgotten God – Reversing our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit; Francis Chan; 2009
 - ii. Making Jesus Lord – The Dynamic Power of Laying Down Your Rights; Loren Cunningham; 1988
 - iii. Your God is Too Small – A Guide for Believers and Skeptics Alike; J.B. Phillips; 1998
 - b. **Monterey Bay Ministry Resources:**
 - i. TLC Journey Encounter Room open every Monday from 5:00 to 7:00 PM at Twin Lakes Church – Monsche Hall back room - <http://www.thejourney-montereybay.org/>
 - ii. Hilltop Ministries – <http://hilltopministries.wordpress.com/> - Identifying and moving beyond my woundedness and dysfunction into health and hope.
 - c. **Web Site Resources:**
 - i. THEODYSEY Web Site – <http://theodyssey.org/> - another means of identifying and moving beyond my woundedness and dysfunction into health and hope.
 - ii. Authentic Discipleship – Spiritual Journey Discovery – it is often helpful to break the inertia of our frozen spiritual state and to move forward by looking back and seeing what God has already done. <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Maturity/SF%202.2%20-%20Spiritual%20Journey%20Discovery.pdf>
5. **Stage 6 & 7** may be joined together – at these stages you are at a jumping off point and have found your faith focus and your life’s calling... that which God has invited you to partner with Him in advancing the Kingdom of God.
 - a. **Biblical Literacy & Theology:**
 - i. **Book Resource** – Across the Spectrum – Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology; Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy; 2002
 - ii. **Web Site Resources** – Authentic Discipleship Web Site: www.authenticdiscipleship.org
 1. Biblical Literacy/Hermeneutics
 2. Biblical Literacy/Bible Survey
 - a. Pentateuch
 - b. Early Prophetic Writings
 - c. Epistles
 - d. Apocalyptic
 - e. Complete Biblical Literacy & Theology readings.

b. Spiritual Formation:

i. Book Resources:

1. **Shaped by the Word – The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation; M. Robert Mulholland, Jr; 1985, 2000**
2. **The Life You've Always Wanted – Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People; John Ortberg; 2002**
3. **Desiring God – Meditations of a Christian Hedonist; John Piper; 2003**
4. **Mansions of the Heart; Thomas Ashbrook; 2009**
5. **Sacred Companions – The Gift of Spiritual Friendship; David Benner; 2002**
6. **Celebration of Discipline – The Path to Spiritual Growth; Richard Foster; 1998**
7. **Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls; Gary Moon & David Benner; 2004**

ii. Web Site Resources – Authentic Discipleship Web Site: www.authenticdiscipleship.org – [Pathway – Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Disciplines/]:

1. Prayer Practicum 1 – Confession & Intercession
2. Prayer Practicum 2 – Meditation & Contemplation
3. Prayer Practicum 3 – Developing Spiritual Vitality
4. Prayer Practicum 4 – Contemplating God in Creation
5. Prayer Practicum 5 – Contemplating God in Scripture
6. Prayer Practicum 6 – Contemplating Your Heart and Mind before God
7. Prayer Practicum 7 – Discerning the Spirit of God in Decision Making
8. Prayer Practicum 8 – Lectio Divina
9. Prayer Practicum 9 - Forgiveness & Prayer
10. Discipline of Worship

c. Leadership Development:

i. Book Resources:

1. **Transforming Discipleship – Making Disciples a Few at a Time; Greg Ogden; 2003**
2. **Following the Master – A Biblical Theology of Discipleship; Michael Wilkins, 1992**
3. **Church Next – Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry; Eddie Gibbs, 2000.**
4. **Lessons in Leadership; Randal Roberts, Editor; 1999**
5. **Spiritual Leadership – Principles of Excellence for Every Believer; J. Oswald Sanders; 1994**
6. **Eternity in their Hearts; Don Richardson; 1982**
7. **The Cross of Christ; John R.W. Stott; 2006**

ii. Web Site Resources – Authentic Discipleship Web Site: www.authenticdiscipleship.org – [Pathway Leadership Development/]:

1. Evangelism:

- a. 1.1 – Evangelism and Apologetics
- b. 1.2 – Evangelism Approaches
- c. 1.3 – Practicing Evangelism and Apologetics

2. Discipleship:

- a. 2.1 – Biblical Theology of Discipleship**
- b. 2.2 – New Testament Discipleship**
- c. 2.3 – Discipling Church Leaders**

3. Mentoring & Coaching:

- a. 4.1 – Fundamentals of Faith Coaching**
- b. 4.2 – Assessing the 7 Stages of the Faith Journey**