AUTUMN RIDGE CHURCH | SPIRITUAL FORMATION

STAGES OF THE FAITH JOURNEY

STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS	HOW WE GET STUCK	HOW WE MOVE TO THE NEXT STAGE
STAGE 1: DISCOVERING Recognition of God "I believe"	We become aware of God's desire to have a relationship with us. Recognition of our need for a Savior and a desire to begin following Jesus and his way.	If we stick to only wanting to be "spiritual" and don't begin pursuing what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus. If we fail to connect with other believers who support our growth.	• Be open to what God has for you • Find someone who is a follower of Jesus to encourage your new faith • If you aren't already, commit to regularly worshipping with other believers at church
STAGE 2: LEARNING Life of discipleship begins "I am learning about God."	Our faith becomes grounded in the truth of who God is and how He relates to us. This never-completed stage grows our faith as we learn more about God, the Bible, the way of Jesus, and our place in His Kingdom.	If we become rigid or puffed-up in what we know, think our maturity is measured by our knowledge rather than our love, or keep switching churches to align with people who think like we do.	• Recognize our need to live out what we believe • Identify our spiritual gifts and begin using them • Discover ways we can contribute to our group, church, or community
STAGE 3: DOING The productive life "I am doing things for God and His people."	Our growing faith leads to a sense of belonging to a church as an interconnected part of the Body. As we serve, we grow through having greater responsibility and opportunities to be ambassadors for Jesus in our church and community.	If the Christian life begins to feel like a routine, if we prioritize what we're doing over who we're becoming, or thinking that God will reward us because of what we do for Him.	• Acknowledge that what fed your faith in the beginning may not satisfy in the same way it once did • Stop trying to earn God's favor because you already have it • Come to terms with this question: Realizing that you don't have to do anything to get God's favor, what do you want to do?
THE WALL "Things just are not working anymore...this isn't what I expected."	We may encounter a period of spiritual drift marked by doubts, disillusionment with God, pain from circumstances, frustrations with spiritual practices "not working" like they once did, aggravations or disappointments in church, etc.	**UNHELPFUL APPROACHES AT A WALL** Pretending like it's not there, trying to answer hard questions with simplistic answers, trying to pray it away, trying harder at what isn't working, leaving a supportive community of faith.	**GETTING OVER A WALL MAY INVOLVE** • Acknowledge that this is where you are, it's ok, and it's a necessary part of the spiritual journey • Share what you're experiencing with someone with on the other side of the wall • Be gentle with yourself
STAGE 4: CONTEMPLATING The journey inward "I need a deeper way to relate to God and His purposes."	On the other side of the wall lies a stage of hard inner work that comes with tremendous growth. In this stage of contemplation, we grow in seeing the complexities of a richer, deeper faith and seek to bring God into the deepest places of soul—places we may have kept hidden from Him before—and discover profound connection and healing.	If we become consumed by self-focus, grow immobilized, or spiritually isolated, or fail to resume spiritual practices we may have put on hold for a while when we hit the wall.	• Recognize that our spiritual maturity won't outpace our emotional maturity, so we have to tell ourselves the truth about our emotional health • Connect the implications of the gospel to our hurt, wounds, flat sides, and every part of our soul • Prioritize time to be with Jesus and come to know him on an experiential level • Accept the sovereignty of God, and rest in His ability to heal through all the means available to us
STAGE 5: BECOMING The journey outward "I want to be like Jesus because it's who I am rather than what I do."	In this stage, we focus on becoming more and more like Jesus. Our motivation for what we do shifts from doing the right things to flowing out of who we are as fully devoted followers of Jesus.	We're never really stuck at this stage since there's always more progress to be made in becoming like Jesus, but others may see us as increasingly less preoccupied with worldly concerns and more focused on being with Jesus, becoming like him, and doing as he did.	• Embrace the paradox that as we seek to become more like Jesus that our focus is increasingly off ourselves and more on Jesus and others • Our primary agenda is to love
STAGE 6: LOVING The life of love "Everything I am is about love for God and for people."	Very few of us make it here. People at this stage embody love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Being in their presence feels like being in the presence of someone who has spent a lot of time with Jesus.		

Take your next step:
We want everyone to grow in their faith journey.
Trust the process:
God changes people; we don't.

Adapted from The Critical Journey by Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich