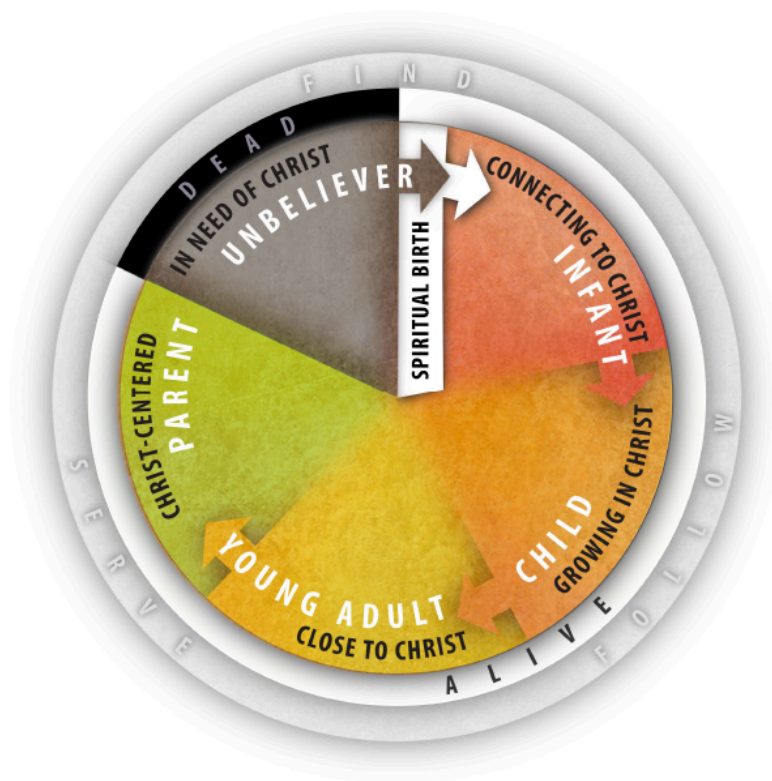


Assessing Spiritual Maturity



We proclaim Him (*Jesus*) by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom so that we may present every person mature in Christ

Colossians 1:28 NET

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

Like newborn babies, (*infant*) crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

1 Peter 1:2,3 NIV

I am writing to you, little children (*child*), because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers (*parent*), because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing you, young men (*young adult*), because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (*1 John 2:12-14*)

Traits

The more a person exhibits the following characteristics, the more likely the person may be an unbeliever. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Hostile or antagonistic toward Jesus, followers of Jesus, or the Bible
- Openly rebellious or skeptical toward God
- Can sin freely without remorse
- Dismissive of Biblical truth
- Feels no need to fellowship with believers of Jesus
- A basic belief in God, but unsure about Jesus and His role in their life
- Attends church services as a form of religion
- Exhibits a life of good works
- Feels no need for a personal relationship with Jesus
- Curious or investigating but undecided about Jesus
- Lacking in spiritual knowledge or continually confused about spiritual things
- Passive, apathetic, or not engaged concerning spiritual life
- Moralistic or religious without love Spiritually arrogant
- Has an unforgiving heart
- Demoralized and continually burdened with guilt or shame
- Tolerant and sincere without being spiritually discerning
- Pluralistic in belief
- Lacks peace
- A desire to belong

Phrases from this Stage

These comments are typical of individuals in this stage of spiritual development.

- “I’m okay. I don’t need God.”
- “The Bible is just a bunch of myths.”
- “I don’t believe in miracles.”
- “God is just a crutch.”
- “I don’t believe there is a God.”
- “Evolution explains away a need for God.”
- “I am a Christian because I go to church and I am a good person.”
- “I have been a good person, so I will be okay; I don’t need to be saved. I’m as good as anyone.”
- “A good person gets to heaven and a bad person goes to hell.”
- “I believe in heaven but there is no hell. There is no hell because God is a God of love.”
- “It does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.”
- “There is no absolute right or wrong.”
- “I don’t know where I am going if I die.”
- “How could a loving God allow all this evil and suffering?”

Needs

- Prayer (*to be prayed by Christ followers*)
- To be loved (*treated well by Christ followers*)
- To feel accepted and safe around a Christ follower
- To get connected to a community of Christ followers
- Exposure to Biblical truth
- To know they are separated from God (*to understand their position*)
- To understand sin and that they are sinners in need of forgiveness
- A clear understanding of who Jesus is
- The awareness of the need for spiritual healing
- A relationship with a mature Christ follower who models and re-enforces spiritual life
- Answers to questions that are barriers to believing in Jesus
- A clear explanation and presentation of the Gospel
- An invitation to believe in Jesus
- To put their trust in Jesus

Dangers

- Immunization (*knowing without believing*)
- Assimilation without conversion (*belonging without believing*)
- Having no relationship with a Christ follower
- Nobody is praying for or with them
- Spiritual warfare
- False teaching, lies they believe

Movement

Ways the disciple assists the unbeliever to grow and become a Spiritual infant.

Key – To move from spiritually dead to spiritually alive.

The Discippler's Role – These are the things a believer should do for an unbeliever.

- Pray that God will show us who to disciple
- Develop a close friendship where you earn the right to talk about spiritual things
- Love them and serve them well
- Pray that God shows you opportunities to share
- Explain your spiritual life story
- Find ways to engage them in Scripture
- Clarify these spiritual truths
 - Salvation by Grace – to know that I am sinful and nothing I do or have done can earn my salvation.
 - The Tri-unity – to believe the God of the Bible is the only true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - God is a personal God who is actively involved in my life.

Movement (*continued*)

- Who the real Jesus is. Christ is First – To desire Jesus to be first in my life
- Authority of the Bible – to believe the Bible has decisive authority over what I say and do
- Invite them to put their faith and trust in Jesus

The Unbeliever's Role – These are the things an unbeliever should be encouraged to do.

- Connect in spiritual relationship through:
 - Friendships – to meet with or talk to a close friend who helps me grow spiritually
 - Serve others through a church ministry
 - Attend worship service
 - Small Groups – to meet with a small group through my church once a month or more.
- Personal spiritual practices
 - Reflection on Scripture – Bible reading and listening to Bible stories
 - Prayer to seek guidance to confess sins

Traits

The more a person exhibits the following characteristics, the more likely the person may be a spiritual infant. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Understand and affirm the Gospel. Put their faith in Jesus
- Overwhelming sense of joy and gratitude
- Has a humble and contrite spirit
- A new peace that passes understanding
- Love Jesus with their heart
- A new appreciation and desire for God's Word
- A new love for other believers
- Curiosity and eagerness to learn
- Has a new understanding of spiritual things
- Lacking in spiritual knowledge and training
- May be confused about their spiritual needs
- Dependent upon a spiritual parent
- The people in this stage have a personal relationship with Christ
- Beginning their spiritual journey and personal relationship with Christ
- A desire to tell others about Jesus
- Evidence of being a new creation
- May have unrealistic expectations of their new life in Christ
- Still has baggage and blind spots
- Self-focus

Phrases from this Stage

These comments are typical of individuals in this stage of spiritual development.

- "You mean I'm really forgiven of all my past sins?"
- "Tell me what I need to know."
- "I can't wait to tell someone about Jesus."
- "Now that I'm saved, do I need to go to church?"
- "Someone says I'm a Christian but I don't know if I am."
- "What does the Bible say about that?"
- "I need someone to help me."
- "I feel more peaceful now."
- "I didn't know the Bible said that."
- "I'm starting to read the Bible but I don't understand it. I am a little confused."
- "I don't know how to pray and I want to learn."

Needs

- A clear understanding of the gospel and their salvation
- A clear understanding of grace and forgiveness
- A clear understanding of their new identity in Jesus

Needs *(continued)*

- A clear explanation of baptism and its importance in a believer's life to be identified with Jesus
- A clear understanding of a believer's assurance in Christ
- A spiritual parent to disciple them
- An explanation of the truths found in the Word of God
- An explanation and modeling of the habits of a growing believer
- Help in developing a personal relationship with Christ
- To get connected to the body of believers
- Compelling worship experiences
- Equipping for the spiritual battle
- Challenge to grow and take next steps

Dangers

- Malnutrition *(lack of reflection on the Word of God)*
- Isolation *(lack of fellowship with other believers)*
- To be placed into a leadership role too soon
- False teachings
- May be disillusioned or frustrated with the church
- Self focus
- Unrealistic expectation of not sinning
- Unaware of spiritual warfare

Movement

Ways the disciple assists the spiritual infant to grow and become a spiritual child.

Key – To grow in the basics of the Christian faith.

The Discippler's Role – These are the things a disciple should do for a spiritual infant.

- Expose the infant to Scripture
- Pray for the infant
- Introduce them to other believers and help them get into a relational environment
- Teach and clarify these core beliefs:
 - Salvation by Grace – *(to know that I am sinful and nothing I do or have done can earn my salvation)*
 - The Tri-unity – *(to believe the God of the Bible is the only true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit)*
 - God is a personal God who is actively involved in my life
 - Who the real Jesus is. Christ is First – *(To give Jesus first place in your life)*
 - Who you are in Jesus. Your new identity as a believer
 - Authority of the Bible – *(to believe the Bible has decisive authority of all I say and do)*

Movement (*continued*)

- Teach the infant to obey Jesus and to apply Scripture to their life
- Discern and address their specific needs
- Model and share
- Encourage and assure them in their faith
- Expose them to serving experience

The Infant's Role – These are the things an infant should be encouraged to do.

- Be baptized
- Begin to develop spiritual practices (*spiritual disciplines / spiritual habits*)
 - Prayer
 - Bible
 - Quiet time
 - Fellowship
 - Share their faith
 - Serve

Traits

The more a person exhibits the following characteristics the more likely the person is to be a spiritual child. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Three unique characteristics
 - They represent the largest stage on the spiritual continuum
 - They are the most active participants in virtually all church activities
 - Their spiritual growth remained slow but steady
- Enthusiastic about discovering new truth and eager to grow spiritually
- Excited about having deep relationships, which they might not have had before
- Remember who they were as unbelievers and therefore appreciate how God has changed them
- Lack of confidence in their spiritual walk with the Lord
- Becoming less dependent on a spiritual parent
- May have an inadequate biblical worldview concerning complex issues
- Tendency to serve others in ministry as long as the benefit outweighs the cost
- Do the right things but with immature motives
- More knowledge about what Christians say than what the Word says
- Has a personal relationship with Christ. They've made a commitment to trust Him with their soul's salvation and for eternity, but they are just beginning to learn what it means and what it takes to develop a relationship with Him
- Feelers may have spiritual highs and lows. Thinkers may neglect their relationship, heart-knowledge and presence of the Lord
- They are becoming more disciplined and comfortable with spiritual practices
- Love of God – Becoming a personal value
- Love of others – Growing but restrained

Phrases from the Stage

These comments are typical of individuals in this stage of spiritual development.

- “I love my small group; don't add any more people to it.”
- “Who are all these people coming to my church? Tell them to go somewhere else.”
- “I am not coming to church anymore. It has become too big; it has too many people.”
- “My small group is not taking care of my needs.”
- “I wish someone was discipling me.”
- “I didn't like the music today. If only they did it like...”
- “I am not being fed in my church, so I am going to a church that meets my needs better.”
- “I believe in Jesus, but my church is when I'm in the woods or on the lake.”
- “I know the Bible says I should do this but I prayed and don't feel led to do it.”
- “Man, God has changed me. I used to think one way and now I think entirely different.”

Needs

- A spiritual family connection
- Need to have a spiritual parent

Needs *(continued)*

- Guidance to start feeding themselves
- To know who they are in Christ
- To know how to live and grow in a relationship with Christ
- A relationship with other believers that provides encouragement, accountability, support, etc.
- To learn about appropriate expectations with other believers
- Help in understanding the Bible and biblical theology in greater depth
- Church leaders who model and consistently reinforce how to grow spiritually
- Challenge to grow and take next steps
- To grow in Christ-likeness

Dangers

- Becoming a disciple of the disciple rather than a disciple of Jesus
- Going on without identifying through baptism
- They may be hesitant to take their faith beyond the walls of the church
- Tendency to be prideful and boast in themselves instead of boasting in the Lord
- May become disillusioned because of idealistic expectations
- Tendency to be self-focused
- Becoming legalistic
- Being overwhelmed by guilt and shame
- False teaching

Movement

Ways the disciple assists the spiritual child to grow and become a spiritual young adult.

Key – To move from self-focused to others-focused, from being served to serving others.

The Disciple's Role – These are the things a disciple should do for a spiritual child.

- Model and teach the importance of head, heart, hands (*Know, Be, Do*)
- Model and teach that God, the disciple and the child each have an important role in spiritual transformation (*growth toward Christlikeness*).
- Model and teach spiritual gifting
- Model and teach how to handle the Word of God correctly when confronted with temptation; feed themselves; interpret the Bible correctly; fight with the Sword, discern God's will; hear God's voice, make wise decisions; dealing with other believers appropriately; deal with conflict; give wise counsel; hold someone accountable; accept criticism.
- Give them a solid Biblical foundation of the core Christian teachings / doctrines (*Head / Know*)
- Model and teach what Christ-like character looks like (*Heart / Be*)
- Model and teach to serve in your nuclear family, your spiritual family and beyond

Movement (*continued*)

The Child's Role

- Engage in spiritual practices (*spiritual disciplines / habits*): prayer to seek guidance; give generously; journal; spend time alone with God in solitude; read, reflect and study the Bible; share your faith with others
- Develop an intentional mindset of being outwardly focused and others focused
- Discover and exercise your spiritual gift(s) as you serve others
- Continue engagement with mentors, in spiritual friendships, small groups and worship services
- To serve those in need on my own
- Participate with others regularly in corporate worship and fellowship

Traits

The more a person exhibits the following characteristics, the more likely the person is a spiritual young adult. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Become action / service-oriented
- Has a zeal tempered and controlled by wisdom
- Become more God-centered and others-centered, serving for God’s glory
- Mission-minded but incomplete in his or her understanding
- Becoming less dependent on a spiritual parent and more interdependent with other believers
- Has taken ownership of their walk with God
- Become disciplined in their walk with the Lord and enjoy their walk with the Lord
- Depends of Christ as someone who assists them for help and guidance
- Connecting daily with God through personal spiritual practices
- Exhibiting characteristics of Christ-likeness
- The backbone of the church in serving
- Pray consistently and have learned to listen to God
- They yield and surrender to the Holy Spirit, God’s presence and power
- Love God
- Love other
- Are self-feeding
- Serve without being strategic and reproducing
- Tendency to be black and white about what should happen in a church

Phrases from this Stage

- “I love my group and there are others who need a group like this.”
- “I think I could lead a group with a little help.”
- “Look how many are at church today – it’s awesome! I had to park on the grass.”
- “Randy and Rachel missed group and I called to see if they are okay. Their kids have the flu, so maybe our group can make meals for them. I’ll start.”
- “In my devotions, I came across something I have a question about.”
- “I noticed that we don’t have a jail ministry. Do you think I could be involved?”
- “I am ready to make disciples, and I will let you know if I need some help.”
- “I am so exhausted. This week I called all sixty men from men’s breakfast to see how they were doing.”
- “I really blew it. One of the women in our group left the church. I must have done something wrong.”
- “God is impressing me to make a change in my life.”

Needs

- Help in finding an appropriate ministry to serve in within the church
- A spiritual parent who will debrief them about ministry experiences
- Ongoing relationships that offer encouragement and accountability

Needs (*continued*)

- Help in establishing healthy boundaries / balance between family and ministry
- Guidance regarding appropriate expectations of people they will serve
- Help in identifying their spiritual gifts and ways to exercise them
- Ministry skills training
- Help in navigating ministry situations
- Help in understanding the Bible and biblical theology in greater depth
- Church leaders who model and consistently reinforce spiritual reproduction
- Challenge to grow and take next steps
- To become less dependent on individuals and more dependent on Jesus

Dangers

- Feeling responsible for others accepting or rejecting the message of God
- Burnout from taking on too much responsibility
- Neglecting our own soul care
- Neglecting our family in our zeal for ministry
- Spiritual Disciplines become legalistic instead of relational
- Being unprepared for spiritual warfare
- Serve without being strategic about spiritual reproducing
- Feeling you have “*arrived*”
- Leading in isolation
- Becoming “*self-sufficient*”

Movement

Ways the disciple assists a spiritual young adult grow and become a spiritual parent.

Key – To become intentional and strategic about Jesus’ mission to invest in the lives of others and make disciples.

The Discippler’s role – These are the things a disciple should do for a spiritual young adult.

- Challenge and encourage the young adult to seek out who to disciple and initiate the relationship
- Encourage the young adult to look for opportunities to disciple where they are currently serving
- Intentionally modeling and training the reproducible discipleship strategy
- Help the young adult to realize the importance of accountability and hold them accountable to the discipleship process
- Helping them learn to work and engage with a disciple-making team
- Train them in ministry skills: spiritual leadership and/or facilitation skills, Bible storytelling, listening to God and others, discernment, etc.

The Young Adult's Role

- Pray and seek out who to disciple and initiate the relationship
- Look for opportunities to disciple where I am currently serving
- To engage and implement in spiritual reproduction
- Be accountable
- Engage as a team player
- Lead from where I am
- Giving away my life – to be willing to risk everything that is important in my life for Christ
- Personal spiritual practices and habits (*daily reading and reflection on Scripture, giving, solitude, pray to confess sins and seek guidance, journal, etc.*)
- Engage in meaningful spiritual conversations with unbelievers

Traits

The more a person exhibits the following characteristics, the more likely the person may be a spiritual parent. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Jesus is the most important relationship in their entire life and guides everything they do
- Walks by faith with courage
- Loves God and loves people, even hard to love
- Sees people through God's eyes
- Is intentional and strategic about making disciples
- Is committed to Jesus' mission
- Desires to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples
- Has a "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to uttermost ends of the earth" view of the mission of Jesus
- Has a desire to see people mature spiritually
- Thinks in terms of how to help other believers take the next step in their spiritual development
- Has a coaching mindset and is team-minded
- Knows when and how to release disciples to make disciples
- Is faithful, available, intentional, teachable, humble (*FAITH acrostic*)
- Feeds others spiritually
- Gives generously from the heart
- Realizes their personal inadequacy
- Is transparent (*shares their life with others*) and vulnerable (*allows others to speak into their life*)
- Desire to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh
- Has an increased awareness of their own sin
- Is quick to confess sin, receive forgiveness, make corrections and obey
- Is accountable and holds others accountable
- Prays immediately with others and/or follows up
- Humility > Transparency > Vulnerability > Authenticity > Accountability > Integrity

Phrases from this Stage

These comments are typical of individuals in this stage of spiritual development.

- "This guy at work asked me to explain the Bible to him. Pray for me."
- "We get to baptize someone from our small group tonight."
- "When is the next S.H.A.P.E class? I want to get Jim plugged into ministry somewhere."
- "How can I pray for you?"
- "Can I pray for you right now?"
- "Lord, show me who you would want me to disciple."
- "Our small group is going on a mission trip and we're praying for team unity."
- "I realize discipleship happens at home too. Will you hold me accountable to spend time discipling my kids?"
- "I have a person in my small group who is passionate about children. Can you have the Children's Ministry people call me?"

• Needs

- An ongoing relationship with co-laborers, mentors and church leaders (*iron sharpens iron*)
 - Accountability
 - Counsel and encouragement
 - Prayer
 - To be challenged
 - Direction
 - Church leaders that model spiritual growth
- To be involved in a ministry with others
- Ongoing fellowship with a church family
- To be empowered to make disciples
- Ongoing growth
 - Help in understanding the Bible in greater depth
 - Relationship with God
 - Leadership and ministry skills
- To have fun

Dangers

- Unwillingness to fully release a disciple
- Lack of discernment on when to release
- Discontentment with church
- Disengagement from church
- Taking on the Holy Spirit's role
- Thinking it all depends on me to teach them everything
- Having spiritual gaps between what you say and do
- Lone Ranger mindset
- Taking on too much
- Being under-challenged by the church
- Neglecting your own spiritual needs or walk with the Lord
- Lose passion or vision
- Discouragement
- Take heed lest you fall

Movement

Ways the disciple-makers help each other to continually grow.

Key – To develop and mentor disciples who disciple others.

- Increasingly clearer vision of making disciples
 - Practice daily the intention and strategy of discipleship
 - Model disciple making
 - Reach out to other who want to be disciples

Movement (*continued*)

- Walk in the Spirit
- Exercise your Spiritual gift(s) and grow in ministry skills
- Be a co-laborer
- Help other parents as a team player
- Hold each other accountable
- Attend to your own spiritual needs
- Model the image of Jesus
- Humility > Transparency > Vulnerability > Authenticity > Accountability > Integrity
- Continually move deeper
 - In the Word
 - In fellowship with the Lord
 - In fellowship with others
 - In practice
- Take on more leadership responsibilities of mentoring others
- Encourage the physically older parents
- Lead others to a relationship with Jesus and grow deeper in that relationship