

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

The purpose of this set of documents is to properly lay out the stages of spiritual maturity that will occur in an individual's life if they are willing to grow in relationship with God the Holy Spirit, God the Son and God the Father.

In reading the whole of God's Word it is clear that God has laid out a very distinct and distinguishable pattern for growth into spiritual maturity. As we see a plant in the natural world go from a seed to a baby plant to a mature plant and a person grows from baby to child to adult so too we can see that pattern in spiritual growth. The main difference between natural growth and spiritual growth is that in order to grow spiritually you have to decide to grow. Your will has to actively decide and then act on any decision to grow. Growth in spiritual maturity, unlike natural growth, is not automatic or guaranteed. This document does not assume that growth will occur but only lays out the scriptural path that God has shown believers for spiritual growth to occur.

A word of caution before proceeding. In Jeremiah 17:9 we read **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse and corrupt and severely, mortally sick! Who can know it [perceive, understand, be acquainted with his own heart and mind]?"** When reading these documents it is very easy to assume that your progress is much further along than it actually is. As humans we have great capacity for self deception because of our inherited self nature (anti-spirit). Before judging your own position in the stages of spiritual maturity it would be best to ask the Holy Spirit to give you proper insight into your own spiritual condition first and then to ask those that are spiritually mature if they agree.

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

Stage 1 (Plowing)		Stage 2 (Sowing)		Stage 3 (Reaping)
Sweat (wool) – <i>Genesis 3:19</i>	C O S T	Mixture (wool and linen) – <i>Ezek. 44:17-18</i>	B E N E F I T	Rest (linen) – <i>Hebrews 4:9-10, Revelation 19:7-8</i>
The action of Self-led Doing		Mixture - Self-led Doing & Spirit-Led Being		The state of Spirit-led Being
Income – <i>Proverbs 3:9; Ecclesiastes 2:11; Haggai 1:6</i>		Manna – <i>Psalms 78:24; John 6:31</i>		Inheritance – <i>Galatians 4:1; Revelation 21:7</i>
Servant responsibility – <i>Galatians 4:1-3</i>		Servant surrender – <i>Phil. 2:5-7; Hebrews 12:1-3</i>		Adult sonship – <i>Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 4:13</i>
Prodigal leaving – <i>Luke 15:11-13</i>		Prodigal loss – <i>Luke 15:14-19</i>		Prodigal returning – <i>Luke 15:20-24</i>
Jews – <i>Romans 2:28-29</i>		Priests – <i>1 Peter 2:5</i>		High priest – <i>Hebrews 5:10; 1 Peter 2:9</i>
Obedience – <i>Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 1:14</i>		Crucifixion & death – <i>Galatians 2:20; Heb. 6:12</i>		Resurrection & reigning – <i>Eph. 2:6; Phil. 3:10-11</i>
Old nature of lying – <i>Ge. 3:7; Num 23:19; Rom. 3:4</i>		Exposing duplicity – <i>Gen. 32:27-28; Matt. 26:74-75</i>		New nature of truth – <i>John 1:47; Revelation 14:5</i>
Slaves – <i>Exodus 13:17-18; John 8:35; Galatians 4:1</i>		Fighting force – <i>Exodus 17:8-13; Ps. 18:34, 144:1</i>		Kings – <i>Psalms 89:27; Romans 5:17; Revelation 19:7-8</i>
Believers – <i>Matthew 4:25; Acts 5:14</i>		Disciples – <i>Mt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23-24, 14:33</i>		Called-out ones – <i>Hos. 4:12; Eph. 5:24; Heb 12:23</i>
Engagement – <i>Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:4-7</i>	Preparation – <i>Esther 2:8-9, 12; Hosea 2:14-16</i>	Marriage – <i>Song 8:8; John 14:23; Revelation 19:7-8</i>		
Virgins – <i>2 Corinthians 11:2</i>	Wise virgins – <i>Psalms 45:14b; Matthew 25:1-13</i>	Bride – <i>Psalms 45:9-14a; Revelation 19:7-8</i>	B E N E F I T	
My beloved is mine and I am his – <i>Song of Songs 2:16</i>	I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine – <i>Song of Songs 6:3</i>	I am my beloved's and his desire is for me – <i>Song of Songs 7:10</i>		
Faith – <i>Matthew 17:19-20; 1 Corinthians 13:13</i>	Hope – <i>Romans 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 13:13</i>	Love – <i>John 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 John 4:17-18</i>		
Conception – <i>1 John 3:9</i>	Circumcision – <i>Colossians 2:11</i>	Adoption – <i>Romans 8:13-15</i>		
Holy Spirit – <i>John 16:13-15</i>	Jesus the Son – <i>Song of Songs 8:5</i>	Heavenly Father – <i>Matthew 5:48</i>		
Green pastures – <i>Psalms 23:1-3</i>	Valley of death – <i>Psalms 23:4-5a</i>	God's Presence – <i>Psalms 23:5b-6</i>		
Paradise – <i>Revelation 2:7</i>	Holy City – <i>Hebrews 11:8-10</i>	Throne Room – <i>Revelation 4:2-11</i>		
Outer Court – <i>1 Kings 8:64; 2 Chronicles 7:7</i>	Holy Place – <i>Ex. 26:33; Lev. 6:12-13; Hebrews 9:2</i>	Most Holy Place – <i>Exodus 26:34; Hebrews 9:3-8</i>		
Sunlight – <i>Isa. 42:16, 19; 2 Peter 1:9; Rev. 3:17-18</i>	Lamp light – <i>Ps. 119:105; 1 Cor. 13:12; Prov. 31:18</i>	Shining splendor – <i>Isa. 50:10; Mal. 4:2; Rev. 22:4-5</i>		
30 fold – <i>Matthew 3:8, 13:8, 23</i>	60 fold – <i>Matthew 13:8, 23; John 15:2</i>	100 fold – <i>Matt. 13:8, 23; John 15:5, 8; Gal. 5:22-23</i>		M O D E L
Seed & tree – <i>Psalms 52:8; Matthew 13:3; Luke 8:11</i>	Pruning – <i>Luke 13:6-9; John 15:2; Ephesians 3:17</i>	Much fruit – <i>Psalms 92:12-15; Song of Songs 7:7</i>		
Joseph as slave – <i>Genesis 39:1-19</i>	Joseph as prisoner – <i>Genesis 39:20-40:23</i>	Joseph as ruler – <i>Genesis 41:1-46</i>		
Ruth as prototype – <i>Book of Ruth</i>	Job as prototype – <i>Book of Job</i>	Melchizedek as prototype – <i>Genesis 14:18</i>		
Children – <i>Hebrews 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:2; 1 John 2:13-14</i>	Young men – <i>1 John 2:13-14</i>	Fathers – <i>Hebrews 5:14; 1 John 2:13-14</i>		
Esther at Susa – <i>Esther 1:2</i>	Esther at the Palace – <i>Esther 2:8-12</i>	Esther crowned Queen – <i>Esther 2:17</i>		
Passover – <i>Exodus 13:3; 23:15</i>	Pentecost – <i>Ex. 23:16a; Lev. 23:10; Jeremiah 2:3</i>	Tabernacles – <i>Exodus 23:16b; Hosea 12:9</i>		
Egypt – <i>Exodus 3:7-10; Revelation 18:4</i>	Wilderness – <i>Hosea 2:14-15; Mark 1:12-13</i>	Promised Land – <i>Deut. 34:1-3; Ps. 81:13-16</i>		
Elementary school – <i>Lamentations 3:39</i>	High school – <i>Hebrews 6:1</i>	University – <i>Genesis 17:1-2</i>		
Bronze – <i>Exodus 25:1-3, 35:5; Jeremiah 15:19-20</i>	Silver – <i>Exodus 25:1-3, 35:5; Zech. 13:9; Haggai 2:8</i>	Gold – <i>Exodus 25:1-3; 35:5; Zech. 13:9; Haggai 2:8</i>		
Caterpillar (worm) – <i>Psalms 22:6; Isaiah 41:14</i>	Cocoon – <i>Psalms 4:1; Isaiah 61:1</i>	Butterfly – <i>Psalms 55:6; Isaiah 40:31</i>		

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

## Stage 1 (Plowing)

### Slaves

**Exodus 13:17-18** - *When Pharaoh let the people go, God led them not by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God said, Lest the people change their purpose when they see war and return to Egypt. But God led the people around by way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the Israelites went up marshaled [in ranks] out of the land of Egypt.*

**John 8:35** - *Now a slave does not remain in a household permanently (forever); the son [of the house] does remain forever.*

**Galatians 4:1** - *Now what I mean is that as long as the inheritor (heir) is a child and under age, he does not differ from a slave, although he is the master of all the estate;*

### Servant responsibility

**Galatians 4:1-3** - *Now what I mean is that as long as the inheritor (heir) is a child and under age, he does not differ from a slave, although he is the master of all the estate; but he is under guardians and administrators or trustees until the date fixed by his father. So we [Jewish Christians] also, when we were minors, were kept like slaves under [the rules of the Hebrew ritual and subject to] the elementary teachings of a system of external observations and regulations.*

## Stage 2 (Sowing)

### Fighting force

**Exodus 17:9-11** - *And Moses said to Joshua, Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.*

*So Joshua did as Moses said and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the hilltop. When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.*

**Psalm 18:34** - *He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

**Psalm 144:1** - *Blessed be the Lord, my Rock and my keen and firm Strength, Who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight*

### Servant surrender

**Philippians 2:5-7** - *Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not [think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, but stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being.*

**Hebrews 12:1** - *Therefore then, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who have borne testimony to the Truth], let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us,*

## Stage 3 (Reaping)

### Kings

**Psalms 89:27** - *Also I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*

**Romans 5:17** - *For if because of one man's trespass (lapse, offense) death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive [God's] overflowing grace (unmerited favor) and the free gift of righteousness [putting them into right standing with Himself] reign as kings in life through the one Man Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).*

**Revelation 22:5** - *And there shall be no more night; they have no need for lamplight or sunlight, for the Lord God will illuminate them and be their light, and they shall reign [as kings] forever and ever (through the eternities of the eternities).*

### Adult sonship

**Galatians 4:4-5** - *But when the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born subject to [the regulations of] the Law, to purchase the freedom of (to ransom, to redeem, to atone for) those who were subject to the Law, that we might be adopted and have sonship conferred upon us [and be recognized as God's sons].*

**Ephesians 4:13** - *[That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.*

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

## Stage 1 (Plowing)

### Income

**Proverbs 3:9** - Honor the Lord with your capital and sufficiency [from righteous labors] and with the firstfruits of all your income;

**Ecclesiastes 2:11** - Then I looked on all that my hands had done and the labor I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after the wind and a feeding on it, and there was no profit under the sun.

**Haggai 1:6** - You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.;

### Obedience

**Hebrews 5:8** - Although He was a Son, He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered

**1 Peter 1:14** - [Live] as children of obedience [to God]; do not conform yourselves to the evil desires [that governed you] in your former ignorance [when you did not know the requirements of the Gospel].

## Stage 2 (Sowing)

### Manna

**Psalms 78:24** - And He rained down upon them manna to eat and gave them heaven's grain.

**John 6:31** - Our forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as the Scripture says, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.

### Crucifixion & death

**Hosea 6:1-2** - Come and let us return to the Lord, for He has torn so that He may heal us; He has stricken so that He may bind us up. After two days He will revive us (quicken us, give us life); on the third day He will raise us up that we may live before Him.

**Galatians 2:20** - I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

## Stage 3 (Reaping)

### Inheritance

**Galatians 4:1** - Now what I mean is that as long as the inheritor (heir) is a child and under age, he does not differ from a slave, although he is the master of all the estate;

**Revelation 21:7** - He who is victorious shall inherit all these things, and I will be God to him and he shall be My son..

### Resurrection & reigning

**Ephesians 2:6** - And He raised us up together with Him and made us sit down together [giving us joint seating with Him] in the heavenly sphere [by virtue of our being] in Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

**Philippians 3:10-11** - [For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] That if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

## Stage 1 (Plowing)

### Believers

**Matthew 4:25** - *And great crowds joined and accompanied Him about, coming from Galilee and Decapolis [the district of the ten cities east of the Sea of Galilee] and Jerusalem and Judea and from the other [the east] side of the Jordan.;*

**Acts 5:14** - *More and more there were being added to the Lord those who believed [those who acknowledged Jesus as their Savior and devoted themselves to Him joined and gathered with them], crowds both of men and of women,*

### Old nature of lying

**Genesis 3:7** - *Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves apronlike girdles.*

**Numbers 23:19** - *God is not a man, that He should tell or act a lie, neither the son of man, that He should feel repentance or compunction [for what He has promised]. Has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?*

**Romans 3:4** - *By no means! Let God be found true though every human being is false and a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified and shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged [by sinful men].*

## Stage 2 (Sowing)

### Disciples

**Matthew 16:24** - *Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also].*

**Mark 8:34** - *And Jesus called [to Him] the throng with His disciples and said to them, If anyone intends to come after Me, let him deny himself [forget, ignore, disown, and lose sight of himself and his own interests] and take up his cross, and [joining Me as a disciple and siding with My party] follow with Me [continually, cleaving steadfastly to Me].*

**Luke 9:23** - *And He said to all, If any person wills to come after Me, let him deny himself [disown himself, forget, lose sight of himself and his own interests, refuse and give up himself] and take up his cross daily and follow Me cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also].*

**Luke 14:33** - *So then, any of you who does not forsake (renounce, surrender claim to, give up, say good-bye to) all that he has cannot be My disciple*

### Exposing duplicity

**Genesis 32:27-28** - *[The Man] asked him, What is your name? And [in shock of realization, whispering] he said, Jacob [supplanter, schemer, trickster, swindler]! And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob [supplanter], but Israel [contender with God]; for you have contended and have power with God and with men and have prevailed.*

**Matthew 26:74-75** - *Then Peter began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not even know the Man! And at that moment a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered Jesus' words, when He had said, Before a [a]single rooster crows, you will deny and disown Me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

## Stage 3 (Reaping)

### Called-out ones

**Hosea 4:12** - *My people [habitually] ask counsel of their [senseless] wood [idols], and their staff [of wood] gives them oracles and instructs them. For the spirit of harlotry has led them astray and they have played the harlot, withdrawing themselves from **subjection** to their God.*

**Ephesians 5:24** - *As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be **subject** in everything to their husbands.*

**Hebrews 12:23** - *And to the church (assembly) of the Firstborn who are registered [as citizens] in heaven, and to the God Who is Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous (the redeemed in heaven) who have been made perfect,*

### New nature of truth

**John 1:47** - *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said concerning him, See! Here is an Israelite indeed [a true descendant of Jacob], in whom there is no guile nor deceit nor falsehood nor duplicity!*

**Revelation 14:5** - *No lie was found to be upon their lips, for they are blameless (spotless, untainted, without blemish) before the throne of God.*

# Stages of Spiritual Maturity

In laying out the map for the stages of spiritual maturity one point has come out regarding the nature of the wilderness experience. Because the whole purpose of spiritual growth is to transform a person from the value system of the world (which is naturally perceived) to the value system of heaven (which is spiritually perceived) the process where the transfer takes place is understandably confusing. To help clear up this confusion we have laid out what happens in the soul (thoughts, emotions and will) of the person that is growing up. You will notice that the experiences and attitudes of Egypt focus primarily on the outward, difficult circumstances we go through as we grow up and the self nature (anti-spirit) in us is being challenged but as we develop into maturity our focus and the desires of our hearts change. This is much like young girls and boys in elementary school that are aware and play with the opposite gender but relate to them only as equals however as they mature their relationship with the opposite gender turns to attraction, romance and love. So too we relate to Jesus in Egypt as one of many playmates we have in this world but as we mature we begin to see Him as more than that and Someone we want to fall head over heels in love with. To put it succinctly the major point of the wilderness is preparation for union with God. However the nature of individuation will be difficult as those who do not understand maturity fight our growth. God will call us to leave our earthly father's house and join with Jesus. Individuation will cause conflict with our family but this growth is a clear indication that we are moving into the wilderness phase of our spiritual journey. Do not get disheartened. This conflict will strengthen us for the road ahead.

"Now I passed by you again and looked upon you; behold, you were maturing and at the time for love, and I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I plighted My troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord, and you became Mine." Ezekiel 16:8

"There is no greater union than to share one life." - Anna Rountree, [Heaven Awaits The Bride](#)

## Stage 1 (Egypt)

- My will be done and I hope God blesses it
- Relationship with Jesus that grows from Saviour to Friend
- Growing acknowledgement of the sinful nature and beginning to address the wounds of the past
- Difficulty and hardship in relationships with others as God brings to light aspects of the self nature (anti-spirit) in you
- Beginning co-operation with God as He leads you and you are learning to obey
- Major focus on externals and doing and minor, but growing relationship with God
- Pain and loss as God begins to dismantle strongholds of self within the soul that were relied on for security and defence
- Dealing with the consequences of a sinful past and continual sinful actions
- Learning to be faithful with the truth you are given before more is given
- As the relationship with God grows, difficulty will increase as you find less in common with the world and more desire for God

## Stage 2 (Wilderness)

- Not my will be done but yours Father growing in intensity
- Overwhelming, yearning passion and desire to be with Jesus
- Wholehearted and complete willingness to go through anything to be like Him
- Total leaning of your body, soul and spirit on Jesus for all your body, soul and spiritual needs
- Complete and unconditional surrender to Jesus' will and leading
- Thorough realization that you can do nothing on your own strength and need Jesus for everything
- Unadulterated acceptance of the duplicity and deceit at the core of your being and the sinful nature (anti-spirit) you were born with
- Accepting full and total responsibility for all your sins and unqualified repentance of them
- Absolute willingness to have all that is self removed from your being and the image of Christ be formed in you
- Full acceptance of His passionate love for you as He moves from being Friend and Master to Lover