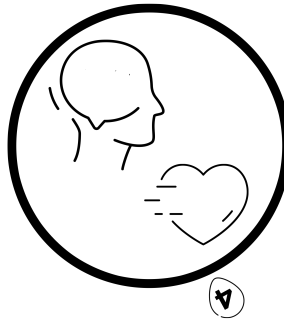




THE PATH

fellowship bible church

Stage 4 — The Inward Journey



The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. - Luke 6:45

Inward Journey- courageous introspection within community that leads to internal transformation.

Case Study

Bill is a 71 year old military vet who has recognized how his anger has affected those around him. He has chosen to go to counseling to work through heart issues so others around him are blessed. Bill is in Stage 4.

Dana is a 43 year old mother of 3 small children. Due to childhood trauma she has found herself over-functioning as a parent but under-functioning as a spouse. She has decided to attend a step program at church to get to the core of why that is. Dana is in Stage 4.

Erin has been a follower of Jesus for 10 years. She is not actively in counseling, therapy, or a step session but she is daily examining her own heart for any sin or deception. Erin's home stage is Stage 4.

Overview

The Inward Journey sees the follower of Jesus exploring deep within themselves to identify the areas of their heart that are in need of healing. Stage 4 is marked by a deep and courageous exploration of one's heart and soul alongside an experienced guide. The Path diverges toward a heart-central approach here that is categorically different from previous stages. Meaning, the primary work in Stage 4 is between the follower of Jesus and God. This stage can be uncomfortable, sometimes awkward, and painful. Should a person press through that discomfort and face the truth about what is inside of them the result is a significant step toward wholeness and spiritual health.

Gordon Cosby put it this way in the introduction to Elizabeth O'Connor's book *Search of Silence*: "The one journey that ultimately matters is the journey into the place of stillness deep within one's self. To reach that place is to be home; to fail to reach it is to be forever restless. At the place of 'central

silence,' one's own life and spirit are united with the life and Spirit of God. The fire of God's presence is experienced. The soul is immersed in love."

Stages 1-3 have a heavy emphasis on *doing* — being disciplined and making disciples. Stage 4 sees us turning our attention primarily toward *being* which we is also called Spiritual Formation. Spiritual Formation is the transformation of our inner world (being), over time, that invites others to experience Jesus through our service. Stage 4 is the deep and consequential heart work that frees us up to enjoy God and others more. It is also the stage when we begin to experience more of the grace and joy of God in our lives. Not only will we learn more of ourselves here, but in doing so we will learn more about who God is as well.

An important note about Stage 4 is that most growing and healthy Christians will spend significant time here as their Home Stage¹. Your Home Stage is the stage of The Path that is the normal, usual, or frequent place your spiritual journey causes you to rest. Because healthy Christians think and feel deeply about God and the world around them, you will find that Stage 4 may be your Home Stage.

What You Carry Into This Stage

You bring wonder, the practices, and the outward shape of Stage 3 into this stage — and you will need all of it, because the inward journey is not a retreat from any of them.

What Stage 4 adds is the habit of honest self-examination within community. Do not treat it as a season to be survived and finished. A person cannot sustain the life of love without continuing to tend their interior; the moment they stop, the old distortions return quietly and start driving again.

Biblical Examples

After Elijah fought the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, a towering scene amongst a sea of Old Testament towering scenes, he's driven off into the wilderness by fear. "Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there"². He despaired of life itself until God came to him. It was there as God ministered to his heart that he came back to life. God brought him a friend in Elisha and they journeyed and ministered together. Elijah went from doing for God to being with God in a matter of verses.

A great example of the Inward Journey is David's confession in Psalms 51. There he confesses that his sin is ever before him³, that he was born with a proclivity for unrepentant sin⁴, and that God delights in truth in his inner being⁵. It is perhaps this last statement that is the greatest: God delights in truth in our inner being. David was not honest with others or God about the condition of his heart. This dishonesty led to egregious sin on his behalf. Yet so powerful is his confession and request for

¹Home Stage is where you spend your "everyday". The corollary to this is our Regression Tendency. This tends to be the stage we revert back to when we are spiritually unhealthy.

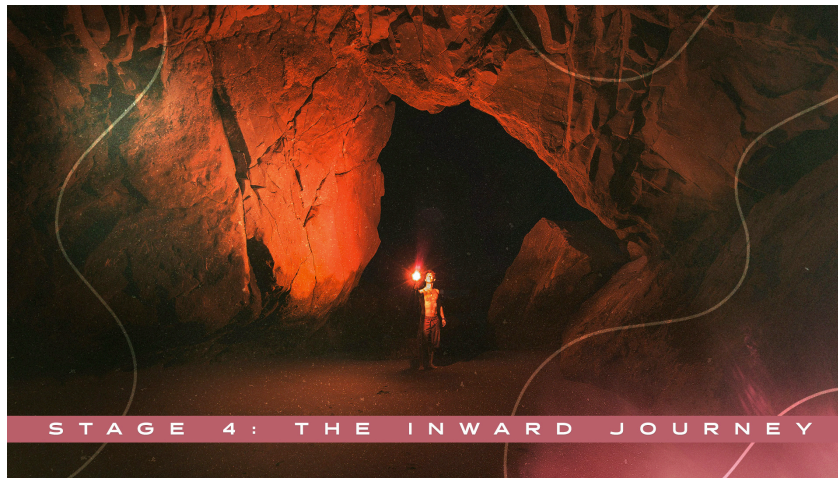
²1 Kings 19:3

³psalms 51:3

⁴Psalms 51:5

⁵Psalms 51:6

God to create in him a clean heart within him⁶ that results in a restoration of joy⁷. David journeys deep and finds that what needs reform is his heart.



The Great Need of This Stage

The great need in Stage 4 is a safe place to be honest about what you find. Not solitude. Company that does not flinch.

Stage Steps

- 4.1 - Journey Into Your History
- 4.2 - Acknowledge Your Brokenness
- 4.3 - Heal: God's Truth Shine On Your Inner Being in Community
- 4.4 - Live Healed By Being Humble
- 4.5 - Guide Others On The Inner Journey

4.1 - Journey Into Your History

You are a person who comes from a family which has largely shaped who you are in known and unknown ways. With a guide⁸, you set out on a journey to uncover how you were formed and shaped by your family of origin. You also set out to understand how your past actions and trauma's are

⁶Psalms 51:10

⁷Psalms 51:12

⁸A guide at this stage is a counselor, therapist, soul care worker, or a well-trusted friend with experience leading someone through Stage 4.

shaping your heart. This Stage is best done with a professional counselor or therapist. It can also be done with a soul care worker or someone who is later in the stage.

4.2 - Acknowledge Your Brokenness

You recognize that not everything that has happened to you is your fault. You also recognize that you are not perfect take ownership for those areas. At this Stage, you tell the truth about your behaviors, your thoughts, your actions, and your mistakes. You acknowledge that you have made mistakes and you name them specifically. With a guide, you confess your brokenness and practice vulnerability. If done correctly, you will experience the freedom of vulnerability and transparency.

4.3 - Heal: God's Truth Shine On Your Inner Being in Community

Our deepest wounds are caused by others and our healing will come at the hands of others. In a healthy community, you allow God's word and his people to speak the truth of who you really are. You receive God's word for yourself and allow it to shape your heart which leads to forgiveness, acceptance, and healing.

4.4 - Live Healed By Being Humble

You display evidence of your healing by living a humble life — a life marked by others-centeredness and service. You are learning to be kind and gentle to yourself in thought, word, and deed. You hear God's voice and are learning to trust that modeling the life of Jesus is the pathway to being healed and staying healed. Your humility will lead others into their own journey of healing.

4.5 - Guide Others On The Inner Journey

You begin to recognize the ways that God's word in community is changing your heart. As you grow in healing and humility, pray that God would connect you with someone who is experiencing life as you used to. As you've taken the Inward Journey you are now poised to help someone else on the treacherous journey. You become an agent of healing for others just as your guide was for you.

Guides

Healthy and helpful guides will enhance your walk in this Stage. Professional and licensed counselors and therapists who understand your faith and the journey that you are on will be most helpful. However, a mature believer with a life worth imitating can also be a tremendous blessing at this stage. For those at 4.5, you may encounter trauma, brokenness, or addiction that is above your level of training. If so, you should refer an individual to someone with the training necessary to walk with them through the Inward Journey. You aren't on the sideline, but you do become an encourager to someone rather than a leader at this stage in their journey.

"Being" Milestones Of Stage 4

Stage 4: Domain Milestones

Spiritual - Experiencing Jesus through acknowledging your brokenness and healing in community.

Relational - Connection with a guide and belonging in a healing community.

Emotional - Awareness of blind spots and ability to name emotions you are feeling (emotional intelligence).

Intellectual - Understanding of how your past shapes you and growth in helping others be set free.

Physical - Acknowledging that the body keeps score and incorporating physical activity as part of your healing.

Exercise: On A Scale of 1-10, what score would you give yourself for each of these domains? What lesson from the life and ministry of Jesus will help you take a step toward holistic health?

Spiritual -

Relational -

Emotional -

Intellectual -

Physical -

“Feeling” Milestones Inventory of Stage 4

1. How do you show grace to yourself? How can you use the gospel to be gracious to you?

-
2. Where do you experience the Kingdom of God breaking into your soul?

-
3. How should healing and humility coincide with one another?
-

4. In what ways will awareness of your feelings help you be a better representation of God at work?

Taking Your Next Step

There are two critical relationships and one growth step for those in this stage.

Critical Relationships: Soul Care Worker(s) and Healthy Community

While doing the work in Stage 4 it is critical in this stage to have Soul Care workers as a guide. These are professional and licensed counselors and therapists but may also be a mature believer with a life worth imitating. While you are journeying and God is transforming your heart being connected to a community is also critical. They will be the support you'll need going through this difficult stage.

Growth Step: Journey Deeper Through Spiritual Disciplines

Silence, Solitude, Fasting, and Simplicity are the growth steps for this stage. Diving deeper into your past and also into these disciplines will deepen your faith, enhance your intimacy with Jesus, and cause life change to be all the more evident in your life to others. You will find each of these, along with many others, in the chart of spiritual practices in Chapter 14.

Owning Your Growth

My Soul Care Worker Is:_____.

My Community Is:_____.

My Plan For Spiritual Disciplines:_____.

Questions For Stage 4 Analysis

1. How has your family shaped you in positive and negative ways?

2. How would others describe the condition of your heart based on your actions?

3. When was the last time you noticed something in your life that needed change? How did you go about addressing it?

4. Which of these disciplines do you tend to gravitate toward? Which do not come as easily?

FOR THE DISCIPLE-MAKER

When Growth Looks Like Backsliding

Someone entering Stage 4 often looks like they are falling away. They pull back from serving. They go quiet. They stop volunteering for things, and they may say church feels hollow. Read from the outside, this looks like decline — and the instinctive response, to re-recruit them into activity, is precisely wrong.

What is actually happening is that the things which worked at Stage 3 have stopped working, and they are turning inward because they have run out of outward answers. Your job is not to pull them back out. It is to make sure they are not alone in there.

Ask what they are finding, then be able to hear it without flinching or fixing. This is the stage where people say the true things they have never said — about their childhood, their marriage, their anger at God, what they have done. If your face changes, they will stop.

Know your limits. Stage 4 frequently surfaces material that belongs with a licensed counselor, and referring someone is not a failure of the relationship. Say plainly that you are staying and that you want them to have help you are not qualified to give. Then keep showing up while they get it.

Resources

- The Return of The Prodigal Son - Henri Nouwen
- Total Forgiveness - R.T. Kendall
- The Gift Of Being Yourself - David Brenner
- Tender Warrior - Stu Webber
- Adore - Sarah Avery
- Relax - Meghan Fate Marshman
- Praying Life - Paul Miller