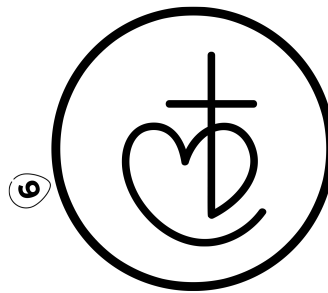




THE PATH

fellowship bible church

Stage 6 — The Life of Love



"Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."-Mark 12:28-31

Life Of Love - The abundant life that reflects Jesus to others clearly and consistently.

Case Study

Rachel is a 49 year-old mother of three who is currently discipling a young mom on Friday mornings. She's made it her life's goal to make disciples and be the type of woman that others can see Jesus in her. She is well thought of by believers and non-believers alike — to the point where non-believers seek her out for counsel and friendship. Rachel is in Stage 6.

Alexander is a 76 year-old semi-retired grandfather of 9. He says semi-retired because he doesn't believe the Bible has a category for retirement. After a long career in education, he now focuses his attention on discipling young men. His life's goal has been to sync up his heart and will with the heart and will of Jesus. Everyone who knows Alex, near and far, see Jesus in him and are infected by his joy. Alex is in Stage 6.

Isaac has given the last 9 years of his life to serve the poor in Sierra Leone. He serves in a local church teaching elementary aged children by day and at night teaches the Bible in villages. His steps are marked by kindness and those who come into contact with him are drawn in by how he radiates something that isn't of his world. Though unmarried, Isaac loves his neighbors and invites his Muslim neighbors in for meals. Isaac is in Stage 6.

Overview

The Life of Love is a life of others experiencing Jesus through the fruit of The Inward Journey and The Wall. Because a follower of Jesus has been courageous to feel their feelings, honest about the darkness of their heart, and willing to surrender their own will to God they are now freed up to love and be love to those around them. Those in Stage 6 most readily display a genuine love of Jesus

Christ that is transformative. When we live in the life of love we give ourselves away freely for the sake of others, are not prone to offense, we are quick to forgive, and quick to honor and bless. Tangible markers of this stage are selflessness, self-forgetfulness, humility, and being at peace with who God made you to be. Those in Stage 6 are prime examples of spiritual maturity and a beatitudinal life¹. There is a deep settledness in Jesus; an insistence to see the greatest thing about themselves is being a child of God.

A Christian is well on their way toward wholeness at this stage. It is important to note that wholeness here can look like weakness and can commonly be misidentified with ambivalence or a lack of “fight”. A Stage 6 Christian simply has a holy discernment about the things of this world that either do not concern them or non-eternal matters. When we encounter those in Stage 6 we encounter a person who allows us to experience the loving presence, grace, mercy, and truth of Jesus Christ. They are not out to change people. They know only the Holy Spirit can accomplish that work². They don’t have anything to prove or achieve because Christ Jesus has won for them. Perhaps the most evident marker of Stage 6, for you and others, is God working in and through you in ways beyond your own capabilities. A deep trust and dependence on God results in a submitted life with supernatural results.

What You Carry Into This Stage

Everything arrives here at once. The wonder of Stage 1. The practices of Stage 2. The worship, gathering, giving, and going of Stage 3. The interior honesty of Stage 4. Whatever The Wall proved.

What marks Stage 6 is not that these have been left behind but that they are finally carried by love rather than duty. If any of them has gone quiet — if wonder has calcified, if service has become obligation, if self-examination has stopped — that is the thing to attend to, and it matters more than anything further ahead.

Biblical Examples

The Apostle Paul is a great example of a person who is making disciples and also growing in the image and likeness of Jesus. He went from trying to destroy the Christian faith to one of God’s most prominent spokesmen³. He then devoted his life to planting churches and discipling several men⁴. Paul shows us what Jesus is like both in his writings, his actions, and his own death. The apostle is full of joy in circumstances where it makes no sense⁵, fighting to love his enemies⁶

The Apostle Peter is also an example of Stage 6 living. In fact, we get to see Peter work through each stage up to Stage 6. His conversion⁷, work with Jesus as he travels with the Messiah for 3 years, we also find his community among the other disciples. We see him hit The Wall in his denial of Jesus⁸ as

¹A life that reflects Jesus’ ethics of holistic living found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7)

²“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” - Philippians 2:13

³Galatians 1:23-24

⁴2 Timothy 1:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Titus 1:4

⁵Acts 16:24-30

⁶2 Timothy 4:14.

⁷Luke 5:8

⁸Luke 22:54-62

well as him taking the Inward Journey during his reinstatement⁹. Later in his life we get a window into the type of person he is when he exhorts the scattered church to “not repay evil with evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing¹⁰ “. He goes on to call the Christians to make a defense of their faith in a gentle and respectful manner — even going so far as to call them to suffer for good¹¹.



The Great Need of This Stage

The great need in Stage 6 is people to give your life to, and at least one person who still tells you the truth about you. Not admiration. Not another platform.

Stage Steps

- 6.1 Grace-Driven and Truth-fully Sharp
- 6.2 Kingdom-Minded and Counter-Cultural
- 6.3 Lovingly Missional
- 6.4 Humble and Wise
- 6.5 Emotionally Differentiated

6.1 Grace-Driven and Truthfully Sharp

You neither blunt the gospel nor soften its exclusive demands upon your life. You proclaim it with grace and compel Christ-followers to live under, in, and by grace because God’s kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

⁹John 21:15-19

¹⁰1 Peter 3:9

¹¹1 Peter 3:15-17

6.2 Kingdom-Minded and Counter-Cultural

God's Kingdom shalom (wholeness) shapes your worldview and you engage the world around you in a way that graciously displays a kingdom alternative to the cultures of the world.

6.3 Lovingly Missional

You are steadily learning to act like Jesus with a life branded by love for all people — including your enemies. This love compels you to live a missional life in your family, vocations (work), through mercy and justice ministries, and in your respective mission field. You are an agent of God's Kingdom shalom. You live as a holistic disciple who makes holistic disciples for the good of the church and the glory of God.

6.4 Humble and Wise

You celebrate and learn from different generations in a humble way while using wisdom and discernment. You live with each generation without the chauvinism of youth or the arrogance of age. You mutually submit to generations that are not your own knowing they are integral in your spiritual growth and development.

6.5 Emotionally Differentiated

You are able to accurately identify the emotions and feelings that you are experiencing. Your growth and maturity in Christ allows you to be in an emotionally charged space without your own emotions becoming enmeshed in that environment. You are able to feel independently from those around you — successfully not succumbing to the anxieties that your surrounds offer. Like a boulder anchored in rapids, the water moves but you do not.

Guides

Every person at each stage needs a guide. At Stage 6 guides take on the form of a Jesus-focused mentor — A spiritual guide who will teach, advise, and guide them on their spiritual journey and insist they pass it on¹². A Stage 6 individual may seek out an array of counselors or sources of wisdom in their life that enables them to continue to grow. Relationally, the ecosystem of relationships is a distinguishing mark of Stage 6 Christians. When someone is an example of Jesus to others they will have disciples, healthy church community, intimate friendships, and good relationships with non-believers.

"Being" Milestones Of Stage 6

Stage 6: Domain Milestones

Spiritual - Communion with God that no longer rises and falls with circumstance. Prayer has become less about asking and more about abiding.

¹²Note: At Stage 6 a Jesus-focused mentor may center around work, parenting, hobbies, or someone already in your church community. A priority is that whatever is gained from that interaction, it will be passed on.

Relational - Loving people without needing anything back from them. Others experience your presence as safe, and your correction as care.

Emotional - Differentiated. You can stay close to people in distress without absorbing their anxiety or losing yourself in it.

Intellectual - Conviction and humility held together. Truthfully sharp without being harsh; settled without being brittle.

Physical - Stewarding a body you treat as neither an idol nor an inconvenience, with rhythms sustainable enough to keep giving yourself away for decades.

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 6

1. Do you find yourself able to extend grace to others and preach the gospel to yourself while in Stage 5? Why or why not?

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2. If shalom is a primary marker of God’s Kingdom, how do you find that in Stage 5?
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3. How does God use suffering to humble us? Have you experienced humility as a result of hardship?
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4. In what ways will feeling your feelings help you be a better representation of God to those close to you?
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Taking Your Next Step

There is one major next step in Stage 5.

Give Your Life Away

If Jesus gave everyone he encountered a foretaste of heaven, then so too should we. Jesus tells us in Matthew 20:28 that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. He gave his life away so others would find theirs. He suffered so we could know joy. He heard God's 'no' so we could hear God's 'yes'. At this stage, much of your life will be a foretaste of what life in God's Kingdom is like. Give your life away. Disciple, serve others, be generous, and continue to live a faithful and consistent life privately and publicly with Jesus.

Growth Step: Give Your Life Away and Stay Accountable

At Stage 6 the growth step points outward and inward at once. Outward: give your life away deliberately, to specific people, by name. The abundant life is not stored. Inward: keep at least one person who still tells you the truth about you. The danger at Stage 6 is not immaturity — it is being admired past the point where anyone will correct you. Both halves are the step. Neither works alone.

Owning Your Growth

My Spiritual Ecosystem Includes:

My Church Family:

My Disciples:

My Healthy Community:

Jesus-Focused Mentor/Disciple-Maker:

Questions for Stage 6 Analysis

1. List 6 attributes of Jesus from the Gospels and describe how others should experience them in us.

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2. Why should a follower of Jesus be distinct from every culture except the culture of God's Kingdom?

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3. When you think of humility, who in your life exemplifies this the most and why?
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4. We are transformed into the image of Jesus when we imitate his life and teachings and walk in obedience. What are three ways you can point yourself to Jesus to continue to be transformed by him?

Resources

- Radical - David Platt
- The Pursuit of Holiness - A.W. Tozer
- Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers - Dane Ortlund
- Sacred Marriage - Gary Thomas
- Soul Keeping: Caring For The Most Important Part Of You - John Ortberg
- Start With Amen - Beth Guckenberger
- Worthy - Elyse Fitzpatrick
- Marriage On The Rock - Jimmy Evans
- How To Walk Out Of A Room - Emily P. Freeman
- The Elusive Dream - Dr. Korie Edwards
- The Table Podcast From DTS
- Bema Podcast