



STAGES *of* FAITH

Spiritual Guidance. Life-long Transformation.

We are in a full-on, Red Alert, war on eight fronts!

In the model of *Stages of Faith*, three enemies conspire to obstruct your renewal at each of the eight milestones. If any milestones are neglected or insufficiently attended to, it will certainly curtail the growth of Christlike, fully alive, whole, and transformed Parents in the faith—whose ultimate purpose is to make an impact on others' growth. Don't miss this point: The long range goal of the trinity of evil is to interfere with your growth at each milestone. The enemies' strategy has been effective, and explains why too many believers plateau, falling short of the Parenthood stage of faith. If growth is delayed or incomplete, your personal story will have limited influence on others. You, then, are neither fully transformed, nor an authentic agent of transformation to others. The news from the front lines is that there is a shortage of seasoned, battle-ready Parents in the faith.

In the Childhood stage of faith:

The three deadly rivals will take aim at Milestone #1 and try to obstruct your experience of God's extravagant and amazing grace. These enemies seek to distort your perception of how God, in His love and forgiveness, sees you and, therefore, prevent any deep renewal and healing. Then, at Milestone #2, these enemies are intent on targeting your concept of God so that you won't let yourself trust Him or fully surrender to Him as your reliable and trustworthy Father. At Milestone #3, these opponents collude to keep you from deep friendships that provide the mix of Christian support, challenge, and vision you will need to grow strong and whole.

In the Young Adulthood stage of faith:

Milestone #4 challenges the believer to be strong—to courageously stand alone—even if it means not conforming to others. The enemies of spiritual growth prevail when the approval and expectations of others have a hold on you. Milestone #5 highlights God's Word, re-orienting all you do, and the goal is always transformation, a deeper relationship with Him, not information. The forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil are evident—diminishing the believer's full potential at the preceding four milestones—crippling the influence of God's Word in Milestone #5.

Milestone #6: Defeating the Enemies of Spiritual Growth

The biblical source of Milestone #6 is 1 John 2:13, 14: "I am writing to you, young men, because you have *overcome the evil one*." At this milestone, believers come to understand the lethal strategy of their three arch enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil—and how to successfully combat each. Milestone #6 will prepare you for battle and victory. If you neglect this milestone, you will be unaware, unprotected and vulnerable to the spiritual battle that stalks you.



- Are you alert to where the three enemies uniquely target you at each of the milestones?
- Can you identify where your story of transformation is delayed or obstructed at each milestone?
- Will you bravely do battle and yield to God's control and healing?

With courage rooted in the Lord, trusting in His power and relying on the process outlined in *Stages of Faith*, you can boldly confront any challenge that comes your way. The perfect tense—*have overcome*—does not mean that the battle is already over, but rather that the believer stands assured of victory. The word for *overcome* comes from the Greek word *nike* which means “victory.” They have overcome in Christ, and overcoming continues in the present.

Salvation is the starting point for what the theologian Francis Schaeffer called “the *substantial* healing of the total person.”¹ Note, however, the word *substantial* as opposed to *complete*. Believers can experience healing that is real and significant, but healing is never complete on this side of eternity.

Overcoming, gaining victory over these adversaries is a key aspect of the personal story of your spiritual journey that, as a Parent in the faith, you will share.

Don Willett, Ph.D.

1. Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1971), 323.

“It’s time for a change in the way we think about spiritual growth and the way we guide others in the faith. Stages of Faith research has developed an unprecedented way to think about spiritual growth and an innovative way to guide others.”

~ Don Willett, Ph.D.