



# STAGES *of* FAITH

*Spiritual Guidance. Lifelong Transformation.*

## Five Views of Sanctification

John Alexander, in *Five Views of Sanctification*, presents five major denominational traditions of the path of spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup> These diverse and complex theological descriptions of sanctification include:

*Lutheran  
Reformed  
Catholic (contemplative)  
Wesleyan, and  
Pentecostal-Charismatic*

Each of the five paths offers a contrasting description of the believer's journey of faith and each has its own distinctive emphases and deficiencies.

Three fundamental perspectives or emphases emerge: The Lutheran stresses faith alone; the Reformed and Contemplative present two variations of the view that stresses faith and the believer's responsible participation; and the Wesleyan and Pentecostal/Charismatic offer complementary, though contrasting, views that stress the unique role of the Holy Spirit.

## A Riddle, A Dilemma

Alexander makes the poignant observation that the recurring debate and disagreement about the process of spiritual growth, is “**the riddle of sanctification**” and “**the dilemma in the call to personal holiness.**”

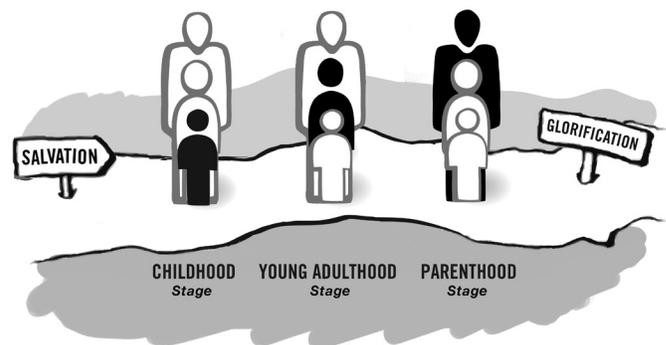
The Christian can likely expect to be confused as to how their personal spiritual growth toward Christlikeness will occur – *unless there is a remedy that enables us to see beyond what appears to be an ongoing riddle and dilemma.*

It is of utmost importance that we describe and explain a biblical map of spiritual development that will be useful to Christians in charting their spiritual growth over the lifespan.

## The Remedy – Stages of Faith

Don't miss it! God revealed through the seasoned apostle John that the process of spiritual growth happens in three Stages – Childhood, Young Adulthood, and Parenthood – and noted distinguishing characteristics of each Stage.<sup>2</sup>

In 1 John 2:12-14, believers find clear direction for their own journey toward Christlikeness. Every follower of Christ can locate how far they have traveled and how far they have yet to go. They can also target specific obstacles that delay their progress and transformation. Too, it provides a path by which each of the five traditions can still employ their distinctive emphases.



John provided a trustworthy map for the church to follow at the end of the first century – and for our own ongoing spiritual growth today. We can be relieved that John's model of Stages of spiritual development remedies “**the riddle of sanctification**” and “**the dilemma in the call to personal holiness.**”

*Don Willett, Ph.D.*

Endnotes:

1. John Alexander, *Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), pages 7, 10.
2. For a full explanation of the John's model, see *Stages of Faith: 8 Milestones that Mark Your Journey* workbook and *The Path: How to Understand and Experience Authentic Spiritual Growth* textbook, both by Don Willett.

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