

Taking Next Steps at Concord Liberty Presbyterian Church*

Where are you?

Before you can take your next step, you need to know where you are, because the practices that spark new growth change as people mature. In other words, certain practices and activities are more catalytic to growth at each stage of the journey toward Christlikeness.

As you read about the four stages of spiritual growth below, keep in mind that no stage is 'better' than another, any more than being 50 years old is better than being 15. What is important is that we are moving toward Christlikeness. Jesus is present and at work throughout our spiritual journey, so resist comparing yourself, favorably or unfavorably to others.

Spiritual Seekers: “I believe in God, but I am not sure about Jesus. My faith is not a significant part of my life.”

Key Question: What do I believe about Jesus?

- Includes both skeptics and the spiritually curious
- Most do not serve within the church but may serve elsewhere
- Generally view the Bible as irrelevant
- Pray in times of need

Believers in Jesus: “I believe in Jesus, and I’m working on what it means to get to know Him.”

Key Question: How do I build a relationship with Jesus?

- New or rededicated believers growing in their faith and beginning to engage personally in their spiritual growth
- Learning that everyone is broken and in need of a Savior
- Beginning to see connections between belief and actions
- Willing to participate in small groups and sometimes read the Bible or Christian books
- Some serve in the church, participate in local or short-term mission service
- Share the excitement of their new faith, or what God is doing in their lives

Followers of Jesus: “I feel really close to Christ and depend on Him daily for guidance.”

Key Question: How do I follow Jesus in my everyday life?

- Increasing devotion to Christ and ownership of their spiritual lives
- The Bible and prayer are central to their lives
- Authentic before others and recognize the need for heart transformation
- Proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel through their lives
- Meet the needs of others by regularly serving in and/or outside the church as an expression of their faith

Companions of Jesus: “My relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life. It influences everything I do.”

Key Question: What shall we do together, Jesus?

- Love God more than anything and are fully surrendered to Jesus
- Prayer and spiritual practices enable constant conversation with God
- Overflow with God’s love regularly through evangelism, service and mentoring others
- Stewardship of all one’s personal resources and God’s world
- Work to bring justice and peace in all human relations and social structures
- Self-initiate learning opportunities and spiritual friendships
- Know their gifts and call and are using them

Questions for self-reflection and assessment: Take a minute and reflect on your life. Use the questions below to help you identify which stage or stages, best describe you.

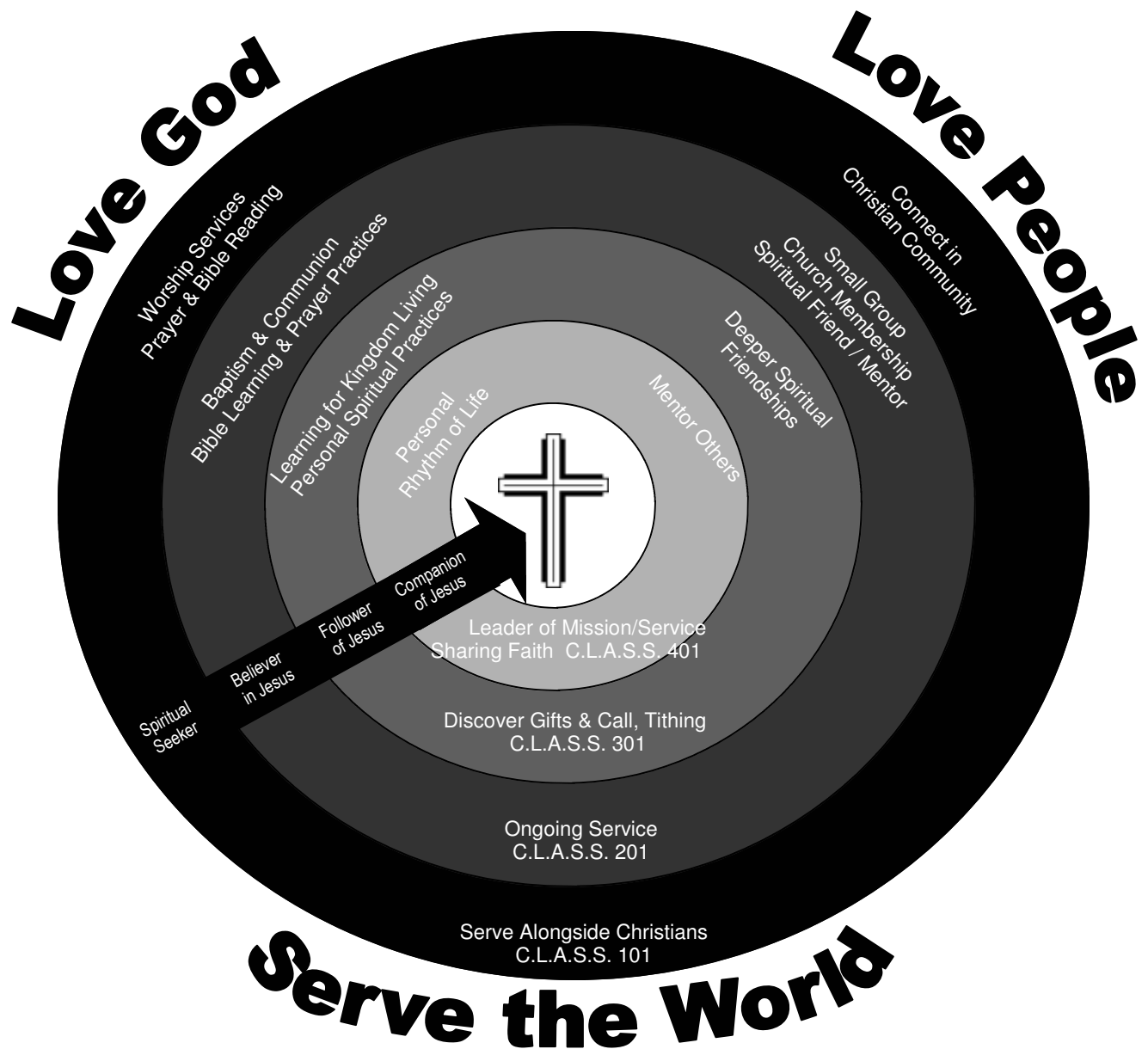
- Which opening statement(s) best describes your relationship with Jesus?
- Which key question(s) resonates most with you currently?
- Which stage(s) has the most characteristics that describe you well?
- Are you between two stages, growing from one to another?
- Can you recall your journey of growth through the stages?

Find my Next Step

Look at the rings on the NextSteps Discipleship Path that correspond to the stage or stages that best describe you:

- Which experiences, practices and relationships are you already using to grow?
- Are there experiences, practices and relationships, even in earlier rings, that you are not yet using to grow?
- Pick one or two next steps, and explore the resources and opportunities available to help you take them.

CLPC'S NextSteps Discipleship Path[®]



DEFINING THE NEXT STEPS

On CLPC'S NextSteps Discipleship Path

For information about resources or opportunities related to these next steps, see the weekly CrossConnected or website at www.concordliberty.org or contact Monica at our office at (610) 358-2105 or by e-mail, clpc@juno.com.

LOVING GOD

Worship services are one of the best places to begin exploring Christianity, to meet followers of Jesus and learn what they believe. As a believer, they are also wonderful places to learn about Jesus and experience his love as you worship with other Christians!

Worship Center: 8:30 Traditional
10:00 Contemporary.

Prayer is simply conversation with God. You can pray about anything, at any time and in any place - and religious sounding language is not required (in fact, you're better without it). Rev. Earl Palmer likes to say the prayer is and amateur sport, so don't feel like you need to polish up on your language to talk to God. In simple prayer, the good the bad and the ugly are all brought to God.

Bible Reading is a great way to explore Christianity and get to know God because the Bible is, first and foremost, the story of God's love for humanity. If you're new to the Bible, we suggest beginning by reading about the life of Jesus in John. For those wishing to read through the entire Bible we recommend the One Year Bible. Many of our people also use Scripture Union Bible reading guides (www.scriptureunion.org) for their daily Bible reading.

Baptism is the church's proclamation and experience that we are who we are because God has first chosen us and loved us and called us into His kingdom. Baptism by water is a visible sign of God's love toward His children and is essentially something that God does. The profound truth and beauty of baptism is not so much that we give our children or ourselves to God - God chooses us as His own. Baptism is offered to adults, upon their profession of faith in Jesus Christ during the worship service as well as to the children of parents who are members of CLPC. The baptism of infants witnesses to the truth that God's love claims us even before we are able to respond to faith. Adult baptisms are held at the time members are received in worship.

Communion also called "The Lord's Supper," is an ongoing opportunity to confess sins and receive God's grace and empowerment through the sacrament.

Bible Learning means discovering how to meet God through study, memorization and prayerful engagement with Scripture, and it will take your love for God to a deeper and more intimate level. These skills are taught in C.L.A.S.S. 201.

Prayer Practices help us to grow in love for God by expanding our conversation with God to intentionally including various types of prayer and aids to conversation with God, including praise, confession, listening, solitude, silence, prayer and Examen, and intercession. These skills are also taught in C.L.A.S.S. 201

Learning for Kingdom Living means reflecting on what it means to follow Jesus in the realities of daily life, specifically the ethical, political, social, relational, vocational, financial and moral dimensions of Christian discipleship. Jesus' call 'Follow Me' has implications for every aspect of our lives.

Personal Spiritual Practices: Even if you have a good foundation in core spiritual practices such as Bible engagement and prayer practices, you will discover that there are still untouched areas of needed growth. Personal spiritual practices are highly focused and targeted exercises that help you live into the fullness of the fruit of the spirit. These skills can be learned through reading and practicing the disciplines taught in Richard Fosters book “Celebration of Discipline.”

Personal Rhythm of Life: You can deepen your love for God by intentionally developing an individualized Personal Rhythm of Life (often called a Rule of Life). Christian tradition understands this as an intentional arrangement of our daily lives around the goal of becoming more like Christ and often has daily, weekly and sometimes quarterly or yearly dimensions. This Rhythm of Life reflects a pattern of attitudes, behaviors, relationships and practices which promote God-awareness and love of others within your routine of daily living. Your rhythm of spiritual practices will reflect your personality, your spiritual type, your season of life, the sins you struggle with and the areas where God is growing you.

LOVING PEOPLE

Connecting in Christian Community is anywhere that you can rub shoulders with Christians, and it gives you the opportunity to experience for yourself the non-judgmental love of Jesus through others and be with those who are trying to follow Jesus. See the Cross Connected or our website, www.concordliberty.org .

Small Groups are the foundational way of experiencing belonging and acceptance in Christ. Within the small group structure, Believers regularly meet in groups from 4-10 to learn from each other how to apply the Bible in their daily lives and support each other in developing personal prayer practices. These beginning spiritual relationships can lead to selected deeper friendships that are increasingly important as Believers mature.

Church Membership: Jesus didn't leave behind a book or a building; he left a community of followers and prayed that through their fellowship others would come to know who he was. Becoming a member says “I'm committed to loving, growing with and serving with my brothers and sisters in this community” and it is catalytic to spiritual transformation. Those wishing to consider church membership attend our C.L.A.S.S. 101, a one afternoon seminar offered twice a year, usually in the fall & spring.

Spiritual Friend/Mentor: A spiritual friendship is a relationship with a fellow disciple that purposefully includes mutual intimacy, guidance and accountability. Mentors are spiritual friends that are a bit further along in the journey toward Christlikeness. These intentional friendships are often formed spontaneously and organically, and can be very powerful agents of change in our lives at every stage of spiritual development. Conversing about our thoughts and feelings of following Jesus day-by-day are just as much a part of our Christian formation as preaching and teaching.

Deeper Spiritual Friendships are relationships in which we experience being deeply known and loved through regular and intentional authenticity, confession, accountability, encouragement and prayer. Often these relationships begin organically in small groups or other places of community, but they always have to be developed purposefully to become the powerful tools of spiritual formation they can be.

Mentor Others: Investing in the lives of others is both a privilege and a responsibility for spiritually mature Christians, and is often a great source of new growth in love for others.

SERVING THE WORLD

Serving Alongside Christians: If you're looking to make a positive difference in the world, you're in good company at CLPC. Come join us as we put our faith into action and live out our belief in God's giving love through serving others in various ways. See the Cross Connected or our website www.concordliberty.org for opportunities.

Ongoing Service is making a regular commitment to serve, either in the church or the community, and is a crucial part of the development of a Christlike heart and life. CLPC is unique in its offering a vast number of ways to "get in the game" and serve. Our many ministries provide a spring board for involvement at any level. Whether you want to welcome guests, serve on a Mission trip, work with kids or simply pray for someone, you can find a place to do so here. No job is ever too large or too small to be pleasing to God - and you just may be surprised how pleasing it is to you!

Discover Gifts and Call: Frederick Buechmer has described a call as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." There are few things more fulfilling or transformative than putting your spiritual gifts to work for the Kingdom of God. Those wishing to discern their unique S.H.A.P.E. for ministry take C.L.A.S.S. 301

Tithing is giving a portion of our income and testifies to the reality that all we have comes from God, and serves as an expression that all our resources, time, talents and treasures, are at God's disposal. (The biblical understanding of tithing is giving 10% of one's resources while 'offering' are viewed as giving above the tithe). Both tithing and giving offerings are aspects of the larger call to stewardship. The glad-giving of our tithes and offerings frees Followers of Jesus from being possessed by their possessions. Parting with our material resources provides a tangible practice that says, "Money, you cannot be the god of my life today" and it is one of God's most important training exercises for reshaping our hearts.

Sacrificial Service is serving even beyond our gifts and your call and is an invitation to all disciples to meet Jesus in the presence of the poor, the lowly and the outcast.

Sharing Faith: Growing a heart like God's means becoming one who deeply loves those far from God. Taking the initiative to build relationships with Seekers, having conversations about tough questions, sharing a verbal witness with them and bringing them to outreach events and small groups sparks amazing growth Companions of Jesus as they learn, love and risk. These skills are taught in C.L.A.S.S. 401