

STAGE: WITNESS

# GROWTH PATHWAY

## YOUR JOURNEY FROM SKEPTIC TO WITNESS

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Real Testimonies. Radical Transformations.

Understanding the Five Transformation Stages and Taking Your Next Steps

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# Spiritual Growth Pathway

Your Complete Journey From Skeptic to Witness — Comprehensive Expanded Edition. Complete guide to your spiritual journey: understanding the five transformation stages, recognizing your location, overcoming obstacles, and taking your next steps. Navigate your spiritual journey with clarity — including detailed stage descriptions, milestone markers, personalized assessment tools, transition guides, customized resource recommendations, and clear next steps for every stage. For anyone questioning their faith journey, churches helping members progress spiritually, small group leaders understanding where people are, and anyone ready to understand and navigate their complete spiritual transformation.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Part One — Understanding the Five Stages
3. Part Two — Stage 1: Skeptic
4. Part Three — Stage 2: Seeker
5. Part Four — Stage 3: Believer
6. Part Five — Stage 4: Disciple
7. Part Six — Stage 5: Witness
8. Part Seven — Assessment and Location
9. Part Eight — Transition Guides
10. Part Nine — Overcoming Obstacles
11. Part Ten — Personalization and Customization
12. Part Eleven — Building Community Around the Pathway
13. Conclusion — Your Next Step

## INTRODUCTION

### Why Your Journey Matters

**Your spiritual journey is not an accident.**

Whether you're:

- A skeptic asking hard questions
- A seeker investigating faith
- A new believer learning to follow
- A growing disciple going deeper
- A mature witness sharing your story

**You matter. Your journey matters. Your progress matters.**

### The Five Stages of Spiritual Growth

Christian growth follows a recognizable pattern:

- **SKEPTIC** — Questioning, doubting, investigating
- **SEEKER** — Open to faith, exploring Jesus
- **BELIEVER** — Committed to Jesus, growing in faith
- **DISCIPLE** — Deeply transformed, serving and leading
- **WITNESS** — Multiplying disciples, influencing others

Each stage has characteristics, challenges, and resources.

### Where Are You?

This guide helps you:

- Understand what stage you're in
- Recognize markers of growth
- Find resources specific to your stage
- Know what's next
- Navigate obstacles

**There's no shame in any stage. Every stage is necessary.**

## PART ONE — UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE STAGES

### Stage Overview

#### The Spiritual Growth Continuum

SKEPTIC → SEEKER → BELIEVER → DISCIPLE → WITNESS

Doubting Exploring Following Growing Multiplying

Each stage builds on the previous one. You don't skip stages — you progress through them.

### Progression Isn't Linear

**Important: Growth isn't always forward.**

You might:

- Move forward then back during crisis
- Stay in one stage for years
- Cycle through stages (exploring, believing, growing, returning, exploring again)
- Progress quickly in some areas, slowly in others

**This is normal. God's timeline is different from ours.**

### Individual Timelines

**There's no "right" timeline.**

- Some move from skeptic to believer in weeks
- Some take years
- Some stay skeptical for decades
- Some become disciples in months
- Some take a lifetime

**What matters isn't speed. It's direction and sincerity.**

## PART TWO — STAGE 1: SKEPTIC

### Definition and Characteristics

A skeptic is someone who:

- Doubts Christianity is true
- Questions God's existence or goodness
- Sees no reason to believe
- Is closed to faith (or unaware of the option)
- Has intellectual or emotional objections

### Typical Markers

You're a skeptic if:

- You don't believe Jesus is God's Son
- You see no evidence for Christianity
- You have unanswered questions/objections
- Faith seems illogical or naive to you
- You're not pursuing faith actively
- Religion seems harmful
- You're satisfied without God

### Common Struggles

Skeptics typically struggle with:

- **Intellectual:** "Christianity doesn't make sense"
- **Emotional:** "I've been hurt by Christians"
- **Experiential:** "I don't see God working"
- **Philosophical:** "Problem of evil, suffering, science"
- **Social:** "My community doesn't believe"

### Objections and Questions

Common skeptic questions:

- How can I believe in something I don't understand?
- Why would God allow suffering?
- What about science?
- Isn't religion just a crutch?

- How can Jesus be God and human?
- Why should I trust the Bible?

## Resources for Skeptics

### kylelauriano.com Resources:

- **Evidence for Christianity** — Case for Jesus' resurrection
- **Defending Your Faith** — Answers to major objections
- **Problem of Evil** — Theodicy and suffering
- **Science and Faith** — Reconciling faith and science
- **Former Atheist Testimonies** — Stories from skeptics who believed

## Moving Toward Stage 2

### What moves a skeptic toward seeking?

- Personal crisis
- Encounter with a believer
- Intellectual breakthrough
- Curiosity awakened
- Emptiness realized
- Encounter with answered prayer
- Honest investigation

**If you're a skeptic, consider:** What would it take for you to investigate faith seriously?

## PART THREE — STAGE 2: SEEKER

### Definition and Characteristics

A seeker is someone who:

- Questions their skepticism
- Genuinely investigates faith
- Explores Jesus and Christianity
- Remains open despite doubts
- Is moving toward faith (though not yet committed)

### Typical Markers

You're a seeker if:

- You're genuinely investigating Jesus
- You're reading the Bible or Christian books
- You're attending church or Christian meetings
- You're asking serious questions
- You're hoping faith might be true
- You're looking for community
- You're moving toward a decision

### Investigation Phase

Seekers investigate through:

- **Intellectual:** Study, reading, research
- **Relational:** Connecting with believers
- **Experiential:** Attending church, prayer, spiritual practices
- **Emotional:** Feeling what faith feels like
- **Practical:** Testing faith commitments

### Common Struggles

Seekers typically struggle with:

- Still having doubts
- Pressure to believe before ready
- Disappointment in Christians
- Fear of commitment

- Uncertainty and confusion
- Isolation or misunderstanding from others

### Resources for Seekers

#### kylelauriano.com Resources:

- **Evidence for Christianity** — Intellectual foundation
- **Problem of Evil** — The hardest objection
- **Science and Faith** — Reconciling apparent conflicts
- **Former Atheist Testimonies** — Stories of journey from doubt to faith
- **First Prayers for Seekers** — How to pray when uncertain

### Moving Toward Stage 3

#### What moves a seeker toward belief?

- Intellectual resolution
- Personal encounter with God
- Relationship with believer
- Crisis that reveals need
- Time with Scripture
- Community experience
- Realization they need Jesus

## PART FOUR — STAGE 3: BELIEVER

### Definition and Characteristics

A believer is someone who:

- Trusts Jesus as Savior and Lord
- Has committed their life to Jesus
- Has been baptized or is considering it
- Is beginning to follow Jesus
- Is learning what faith means in practice

### Typical Markers

You're a believer if:

- You've made a commitment to Jesus
- You believe Jesus died for your sins
- You've experienced conversion/transformation
- You're new to faith (1–2 years typically)
- You're still learning basics
- You're beginning to read Bible regularly
- You're attending church/community

### The Conversion Point

Belief typically involves:

- Acknowledgment of sin
- Acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice
- Commitment to follow Jesus
- Prayer of commitment
- Public decision or baptism
- Entry into Christian community

### Early Growth

Early believers typically:

- Experience immediate transformation
- Have lots of questions
- Find community important

- Want to share their faith
- Learn the basics of faith
- Establish spiritual disciplines

## Common Struggles

New believers typically struggle with:

- **Overconfidence** (thinking they have it all figured out)
- **Legalism** (thinking faith is about rules)
- **Disappointment** (thinking everything will be easy)
- **Isolation** (feeling alone in their faith)
- **Temptation and sin** (surprised by ongoing struggles)
- **Community hurt** (disappointing experiences with Christians)

## Resources for New Believers

kylelauriano.com Resources:

- **Your First Week as Christian** — Immediate steps
- **New Believer's Survival Kit** — First year guidance
- **Bible Reading Basics** — How to engage Scripture
- **First Prayers for Seekers** — Learning to pray
- **Worship & Praise** — Encountering God
- **Christian Finances** — Practical Christian living

## Moving Toward Stage 4

What moves a believer toward discipleship?

- Mentoring relationship
- Commitment to spiritual disciplines
- Crisis that deepens faith
- Community investment
- Hunger for depth
- Leadership opportunity
- Understanding of transformation

## PART FIVE — STAGE 4: DISCIPLE

### Definition and Characteristics

**A disciple is someone who:**

- Has been following Jesus for years
- Shows evidence of spiritual transformation
- Practices spiritual disciplines consistently
- Is living obediently
- Is being shaped into Christ's image
- Is growing in character and wisdom
- Is serving and leading others

### Typical Markers

**You're becoming a disciple if:**

- You've been following Jesus for 2+ years
- Your life shows visible transformation
- You practice prayer, worship, Bible study regularly
- You're serving in your community/church
- You're being held accountable
- You're growing in character
- You're mentoring others or considering it

### Deepening Faith

Disciples are characterized by:

- Deep relationship with Jesus
- Confidence in God's care
- Understanding of God's Word
- Willingness to sacrifice
- Servant leadership
- Spiritual wisdom
- Bearing fruit

### Transformation Markers

**Signs of spiritual transformation:**

- Increased love for God and others
- Decreased selfishness and pride
- Greater patience and peace
- Growing wisdom
- Expanding capacity to serve
- Deepening humility
- Authentic faith

## Common Struggles

Maturing disciples struggle with:

- Plateau in growth (feeling stuck)
- Spiritual dryness (absence of emotion/feeling)
- Questions about calling
- Pressure to perform or lead
- Disillusionment with church
- Questions about God's work in the world
- Wrestlings with deeper theology

## Resources for Disciples

kylelauriano.com Resources:

- **Spiritual Disciplines Checklist** — Deepening practices
- **Worship & Praise** — Encountering God deeply
- **Level 4 – Disciple Someone** — Mentoring others
- **Creating Discipleship Materials** — Building systems
- **First Prayers for Seekers** — Advanced prayer

## Moving Toward Stage 5

What moves a disciple toward being a witness?

- Spiritual maturity and confidence
- Burden for others' salvation
- Experience of ministry impact
- Calling to lead
- Investment in others
- Living authentically
- Using gifts for Kingdom

## PART SIX — STAGE 5: WITNESS

### Definition and Characteristics

**A witness is someone who:**

- Is mature in faith
- Shares their story naturally
- Influences others toward Jesus
- Leads and multiplies disciples
- Has long-term commitment
- Lives as ongoing testimony
- Invests in others' spiritual growth

### Typical Markers

**You're becoming a witness if:**

- You've been following Jesus 5+ years
- Your faith is evident to others
- People ask you about your faith
- You're actively involved in leading
- You're mentoring/discipling others
- You're sharing your story
- You're multiplying disciples

### Sharing Your Story

Witnesses share their story:

- Naturally in conversation
- Intentionally in settings for it
- Publicly and privately
- With humility and confidence
- Pointing to Jesus, not themselves
- Inviting response

### Impact and Influence

Witnesses have:

- Personal testimony others respect

- Relationships with seekers/skeptics
- Leadership in church/community
- Multiplication mindset
- Kingdom perspective
- Long-term spiritual vision

## Common Struggles

Mature witnesses struggle with:

- Maintaining fresh faith (avoiding rote)
- Not judging those in earlier stages
- Understanding different timelines
- Navigating disappointment in others
- Balancing confidence with humility
- Continuing to grow themselves

## Resources for Witnesses

kylelauriano.com Resources:

- **Level 1 – Craft Your Testimony** — Sharing your story
- **Building a Testimony Ministry** — Multiplying testimonies
- **Online Evangelism Best Practices** — Reaching digitally
- **Level 4 – Disciple Someone** — Multiplying disciples
- **Creating Discipleship Materials** — Building systems

## PART SEVEN — ASSESSMENT AND LOCATION

### Where Are You Right Now?

#### Quick Assessment

Rate yourself 1–10 on each:

- **Intellectual conviction:** 1 (doubting) → 10 (fully convinced)
- **Emotional openness:** 1 (closed) → 10 (very open)
- **Commitment level:** 1 (none) → 10 (complete surrender)
- **Evidence of transformation:** 1 (none) → 10 (dramatically changed)
- **Spiritual practices:** 1 (none) → 10 (consistent disciplines)
- **Time in faith:** Years/months following Jesus?
- **Influence on others:** 1 (negative) → 10 (multiplying disciples)

### Comprehensive Assessment Tools

#### Stage 1 Assessment (Skeptic)

Are you:

- Genuinely questioning your disbelief?
- Willing to investigate evidence?
- Open to being wrong?
- Curious about Christianity?
- Experiencing life circumstances that raise questions?

If **yes to most:** You may be moving toward Seeker stage.

#### Stage 2 Assessment (Seeker)

Are you:

- Actively investigating faith?
- Attending church or Christian meetings?
- Reading Scripture or Christian books?
- Praying or considering it?
- Leaning toward faith?
- At a decision point?

If **yes to most:** You're ready to move toward belief or commit.

#### Stage 3 Assessment (Believer)

Are you:

- Committed to Jesus?
- Been following 1–2 years?
- Growing in faith?
- Part of a faith community?
- Learning spiritual disciplines?
- Wanting to go deeper?

If **yes to most**: You may be ready for deeper discipleship.

#### Stage 4 Assessment (Disciple)

Are you:

- Showing evidence of transformation?
- Following 2+ years?
- Practicing disciplines consistently?
- Serving others?
- Growing in spiritual wisdom?
- Mentoring or ready to mentor?
- Bearing spiritual fruit?

If **yes to most**: You may be ready to become a witness.

#### Stage 5 Assessment (Witness)

Are you:

- Comfortable sharing your faith?
- Influencing others spiritually?
- Leading or mentoring?
- Multiplying disciples?
- Living as authentic testimony?
- Continuing to grow?
- Expanding Kingdom impact?

If **yes to most**: You're operating as a witness.

### Moving Between Stages

Typical timeline:

- **Skeptic** → **Seeker**: Weeks to years (usually months)
- **Seeker** → **Believer**: Weeks to months (sometimes longer)
- **Believer** → **Disciple**: 2–5 years typically
- **Disciple** → **Witness**: 5+ years typically

**But remember:** These are typical timelines, not rules.

## PART EIGHT — TRANSITION GUIDES

### From Skeptic to Seeker

#### What typically triggers transition:

- Personal crisis revealing emptiness
- Relationship with believer
- Intellectual argument that resonates
- Spiritual experience
- Realization of mortality
- Moral question that points to God

#### Your action step:

- Commit to genuine investigation
- Read one book about faith (Evidence for Christianity)
- Visit a church service
- Ask a believer your hardest question
- Be open to being wrong

### From Seeker to Believer

#### What typically triggers transition:

- Resolution of major objection
- Personal encounter with God
- Crisis that reveals need
- Sufficient evidence to commit
- Community invitation
- Prayer experience
- Reading Gospel accounts of Jesus

#### Your action step:

- Make a commitment to Jesus
- Pray a prayer of confession and commitment
- Tell someone about your decision
- Get baptized
- Find a church community
- Start reading the Bible

## From Believer to Disciple

### What typically triggers transition:

- Finding a mentor or disciple-maker
- Commitment to spiritual disciplines
- Crisis that deepens dependence on God
- Community that challenges you
- Hunger for depth
- Understanding of transformation
- Investment in others

### Your action step:

- Find someone to disciple you
- Commit to weekly spiritual practices
- Join a small group or community
- Read and meditate on Scripture
- Establish prayer rhythm
- Begin serving others

## From Disciple to Witness

### What typically triggers transition:

- Spiritual confidence and maturity
- Burden for others
- Leadership opportunity
- Experience of God's power
- Long-term faithfulness
- Mentoring someone else
- Living authentically

### Your action step:

- Accept a leadership role
- Begin mentoring someone
- Craft and share your testimony
- Be intentional about spiritual influence
- Continue deepening your own faith
- Invest in multiplying disciples

## PART NINE — OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

### When Progress Stalls

#### Reasons growth stalls:

**Lack of community:** Without support, growth is hard. **Solution:** Find a church, small group, or mentor.

**Unresolved crisis:** Trauma or loss can derail faith. **Solution:** Seek help, find support, give yourself time.

**Unaddressed sin:** Hidden sin prevents progress. **Solution:** Confess, repent, find accountability.

**Lack of discipline:** Without practices, faith fades. **Solution:** Establish simple spiritual practices.

**Intellectual objections:** Unanswered questions block progress. **Solution:** Find resources, ask mentors, read apologetics.

**Disappointment in Christians:** Hypocrisy or hurt slows faith. **Solution:** Remember Jesus is the focus, not people.

### Handling Doubts

Doubts are normal at every stage.

#### What to do:

- Don't suppress doubts (acknowledge them)
- Investigate honestly (research, read, ask)
- Talk to others (mentor, pastor, community)
- Keep practicing faith (don't put faith on pause)
- Remember past evidences
- Give time for resolution
- Trust God with uncertainty

### Returning After Falling Away

#### If you've fallen away:

- **Acknowledge it** — Don't pretend it didn't happen
- **Repent** — Confess where you turned away
- **Return** — Come back to Jesus
- **Reconnect** — Find community again
- **Rebuild** — Restart spiritual practices
- **Remember** — Why you believed before

**You're not the first to struggle. Jesus receives the returning. (Luke 15)**

## PART TEN — PERSONALIZATION AND CUSTOMIZATION

### Your Unique Spiritual Style

#### Not everyone:

- Learns the same way
- Progresses at same pace
- Connects with God the same way
- Has same obstacles
- Takes same path

#### Your pathway is personal.

### Different Pathways

#### Intellectual pathway

- Evidence and apologetics first
- Understand doctrine
- Then experience

#### Relational pathway

- Meet a believer first
- Experience community
- Then understand theology

#### Experiential pathway

- Encounter God
- Personal experience first
- Then learn about it

#### Crisis pathway

- Life falls apart
- Need becomes evident
- Then embrace faith

### Seasonal Adjustments

#### Your stage or pace might adjust based on:

- Life circumstances (new job, marriage, kids, loss)

- Crisis or trauma
- Health changes
- Community dynamics
- Spiritual seasons (growth, plateau, wilderness)

**This is okay. Adjust as needed.**

## PART ELEVEN — BUILDING COMMUNITY AROUND THE PATHWAY

### Churches Implementing Pathways

#### Churches can:

- Map all members to stages
- Create stage-specific small groups
- Offer stage-appropriate resources
- Train leaders for each stage
- Celebrate transitions
- Measure spiritual growth
- Build clear next steps

## CONCLUSION

### Your Next Step

Whatever stage you're in, there's a next step:

- **Skeptic:** Investigate honestly one more day
- **Seeker:** Make a commitment to Jesus
- **Believer:** Find someone to disciple you
- **Disciple:** Begin mentoring someone
- **Witness:** Invest in multiplying disciples

*"But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded. — 2 Chronicles 15:7"*

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The King Is Coming Ministry

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