



PERICHORESIS - TO DANCE WITH, AN INTIMATE CONNECTION THAT IF ONE DOES ALL DO. What one knows the other knows. Communion, dynamic, alive, relational, balance, being and doing,

The human and divine are caught up in an eternal nuptial dance in which God is always initiating.

The songs that God sings contain human lyrics, rhythms, and melodies. The encounter with grace is always a human encounter. Grace is encountered in and through our social, family, work and cultural realities. God oversees, cares for, orders and is in relationship to the household of creation through the Spirit's movement.

Jesus Christ, the visible icon of the invisible God, discloses what it means to be fully personal, divine as well as human. The Spirit of God, poured into our hearts as love, transforms us so that we become by grace what God is by nature, namely, persons in full communion with God and with every creature.



You are the Author of Your Life.

What do you want to happen in the next Chapter of your life?

Think about:

How do you want to change?

What part of your physical, spiritual, emotional and social life do you want to grow?

What aspects of yourself do you want to change and grow?

What will be important to you as you design yourself?

What are the values that will guide you as you live your new design?

What will be some goals you can achieve within the next week, month and year?

What kind of person do you want to become and be known as?

What can you do with your gifts and talents?

Preface

the persistent voice of midlife
wooded and wailed, wept and whined,
nagged like an endless toothache,
seduced like an insistent lover,
promised a guide to protect me
as I turned intently toward my soul.

as I stood at the door of "Go Deeper"
I heard the ego's howl of resistance,
felt the shivers of my false security
but knew there could be no other way.
inward I traveled, down, down,
drawn further into the truth
than I ever intended to go.

as I moved far and deep and long
eerie things long lain hidden
jeered at me with shadowy voices,
while love I'd never envisioned
wrapped compassionate ribbons
'round my fearful, anxious heart.

further I sank, to the depths,
past all my arrogance and confusion,
through all my questions and doubts,
beyond all I held to be fact.

finally, I stood before a new door:
the Hall of Oneness and Freedom.
uncertain and wary, I slowly opened,
discovering a space of welcoming light.

I entered the sacred inner room
where everything sings of Mystery.
no longer could I deny or resist
the decay of clenching control
and the silent gasps of surrender.

there in that sacred place of my Self
love of a lasting kind came forth,
embracing me like a long beloved one
come home for the first time.

much that I thought to be "me"
crept to the corners and died.
in its place a Being named Peace
slipped beside and softly spoke my name:
"Welcome home, True Self,
I've been waiting for you." ---Joyce Rupp



Individuation Process

<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Mid-Life Transition</u>	<u>Phase 2</u>
Ego Development	Archetypal Encounters	New Ego Identity
Ego Identity	Shadow Implosion	Second Archetype
What I can/can't do	Reconstruction	Generativity
Psycho-sexual development	Inclusion	Integrity
Psycho-social development		Resolution
Construction		

Phase 1 – Construction

- o We move into a lot of exclusion, the ego stores all I've excluded in the shadow
- o What do I exclude of my capacity to think, feel, desire, and behave?
- o Have I really exhausted the resources that were given to me?
- o Have I an ego identity—do I like how I wear myself out loud?
- o Psychosexual is my capacity to live in my skin well—how much at home am I in my skin.
- o In so much as I can live in the social unit will equal my capacity to belong, associate, and connect.
- o At mid-40's something is triggered—having profession, car, home, collecting stuff no longer satisfies—there is an emotional atrophy, indifference, longing kicks in.
- o Men drink more, work more, or develop another relationship.
- o In the U.S. Phase 1 is prolonged for religious women—they need to work longer for support because of the poverty of the Catholic Education system.
- o We can only last in Phase 1 for so long then we burn out—it is an act of violence to the psyche to remain in Phase 1. In the U.S. 50% of the men die in midlife.

At Mid-life we need to rewrite our Phase 1 rules

- o Midlife is a transition period—physically, emotionally, spiritually.
- o Shadow implosion—I'm disinterested in all I've been.
- o Who have I become—has it allowed me to become who I am called to be?
- o Persons are looking for an inner marriage not an outer one—beware of narcissism.
- o My ego says, "I'm fine, no change needed." But if I stay where I am I will die/atrophy.
- o The danger of midlife is trying to wear the parts of my youth in old age.
- o People can ricochet—go backwards e.g., let's bring back the Latin mass.

Mid-life is about the inner world trying to reconcile with the outer world—happiness lies in our inner world—the whole quest is an inner journey.

The work ethic is against this transition—saints, mystics, prophets are born here.

Unresolved issues from Phase 1 get amplified as I move toward mid-life.

- o The answer is simplicity, basics, poverty.
- o The byproduct is health, serenity, balance, proportion, integrity, generativity.



- o Driven vs. laissez-faire.
- o Making sense vs intuitive/symbolic
- o In life there are losses—any lesson unlearned in life is repeated.

Phase 2 – Resolution/Integration

In Phase 2 we can become the direct opposite of Phase 1. The Principle of Opposites kicks in but Balance and Proportion are very important.

- o I am not going to be the person I was.
- o Within my lifetime I only get two archetypes—I must give up one to gain the other.
- o Issues of generativity and integrity kick in
- o Resolution—a sense of resolution/peace with what I'm doing.

The measuring cup of Individuation is wholeness—if I am living out what God means me to be, wholeness will be very important.



Ego Development

1. There is no growth in holiness without self-knowledge.
2. It takes 18-24 years to create a healthy ego identity.
3. Our family, religion and culture are major contributors to creating our ego.
1. Other factors are our biological, psychological preferences and temperament, spiritual disciplines, intellectual capacity and genetic contributions from mother and father.

The ego has some serious handicaps that we need to be aware of:

1. The ego is a collection of patterns and definitions that shape and determine what and how you think, feel, desire and behave.
2. The ego doesn't believe what you think and feel until you say it out loud to a significant person.
3. What you deny you are condemned to become. If you don't become it you marry it. If you don't marry it you will find employment with it. How many of us said that "I will never be like my mother or father and today you speak, act, and talk just like them. How many of us today realize that when we denied the negative potential of our mother/father within us—we became the very thing we denied. If not, we married them—through our spouse. If not that then we found an employer who treats us just like mom and/or dad. Your mother and father live inside of you. If you deny their good/bad potential, then you become a captive of it. If you accept their good/bad potential and offer it hospitality and love—you then have authority over it and can then decide to do with it as you please. You are no longer determined by your parent's blessings or burdens.
4. What you leave unloved grows in power and influence over the ego and will be projected onto another person.
5. What you leave unnamed of your potential becomes content for an infatuation and can make you lovesick for another—positive projection.
6. At you best your ego can perceive on 50% accuracy of what it sees. The rest is biased through the filters we have.
7. The ego hates to be changed. That's why it avoids conversion experiences. When the ego experiences a conversion encounter it shatters the ego.
8. In the absence of information, the ego assumes the negative. We have built in handicaps to assume the negative when we don't have information otherwise.
9. We design ourselves by the choices we make. Our parents give us the basic stuff from which we design ourselves by the choices we make. Do you like how you have designed yourself?
10. There is no growth without pain. If you endure the pain, you get the growth. If you avoid the pain and skip over it you do not get the growth.
11. Life is full of lessons. All lessons must be learned. Any lesson not learned must be repeated. Unlearned lessons are repeated and repeated and repeated until learned. What we don't learn in our lifetime can be passed onto the next generation as a burden. What we do learn in our lifetime is wisdom and we can pass this onto the next generation as a blessing. The Holocaust Museum in Israel has a saying, "Unless we learn from the past, we are condemned to repeat it."



Introduction to Call of the Soul The Archetypal Journey of the Labyrinth

Almost every other aspect of our living and dying has been categorized into stages: pregnancy, the first years of life, mid-life passages, death and dying. But our spiritual development remains essentially uncharted. *The Call to the Soul* offers a spiritual roadmap, a six-stage soul work cycle that will help to understand the natural and consistent process of spiritual development.

Knowing that there is a pattern and progression to call can be encouraging when we feel lost and alone with impulses we do not understand. Becoming conscious of the way call weaves between the individual and community can be a guide to what we need to do next. Although we can enter at any point, experience dictates that the stages of call unfold in a pattern called the labyrinth—as a spiral journey with inward and outward dimensions. Knowing where we are in each cycle can offer comfort, companionship, and guidance in an otherwise lonely journey. The understanding of this process of call can freshen our conversations about meaning and purpose, provide guidance for people who want to believe in God, and encourage the formation of informal spiritual communities.

Throughout history, the labyrinth model depicts the spiritual journey, wherein; the movement is down toward the center of our self—trues self. It is at the center or still point that we become contemplative, quiet, and wait for the presence of God. From this center point, the natural movement is back out into the world. The labyrinth model illustrates the pathway that invites change—the way in is the way out. Neither time nor chronological age is a measurement of traversing the path. Typically, stage developmental tools are *mapped* in a linear fashion, beginning at birth, and ending with death. Age increments delineate the stage of development that should occur in body, mind, and spirit. Psychology tells us that completion and integration of one stage is necessary before proceeding to the next. Regression to a previous stage of development occurs when a person is threatened in some way and feelings of fear surface—the person regresses to a safer stage, usually the previous one. However, by implementing the labyrinth model, the movement is forward until the center is reached. The moments of seemingly regression are actual times of reflection and taking inventory of previous life experiences. These times of reflection or reclaiming are necessary to move along the labyrinth pathway. It is a time to recognize patterns, events, and people that were supportive, challenging and healing throughout life. Only by taking time and energy to reclaim these events is it possible to move into uncharted waters. Without known resources the unknown becomes a source of fear and trepidation.

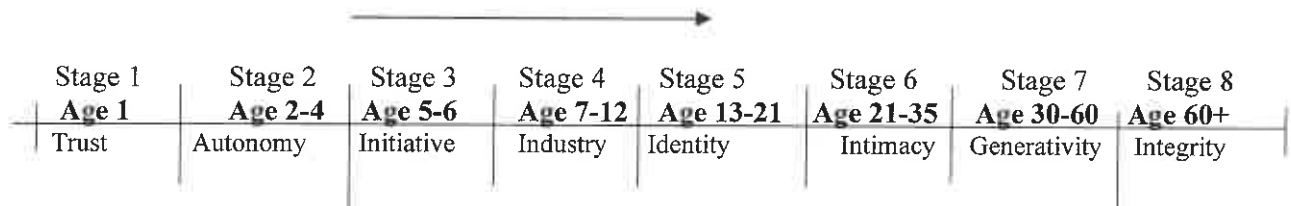
This model is illustrated in the following diagrams of Bernard Lonergan and St. Teresa of Avila. In both illustrations, the person starts the journey on the outer edge, with the basics of awareness and outer-world experiences. Visually, think of yourself as walking on the edge of a circle. Within each circumference, life is lived smoothly and with a degree of predictability. When an interruption of the norm or pattern—when the circle is punctured—as is death, illness, separation, or dissatisfaction, the circle ceases to function. There is a gap, a missing segment, a void in the circle, and a halt to the movement. When this happens the first reaction is to fix the fracture, bridge it, fill in the *hole*—possibly with addictive



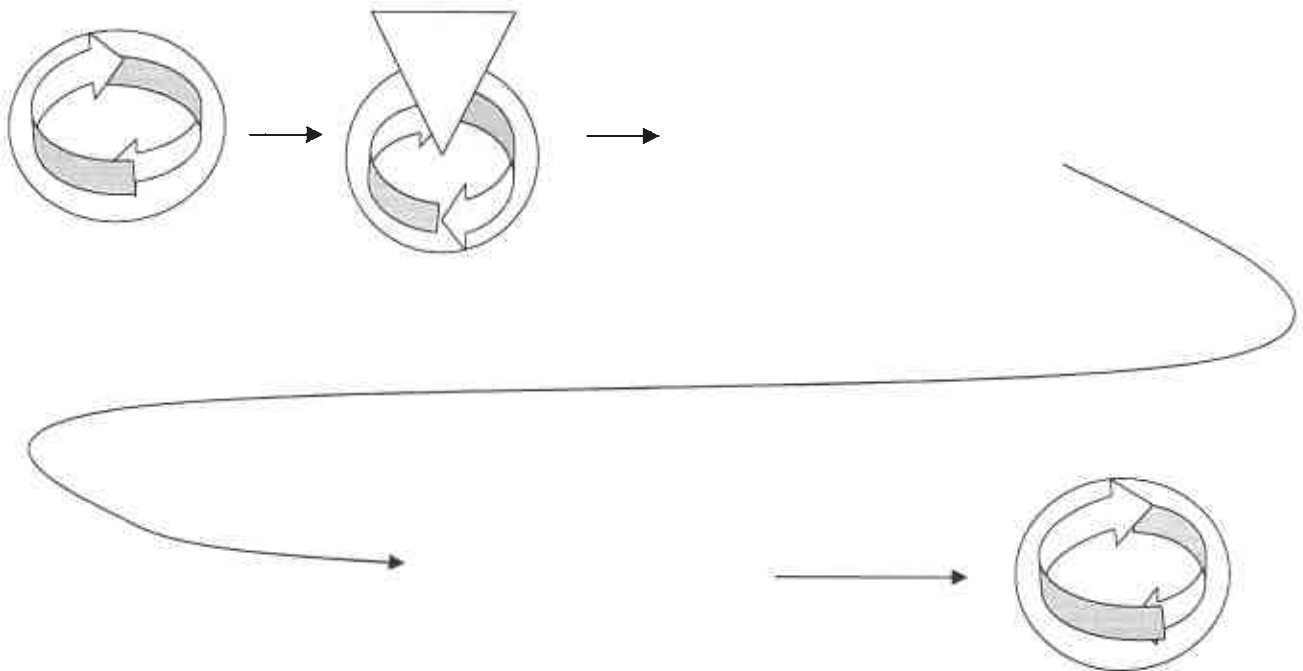
behavior—or stay in one place. When this fails to produce adequate restoration of the circle, the alternative is stepping off and finding a new pathway. Step off and enter the labyrinth.

As the person is called to move into an intimate knowing of God and Self, the pathway becomes more focused and narrower—until having reached the center find union with God. The energy created in this inner movement demands re-expression in the outer world of people and things. It is in the expression of a new Self that the circle, once again, becomes complete. In this perpetual outer-inner-outer movement, the focus is not on conquering of tasks but rather it is on the movement itself. The goal is wholeness, well-being, union with God—of integration and expression. The completion of once cycle prepares you to enter again.¹

Linear Approach to Stage Development: Erik Erickson



Labyrinth Approach to Journey



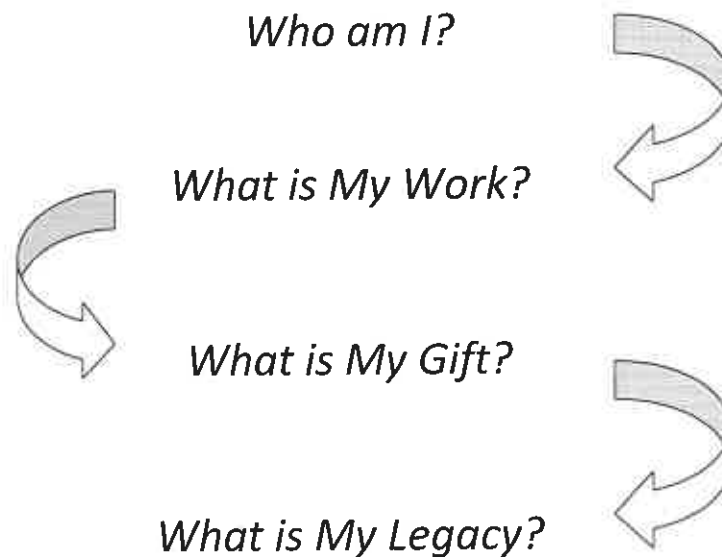
¹ Marjory Bankson, *Call of the Soul*, adapted by Mary Superata, 2000



Call of the Soul

To begin the process it is necessary to take inventory of where you are now and how you got there. The relationship of call to developmental psychology is as follows:

- o In the first round or cycle of adult life, from age twenty to thirty-five, call seems to center around the question of identity: *WHO AM I?* It is also a time when we separate from our biological family and seek a separate identity through financial self-sufficiency and/or marriage.
- o From thirty-five to fifty, most of us focus on finding our vocational call and achieving some financial stability. Moving beyond the simple question of a job, the question becomes *WHAT IS MY WORK?* Our search for work that contributes to a greater good means claiming a wider context and perhaps naming it as call.
- o From fifty to sixty-five, we begin to grapple with the reality of death and physical limits and move beyond ego development to the question of *WHAT IS MY GIFT?* The question of “my gift” implies a sense of gratitude and identification with others who can celebrate our creativity with us.
- o The last stage, from sixty-five to eighty and beyond, grows out of an acceptance of death and an embrace of God’s timeless story of creation. That call becomes *WHAT IS MY LEGACY?* Seeing diminishment and death as limits on life’s unquenchable desire for being gives final round special urgency, even adventure. When we understand that call outlasts the marketplace and gives us a sense of meaning and value beyond producing income, then attending to call moves us beyond questions of career satisfaction into the realm of spiritual completion.²



² Marjory Bankson, *Call to the Soul*



Briefly reflect and answer the following:

Who am I now?

What is my work?

What is my gift?

What is my legacy?



The Nature of Call

One of the factors that make the question of sequential calls so relevant is the dramatic segmentation by age and experience in our society. Never before in history has society been so differentiated by the technological and social conditions that shape childhood and early adulthood. Today there are four major age groups in the adult populations, each making an impact on public policy and common resources, each ready for a distinct kind of call. In each grouping, age and circumstances affect call differently. The biblical understanding of call as a quickening of one's relationship with God is something that all four age groups are seeking, each in their own way. Following are the four groups:

Builders, born prior to 1929

Builders grew up during the Depression, went to college on the GI Bill after World War II, and come of age in the euphoric postwar period. They "saved the world for democracy" and wanted to enjoy the fruits of that victory. They built homes, churches, schools, and manufacturing plants outside of urban centers, depending on cheap gas to link the parts of society. Commitment is a strong value for Builders who were willing to give their lives for what they believed in. Men and women of the Builder generation understood commitment so well that they gave their lives to institutions now run by younger people who do not seem to appreciate the sacrifice. Since the social unrest of the sixties, Builders have lived with the criticism from their Boomer children. Many Builders question whether the legacy of their life experience can be received by younger generations—though there is no doubt about their eagerness for monetary inheritance. Call for this age group revolves around relationships, tending old ones and finding new ones with people who are walking the path toward conscious aging and, ultimately, toward death. The soul work cycle for Builders can be a time for integration and generosity instead of fearful clinging to privacy with property without a sense of call. Their primary question is *what is my legacy?*

Bridgers, born 1929-1945

Born in the Depression and World War II years, Bridgers form a numerically small generation between Builders and Boomers. They reached early adulthood in the fifties and sixties, understood hardship and commitment because of war, generally married right out of college and had their kids early before "the pill" was widely available. In the eighties, Bridger women went to work in droves after their children were grown. Bridgers tend to be very loyal, though they are more likely than Builders to look critically at unlimited commitments. Bridgers may be the last age group with strong roots in the church, loyalty to denominations, and general knowledge of the Bible from long years in Sunday school. For Bridgers, call usually means finding time for reflection, deepening relationships, and volunteer or part-time work after retirement. Many are looking forward to spending more time alone or with their adult children, who seem to have more trouble establishing independent homes for themselves. When to leave mainstream employment and focus on another kind of work is the question for many Bridgers today, as many are being pushed aside by aggressive Boomer reorganizations and buyouts. Finding a basis for self-worth



beyond work is the primary spiritual task for Bridgers. Their question of call is, *What is my gift?*

Boomers, born 1946-1964

Boomers form the largest generation in American history. They rebelled against Ozzie-and-Harriet world of their parents with drugs, sexual freedom for women on “the pill,” and anti-Vietnam protests. Children came later for Boomers as their biological clock ticked on toward forty. Divorce and drug-use, greed and violence at home have marred the material success of many. Because the Boomer generation is so large, their needs have impacted social institutions from the time they started school. Many come to middle age without the grounding of community and church-related traditions that provide the myths and meaning for times of vulnerability. They want professional leadership, consumer sensitivity, and quick results. Time pressures make long-term commitments seem impossible for Boomers, and they have changed the working environment for everyone with their faith in quick-response, just-in-time organizational mobility. Boomers are concerned primarily with matters of work and family, ego accomplishment, and assertion of their power into the world. For Boomers, how to recover (or find for the first time) a sense of wholeness and connection with a wider community beyond family often begins with searching for insight, for a spiritual practice that is different from what their parents had. In their search for an answer to *what is my work?* Boomers are beginning to face the spiritual questions about meaning and service that come in the last half of life.

Busters, born 1965-1980 also called Generation X

Born to Bridger and Boomer parents, Busters parallel the lower birthrate of the Bridger generation because of birth control is more widely available. This so-called Generation X, who grew up with MTV and computers, eschews description and categorization. At home on the World Wide Web, they are well educated but under-employed (because the Boomers are already in those jobs), often unmarried but loyal to a small group of friends, suspicious of public institutions, and conscious of environmental degradation. Busters are looking for new forms of family and community, a few reliable relationships in a constantly changing world. Busters will volunteer their time to help people in need, but those efforts need to be organized by somebody else and, for the most part, be short-term or one-time contributions. The emerging model of church for Busters is a self-organizing unit, usually small in size and flexible enough to receive what they want to offer. They work hard, play hard, and reject formality. Establishing *Who I am?* Is the primary spiritual work for the Busters as they enter a chaotic global village linked by the Internet?

Gen Y 1981-1996 Millennials or Zillennials

Gen Z 1997-2012

Gen A 2012-2025



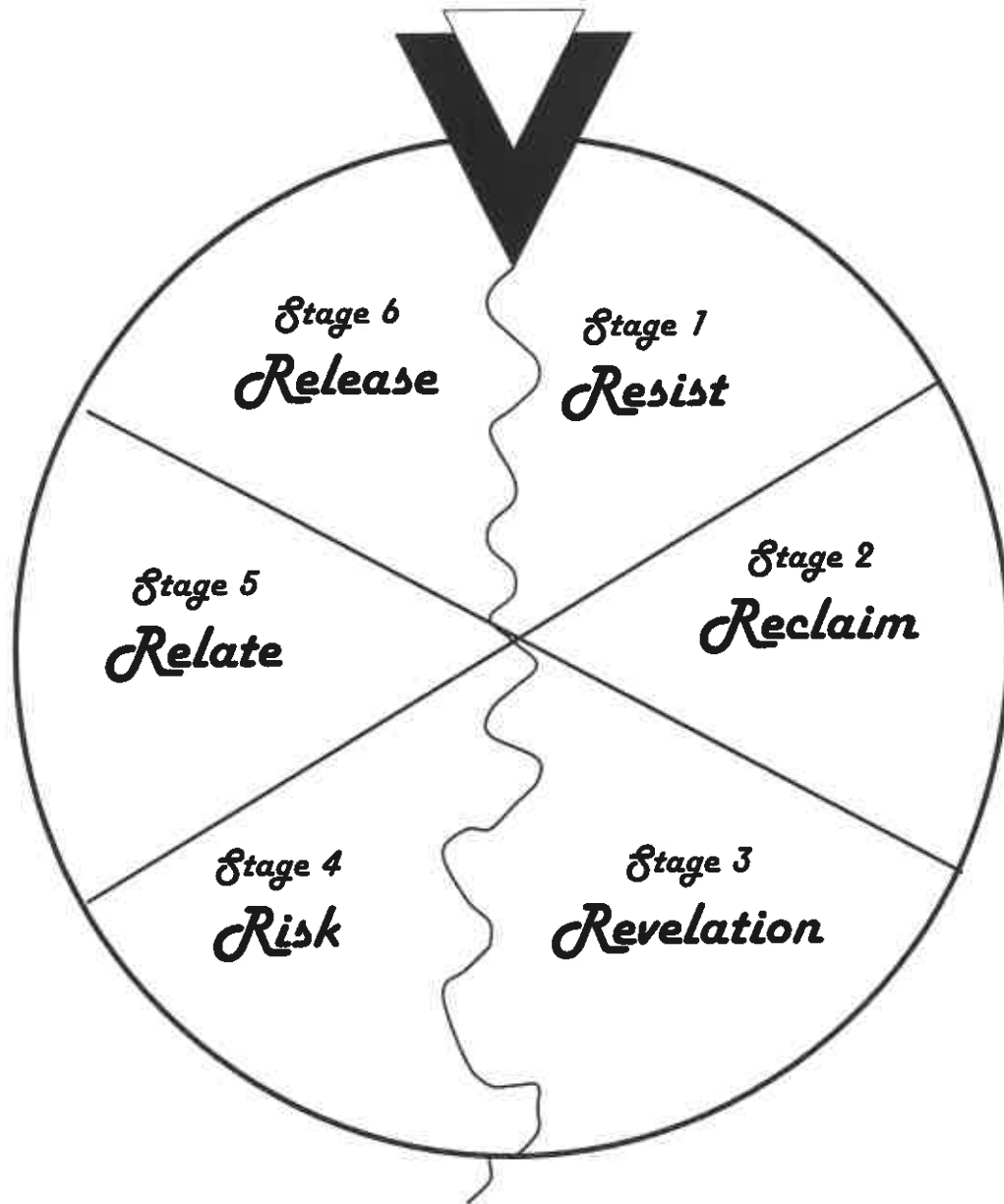
Headwaters

The ending of the cycle is really the beginning. It is here that the public self gives way to a more private exploration and the start of the new cycle—ready to incubate a new call.





The Cycle of the Call





Call to the Soul ~ Archetypal Journey Stages of Spiritual Development

...no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration...which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. —Joseph Campbell

The following are the stages of the spiritual journey as outlined by Marjory Bankson. These stages are signposts that inform the traveler where they have been, where they are, and a glimpse of what is ahead. These stages, although illustrated as segments of the whole, are nonetheless fluid and independent of a prescribed time or duration. Each stage has an invitation to move beyond the present and move towards the call. These summaries capture the highlights of each stage.

Stage 1 ~ RESIST

- Resistance to the ideas that we might be called to a larger purpose in life.
- An inner signal that all is not well.
- We resist giving ourselves to the unknown.

Stage 2 ~ RECLAIM

- Reclaim from the unconscious past associations of who we truly are.
- Reconnect with family traditions—reclaims the sacred.
- Reweave our story of the past, connect with family, nature, work, God.

Stage 3 ~ REVELATION

- We enter a place of possibilities and vision.
- Everything is connected, whole, and congruent.
- There is a vacillation between ready to move ahead, and then backing off wondering is this the call, shall I move forward with this impulse?

POISON RIVER

- Commitment is required to cross over into another way of being in the world.
- It is a time of testing, trial, and trust in an unknown future.
- Fall from innocence and self-absorption, from rote religion or mindless diversion to a specific task that we are vulnerable and dependent on God.

Stage 4 ~ RISK

- Need for a new life.
- Move into the public forum.
- New framework of values.

Stage 5 ~ RELATE

- When we change from the inside out, everyone around us is affected.
- Task is to connect with the larger community who can share in our sense of purpose, filled with common symbols, language, and story.
- Honoring the differences in others and celebrating their creativity.
- How to work and live with those who are unlike us?

Stage 6 ~ RELEASE

- Integration, endings, and release.
- Release of control of what we have accomplished.
- Giving our call to others, passing the experience on to others.
- Leave behind power, prestige, and proficiency.



Scripture References

Stage 1 – RESIST

Judges 6:11-18

The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Orah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” “But sir,” Gideon replied, “if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now, the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.” The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” “But Lord,” Gideon asked, “how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.” Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.”



Stage One: Resist

I feel anxious and unsettled. Nothing satisfies my vague sense of hunger. I feel a change coming but am too tired to care. I've stopped writing in my journal regularly and can't seem to find energy or willpower I need right now. I feel like a slug. My body is hanging onto old forms even as my soul grows restless, yearns for something else. I can't figure out how to make space for it.

The first sign of Stage One is resistance to the idea that we might be called to larger purpose in life. Something comes unbidden to signal that all is not well. Or, just when we feel totally abandoned, something happens to remind us of our relationship with the universe. Serendipities occur. A coincidence or sign catches our attention. We hear a story that resonates with rightness or see a rainbow or catch sight of a bird in high flight. The soulwork begins with a visceral response. As an organism, we seek homeostasis, stability, and balance. We resist the messenger of call, preferring our own methods of coping with whatever difficulties life seems to have for us. We resist giving ourselves to the unknown and cling to what we know. Resistance implies a boundary between different states of matter, otherness, opposing forces, friction, and attraction without absorption. Entering the muddy waters of soul work is not so much a movement toward ecstatic fusion with God as it is recognizing the downward and inward presence of God in earthly clay and ordinary moments.

Forms of Resistance:

- Resistance implies a boundary between different states of matter, otherness, opposing forces, and friction.
- Forms:
 - Forgetfulness, leaving things behind, misplacing things
 - Not fully present to the moment
 - Feeling numb and dumb, removed from the spark of life
 - Anxiety, confusion
 - Desire to hang on to the old patterns that have kept me going in the past
 - Lost and disoriented, confused about what to do next
- We resist giving ourselves fully to the unknown because when we do, we are vulnerable, childlike, and dependent on something beyond ourselves.
- At the same time, to resist “not knowing” is both a sign of new birth and of healthy caution.
- We may tend to project our potential on to someone else in the form of infatuation.
- There is a desire to fit the new call into what you are already doing—not wanting the work of shifting priorities to make space for the unknown.
- To engage our stubborn core of resistance, we must be willing to enter a time of “not knowing” that goes against our cultural patterns of reason, autonomy, and control.
- Symbolized in mythology by a trip to the underworld, or time in the tomb, or forty days in the desert, genuine call is a fearful thing, worthy of our resistance.
- Some people shut down or deaden themselves with obsessive activity, drink, or drugs.
- We see in someone else an image or reflection of what we ourselves could embody.
- We envy, admire, and very often avoid the people who are living out the call we carry inside.



- Either avoidance or obsessive attraction can be a sign of resisting call.

Archetypes of Resistance to Call

The Innocent Resists

- The Innocent is the perfectionist, clinging tightly to “oughts” and “shoulds”
- Cling to a preconceived picture of what God ought to do and blames God for not making it happen.
- They believe the world is a safe place just waiting to be explored and that others are there to help and save them when they get into trouble.
- Optimistic, carrying an idealized picture not only of themselves, but of others.
- One way of coping with a rapidly changing environment is to make the sphere of our decisions very small, narrow the realm of control down to something we can handle.
- The shadow side of perfectionism is projected hostility, where we demonize the “enemy” instead of seeing evil as part of creation and part of ourselves.
- The Innocent wants to rescue and to be rescued.
- They see how other people could be if only they would do things differently.
- When our powers of denial are greater than our capacity for truth, we may be stuck in Stage One for a long time.
- Moving beyond resistance means confronting the reality of evil, or our mortality and limitations.

The Orphan Resists

- The Orphan is the realist.
- The Orphan is not so likely to question the identity of the caller, as she is to question her own identity.
- Self-reliance may stem from an early experience with abandonment, being psychologically or physically orphaned and left alone to fend for oneself.
- Pragmatic, testing every intimation of call against the practical questions of survival and stability.
- They are suspicious and calculating—can be cold and distant, self-sufficient and unlikely to trust easily.
- Even if they have faith, they do not really trust God’s care or provision.
- Fear of abandonment shades every relationship, and they are more likely to withdraw into depression and self-examination for answers.
- Resistance buys time to find their own solution and relies on their own resourcefulness.
- Even if they have achieved considerable wealth and status, they resist a new call by turning inward, embracing the practice of meditation, long distant running or biking, solitary, and entrepreneurial efforts to change the surrounding culture.
- The world is seen as an unsafe place where nourishment and protection must be sought every day and nothing is achieved without struggle, and danger is always lurking.
- They need to find a place of trust, even serenity, a stance of willingness to accept life as it is, not as they want it to be.



- Listening to the call is about restoring our relationship with self, with the world around us and with God.
- Controlled by suspicions and fear of change, it will be hard to believe there is anyone “out there” to trust.
- Moving beyond resistance means identifying with a larger reality other than self.

By the Rivers of Babylon

Psalm 137 ~ Reflection

By the rivers of Babylon, we sat
down and wept
when we remembered Zion.
There on the willow-trees
we hung our harps,
for there those who carried us off
demanded music and singing,
and our captors called on us to be
merry:
‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’
How could we sing the Lord’s song
in a foreign land?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right-hand wither away;
let my tongue cling to the roof of
my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.
Remember, O Lord, against the
people of Edom
the day of Jerusalem’s fall,
when they said, ‘Down with it,
down with it,
down to the very foundations!’
O Babylon, Babylon the destroyer,
happy the man who repays you
for all that you did to us!
Happy is he who will seize your children
and dash them against the rock.



Exile as a Way of Life

Psalm 137 reflects the feelings and emotions of a people that are taken from their homeland and relocated in Babylon. It gives voice to an authentic faith-experience in the context of prayer. Everyone at some point in their life will experience the disorder of being exiled—living estranged in an unfamiliar place. Feelings of disorientation, lament, anger and revenge strike hard in the psalmist voice as an attempt to deal with the unknown. The anger in the psalm points to our pain, to our rejection of what makes it seemingly impossible to return home. Their hope is in a saving God that will remove them from their exile and show them the way home. W. Brueggemann suggests that the psalm was written to remind those in exile of what was and to look towards another future:

It is important that generation after generation...remember...that the present arrangements are not right, not acceptable, and nor finally to be accepted. Psalm 137 draws its power and authority of another vision, marked by homecoming, which seems remote, but is not for one instant in doubt... This Psalm is the ongoing practice of that hope against enormous odds. It is always, "Lest we forget."

Exile can take on many forms—physical location, psychological stress, or spiritual separation. However, exile can be seen as a vocation, a time of recollection and creativity. It is a time to acknowledge the feelings of exile, but not allowing to become overcome by it—not giving into despair or hate. It is recognizing the injustice of being separated from the known and reflecting on its personal impact. As a vocation, the pain one feels can give birth to new possibilities. Exile is a time of radical questioning of identity, faith, purpose, and values. It is a time to gain a different perspective, re-arrange priorities, and recall lost confidences. Ann Bedford Ulanov reflects:

Meaning does not come to us in finished form, ready-made; it must be found, created, received, constructed. We grow our way toward it. And sometimes the precious bit of true self, the un-lived bit of soul, hides in psychological complexes, in illness, even in tragedy, even in sin... Some mysterious power uses what we see as horrific and as the defeat of all our hopes to bring about our salvation.

Exile is a time of temptations, lamenting losses, bargaining—in short, the grief cycle. While in this place of uncertainty questions arise and clarity comes.

For further reflection consult these passages:

Matthew 4:1-11

Deuteronomy 4:26-31

1Kings 17:1-16

Baruch 5:1-9

Ezekiel 12:1-20

Exodus



Stage Two: Reclaim

At the time of my father's death, I spent some months with a dance therapist who helped me "get out of my head" and into my body. One day after watching me move about the room in silence with my eyes closed, she remarked, "You aren't using the space behind you." She was right. I was not using the space behind me. Or the time. That's why I had come. With my father's death, I felt adrift, ungrounded. Her observations gave me a name for it: I had lost my past. Not literally, of course, but something about my father's death had shut down access to my intuition, and I knew it would take movement rather than words to reconnect.

Regardless of the form our resistance in Stage One takes—whether *denying* our own strengths or relying *solely* on our own strengths—the work of Stage Two is to reclaim from the unconscious collective of past associations who we truly are. We need to discover a larger context for our lives, reconnect with family and tradition, reclaim “the sacred.” We have to recall past connections, reweave the story of past history, and recover gifts that connect us to family, to work, to nature, to God. We may have to reenter dark places to face some of the dragons we needed to flee at earlier times and to reclaim powers that we can use now. We must gather and reassemble beliefs that expand our sense of meaning and purpose, even when we are fearful of taking the next step. Stage Two is primarily relational and communal, even as call begins to differentiate us from the herd.

Forms of Reclaiming:

- Reclaim from the unconscious past associations of who we truly are.
- Reconnect with family traditions—reclaims the sacred.
- Reweave our story of the past, connect with family, nature, work, God.
- Seek the form behind our skills. How did they develop?
- A companion, therapist or spiritual director is important at this stage to mirror back essential qualities of our story.
- Mirroring is a skill that lets us see who we are rather than what someone else wants us to be.
- A companion helps to validate our truth and confirm our body-knowing.
- A process of learning, of drawing on the past by reexamining personal experience, family traditions, religious training, and cultural myths.
- As we begin to gather energy around our new call, as we reclaim our tribe and traditions, we begin to put our individual concerns in a larger context and discover a sense of God's perspective as well as our own.
- Taking time to read our lives backward to discern the meaning and purpose more clearly.
- Revisiting memories of times when someone truly *saw* us and did not try to make us into a carbon copy of others for the sake of order or their convenience.
- We must dislodge the masks we developed as children and reclaim the soul-force that makes each of us unique and important in the whole web of life.
- Reclaiming is not simply a process of reminiscence but of observation and action—and a witness validates our truth and confirms our body-knowing.



- Not only do we need to reclaim parts of our personal history, but we also need to confront cultural power systems designed to keep us in place.
- Cadence, rhythm, and sound invite us to dance, to move and bless in religious ritual, and to blend our energies together in physical labor—a natural way to reclaim our sense of connection with others.
- Music and story take us beyond ourselves, into the realm of spirit and community.
- When we are faced with change at the soul level, we also turn to heroic stories for inspiration and encouragement.
- Stories help to reclaim the rejected parts of life.
- The question of call moves beyond personal healing and remembering the past.
- As we reclaim our tribe and traditions, we begin to put our individual concerns in a larger context and discover a sense of God’s perspective as well as our own.

Scripture References

Stage 2 – RECLAIM

Deuteronomy 32:7

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble comes and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”—before the sun and the light and the moon and men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.



Stage Three: Revelation

The night was bitter. When all the sky was dark, I thought I would die. Then far, far off I saw a shepherd's fire on another mountain. I kept my eyes on the red glow in the distance, and I dreamed of being warm. And that is how I had the strength to survive.³

If Stage Two is set in community and past tradition, then Stage Three opens the future like the night sky full of stars. In this third stage some event or insight draws the curtain back, for an instant, between the temporal and eternal reality. We glimpse another dimension where possibility abounds and fear is, for the moment, overtaken. We are transported into another realism. The future opens, and suddenly we feel the euphoria of Eden if only for a moment. Everything is connected, and we sense the whole, feel the fusion of a timeless realm. We are left to struggle with bringing the vision to birth in time and space. We vacillate, at one moment feeling ready to move ahead and then back off, wondering, “Is this call? Shall I move forward with this impulse?” In this third stage of call, we could say “yes” to the unseen world. We also have the power to say “no,” to deny what we have seen and stay with old ways. Stage Three is a struggle between caution and custom, between what we “know” and a brief glimpse of something larger than ourselves. It is a transitional stage, full of ambivalence and uncertainty, possibilities, and potential dangers. That is the way new vision is born into the world. If we have no mythic vocabulary, no framework for interpretation, we may isolate this “glimpse of heaven.” We may see it as a product of our imagination—and perhaps gather an artifact to remind ourselves that we have had a “sacred” moment—but not be able to integrate what we have seen. If we continue to separate body from spirit, we will not be able to experience revelation as guidance and enter an ongoing relationship with that divine presence. The step from imagination to revelation is a small but critical one in the soul’s journey.

Forms of Revelation

- We enter a place of possibilities and vision.
- Everything is connected, whole, and congruent.
- And then the glimpse is gone.
- There is a vacillation between ready to move ahead, and then backing off wondering is this the call, shall I move forward with this impulse?
- We have the power to say yes or to say no.
- The struggle is between caution and custom, between what we know and the glimpse of something larger than ourselves.
- This is the transitional stage.
- Ambivalence, uncertainty, possibility, and potential dangers await.
- A time of signs and wonders.
- Mystery and serendipitous occur and God-instances and numinous encounters.
- Words hit home, pictures take on a special attraction or quality that captures our attention.
- Synchronicity...hints of the divine presence, cannot be explained with logic or probability.

³ Jane Kurtz, *Fire on the Mountain*, 1994



- Usually there is something that stands in the way of responding to God’s call, family or ego.
- Making the decision to act means entertaining the possibility that God can reveal something entirely out of character to us.
- Seeing things in the larger context of mystery and challenge.
- There is a time to leave home, to separate from unconscious patterns and claim an independent vision—even if it feels like we are choosing death instead of the safety and comfort of known ways.
- Stakes are so high that we may find that we slip back into dysfunctional and non-productive behavior patterns of earlier stages.
- Seeking discernment about how and when to act. Walk, breathe, journal.
- Waiting is a way of nurturing the future. Accepting the revelation implies that we are willing to be changed, willing to be healed.
- It is a period of being willing to give up our defenses for the sake of call the mystery.
- Revelation can be a simple feeling of a “rightness” or fit, a kind of body-knowing—perhaps tears that rise unexpectedly or persistent dreams.
- Sometimes we simply know it is time to put our resistance aside and say “yes” to the unknown path ahead. Can be a time of infatuation with the qualities found in another person. True revelation demands a response. When God’s intent is revealed, we must decide.
- A decision to act means entertaining the possibility that God can reveal something entirely out of character. It means putting a partial vision into action, taking a small (or large) step based on this new understanding.
- Because the stakes are so high at this point of the cycle, we may also find ourselves repeating all the dysfunctional and non-productive behavior of earlier stages.
- Revelation is a time to seek discernment about how and when to act.
- This is a time when waiting becomes the nurturing of the future.

Scripture Reference

Stage 3 – REVELATION

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death, and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees, and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings, and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



Poison River

Water also healed me...many warm baths...lying on a mat in the pool in the hot sun and imagining the baptismal waters that brought me to new life were literally doing it again...in the shower, my prayer: "purify me, O God" as I feel the water cleansing both my body and my spirit.

As adults, when we come to a barrier between belief and embodiment, we must confront our fears of radical change, of making a terrible mistake with the time we have and challenge our fears of death. The Poison River is the dividing line between inspiration and application, separating affect from effect, keeping the feelings of love and body-connection in the private sphere away from the public sphere of institutions. The Poison River flows from the mouth of call, tumbling down rapids, cascading over falls, creating a testing place for the soul to cross from private, individual experience to public, communal life. Many stays on the side of resist, reclaim, and revelation, never moving farther than the glimpses of God or special angelic interventions in Stage Three. We separate personal inner life from public outer expression. If soul development is limited to the personal realm of feeling and spiritual highs, then increasing separation develops between personal beliefs and public actions, creating the kind of moral wasteland. Our "doing" and "being" stay separate. The cost of this split between our spiritual and physical lives is often nothing than a loss of self.

Forms of the Poison River:

- Commitment is required to cross over into another way of being in the world.
- It is a time of testing, trial, and trust in an unknown future.
- Fall from innocence and self-absorption, from rote religion or mindless diversion to a specific task that we are vulnerable and dependent on God.
- Brings us back to mortality, to sickness, and the possibility of failure.
- Obstacles abound and we desperately need to know if God is really part of the call.
- We need reassurance that we can trust that we are meant to go ahead, that we will not drown, that it is God that is calling to us, and that God is with us in the water.
- It can take years, or a day or two.
- It involves stripping down, leaving behind the stuff we have accumulated to reassure ourselves that we are loveable and capable.
- We leave behind the baggage and furniture on the trail for someone else to find.
- We must cross with no excess.
- We review the story of what has brought us to this point, reassuring ourselves that the call has been real.
- When we confront our fears of failure and shame, of wasted life and needless death.
- We leave the familiar behind not knowing the outcome of our crossing.
- We arrive at the riverbank, naked of what has sustained us in the past, and we must find a way to trust the unknown future even when logic says "no!"
- To cross the Poison River, most of us need reassurance that we can trust that we *are* meant to go ahead, that we will not *drown*, that it is *God* who is calling us, and that God is *real* enough and powerful enough to accompany us on this journey.



- Jesus in the desert temptations is the example.
- We are tempted to sidestep the call to avoid the discomfort.
- Reaching the far shore can seem like the end of the cycle instead of the midpoint.
- We have traversed the first three stages, we have suffered through trials, withstood tests, and learned to trust, and developed a deeper sensitivity about what not to trust.
- Results:
 - New definition of who we are.
 - Able to take on a challenge that we were not prepared for.
 - Call for a more serious application of our gifts.
 - Create a legacy to leave behind.
 - Each time we cross over there is a temptation to turn back and replay an old role rather than push ahead.

Scripture Reference

POISON RIVER

Romans 12:2

Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

Matthew 3:13,16-17

Then Jesus arrived at the Jordan from Galilee, and came to John to be baptized by him. After baptism Jesus came up out of the water at once, and at that moment heaven opened; he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove to alight upon him; and a voice from heaven was heard saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, on whom my favor rests.'



Trust

*The northwest wind tugged at the autumn leaves,
Sometimes gently,
Sometimes with determination.
One by one each let loose,
Letting the wind carry it where it would.
Trusting in the wind's strength and gentleness
To guide its journey.
So also, the Spirit has tugged at me.
Sometimes gently,
Sometimes with more urgency.
Bidding me to lay my burdens upon God.
To put my trust in Him.
It is a scary thing to break loose
From things I've always depended upon,
From my safe little world
Which I've tried so hard to keep under my control.
But in letting loose of those very things.
I've found the freedom of the wind.
I've found God's forgiveness.
For my past mistakes,
For my brokenness in relationships,
For my reluctance to trust in Him above all things.
God's love for me,
Despite my imperfections,
Overwhelms me.
Like the wind's uncharted course
My way in life is ever-changing.
Instead of the security of known things,
Of seeing where I am going,
I've put my hand in God's.
Not knowing what lies ahead.
I trust where He leads me.
God's strength and power lightens my burdens.
My heart overflows
With His gentleness and love.
Author Unknown*



"O then, what a blessed day will that be when I shall have
all mercy, perfection of mercy, and
fully enjoy the Lord of mercy.
When I shall stand on the shore and look back on the
Raging seas, I have safely passed;
when I shall review my pains and sorrows, my fears and
tears, and
possess the glory which was the end of all!"

...even as we drift—if we do it faithfully, if by grace we hold with the movements beyond our control, and if we stay open—at length we notice the hints. The rolling waters start to grow shallow. Our hearts quicken. And though it may be a long time since we dared let ourselves feel this way, we begin to eagerly anticipate landfall.

Our natural inclination is to make reaching land something grand, which it is. It is the climax of the journey, lush ground for dances of celebration, and a green and fresh beginning. I see Noah standing on firm ground, looking back at the receding waters of the flood. Next to him, slightly bent, is St. Paul, eyeing the spume of the Mediterranean Sea. The female disciples and Mary, the mother of Jesus start to crowd about, calmed, but aware of their loss of direction after the tomb that held the body of Jesus was sealed. Then whole groups start to press in. Young adults who have dared to drift and watch and discover. Small bands of old who yearned for newness in the community of faith and have, at length, caught hints of the newness. I see cancer patients who, after terrible, unsettling struggles, have come to help others with their cancer, and grief-stricken parents who, in time, have helped others in their sorrow.

The entire group looks back into the time of being adrift, into the days of not knowing what to do or what direction to go. Not one romanticizes that season of living. As a body, from Noah onward, they gaze and reflect. And more with their steadiness than with words, they seem to say: *You were there too, Kind One. Even there you upheld me. While I drifted you taught me to wait long and to watch deeply. And you shaped me for all that now is new.* A simple prayer. The flow of life being as expansive as it is, I sense that their prayer is wise, and I would do well to keep it close...⁴

⁴ *Adrift*, by Stephen V. Doughty, *Weavings*, March/April, 2001, Volume XVI, Number 2, pp16.



Stage Four: Risk

Silence is like a rudder through choppy seas. When I remember to stop and breathe, I can reconnect with God. Words drop away like old clothes. I am naked and new again, supple as clay in the Potter's hands. Maybe a dozen times a day I stop and breathe, look, and listen, refocus my attention beyond habitual response. Often an image arrives, or words pop into my head, like manna for a moment. Refreshed, I can risk a new way.

Deep within us is planted the seed of new creation—dreams for a better world and wild hope that our visions can be realized. We have an unquenchable need for new life, new forms, new ideas to be realized in Stage Four. The call shifts from a private conversation with God to a public form of some kind. We will have to trust previously undeveloped parts of our selves to bring the vision of Stage Three into being. It may mean taking only a small step at first, but we need to *act* to make our dreams come true. External commitment to an internal call feels risky because it requires that we move from an old framework of values into a new one that may not be very coherent at this point. New actions do not automatically bring other people into alignment with our dreams or drives. We can expect opposition from old friends or people invested in the status quo. The risk of moving forward with call includes learning to articulate our vision for change, dealing with opposition that may be unconscious and therefore unnamed, and developing strategies for protecting the seeds of newness that may be tender and somewhat fragile. At a personal level, our fears may flash out as anger or sink new ventures in a morass of depression. It is in this stage that our call can overcome our fear, take possession of our resources, and hopes, and move us into action. To begin a new venture based on call means sharing it aloud, inviting others to care about something we have carried inside.

Forms of Risk:

- Need for a new life.
- Move into the public forum.
- New framework of values.
- Expect opposition from old friends or people invested in the status quo.
- Fears may erupt.
- The call can overcome our fear, take possession of our resources and hopes and move us into action.
- This is a stage of firsts, new job, going back to school, taking a stand on some issue, moving after the death of a spouse or parent.
- Sharing out loud, inviting others to care about something other than self.
- Move towards something larger than ego expression.
- Movement towards what life giving, clarity, and urgency, the risks we take in this stage are known best by the heart.
- When we give birth to something new, other things are set aside. Saying yes to some things, means saying no to others.
- Risk is ultimately a birthing stage, often marked by sweat, blood, and tears, along with moments of ecstatic joy.
- A time of simplicity of knowing what is essential.



- Risk requires that we be willing to fail as well as succeed, to be wrong as well as right.
- Taking time for art, for music, for poetry can be a way to cultivate our growth at this stage in the soul work cycle.
- With clarity and urgency that comes from our connection to what is life-giving, the risks we take in this stage are known best by the heart.
- Paring a project down to its essential elements is one of the disciplines of call, but it may not feel natural or prudent.
- Risk requires that we be willing to fail as well as succeed, to be wrong as well as right.
- Going public in Stage Four with what has previously been only private and personal brings us to leaving excess safety and moving into an unknown situation.

Scripture Reference

Stage 4 – RISK

Isaiah 52:1-2 Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion.

Stage Five: Relate

Will anyone care when I'm gone? Does my life make a difference to others? All must be cultivated and cared for. I know I need both people and place for belonging, to say what I believe and be held accountable for it. I can look back and see that "doing my own thing" is satisfying only for a short while. It's the relational side of call that gets shortchanged in our individualistic culture.

The birthing of call, like all births, needs family, a community context in which to thrive and grow. That is the essence of Stage Five—discovering and building those surrounding relationships. When we change from the inside out, everyone around us is affected in some way. It is Stage Five that our framework for decision-making expands to include others. They may be people who are not directly involved in the risks we have decided to take. They may be a different set of people than those we depended on in earlier stages. But we need the “otherness” of people who share facets of a single whole if we are to recover the sacredness of life. What began as a unique and personal invitation to newness will spread to others? Our task in Stage Five is to connect with a larger community who can share in our sense of purpose, and find a common language, common symbols, and a common story. Call carries us beyond personal achievement into an organizational form. This stage requires community for celebration, correction, and systemic impact. Relating to a new community based on a different understanding of God in Stage Five puts flesh and blood on the stories and traditions reclaimed in Stage Two. Both stages are collective and communal. What quickens as remembrance in Stage Two becomes the link for relating in Stage Five.



Forms of Relating:

- When we change from the inside out, everyone around us is affected.
- Task is to connect with the larger community who can share in our sense of purpose, filled with common symbols, language, and story.
- Belonging to a larger network of relationships.
- Honoring the differences in others and celebrating their creativity.
- How to work and live with those who are unlike us?
- Discover our leadership and kinship with others.
- Ethical questions emerge that can again stretch us.
- This stage can be satisfying and fulfilling because we now have a community with whom we can celebrate.
- Can provide satisfaction and the possibility of worldly success.
- Relating to others around call will probably be a place where we can “tell our story” in different ways.
- Call cannot be manifested fully without community.
- As we discover the points of our connection, we also become aware of our interdependence.
- A “called” community shares a clear purpose, with enough structure and tradition to offer mutual guidance and opportunities to experiment with call and enough commitment to allow the deeper currents of soul work to develop.
- We wrestle with the ambiguities of power and opposition.
- In this stage we discover the complexity of chosen family where we may feel more bonded that we ever have with our biological families.
- We may be tempted to see Stage Five as the completion of the call.

Scripture Reference

Stage 5 – RELATE

2Corinthians 10:11-15

Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present. We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves and compare themselves, they are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting in the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand.



Reconstruction

You will finally enter reconstruction when you accept the notion that the only person in the world who can make you happy is YOU.

You may need to let go of some of the basic assumptions that directed your life up to now and make a new map to follow.

Your task is to choose life and explore each possibility for growth that is now presented to you daily. You must begin to re-explore your universe and draft a new map that represents the new reality.

Through transition you can integrate a new set of assumptions with the old and can recognize your behavior on a new level.

When you are ready, begin to feed your mind new information and stimulate your senses gradually.

Consciously take on some new interests and set a goal to learn some new skill or knowledge. Try to get some music and humor into your life.

You can resolve to control your beliefs rather than being enslaved by them.

This is a time to work on becoming more independent in four basic aspects of your life: economic, emotional, social, and intellectual.

This is a time to evaluate your personal relationships consciously and deliberately with family members, friends, and co-workers.

- select new friends carefully.

- let go of both new and old relationships that are not supportive, even though it were painful to admit those relationships are no longer a part of your life.

Do the kind of things you like to do and go the places where you like to go.

The best cure for painful old memories is to create a series of pleasant new memories.

Use your thinking to plan stimulating activities and invite people into your life who will help you build a new set of healing memories.

If decision making is a problem for you, learn a step-by-step procedure to help you evaluate any set of options, giving you more confidence and reducing the element of risk involved.

To move ahead, you need to learn how to convert fear into power, struggle into adventure, problems into opportunities, and hope into confidence.



Stage Six: Release

Eternal God, lead me now out of the familiar setting of my doubts and fears, beyond my pride and my need to be secure into a strange and graceful ease with my true proportions and with yours; that in boundless silence I may grow strong enough to endure and flexible enough to share your grace.⁵

Completing the cycle of soul work means integration, endings, and release. In Stage Six we have an opportunity to weave earlier stages of call into a conceptual framework that transcends the limits of individual accomplishment and opens us to the mysteries of birth and death. We begin to release control of what we have accomplished, knowing that the time is right to step back from the power-point where call has placed us. Stage Six has a dimension of generativity, of giving our call away to others, of looking for opportunities to pass our experiences on or to let go of them so we can start the soul work cycle all over again. In Stage Six we need to leave behind power proficiency, and prestige, as happens with graduation or retirement. Or we may need to leave behind a structure of servitude that is known and familiar—dead-end job, an abusive marriage, or even an old image of God. People try to skip Stage Six and stay in the relationship stage because it “feels good” and gives them a sense of power and expression. Release is a stage of rest, of listening for guidance and following in trust because we know we have been led by call in earlier stages. It is a time of letting go of our illusions, of the little ways we play god in daily life. Generativity is expressed when we can move into Stage Six with care and concern for others, ready to pass on what we have learned and make space for others to learn in their own way, make their own mistakes, and face the consequences of their actions.

Forms of Release:

- Integration, endings and release.
- Release of control of what we have accomplished.
- Giving our call to others, passing the experience on to others.
- Leave behind power, prestige, proficiency.
- We learn that nothing is permanent.
- Let go of the past to life fully in the present.
- Learning how to love fully and freely without clinging or demanding certain results is the secret of this stage.
- Our idealism is tempered by the reality of human beings doing the best they can, given the resources they have.
- We choose connection over perfection.
- Serving becomes the natural result of the call.
- Freedom and humility are the by-products.
- We begin to give away what we have achieved, blessing others in the process.
- Wisdom replaces coercive force.

⁵ Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*



- We begin to see our weakness as part of our strength.
- Develop our capacity to live in the present moment, and not to hang on to the past however painful or glorious.
- A sense of completion in the sixth stage will always give way to the chaos of Stage One, as we begin the journey at a different level.⁶

Scripture Reference

Stage 6 – RELEASE

John 16:20-22

I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So, with you: Now your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

John 20:17-18

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” and she told them that he had said these things to her.

⁶ Marjory Bankson, *Call to the Soul*



**When the time is ripe,
The vision will come,
When the heart is ready,
The fruit will appear.
When the soul is mature,
The harvest will happen.**



**Not to worry
About all the unspoken
The unnamed, the undelivered.
Not to hurry
The sprouts out of seeds,
The weeds out of garden**

**Let it all grow.
Wait for the ripening.**

**Yearn for the yielding
If you must,
But be patient,**

Trust the process.

**Talk to the restlessness,
Sit with confusion,
Dance with the paradoxes,
And sip tea
With the angel of midlife.**

**Smile while you wait,
Empty basket in hand,
All too eager
To snatch the produce
Of your spiritual path.
---Joyce Rupp**