

# ***The Next Step: Stop 6***

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*Slide Notes*

## **Aha! Moments**

- God is real
- God is involved
- God is personal
  - “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered... — Lk 12:6-7
  - ...*Abraham believed God...* And he was called the friend of God. — Jas 2:23
- God loves me

Kind of like walking around a corner and literally bumping into Big Foot. He grabs you, gives you a big hug, and says, “Hi, I’m Yeti. I am so glad to get to meet you.” Everything you ever thought about Big Foot would instantly change.

A critical revelation is that God is listening to you and talking with you—personally! Everything changes at that point.

## **Prayer is Personal**

- Prayer must not just be some Christian thing you do, a chore or an obligation
- It is simply talking with the One who loves you intensely
- One-sided conversation is not personal
- Listening to God is a huge part of prayer

## **Worship is Personal**

- Worship must not just be some Christian thing you do, a chore or an obligation
- Worship is meant to be an intimate, one-on-one relationship—even during worship as a group
- It’s kind of like cuddling up with the love of your life in front of a nice, cozy fireplace on a cool evening

## But Not Just About Me

- Discovering that God desires an intimate, personal relationship with me can lead to the faulty assumption that it's all about me.
- It's much bigger than that!

## On to Maturity

- You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong. ... Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding... – Heb 5:12-6:1 (NLT)

For a baby, it's all about me! That is normal for that stage of a child's growth. But as the child grows, his focus in life should shift from me-centered to others-centered. That doesn't always happen—and even less often in our current culture.

## Barna's Maturity Survey

- *Maximum Faith: Live Like Jesus* by George Barna
- Typical stops in the process of maturity
- "...the journey is divided into a pathway with ten stops — temporary resting places at which we are built up in preparation for the continuation of the journey." (Barna, p. xxi)

Note: This is a survey that uses "primitive measures" that rely on self-reporting. Only God truly know where anyone truly is. It is not for us to judge anyone. (Barna, p. 24) But the results do help us understand something about the Christian maturing process and where people are having difficulties. To that end, we will take a look of some of the survey results.

**Do not use these to judge others. Rather, use them to evaluate and facilitate your own progress along the journey to maturity in Jesus.**

## First 6 Stops on the Road

1. Ignorance of concept or existence of sin (1%)
2. Aware of and indifferent to sin (16%)
3. Concerned about the implications of personal sin (39%)
4. Confess sins and ask Jesus to be their Savior (9%)

5. Commitment to faith activities (24%)
6. Experience a prolonged period of spiritual discontent (6%)...

Barna, pp. 17-24

Stops 1-3 – 56% of adults in this survey have not reached Stop 4 — salvation.

Stop 4 “... Jesus talked about the fact that you can tell Christians by the spiritual fruit they bear, but the data suggest that just one out of every ten adults who accept Jesus as their Savior make any substantial changes in their spiritual routines and commitments. “ (Barna, p. 26)

Stop 5 – ...the most common reaction after embracing Christ is to become more active in both personal spiritual growth and in a community of faith. (Barna, p. 19)

Stops 1-5 include 89% of the adults surveyed.

## Stop 5 – Faith Activities

- Notice that about one out of every four adults are stuck at stop 5 – committed to faith activities
- Only about 11% of adults make it beyond stop 5
- Why is stop 6 so hard for so many?

**Faith Activities:** Read Bible, pray, go to church, worship, hang out with Christians, Bible study, listen to Christian music, read Christian books, attend church and Christian meetings, help with church ministries, lead church ministries, etc.

## Stop 5 Typical Response

- “After years of involvement in the Christian faith, most people slip into a spiritual coma. Their faith becomes a series of rituals, routines, recitations, rules, relationships, and responsibilities. Without noticing it, their spiritual goals also slip into a more relaxed state such that they are no longer stretching their faith muscles and pushing themselves to explore and master new spiritual territory. Rather than sustaining their passion for getting closer to God, they become comfortable with their spiritual experience. (Barna, p. 20)

## Then Stop 6

- But some people realize that there is a silent, unobtrusive kind of nagging that is troubling them regarding their faith. (Barna, p. 20)
- This season of “holy discontent” — most likely instigated by God to jar them into re-evaluating what they want from Him and from life — is a

major decision point for the believers... (Barna, p. 20)

## Asking Right Questions

- This is a time when serious believers ask the right questions out of spiritual hunger, but are also susceptible to cynicism, doubt and frustration. Asking the right questions and getting the right answers are two different things. (Barna, p. 21)

People begin to see inconsistencies in the lives of other believers and problems in the Church. They see the warts, curlers, and other less-than-pretty parts of the Body of Christ.

We can begin to think that it's all about the problems in other people and the church structure—when God is wanting to deal with the issues in us personally—an intense time of character development.

This is when many can get offended and quit pursuing a deeper walk with the Lord.

## But It's Too Hard...

- Most believers who get to Stop 6 abandon the investigation once they realize the commitment and cost of moving forward on the journey to wholeness. Instead, they retreat to an earlier stop on the path and simply settle for what the local church and other spiritual entities have to offer. ...rather than pay the price of a deeper relationship with God, they retreat to the shelter of the religious games... (Barna, p. 21)

Many revert back to either...

### **Stop 5 – Commitment to faith activities**

They either scale back their faith activities to a more manageable level and live a mediocre life, or they increase their faith activities to distract themselves from God's call for real inward change.

### **Stop 4 – Confess sins and ask Jesus to be their Savior**

Jesus is their Savior and they are glad to be going to heaven, but pretty much live their lives as they want.

## The Problem with Me

- Stop 6 begins to deal with “Me”
- This is where your focus should begin to shift
- JOY – Jesus, Others, You
- But there is a lot of fear involved. If you don't watch out for your

interests, who will?

- Even that question betrays our problem
- “We have met the enemy and he is us!” (Pogo, by Walt Kelly)

The devil is not your biggest enemy, neither is your boss, spouse, or any other person — your own self-centered thinking is your biggest enemy!

## The Mind Set on “Me”

- For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.  
— Ro 8:5-7 (NKJV)

If your life is a mess and falling apart, maybe it’s because your mind is focused on the things concerning yourself rather than the things important to God. Time for a mind shift!

## Wrong Comparison

- ... But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.  
— 2 Cor 10:12

Can always find someone doing better, which can be discouraging. Can always find someone doing more poorly, which can lead to pride or complacency. The real problem with comparing your performance with that of others is that it is a focus on yourself rather than a focus on Jesus.

## Right Comparisons

- With Jesus
  - He is our model and example to follow
  - Shows the way for us
- Others as guides along the way
  - Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ. — 1 Cor 11:1
- With who you were a year ago
  - Do you think, look, and act more like Jesus?
- Goal: To improve rather than validate

It can be good to have others who provide a godly example to FOLLOW, but not in comparison. The difference is in the purpose to **improve** rather than **validate**.

Am I okay, is this okay? Yes! You are okay with God because Jesus made you okay. But, no! It is not okay to stay where you are.

## It's A Personal Race

- ...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith... — Heb 12:1-2
- Don't compare yourself with others, or your race with their race.
- Compare yourself with Jesus to see how to better follow His example, but not for approval.

When born again, you have already been made acceptable and approved by Jesus' blood.

## A New Focus

- But earnestly desire the best gifts. — 1 Cor 12:31a
- And yet I show you a more excellent way. — 1 Cor 12:31b
- The love chapter — 1 Cor 13

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul gives us practical instruction about spiritual gifts and spiritual offices/functions in the church. We are called to grow in and desire the power of God in our lives. Then he instructs us to desire the best gifts that God has to offer. But there is something even more excellent than that. — Love

We think of 1 Corinthians 13 at weddings and for couples, but this chapter is a blueprint showing us what God's love looks like and how to love others like He loves us.

The power and ministry gifts were given for use in loving people! Learning to love with God's love is hard on "me" (self)!

## Pressing On

- Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; ... Brethren, join in following my example... — Philippians 3:12-17

Paul was pretty mature, but he continued to press forward. It is a **lifelong process**. Jesus saved you for His purpose. Pursue the fulfillment of His purpose for you. **PRESS** — pursue actively and diligently, to run after something as in a race. "forgetting those things which are behind" — the

good and the bad! Learn from your past, don't focus on it! Paul's life is not a special instance of Christianity, it is an example to follow as we follow the example the Lord gave us.

## Embrace the Discontent

- Need to embrace the holy discontentment, letting it motivate you to submit to the transformation process
- Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. — Ro 12:2 (NLT)

## Transformation...

- Only God transforms people
- He only transforms those who choose to cooperate with Him in the process
- Transformation is a gift God grants to those who desire it badly enough to abandon the world and pursue His Kingdom.
- It's personal!

## Transformed Into What?

- A reflection of the image of Jesus
  - For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. — Ro 8:29
- A disciple who looks & acts like his Teacher
  - It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher... — Mt 10:25
- A Christ follower
  - My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. — Jn 10:27

## A Christ Follower

- Many Christians are Christ-admirers rather than Christ-followers
- Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, ...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you... — Mt 28:19-20
- How can I teach what I do not do?
- Do I even know what He commanded?

I need a lot of work! Feel overwhelmed? How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. It's time to start chewing!

# Transformed — How?

- Learn to
  - See what Jesus sees
  - Think like Jesus thinks
- Choose to
  - Live like Jesus lives
  - Love like Jesus loves
  - Serve like Jesus serves

You cannot learn to see and think like Jesus if you don't spend time reading and studying the Bible.

You need to make the godly choices first, THEN God empowers you.

**saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. — Lk 22:42-43**

Choosing and doing solidifies and completes the learning.

## Why Bother?

- God desires an intimate relationship with you (1 Jn 5:20, Phil 3:8-11)
- You have been designed and equipped to walk along side God (Col 2:6, Mat 11:28-29)
- There is a part in God's bigger story for you to fulfill (Rom 10:14, 2 Cor 5:20)
- You will make investments in this life that will impact eternity (Jn 4:34-36)

Too much work! Jesus didn't die just so you won't go to Hell. God wants to be with you—now and for eternity.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. — 1 Jn 5:20

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. — Php 3:8-11

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, — Col 2:6



Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. — Mt 11:28-29

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? — Ro 10:14

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. — 2 Co 5:20

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. — Jn 4:34-36

## Next Stop: #7

- Soon...

We have a few weeks to work on Stop 6, then we head to Stop 7.

Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? ... From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. — **Jn 6:60-68**

Don't be one of those who get offended and walk away. What else can you do? Only Jesus has the goods. There is no other source of real life!