

Spiritual Journey Diagram

The Pattern of Spiritual Progress in the Kingdom of God

As I talk about God, I am referring to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When I mention His kingdom, I mean His dominion of rulership, whether sovereign and universal, or personal and particular. Whenever I talk about God's sovereign rulership, I'm talking about His position as the one and only true living God; His **right to rule**. I am saying that He is the King of kings and LORD of lords, the Creator God and Lord of all the hosts of heaven and earth; unconstrained by space or time; the all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing King of the universe and judge of every living thing. He is the one who makes all the rules, sustains all things with the power of His word, and the One before whom we will stand at the time of judgment. This is why God is the sovereign ruler of all things and worthy of our fear. It is in this level of relationship that we first experience His **sovereign level of grace**. For example, the LORD gives rain to the righteous and the wicked (Matthew 5:45); God hears the first prayer of the repentant sinner (Isaiah 30:15; Psalms 4:1; 6:9; Proverbs 15:8,29; Acts 20:21); and responds with saving grace (Proverbs 3:34; Isaiah 26:10; Romans 5:1-2).

God reveals to us, through His Word and His Spirit, His way of "spiritual formation". What I mean by that is His pattern and progression of how He reveals Himself to Man and how He expects Man to respond. It is helpful to understand the pattern of spiritual progress in the kingdom of God, and this diagram is intended to be helpful, not dogmatic.

I think it is very important to understand that being a Christian is not about a static one-time event. To be a Christian is to be on a journey, fluid and changing, with ups and downs; hopefully, a life-long journey of action and activity, movement and progression. As long as we live, there should be no end to the progress, only "graduating" by transitioning from this life to an eternal life with God. I can find nowhere in the Bible a statement by God to His people regarding a life with Him saying, "Be stationary before Me." Rather, He says, "Walk with Me". It is a spiritual journey, the path of which is laid out by the Holy Spirit; the path on which we must trust and walk with God's Spirit. On this spiritual path, imagine that we walk facing God, essentially walking backwards, trusting God for His direction, instruction and guidance. It is important to understand God's part **and** our part in the process, and I think it is just as important, perhaps more important, how we **finish** the journey than how we start it, because we all start the journey from the same spiritual place or in the same spiritual condition, that of a sinner in need of saving grace.

When I speak of beginning the journey, walking with God, I am speaking of the personal and particular work of the **Holy Spirit**. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I experience the death of the "Old Man" within me and the "second birth" of the "New Man" within me. I am talking about His power in me to abandon my walk in darkness, to free me from my slavery to sin and my fear of death, stopping my adherence to the rules of the kingdom of this world, and starting my walk in the Light; throwing off the yoke by which the world enslaves me and taking on the yoke of the kingdom of God, which means submitting to **His** direction, instruction and rules for living in **His** kingdom. I am speaking of what is called "dying to self", relinquishing my own fleshly desires and living toward **God** through the power of **His** Spirit, learning **His** spiritual desires for us, both as individuals and as a group. Sometimes my walk may stall or even go sideways; or I may turn my back to God and go my own way for a while, but the **Holy Spirit** will patiently pursue and call me back on track, often through suffering, because His love for me includes discipline. This does not happen overnight; it takes a lifetime of commitment, failures and victories.