



Week 1 // From Death to Life

In this Post-Easter series we explore the first Epistle written by Jesus' disciple John. This love-filled letter prompts us to explore five distinct stages of life in Christ: spiritual death, infancy, childhood, young adulthood, and reproducing parenthood. Learn to identify the stage of someone's spiritual growth based upon the key phrases they use. This series is sure to lead to self-reflection and greater growth toward spiritual maturity.

Connect

- 1) What has been your favorite stage of life, so far? You might gravitate toward a certain age, or perhaps an age range: birth to age 5, age 5-10, 10-15, 15-20, etc. What did you enjoy or appreciate most about that distinct period in your life?
- 2) If you had the ability to time travel, would you want to go back to that stage in your life again? Why or why not?
- 3) This week we begin a new series that compares our journey of discipleship to stages of a person's life. If you haven't done so already, look back to the top of this page and read the description listed there. What gets you excited, as you as you think about the potential of this series? Is there anything you personally hope to gain from going through the five weeks of this series?

Digging Deeper

- 4) No one likes to be sick. But think of a time you were not feeling good. In fact, think of a time you were really, really sick. What was that like? Were there certain things you were unable to do for yourself? Who helped you? Was it easy or difficult for you to accept assistance during your illness?

- 5) Okay, so now let's take things one step further. The Bible describes people who are not in fellowship with Jesus and His Father as being spiritually DEAD! If a sick person is limited in the degree that they can help themselves, then how much more so is one who is dead! Read Ephesians 2:1-3 and share reactions.
- 6) If apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead, then what hope is there for us? How do we get out of that state and into the journey of the Christian life? The answer is found as you keep reading. Go on to read Ephesians 2:4-10. Share reactions to the message you see here. In what ways have you seen this truth worked out in your own life?
- 7) In this 'Stages' series, we will identify for each phase certain phrases that identify a person with this particular stage of discipleship. Take a look below. These are samples of the 'Phrase from the Stage' that tells us the person has not yet entered true Life in Christ:
 - I've been a good person, so when I die, everything will be okay.
 - The Bible is just a bunch of myths.
 - I don't believe in hell. People make their own hell.
 - Christians are just intolerant and homophobic people.
 - I'm spiritual, but I don't connect with any one religion.

Have you heard anyone use similar phrases? What does this tell you about them?

Live It Out

- 8) Rather than using a 'Phrase from the Stage' to judge a person... the words they use actually help us know what they need. What a person needs from us at this stage is love. A person who is not yet in a relationship with Christ needs honest friendships and relationships with believers. Over time, they need someone they trust to authentically share the Gospel with them.
 - + Name someone you know who may be identified with this stage of pre-belief.
 - + How has today's discussion helped you to reframe your relationship with them?
 - + What is the Holy Spirit nudging you to do or say?

Lifting it up

- 9) As we consider the various stages of life, we acknowledge that SIN is the barrier that keeps us from a living relationship with God. Use the remaining time in your small group this week to acknowledge God's loving kindness in your own life. As appropriate, take a few moments to confess your sin to one another and also before God. Thank God the Father that He has established a way to remove your sin from you, through the blood of Jesus His Son.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

1 John 1:5-10