

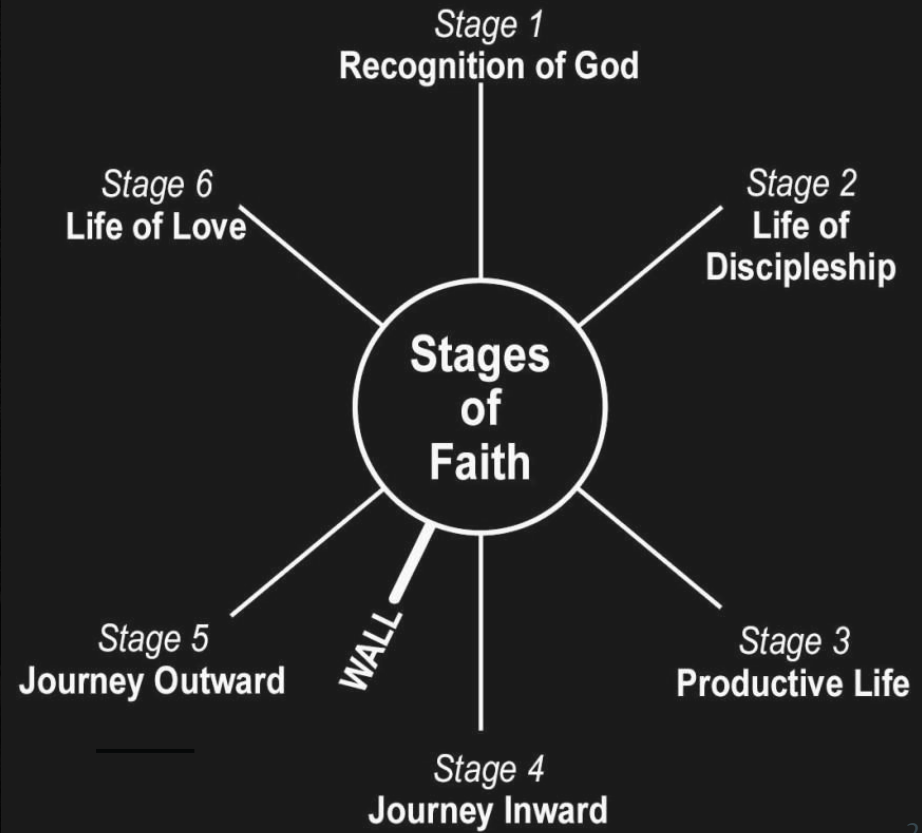


# The Journey of Spiritual Formation

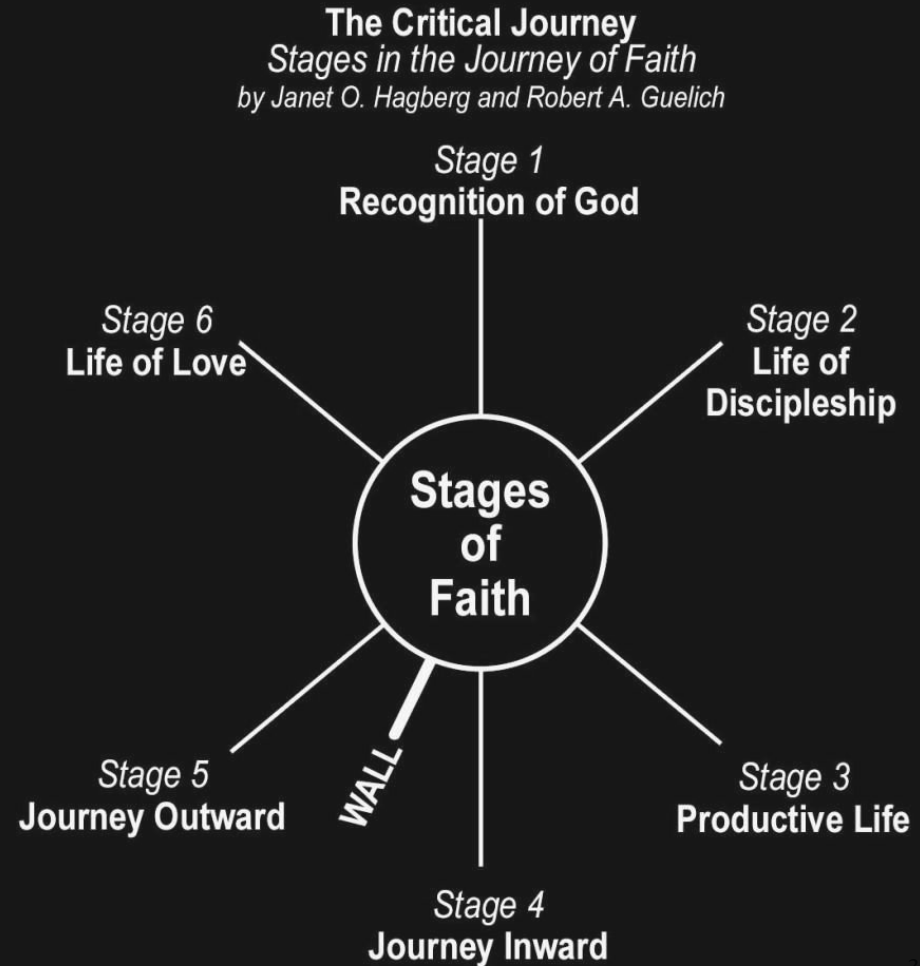
Janet Hagbert &  
Robert Guelich *The  
Critical Journey*



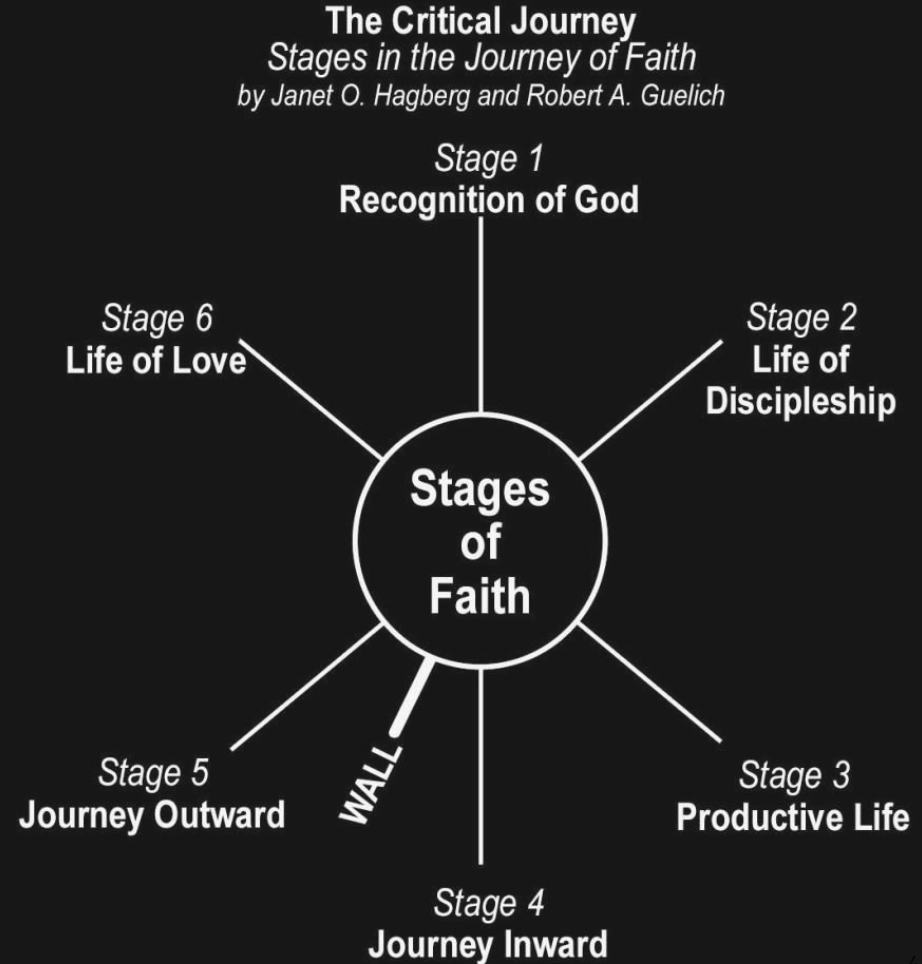
**The Critical Journey**  
*Stages in the Journey of Faith*  
by Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich



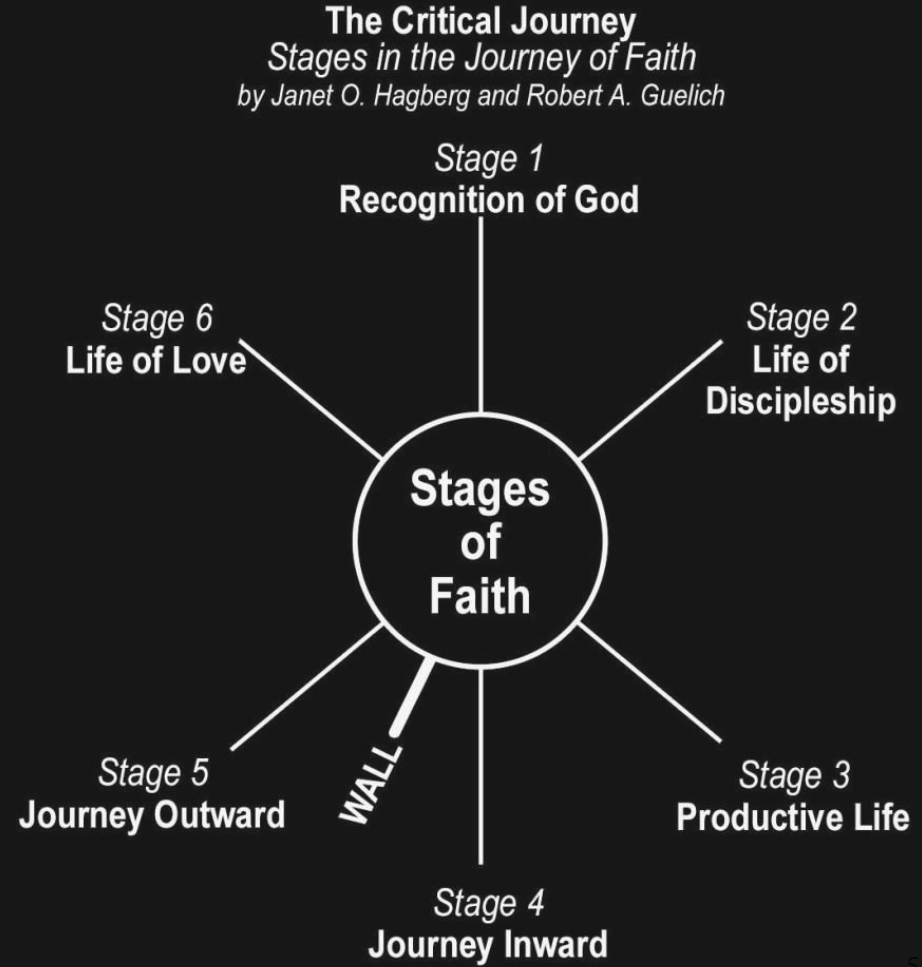
- We move back and forth between the stages and can experience more than one at the same time.
- We have a home stage from which we operate most of the time.
- We can get stuck along the way (“cages”), often because it is more comfortable to sit rather than move.



In the **first three stages**, our faith/ spirituality takes its expression most frequently in ways that are prescribed by **external standards**, whether by the Church, a spiritual leader, a book or a set of principles.

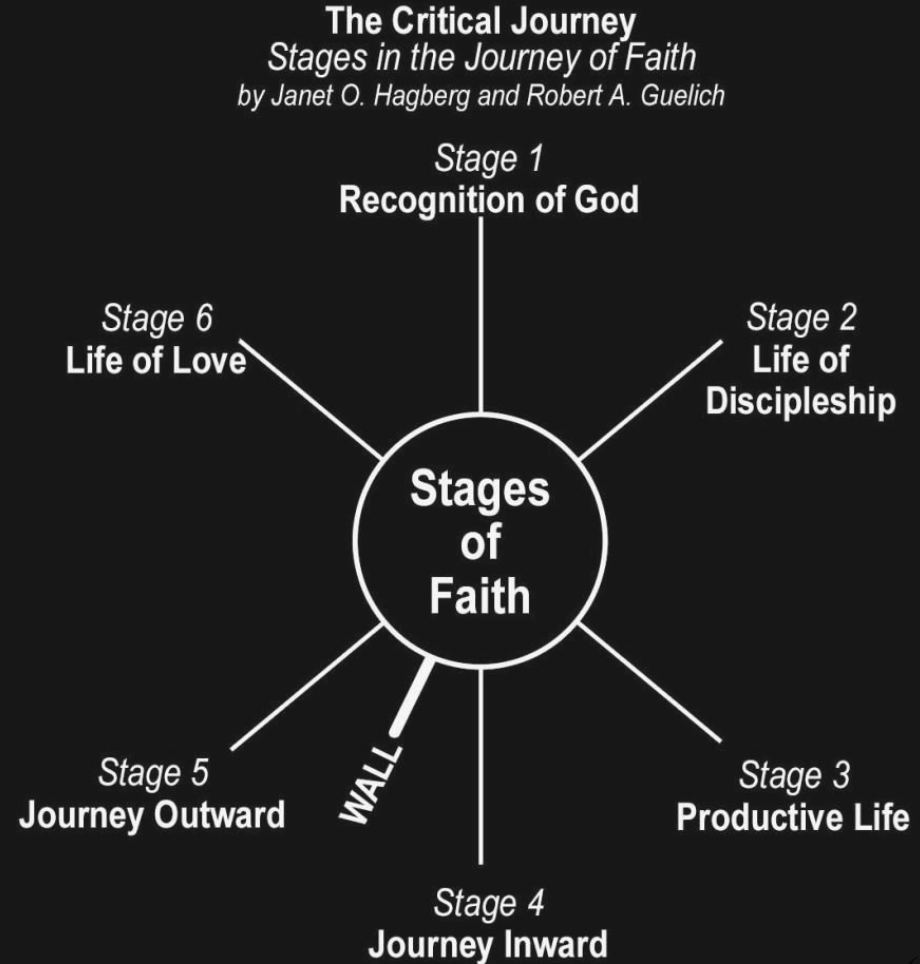


Stages **four through six** represent a difficult personal transformation and reemerging that require a rediscovery on a different level of what faith and spirituality are all about.

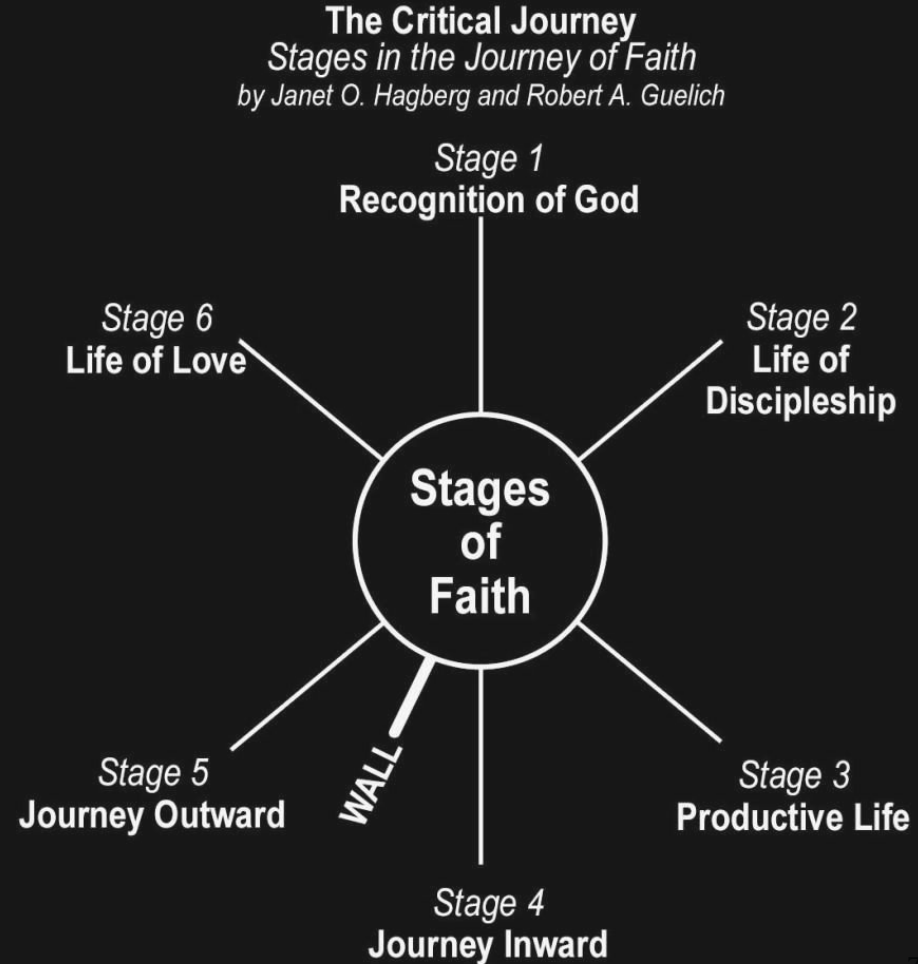


## Stage 1 - Recognition of God -

Childlike and fresh recognition of the reality or presence of Someone who stands behind it all. It is a time we may frequently long for again later in the relationship. People enter into a relationship with God in one of two very different ways: through a sense of awe, others out of a sense of need.

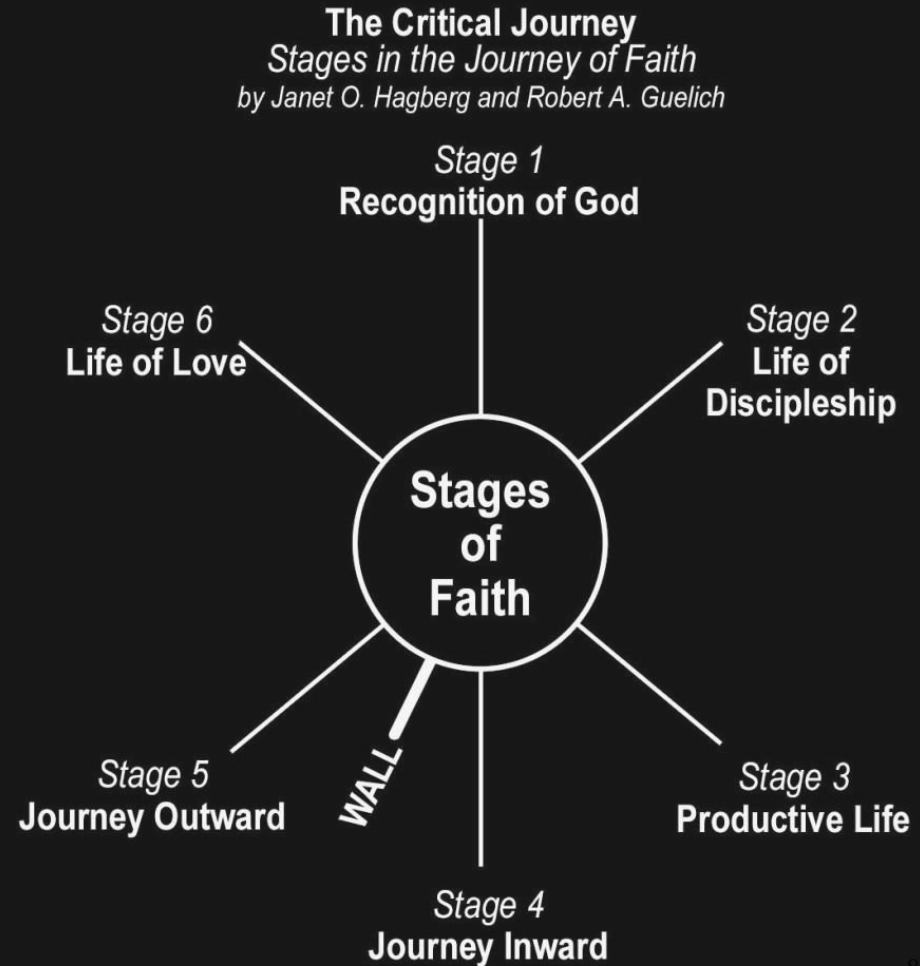


**Stage 2 - The Life of Discipleship** - A time of learning and belonging. In this stage we learn the most about God as perceived by others we respect and trust. We are not confident in ourselves to know what to believe or how to learn about God and know God better. We are dependent on a more advanced person in the faith or a guiding principle or cause to lead us.



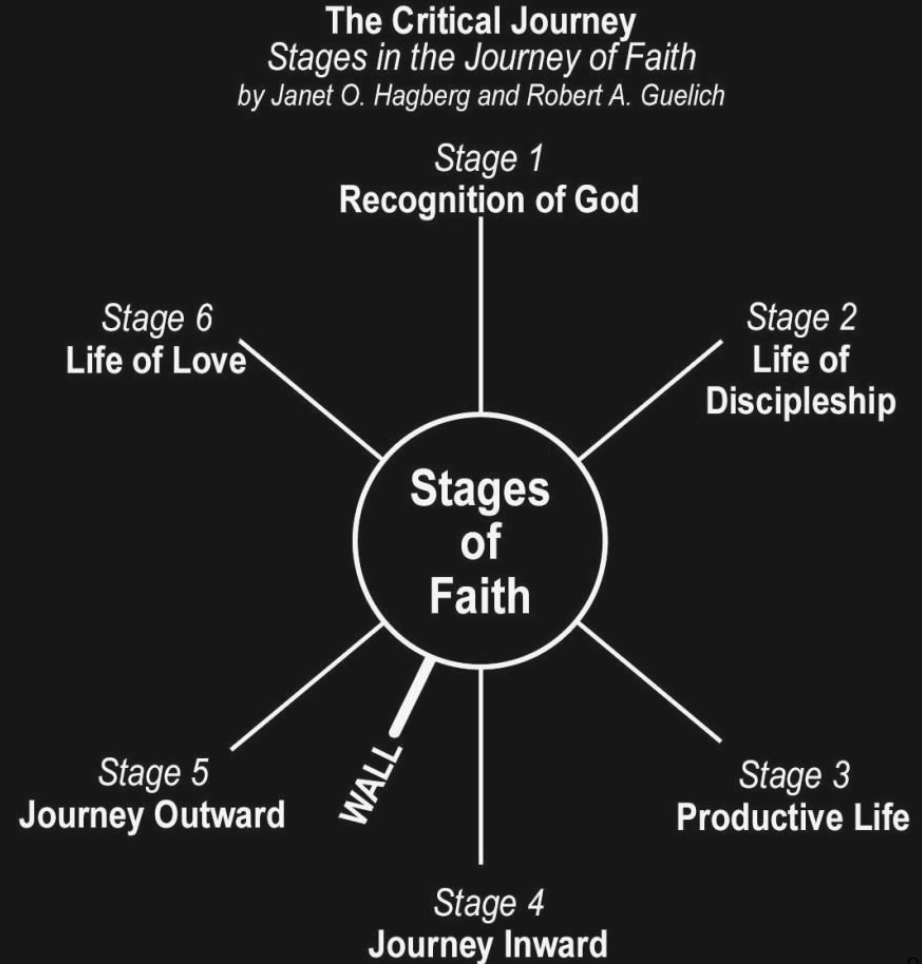
## Stage 3 - The Productive Life -

Stage 3 is best described as the “doing” stage. It is the period of time when we most consciously find ourselves working for God.

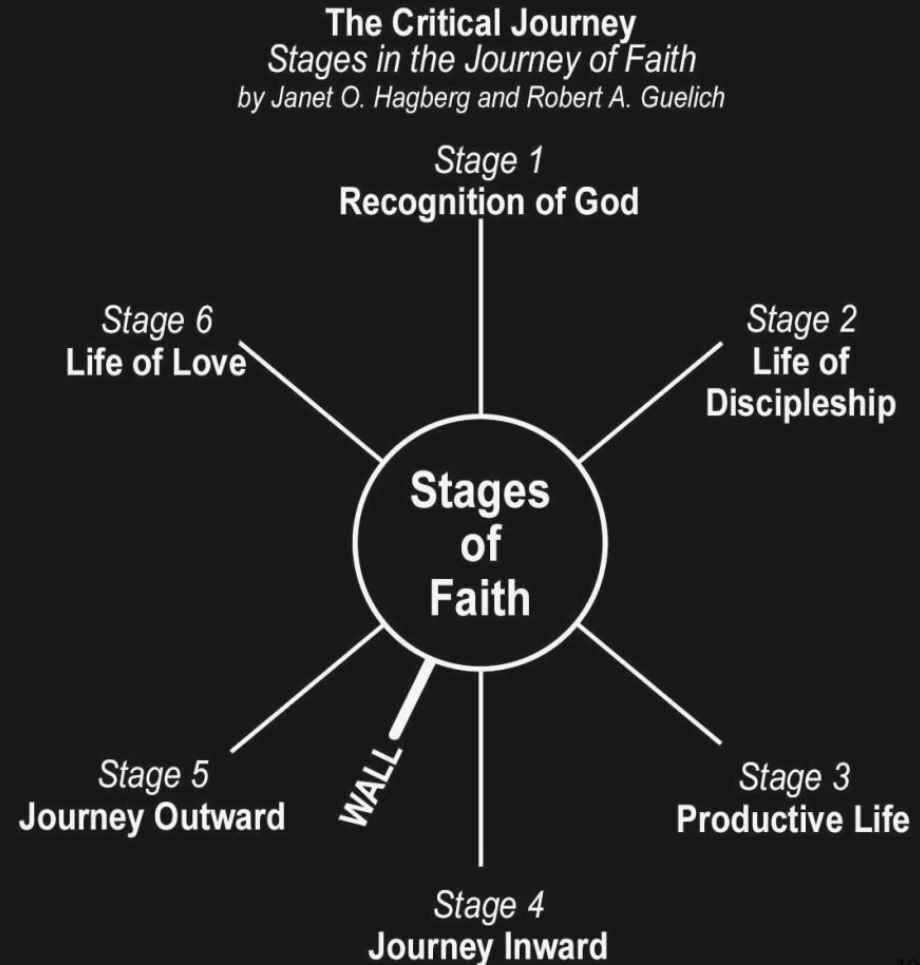




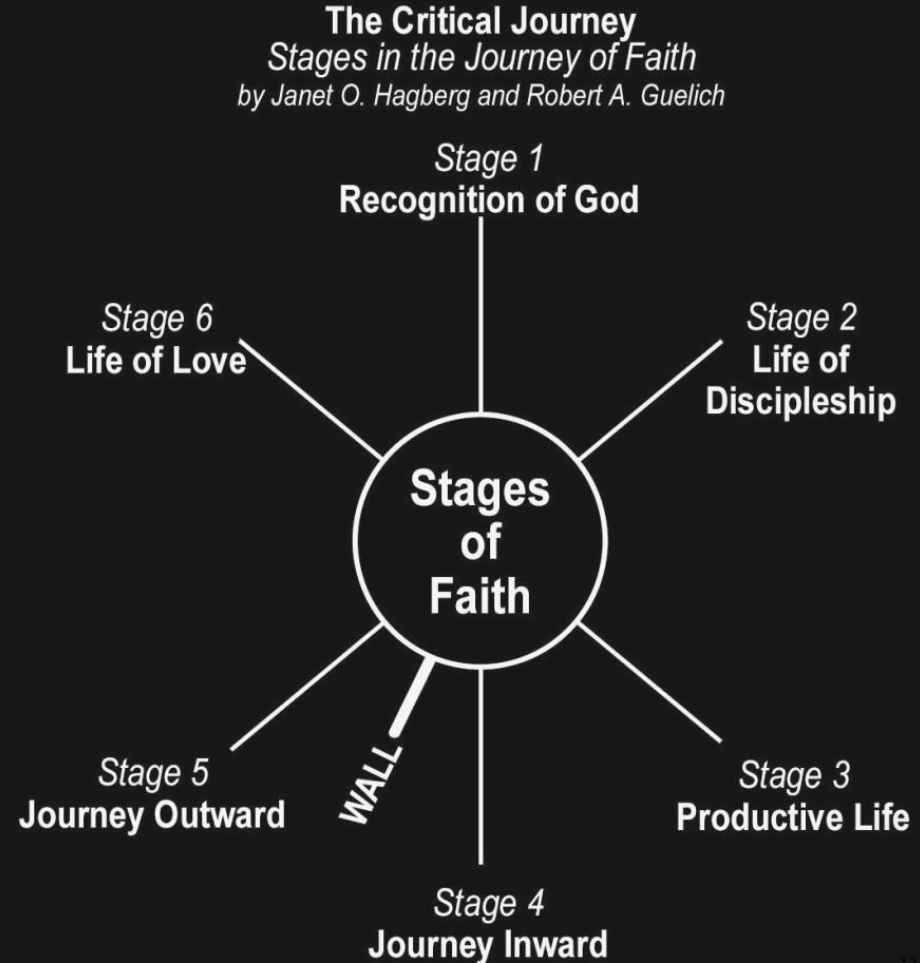
**Stage 4 - The Journey Inward** - It's a mode of questioning, exploring, falling apart, doubting, dancing around the real issues, sinking in uncertainty, and indulging in self-centeredness. For the first time, our faith does not seem to work. At this stage we discover painfully that God is not who we had thought God was.



**The Wall** -The Wall differs for everyone. It has to do with slowly breaking through the barriers we have built between our will and a newer awareness of God in our lives. For some it requires a lengthy time. Others move through it rather quickly. Not everyone goes through the Wall. Some decide at the Wall to return to an earlier stage. Still others get stuck in front of the Wall, not wanting to submit to God.

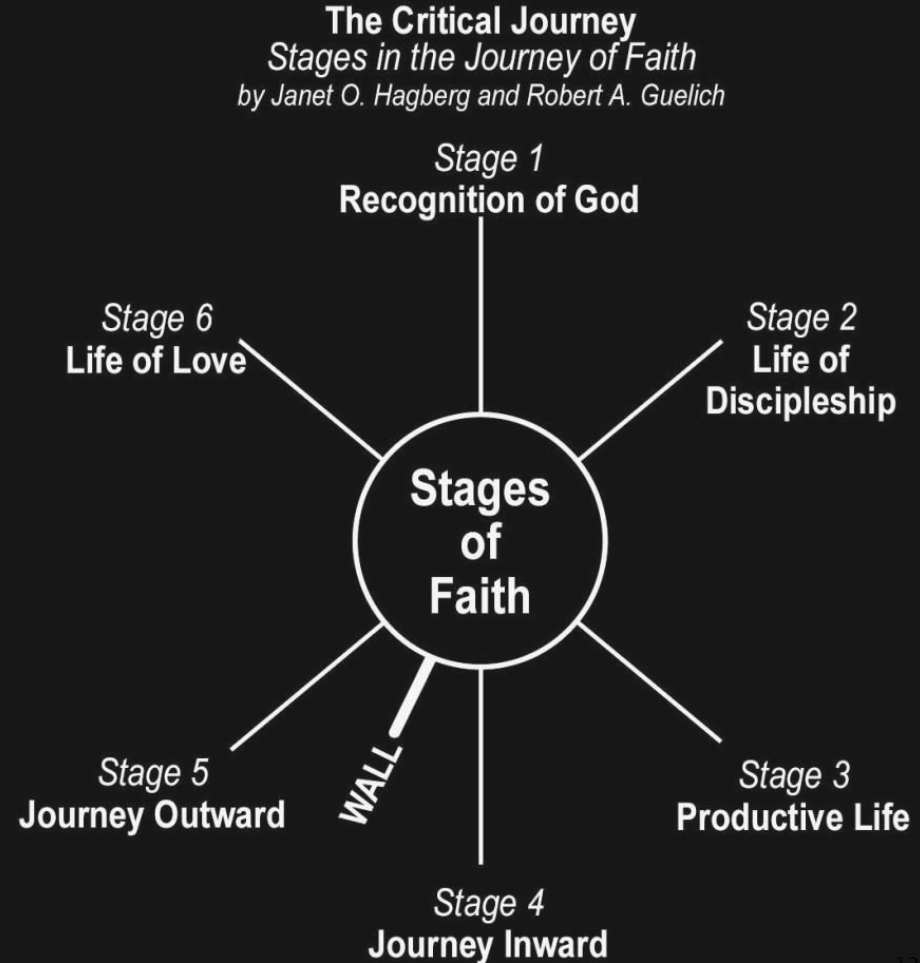


**The Wall** - One must go through the Wall, not underneath it, over it, around it, or blasting it. We must go through it brick by brick, feeling and healing each element of our wills as we surrender to God's will.

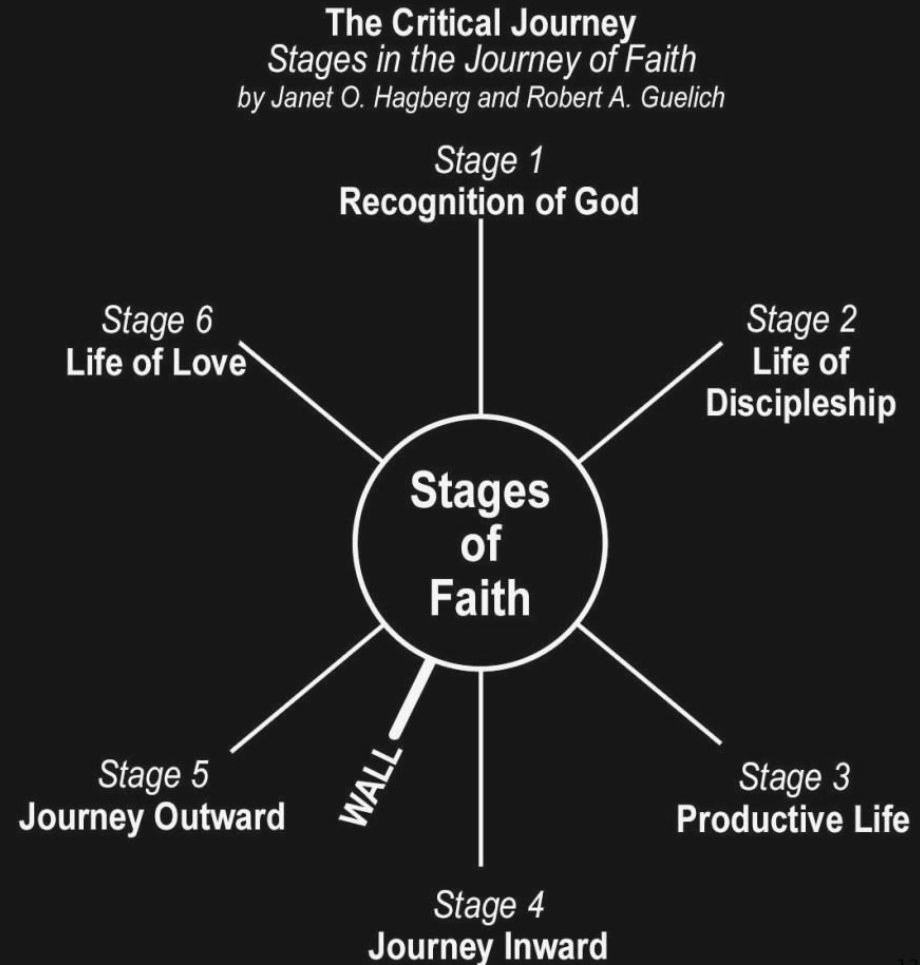


**The Wall** - People commonly experience some of the following as they go through the wall:

1. *Discomfort* (perhaps a “dark night of the soul”)
2. *Surrender* - something is always given up.
3. *Healing* - it is impossible to get through the Wall without recognizing past and present parts of us in need of psychological and spiritual healing and transformation.

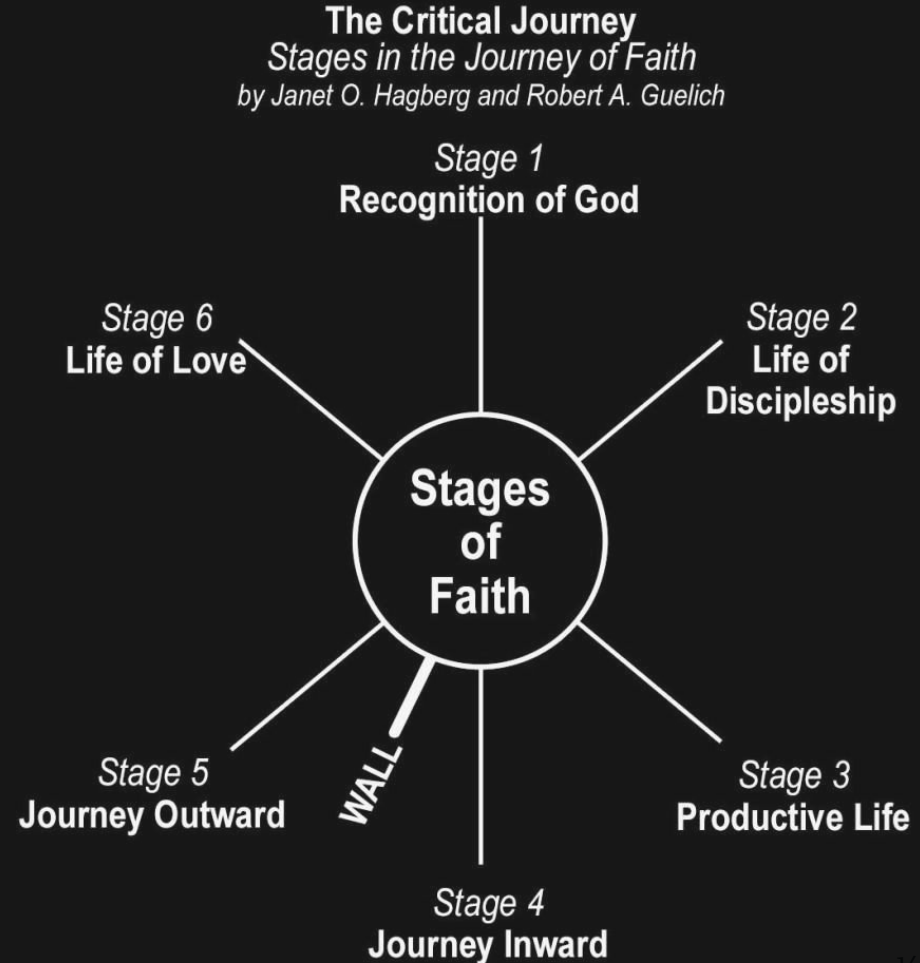


4. *Awareness, Forgiveness, Acceptance, Love* - Four-phase movement (awareness of our shadow sides, forgiveness of ourselves and others, acceptance of ourselves, love of self-God-others).
5. *Closeness to God*-We experience God in a new and different way as we move through the wall.
6. *Discernment*-The Wall invites us to consider anything God brings before us and to be open to understanding when it is of God.



7. *Melting, Molding* - Before the filling and using comes the time of melting and molding. Previously, we may have allowed God to melt an arm or leg, head or foot but now we offer more of our body, mind, and soul for melting and molding.
8. *Solitude and reflection* - We must set aside time for solitude-time to walk, to listen to God's voice, to think, to feel and to reflect

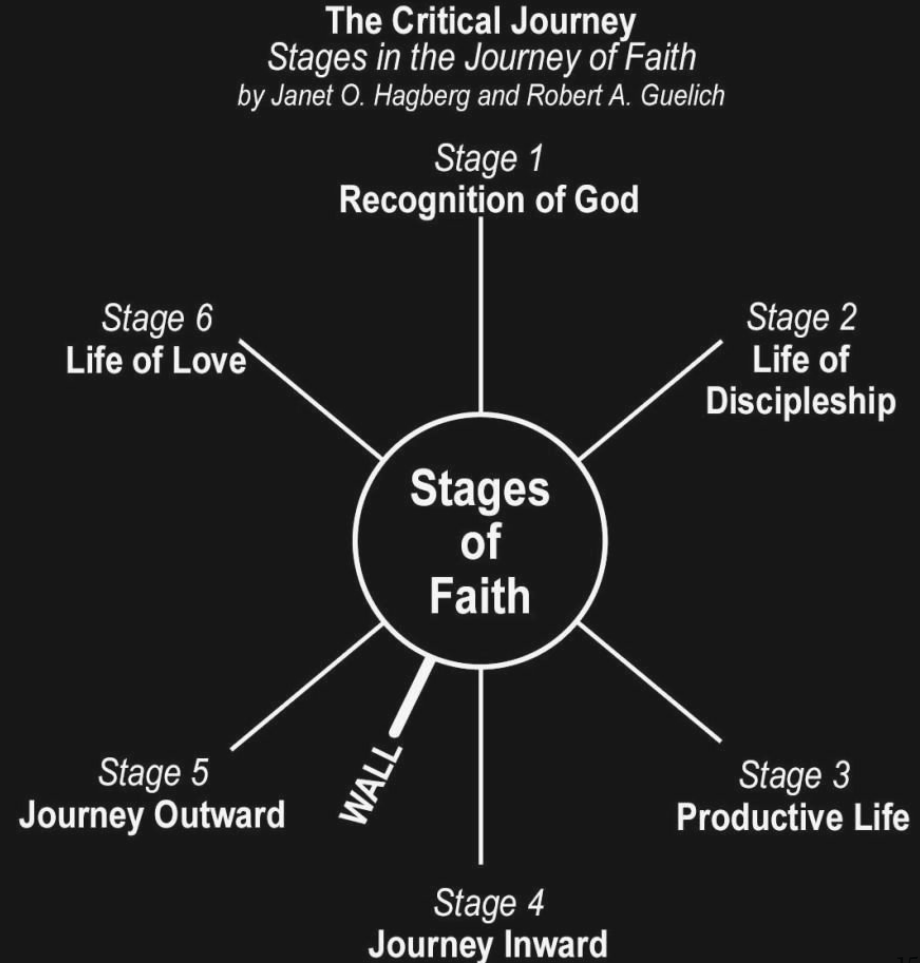
**The Wall is a necessary prerequisite to stage 5.**



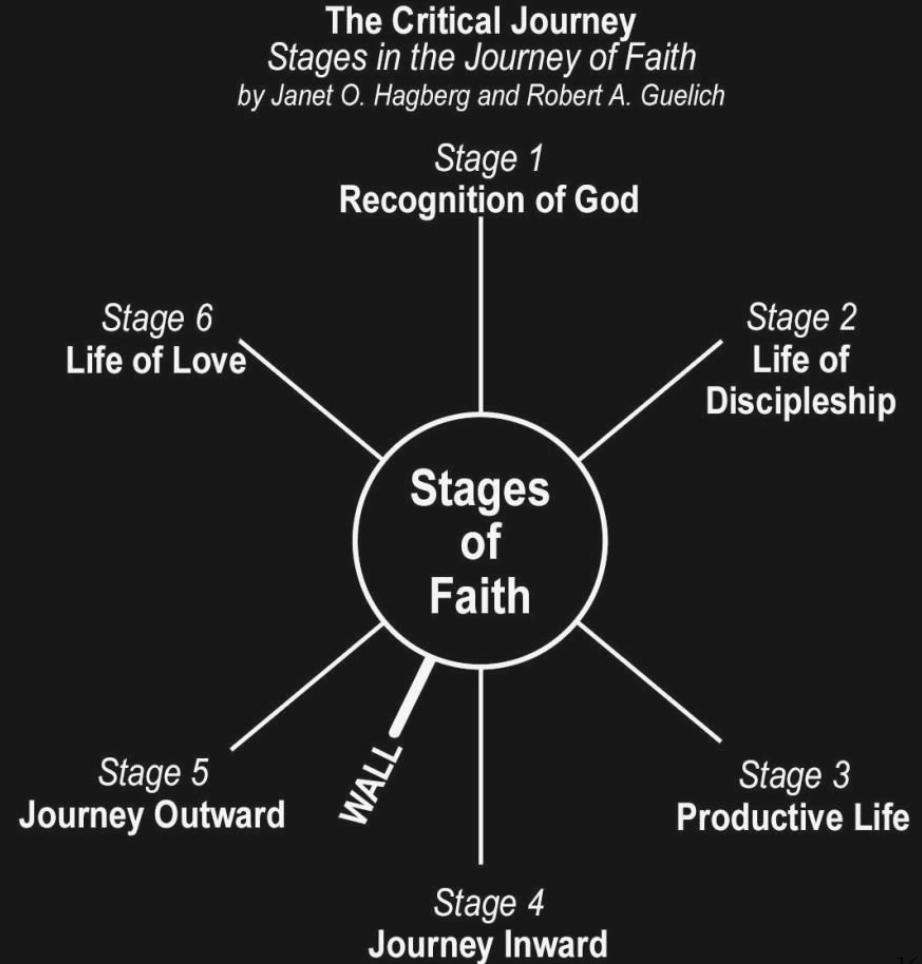
## Stage 5 - The Journey Outward

- Once parts of the deep, excruciating inward journey have been experienced, the natural outcome is to venture outside and back into the active world.

Our focus is outward, but from a new, grounded center of ourselves. We sense a looser grip on ourselves and a willingness to be conduits for God's work in our lives and in other's lives.



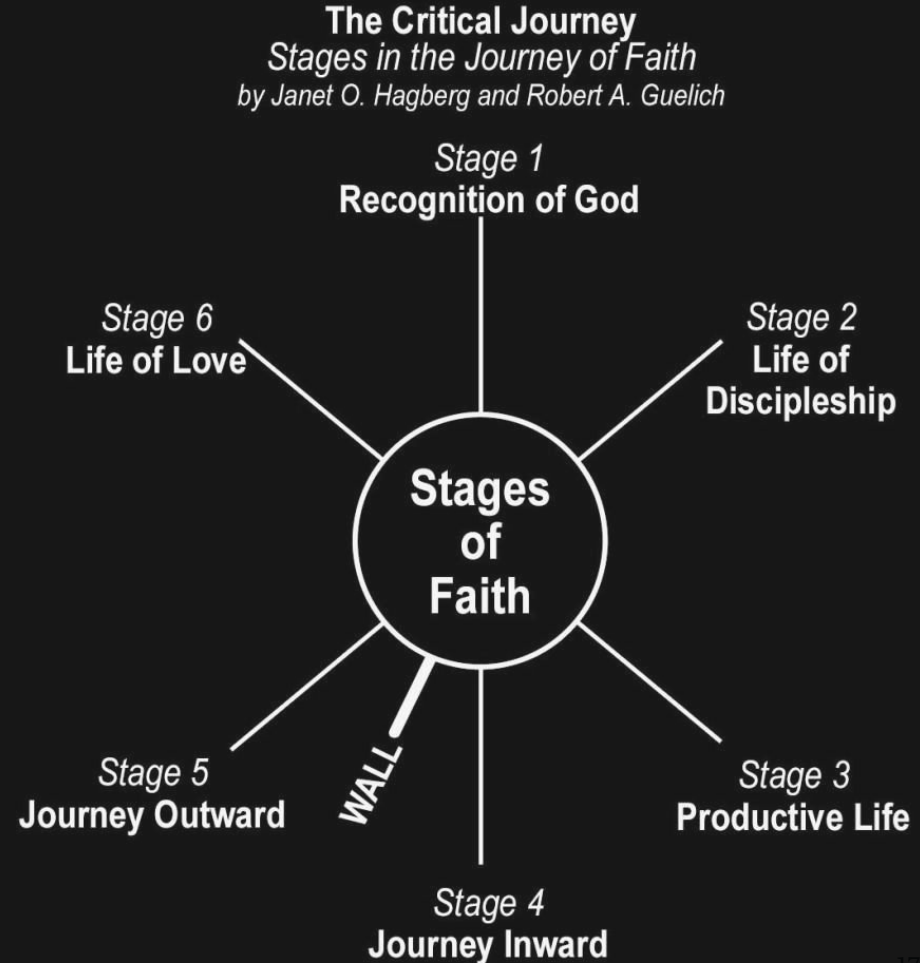
In stage 2, we surrender to that life of which we are sure. In stage 5, we surrender to that life purpose which we have yet to know or understand. At stage 5 we at times may be very vulnerable and unclear about our lives and direction, but there is an inner peace and calmness about us that is mystifying.



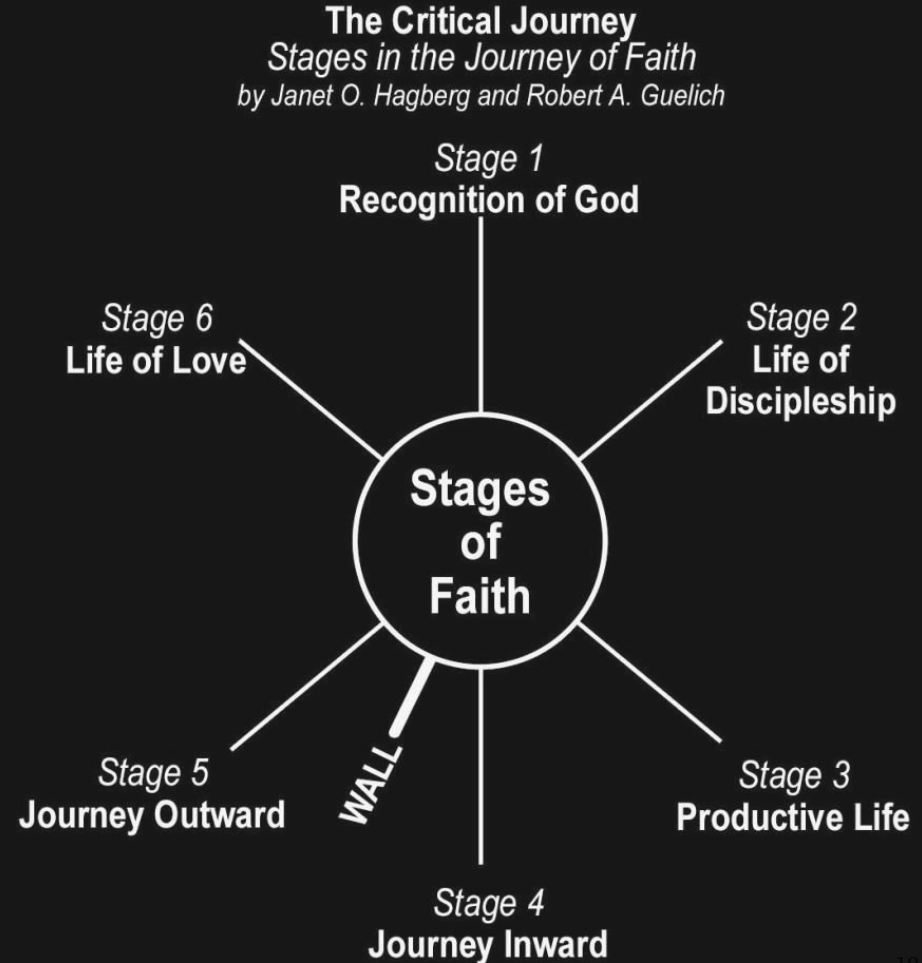


## Stage 5 - The Journey Outward - Characteristics:

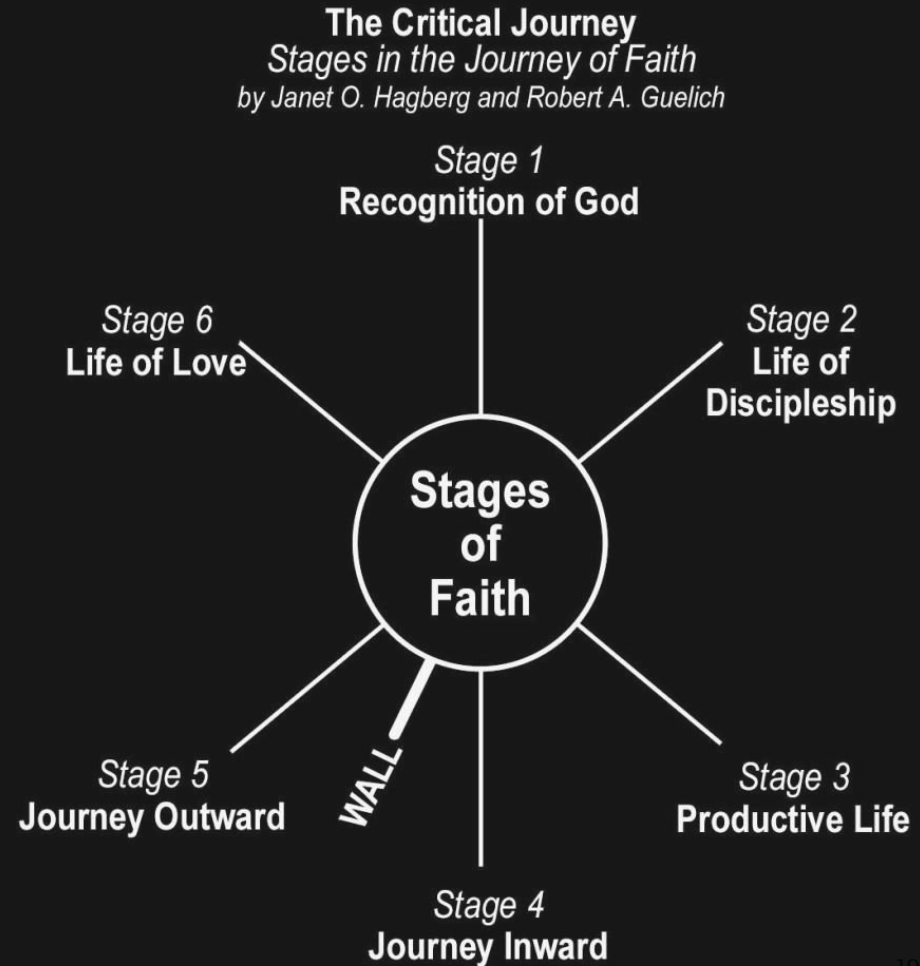
1. *A renewed sense of God's acceptance* - At stage 4 we meet ourselves, discover forgiveness, and experience healing. Yet the healing process and integration must continue. At stage 5 we grow into the full awareness that God truly loves us even though we are never fully whole. God loves us in our humanness.



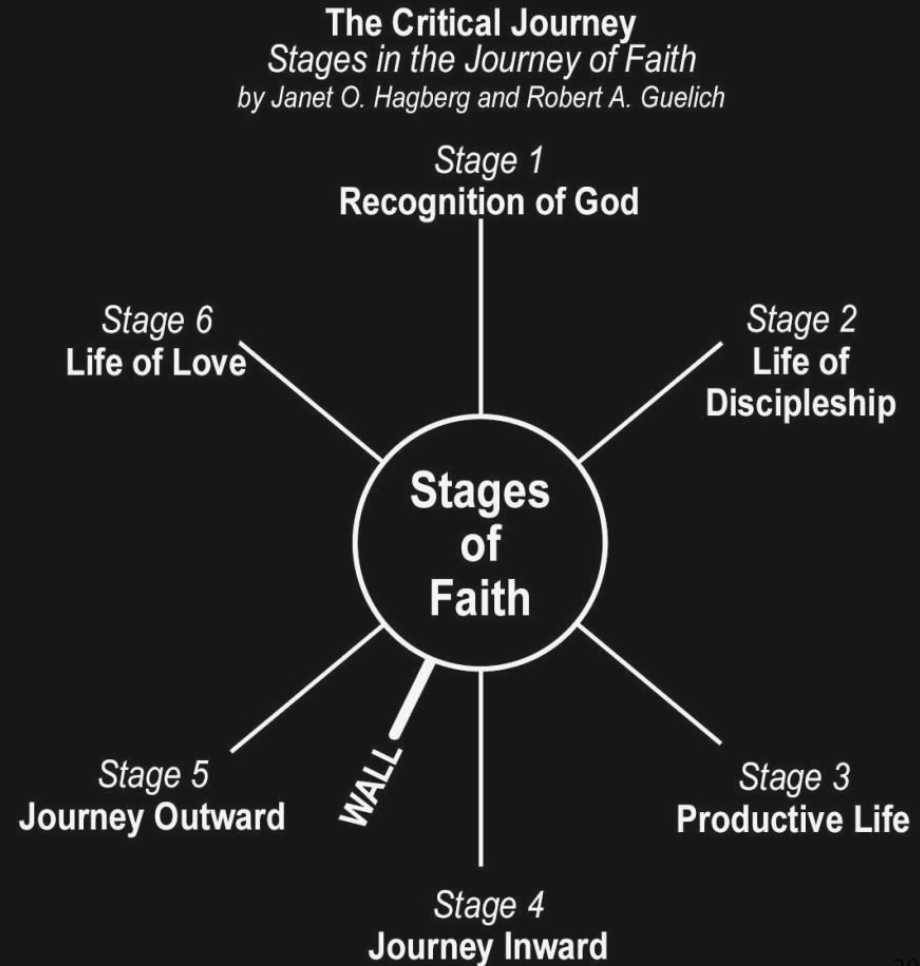
2. *A new sense of the horizontal life -*  
In stage 4, the focus was on the vertical relationship between us and God. The movement at stage 5 is on the horizontal, the reaching out to other people from a sense of fullness, of being loved by God, and being asked to love others in return. Living horizontally means becoming aware that God's purpose for our inner lives is lived out in the world.



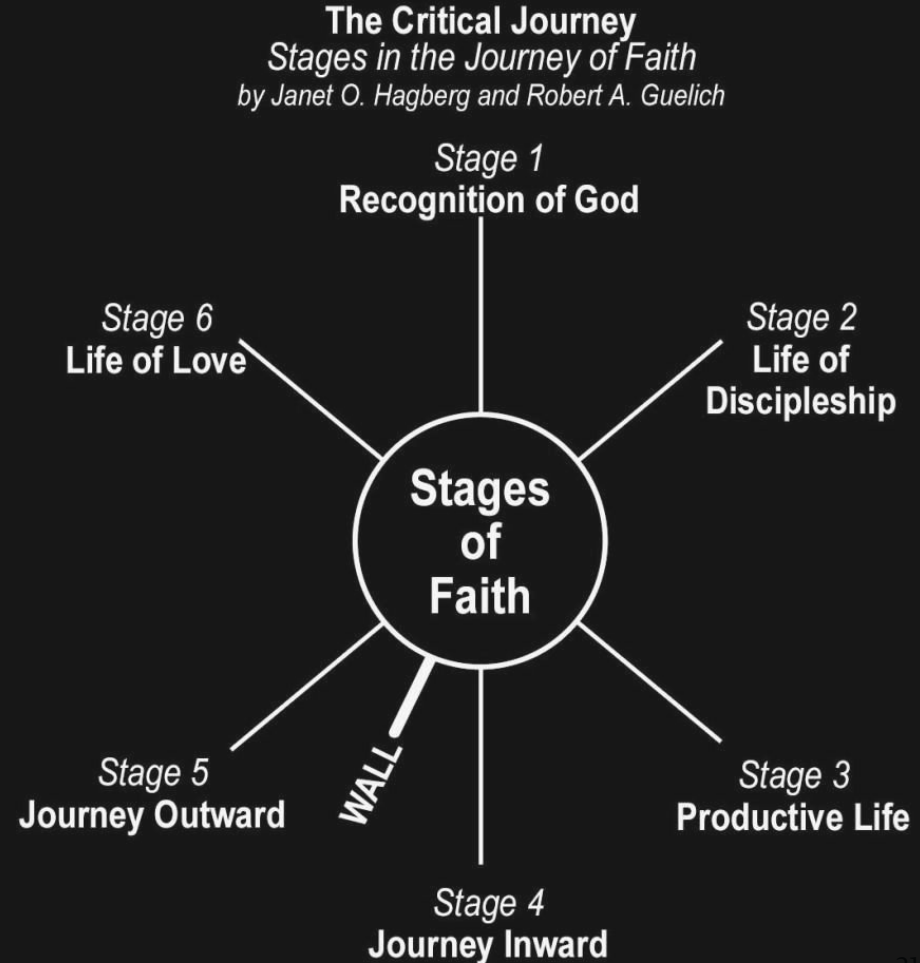
3. *Sense of calling, vocation, or ministry* - Along with the distinct move to the horizontal comes a somewhat disturbing or relieving call from God either to be different in our life's work or to be in a different life's work. The calling comes from God at this stage, not from another person who interprets God's call for us.



4. *Concern and focus on others' best interest*-At stage 5, winning, losing, accomplishing tasks are secondary to us. The focus is more on process, not getting there, and on our role with others. Our major concern is not ourselves. We do not burn out at this stage. We know ourselves well enough to avoid, or necessary to tolerate, emotionally draining situations or job settings.

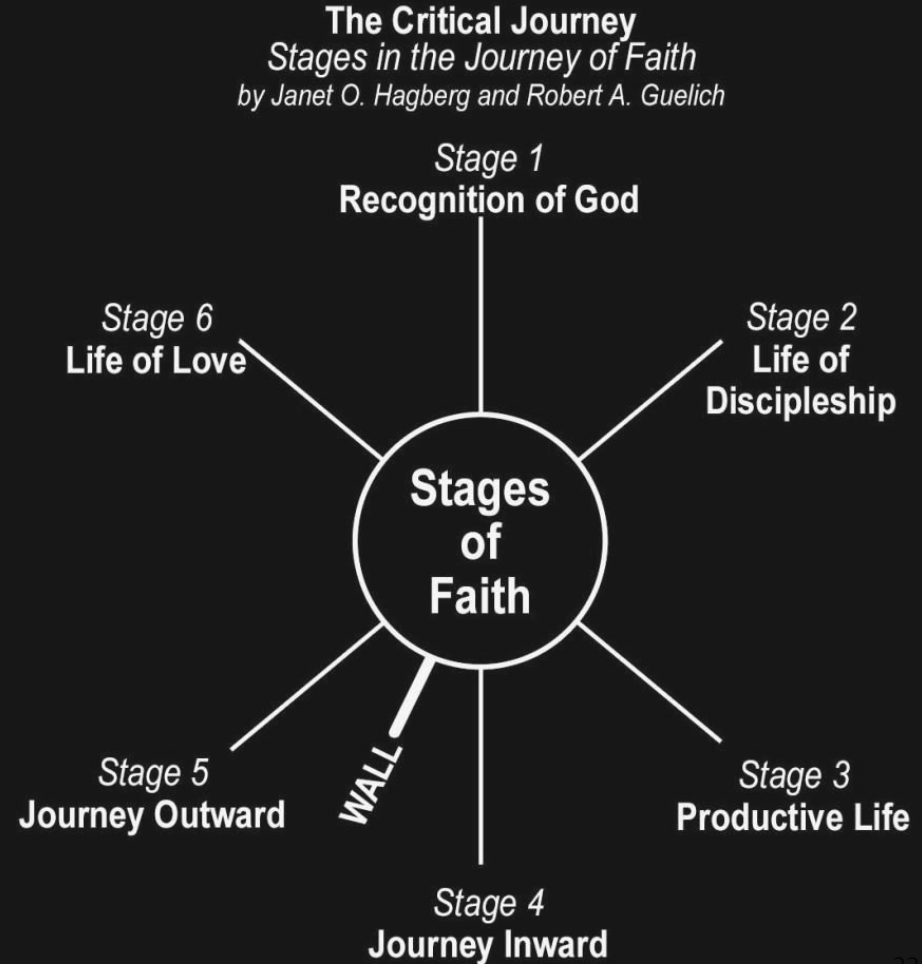


5. *A deep calm or stillness* - There is a new longing just to be simply in the presence of God's fullness. We let God be God. We let God direct our lives from a calm stillness inside, from a peace of soul and mind. We often feel a longing to be quiet inside, to be still, to listen and wait, even when we are busy in the world. We carry a calmness or stillness with us that permeates the room and touches others without fanfare.



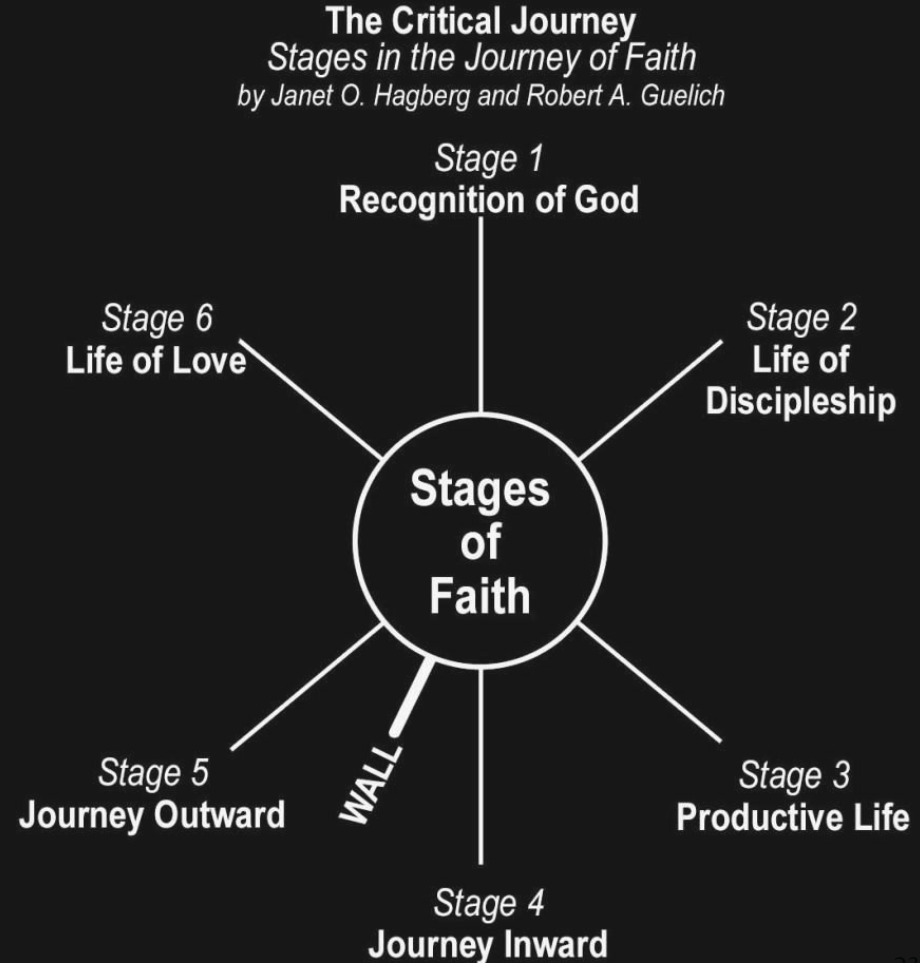
## Stage 6 - The Life of Love

At this stage we reflect God to others in the world more clearly and consistently than we ever thought possible. We have lost ourselves in the equation, and at the same time we have truly found ourselves. The people at stage 3 give to God what they can afford to give. People at stage 6 give more than they can afford.

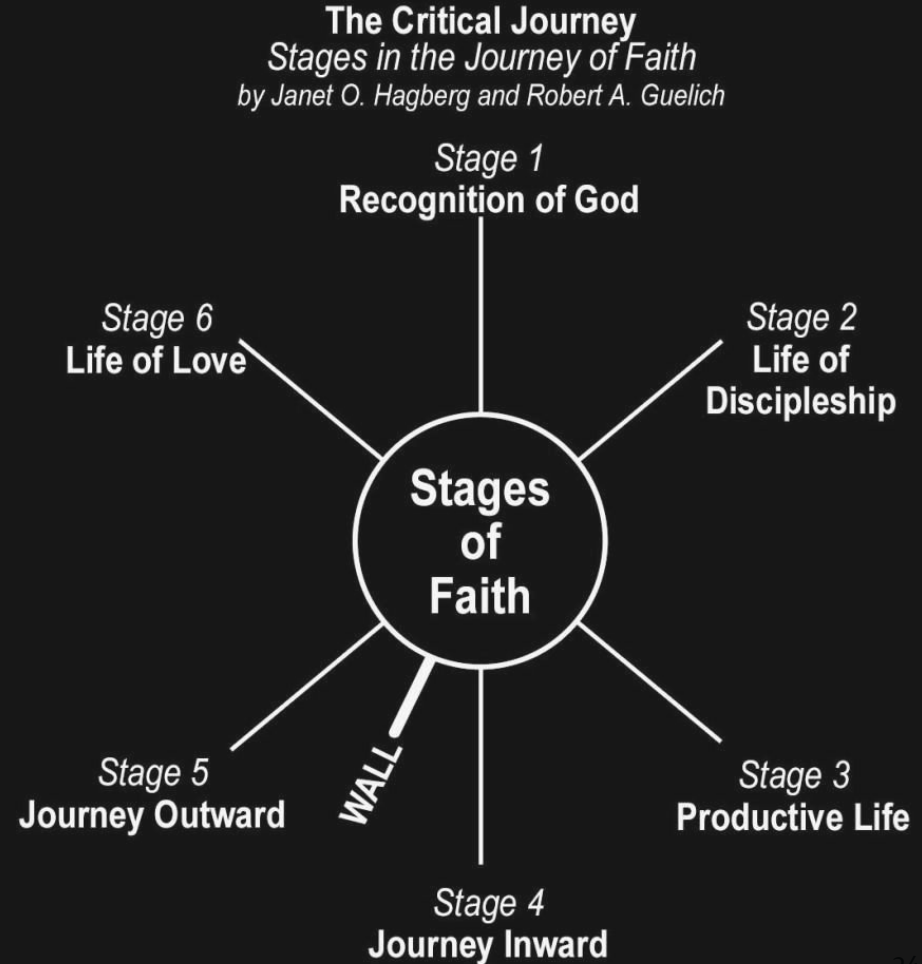


## Characteristics:

1. *Christ-like living in total obedience to God* - We are like vessels into which God pours his Spirit, constantly overflowing.
2. *Wisdom gained from life's struggles* - We do not fear pain, trauma, disappointments, or even death, because God is there to provide and to lead us on. For us life's struggles provide a source of wisdom.



3. *Compassionate living for others* - We can reach far beyond our own capacity and love our fellow human beings with deep compassion, because we know that all come from and are loved by God
4. *Detachment from things and stress* - We become aware that the more of God we have, the less of everything else we need. We do not renounce material possessions. We simply learn we need them less.





5. *Life underneath or on top* - We choose to do anything God asks, whether the most menial or the most prestigious things. We can be close to God either way.
6. *Life abandoned* - We seem to disregard our own needs and not care for ourselves at this stage. This is because those needs are secondary to our need to totally obey God and listen for God's direction.

