

## Stayin' Alive: To change is to live...

Henri JM Nouwen: Adam God's Beloved. ISBN: 157075944

J Heinrich Arnold: Discipleship – Living for Christ in the Daily Grind. ISBN: 0874878769

Milk to Meat: 1Cor 3v2, Heb 5v12-13, Ex 23v19

### Erikson's Stages of Development

Erik Erikson was a German-born, American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst. He divided life into a number of stages marked by social conflicts. These 'crucibles' are often powerful forces for spiritual development. Negotiating each conflict is required before you can move on – and not moving on means you can be out of sync with those around your age.

Stage	Name	Typical Age	Description	Conflict
1	Basic Trust vs Mistrust	Infancy	I'm dependent on others. Can I trust this system? <b>Risk:</b> I am afraid to trust and explore	Hope or Withdrawal
2	Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt	Toddler	I can seize control in some areas, sometimes – is this independence met with encouragement, even when my efforts miss the mark? <b>Risk:</b> I am passive and compliant	Will or Compulsion
3	Initiative vs Guilt	Pre-school	I can more freely exercise my will, physically and emotionally – is taking such initiatives rewarding or too likely to end in tears? <b>Risk:</b> I am not willing to stand out	Purpose or Inhibition
4	Industry vs Inferiority	School Age	I am aware of my peer group and our differing abilities – am I basically competent or inferior? <b>Risk:</b> I try to hide away so others don't notice	Competence or Inertia
5	Identity vs Identity Crisis	Adolescence	I become properly self-conscious; who am I? With whom and what should I identify? <b>Risk:</b> I don't identify with any group, nor with my family	Fidelity or Role Repudiation
6	Intimacy vs Isolation	Early Adulthood	I am ready to share my special identity with others – how far can I give of myself in intimate relationships? Or should this be avoided altogether <b>Risk:</b> Better safe than sorry, I stay alone	Love or Exclusivity
7	Generativity vs Stagnation	Late Adulthood	I have a lot to pass on. How much should I keep to myself? Do I need to conserve energy? Can I extend a creative influence on others? <b>Risk:</b> I am still busy building my own life	Care or Self-absorption
8	Integrity vs Despair	Old Age	I take stock of my life – past, present and limited future. Does the end-game 'add up' to a meaningful life? Or has there been no point at all and no time left to change? <b>Risk:</b> I have lost hope and meaning; and give up.	Wisdom or Disdain

#### Questions:

- 1 What stimulates your faith journey more – your church's agenda or your own life stage? Is there a right answer?
- 2 How can understanding common tensions at certain life stages help you reach out to that group?
- 3 Each tension has a positive or negative resolution. How can you help someone who has had a negative resolution?

*The table above, and part of the one on the next page, are based on Watts, Nye and Savage (2003) Psychology for Christian Ministry*

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### Fowler's Stages of Faith

A series of **stages of faith development** was proposed by Professor James Fowler, a developmental psychologist at Candler School of Theology, in the book *Stages of Faith*. It is not designed with Christians in mind, but to outline spiritual development in general. The words used to describe the stages are a bit unusual, but I have tried to decode them!

Stage	Name	Typical Age	Description	Pastoral Needs
0	Undifferentiated	0-2 Toddler	Learning to trust the environment – e.g. a chair can be sat on. Working out what is safe and unsafe. Faith and trust are indistinguishable.	Positive early relationships to allow trust to develop and to learn one's place in the world.
1	Intuitive	3-7 Preschool	As language develops, so does the ability to work things out and predict what things can be trusted, and believed in. Emotional curiosity can mean some 'dark' material is explored. Faith is exciting.	Boundaries and time to allow play, material to play with. Stories from the Bible but also active imagination.
2	Literal	7-11 Primary School	Belief in rules and justice – that things should 'be' a certain way. God is like a powerful adult/friend. Faith is beliefs.	Making and reading stories – engaging with what can be experienced 'in' the story as well as what it is about, otherwise story will become rote and dry.
3	Conventional	12-20 Secondary School	Follows main stream faith and religions with conformity. Differences are ignored because of risk of conflict. Faith is loyalty.	Relationships bring coherence as you meet with like-minded people, but there are always differences. Diversity and relationship breakdown can challenge faith.
4	Reflective	20-39 Adulthood	Takes personal responsibility for beliefs and feelings. Aware of complexity – which in turn increases conflicts. Faith is exploration.	A tension is held between moving beyond a simple denomination, but not as far as loneliness. Alternative forms of worship and/or prayer are important.
5	Conjunctive	40-60 Mid-life Crisis	Challenges cause a stepping back to see inherited systems [e.g. from parents]. Conflicts are resolved by seeing truths as complex and 'interdependent' and not tied down by simple statements. Faith is mystery.	Stepping back does not have to mean stepping away, just perspective. Faith can become very academic, esoteric and individualistic – no-one seems to see it like you do. Community has to be worked at.
6	Universal	<60 'Maturity'	Able to treat all people and all situations with compassion, because they are seen as part of a universal community, led by love and justice. Faith of this kind is rare. Faith is love.	People can over-commit, and there needs to be protection from exploitation and self-sacrifice. The focus should be on growing up younger leaders into this model rather than you leading it all.

#### Questions:

- 1 What do you recognise of your own journey in Fowler's stages? Where might you be at the moment?
- 2 How have your life stages and your faith stages been related?
- 3 Fowler says that all these stages are equally valuable and needed in a church. Are there any that you were tempted to admire or disrespect?

Marjory Foyle. Honourably Wounded. ISBN: 1854245430

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