

4 Stages Of Faith Growth



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4 STAGES OF FAITH GROWTH

INTRODUCTION

Every child of God has their own stages of faith growth, which are not always related to how long the person has been a child of God and how diligently they go to church. In fact, these stages are not directly related to service activities and positions in church organizations, as some people think. This means that a high position and service activity are not absolute signs that a person's position of faith growth is higher than that of ordinary congregation members who do not have church service activities. Thus, a person's position as a servant of God is not a benchmark that the person concerned has a high level of faith.

According to the Bible, the growth of faith involves **understanding the Word and practicing it**. The growth of faith is fostered through hearing and contemplating the word of God, acting in accordance with His commandments, and seeking God's grace.

In Romans 10:17 it says,

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

This verse explains that faith is related to hearing the word of God. The word of God that is heard can come from sermons, both those delivered directly in church or indirectly through various media (online or offline), as well as from reading the Bible.

From this verse, we can also understand that many church activities are not always directly related to the growth of faith. We often see church activists who are actually sleeping, chatting, or even leaving the worship room when a sermon is being delivered. There are also people who are so busy involved in so many church activities that they don't have enough time to read the Bible.

However, what is most concerning is the assumption or statement that links service with the growth of faith. According to such an assumption, a person is considered to have a higher level of faith when the person concerned carries out church service. For example, people who are involved in pulpit service, preaching, are considered to have much more faith, even though this is not necessarily the case.

I. FOUR TYPES OF CHRISTIANS

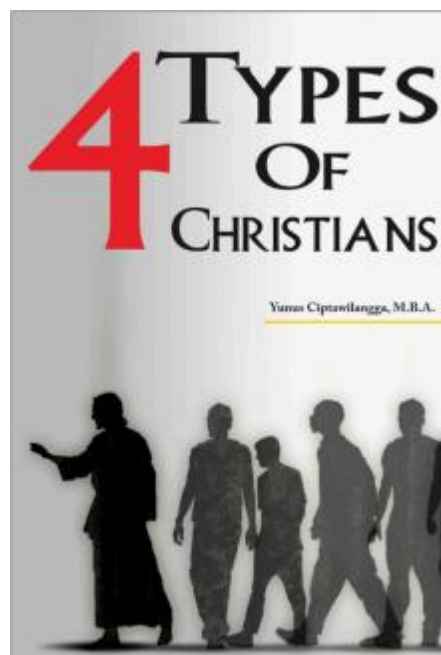
Before we discuss the four stages of faith growth, the author would like to discuss again the four types of Christians that were previously discussed in the author's book of the same title, because they are related to the theme discussed here. The four types of Christians are taken from the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:4-15).

The parable depicts the Lord Jesus as the sower. The seed is a picture of the Gospel or the word of God. The soil there is a picture of various groups of people who hear or receive the truth from the Lord Jesus: His identity and the reason for His coming. The parable highlights the importance of keeping faith rooted in the Word and the importance of active involvement in studying, contemplating, and doing the word of God. The parable serves as a reminder that our hearts need to be prepared to receive the word of God and let it grow in us.

*³Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, **some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.** ⁵**Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.** ⁶**But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.** ⁷**Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.** ⁸**Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.** (Matthew 13:3–8)*

¹⁸“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:
¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²²The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (verses 18–23)

For a more complete explanation, please read this book again.



A. The First Type of Christian

The first type of Christian is found in Matthew 13:4 with its explanation in verse 19.

*⁴As he was scattering the seed, some **fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.***

*¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and **does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.** This is the seed sown along the path.*

These verses explain the case of people who hear the Word about the kingdom of God or have heard the gospel (being preached), but do not understand its meaning. The person concerned does not know why his sins can be forgiven or what it means that the Lord Jesus died to atone for his sins. He also does not try to understand it. Then, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in the person's heart so that he forgets what has been said. Basically, the person is not a child of God. Maybe he feels that he is a child of God, even having been baptized. However, in reality, he is not a child of God because he has never personally accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior.

How can someone who has been baptized not be a child of God? Doesn't Mark 16:16 say,

*Whoever **believes** and is **baptized** will **be saved**, but whoever **does not believe** will be **condemned**.*

If we study this verse, we will see that there are two requirements for someone to be saved: **believing and being baptized**. There, **"believing" is placed first**. This means that someone must believe first, then be baptized. That is why, someone who does not believe, even though they have been baptized, will not be saved. We also see further confirmation, *"but whoever does not believe will be condemned"* which implies that belief is more important.

The act of believing referred to in this verse is also written in other parts of the Bible, including Romans 10:9,

*If you **declare with your mouth**, "Jesus is Lord," and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

This verse explains two important things. First, **"confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord,"** meaning that the person, voluntarily, without coercion, acknowledges that Jesus is Lord. Next, **"believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,"** meaning that the person believes because **he understands** that God raised Christ from the dead. It is impossible for someone to believe something that he does not understand. That is why some churches require everyone who wants to be baptized to take catechesis first.

B. Second Type of Christian

The description of the second type of Christian is found in Matthew 13:5–6 with its explanation in verses 20–21,

*⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and **they withered because they had no root.***

*²⁰The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and **at once receives it with joy.** ²¹But since **they have no root, they last only a short time.** When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, **they quickly fall away.***

So, the second type of Christian is someone who has been evangelized, understands and accepts Christ as his Lord and Savior, **but does not maintain his faith.** At first, he diligently goes to church, reads the Bible, and prays, and may even have participated in church activities. However, over time his enthusiasm begins to wane so that he rarely goes to church, no longer reads the Bible, and prays only moderately. In the end, **his faith weakens so that when trials and persecution come, he apostatizes.**

C. The Third Type of Christian

The third type of Christian is found in Matthew 13:7 with its explanation in verse 22,

⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

*²²The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but **the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth** choke the word, making it **unfruitful**.*

The third type of Christian is a child of God who is quite diligent in worship, some of whom are even active in church service. However, **they are worried about their life in the world. They do not believe in God's provision.** In fact, the Bible has shown many ways how God takes care of His people. One of them, in Nehemiah 9:21 it says,

For forty years** you sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing, **their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

Even in the wilderness, God was able to take care of them well. That was not just 1 or 2 days, but 40 long years!

God also looked after the Prophet Elijah by commanding ravens to bring him bread and meat every day, morning and evening.

*The ravens brought him bread and meat **in the morning** and bread and meat **in the evening**, and he drank from the brook. (1 Kings 17:6).*

As for the New Testament, we see God manifesting His providence, when with only five loaves and two fish, **He fed 5,000 people.**

Basically, the third type of Christian **does not believe in the power of God**; he **believes more in wealth** which he sees as his keeper, guard and protector. In Matthew 6:24 it says,

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (KJV)

Because they believe more in wealth, they usually value or place great importance on their finances. They believe that they will be safer and more protected the more possessions they have. Indeed, such Christians **have their hearts more inclined to mammon than to God.**

Therefore, they justify any means in an effort to obtain wealth. In order to obtain money, the laws of God are abandoned: they do not mind bribing or being bribed; the quality of goods is reduced; deception in business or work is carried out; business partners, friends, and employees are not treated well.

Because of the desire to have a lot of wealth, some of God's children of that type **fall into the deceitfulness of riches.** They also experience what is written in 1 Timothy 6:10,

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

For the success of their business, they are willing to do anything: accompany business partners to enjoy the nightlife, enjoy drugs, and **do other activities that are not in accordance with the word of God**. Some others work hard day and night, actions that **ultimately torture and destroy themselves and their families**.

Because of their love of money, some also **fall into the crime** of corruption, manipulation, and other violations of the law, which eventually leads to their **being punished and put in prison**.

Regarding this, the Bible itself has stated,

It is vain for you to rise early, come home late, and work so hard for your food. Yes, he provides for those whom he loves even when they sleep. (Psalm 127:2 NET).

The daily lives of the third type of Christian are difficult to distinguish from worldly people because their lifestyle and business methods are also worldly. As a result, their lives do not reflect the presence of Christ in them. **Their lives are unfruitful**.

The Lord Jesus also, very clearly, stated that the faith of the third type of Christian will die.

*⁷Other seed fell **among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.***

***22**The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but **the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.** (Matthew 13:7, 22)*

Some people think that “**bearing fruit**” means “**having love.**” For example, giving an offering to a church or Christian organization or helping some fellow believers is perceived as a sign that the person doing it has borne fruit. In fact, what is meant by bearing fruit in the Parable of the Sower passage is **bearing fruit in the spirit**, which consists of nine things, as explained in Galatians 5:22 and 23,

*²²But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³**gentleness and self-control.***

The Lord Jesus emphasized in John 15:2,

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Christians in the End Times

All Christians will face extraordinary challenges in the end times like now. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:23,

When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

“When you are persecuted in one place” refers to the situation when we are forced to be implanted with a 666 chip which, if we refuse, will cause us to be persecuted. That's why we are advised to run to another city that still doesn't require people to be implanted with this sign. If that city is obliged to accept 666 chips, run to another city. The Lord Jesus also promised, before we finish visiting cities that still haven't implemented 666 chip implants, He will have come. So, before we finish moving around, the Lord Jesus has come.

Choosing Apostasy rather than Losing Wealth

Because of their love for money, it is likely that the third type of Christian is not willing to move to another city. Moving to

another city means leaving their home, business and all their possessions, which will soon be taken by someone else.

This is in accordance with the word of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:9–10,

*⁹Then you will be handed over **to be persecuted and put to death**, and you **will be hated** by all nations **because of me**. ¹⁰At that time **many will turn away from the faith** and **will betray and hate each other**,*

At that time, those who are not willing to accept the 666 chips will be persecuted. That is why the third type of Christian **prefers to apostatize** or convert to another religion rather than accept persecution and lose all his possessions.

D. The Fourth Type of Christian

The last, the fourth type of Christian, is found in Matthew 13:8 with its explanation in verse 23.

*⁸Still other seed **fell on good soil**, where it **produced a crop**—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*

*²³But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and **understands it**. This is the one who **produces a crop**, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ”*

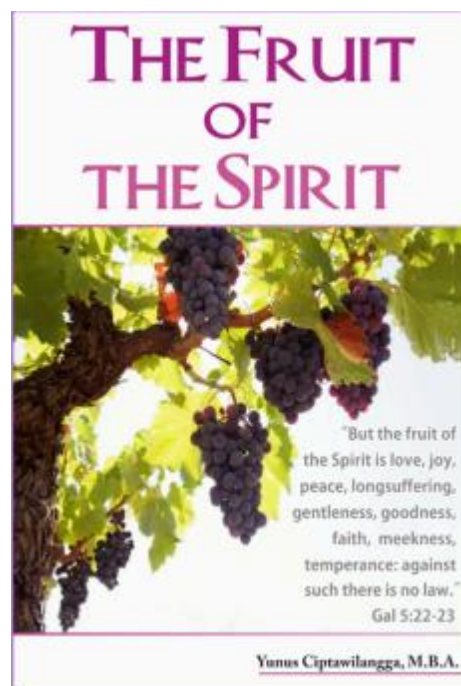
The seed falling on the good ground describes the one who hears the Word and **understands it**, and bears fruit. That is the type of God's children who, after being evangelized, can understand and bear fruit.

Luke 8:15 adds,

*But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, **retain it**, and **by persevering produce a crop**.*

That verse explains why the fourth type of Christian can bear fruit. First, they do not just hear and understand, **but keep the Word in their hearts**. Second, because **they diligently do the Word**, they obtain the fruit of the Spirit.

To get a clearer understanding of the fruit of the Spirit, please read the author's book with the same title.



II. FOUR STAGES OF FAITH GROWTH

Next, we will go into the main material related to the Four Stages of Faith Growth.

A. The Stage of Hearing the Word

The Lord Jesus said,

²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (Matthew 7:26—27)

First-stage Christians are those **who hear the Word but do not do it**. The Lord Jesus explained that they are **foolish people** because they built their house on the sand. When the rain, floods, and winds came, the house collapsed and great was the fall of it. That is the picture of a child of God who hears the Word, hears testimonies, reads the Bible, but **does not practice it**.

It could be that a first-stage Christian has just come to know the Lord. However, he could also be a child of God who has followed Him for a long time, becoming an activist, a church council, or even a servant of God. Some of them understand the Word, but do not want to put their

understanding into practice. That's why the foundation of their faith is fragile, like a house built on sand. That is why, position as an activist or church official, whether a person has been a Christian for a long time or recently, these are not indicators that the person concerned is at a high stage of faith. Why? **Because the key is doing the Word, not carrying out ecclesiastical activities.**

One of the reasons many of God's children stagnate at the stage of hearing the Word is because **they are satisfied and feel comfortable just being followers of Christ.** According to them, accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and being baptized is enough to guarantee salvation so that they do not feel the need **to become true children of God.** In fact, the Lord Jesus said,

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (Matt. 16:24).

The verse above explains that, if we want to be followers of Christ, to be children of God, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and continue to follow the Lord Jesus.

Denying ourselves means not following the desires of our flesh. That is why we must cast away our fleshly desires.

¹⁹*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I*

*did before, **that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.** (Gal. 5:19—21).*

The verse above ends with “**that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God,**” meaning **they will not enter the kingdom of God** because they have not truly repented, they are not followers of Christ.

Furthermore, as children of God, we must live like Christ. That means our lives must be like Christ so that people around us can see Christ in our lives.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (Rom. 8:29).

Taking up our cross means having to accept the consequences of being a child of God. The Lord Jesus has said that we, as children of God, will be hated, ostracized, criticized, and rejected. However, the Lord Jesus also stated that we should be happy when treated like that. Why? **Because it signifies that we are not the same as them.** We do not belong to the world, but **to Christ.**

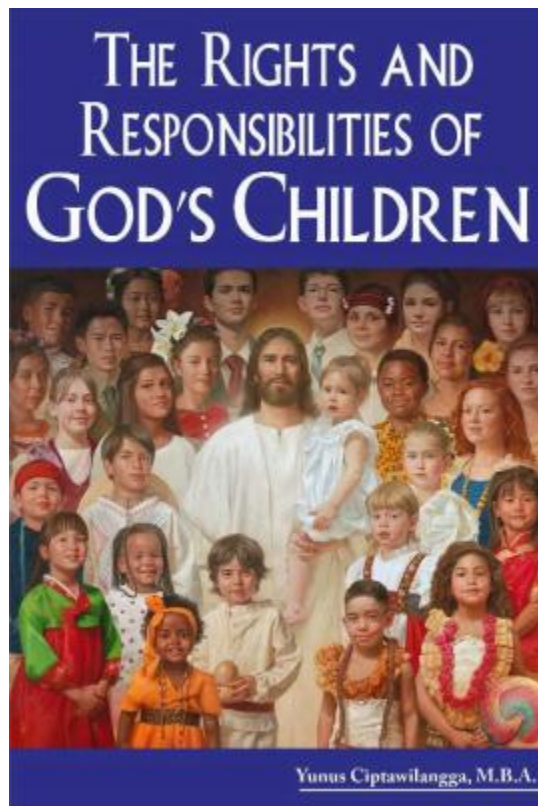
*Blessed are you when people **hate you**, when they **exclude you** and **insult you** and **reject your name as evil**, because of the Son of Man. (Luke 6:22).*

*If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, **you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.** (John 15:19).*

Following Christ means remaining His followers until the end of life; we must not give up our beliefs and switch to other beliefs.

- *Everyone will hate you because of me, **but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.** (Mark 13:13)*
- *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. **Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.** (Rev.2:10)*

Fundamentally, Christians at the stage of hearing the Word are followers of Christ **who do not dare to pay the price of being children of God.** When we become children of God, at that moment we also receive our rights as children of God. However, along with that, come the responsibilities as children of God. For more details, please read the author's book entitled *The Rights and Responsibilities of God' Children.*



B. Stage of Doer of the Word

The Lord Jesus also said,

*²⁴“Therefore everyone who **hears these words of mine and puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet **it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.** (Matt. 7:24—25).*

In these two verses, the Lord Jesus calls people who listen to God's word and do it **wise**. Such a person is like a builder who builds a house on rock so that **it remains sturdy** even when hit by rain, floods, even storms.

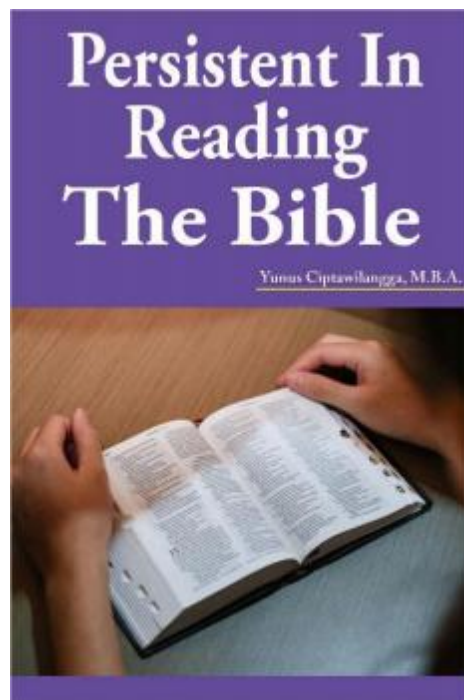
Then, why is doing the Word so important? Because, if we become doers of the Word, we will experience **the fulfillment of God's word**. It is not just hearing the Word and testimony and reading the Bible, but actually experiencing its fulfillment. When we experience the fulfillment of the Word, **we will believe that what is written in the Bible is the word of God**. That is the solid foundation for our faith. Strong faith makes us not easily misled by false teachings because **our faith is based on our experiences of living together with God**, not on the statements or testimonies of others.

We cannot possibly become doers of the Word if we do not understand and know the word of God widely and correctly. It is impossible for us to do or practice something that we do not understand. As an illustration, let's say one day our car breaks down. If we do not understand the problem of vehicle mechanics, it is impossible for us to do anything to fix it. Likewise with the word of God, it is impossible for us to become doers of the Word if we have never read the Bible in its entirety.

Some people who have been Christians for a long time argue that reading the entire Bible is not necessary; we just need to pay attention to the weekly sermons in church. However, if we only rely on sermons in church, at most we will only listen to fifties sermons, some of which will be forgotten as the weeks go by. That is why, if we want to become doers of the

Word, increase our knowledge of the Word, namely by reading the Bible more.

The author has written down his experience in reading the word of God, namely *Persistent in Reading the Bible*. Hopefully the book will encourage readers to read the entire Bible.



Experiencing the Fulfillment of the Word

The author has attended Sunday School since childhood and has experienced various fulfillments of the Word. One of the most memorable fulfillments of the Word is related to tithing. The author has been practicing tithing for more than 35 years and during that time has stopped twice. Giving tithing,

stopping, doing it again, stopping, then doing it again until today.

The author does not remember why he stopped tithing. However, when he stopped for the second time, the author felt how Malachi 3:10 was truly proven. At that time, the author felt a real difference in his life and finances, between when he practiced tithing and when he did not. It was truly surprising. When he did not tithe, even though his business seemed to be going well, he felt like he had no money. When he tithed, the reality was very different. Not only did he have abundant money, but God gave extraordinary blessings to the author and his family. The author has experienced the fulfillment of Malachi 3:10,

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

When giving tithe, the author truly feels that God is opening the windows of heaven and pouring out blessings abundantly. That is why, when he started to practice tithing again and, later, was commanded by God to give more, the author did not object. At that time, the author simply said, *"Lord, if You want me to give more, I will do it because I believe You*

will provide it. " This has been proven to this day: God always provides the funds needed for ministry, even in abundance.

The author's experience regarding giving tithing was also experienced by the author's children and in-law. That is why the author is one of those who encourages God's children to tithe. However, it is not motivated by the desire to get tithing money because the author will not possibly get it. The author is not a pastor or a shepherd who has a congregation. So, there is no possibility of getting tithing money. So, why does the author recommend it? When giving tithing, not only will we get blessings, but we will also see that God's word is real. If we pay attention, Malachi 3:10 clearly contradicts the principles of finance or mathematics. In finance or mathematics, if you want to get a lot, expenses must be reduced. However, God says the opposite: give tithing, then you will get more. For the author, what is extraordinary is not just the acquisition of abundance, but we can also witness how God fulfills His word, even though it contradicts financial science and mathematics, even human logic.

Furthermore, those who do the Word are children of God who rely on prayer, not their own strength. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:7,

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

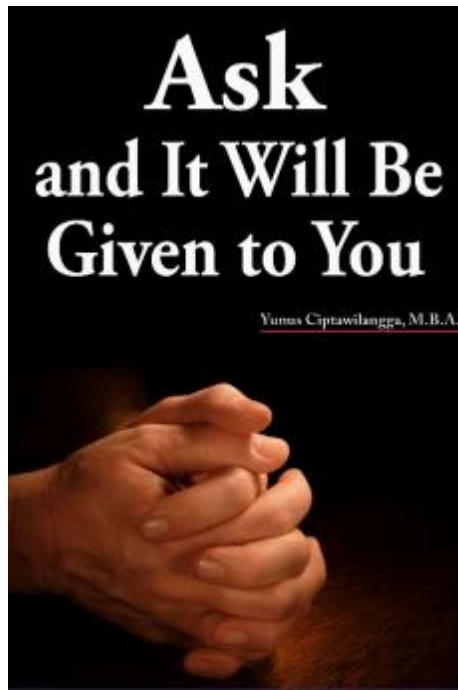
That verse is God's promise that will answer all our prayers. As doers of the Word, we must believe every promise, including that we have received prayer requests as explained in Mark 11:24,

*Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.***

This means that when we pray to God, we must believe that God has answered it. Therefore, we do not need to ask for help from others or try on our own by relying on our strength, acquaintances, or relationships to solve problems or fulfill our prayer requests. We should not **pray in the ears of others**, conveying our needs to others with the “cover” of prayer, in the hope that one of them will help. Pray as taught and exemplified by the Lord Jesus.

- *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your **Father, who is unseen.** Then your Father, who sees what is **done in secret, will reward you.** (Matthew 6:6)*
- *Very early in the morning, while it was **still dark**, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to **a solitary place**, where **he prayed.** (Mark 1:35)*

For more details, please read the author's book, *Ask, and it will be given to you.*



C. The Stage of God Encountering

Amazing Change

In the journey of growing in faith, we have reached the stage of God Encountering when **we can hear His voice**, both through our hearts and through our ears. Let's look at the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10.

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of **Zacchaeus**; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³**He wanted to see who Jesus was**, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “**Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.**” ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷All the*

people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” ⁸**But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”** ⁹Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. ”

From this passage we know that when the Lord Jesus entered Jericho, a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus was eager to see the Lord Jesus. However, he had difficulty because there were many people ahead of him and he was short in stature. That is why, he ran and climbed a sycamore tree to see the Lord who was going to pass by there. When the Lord Jesus arrived at his place, **Zacchaeus heard the voice of the Lord Jesus** saying, “*Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.*” Then Zacchaeus immediately came down and received the Lord Jesus with joy into his home.

Next, as explained in the passage, there was a remarkable change in Zacchaeus:

“But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much. 9 ”

Not many people were able to do what Zacchaeus did. So, what caused Zacchaeus to be able to do it? **Because he had met the Lord.**

A similar incident also happened to the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–42). In the passage, we see the Lord Jesus conversing with a Samaritan woman. At that time, it was about 12:00 noon when the Lord Jesus and his disciples arrived in a city in Samaria. The disciples were going to buy food and the Lord Jesus was sitting by a well when a Samaritan woman came to draw water. The Lord Jesus asked her for water. Then, a conversation took place between the Lord Jesus and the woman.

After that conversation, an extraordinary change occurred in the woman. From the beginning, the woman was aware that she was not a good woman. That is why she drew water during the day so that she would not meet many people or hear them gossiping about her. However, when she met the Lord Jesus, when **she heard His voice**, an extraordinary change occurred. Now, the woman **boldly went into the city, confessed her mistakes, and brought people to the Lord Jesus. Many people believed because of her testimony.**

²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him

because of the woman 's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did. "

The same thing happened to Saul when he heard the voice of the Lord Jesus.

⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. (Acts 9:4—5).

Saul, who was once a persecutor of the people, eventually became an extraordinary evangelist.

What important thing happens after someone encounters God? When we meet God **by hearing His voice, we will believe in the existence of God.** This belief **will strengthen our faith.** In addition, hearing His voice makes us sure that **the God we worship is a living God,** a God who can answer our prayers and struggles directly **through His voice.**

When we can hear His voice, **our lives become easier** because God will give us His revelation or answer to our prayers. So, we don't need to hesitate or need to consider a lot when doing something. **Two-way communication between us and God makes the relationship between us and God closer.** This familiarity will make our hearts feel warm when we pray, especially when we hear His voice.

How to Encounter God

It is not difficult to encounter God because, fundamentally, **He Himself wants to be close to us**. Since creation, we have seen God come close to humans.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:8–9)

Likewise with James 4:8, it says,

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

How do we draw close to God? We draw close to Him by having quiet time before the Lord, namely by:

- setting aside special time for personal prayer regularly
- diligently reading the Bible
- holding family worship regularly every day

Next, if we look at the three people who met the Lord (Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, and Saul), we will see that all three had a great desire to meet the Lord.

- **Zacchaeus**, in his effort to see the Lord Jesus, was even willing to climb a fig tree even though he was a rich chief tax collector.

³*He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. (Luke 19:3—4).*

- **The Samaritan woman**, although not a good person, had quite a good grasp of religious knowledge. The proof is that she was able to have quite a long discussion with the Lord Jesus.

²⁰*Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that **the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.***
” ²⁵*The woman said, “**I know that Messiah**” (called Christ) **“is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”** (John 4:20, 25).*

- **Saul** was a man who seriously studied the laws of his ancestors and tried to work hard for God and his religion.

³*“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. **I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.** (Acts 22:3)*

¹*Meanwhile, Saul was **still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.** He went to the high priest ²and asked him **for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.** (Acts 9:1–2).*

D. The Stage of Walk Faithfully with God

The highest stage of growth in faith is Walk Faithfully with God, for example as stated in Genesis 5:22–24,

²²After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Enoch was appointed by God because he walked faithfully with God. What is the stage of walking faithfully with God like? When we live in association with God, not only can we hear God's voice, but we can also see Him. They are special people in the eyes of God.

III. WHEN THE 4 TYPES AND 4 STAGES ARE COMBINED

In the beginning we briefly discussed the Four Types of Christians, then continued with a discussion of the Four Stages of Faith Growth. If these two parts are combined, we will get the following table.

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
		Type 1 NOT UNDERSTANDING	Type 2 NOTROOTED	Type 3 NOT BEARING FRUIT	Type 4 BEARING FRUIT
F A I T H S T A G E S G R O W T H	WALK WITH GOD	13	14	15	16
	GOD ENCOUNTERING	9	10	11	12
	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	8
	HEARER OF THE WORD	1	2	3	4

From left to right, vertically, there are four columns that correspond to **the 4 Types of Christians**:

Type 1 – Not Understanding

Type 2 – Not Rooted

Type 3 – Not Bearing Fruit

Type 4 – Bearing Fruit

Next, from bottom to top, horizontally, there are also four columns that correspond to **the 4 Stages of Faith Growth**:

Stage 1 – Hearer of the Word

Stage 2 – Doer of the Word

Stage 3 – God Encountering

Stage 4 – Walk with God

IV. THE FATE THAT WILL BE EXPERIENCED BY EACH GROUPS

Next, let us study together the fate that will be experienced by each group included in the columns, namely whether **they will go to heaven or hell**. Several specific columns will be highlighted by the author.

A. Hearers of the Word + Do Not Understand (Column 1)

The first type of Christian is found in Matthew 13:4 with its explanation in verse 19.

*⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and **the birds came and ate it up**.*

*¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, **the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart**. This is the seed sown along the path. (Matthew 13:4, 19).*

In the beginning it was explained that, basically, **they are not children of God**. Therefore, **they will go to hell** because the Christian faith believes that **there is only one way of salvation**: through Jesus Christ.

- *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*
- *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. ” (Acts 4:12)*

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
		Type 1 NOT UNDERSTANDING	Type 2 NOTROOTED	Type 3 NOT BEARING FRUIT	Type 4 BEARING FRUIT
F A I T H S T A G E S O F G R O W T H	WALK WITH GOD	13	14	15	16
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	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	8
	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	2	3	4

B. Hearers of the Word + No Roots (Column 2)

Next, the type of Christian who has no roots is found in Matthew 13:5–6, with the explanation in verses 20–21.

⁵*Some **fell on rocky places**, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because **they had no root**.*

²⁰*The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and **at once receives it with joy**. ²¹But since **they have no root**, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, **they quickly fall away**.*

It was explained at the beginning that this type of Christian is God's children **who do not maintain their faith**. So, when they experience tribulation or persecution, they immediately **fall away**. Therefore, people who are included in this column **will also go to hell**.

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
		Type 1 NOT UNDERSTANDING	Type 2 NOT ROOTED	Type 3 NOT BEARING FRUIT	Type 4 BEARING FRUIT
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	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	 2	3	4

C. Hearers of the Word + Unfruitful (Column 3)

Christians who do not bear fruit are found in Matthew 13:7, with the explanation in verse 22.

⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

*²²The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but **the worries of this life** and **the deceitfulness of wealth** choke the word, making it **unfruitful**.*

Previously, it was explained about the existence of Christians who worry about life in the world, some of whom are even caught in the deceitfulness of riches so that they do not bear fruit. Concerning them, the Lord Jesus explained,

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (John 15:2)

So, that type of Christian will also **go to hell**.

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
		Type 1 NOT UNDERSTANDING	Type 2 NOT ROOTED	Type 3 NOT BEARING FRUIT	Type 4 BEARING FRUIT
F A I T H S T A G E S G R O W T H	WALK WITH GOD	13	14	15	16
	GOD ENCOUNTERING	9	10	11	12
	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	8
	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	 2	 3	4

D. Hearer of the Word + Bears Fruit

(Column 4)

However, Christians **who lack faith** also have the opportunity to enter heaven if **“the thorns” does not grow so big that it crushes their faith until it dies.**

*Other seed fell among thorns, **which grew up** and choked the plants. (Matt 13:7)*

How do we prevent the thorns from growing so big that they can crush our faith to death? The answer is if we are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit. In fact, every child of God is given the Holy Spirit in their heart, who will guide their life. Unfortunately, many reject the leadership of the Holy Spirit. If a child of God who has many worries and loves wealth is willing to be led by the Holy Spirit, he will be led to have more faith so that **he can bear fruit.**

²⁵*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

²⁶*Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Gal. 5:25—26)*

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
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	GOD ENCOUNTERING	9	10	11	12
	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	8
	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	 2	 3	 4

E. Doers of the Word + Bearing Fruit (Column 8)

Christians who bear fruit can be seen in Matthew 13:8 with its explanation in verse 23.

⁸*Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*

²³*But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and **understands it**. This is the one who produces a **crop**, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ”*

It has been explained previously that the fruit of the Spirit appears because of doing the Word. In Matthew 7:24–25, the Lord Jesus also calls those who do the Word as **wise people** because they build their faith on a solid foundation so that **it will remain strong** even though they face many challenges and trials. That is why Christians who are included in that group **will enter heaven**.

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
		Type 1 NOT UNDERSTANDING	Type 2 NOT ROOTED	Type 3 NOT BEARING FRUIT	Type 4 BEARING FRUIT
F A I T H S T A G E G R O W T H	WALK WITH GOD	13	14	15	16
	GOD ENCOUNTERING	9	10	11	12
	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	8 
	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	 2	 3	 4

F. God Encountering + Bearing Fruit (Column 12)

In column 12 we can see the group of Christians who encounter God and bear fruit. That stage is only achieved by those who have already borne fruit. If we compare it to levels of education, the level of hearing the Word is elementary school, the level of doing the Word is junior high school, the level of encountering God is high school, and the level of walking with

God is college. So, it is impossible for someone who is still in elementary school to suddenly jump to high school, unless they get special privileges.

Nowadays, we often hear stories about people from other religions who have visions or dreams of meeting the Lord Jesus. According to the author, this can happen because those people are sincere (although somewhat different from the sincerity according to the Christian definition). What is clear is that **they are people who are truly seeking the truth**. God also reveals Himself to these people. However, we must be careful with people who claim to have met God. **If the life of those people do not change**, that is, the person from another religious background **do not end up becoming children of God**, their testimonies need to be doubted. In fact, if they really met God, they would act the same as Saul, a militant Jew who eventually became an extraordinary disciple or child of God.

It was similar to what happened to Samuel.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” (1 Sam. 3:10)

As soon as he heard God's voice, there was a tremendous change in him which, in fact, the entire nation of Israel could see.

¹⁹The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of

Samuel's words fall to the ground. ²⁰And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. (1 Sam. 3:19–20)

Both Saul and Samuel experienced extraordinary changes after meeting God. God's children who are included in this group **are guaranteed to enter heaven.**

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
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Hearing God's Voice

The author himself first heard God's voice when praying at midnight around 2009. As written in his book, since 2001 the author has always been awakened by praise. So, the praise resounded when the author was still sleeping or half asleep so that the author woke up. The praises that resounded were different. Often, one praise resounded for several days.

At that time, the author was awakened by the praise of "Bapa yang Kekal/Eternal Father".

Perfect love I have received from You

Not because of my goodness,

Only by Your grace, You restore me

Worthy am I to call You Father

You give me what I ask,

When I seek I find

I knock on Your door and You open it

For You are my Father, the eternal Father

You will not let me walk alone

You are always there for me,

For You are my Father, the eternal Father.

When receiving the praise, the author sang the praise twice while trying to find what it meant. At that time, the author interpreted that the praise was advising the author not to worry even though there were still many things related to the end times that were still unclear; if the author asked, God would give understanding. The praise also encouraged the author not to be afraid because the Heavenly Father would not let the author walk alone.

The following night, the author received the same praise and gave the same interpretation of the praise. On the third day, the author still received the same praise, and it was not something strange, because the author had received the praise

"Kami Memuji Kebesaran-Mu/ How Great Thou Art" every night for several months with several other praises interspersed. The praise only changed when God gave the author something extraordinary.

However, on the third day, when the author sang the last verse, "*You are always there for me, for You are my Father, the eternal Father*", there was a voice that asked, "*God is always there for me if God is your Father, **are you His child?***" The author was very surprised and cried when he received the question. In his entire life, the author had never for a second thought or felt that he was not a child of God. The author had attended Sunday School since he was little, was baptized at the age of a teenager, served in church as a teenager, and when he heard the question, the author was actively providing material in churches and theological schools whose participants were not only congregations or students, but also lecturers and pastors. In fact, the author once presented material from his book in front of Masters of theology students. But the voice answered, "*Not that, not that.*" Therefore, **the author repented again by praying:** "*Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I believe that You are God who came to earth as a human to atone for the sins of mankind. I ask the Lord Jesus to be my Savior by atone for my sins, purify me, and make me a child of God and **I want to live righteously and holy before You.** Amen.*"

At that time, the author considered the incident as God's way of rebuking the author to repent. The author only found out that the incident was an encounter with God when, several

years later, the author presented material at a theological school in South Sumatra. At that time, the author testified about the experience. After presenting the material, the author handed over the pulpit to the director of the theological school, who then explained to the students and lecturers present that the incident was the author's experience of God encountering – something that the author himself did not understand.

In the last few months, the author has come across the term “meeting with God” or “God encountering” several times, both from sermons, daily devotions, and writings of God's servants. The term repeatedly entered the author's heart so that finally the author tried to prepare sermon material related to the theme. Praise God, the Heavenly Father gave the author understanding, which enabled him to prepare sermon material and write about it.

G. Walking Faithfully with God + Bearing Fruit

(Column 16)

In the last group, there are God's children with the highest level of faith, namely those who walk faithfully with God and bear fruit. This group is **not only certain to enter heaven, but also receive many privileges in life on earth.**

In the Old Testament we can see, for example, Moses who was given the privilege to be able to meet God face to face.

¹⁰*Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew **face to face**, ¹¹who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. (Deut. 34:10–11)*

Likewise Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire.

*As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a **chariot of fire** and **horses of fire** appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah **went up to heaven** in a whirlwind. (2 Kings 2:11)*

In the New Testament, we see God giving Paul the privilege of being caught up to see heaven and Paradise.

¹*I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to **visions** and **revelations** from the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago **was caught up to the third heaven**. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ⁴**was caught up to paradise** and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. (2 Corinthians 12:1–4)*

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	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	 8
	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	 2	 3	 4

V. WHICH COLUMN ARE WE IN?

4		TYPES OF CHRISTIANS			
		Type 1 NOT UNDERSTANDING	Type 2 NOT ROOTED	Type 3 NOT BEARING FRUIT	Type 4 BEARING FRUIT
F A I T H S T A G E S G R O W T H	WALK WITH GOD	13	14	15	 16
	GOD ENCOUNTERING	9	10	11	 12
	DOER OF THE WORD	5	6	7	 8
	HEARER OF THE WORD	 1	 2	 3	 4

Referring to the columns in the table above, which column are we in now? Based on the previous discussion, where will our souls go if God calls us now, **to heaven or hell?**

The author cannot possibly know which column each reader is in. However, in any section, at this time God still gives the opportunity to move to the desired column. However, that opportunity will not always be there. So, use that opportunity as best you can.

For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2).