

## Stages of Discipleship

Jim Putnam has refined Avery Willis' stages of discipleship. Their scheme is not the only spiritual growth model, but I find it very useful. It is simple and easy to explain. Everyone knows the characteristics of physical growth from an infant to an adult. These same characteristics are present as one grows spiritually from an infant to be a spiritual parent. The scheme uses the term parent and not adult because we are told not only to follow Jesus as a disciple but to "reproduce" and go make other disciples.

### DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS: The 5 Stages Of Spiritual Growth

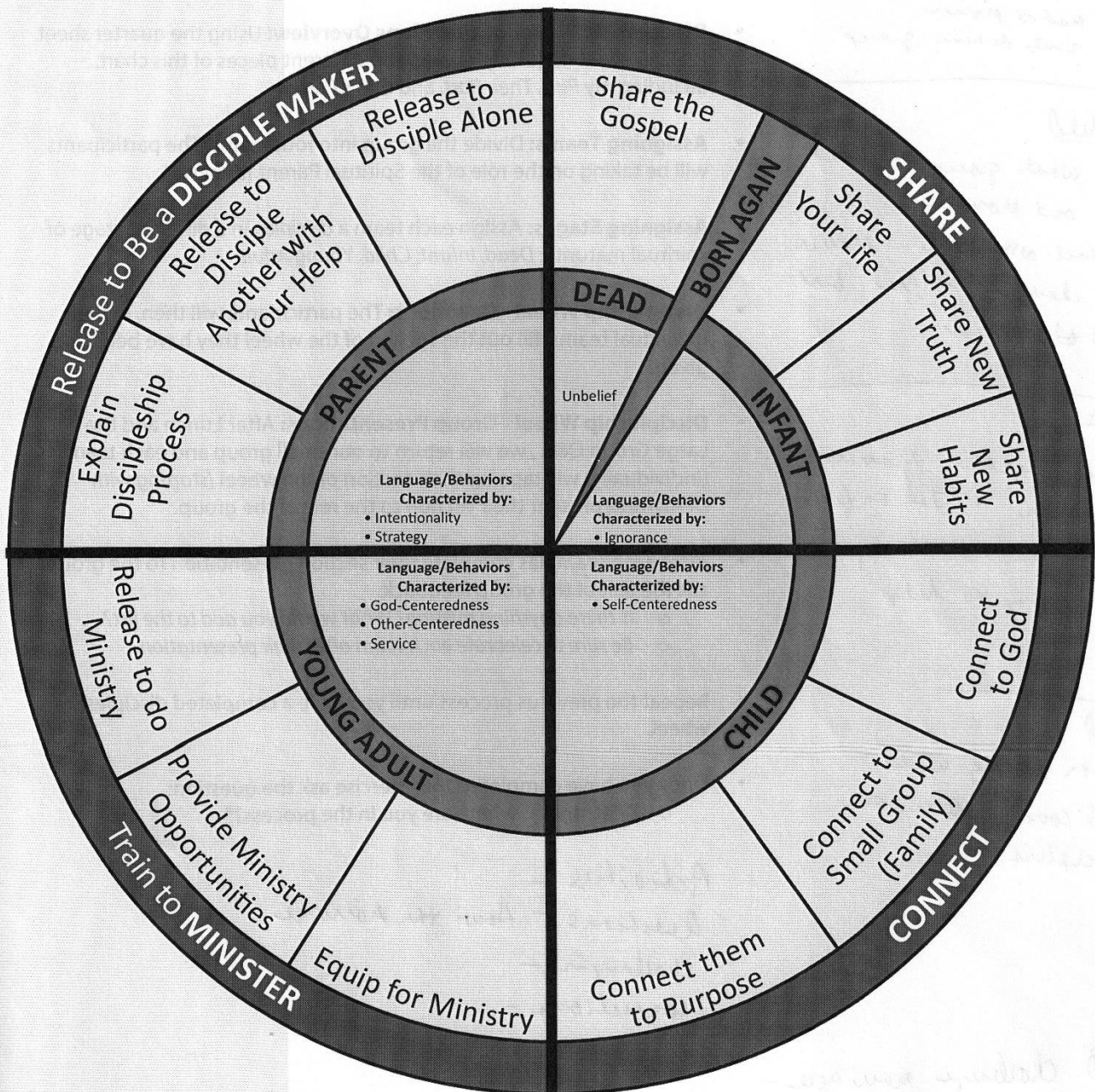
TRAITS, PHRASES & CHARACTERISTICS



<sup>1</sup> Jim Putman, *Discipleship1 Training Manual*, (Post Falls, ID: Real Life Ministries) 42.



Another way to look at the same five stages in a circle. The outside rings of the circle show how a small group leader can take action to help move the individual around the circle.



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Real Life Ministries is a church in northern Idaho that uses Biblical Storytelling as the basis for their discipling small groups. With the help of Avery Willis they developed these diagrams to help their leaders disciple the people in their groups. During the question dialogue of the group, the leaders listen to “the phrase from the stage.” People reveal their spiritual maturity as they talk. When a leader begins to know the individuals better and where they are spiritually, they can begin to mentor them more appropriately.

<sup>2</sup> Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*, Exponential Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 60.

If you want to know more, I recommend this book

Putman, Jim, and Bobby Harrington. *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. Exponential Series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

They also have put much of the information from *Discipleshift* into a workbook form that is helpful to help train lay people in ministry.

Putman, Jim, Avery T. Willis, Brandon Guindon, and Bill Krause. *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples Who Make Disciples*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, ©2010.

Real Life Ministries Network had two day training seminars for leading discipling groups called Discipleshift1  
<http://www.discipleshift.org/>