

**MAKING THE CHANGE YOU  
ALWAYS WANTED AND NEVER  
COULD MAKE BEFORE**



# **10 STEPS TO LIFE- CHANGING GROWTH**

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## About the Author



Rev. Dr. Jim Milley loves helping leaders. Whether he is training university students in Ethiopia, organizing large scale programs for adults as an associate pastor at a congregation, or raising his three children, Jim is focused on developing leaders who make a difference through discipleship, community transformation, and forming new Christ-following communities. Together with La Canada Presbyterian Church and many others, Jim started the Christian nonprofit, Bridges, in March 2010 that is deeply committed to seeing America transformed through a number of small, low-cost Christ-following communities. Partnering with existing churches, these communities form a network of both new and old, large and small, high-cost and low-cost churches. Jim believes the future church of America is taking shape all around us. There is hope. God is working.

### About Bridges



Bridges is a Christian non-profit that empowers local leaders to improve the lives of people in their communities. Whether our leaders are helping pregnant teenagers, feeding the hungry or assisting the elderly, Bridges helps these leaders accomplish their goals by providing Assessment, Coaching, Training, and Support (ACTS). With your partnership, Bridges will realize its dream of an America transformed through an ever-increasing number of local Christ-following communities working for the common good of all.

We provide the very best support to leaders seeking to change lives, start new ministries, and facilitate newly Christ-following Communities among the many cultures outside the existing church.

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A close-up photograph of a hand sowing small, light-colored seeds into dark brown soil. In the background, several small green seedlings with two leaves each are growing out of the soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

# Introduction

## HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE ARE GROWING?

I enjoy laughing. Maybe a little more than most people. When I saw the president of our local YMCA, I gave him a great big hug and then took a step back, “Tyler, I am sorry to have to share something with you.” I paused. “I am suing the Y. Now, I am not the only one. It is a class-action lawsuit. You see, there are a number of us—I am just the spokesperson—and we have come to believe that we have been seriously overcharged for a very long time. You see, we have been members of the YMCA for decades, some of us four or five decades, and we are in worse shape now than we have ever been in our lives.” I thought it was not only a great joke, but it made a very good point.

Tyler didn’t miss a beat. “Well, Jim, you see, to get the benefit of the Y, it is not enough to be a member and pay your monthly dues, nor enough to come here, walk around, and talk and tell jokes. You have to actually participate in the activities, especially the ones labeled as ‘exercise.’”

While Tyler and I were joking about the YMCA, there are a growing number of people in America who are starting to ask similar questions about church. Are we getting our money’s worth? How do we know if we are growing? How can we tell if we are becoming better people, or more generous people, or more serving people? And by the way, what is the point of it all? What is the end game? Is it really just about my growth? What is the vision for the outcome of all this activity? Is it enough to be a member, or are there particular activities that are required to obtain the benefits of church?

## Introduction

As children, many of us felt like school was pointless. We wondered if we would ever have any use for what we learned in algebra or history. But adults would assure us that other adults had spent a lot of time trying to figure out exactly what was most beneficial for us to learn so that we could do well in a democratic, capitalistic, competitive society. And in fact, there is a broad range of researchers who have committed much study, research, data collection, and analysis to answer these important questions.

Has anyone done that kind of thinking about all our time spent in Bible study? Or in worship services? Well, in some respects, yes. Theologians, philosophers, sociologists, educators, marketing experts, and psychologists have been studying how humans learn and how behaviors are changed, for better or for worse. Dallas Willard, a philosopher from the University of Southern California, combined theology, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology into a theory of how humans mature and what maturity looks like.<sup>1</sup>

I am going to share with you 10 of the most powerful steps for personal growth that some of the smartest people in the world have discovered. These steps are not hard to do. You will not be asked to travel to a remote location nor meditate for thousands of hours. The steps are not expensive. There is no product to buy that costs \$500 per month for the rest of your life. You do not have to read ancient books with arcane words. The steps are simple. But surprisingly, relatively few people actually benefit from these steps. You see, it doesn't help to know them. It only helps if you practice them, just like exercising at the Y leads to better health while just being a member does not. I don't really understand why so many people walk away without putting known solutions into practice. My only question is, What about you? Will you walk away? Or will you leverage the 10 simple steps of this little eBook in order to change the rest of your life?

**Begin Today. Simply begin your eBook download by clicking here.**

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<sup>1</sup>Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav-Press, 2002), 77.

A misty, ethereal cave scene with hanging roots and a small lantern.

# Step 1

## CREATING SACRED CAVES

When I was a child growing up in the cold state of New Jersey, my parents used to argue in the home. I can still hear their voices in my head today as I write this sentence. It didn't matter if I was upstairs in my room or outside in the backyard; I could hear them. And when they yelled, I didn't feel safe. I certainly didn't want to stay in the same room with them.

One day, perhaps in response to a very ordinary verbal fight or perhaps in response to an especially big one, I ran out of the house and across the street. Our house was in a neighborhood surrounded by woods, and the woods were surrounded by a golf course. I headed into the woods and walked, houses to my left, fairway to my right. The trees were leaning under a stiff wind. Staying under the cover of tall, broad-leaf trees, I walked up a hill and down a hill, around a corner, and there before me was a wall of fallen leaves in reds and browns and purples and yellows. The wind had blown the leaves up against a fence so that there was a pile that reached over my head. I began to dig a path in the leaves. I dug a tunnel that led to a cave of my creation. The sunlight shone through the leaves in places, but I was safe. No one could see me. Like white noise, the wind blocked out everything except my thoughts and imaginations. Tears began to flow. I cried.

As a boy, I had created a safe and sacred space for myself. I had very little ability to reflect on what was happening or on what I needed, and yet I still created a space away from conflict, noise, responsibilities, commands, shoulds, violence,

## STEP 1

pain, and urgency. A place of color and light, peace, silence, stillness, and solitude, where reflection, feelings, thoughts, and truth can reveal themselves without fear or shame.

It turns out that all humans need safe and sacred space as a prerequisite for genuine growth and change. When our glands activate and shoot adrenaline into our veins, our frontal cortex shuts down. We want to run or fight, our cognitive focus narrows, creativity wanes, and old patterns re-emerge over more newly learned behaviors. Recently, my friend told me a story about visiting his son at college. Right in front of my friend and his wife, the son's girlfriend said to him, "Why are you acting like you did in high school?" The reason was that his mother had begun to criticize him. He had begun to cower and act out with some passive-aggressive words and actions. Old behavior patterns trumped newer ones.

Where have you discovered safe and sacred space for yourself? Perhaps you found it in a church sanctuary? But there is a growing number of people who do not feel safe in a church building after a negative experience. Bridges is a Christian non-profit that empowers local leaders to improve the lives of people in their communities. Our Bridge Leaders learn how to create safe and sacred space for others in common, everyday spaces: a moment in a coffee shop, by a hospital bed, on a front porch, waiting at the school gate, standing in a pool.

It is with our souls that we create safe and sacred space with others. We name the space with our words. Our non-verbal actions may reinforce that sense of safety and sacredness. But it takes a congruence of our words, our actions, and the extension of our souls. And of course, it is not entirely in our hands or within our control. It is the presence of God that creates an overflowing sacredness that feeds our souls. I was not alone in my cave.

Imagine a community of people who are practicing the habit of creating safe and sacred space for themselves and for others, in common, everyday places. We are all digging tunnels in leaves and creating caves with our creative imaginations.

## STEP 1

1. What in your life indicates that you are ready to create safe and sacred space for yourself?
2. Where might you go that feels safe? What would you need to do to reserve for yourself some space and time to be alone or with a few trusted friends?
3. What might you do to invite God into your space and time? You might try saying this simple message to God: "God, I want to invite you into my life. I want to invite you to help me grow as a person. Especially during this time and this place, I invite you to work within me and speak to me as you would like. Thanks."
4. What do you need to do next to create safe and sacred space for yourself?
5. Who might help you create safe and sacred space for yourself or at least be someone with whom you could share your intentions?

This is the first step. And this is enough for today. There are nine more steps that Bridges is going to provide for you over the next nine weeks. Each one will come with winsome stories that will motivate you to take the next step. Together, we can take the 10 steps that lead to life-changing growth!



A person with a backpack is walking away from the viewer on a dirt path that leads towards a bright sunset over a calm lake. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a golden glow across the sky and water. The path is flanked by grass and small plants.

# STEPS AHEAD

## CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

I know some of you really want to know all 10 steps. And you don't want to wait 10 weeks. It does help sometimes to have a sense of the path before us. So, here are the 10 steps in bullet point. We will be diving into each step so that we can embrace it and be changed by it. It cannot happen in a single day nor a single week. Step by step, together, we will make the journey.

1. Create Your Cave
2. Identify an Unfinished Story
3. Ask God for Help
4. Share Our Unfinished Story.
5. Reflect on Our Unfinished Story
6. Reflect on Related Scriptures
7. Choose and Write Down Action Steps
8. Take Action
9. Reflect on our Experience of Taking Action
10. Repeat

A person stands in the center of a graffiti-covered tunnel, looking out at a bright light at the end. The scene is silhouetted against the light, creating a strong contrast. The walls are covered in various graffiti tags and drawings. The floor is made of brick or cobblestones.

## STEP 2

### PRAY FOR GOD'S HELP

His hands were firmly around the white, Styrofoam coffee cup. And he was speaking into it slowly and deliberately. We had finished playing cards. The others had gone to bed. It was after midnight. All the exaggerated talk and posturing and bantering had faded away, and all that was left was a stillness and a sense of privacy around a small table. As 19 adults and children slept in the next room of the homeless shelter, Robert was getting honest, really honest. He was telling me some of the ways he had messed up his life. As he got towards the end of his story, he looked up from the audience of his white cup and looked straight into my eyes. After a long pause, he said to me, “Jim, I am so fucked up, that even when I try to get unfucked, I fuck it up.”

Wow. Maybe these are not the words we are used to using. But Robert was not wasting words. He was saying something very profound. He was experiencing something very profound. He was experiencing the sensation of deeply accepting that he was not in a position nor did he have the power within himself to bring about the change in his life that he really desired.

Until we have this experience, we do not feel the need for God's help deep down, and we cannot sincerely approach God with humility and urgency.

Do you believe in your power to change yourself? Or have you come to a realization? Many self-help books teach that you have the power to change yourself and your life. This eBook is not one of those. Bridges begins with a

## STEP 2

more humble assumption—that none of us can change ourselves in the ways that really matter and really last. We need God’s help. So, we begin by asking for God’s help.

This is simple. And yet we find that there is much within us that resists the simple step of asking for help. We find that we need help to overcome our resistance. We discover that we need help to ask for help.

Bridges teaches us the skills both to ask for God’s help and to receive God’s help. Bridges aids us in talking to God and listening to God. There is a give and a take, a talking and a listening, a push and a pull, a word and a response—a relationship.



**Join us for next week for Step 3:  
“Telling an Unfinished Story.”**



## STEP 3

### TELLING AN UNFINISHED STORY

We cannot change the past. We cannot change the future today. We can only change the present.

This means that our efforts of change need to focus on the decisions and issues that we are facing today.

When we begin to tell the story of what is happening today, we are telling a story that is by necessity unfinished. It is a story for which we do not know the ending. We are in the middle. Decisions still need to be made. Actions still need to be taken. We are not sure what to do. Or if we know what to do, we are struggling to find the courage and motivation to do it.

Usually, in the midst of our unfinished stories, we need our friends to come with us into the safe and sacred space that we have created. After all, to tell our “unfinished story,” we need someone to tell. And if the space is safe, we feel comfortable to share. And if the space is sacred, we have the hope that God could help us.

In Bridges, we gather into Support Groups not to study ancient texts nor to meditate on abstract principles. Rather, our main focus is on the decisions and issues that we are facing today, currently, in real life with real people in real situations that really matter.

### STEP 3

So, we begin by picking one person in the group to tell an “unfinished story” of a current issue, situation, or dilemma that demands some type of decision, response, or action by the storyteller.

If you are the storyteller, just tell the story the way you want to tell it now. No need to think too much. No need to worry about what others will think. No need to edit too much. Just let it flow. It is the story that you are telling yourself about the issue that you are facing right now. Not the story from three years ago. Not the story you have told many times. This is a new story that is not quite finished yet because it is not fully lived. This is the story of what is happening to you now, and you are trying to figure out what to do.

The whole group listens to the story. At this point, only listening is allowed. Listening is necessary. Listening is sufficient.



**Join us for next week for Step 4:  
“Reflect on the Unfinished Story.”**



## STEP 4

### REFLECT ON THE UNFINISHED STORY

Once the story has been told with all of its unfinished edges, we can reflect together. As we reflect, we are looking for a new perspective, new insights, and new options for next steps.

#### **The first questions are only for clarification:**

- What did you mean by...?
- Could you say more about...?
- I did not understand what you meant by ....  
Please explain more about that.
- When you said this..., did you mean this... or this...?

#### **The second set of questions helps you tell more of the story:**

- When you said..., how did you feel?
- When you did..., what did the other person do or say?
- After you said..., what did the other person do or say?
- What happened in the story after the part where you...?

## STEP 4

### **The third set of questions helps you to gain new insights and frames for your story:**

- Which Bridging Skills could be used in this situation?  
(See the 101 Bridging Skills in the Bridging Store)
- What insights or perspectives from psychology might elucidate this situation?
- What insights or perspectives from sociology might elucidate this situation?
- What are the cultural differences between the participants that are affecting the situation?
- What are the racial, class, power, or linguistic issues affecting the situation?

All members of the group are invited to share their reflections through stories. This is not an opportunity to give advice directly to the storyteller. Rather, people in the group are supposed to tell stories from their own lives when they faced similar decisions, problems, or opportunities. They can answer any of the above questions about their own stories. As long as they are not offering advice, they can answer any of the above questions for the “unfinished story” of the storyteller.



**Join us for next week for Step 5:  
“Identify Related Stories from Scripture.”**





## STEP 5

### IDENTIFY RELATED STORIES FROM SCRIPTURE

Once we've told our story, we look for Scriptures relevant to our experiences. The first person to suggest related Scriptures is the storyteller themselves. Next, friends in the circle suggest stories from Scripture they believe relate to the "unfinished story" of the storyteller. Everyone is invited to participate in answering two simple questions:

- Which stories from Scripture have points of connection with the "unfinished story?"
- Where is that Scriptural story located?

It is not necessary to memorize chapter and verse. It is enough to be able to find the biblical story for yourself. Is it in the Old Testament or the New Testament? In Genesis or Psalms or Matthew? Towards the beginning, middle or end of the book? And of course, it is OK to use your favorite search engine. Just type in a phrase you remember from the Scriptural story.

An even more important way of "locating" the Scripture is to discover what is written in the text immediately before and after the Scriptural story you have suggested. Many times, the key to a story's intended meaning is not within the story itself but in the context. My entertainment friends point out that the



## STEP 5

“subtext” is more determinative to the meaning of a scene than the text. And so it is in the drama of Scripture.

### **Read the Scriptures(s)**

Many people may find this Bridges approach a little awkward because Christian gatherings usually start with Scripture rather than with an “unfinished story.” This seemingly “backward” approach of Bridges ensures that life application has prominence rather than abstract knowledge. Many religious groups gather to study religious texts. These groups spend most of their time asking questions about the story in the religious text, such as a story in the Bible. Often, the last question of the study is, “How does this apply to your life?” After spending typically just five minutes discussing this last question, the group ends the study and moves to the final prayer before leaving to go home.

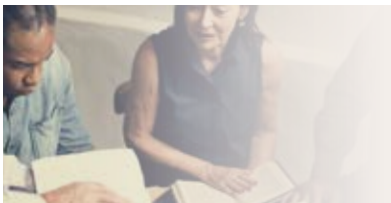
I once visited a group of women in their 80s who had been meeting monthly in the church basement together for over 40 years to study the Bible. In the Bible, Jesus instructs his disciples to make more disciples. He also says that his disciples will obey his commands. And yet, I was afraid to ask them how many disciples they had made for Jesus. I suspected it would be too painful for them to consider that they had studied for 40 years and yet failed to do what Jesus had instructed and commanded.

The other great thing about this “backward” approach is that it provides a great deal of motivation for people to read and study the Bible regularly and often. In order to have a story of Scripture come to mind that somehow relates to the “unfinished story” from the current life of the storyteller, a person needs to know a lot of stories from the Bible. The more stories which are stored in a person’s memory, the more stories can be brought to mind or “tapped” by the Holy Spirit when listening to the storyteller.

While listening to an unfinished story, many people are concerned that nothing from Scripture will come to mind because they don’t know Scripture well. Hence, a little concern may lead to a lot of motivation. Bridge Leaders do not

## STEP 5

study the Bible because they are supposed to or simply because it is a good thing to do. Rather, Bridge Leaders study the Bible because they never know which story in the Bible will be the one needed to affirm, encourage, or bless the next person who begins to share an unfinished story with them in a coffee shop, at work, or during an Uber ride. When real-life situations with real people require any story from the Bible at any time, one begins to feel the need to know all the stories all the time.



**Join us for next week for Step 6:  
“Reflect on the Stories of Scripture  
With some Questions.”**



## STEP 6

### REFLECT ON THE STORIES OF SCRIPTURE WITH SOME QUESTIONS

- Why did this Scripture come to mind in relationship with the “unfinished story?”
- What are the points of connection with the “unfinished story?”
- What are the points of disconnection with the “unfinished story?”
- How does the story from Scripture reframe or reinterpret the “unfinished story?”

Let me share with you a real-life example of how a Scripture can reframe an “unfinished story.” Right now I am sitting in a comfy faux-leather brown chair in Starbucks. For me, this Starbucks is a safe and sacred place. God has met me here many times. I have prepared sermons here. I have counseled hurting people here. I have reconciled with my wife here more than a few times after a disagreement or conflict.

About a year ago, I sat down in my chair across from a man typing away on a laptop in another comfy chair. After the usual polite greetings, I asked, “Looks like you are working. What kind of work do you do?” He replied, “I just moved here to take care of my sick Mom. I had to leave my job up north. She needs total care—help to eat, help to get to the bathroom, help to get changed. It’s my new full-time job.” “Wow, that sounds intense,” I said. “Yeah well, it wouldn’t be so

## STEP 6

bad except that my mom is super religious. She keeps telling me that I need to accept Jesus into my heart. She says that if I don't ask for forgiveness that I will go to hell. 'Just do this for your sick mother,' she says, 'just accept Jesus as your Savior.' It is driving me a little crazy." After a pause, he says to me, "So, what do you do?"

I had to explain to this unsuspecting stranger that I am a pastor and lead a religious nonprofit that helps people connect with God. I said, "I am so sorry about what you are having to suffer through as you take care of your sick mom. That must be really hard. And I want to share with you two things that I hope will help. First of all, I want you to know when Jesus talks about hell that he is usually talking to religious leaders who are using religious power to hurt regular people, so I want to encourage you not to worry so much about the threat of hell. Seriously, Jesus' harshest words were for people who seemed very religious. Second, there is a verse in the Bible that I want you to know about. It goes like this, 'Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress' (James 1:27). I am guessing that your Mom is a widow? It turns out that what you are doing is the biblical definition of pure and genuine religion.

I want you to know that when you are taking care of your mom, God is smiling. Whenever your mom starts nagging you, I want you to turn this sentence over and over in your head." I slowed to a mantra cadence: "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for ... widows in their distress.' I paused deliberately---and then continued, "It turns out that you are the true deal---the truly religious." Tears were rolling. I believe that the Holy Spirit was there. I believe that a life was changing.

This is how we connect Scripture and the "unfinished story." This is how the Scripture reframes the "unfinished story."



**Join us for next week for Step 5:  
"Identify Related Stories from Scripture."**



## STEP 7

### DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO DO NEXT AND WRITE IT DOWN

My new friend in Starbucks now has the opportunity to take action. He might choose to look up the verse James 1:27 on his own, read it, memorize it, perhaps write it on a 3 X 5 card to keep in his wallet. He could frame it and hang it over his mother's bed. He might begin to talk to God about it. He might choose to create his own safe and sacred space, invite a friend, and share his "unfinished story" that now includes an encounter with a stranger in a Starbucks. He might choose to do none of these things and to forget about this encounter entirely as a strange experience.

The opportunity to take action or not to take action is entirely within the power and choice of the storyteller. Make no mistake--There is no coercion here. It is important that no coercion is applied by others, whether intentionally or unintentionally.



**Join us for next week for Step 8:  
"Go Forth and Take Action."**

A woman with dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up, looking slightly to her left with a thoughtful expression. Her hand is near her chin. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen or a similar indoor setting.

## STEP 8

### GO FORTH AND TAKE ACTION

When we say, “take action,” we are referring to the type of action that makes an impact. We are not referring to the type of religious activity that has no impact on ourselves, others, or our communities and nations. It is possible to live a very “active” religious life and not be taking actions that lead to the changes we desire.

**The book of James describes what people are like when they hear the Word of God but go away without reflecting and without a plan of action:**

For if you listen to the Word and do not obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

(James 1:22-25)

We would like to be the kind of people who look in the mirror, see that our hair is messed up, and promptly get a brush. It is a great accomplishment for many of us to look in the mirror. And yet, just looking does not necessarily lead to change. That is why we are praying and asking God to empower us by the Holy Spirit to make the changes in our lives that lead to life, joy, and meaningful service to others.

## STEP 8

The book of James does not avoid stating the truth plainly: “Don’t just listen to God’s Word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.” Many people are fooling themselves, but the fact that you have read this far means you are already on the path towards accepting whatever you discover in the mirror and allowing God to change you.

When we create safe and sacred space, tell our “unfinished story,” and then spend the time to reflect on our story and related Scriptures, we will have new insights that lead to new possible actions. When we write down those actions and share them with a friend, we are moving towards a life-changing experience.

May the Spirit of the Living God meet you as you read, reflect, and take action. May the God who raised Jesus from the dead empower you to respond to what the Spirit is saying to you through your “unfinished story,” your friends, and through the stories of Scripture.



**Join us for next week for Step 9:  
“Sometime Later, Talk to Someone About  
the Experience of Trying to Take Action.”**





## STEP 9

### SOMETIME LATER, TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF TRYING TO TAKE ACTION

Many of us are afraid to share with someone else our plans to take action, much less report back what happened. When I was a youth, too often this became an interrogation and shame exercise: “Did you do it?” “When?” “How?” These are not very helpful questions. Our goal is not accountability. Our goal is learning from our actions or inactions.

With the help of a friend, use the questions below to process your experience.

**Questions that help us learn from our fulfilled or unfulfilled plans go something like this:**

If you did what you planned to do,

How did it feel while you were doing it?

What did you learn from those feelings?

How did you feel after you did it?

What did you learn from those feelings?

What were the results of doing it?

What did you learn from those results?



## STEP 9

If you did not do what you planned to do,

Was there something else you ended up doing?

What moved you towards the new plan?

What were the results?

How did you feel about the results?

If you did not do what you planned to do,

What resistance did you discover inside of yourself?

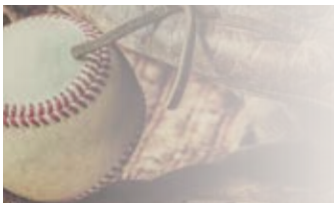
What can you learn from that resistance?

What external resistance did you discover?

What can you learn from that external resistance?

Would you like to keep this goal, discard it, or change it?

If you would like to change it, what would be the new goal?



**Join us for next week for Step 10:  
"Repeat the above 9 steps."**



## STEP 10

### REPEAT THE ABOVE 9 STEPS

It happens about once every two or three months. It is dark in the house and everyone is asleep, but I want something to drink. Half asleep myself, I patter into the kitchen and open the refrigerator door. The light from the refrigerator floods my eyes. In an instant, my brain registers that something is moving towards the floor. I have not identified what is falling, but my hand moves almost by itself. I have caught something. Now I see what it is. It is a bottle of ketchup. The time before that it was a glass of milk. I wonder at my ability. How could I be so good at catching things? I do it without even thinking. I was not even fully awake. It is like my hand and arm know what to do without my head.

How did I get this way? Well, I know the answer. I caught baseballs. Lots of baseballs. My Dad (and later, my coach) would hit a hard ball with a hard bat across hard ground at a significant speed. I would catch it and throw it back. And then they did it again. And I caught it again. And again. And again. My hand and arm are trained by repetition not only to catch but to respond without fear and without the need for a lot of top-down instructions.

Repetition is a key ingredient to all human learning. It is in our biology. Muscles grow in response to repeated lifting. Neurons grow in response to repeated experiences. The trainer at the YMCA tells me that it takes 12 weeks to form a habit. We are made to learn and grow through repetition.

## STEP 10

These 10 steps really work—but only if you repeat them. Almost as surely as exercise leads to fitness, and repeated experiences lead to growth in the neurons of our brains, you will experience the growth in your life that you have wanted for so long when you follow these 10 steps. Many individuals are experiencing tremendous growth through Bridges and through any community of people who put these 10 steps into practice. They are also inviting more people into the safe and sacred spaces which they are creating, and the transformation is spreading across America.

Notice that I said, “Almost as surely.” Ultimately, we are not in total control of our growth because we cannot control God. We ask for God’s help. We cannot guarantee God’s help. Sometimes it seems that God has not come and indeed, has not come in time. Sometimes it seems as if all is lost. When my friend George complains that God did a very bad job during the Holocaust, I cannot disagree. Even monks and nuns through the centuries who have earnestly sought spiritual maturity report that there are seasons in which God seems purposefully absent.

Just as parents provide less support as children mature, it seems that God provides times in our lives when we must stand and wait without the normally available sense of God’s presence and love. It is during these times that we especially need the companionship of friends. It is during these times that our best prayers are the repetition of, “Help, O God,” and “Come, Lord Jesus,” followed by “Not thy will, but thine be done.” It is only after these periods of God’s absence that we begin to discern whether the repetition during these most difficult times leads to a new level of growth, stronger muscles, and deeper insights.



**Join us for next week as we wrap it all up.**



# SUMMARY

## WRAPPING IT UP

Let's review what we have learned so far about the 10 steps. We call these 10 steps the Bridges Learning Cycle. It is easy to follow the 10-step pattern after a few practice runs around the cycle.

1. Create Your Cave
2. Identify an Unfinished Story
3. Ask God for Help
4. Share Our Unfinished Story.
5. Reflect on Our Unfinished Story
6. Reflect on Related Scriptures
7. Choose and Write Down Action Steps
8. Take Action
9. Reflect on our Experience of Taking Action
10. Repeat.

## SUMMARY

1. First, create for yourself some safe and sacred space. It is in this space where we can be real with ourselves and open ourselves to God's touch in our lives. Resist the urge to read Scripture first.
2. Identify an "unfinished story" in our lives for which we would like help.
3. Pray and ask God for help.
4. Gather some friends and share our "unfinished story".
5. Spend some time together reflecting on the story using the questions provided.
6. Spend some time thinking of stories from Scripture and using the questions provided to reflect on those stories in relation to the "unfinished story". Resist the urge to read quickly and rush off. The reflection time is key—reflecting on both the "unfinished story" and the Scripture.
7. You will discover that the entire pattern helps you reflect on your own life as well.
8. Before ending your time, be sure to decide what action you want to take as a result of what you have experienced. Write down that action. Share it with a friend.
9. Go and take action.
10. Sometime later, talk to someone about the experience of trying to take action.
11. Repeat.

This is the Bridges' Learning Cycle—prayer, followed by storytelling, followed by reflection, followed by Scripture, followed by reflection, followed by prayer, followed by ACTION.

Then, ACTION is followed by a repetition of the Bridges' Learning Cycle, beginning with the question, "What happened when I acted?" Or if you didn't act, "What did I learn from my own resistance to acting?"

# CONTACT US



**"TAKE YOUR LEADERSHIP TO THE NEXT  
LEVEL—MEET WITH BRIDGES TODAY"**

To learn more about Bridges and how we can help you take the next steps to create positive, meaningful change in your life, please contact Bridges at:

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