



# ACT3

Overview

*Discover God's Calling for the  
Third Stage of Life*

Thank you for your interest in ACT3! This overview is for the churches or individuals that are interested in learning more about ACT3 and the Discovery process. It provides insight into the teaching materials, experiences, assessments, activities, and overall process encountered in the Discovery Growth Groups. The final page contains information about how to take the next steps if you want to implement ACT3 at your church. You may also contact the ACT3 Team at [info@act3ministry.com](mailto:info@act3ministry.com).

## WHAT IS ACT3?

In short, ACT3 is a ministry that exists to help people discover (or rediscover) the purpose and calling that God has given them. Because our sense of identity and purpose often change throughout the various stages of life, we may find it beneficial to have some sound spiritual guidance to help us gracefully navigate those transitions. ACT3 provides that help – specifically those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life. Our mission is *to connect 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers to people and opportunities to serve in alignment with their calling.*

ACT3 was designed so that it could be easily implemented at any church around the globe. The participants journey through a seven-week Discovery process in which they rediscover their calling for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life, and they do this by sharing the experience with other 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers in small groups that we call Discovery Growth Groups. The Discovery process centers on the rich promise of Ephesians 2:10: *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

The seven-week experience helps participants develop a comprehensive look at the masterpiece that God created them to be, so that they may be better equipped to do the good works that God prepared for them to do. They develop this renewed picture of God's workmanship by using a unique tool called the *Calling Star*.



The *Calling Star* is a composite picture of six distinct yet related personal attributes that give insight into how God has wired you, where you have been, and where He wants to take you in order to fulfill His purpose for your life. Participants will individually and collectively explore these six points in their Discovery Growth Group:

**JOURNEY:** The story of your significant life events and experiences

**STRENGTHS:** Your natural talents (abilities, behaviors, and ways of thinking) with which you were born

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** “Others-focused” talents given by the Holy Spirit upon accepting Christ

**PASSIONS:** The good things that make your heart sing and the bad things that break your heart

**PEOPLE:** Those who have spoken into your life and those who are speaking into your life now

**RESOURCES:** Specifically, Time (the 168 hours available to you each week and how you use them) and Skills (the abilities you’ve honed to do something well)

While these six life variables are significant for everyone, they converge in a very special way for those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life. But before we get into why that is, let’s first address one of the most immediate and fundamental questions that emerges in ACT3.

## WHAT IS THE 3RD STAGE OF LIFE?

Many developmental, psychological, and spiritual models divide the human lifespan into four phases or stages. Some models distinguish between these phases on the basis of physical age (childhood, adulthood, elderhood, etc.) while others distinguish between them on the basis of shifting values, needs, priorities, etc. ACT3 emphasizes *stages* over *ages* when defining the different phases of life. We have found “young” 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers as well as “old” 2<sup>nd</sup> Stagers! Since we’ve found that the stages of life gradually shift in ways that are not always directly tied to physical age, we take an entirely new approach in defining the four stages of life:

### 1st Stage: The Preparing Years

The 1<sup>st</sup> Stage of life is a time of learning, foundation setting, and imitation. In this stage, we are preparing to enter into and function within society. While we seek independence, we also desire validation and strive to fit in with the people and culture around us.

### 2nd Stage: The Building Years

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage of life is a time of establishing our adult identity, contributing to society, and testing our limitations. We are focused on building our family and social world, our career and resume, our skill sets and life experiences, as well as our resources and balance sheet. 2<sup>nd</sup> Stagers are builders, explorers, and creators. We pursue the causes we believe are most important and begin to scale the mountains we feel compelled to climb.

### 3rd Stage: The Investing Years

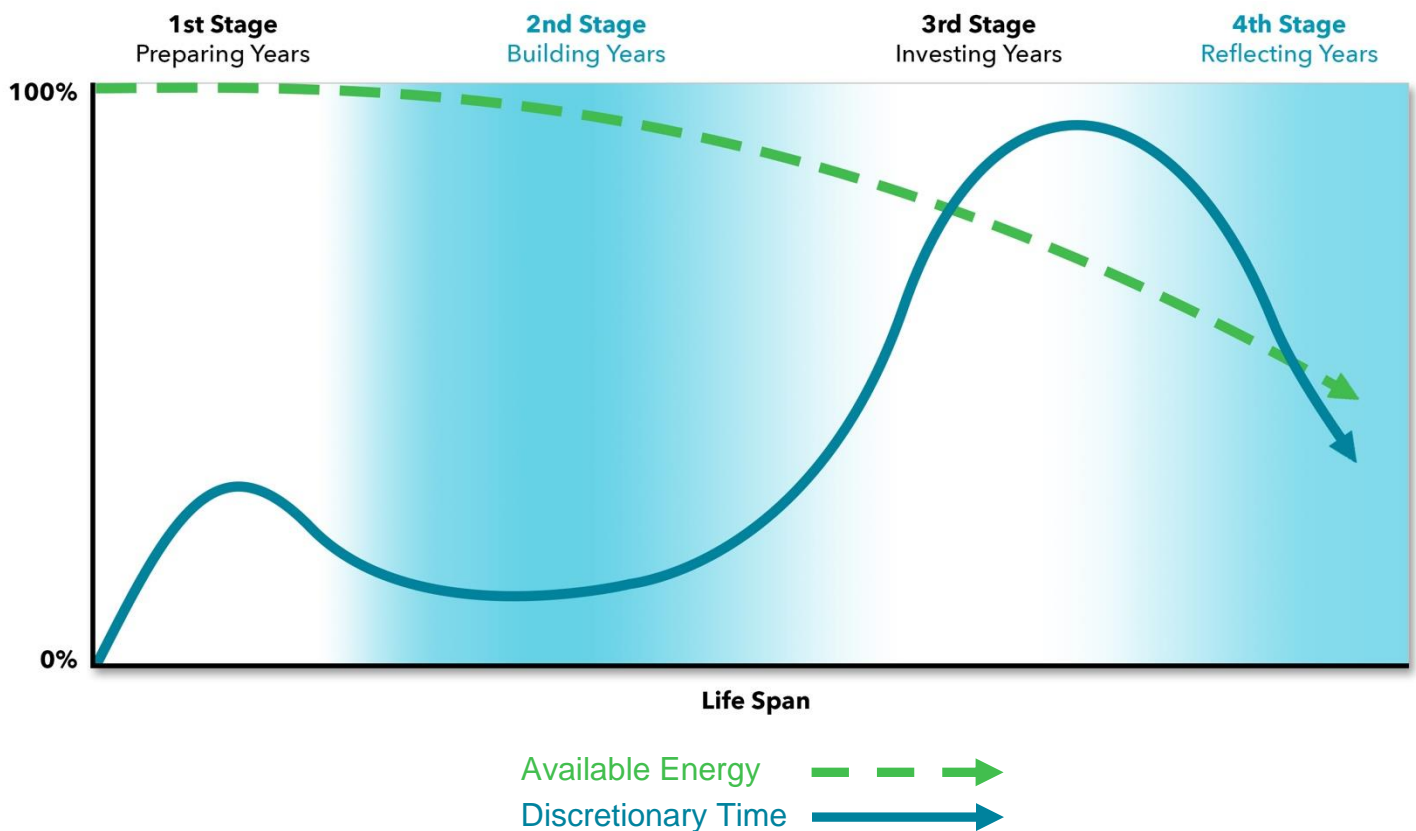
The 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life is a time of purposefully leveraging what we were able to build in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage of life and investing it in the world and the people around us. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage, we live up to our full potential and seek to add value to those around us as well as make a difference in the global issues that we care about most. This is our time to double down on what is most important, establish and secure our legacy, and truly make a dent in the world!

### 4th Stage: The Reflecting Years

The 4<sup>th</sup> Stage of life is a time of contemplation, mentoring those in the first three stages, and reflecting on battles won and lost. Where legacy was created in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage, the 4<sup>th</sup> Stage is a time to ensure that legacy lives on.

### Graphing it Out

In addition to the above definitions, we can also identify our current stage of life by looking at the relationship of our discretionary time and available energy. Graph out your levels of discretionary time and available energy as they evolved over the years and you will most likely see that these two factors naturally shift with each of the four stages of life.



As seen in the above graph, those in the 1<sup>st</sup> Stage most likely have *some* discretionary time, although the majority of their time is probably managed by the authority figures in their lives. The 1<sup>st</sup> Stage is also marked by great amounts of energy.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage usually sees a dramatic reduction in discretionary time due to the demands of work, children, projects, etc. However, their energy levels are still high – a critical factor that enables them to climb their mountains and explore the terrain.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage is marked by a significant rise in discretionary time and a sufficient amount of energy. This is discussed more below.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Stage typically sees a decline in discretionary time, as they once again become dependent on their support network and health care system. This final stage of life is also marked by a natural decline in energy.

### **How Do I Know if I'm a 3<sup>rd</sup> Stager?**

Many 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers report that their lives are marked by a *dramatic rise* in discretionary time. Perhaps children are leaving the nest, or perhaps career demands begin to lessen. Whatever the cause, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage is when you will likely find yourself with an increasing amount of free time that you fully control.

Similarly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life is marked by a *sufficient* amount of available energy. While you may not have the vigor that once let you scale the towering mountains of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage, you certainly still have the energy you need to accomplish almost anything you want.

A very simplified version of the relationship between discretionary time and available energy – and how it shifts over the four stages of life – can be plotted on a graph to demonstrate this point. Of course, everyone's graph would plot in a unique way depending on their health, career opportunities, family, available resources, trauma, and a dozen other life variables. The above graph is simply a general model meant to depict how the relationship of discretionary time and available energy often change as we move through the four stages of life.

If you find yourself with ample discretionary time and also feel like you have sufficient energy to accomplish your daily tasks, you may very well be in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life. With that said, one foundational truth runs throughout the ACT3 Discovery process: *God has an extraordinary and meaningful purpose for you, regardless of your stage of life.*

### **What is Unique about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of Life?**

Many developmentalists have concluded that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage is our greatest opportunity to make a difference in the world around us. It is not uncommon for 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers to also confirm this idea, as they are keenly aware of an inner voice that whispers that they have much more to give. They have so much to offer those in need and those charged with leading the churches that minister to people.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life is when we are at our fullest potential. We have developed our skills and education; our passions have ripened; we have navigated much of our journey and learned some hard lessons along the way; we have most likely benefited from others investing in our lives. It is these factors as well as our growing discretionary time that reveals the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage as the optimum time to personally invest our God-given capacities into a hurting, challenged world.

As seen on the ACT3 cover image, 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers have already scaled many mountains in their lives. It's from the heights of these peaks that they often find themselves asking, "Now what?"

ACT3 was created to answer this question. By following their *Calling Star* and rediscovering God's purpose for their lives, ACT3 participants will connect to people and opportunities to serve in alignment with their calling.

With the purpose of ACT3 clarified and the uniqueness of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life defined, let's examine what it is that participants experience in a Discovery Growth Group.

## OVERVIEW OF THE DISCOVERY GROWTH GROUPS

ACT3 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers participate in a seven-week series of home-based small group meetings. They can expect to experience the teachings, discussions, assessments, and activities outlined here:

### Week 1: ReFocusing Your Heart

In the first session, initial steps are taken to develop a relational setting for the duration of the group. An overview of the *Calling Star* is shared. The foundational prayer for ACT3, embedded in Ephesians 1:15-19, is taught and woven throughout the rest of the Discovery process.

**Activities:** Personal introductions, Journey Worksheet.

**Assessments:** Personal Strengths Assessment, Spiritual Gifts Assessment.

### Week 2: ReThinking Your Path

The first step to changed behavior is changed thinking. This session challenges us to prepare our minds for action. The role of the personal Journey Map helps them see how God has used their life experiences, both good and not-so-good, to prepare them for His future plans in their life.

**Activities:** Group discussion about the Journey Map and where God has placed each of us.

### Week 3: ReDiscovering Your Strengths

According to Psalms 139, the first stroke of the Master's brush lays the foundation of our masterpiece before we even draw our first breath. The first hints of God's plans for your life are discovered in confirming the natural talents He infused during the earliest moments of your existence. The assessment tool used in preparation for this becomes a powerful confirmation of the natural capacities God gave you.

**Activities:** Review of Personal Strengths Assessment, group discussion of talents and strengths, group discussion about calling.

### Week 4: ReCommitting to Spiritual Gifts and Relationships

The Master adds another broad stroke to you, His masterpiece, at the moment of your new birth as a believer in Christ Jesus. This stroke of His brush is studied through scripture and the use of

a Spiritual Gifts Assessment. In addition, time is spent on God's use of special people in your life to shape who you are and how you think. An exercise is used to specify and reflectively think about who those people have been and the impact that they made on you.

**Activities:** Group discussion about Spiritual Gifts Assessment results, group discussion of the people who have shaped our journey, group discussion about *kabod* and our sense of worth, People Worksheet, Passions Worksheet.

## **Week 5: ReCalculating Your Passions and Resources**

Passions may very well be the brightest point the *Calling Star*. Passions are considered a mature attribute that often emerge as we are exposed to the realities of the world around us. We use an exercise to clarify both passions and the resources you bring to the serving equation. Those resources are discretionary time as well as the skills you have developed through practice.

**Activities:** Group discussion about the People Worksheet, group discussion about the Passions Worksheet, personal sharing about rethinking the "finish line" of life, group discussion about resources (time and skills), Time Worksheet, Skills Worksheet, Serving Exploration Worksheet.

## **Week 6: Coaching Session**

The first steps of discovering opportunities to serve are taken during this personal coaching session. The foundation of this experience is the collective use of the *Calling Star* and the Serving Exploration Worksheet. An assigned ACT3 coach will help guide thoughts with helpful questions as multiple lists of opportunities to serve are presented. There is also a confirming role of peer input by a cohort participant.

**Activities:** Discussion with ACT3 coach.

## **Week 7: ReEngaging Your Calling**

Just as God added a seventh day of celebration to six days of work, ACT3 uses a seventh week to memorialize the Discovery experience and celebrate first steps taken by participants in their discovery of opportunities to serve. The Discovery experience ends with a meaningful moment: Declaring gratitude to the Master Server and a commitment to follow in His steps.

**Activities:** Communion and/or the moment-marking gift of an ACT3 Servant's Towel.

In addition to the content and activities of the Discovery Growth Groups listed above, the following resources and teams are needed to successfully implement ACT3:

**Participant Guides:** A resource containing the content and personal assessments that the Discovery process leverages to create a composite picture of the individual 3<sup>rd</sup> Stager's calling.

**Facilitator Guides:** A resource to supplement the Participant Guide with instructions to maximize the experience of the participants. The Facilitator Guide includes timelines for each segment of the weekly sessions as well as the Big Idea, the Desired Outcome, and the teaching points of each segment. Specific questions are also included to focus the discussion at three different levels of interaction.

**Communication Guides:** A resource containing suggestions and templates that can be used when sending invitation emails about the Discovery experience, welcome emails that direct registrants to the location of the Discovery meetings, and weekly reminder emails to encourage completion of the supporting assignments through the week.

### **Elements of a Local ACT3 Team:**

- **Facilitator Team:** Each Discovery Growth Group has two facilitators that are responsible for leading participants through the Discovery process as designed. These facilitators help to personalize the experience and apply the principles of the ACT3 materials in a way that best meets the needs of their local group.
- **Host Home Team:** Discovery Growth Groups are best experienced in a home environment, generally complemented with refreshments or a light meal. Groups typically range in size of 8-12 participants. The home environment will ideally include sufficient space and the host will ideally have the Spiritual Gift of Hospitality.
- **Coaching Team:** A unique aspect of the Discovery process is that it includes interacting with a personal coach tasked with guiding the participant to opportunities to serve in alignment with their calling. The coach ensures the participant understands the combined definitions and meaning of the six attributes represented in their *Calling Star*. The coach also partners with the Serving Coordinator to present the various lists of serving opportunities offered by the church, the church's partner ministries, and other community service organizations that are in alignment with the church's mission. Lastly, the coach is also responsible for advocacy and longer-term wellness checks on the assigned participant.
- **Serving Coordinator:** The Serving Coordinator partners with the local church to identify special opportunities in which the ACT3 participants can serve. This involves identifying the service needs, teams, and roles involved, as well as identifying and vetting all external serving opportunities in the local community. The Serving Coordinator partners with the Coaching Team to identify ministries and opportunities to serve that are in alignment with each participant's calling and desires. The Serving Coordinator is also responsible for maintaining the matrix of opportunities related to personality strengths, spiritual gifts, passions, and skills, as well as identifying specific roles within each ministry where those specific gifts and experiences may be best leveraged.
- **Connections Team:** This team leads all the local ACT3 events, including recruitment and alumni events, and manages all local communications and marketing responsibilities.
- **Operations Team:** This team ensures all participants have a seamless experience in the Discovery Growth Groups. In partnership with all the above teams, the Operations Team oversees the coordination of all administrative and logistics duties involved in the successful execution of the Discovery Growth Groups.

### **The End Result**

Perhaps the capstone of the Discovery process is the smile that breaks across the faces of the participants as they rediscover that they are truly God's masterpiece. They recognize that their journey is not complete and that God still has big plans for them – and that He has uniquely equipped them to



fulfill that mission. Participants often experience a deeply renewed sense of purpose, mission, and value in the Kingdom of God. This allows them to reach their full potential and secure their legacy as faithful men and women of God. In turn, this empowers them to serve others in alignment with their calling. This is why ACT3 was created.

## READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEPS?

If you believe the ACT3 Discovery process may help the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stagers in your church to rediscover their calling for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage of life, fill out this [contact form](#) and someone from the ACT3 Team will reach out to you. We are happy to discuss the details and walk you through everything involved in launching ACT3 at your church.

The ACT3 Participant Guide (ISBN 9781946093110) is \$14.95 retail, and the ACT3 Facilitator Guide (ISBN 9781946093103) is \$21.95 retail.

Churches or individuals are encouraged to purchase the guides [directly through the publisher](#) for a 20% discount.

Blessings to you as you rediscover God's calling,

*Jeff, Becky, and Courtney*

