



connect to reflect

INTRODUCTION

a personal journey **03**
reflecting Jesus is journey of my life



the challenge to believe

To what extent is the beauty (character) of Jesus something that practically motivates your life? What joys or challenges do you have with this idea?



deepening dependence

Spend some time to pray about the beauty of Jesus as a motivation for your life.



steps to re-connecting our hearts to God

1. Ask the Holy Spirit what he wants you to learn from this lesson. What do you sense the Holy Spirit teaching you?
2. This week, what practical steps do you need to take to apply what the Holy Spirit is teaching you?
3. What evidence will you see that indicates that you are successfully applying what the Holy Spirit is teaching you?



passing it on

- INTERCESSION** For whom can you pray, that the beauty of Jesus becomes their primary motivation for living?
- WORDS** With whom can you share the importance of the beauty of Jesus?
- CHARACTER** How could your desire to "gaze upon the beauty of Christ" be practically visible in your life?

Psalm 23 outlines the stages of life's journey...

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.



He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul.



4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, a I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.



6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



...Psalm 27 explains the reason for this journey...

4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.

right paths because they lead to the right place, the Shepherd's home. Secondly, they are right paths because they keep us on a journey in the company of the right person, the Shepherd. Thirdly, they are right paths because they shape us into the right people. Notice how we travel the paths of righteousness "for his name's sake" (23:3). "For his name's sake" means for the honour and glory of the Shepherd.

3. No matter how frightening our journey might be, the darkness is not a place to be feared for it is a place the Shepherd uses to mature us—whether we have gone there on our own, or whether he has led us there, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (23:4). It is in the darkness, like no other place, that we see God deliver us from attack with the rod and rescue us with his staff.

4. No matter how easy we expect our journey should be, the Shepherd may allow our enemies to surround us in order for us to gain a deeper understanding of his love for us, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (23:5). We may be tempted to think that our enemies will steal God's blessings for us, but they cannot. No-one can take what God gives to us.

5. No matter how lonely our journey may appear to be, the Shepherd is always present, "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (23:6)

6. The whole point of the journey is to "gaze upon the the beauty of the Lord" (27:4). The journey of Psalm 23 finishes at the house of the Lord, but the Psalmist does not explain why he is going there—but in Psalm 27:4 he does. The beauty of Christ, the perfection of his character is something that motivates the Psalmist's whole being. Pursuing the character of Jesus keeps him going when the valley is dark and enemies surround him.

There is nothing more precious to the Psalmist than the beauty of Jesus.



open to God's words

While the whole Bible explains the importance of reflecting Jesus from a cosmic perspective, Psalm 23 and Psalm 27 are helpful in understanding why reflecting Jesus is also at the heart of our own personal journeys.

The journey that begins in Psalm 23 is not always easy. Sometimes, going to the Shepherd's house may feel difficult and tiring. For such times, here are six encouragements as to why we should keep going on this journey.

1. No matter how unprepared and weak we might feel on our journey, the Shepherd promises to provide everything we need, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want." (23:1)

2. No matter how bewildering or confusing our journey might be, walking in the Shepherd's paths will always accomplish the Shepherd's purposes for our lives, "He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (Verse 3). Notice how these paths are all called "paths of righteousness" (NIV) or "right paths" (NRSV). But why are they called right or righteous paths? Firstly, they are