



# reflecting Jesus

BETA

character determines  
destiny **03**

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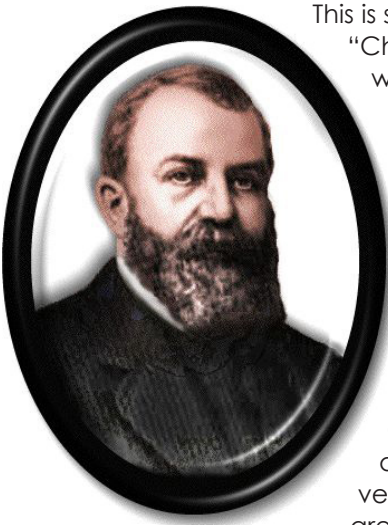
*did you know that...*

## people through history have claimed that character shapes our future

Around 2500 years ago, Heraclitus wrote that "Character is destiny". More recently, Samuel Smiles wrote, "Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny." And Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States (1858-1919) declared, "Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike."

## character consists of our thoughts and feelings

This is similar to what D L Moody, a famous preacher, meant when he wrote, "Character is what you are in the dark". In other words, character is what we are inside when nobody is looking.



**Dwight L Moody, 1837-1899**

**"Character is what you are  
in the dark"**

## character (thoughts + feelings) shapes our habits

And our habits—how we behave normally— shows what sort of people we really are. So if we want to change our characters, our habits will also need to change.

## our characters grow depending on the choices we make and the self-control we exercise

Character does not happen by accident. And we are not born with a certain type of character. Character is made by the choices—often very small choices—that influence the way we live. In a world where we are often pressured to live in ways that go against God, we will have to exercise strong self-control, in order to honour God in the way we live which reflects a character like His.



## *the facts of his story*

1. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, what did God reveal to him? (Exodus 33:18-34:7)

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2. What was the consequence of Moses' seeing the glory of God? (Exodus 34:29)

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3. Why do you think this happened to Moses, and what does it teach us?

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4. When writing to the Galatians, how does Paul describe the consequence—the “destiny”—of someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit? (Galatians 5:22-26)

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5. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 what is the destiny, or consequence, for people in whom the Holy Spirit is working?

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6. What does Jesus say is the destiny of those who reflect the characteristics of God? (Matthew 5:1-12)

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## *thinking it through*

We have looked at what a number of people have said about the link between our characters and our destiny. What thoughts, questions, and decisions do you have after reading the following quotations from Ellen White?

1. “A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, 332)
2. “Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never before was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so great as confront them today.” 1911. (Education, 225.)

Things to remember:

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Amy Carmichael took a group of children to see a traditional goldsmith at work in India. In the middle of a charcoal fire was a curved roof tile. On the tile was a mixture of salt, tamarind fruit, and brick dust, and embedded in this mixture was the gold. As the fire devoured the mixture, the gold became purer. The goldsmith took the gold out with tongs, and if it was not pure enough, replaced it in the fire with new mixture. But each time it was replaced, the heat was made hotter than before. The group asked him, "How do you know when the gold is pure?" He replied, "When I can see my face in it." (Amy Carmichael, *Learning Of God*, (London: SPCK, 1983), 50.)



## habits for reflecting Jesus ~ reflecting on character

### why reflection is so helpful

It is helpful to reflect on our lives in order to become conscious of how we are growing as Christians, because reflecting the character of Jesus does not happen by accident! Socrates said that the "unexamined life is not worth living." In other words, we have to first recognise what we are really like inside in order for us to have a chance to grow and change.

Imagine that you go to meet someone important without realising that have dirt on your face. That would be embarrassing. That's why we have mirrors, so we can check how we look. God has given us the Holy Spirit to act as a mirror for our souls—so we can see what we are really like on the inside.

When we spend time to pause, think, and be silent before God, it gives the Holy Spirit an opportunity to communicate to us about the progress of our lives, and the plans God has for us to increasingly reflect His character.

### how to use your Journal for reflection

Here is how you can use your Journal to help you reflect on the character of Jesus.

1. Find a quiet place where you can be by yourself.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your thoughts, and bring to mind anything that He wants to share with you, for He is the one who will "guide you into all truth"

(John 16:12).

3. Consider the following questions to help you reflect on character. Use your Journal to write down your thoughts, questions, conclusions, and prayers from what you think about.
  - a. Do I really believe that it is possible to change the way I am?
  - b. Have I clearly seen the character of God revealed in the Bible so that I am inspired to grow to be like Him? If not, what can I do about that?
  - c. Do I really care about being more like Jesus?
  - d. How much time do I spend thinking about my looks, popularity, possessions, playing computer games, or watching movies, compared to the amount of time I spending thinking about and developing my character?
  - e. To what extent am I willing to spend time, thought, and energy to improving my personal character to more fully reflect the character of Jesus?

(Questions adapted from Russell Gough, *Character is Destiny*.)

You can use your Journal to reflect on any area of your life with God. What's most important is that you can have regular times of quietness where you are not rushing around in order to be able to think clearly about your relationship with God. When you have the time and space to

do this, you will find that you will learn a lot quite quickly. Then your time with God will become increasingly interesting and meaningful. reflection even more enjoyable.

If you and a friend or mentor can regularly share your reflections together, it makes the habit of



## putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story", we saw that 1) the glory of God is not just bright light, but His character. 2) Like Moses reflecting the visible glory of God, so 3) God wants us all to reflect His character. 4 & 5) When the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, our spiritual destiny is to reflect the character and glory of Jesus. 6) Those who reveal Jesus will find that their geographical destiny is to be with Jesus in Heaven.

In "thinking it through" we read quotations about how important character formation is, for a character like Jesus' is the only thing that we will be able to take to Heaven with us.

In "habits for reflecting Jesus" we looked at journaling, which is a helpful way to become daily aware of God's work in us as we learn to reflect the character of Jesus.



## my time with God

1. Why do you think that God makes a link between our character and eternal destiny? (Matthew 25:31-46)
2. Jesus assured the thief next to him on the cross that his eternal destiny in Heaven was certain. If the thief did not need to spend time to reflect the character of Jesus, why should we? (Luke 23:39-43)
3. Why do you think that your will (choices) and self-control are critical to the development of your character?
4. Samuel Smiles wrote "Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny." If your thoughts shape your character, based on the type of thoughts you think about most, what sort of person are you becoming? What thoughts do you need to fill your mind with in the future to reveal Jesus more fully?
5. In the story about the making of gold, Amy Carmichael told how the goldsmith knew that the gold was pure when he could see his face reflected in it. What does this story teach you? (Hebrews 12:11)
6. When Jesus left the disciples to go to Heaven, he told them not to be afraid. Indeed, Jesus said it was better for Him to leave and the Holy Spirit be in his place. Why do you think Jesus said this, and what does this mean for you as you pursue a life shaped by the character of Jesus? (John 16:5-15)



## pass it on!

Can you explain to someone else why the glory of God is His character, and why reflecting His character is so important?



## extra help

1. Character is Destiny, by Russell Gough
2. Child Guidance, Chapters 31-36, by Ellen White.
3. "Without a Wedding Garment", Christ's Object Lessons, 307, by Ellen White.