

The background of the entire page is a photograph. It shows a woven basket, likely made of wicker or a similar material, filled with several white, spherical flowers that look like small chrysanthemums or similar daisy-like blooms. The basket is placed on a highly reflective surface, possibly a piece of glass or a polished metal plate. This reflective surface shows a clear, inverted reflection of the basket and its contents. The entire scene is set against a backdrop of a dense field of tall, green grass, which is slightly out of focus, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is natural, suggesting an outdoor setting during the day.

# Reflections of God

THE THEOLOGY OF BEAUTY

LEADER GUIDE

# Reflections of God

## LEADER GUIDE



This leader guide is simply meant to support you as you lead and provide additional questions for your group to discuss as you process this exploration of God's passion for beauty and the arts. If your group has a lively discussion going, there's no need to rush to get through all the questions. We simply want to make your role a bit easier and provide a starting point to get the conversation going.

A vertical image on the left side of the page shows a hand holding a broken mirror. The mirror is shattered, with a large piece missing, revealing a dark, textured interior. The hand is holding the handle of the mirror, which is dark and has a textured grip. The background is a light, neutral color.

# Leader Expectations

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## GATHER & FACILITATE CONVERSATION

We recommend that everyone in your small group read Reflections of God daily in their study book or online through the IF:Gathering app or IFEquip.com. Once a week, gather with your small group to dialogue about the daily questions and/or discuss the group discussion questions provided in this guide.

## BUILD A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR PEOPLE TO GO DEEP

**Pray:** Pray in preparation for your small group gatherings. Beg for the Holy Spirit to fall afresh and use your time together for God's glory.

**Lean on God:** God will have a unique agenda for your group each time you meet. Rely on Him instead of trying to control the conversation. Lean into your own weakness and into His strength and direction.

**Be transparent:** If you choose not to be vulnerable, no one else will be. If you desire women to feel safe with you and your group, be vulnerable.

**Listen but also lead:** Some women are taking a tremendous risk in being vulnerable with you. Protect them by not interrupting; instead, listen and empathize. In love, direct them to what the truth of God's Word says in their situation.

**Model trust:** Show your group how you are seeking God. Confess unbelief and ask for greater obedience to what God is doing. Ask God to convict you and lead based on how you are processing His will in your own life.

## KEEP UNITY A CENTRAL VALUE

As a leader, we give you the responsibility to keep a spirit of unity within your group. We ask for sensitivity, openness, and a simple and pure environment for everyone to study the Scriptures. Ask the Spirit to guide you in demonstrating love to everyone that you come across as you prepare and guide the conversation.





## Supplies

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- IF:Equip study book for each attendee, or access to the study on the IF:Gathering app or IFEquip.com
- Leader Guide
- Bible

Optional: Daily videos. If there are daily videos on IFEquip.com or in the IF:Gathering app that you feel are important to your discussion, use your computer or phone to play the video for the group.

## Suggested Format

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We suggest that women do the IF:Equip study on their own daily, then come together once a week to discuss your experience and what you have learned from the study. Begin with prayer and the daily questions, then supplement your discussion with the questions in this guide.

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# God, The Source of Beauty

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1. Have you been a “student of beauty” in any context before? What was your experience? Did you learn anything about God?

2. When you consider your life and situation, what specifically jumps out as a “dim reflection” of what God meant it to be? How might becoming a student of beauty help you remember who God is, who you are, and what is coming in the future?

3. Why is it comforting to know that God’s beauty is so radiant it shines? (Psalm 50:2)

4. What do we learn about God when we consider the billions of galaxies He has made simply for His own pleasure? What kind of response does this lead to?

5. What wonders of God in nature have you not stopped to ponder lately? How does pondering these wonders produce worship?

6. Job learned that the same God who made the beautiful structure of the universe is the One who holds our lives in His hands. How might that truth change the way we handle hard times?

7. Is your definition of beauty “cosmetic”? Are you easily pleased with the way the world has defined beauty for you? How can you work to define beauty as that which is sourced out of the goodness of God?

8. Have you been in a season of forgetting the beauty of your Creator? How will you be intentional about entering a season of remembering these next several weeks?





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# Imago Dei & The Fall

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1. What does imago Dei, being made in the image of God, have to do with our instinct to create? How have you witnessed this instinct in yourself in the past or currently?
2. What does our role as stewards over God's creation have to do with our innate desire to cultivate beauty wherever we go?
3. Cultivating beauty involves all kinds of work in this world, including service to others (1 Peter 4:10). When you think of serving others, what ideas or emotions tend to come to mind? Do you think of serving as part of stewardship?
4. In what areas of your life have you seen shalom shattered? How has clinging to what is beautiful and good proven helpful in those times?
5. How might we shift from only admiring beauty for beauty's sake to appreciation of the future (and eternal) beauty it is pointing to?
6. Have you felt recently like some part of you or your life were "outwardly wasting away"? (2 Corinthians 4:16) What is God's antidote for the frustration that might cause? (2 Corinthians 4:18)
7. What are your thoughts and feelings on starting a Beauty Journal? What do you hope this Beauty Journal ignites within you?

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# True Beauty & Redemption

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1. Have you ever seen God take something broken in your own life and make it more beautiful than it was before?

2. Are you living through a time of suffering now? How might remembering Jesus and how He suffered help? How might the promises of God bring you the hope you need?

3. There was nothing in Jesus' physical appearance to attract us to Him, yet people were immensely drawn to Him. Where did Jesus' beauty come from? And what will make us truly beautiful?

4. What "common stuff" in your own life are you struggling to find beauty in right now? Pray that God would reveal its beauty to you and that He would make you more like Jesus through this understanding.

5. What means of improving your outward beauty are your go-tos in times of distress? How have these attempts helped you in the past? How have they failed you?

6. How can we develop unfading beauty described in 1 Peter 3:3-4?

7. How have you recently sought the beauty of shalom in your home, community, or world? How did you see God move when you did?

8. What resources in God's kingdom have you not been considering yours? If you believed God for these, how might you go about fighting for justice and seeking shalom differently than you are now?







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# The Restoration of Beauty

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1. We are not yet fully experiencing everything we have been promised in Christ. How is this frustrating at times? How is it encouraging?
2. Which glimpses of the world to come (Abundance, Glory, Leadership, Wholeness) brought the most hope to your heart this week?
3. In what areas of home, work, or community do you long for restoration right now? How have you moved to seek restoration?
4. Which of Satan's "propaganda" concerning the body have you succumbed to lately? (Have you asserted yourself as lord over your own body? Have you gratified yourself where God said not to? Have you restricted yourself where God says there is freedom?) Has succumbing to Satan's "propaganda" caused damage to your relationship with God and/or others?
5. Why is the right view of soul and body so important to have as Christians, especially when considering engaging with the arts?
6. Christ bought your restoration through His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Is there any part of you that will not be restored? Why is this important for us to know and understand as Christians?
7. What Scriptures have we seen so far in this study that prove there is no part of us that is beyond restoration? What Scriptures show that God wants us to be an active part of the restoration of this world?
8. Consider memorizing one of these Scriptures this week, before we embark on a more practical discussion of our engagement with the arts.





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# Fighting for Beauty

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1. Which art form has had the most impact in your life?

Describe the kind of impact it has had and why.

2. Why do you think it's important that Christians fight for beauty? Why do we even call it a "fight"?

3. Scripture often references, promotes, and encourages artistic expression. Which mention of the arts found in Scripture (Day 2) had you never heard, or never considered in the way presented?

4. Think back on your childhood. What was your favorite way to use your imagination?

5. In what areas of life have you given up on imagination all

together? In what areas are you currently exercising your creative muscles?

6. What creative gifts do you have that God might want you to use for the good of others?

7. Consider a time when either appreciation for OR engagement with the arts filled your soul. What would it take to set aside more time for these kinds of activities in your schedule? Do you want to make these things a priority?

8. Why is a non-creative Christian an "oxymoron" according to Howard Hendricks? How can the practicing of the creative arts serve as an apologetic for God?





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# God & the Arts

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1. How can we be confident that the Spirit of God inspires artistic expression?
2. Before this study, how would you have defined “good art”? After the study, what would you say “good art” requires?
3. What lies have you believed in the past concerning the types of people God wants participating in the arts? What Scriptures combat these lies?
4. Are there currently “barricades” to your participation in creative engagement or expression? What are they? Do you think God wants to tear those barricades down?
5. What does participation in communal efforts require on behalf of an individual?
6. When we open ourselves to others, Christian and non-Christian, what can happen?
7. If you went on the nature walk suggested in Day 5, what was your experience?
8. How do you want to think differently and live differently on account of this study?

