

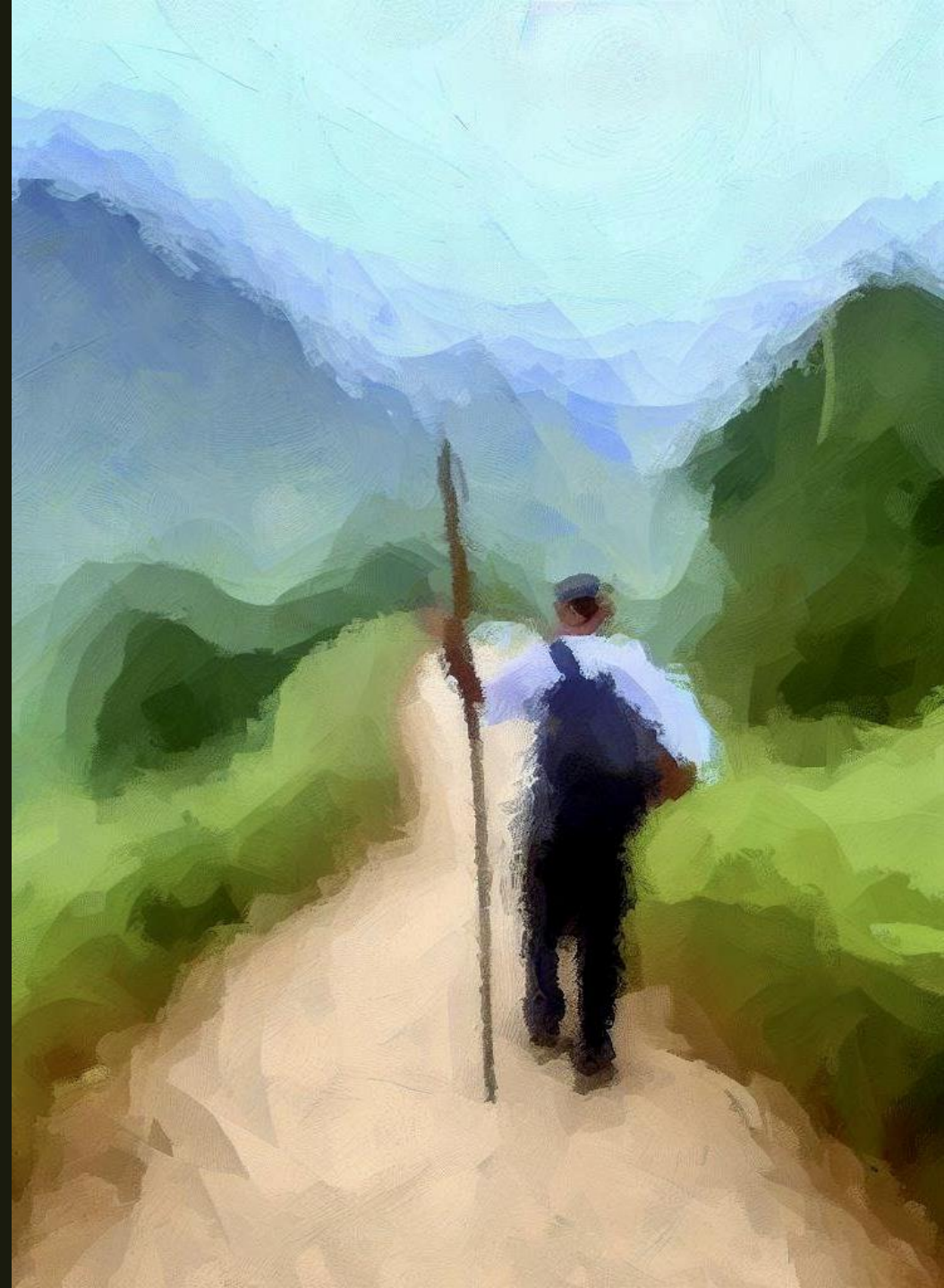


THE UPWARD JOURNEY

Spiritual Growth for Men

THE UPWARD JOURNEY 1

INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION



Spiritual growth

But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have **trained themselves** to distinguish good from evil. (Heb 5:14)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize.** (1 Cor 9:24)

What do you think about the idea of training in relation to spiritual maturity?

Spiritual Formation

- *Spiritual formation, I have come to believe, is not about steps or stages on the way to perfection. It's about the movements from the mind to the heart through prayer in its many forms that reunite us with God, each other, and our truest selves. —Henri Nouwen*
- What do you think about this? Have you thought like this before?





Spiritual Formation

- Spiritual Personal Development
- “God-help” not “self-help”
- At some point, we need to allow God to work on us. The sooner we allow him to work on our hearts, the sooner we will grow into the mature disciples that he wants us to be. Spiritual growth comes from learning to think spiritually. We have to stop thinking like the world and start thinking like Jesus.
- 1 Corinthians 3:1–3, *“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly.”*
- Main point: Spiritual development requires **intentionality** and **focus** or you stay put!
- Up for that?



Thirsting for God

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" (Ps 42:1-2)

Have I ever felt like this? Can I relate?

Personal

- Philippians 2:12–13 reads: Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out **your salvation** with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in **you** to will and to act according to his good purpose.
- Because spiritual growth is first and foremost a personal matter. It is between each disciple and God. [9]



Growth

- And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:52).
- Jesus grew—growth is good. Luke mentions that Jesus grew in four areas:
 - *Wisdom*
 - *Stature*
 - *Favor with God*
 - *Favor with man*
- What parts of life are these?
- Intellectual, physical, relational, spiritual

Plans

- What areas of life do we develop plans for?
- Career
- Education
- Marriage
- Finances
- Fitness
- Hobbies
- Holidays
- Spiritual growth?

- Intentionality required!



Holistic Approach

- You need a holistic approach to your spiritual growth that includes all aspects of your life. Ultimately, you need to spend time thinking about and planning how you want to grow. You need to set goals and accomplish them.
- You need to include many different spiritual disciplines in your plan of action.
- You need to understand where you want to be at the end of a month, six months, a year, five years, and ten years.
- You need to understand what your gifts are and then figure out how you can use those gifts for God.
- Agree or disagree? What do you think about this?



Development Plans

- This book will help you **develop a plan** for your spiritual personal development. It will help you **ascertain your spiritual gifts** and teach you **how to make wise, spiritual choices**. It will start you on the path to practicing spiritual disciplines that will **feed your spirit and help you connect with God**. It will help you **set and achieve spiritual goals** in your life.
- How does that sound?



Transformation

- *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3:18)*
- How does this work?
- What is the OT story being referenced here?
- What is the end-point?

Spiritual Disciplines (Dallas Willard)

Disciplines of Abstinence

- Solitude
- Silence
- Fasting
- Frugality
- Chastity
- Secrecy
- Sacrifice
- Watching

Disciplines of Engagement

- Study
- Worship
- Celebration
- Service
- Prayer
- Fellowship
- Confession
- Submission

Any surprises here?

Spiritual Formation (Henri Nouwen)

- Spiritual formation, to use the words of Elizabeth O'Connor, requires both a journey inward and a journey outward. The **journey inward** is the journey to find the Christ dwelling within us. The **journey outward** is the journey to find the Christ dwelling among us and in the world. The journey inward calls for the disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and attentiveness to the movements of our heart. The journey outward in community and mission calls for the disciplines of care, compassion, witness, outreach, healing, accountability, and attentiveness to the movement of other people's hearts. These two journeys belong together to strengthen each other and should never be separated.[Henri Nouwen]
- Journey inward and journey outward.
- What do you think about that idea?

Steve's List

Part One: Learning Dependence on God

The Inward Journey:

- 1. Prayer
- 2. Fasting
- 3. Meditation Silence, Solitude, Reflection
- 4. Bible Study Journaling, Memorization

The Upward Journey:

- 5. Worship Celebration
- 6. Surrender Trust, Submission, Obedience, Guidance, Suffering, Self-Denial
- 7. Repentance Confession

Part Two: Learning Interdependence with Others

The Outward Journey:

- 8. The One Another Way Fellowship, Mentoring/Discipling, Confession
- 9. Evangelism, Missions
- 10. Simplicity, Frugality
- 11. Service, The Servant Heart, Sacrifice, Giving, Ministry
- 12. Sanctifying the Ordinary, 24/7 Discipleship

Assignment

- Open a “My Upward Journey” file.
- Think, meditate, pray, and write down 5 or 6 possible spiritual goals to work at over the next 3 to 6 months.
- Will settle on 2 or 3 over the next few weeks.
- Be prepared to share them!





Growth goal ideas...

- A character weakness to develop or eliminate
- One or more fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
- Victory over a sin.
- Grow in love for people.
- New frontiers in evangelism.
- Constancy and extension in your prayer life.
- Calmness.
- Developing personal warmth.
- Setting boundaries.
- Deeper engagement with the Scriptures.
- Develop discipline in some area – eating, use of leisure time etc.

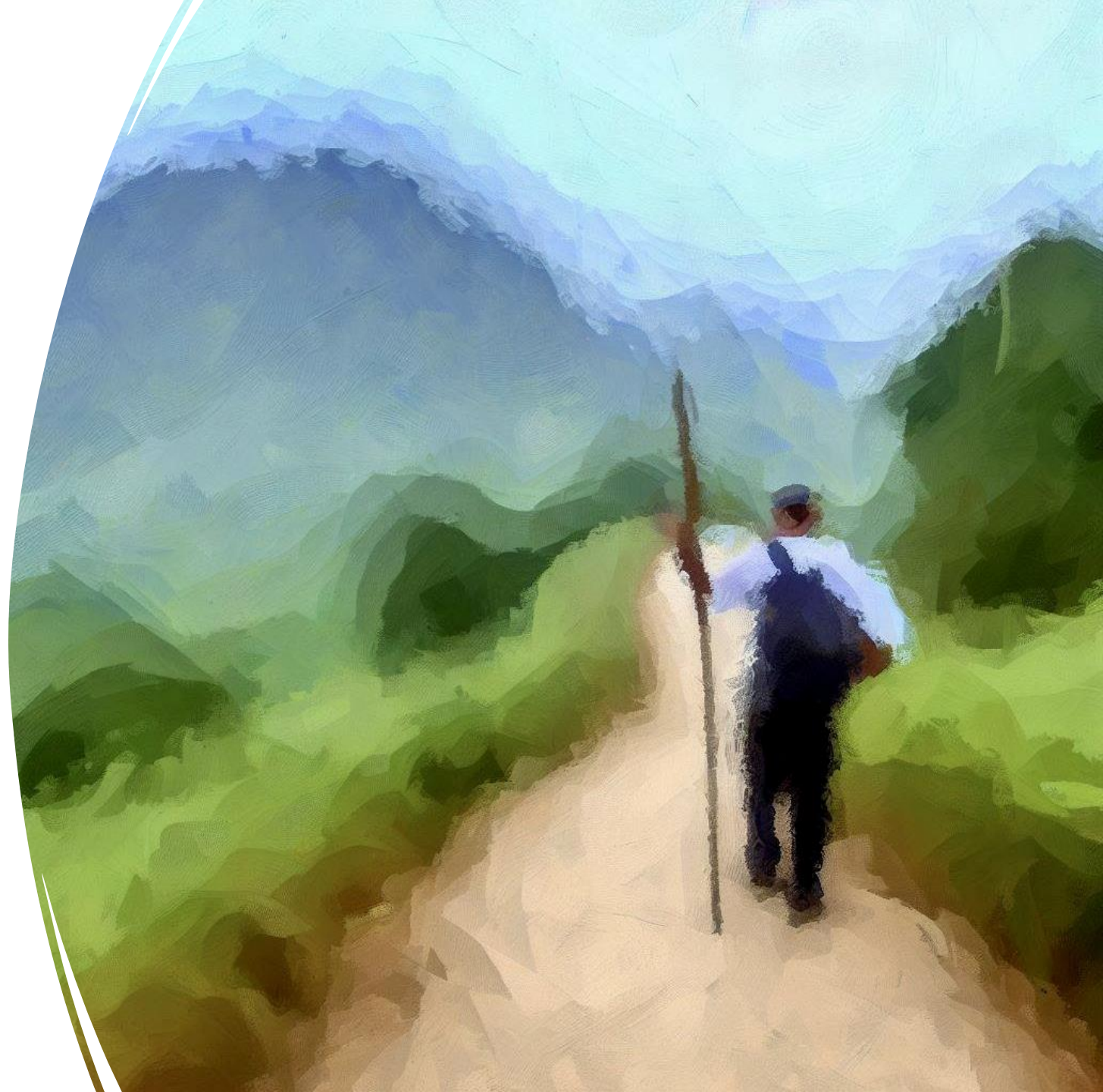


Reflection

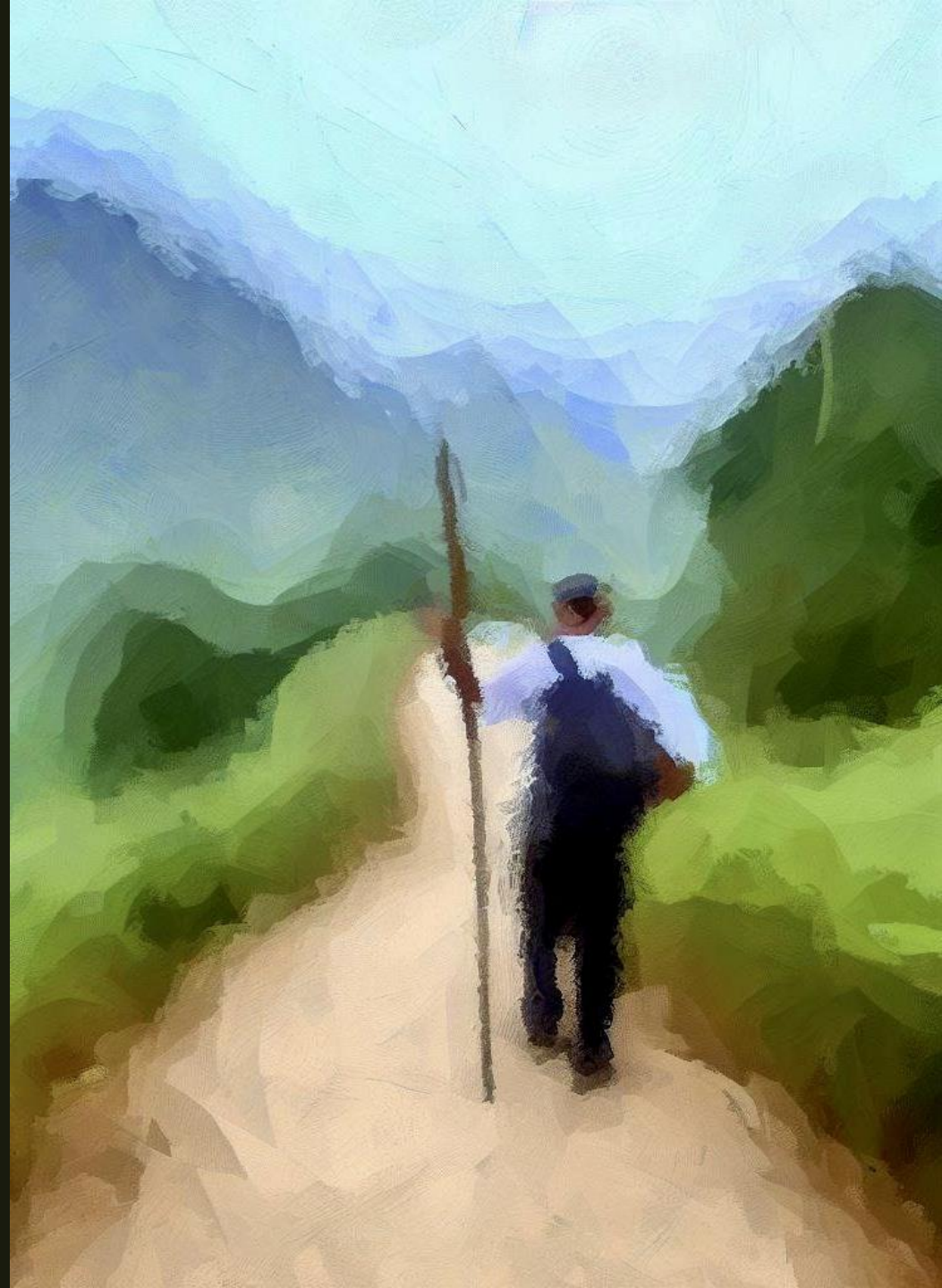
- What am I feeling?
Excited/daunted/disappointed/mad?
- What do I think about the idea of intentional focus on spiritual growth?
- How would I describe “spiritual growth” so someone?
- Are areas of personal goal-setting clear to me?
- What do I think about goal-setting?
- What are my main take-always today?

Where to from here...

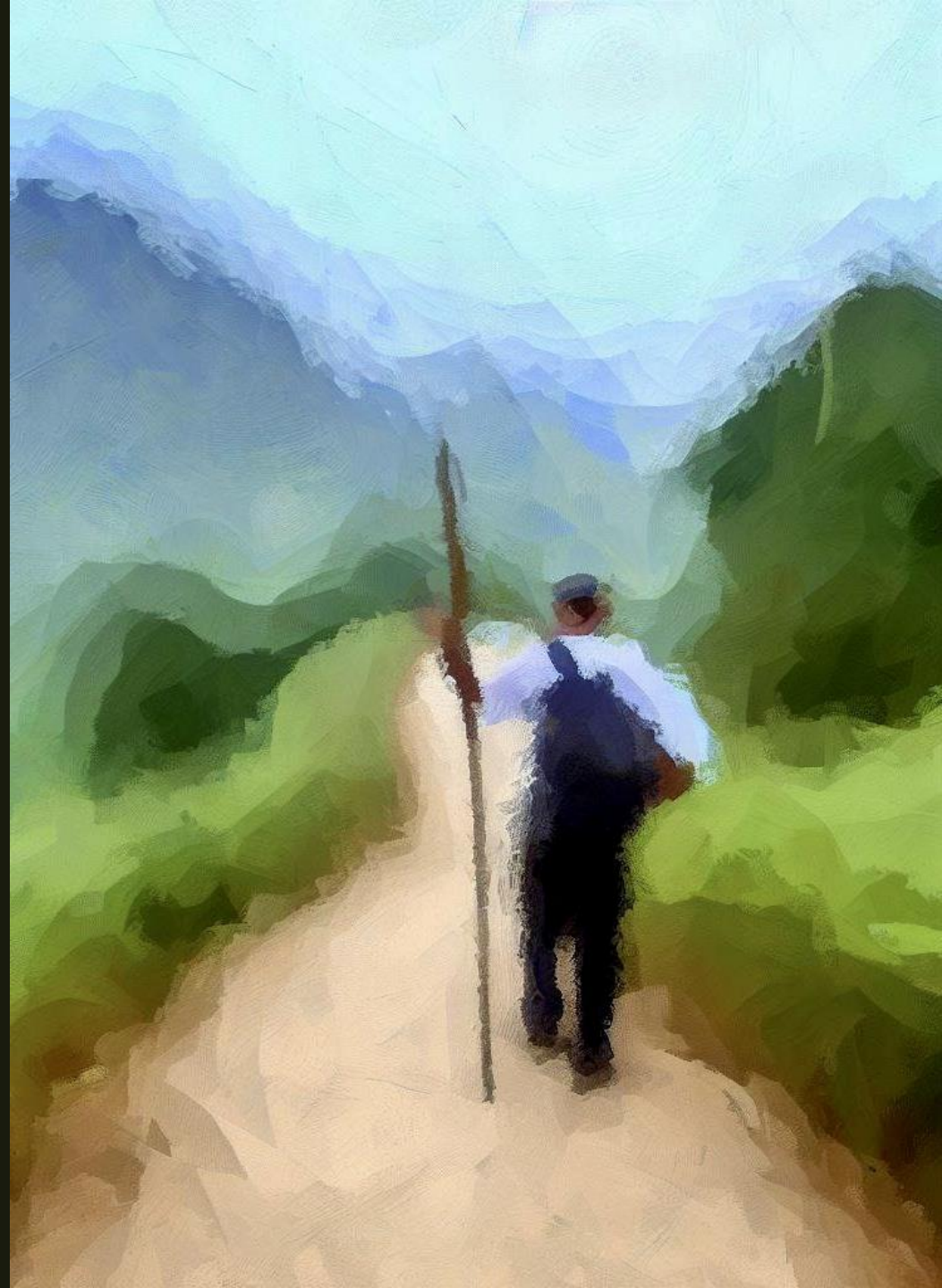
... focus on the spiritual disciplines **through the lens of Jesus** by looking at the practice of the spiritual disciplines in his life, teaching, and ministry. How did Jesus practice the spiritual disciplines? What did Jesus teach about each of the spiritual disciplines? How were they made manifest in his ministry?



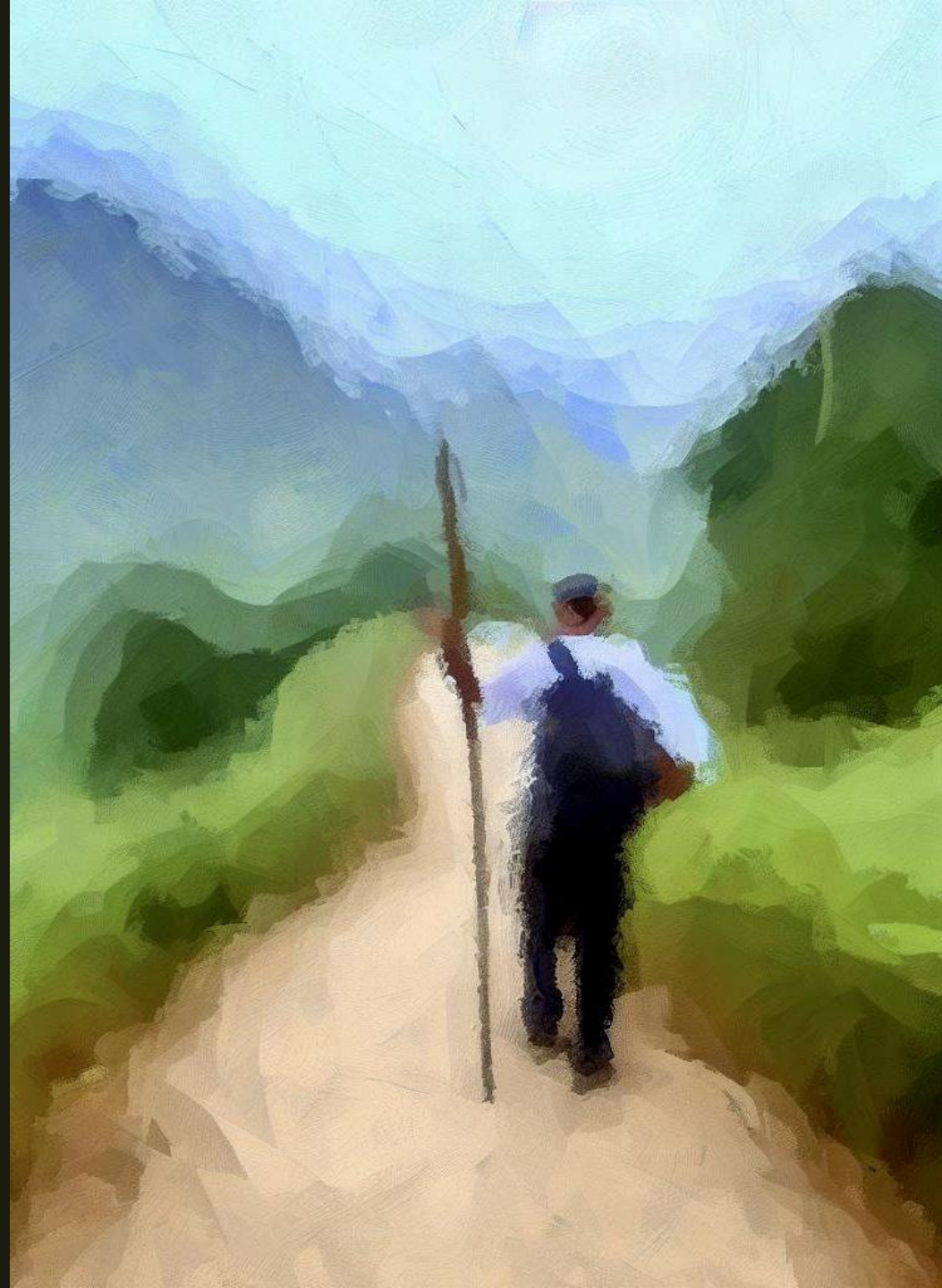
THE UPWARD JOURNEY 2
CONNECTION WITH JESUS



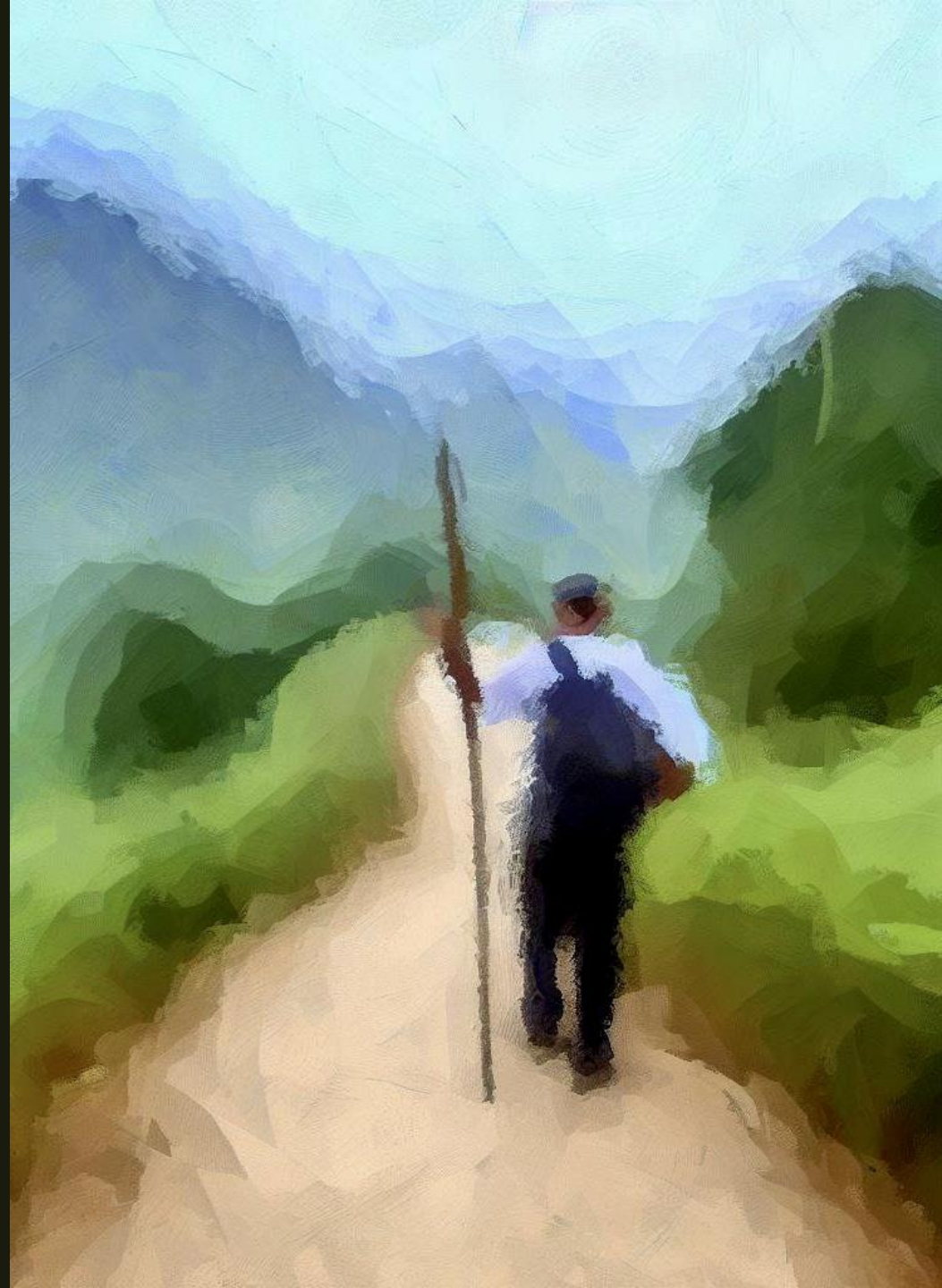
THE UPWARD JOURNEY 3
WAYS TO GROW
SPIRITUALLY



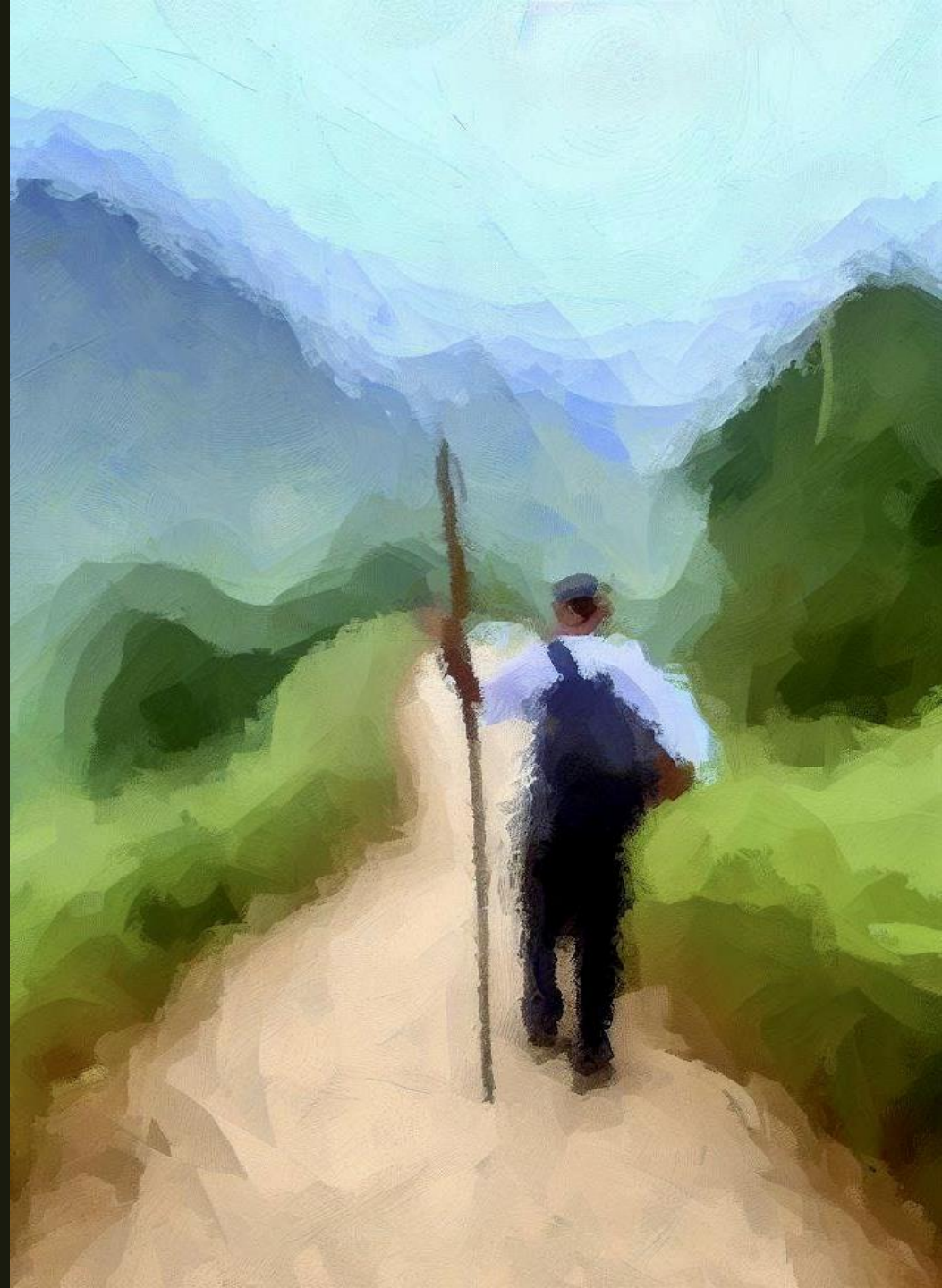
THE UPWARD JOURNEY 4
DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL
LEGACY



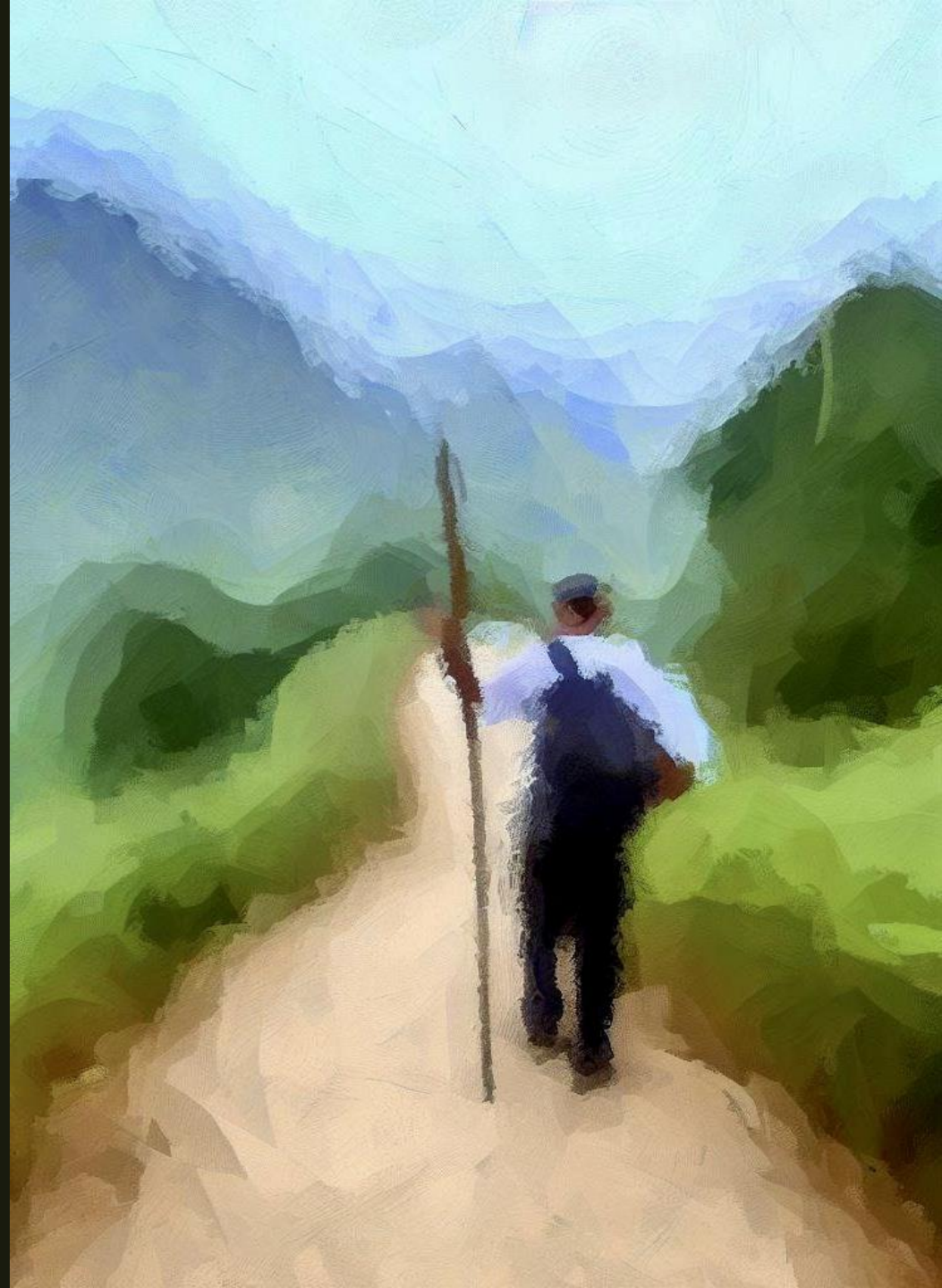
THE UPWARD JOURNEY 5
MAKING THE BETTER
CHOICE – SITTING AT THE
FEET OF JESUS



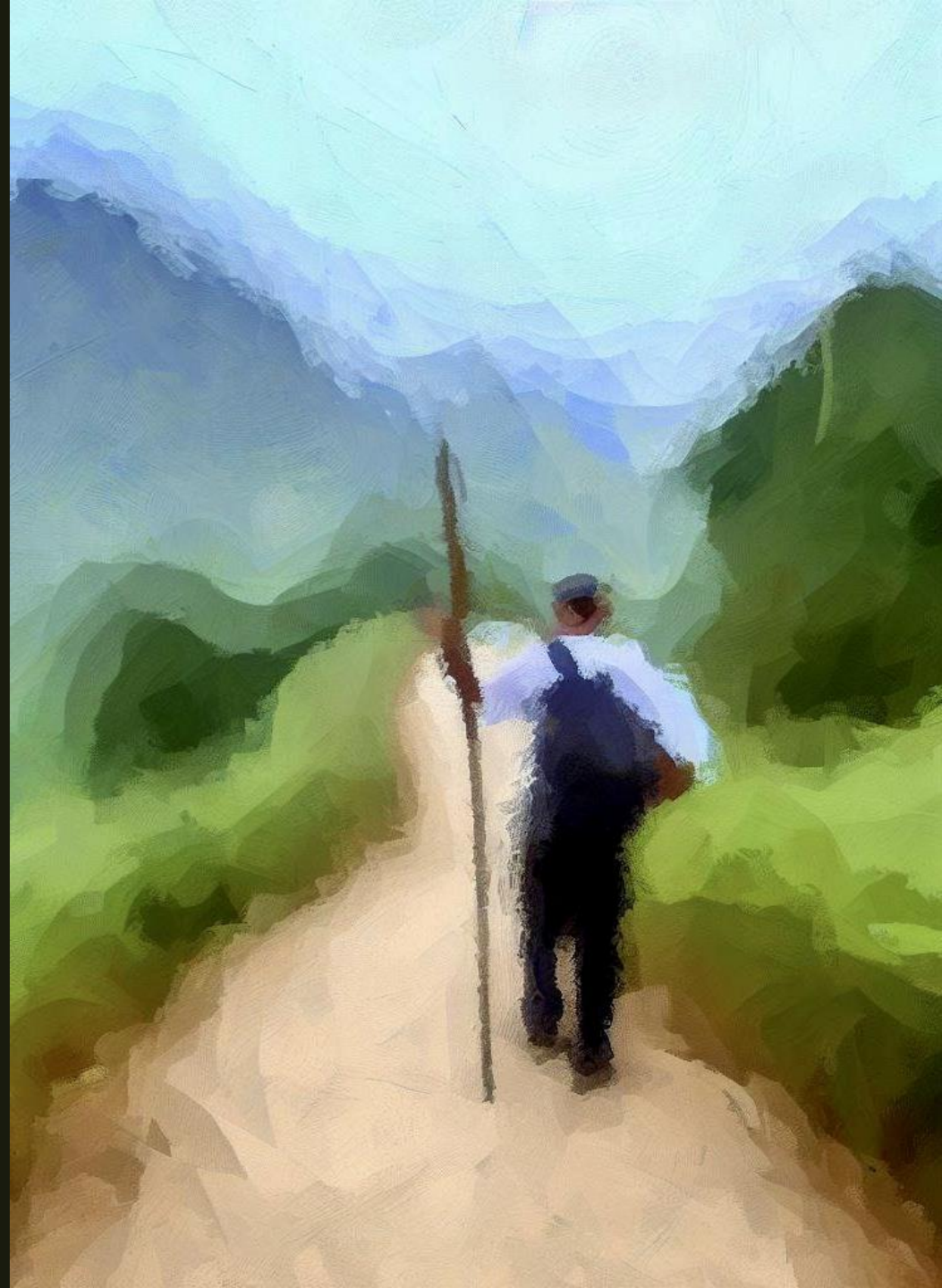
THE UPWARD JOURNEY 6
JESUS – THE ULTIMATE
TRAVELLING COMPANION



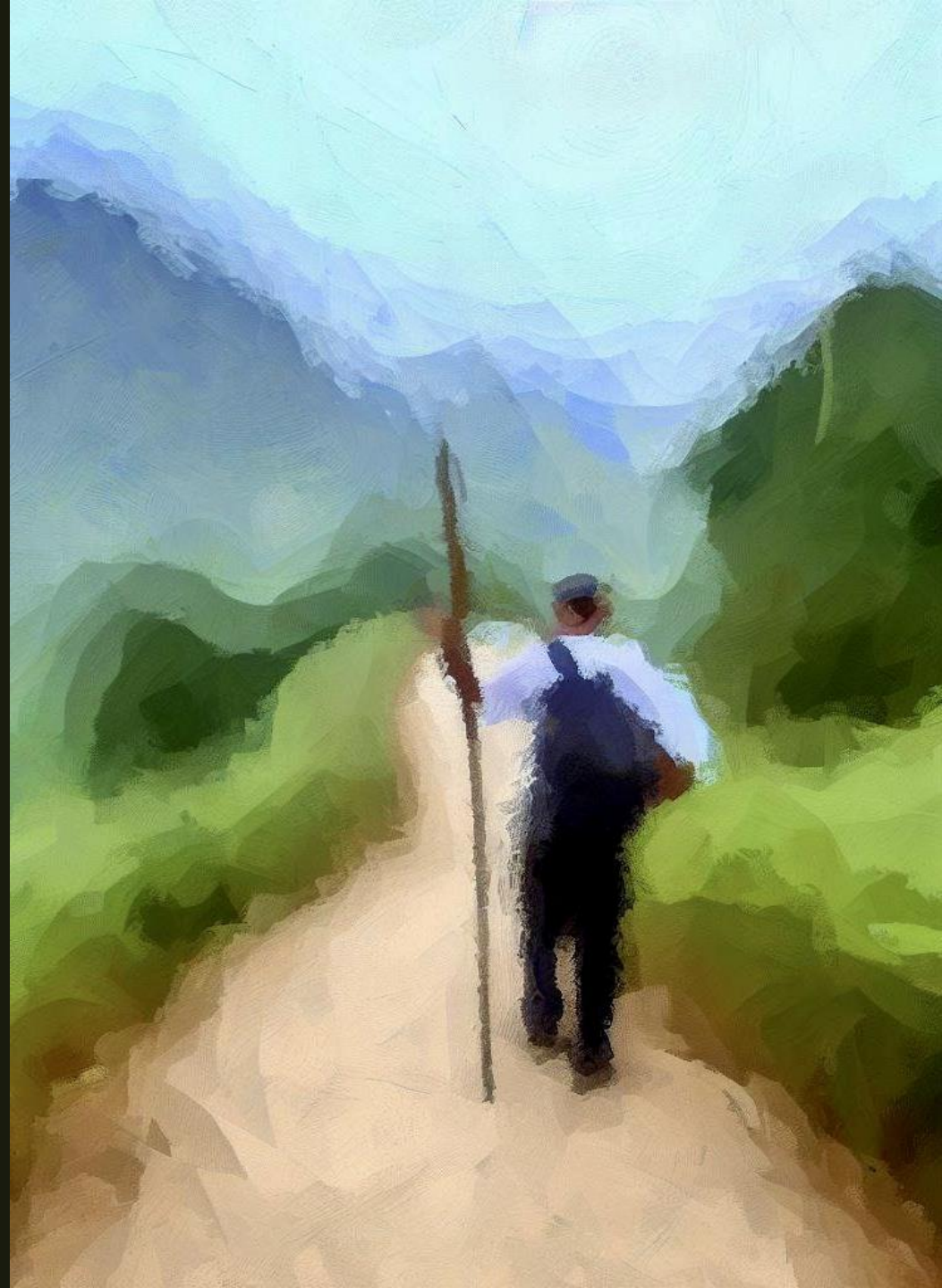
THE UPWARD JOURNEY 7
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE –
WORSHIP CELEBRATION



THE UPWARD JOURNEY 8
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE –
SURRENDER



THE UPWARD JOURNEY 9
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE –
REPENTANCE



THE UPWARD JOURNEY 10
THE BEGINNING

