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## Reflection

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## Reflection

Spiritual reflection is related to, but not the same as, seeing our reflection in a mirror. When we look at ourselves in a well-lighted mirror, we see, in present time, our face or other external components of our bodies exactly as they are. When we reflect upon our experiences, we “see,” in the present, something that occurred in the past, and are able to consider and appreciate internal realities in a somewhat different way now than we were able to do at the time they happened. When we reflect on actions we have taken, we are able to recognize aspects that were not so clear when we first made our decisions.

A mirror image can be very helpful for being able to see a spot on our forehead that needs medication or to locate a stray eyelash that is causing irritation. The act of reflecting on something that we have experienced in the past is also quite practical, as it enables us to relate consciously with particular events, so that we can make appropriate evaluations for the present, and adjustments for the future. For example, we might have had a brief meeting with a person, and come away uncertain as to what effects still reverberate within us, and what, if anything, we might want to do. As we reflect, taking our time, we can notice how we felt, even if we were too busy to pay attention to such information during the interaction. We can think now about options, and notice which of them seem authentic, and which would not be in accord with our values.

Mirrored reflections are exact; they do not make alterations to what we present before them. When we reflect about even the smallest and most recent of occurrences, our estimations and valuing of the experiences often changes their significance for us, sometimes radically. We could be quite irritated with a written or electronic message we received from someone, and then reflect on both the content of the message and our immediate emotional response, and work toward a positive resolution. For example, we could recognize that the sender of the message “was having a bad day” and that we can reasonably dismiss the negativity as not really aimed at us. Or, we might determine that the words were apparently sent in anger, but that we do not need to relate to that person as a personal friend, and so, having identified a proper boundary, can move peacefully on to more productive uses of our time and energy.

We are “created in the image and likeness of God,” (Gen. 1:26) but not as mirror images. If we reflect on the words, few of us would think that we “look” like God in external appearance, as could be viewed in a mirror. Rather, our likeness to God is found, for example, in our use of spiritual reflection, through which we can discover the positive aspects among even

apparently negative elements, and find the unity that exists in seemingly irreconcilable differences of persons and circumstances.

Reflection upon experience takes more conscious effort than looking at our unchanging image in a mirror, but we can radically change our initial thoughts and consequent feelings through spiritual reflection upon whatever has taken place. Each form of reflection is useful for its own purpose.