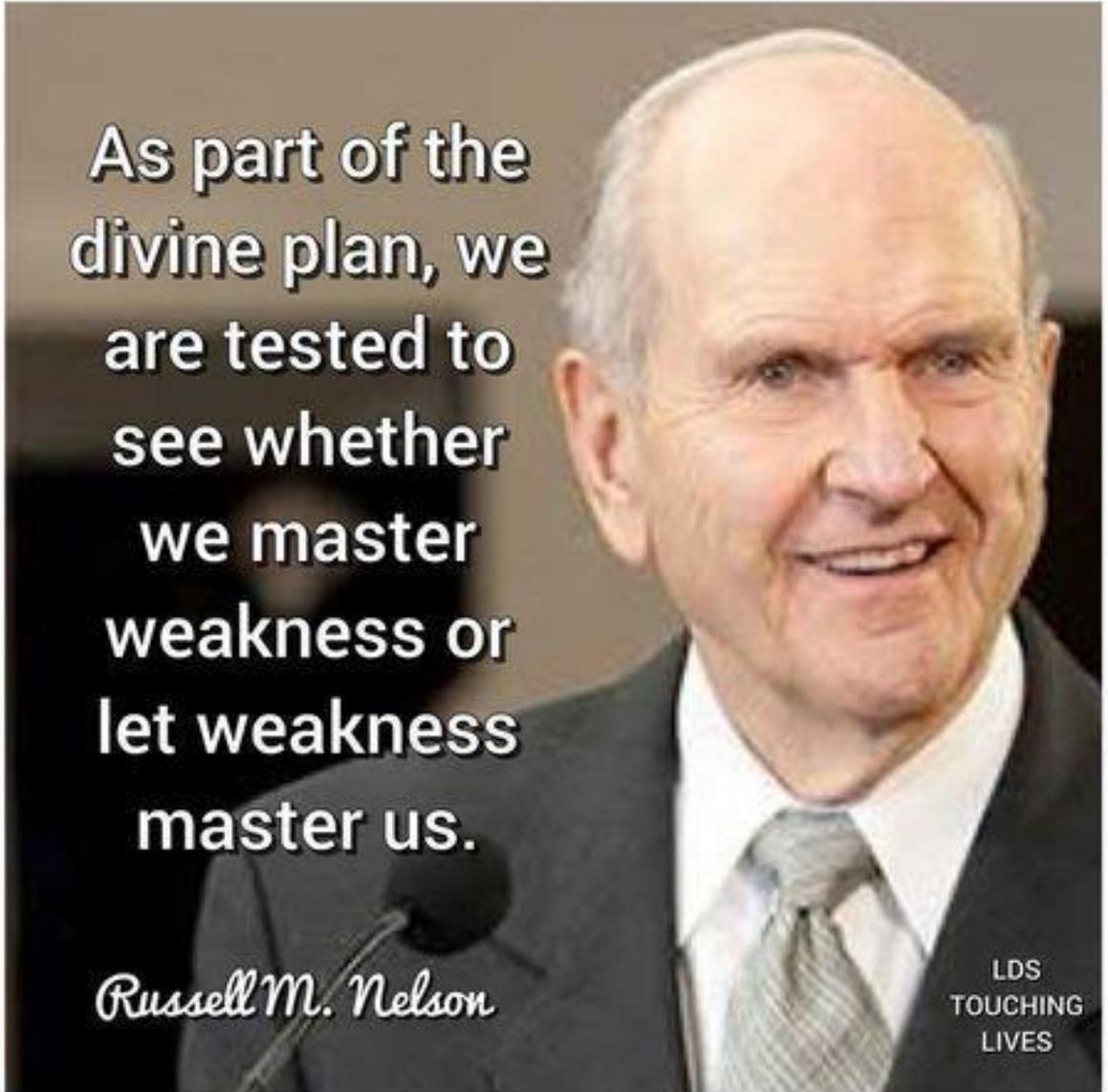


How to cultivate Mindfulness as Latter-Day Saints

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A portrait of Russell M. Nelson, an elderly man with thinning hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

As part of the
divine plan, we
are tested to
see whether
we master
weakness or
let weakness
master us.

Russell M. Nelson

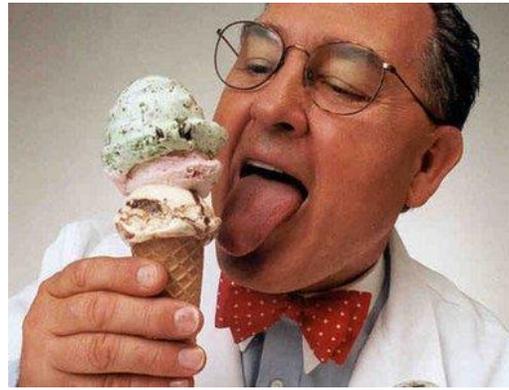
LDS
TOUCHING
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Elder Bednar's analogy

- ▶ Elder Bednar has used analogy—imagining your minds as a tube filled with grains of sand with a hole at each end. Bad thoughts are represented by **black** grains and good thoughts, **white grains**. “If you’ve accumulated a lot of those bad thoughts in your head, they come back and ... haunt you ... at the worst possible time,” he added.
- ▶ **“If you will be patient over time and keep putting in white grains of sand, every time you do, you’re popping out one of those dark ones. It won’t happen fast, but ultimately you change the entire content of that container, and it can be filled with pure white sand”** ([Face to Face with Elder and Sister Bednar](#), May 12, 2015).



About Mindfulness



- ▶ Asking someone to define mindfulness is kind of like asking,
- ▶ **“What does chocolate taste like?”**
- ▶ Or **“What does your favorite song sound like?”**
- ▶ Definitions can only give you a small ^[T]_[SEP] idea of what the real experience is like.
- ▶ **Just reading about mindfulness without experiencing it yourself is like going to a restaurant to read the menu, without tasting any of the food.** Just as the point of going to a restaurant is to taste the food, the point of mindfulness is to experience it for yourself.



SO--- What Exactly Is Mindfulness?



- ▶ At the most basic level, mindfulness is just being aware of what's happening as it's happening in your mind. Being mindful means that you notice the workings of your mind, in the moment. When practicing mindfulness, you deliberately direct your attention into the now and focus your mind there.
- ▶ In essence, it's a way to train your brain to pay attention and focus.

Everyone has experienced mindfulness...



- ▶ You have probably already experienced moments of natural mindfulness. Perhaps you've had times, without even trying to, when you were deeply aware of what you were doing; **the only thing that mattered was the present moment—the past and the future seemed to disappear—and you were filled with gratitude for being alive.**



- ▶ **Examples:** Maybe this happens for you when you play sports. Or maybe you experience this kind of awareness when you play a musical instrument, when you pet your dog or cat gently, or when you listen to your favorite song. **Whether you realized it or not in those moments, you already know how to be mindful!**



Other Ways of Describing Mindfulness:

- ▶ Mindfulness is about shifting out of autopilot and awakening to the here and now. Here are a few other ways of describing mindfulness:
- ▶ **“Being present”**
- ▶ **“Awareness”**
- ▶ **“Awakening”**
- ▶ **“Concentration plus attention”**
- ▶ **“Seeing clearly”**
- ▶ **“Compassionate awareness”**
- ▶ **“Openheartedness”**
- ▶ **“Loving presence”**

Breathing: The Heart of Mindfulness

- ▶ You breathe in and out about 20,000 times a day. **How many of those breaths are you consciously aware of?**
- ▶ How many of those breaths do you really enjoy? If you're like most people, the answer is "not many."
- ▶ The foundation of all mindfulness practices is to **bring your awareness to your breath**. This is also known as "coming back to your breath." **Your breath is a wonderful gift that brings your mind and body together in the here and now.**
- ▶ You can start to bring yourself back to the present moment, and begin to free yourself from stress, with as few as three mindful breaths. Right here. Right now.



Try This! Informal Mindfulness part 1

- ▶ Perhaps you have a tendency to try to do two, three, or even four things at the same time. For example, you might be used to checking your cell phone while eating, or you might have a habit of texting while walking. Although it may seem very efficient to do multiple things at once, in reality, such **multitasking** usually doesn't help people be more productive. Instead, it mostly just adds to their stress. **Informal mindfulness is all about doing just one thing at a time, with full awareness.**

Here are some examples of daily activities that can become mindfulness practices:

- ▶ Brushing your teeth
- ▶ Walking to class
- ▶ Getting dressed in the morning
- ▶ Walking your dog or petting your cat
- ▶ Cleaning your room
- ▶ Answering your phone
- ▶ Exercising or playing sports
- ▶ Playing a musical instrument
- ▶ Drawing or painting
- ▶ Can you think of some more?
- ▶ Pick at least one of these activities as a means of practicing informal mindfulness over the coming week.



Try This! Informal Mindfulness part 2



The first step, before doing this activity, is to **stop for a moment**. Take a few mindful breaths, and observe what is happening for you right here and now.

- ▶ Then, **proceed with the activity as if it is the most important thing in the world, with great curiosity and care.**
- ▶ As you do the activity, tune in to your senses. *What does this thing that you are doing look like? What does it smell like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like?*
- ▶ You don't need to rush to get whatever it is you're doing done. You don't need to do three things at once. Let go of all that extra stress. Doing just this one thing, with mindfulness, is enough. If you are walking, just walk. If you are eating, just eat. If you are brushing your teeth, just brush—instead of trying to get it done quickly so that you can move on to something else, **invest 100 percent of your effort** in brushing your teeth.

Try This! Informal Mindfulness part 3

- ▶ As best you can, keep your full attention on what you are doing. Continue to breathe mindfully. **Every time your mind wanders, simply notice: *Where did my mind just go?*** Whenever stress arises—for example, when you start to think about all the things that you need to do or wish you had done—**just come back to your breath.** Don't judge yourself if your mind is wandering; you're not doing anything wrong. **Remember, noticing that your mind wandered marks a moment of mindfulness. Stop, taking three more breaths. Return to the present moment, over and over again.**
- ▶ You can say a few guiding words silently to yourself to help you stay present. For example, if you are walking to class or to the bus stop, you can say to yourself silently, *Breathing in, I know that I am walking. Breathing out, I smile. Walking... Smiling...*
- ▶ How is this experience different from your normal way of doing things? Do you notice anything interesting about this daily activity that you might not have noticed before? How might **paying attention** to everyday activities in this way help you be less stressed and more resilient?



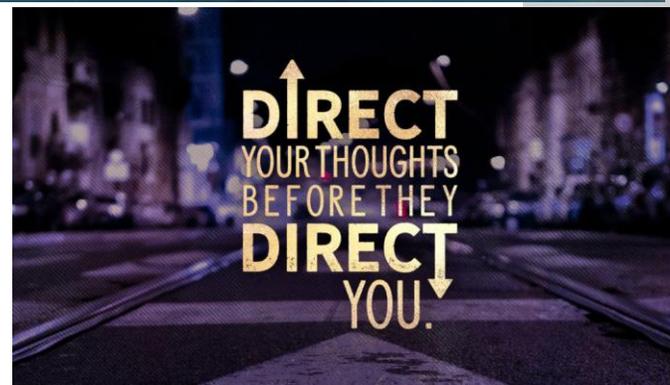
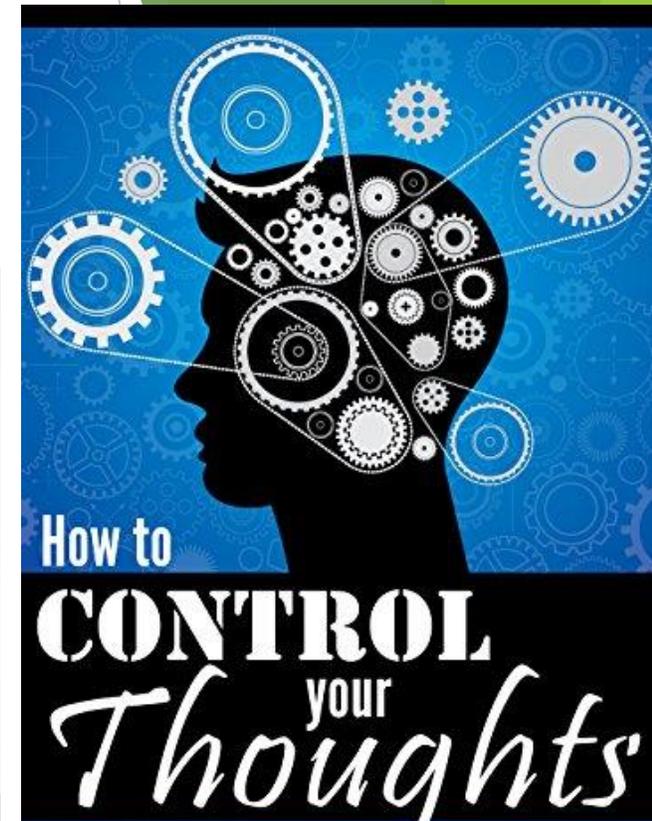
Try This! Mindful Breathing -- a practical application

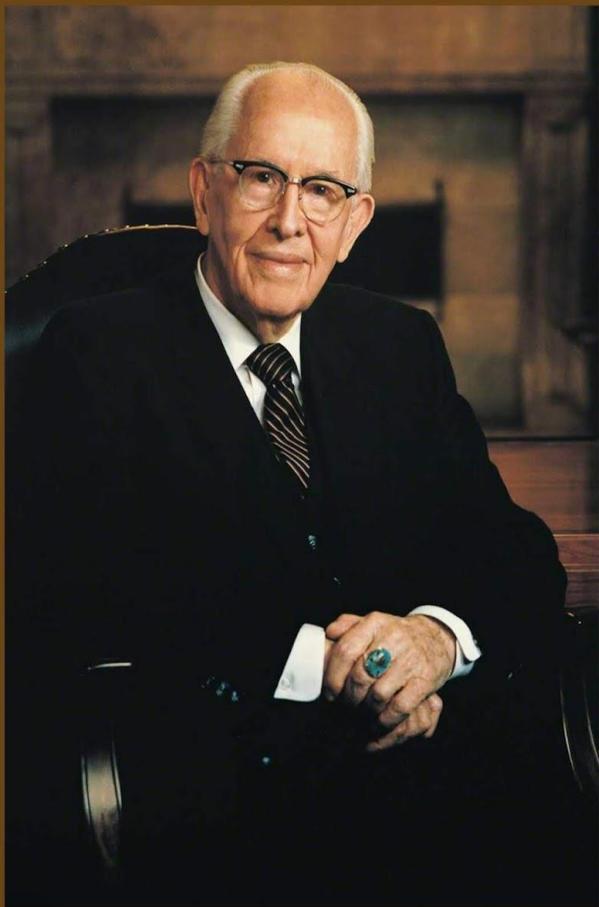
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- ▶ First, stop. Stop whatever you are doing, or whatever it is that you were about to do, and simply allow yourself to be “here,” without needing to do anything.
- ▶ Just checking in with your breathing, noticing what it feels like to breathe and to be alive in this moment.
- ▶ It’s not about forcing the breath to be a certain way, it’s just about being present with the miracle of life, the miracle of breathing--- in the here and now.
- ▶ You can say to yourself, “Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in,” ... “Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out,” in -- out
- ▶ Then you can make a gesture of compassion by putting your hands over your heart, sending some kindness and love to your heart
- ▶ Breathing in, “I know that I am breathing in, breathing out, I am smiling to myself, taking care of myself, treating myself like the best friend, like a child of God
- ▶ Breathing, smiling.

Mindfulness as a mental health tool, a skill you can learn- to better control your thoughts.

- ▶ “Probably **the greatest challenge** to people of any age, **particularly young people**, **and the most difficult thing** you will face in mortal life is **to learn to control your thoughts**. As a man ‘thinketh in his heart, so is he.’ (Proverbs 23:7). **One who can control his thoughts has conquered himself.”**

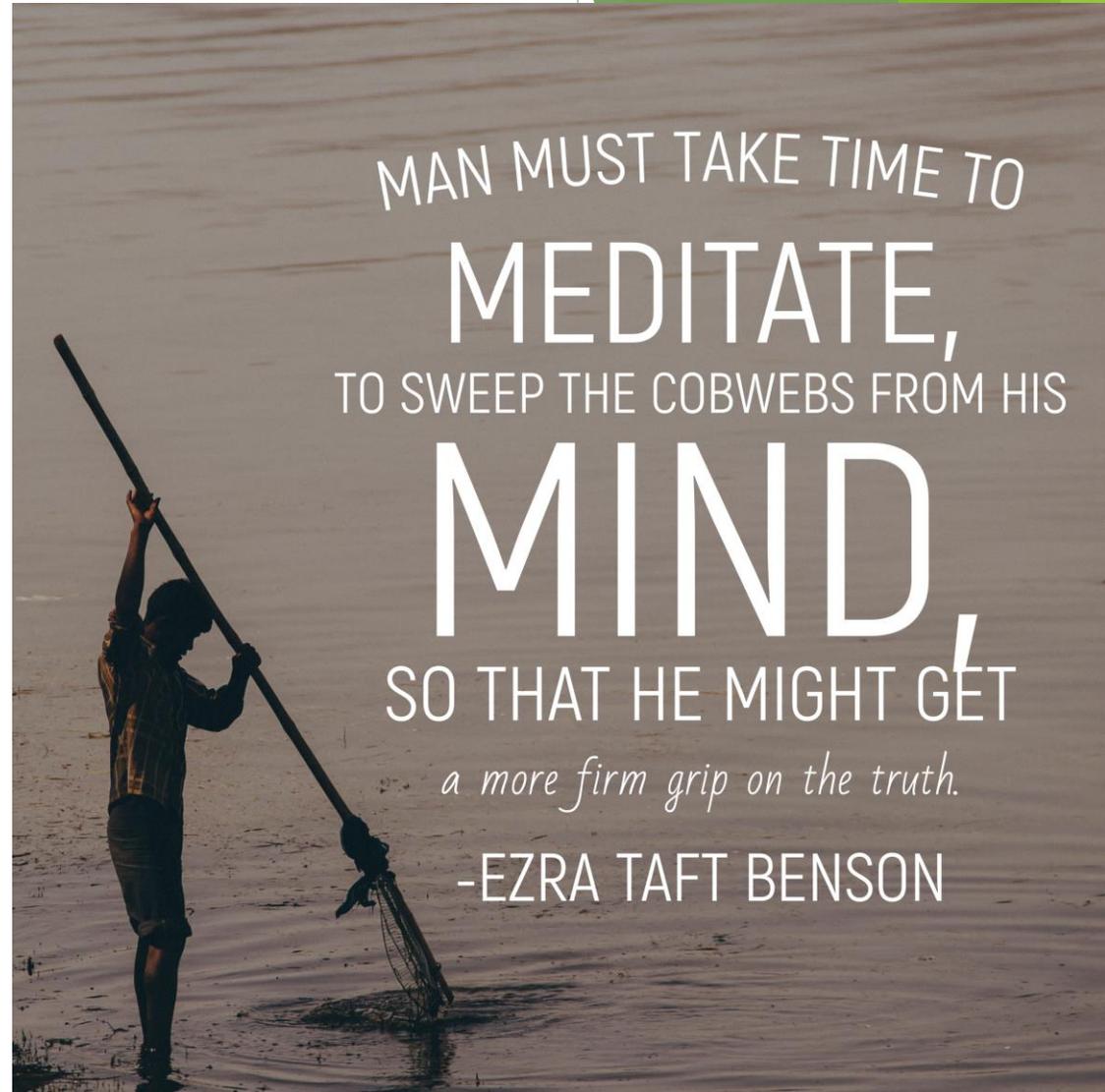




*“Thoughts lead to acts,
acts lead to habits,
habits lead to character—
and our character
will determine
our eternal destiny.”*

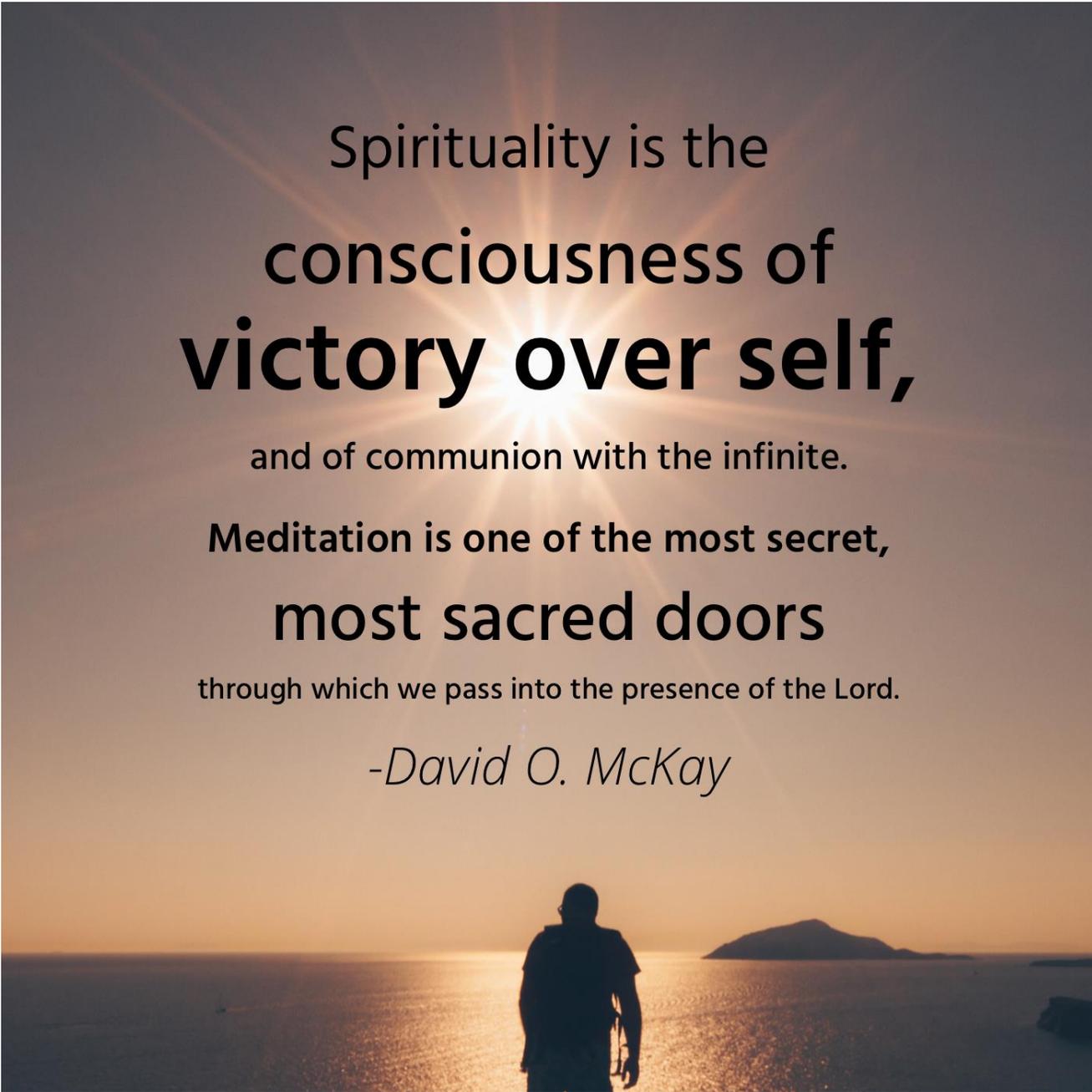
*- Ezra Taft Benson, "Think on Christ,"
General Conference April 1984*

See <http://dailymormonthoughts.com>



MAN MUST TAKE TIME TO
MEDITATE,
TO SWEEP THE COBWEBS FROM HIS
MIND,
SO THAT HE MIGHT GET
a more firm grip on the truth.

-EZRA TAFT BENSON



Spirituality is the
**consciousness of
victory over self,**

and of communion with the infinite.

Meditation is one of the most secret,

most sacred doors

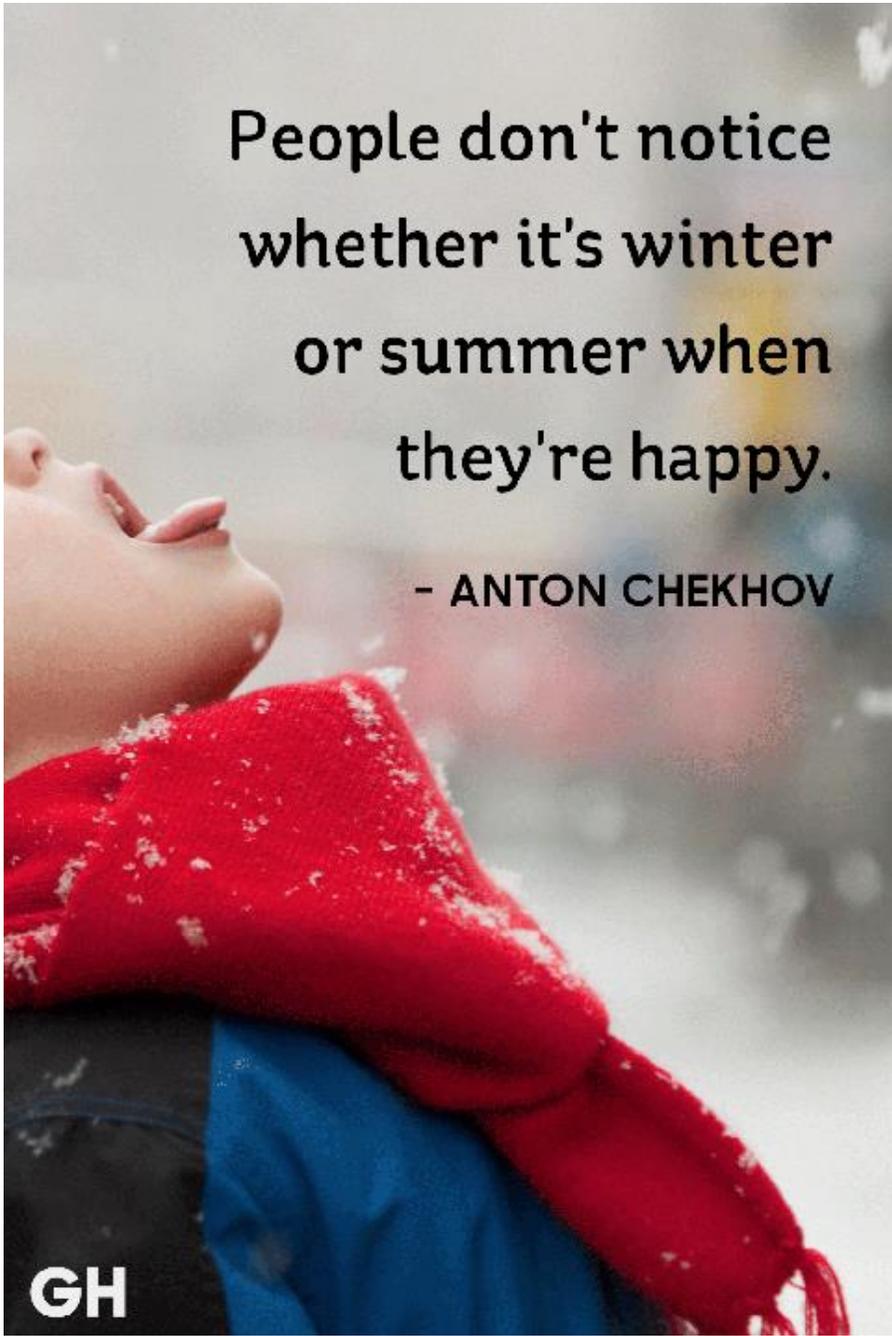
through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.

-David O. McKay

Meditation is the language of the soul. It is a private devotion & spiritual exercise...it is a form of prayer and one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.

#learntomeditate

David O. McKay

A photograph of a child's face in profile, looking upwards with an open mouth, as if enjoying the snow. The child is wearing a bright red knitted scarf and a blue jacket. The background is a soft-focus, snowy outdoor scene.

People don't notice
whether it's winter
or summer when
they're happy.

- ANTON CHEKHOV

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