

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

I do not apologize for trying to speak about one of what Paul called "the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10), only for my inability to go deeply enough.

Submitting fully to the Lord

While we see this quality in the quiet but spiritually luxuriant lives of the genuine, spiritual heroes and heroines about us, the lack of it keeps so many of us straggling in the foothills and off the peaks in the adventure of full discipleship. I refer to our hesitancy and our holding back in submitting fully to the Lord and His purposes for us.

This holding back is like leaving Egypt without journeying all the way to the Holy Land, or waiting in Nauvoo for the railroad to come through, or staying permanently at Winter Quarters.

Though possessed of other fine attributes, we may still lack this one quality. Such was the case with the righteous young man who knelt sincerely at Jesus' feet. Lacking one thing, he went away sorrowing and unsubmitive when a particularized challenge was given. (See Mark 10:21-22, Luke 18:22-23.) Whether it is walking away without looking back from "great possessions" (Mark 10:22), or from a statusful place in the secular synagogue (see John 12:42-43), or from proud but erroneous attitudes accrued over the years, or merely "straightway" from fishing nets (Mark 1:18), the test is always the same.

"Become as little children"

With honest, individualized introspection, each of us could name what we yet lack—and in my case more than one thing.

Spiritual submissiveness is so much more than bended knee or bowed head. Alas, insofar as we "mind the

things of the flesh" (Romans 8:5), we simply cannot have the "mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Jesus laid down this sobering requirement: "Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

One of Jesus' prophets delineated—with submissiveness thrice stipulated—how a disciple can become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

Three other clusters of scriptures stress these towering qualities. (See Alma 7:23, 13:28; D&C 121:41-42.) Stunningly parallel, they form an almost seamless litany of attributes to be developed, with submissiveness at their catalytic center. This repeated clustering is too striking to be random.

Be led aright

Moreover, the descriptive simplicity of this quality is matched by its developmental difficulty. It is so easy to be halfhearted, but this only produces half the growth, half the blessings, and just half a life, really, with more bud than blossom.

A superficial view of this life, therefore, will not do, lest we mistakenly speak of this mortal experience only as coming here to get a body, as if we were merely picking up a suit at the cleaners. Or, lest we casually recite how we have come here to be proved, as if a few brisk push-ups and deep knee bends would do.

Just how much submissiveness to circumstance there should be is not treated in these brief remarks. Suffice it to say, God "allotteth unto men" certain things with which we are to be content. (See Alma 29:4, Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:8.) A missing parent or limb is to be lived without. Yet temper and lust are to be tamed. One's race is

fixed, but one's genetic endowment offers opportunity to be a careful steward. The submissive soul will be led aright, enduring some things well while being anxiously engaged in setting other things right—all the time discerning the difference.

Meekness of mind

Required, in particular, is meekness of mind which recognizes God's perfect love of us and His omniscience. By acknowledging these reassuring realities and accepting that God desires our full development and true happiness, we are readied even as the learning experiences come. Such meekness requires genuine intellectual honesty, owning up to the learning experiences of the past and listening to the Holy Ghost as he preaches to us from the pulpit of memory.

As the Lord communicates with the meek and submissive, fewer decibels are required, and more nuances are received. Even the most meek, like Moses (see Numbers 12:3), learn overwhelming things they "never had supposed" (Moses 1:10). But it is only the meek mind which can be so shown and so stretched—not those, as Isaiah wrote, who "are wise in their own eyes" (Isaiah 5:21; see also 2 Nephi 9:29 and 15:21).

God's counsel aligns us and conjoins us with the great realities of the universe; whereas sin empties, isolates, and separates us, confining us to the solitary cell of selfishness. Hence the lonely crowd in hell.

Spiritual submissiveness means, instead, community and communion as the mind and the heart become settled. We then spend much less time deciding, and much more time serving; otherwise, the more hesitation, the less inspiration.

Yielding one's heart

Yielding one's heart to God signals the last stage in our spiritual development. Only then are we beginning to

be fully useful to God! How can we sincerely pray to be an instrument in His hands if the instrument seeks to do the instructing?

As we really begin to keep the first commandment—loving God with "all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength" (D&C 59:5; see also Matthew 22:37)—giving time, talent, and treasure is then accompanied by fully giving of ourselves.

Sometimes, our holding back occurs because we lack faith or we are too entangled with the cares of the world. Other times, there is in us an understandable tremulousness which slows our yielding, because we sense what further yielding might bring.

Yet we need to break free of our old selves—the provincial, constraining, and complaining selves—and become susceptible to the shaping of the Lord. But the old self goes neither gladly nor quickly. Even so, this subjection to God is really emancipation.

How can we truly acknowledge the Fatherhood of God and refuse His tutorials? Especially in view of the fact, the Lord even chastens those whom He loves. (See Hebrews 12:6, D&C 136:31, Mosiah 23:21, Revelation 3:19.)

Saul, when chosen, was "a choice young man, . . . and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he" (1 Samuel 9:2). Later, he became encrusted with ego and puffed by power. Samuel then recalled a time when Saul "wast little in [his] own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17). In contrast, true submissiveness greatly enlarges the soul, but *without* hypocrisy and guile. (See D&C 121:42.)

Total surrender

Submissiveness also checks our tendency to demand advance explanations of the Lord as a perplexed yet trusting Nephi understood: "I know that [God] loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17).

So did a wondering but submissive Mary: "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

Just as the capacity to defer gratification is a sign of real maturity, likewise the willingness to wait for deferred explanation is a sign of real faith and of trust spread over time.

If faithful, we end up acknowledging that we are in the Lord's hands and should surrender to the Lord on His terms—not ours. It is total surrender, no negotiating; it is yielding with no preconditions.

Suppose Enoch had demurred when called by the Lord? He would have gone on being a good person, serving the Lord part-time, living in a city which was a slum compared to the glorious City of Enoch; nor would Enoch be a part of that scene of glorious greeting yet to come. (See Moses 7:63.)

Suppose Peter had not left his nets "straightway"? (See Mark 1:18.) He might have become the respected president of the local Galilean fishermen's association. But he would not have been on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus, Moses, and Elias and heard the voice of God. (See Matthew 17:4.)

Three special words

We have been given three special words—but if not—by three submissive young men who entered their fiery furnace, knowing "our God . . . is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, . . . *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17–18; italics added).

Moreover, our prayers should allow for three more special words: "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is right*, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20; italics added).

By yielding to God

It is only by yielding to God that we can begin to realize His will for us. And if we truly trust God, why not yield to His loving omniscience? After all, He knows us and our possibilities much better than do we.

"Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ . . . even to the . . . yielding their hearts unto God" (Helaman 3:5).

Otherwise, one can be too busy promoting his own agenda: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3).

Distinguished therefrom is Jesus' clear call: "Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness" (JST, Matthew 6:38).

While events often induce submissiveness, one's development need not be dramatic or tied to a single moment; it can occur steadily in seemingly ordinary, daily settings. If we are meek, a rich and needed insight can be contained in reproof. A new calling can beckon us away from comfortable routine and from competencies already acquired. One may be stripped of accustomed luxury in order that the malignant mole of materialism be removed. One may feel humiliated in order that pride be chipped away.

The shaping goes on, and it is anything but merely cosmetic.

The tilt of our souls in first moments is so vital. Will what follows be viewed with disdain or as having some design? Which will we do most, murmur or ponder?

While most of our suffering is self-inflicted, some is caused by or permitted by God. This sobering reality calls for deep submissiveness, especially when God does not remove the cup from us. In such circumstances,

when reminded about the premortal shouting for joy as this life's plan was unfolded (see Job 38:7), we can perhaps be pardoned if, in some moments, we wonder what all the shouting was about.

For the faithful, what finally emerges is an understanding of "things as they really are" (Jacob 4:13), such as the reassuring realization that we are in the Lord's hands! But, brothers and sisters, we were never really anywhere else! Demonstrating this great attitude is our beloved and submissive brother, Bruce R. McConkie.

"Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God?" (Mormon 5:23.) Likewise, "all flesh" (D&C 101:16, Moses 6:32) and "the heavens and the earth" (D&C 67:2)! Perhaps the realization of being in God's hands comes fully only as we ponder the significance of the prints in the hands of our submissive Savior. (See 3 Nephi 11:14-15.) Some will have to ask what those wounds are, having been estranged. (See D&C 45:51-52.) These are they who "regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands" (2 Nephi 15:12).

Pondering the awesome atonement

The more we study, pray, and ponder the awesome Atonement, the more we are willing to acknowledge that we are in His and the Father's hands. Let us ponder, therefore, these final things.

When the unimaginable burden began to weigh upon Christ, it confirmed His long-held and intellectually clear understanding as to what He must now do. His working through began, and Jesus declared: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Then, whether in spiritual soliloquy or by way of instruction to those about Him, He observed, "But for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27).

Later, in Gethsemane, the suffering Jesus began to be "sore amazed"

(Mark 14:33), or, in the Greek, "awe-struck" and "astonished."

Imagine, Jehovah, the Creator of this and other worlds, "astonished"! Jesus knew cognitively what He must do, but not experientially. He had never personally known the exquisite and exacting process of an atonement before. Thus, when the agony came in its fullness, it was so much, much worse than even He with his unique intellect had ever imagined! No wonder an angel appeared to strengthen him! (See Luke 22:43.)

The cumulative weight of all mortal sins—past, present, and future—pressed upon that perfect, sinless, and sensitive Soul! All our infirmities and sicknesses were somehow, too, a part of the awful arithmetic of the Atonement. (See Alma 7:11-12, Isaiah 53:3-5, Matthew 8:17.) The anguished Jesus not only pled with the Father that the hour and cup might pass from Him, but with this relevant citation. "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me" (Mark 14:35-36).

Had not Jesus, as Jehovah, said to Abraham, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). Had not His angel told a perplexed Mary, "For with God nothing shall be impossible?" (Luke 1:37; see also Matthew 19:28, Mark 10:27, Luke 18:27).

Jesus' request was not theater!

In this extremity, did He, perchance, hope for a rescuing ram in the thicket? I do not know. His suffering—as it were, *enormity* multiplied by *infinity*—evoked His later soul-cry on the cross, and it was a cry of forsakenness. (See Matthew 27:46.)

Even so, Jesus maintained this sublime submissiveness, as He had in Gethsemane: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

While bearing our sins, our infirmities, our sicknesses, and bringing to pass the Atonement (see Alma 7:11-12), Jesus became the perfect Shepherd, making these lines of Paul's especially relevant and reassuring:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

Indeed, we are in His hands, and what hallowed hands!

The wondrous and glorious Atonement was the central act in all of human history. It was the hinge on which all else that finally matters turned. But it turned upon Jesus' spiritual submissiveness!

May we now, in our time and turn, be "willing to submit" (Mosiah 3:19),

I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

President Benson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder J. Richard Clarke, who was released yesterday as Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric and sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder J. Richard Clarke

Brothers and sisters, this has been a wonderful week. We have been so spiritually fed, and I pray now that I might be able to share something that will be appropriate.

Before doing so, I would like to express my love and appreciation to Bishop Brown and to Bishop Peterson for eight and a half wonderful years of association in the Presiding Bishopric. And to the Seventy and the Twelve and the First Presidency who have been so supportive and encouraging, I express my love and continued support for them. I also would like to acknowledge those wonderful brothers and sisters who work behind the scenes here at headquarters and throughout the world to provide so many services and resources to help move the work along.

It's marvelous to be in the service of the Lord and now to be called as a witness for our Lord and Savior and to return to a land that I love more than I can express. It's just about as much emotion as I can handle at one time. So I pray that I might be able to fulfill the expectations of that wonderful call.

Covenant children of Abraham

In the Pearl of Great Price we read that the Lord delivered Abraham from

idolatrous sacrifice. He introduced Himself as Jehovah and declared, "[Abraham], I will lead thee by my hand, and I will . . . put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. . . .

[And] through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God" (Abraham 1:18-19).

This blessing was extended to Abraham's posterity, who would "bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations." (See Abraham 2:9.) The covenant children of Abraham were to be distinguished by their sacred obligation to declare to the world the true and living God. Not only were they to be believers and worshipers, but His witnesses, boldly testifying of Him among the unbelievers.

God has once again spoken from the heavens and restored the fulness of the gospel through His chosen prophet. We have become the covenant children of Abraham, a new generation of witnesses to bear testimony that God lives and Jesus is the Christ. We are to be a pure people, a holy people, fully committed and zealous in our proclamation of the gospel in word and deed. This is an awesome responsibility.