

Meek and Lowly of Heart

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Meekness is a defining attribute of the Redeemer and is distinguished by righteous responsiveness, willing submissiveness, and strong self-restraint.

I rejoice in the sacred opportunity to sustain our Church leaders, and I wholeheartedly welcome Elder Gong and Elder Soares to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The ministries of these faithful men will bless individuals and families all over the world, and I am eager to serve with and learn from them.

I pray the Holy Ghost will teach and enlighten us as we learn together about a vital aspect of the Savior's divine nature¹ that each of us should strive to emulate.

I will present several examples that highlight this Christlike quality before identifying the specific attribute later in my message. Please listen carefully to each example and consider with me possible answers to the questions I will pose.

Example #1. The Rich Young Man and Amulek

In the New Testament, we learn about a rich young man who asked Jesus, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"² The Savior first admonished him to keep the commandments. The Master next gave the young man an additional requirement customized to his specific needs and circumstances.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."³

Compare the response of the rich young man with the experience of Amulek, as described in the Book of Mormon. Amulek was an industrious and prosperous man with many kindreds and friends.⁴ He described himself as a man who was called many times but would not hear, a man who knew the things of God but would not know.⁵ A basically good man, Amulek was distracted by worldly concerns much like the rich young man described in the New Testament.

Even though he had previously hardened his heart, Amulek obeyed the voice of an angel, received the prophet Alma in his home, and provided nourishment to him. He was spiritually awakened during Alma's visit and was called to preach the gospel. Amulek then forsook "all his gold, and silver, and his precious things ... for the word of God, [and was] rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred."⁶

What do you think explains the difference between the responses of the rich young man and Amulek?

Example #2. Pahoran

During a perilous period of war described in the Book of Mormon, an exchange of epistles occurred between Moroni, the captain of the Nephite armies, and Pahoran, the chief judge and governor of the land. Moroni, whose army was suffering because of inadequate support from the government, wrote to Pahoran “by the way of condemnation”⁷ and accused him and his fellow leaders of thoughtlessness, slothfulness, neglect, and even being traitors.⁸

Pahoran easily might have resented Moroni and his inaccurate allegations, but he did not. He responded compassionately and described a rebellion against the government about which Moroni was not aware. And then Pahoran declared:

“Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul. ...

“... In your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart.”⁹

What do you think explains Pahoran’s measured reply to Moroni’s accusations?

Example #3. President Russell M. Nelson and President Henry B. Eyring

In general conference six months ago, President Russell M. Nelson described his response to President Thomas S. Monson’s invitation to study, ponder, and apply the truths contained in the Book of Mormon. He said: “I have tried to follow his counsel. Among other things, I’ve made lists of what the Book of Mormon *is*, what it *affirms*, what it *refutes*, what it *fulfills*, what it *clarifies*, and what it *reveals*. Looking at the Book of Mormon through these lenses has been an insightful and inspiring exercise! I recommend it to each of you.”¹⁰

President Henry B. Eyring likewise emphasized the importance in his life of President Monson’s request. He observed:

“I have read the Book of Mormon every day for more than 50 years. So perhaps I could have reasonably thought that President Monson’s words were for someone else. Yet, like many of you, I felt the prophet’s encouragement and his promise invite me to make a greater effort. ...

“The happy result for me, and for many of you, has been what the prophet promised.”¹¹

What do you think explains the immediate and heartfelt responses to President Monson’s invitation by these two leaders of the Lord’s Church?

I am not suggesting that the spiritually strong responses of Amulek, Pahoran, President Nelson, and President Eyring are explained by only one Christlike quality. Certainly, many interrelated attributes and experiences led to the spiritual maturity reflected in the lives of these four noble servants. But the Savior and His prophets have highlighted an essential quality that all of us need to more fully understand and strive to incorporate into our lives.

Meekness

Please notice the characteristic the Lord used to describe Himself in the following scripture: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am *meek and lowly in heart*: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”¹²

Instructively, the Savior chose to emphasize meekness from among all the attributes and virtues He potentially could have selected.

A similar pattern is evident in a revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1829. The Lord declared, “Learn of me, and listen to my words; *walk in the meekness of my Spirit*, and you shall have peace in me.”¹³

Meekness is a defining attribute of the Redeemer and is distinguished by righteous responsiveness, willing submissiveness, and strong self-restraint. This quality helps us to understand more completely the respective reactions of Amulek, Pahoran, President Nelson, and President Eyring.

For example, President Nelson and President Eyring righteously and rapidly responded to President Monson’s encouragement to read and study the Book of Mormon. Though both men were serving in important and visible Church positions and had studied the scriptures extensively for decades, they demonstrated in their responses no hesitation or sense of self-importance.

Amulek willingly submitted to God’s will, accepted a call to preach the gospel, and left behind his comfortable circumstances and familiar relationships. And Pahoran was blessed with perspective and strong self-restraint to act rather than react as he explained to Moroni the challenges arising from a rebellion against the government.

The Christlike quality of meekness often is misunderstood in our contemporary world. Meekness is strong, not weak; active, not passive; courageous, not timid; restrained, not excessive; modest, not self-aggrandizing; and gracious, not brash. A meek person is not easily provoked, pretentious, or overbearing and readily acknowledges the accomplishments of others.

Whereas *humility* generally denotes dependence upon God and the constant need for His guidance and support, a distinguishing characteristic of *meekness* is a particular spiritual receptivity to learning both from the Holy Ghost and from people who may seem less capable, experienced, or educated, who may not hold important positions, or who otherwise may not appear to have much to contribute. Recall how Naaman, captain of the king’s army in Syria, overcame his pride and meekly accepted the advice of his servants to obey Elisha the prophet and wash in the river Jordan seven times.¹⁴ Meekness is the principal protection from the prideful blindness that often arises from prominence, position, power, wealth, and adulation.

Meekness—a Christlike Attribute and a Spiritual Gift

Meekness is an attribute developed through desire, the righteous exercise of moral agency, and striving always to retain a remission of our sins.¹⁵ It also is a spiritual gift for which we

appropriately can seek.¹⁶ We should remember, however, the purposes for which such a blessing is given, even to benefit and serve the children of God.¹⁷

As we come unto and follow the Savior, we increasingly and incrementally are enabled to become more like Him. We are empowered by the Spirit with disciplined self-restraint and a settled and calm demeanor. Thus, meek is what we become as disciples of the Master and not just something we do.

“Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.”¹⁸ Yet he “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”¹⁹ His knowledge and competence could have caused him to be prideful. Instead, the attribute and spiritual gift of meekness with which he was blessed attenuated arrogance in his life and magnified Moses as an instrument to accomplish God’s purposes.

The Master as an Example of Meekness

The most majestic and meaningful examples of meekness are found in the life of the Savior Himself.

The Great Redeemer, who “descended below all things”²⁰ and suffered, bled, and died “to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness,”²¹ tenderly *washed* the dusty feet of His disciples.²² Such meekness is a hallmark characteristic of the Lord as a servant and leader.

Jesus provides the ultimate example of righteous responsiveness and willing submission as He suffered intense agony in Gethsemane.

“And when he was at the place, he said unto [His disciples], Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

“And he ... kneeled down, and prayed,

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”²³

The Savior’s meekness in this eternally essential and excruciating experience demonstrates for each of us the importance of putting the wisdom of God above our own wisdom.

The consistency of the Lord’s willing submission and strong self-restraint is both awe-inspiring and instructive for us all. As an armed company of temple guardsmen and Roman soldiers arrived at Gethsemane to seize and arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest’s servant.²⁴ The Savior then touched the servant’s ear and healed him.²⁵ Please note that He reached out and blessed His potential captor using the same heavenly power that could have prevented Him from being captured and crucified.

Consider also how the Master was accused and condemned before Pilate to be crucified.²⁶ Jesus had declared during His betrayal, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”²⁷ Yet the “Eternal Judge of both quick and dead”²⁸ paradoxically was judged before a temporary political appointee. “And [Jesus] answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.”²⁹ The Savior’s

meekness is evidenced in His disciplined response, strong restraint, and unwillingness to exert His infinite power for personal benefit.

Promise and Testimony

Mormon identifies meekness as the foundation from which all spiritual capacities and gifts arise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

“And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

“If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.”³⁰

The Savior declared, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”³¹ Meekness is an essential aspect of the divine nature and can be received and developed in our lives because of and through the Savior’s Atonement.

I testify that Jesus Christ is our resurrected and living Redeemer. And I promise that He will guide, protect, and strengthen us as we walk in the meekness of His Spirit. I declare my sure witness of these truths and promises in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.