

Podcast Episode 94: Meekness and Humility, Part 2

This is the final part of a series on meekness and humility which is intended to go deeper than mere words and definitions. The hope is to give you the chance to get a feel for the underlying state of being associated with meekness and humility so you can resonate with these attributes and bring them into your life. We encourage you to pause and ponder on any examples of meekness and humility that come to mind as you listen, including nature, scriptures, and/or examples from your own life. We hope these episodes are meaningful and relevant to everyone's hope and desire for Zion.

DENVER: The Protestant Reformation was two things: First, it was a protest against the corruption of Roman Catholicism (hence the term *Protestant*) because the protestors rejected the corrupt Roman hierarchy then in charge of western European Christianity. Second, it was an attempt to reform corrupted Christianity into something better (hence the term *Reformation*) because the protestors hoped to recover and establish something marginally better than the institution headquartered in Rome.

They hoped to reform Christianity into something better representing the *actual* commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ. None of the Protestant fathers hoped to reestablish the original Christian church (or what is referred to as the *primitive* church) which once existed when Peter, James, John, Matthew, Luke, and other New Testament figures lived. When Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, it did not improve Christianity; it compromised it.

Christianity is best understood and practiced by the meek and the humble.

Christ came as a lowly servant, kneeling to wash the feet of others. He held no office, no rank, commanded no fortune, submitted to Jewish and Roman authorities. He was abused and rejected. His only tool was the truth. He was born in a stable and continually regarded by the leaders as unimportant. There was nothing about His position that commanded respect.

When those who claimed to follow Him acquired the rank of official Roman Empire state religion, Christianity could not have become more alienated from how Christ lived. Silk robes and gold headpieces worn by church leaders replaced the rough clothing and crown of thorns worn by Christ. This was a tragedy, not a triumph. Christianity was utterly broken. It has not been fixed, even by the Reformation.

I believe that there is tension, if not outright hostility, between charity as a priority on one hand and knowledge as priority on the other hand; and that as between the two, it is more important to acquire the capacity for charity or love of your fellow man than it is to gain understanding. It's like what Paul said, "If I have all gifts and know all mysteries but have not charity, I'm nothing." (See 1 Corinthians 13:1-3) Charity, or the love of your fellow man, is

the greater challenge and the more relevant one, and when you've acquired that, you can add to it knowledge.

But knowledge has the ability to render the possessor arrogant and haughty, whereas charity renders the possessor humble. If you want the greatest challenge in life, try loving your fellow man unconditionally and viewing them as God would view them and then behaving according to that view. And out of that, you will learn a great deal more about Christ than you can simply by studying. Walking in His path is a greater revelation of who He is than anything else that's provided.

Well, the more I began to take in the truths of the content in the Book of Mormon, the greater the gap grew between the lip service paid to the Restoration by the Mormon Church (the LDS Church) and the *practice* of the institution itself. In fact, the Book of Mormon, used as a guide or measuring stick, condemns *all* of the institutions of Christianity. In fact, it condemns everyone except the few who are the humble followers of Christ and points out (despite *that* few being humble followers of Christ)—nevertheless, *they* are led that in many instances, they do err because they're taught by the precepts of men.

If you want precepts that come from God, the best place to look at this point is the Book of Mormon text. The closer you look, the more you'll see. The more you see, the more you'll find that right now, the religion of Jesus Christ is hardly practiced anywhere on this earth. If it's going to be practiced at all, it needs to be done by you, by someone who is eagerly searching for and trying to find words that come from Jesus Christ as your guide, as something to lead you back to Him, as the message intended for the last days, and as the means by which you can interpret the *earlier* New Testament, the *earlier* Old Testament, to find out exactly what *they* mean—because the key to unlocking *all* of what God has been, is presently, and will ultimately be involved with to fulfill all the prophecies is contained primarily in the text of the Book of Mormon.

And so, if you want to escape before the ultimate destruction of that great image with the head of gold *beforehand*, to be prepared for the coming of the Lord; if you're a sincere Christian, you don't need to go and join another denominational institution. But you *better* take seriously the Book of Mormon and study *it* and take *its* interpretations, *its* meaning, *its* guidance seriously because it *is* the standard that has been planted in the last days as the ensign of truth to which all Christians, if they believe in Christ, need to rally in order to be part of His great latter-day work.

Mormonism is compelling. It's a very big religion, at least when it began. Since it's beginning, it has diminished considerably. Joseph Smith asserted:

"The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe [that] we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another, when

that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds.” (Letter from Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, Mar. 22, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri, published in *Times and Seasons*, Feb. 1840, pp. 53–54; spelling and grammar modernized.)

Everything that’s true, lovely, or of good report was intended to be part of original Mormonism.

Joseph’s original Mormonism was inclusive, not exclusive. All truth belonged to Mormonism, but it never pretended to have it all. Mormonism was the search for truth. It was originally the search to discover truth without fear of finding something new. To Joseph, Mormonism did not possess all truth. His religion was not based on *conceit* but on *humility*—the willingness to continue to search, pray, study, and hope for newly revealed additions. It was understood there was a great deal more yet to be discovered. The claim that Mormonism was the *only true and living church* presumed the willingness to hear God’s voice and receive new truth. It was not because it already had all truth. It was *living* during Joseph’s life because it continued to grow and expand. Living organisms grow; dead ones decay.

Opposition in scripture seems clear, but when we struggle in our environment, it becomes much more difficult to make decisions about what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad, what is of God, what is deception, what is truth, what is false. But that’s not a correct understanding because the scriptures may reveal the conflict in sharp contrast, but it was no different in that day than it is today. Deciding between the opposing sides was not any more clear to those living at the time the scriptures were written than the opposition you encounter every day of your life.

The scriptures were written by or about prophets who took clearly opposing positions from those who were deceived. The clarity you read in scripture is because the views and opinions of prophets were used to *tell* about the events. But as the events happened, those living at the time had to have faith to distinguish between truth and error, to believe or to ignore a message from the Lord.

It is no different for them than it is for the dilemma that we face today. Does the message invite or entice you to believe in Christ and to do His works? Does it get presented in a way that displays patience, long-suffering? Does it use gentleness and persuasion, meekness and love, and consistency with the revelations and commandments found previously in scripture? Or does it appeal to your vanity, to your arrogance? Does it make you proud of yourself, or does it make you, instead, wish that you were a better person?

Humility is absolutely required to progress. The more we think we understand, the less willing we can become to receive more. Joseph said, “It is the constitutional disposition of mankind to set up stakes and bounds to the works and ways of the Almighty (TPJS, p. 320).” He also said, “I never heard of a man being damned for believing too much, but they are

damned for unbelief (ibid, p. 374).” James 4:6 says, *God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble*.

Damnation is limiting progress or stopping progress. Setting up boundaries to what the Lord can do is *voluntary damnation*. No matter how much you believe you know, if you will be humble, then you will learn a great deal more. We must continue progression, *or*, if we don’t, we accept damnation and that, too, voluntarily.

And then there is Moses, who is called in scripture, *the meekest of all men* (See Numbers 7:22), and gentiles depict him as a bully and a strongman. And yet, Moses saw no reason to be jealous when others were out prophesying—would that all men would do that. Moses, like Adam, like Christ, is an example of how the word *dominion* should be understood.

All three [were] gardeners, responsible for trying to make their garden thrive, grow, and bear fruit. In reality, those who have held the greatest dominion given by God have all lived lives of meekness and service. They were the opposite of what gentiles regard as a strongman, the *opposite*.

Mormonism cannot (or at least, should not) consider itself the exclusive possessor of *the* sacred canon, or that there is only one canon containing Gods’ teachings—*the* God’s teachings. There are words from heaven spread throughout our world by deliberate planting of the Gods.

Continuing: *For out of the books [that] shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written* (2 Nephi 12:10).

These *books* hold terrible importance for Mormons because we are going to be judged by the Gods based on a comparison between *our works* and that which is written. With such a warning, we Mormons ought to be humble about our claims to know more than other faiths. We should be modest in thinking we are especially graced by the Gods’ words and should be anxious to scour the globe to discover the sacred texts of other cultures. In humility, we should invite *them* to share the truths *they* value most with us because we’ve shown that we will respect what *they* regard as sacred.

It’s really hard to sit inside your own life and to be realistic about your own personal failings. We always tend to apply tests that are given in scripture outwardly and to say, "As long as I use persuasion and pure knowledge, then I can beat you into submission and never yield the argument because I’m doing what was said is the criteria—*gentleness*: Okay, I won’t yell at you; *meekness*: Okay, I’ll be polite enough to let you say what you have to say before I— I won’t interrupt; *love unfeigned*: Okay, I love you, brother; I love you, brother; and *Persuasion*: Okay, when I get my opportunity to present mine, I’m going for the brass ring. I’m gonna..."

Wait a minute! What if that’s God trying to get through to you? What if the way in which God is trying to persuade you is by the meekness of the humble Lord who speaks to us in

plain humility; who comes to us, not to try and overawe us, but comes to us saying: *You are me in embryo. I know what it took for me to become the Son of God, and I know you can do it, too.* What if the Lord is your greatest cheerleader, and He wants nothing more than to try and get you to be more like Him? You can't be more like Him when the center of everything is yourself, and you never self-examine. We all deserve criticism.

It requires humility to approach God and ask Him for His answer and yet more humility to know it is from Him and not my own ego, presumptions, hopes, desires, wants, and conceit. It is for me as it was for Joseph. Only *when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers* (T&C 138:11) the truth. *That* comes from a purer source, higher than myself and more filled with light than any man—*certainly* greater light than I have.

This was once a temple text and has become somewhat corrupted. I'll not make any corrections or clarifications. This is from Proverbs 8 in the King James Version. The version we have has additional passages about the foolish woman at the beginning and again at the end. I am going to discard those words attributed so that the words that are attributed to the Heavenly Mother alone can be isolated and looked at to be considered. She states:

Hear, for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. (Proverbs 8:6-8; see also Proverbs 1:35 RE)

She proclaims Herself as the reliable source of truth, righteousness, and plain (meaning *clear*) understanding. She is opposed to wickedness, frowardness (meaning *stubbornness* or *contrariness*), and perversity.

If *we* are *froward*, we are stubborn or contrary with one another. We dispute. We find it difficult to agree. How much debate and anger are produced by frowardness?

Jacob (called James in the King James Bible) mentioned *wisdom* in his letter. In contemplating Her, Jacob suggested we should be *easy to be entreated*.

Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge, among you? Let him show out of good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife are, there [is] confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace. (Ep Jacob 1:14)

Wisdom from above can endow us with the kindly demeanor of brothers and sisters who seek what is good for one another. How often are the words of our mouths froward and perverse? The Divine Mother refuses to speak wickedness and abominations, and Her influence brings others to depart from such failures.

Continuing:

They are all plain to him that understandeth and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it (Proverbs 1:25).

Proclaiming *wisdom is better than rubies*, She asks us to receive Her instruction rather than seek silver and gold. Nothing else is to be compared with Her wisdom. She instructs in virtues that would make *any* person better. But Her instruction will also make living in peace with others *possible*. Nothing in this world is more desirable than acquiring wisdom (understanding and putting knowledge to wise use). Zion will require the wisdom to use pure knowledge in meekness, humility, and charity. Zion will require *Her* influence.

Frowardness is a really old English word, so old that Microsoft Word incessantly corrects it to *forwardness*, because *forwardness* we use. *Frowardness* is old, and we don't have a good word for it, but it means exactly what's defined in the talk—being contrary, being stubborn, being difficult to get along with.

Froward people are continuously nagging other people because they either think the other person is wrong, or they think themselves right, and therefore, they agitate rather than become meek and submissive and humble and patient and kindly.

I suspect that that part of the talk had something to do with the activities that have gone on, although I haven't looked to see. I've heard from a couple of people that there was some head-butting. Head-butting is not a bad thing so long as it's not done in a way so as to break hearts, create divisions, and make people hold ill will toward one another.

People are very different one from another. Not only are men and women different from one another, women are different from each other, and men are different from each other; and personalities are *always* going to be ill-fitted. Getting people to mesh together?—That's not going to result in, somehow, this universal similarity of personality. It's important that people preserve their differences. It's important that people have the gifts that have been given to them by God preserved intact and not suppressed because someone doesn't like the way that their gift gets expressed.

I've mentioned it before—I just find the artwork that Monet does with his version of impressionism the highest and greatest use of the paintbrush. But I think Van Gogh's impressionism is crude and elementary; and quite frankly, I mean, his suicide stopped the

outpouring of that stuff; and in some ways, you know, maybe the art world is benefitted by that.

When he was a realist in the early stages, some of what Van Gogh did was rather lovely, but his impressionism— I see that when my wife substitutes in fourth grade, and she brings presents home from her kids. But there are people who love Van Gogh. *Sunflowers* sold for 44 million last time it sold. You know, some people really love Van Gogh. I assume that in the resurrection, they'll figure out that they were duped. But for here and now, in this fallen world with its perverse set of priorities, that's all good and well; and if they've got the money, and they want to use it that way, that's fine.

Zion is going to have people whose artistic outpouring is going to be *fabulously* different from one another. You look at the totem pole artistry of the Alouettes, and you look at the carved artistry of the Hawaiian Islands, and you look at the sculpture of Michelangelo—and these are *radically, radically* different, one from the other, so much so that you're bridging these enormous cultural divides to look at these different kinds of sculpture.

Why would we ever want to have a studied school of artistic discipline that produces nothing more than some uniform product when beauty and artistry can find so many unique forms of expression? Why would we ever want that?

And the brother of Jared is asked, "Did you see more than this?" "No." "Will you believe me if I show myself to you?" "Yea, I know you're a God of truth, and you cannot lie. I'll believe all your words." (See Ether 1:12)

Why do you think the Lord posed the question, "If I show myself to you, will you believe in me?" Why do you think that Mormon writes about how he's spoken face-to-face in plain humility as one man speaks to another? We want the thundering and the lightning and the ground shaking on Sinai.

And when the Lord appeared to the brother of Jared, before appearing, He asked him, "Now when you see me, are you going to believe me?" (ibid, vs 12)

He loveth all who will have him to be their God.

"Well, I knew not that God was a man. You seemed— You seemed so much bigger and better when you were the burly thunderer from behind the curtain announcing that you are the great and powerful Oz. But now that the curtain's drawn aside, and you're like— Man was created in your image, and it's literally— It literally means that." (It takes some of the varnish off it all.)

God's greatness does not consist in striking awe in the eye of the beholder because of glory. It consists in the humility, the virtue, the goodness, the purity of the being. We worship God not because He is powerful. We worship God because He represents everything that is pure and holy and good, everything that is desirable above all else. The purity of that fruit that

was delicious that Father Lehi talked about and Nephi wrote about, it is so because of its goodness. Because it is exactly what the highest and the best and the most noble should be. That's who God is.

If I can help you envision our Lord a little more, let me describe Him in terms of His characteristics. Our Lord was and is affable, but He is not gregarious. He was approachable, and He is approachable, and He's not aloof. He's patient. He's willing to guide, and He's willing to teach. He is intelligent, but He is not overbearing. He's humble in His demeanor even though the power that he possessed and possesses is undeniable. He is, therefore, both a Lamb and a Lion.

I want you to entertain three truths about Him in your mind as we begin the subject today. Those three truths are:

- He is quick to forgive sin;
- He allows all to come unto Him;
- And He is no respecter of persons.

In some respects, our own respect for or our disrespect for ourselves is the impediment in coming to Him because we tend to think that we aren't good enough. Because He is quick to forgive sins, it really doesn't matter if you're not good enough because one of the first orders of business when you come into His presence is He forgives you. He cannot look upon sin with the *least* degree of allowance, but He has the capacity and the ability to forgive sin. Therefore, although your sins may be as scarlet, He can, He will, and He does make you white as snow, no longer accountable. Therefore, you needn't fear, but you can approach boldly our Lord.

The simple answer is that there is always one [temple] on the earth. That has been true from Adam to the present time, yeah. Remember that in Nauvoo, the Lord offered to reconnect the saints but clearly defined the condition for that to happen was necessarily an acceptable temple where He could come and restore the connection. The reconnection is ordinance-based and will require an acceptable temple before it goes beyond the single representative.

First, ideas need to be advanced and accepted, and, second, we need to act on the ideas primarily by repenting and opening ourselves to the influence of God. Third, we have to be humble and patient and willing to practice the religion before we can have any hope of God deciding to gather us.

Practical experience is absolutely necessary. Theories and pretensions are not going to get us anywhere. Everyone can theorize the virtues that are necessary to gather people together and live in harmony. Everyone can envision *themselves* as one of the residents of the city of peace. But the practical experiences required to iron out our selfishness and competitiveness so we can actually live in peace is another order of magnitude harder.

In the Nauvoo City Council minutes, you see them grappling with a society that is trying to be composed of Saints, and the practical problem solving goes on. There are moments when I'm reading the Nauvoo City Council minutes that I'm laughing because they go to solve one problem, but the solution creates another. Basically, people are discourteous of one another, and because they're discourteous of one another, they adopt an ordinance in order to end one discourtesy only to create yet another discourtesy on top of that.

For example, one of the problems that they had was that Nauvoo was organized as a city in which everyone had a garden plot. But because the garden plots were not fenced, horses and foot traffic would go through the gardens, and the result of that was the destruction of needed food stuffs. So, they couldn't get people to build fences around their gardens. The solution to the problem was to turn the hogs loose because when the hogs are loose, the hogs are going to go into the gardens. And so, they adopted an ordinance, and the ordinance let the hogs in Nauvoo go free, and that produced the required fences that they wanted at the expense of hog wallows in the middle of the streets in the middle of Nauvoo until finally some guy, tired of the hog problem, went out and killed and butchered and ate a couple of hogs that another guy said belonged to him; and he sued him, and they had the public fight over it.

The point of all this isn't hogs and the Nauvoo City High Council. The point of all this is we need practical experience, not theory. And the way in which the practical experience can be had is in gathering in fellowships or societies, collecting our own tithing, and then grappling with the fact that there is a pile of money sitting there which is *ever* a temptation and to deal with that in a responsible way that forces individuals to confront their own self-will, their own pride, their own desire, their own jealousy, their own envy, their own ambition, their own covetousness.

In the fellowships that have been organized, there have been moments of profound breakthroughs in the kind of attributes that you would want for Zion. One group, when they begin their meeting, they gather all of the needs, and they put all of the needs together. Then, they gather the money, and the money is always cash and in a container that they don't know how much cash there is. Without opening the cash then, they open the needs, and as a group, they reason together and agree on what the priority of the needs are so that they have a list of the most compelling and on down. Once they know what the most compelling, the second, the third, the fourth are, they open it up, and they count the money.

There have been occasions— On one occasion, the person whose need could be satisfied (because there was enough money there) looked at the person next in line in priority behind them and concluded that in *their* heart, they thought *that* need greater than their own. If they satisfied that need, there would be nothing left for them. So, they voluntarily passed on their priority and took none of the money and allowed it all go to the next person behind them. That is a person that I would willingly add to a community because they've learned self-sacrifice.

Someone who advocates incessantly, we've *got* to live the United Order; we've *got* to have consecration—because they intend to benefit from that—is unfit to be gathered. They would destroy Zion. Someone who says, "What can I give at the cost of my own self-sacrifice?" and who is willing to live the law of consecration in order to bless and benefit others (not expecting themselves to be blessed or benefitted but, instead, for themselves to carry a burden), those people can be gathered, and they present no threat. But the way in which those people get identified is by practical experience which is what the fellowshipping communities are designed, by the inspiration of God, to allow to take place.

Every one of us theorizes that we are a great candidate for Zion. Go out and get some practical experience and see how great of a candidate you truly are. You'll be disappointed in yourself. Most of us would be, anyway.

Alma taught a lesson that we accepted by covenant as a statement of our faith:

And now, my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the Holy Order of God after which ye have been received. And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle, easy to be entreated, full of patience and longsuffering, being temperate in all things, being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times, asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal, always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. (Alma 5:6)

The greatness of a soul is defined by how easily they are entreated to follow the truth. The greatest of those who have ever lived have been submissive and gentle souls. In a day when Satan accuses and rages in the hearts of men, it requires *extraordinary* will and *steely* determination to remain easily entreated by truth.

The new scriptures is a historical event that throughout the entirety of history, going back to the time of Moses, has only happened three times. It happened with Moses; it happened with Ezra; it happened through the prophet Joseph Smith and through the faithful diligence of a remnant of the people who sought to reconnect in our day and to honor that third Restoration through Joseph Smith. *It is beyond historic*. It is something designed to alter the course of history.

But some people look upon signs like that as inconsequential and easy to dismiss. I can testify to you that the heavens themselves rejoiced at what happened there. Even if you're dismissive; even if you're nonchalant about it, it is, nevertheless, one of the greatest developments to occur in history, and it happened in your lifetime.

The saints were rejected in 1844. Nothing has been done to repair the condemnation in 1831 [1832] or to reclaim people since the rejection in 1844. No one has attempted to repent and remember the former commandments—not only to *say*, but to *do*—until today.

Stop your damn squabbling! Don't go back and revert to pre-1820 Christian conduct that aroused God's ire. I use the word *damned* in the scriptural sense because that's exactly what it is. Stop squabbling! Stop disagreeing! Surrender your pride! If you think you're right; if you think someone needs to be corrected; if you think you have a higher, holier, better way, stay and persuade. Be meek. Be humble. Solicit other people and appeal to their heart.

We should welcome everyone. We should welcome Latter-day Saints. We should welcome Community of Christ. We should welcome Catholics. We should welcome Presbyterians. We should welcome *every* kind of person and then treat them with respect and kindness and understanding. Let them bring their ideas, and let you teach them those truths that you presently understand. The religion of Joseph Smith which is—it's in that video that was shown just before the opening prayer—the religion of Joseph Smith is to accept all truth.

Just because it hasn't entered into your hard heart and your closed mind yet doesn't make it untrue. There are truths in rich abundance that hail from all quarters of the earth. As religions have discarded truths, many of them have sought and fought to retain the most important core; and the most important core of many faiths and the highest aspiration and the highest ideal. It doesn't matter if you're talking the Cherokee tradition, the Hindu tradition, the Islamic tradition, the Polynesian, the Hawaiian tradition. It doesn't matter. The highest aspiration remains for the individual to connect to God and for God to recognize and connect with the individual.

There's really no difference if we welcome one another, and we treat each other kindly. Someone that may have a religion that is very strange to us— If they bring with them the aspiration to know God, and we can persuade them that God has done a work among us through Joseph Smith (through the labor that has been done to recover that Restoration), maybe they'll labor alongside us as the Restoration wraps up.

It is a great deal left to be done. And there is no one seriously entertaining the possibility of constructing a city of holiness, a city of peace, a people that are fruit-worthy to be laid up against the harvest. No one has made the effort until now. And while you may look at us and say, "You've done a crude job. You've done a rudimentary job. It needs improvement." Then help us improve it! Stop sitting back and throwing rocks! This is a time to gather, not to disperse. The same garbage that existed at the beginning (when Joseph looked around and saw confusion and disharmony) *wants to creep in* among us.

Recognize that's a false spirit. If you'll cast it out of yourself, and if you'll look at the words of the covenant that was offered in September of 2017, what you'll find is that Christ wants us—like the Book of Mormon explains—to be meek, to be humble, and to be easily entreated. And therefore, entreat one another to honor God and recognize that all of us

aspire to be equal, whether you're at the top or at the root. The aspiration is the same: *to be equal*.

But remember that without the fruit of repentance and a broken heart and a contrite spirit, you cannot keep my covenant, for I, your Lord, am meek and lowly of heart. Be like me. You have all been wounded, your hearts pierced through with sorrows because of how the world has treated you. But you have also scarred one another by your unkind treatment of each other, and you do not notice your misconduct towards others because you think yourself justified in this. You bear the scars on your countenances from the soles of your feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Your visages have been so marred that your hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward your fellow man bear outward witness of your inner self; you cannot hide it. When I appear to you, instead of confidence, you feel shame. You fear and withdraw from me because you bear the blood and sins of your treatment of brothers and sisters. Come to me, and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love. (Answer and Covenant, T&C 157:49)

The fact that I have concluded that Joseph Smith was a restrained man (in many respects, a very modest man) whose defense of what he believed to be the truth was fierce, but who recognized that there were a lot of people (including his own wife, Emma Smith) who had a better education than did he, Joseph was like a sponge when he thought he could get truth or help from others. And he was meek and humble in that respect. But if God had revealed something to him, he was—he was an iron-fisted, immovable man for the truth.

Personally and privately (just as the scriptures say concerning Moses), Moses was the meekest of all men. If you just read the dialogue from Moses in Exodus, you'll see nothing but meekness in that man.

If you'll read Joseph Smith's three documents in *A Man Without Doubt*, you'll see a meek man, *unbelievably* frustrated by some of the circumstances into which he was put, *searching* to find the right way out of the dilemma, trying to get God aroused to anger in the same way that the circumstances aroused Joseph to anger, but submitting *always* to whatever the will of God was for him.

Ultimately, Joseph Smith left to go to be imprisoned in Carthage knowing he would not come back from there or, at least, expecting that he would not; and commenting about how his life was of no value to his friends, as he returned—and he went back for the slaying.

Say what you want about those final moments in the life of Joseph Smith. He put himself in harm's way to prove his fidelity to his friends. He would not forsake *them* (as they claimed he was doing in *their* hour of need) and ultimately gave his life up. That's not the conduct of a con man. That's not the way in which someone who's going to lie and cheat and steal and behave as an immoral exploiter of others would conduct their lives. Joseph, in my view, was

not just a virtuous man, but he qualified as one of those who *hath no greater love* (See John 9:11) because he went back and surrendered at the behest of his brethren—in part, with the hope that by losing his life, Nauvoo would be spared the slaughter that had gone on at Far West and Haun's Mill and elsewhere.

And if ye...say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if ye [shalt] say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass (Helaman 3:19).

And then, because He knows the nature and the character of the man [Nephi] involved in giving this authority, God commands him. He has to go out and deliver the message, *Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction* (ibid). He didn't want to do that because that's not the character of the person who, with unwearyingness, would go out and declare the word of God because such people have in their heart one and only one objective, and that is the salvation of the souls of men. But now, this troubling message has to be given, and when he goes, and he delivers it, he doesn't even use the authority that he's been given. He simply asks the Lord if the Lord will smite.

Imagine how different things are when you know that there is no power or authority *in the priesthood itself*. But the power to influence others comes only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, and by kindly presenting pure knowledge. Imagine that a teacher must greatly enlarge your soul to actually claim priesthood. How different would that be for you? You would be drawn to attend a meeting for what great light it could provide you. You would no longer endure those meetings, conferences, and conversations that are low, mean, vulgar, and condescending. *Leave* if they do if you're not edified, and your soul is not enlightened. Religion classes and meetings that bore us are an obscenity. Discussions filled with a myriad of unenlightened personal opinion are the real pornography of today's Mormonism.

I know of no way to receive light and truth from heaven but by patient, obedient, and disciplined living by everything God has said, commanded, or instructed. It is as the Lord told His disciples, some things are not overcome but by *fasting and prayer* (See Matthew 9:7). A haphazard inquiry from a proud and hard-hearted soul will not likely receive an answer from the same Lord who spent entire nights alone in solitary prayer.

Our Lord's prayers were so private that His own disciples needed to ask Him to teach them how to pray because He did not display it for them to learn by overhearing. He went alone, apart, and in private, and then prayed for hours, oftentimes overnight. This was Christ. This was He who is *more intelligent than [them] all* (Abraham 5:4).

Yet, people expect they can ask in haste about something that shatters their paradigm and in their pride expect to have everything they always believed to be ratified to their satisfaction, and what annoys them to be denounced. Until the heart is broken and willing to accept the sad news that they are wrong, and God is going to correct them, they are not likely to get an answer other than they are right. In fact, they've been right all along. The

answers from a meek and lowly Lord come with the greatest accuracy to the meek and lowly inquirer. There are but few of those living.

This is my focus: I try to do what I have been asked, when asked to do it, in exactly the manner it's told me to accomplish and leave the results entirely to the Lord. If I do only what He asks, then the outcome is His alone. I cannot take credit or blame. I cannot be flattered or criticized because it has but little to do with me. If the result is something great, then I do not own it and can take no credit for it. If it results in something terrible, then I cannot blame myself for failure or take upon myself the disappointment. If I respect man's agency and allow them to choose, then I have discovered that I ought to likewise respect God's agency and allow Him to lead. Given my limitations, I may suggest, petition, give observations, protest, and complain to the Lord, but I have no right to reject His direction and fail to follow His instructions.

There is no such thing as a *spiritual accomplishment*. As soon as we think *we've* achieved, our hearts are off-track. There is only humility and meekness. These two virtues allow God to accomplish something because it removes our own vanity and pride from the equation. No matter how well-intended, we are *not* God, we are *not* wise, and we do not have at our disposal enough intelligence to outthink our adversaries. God can. We cannot. If we want to fail, then we just need to take the initiative. If we wish to succeed, then we kneel before God and do as He asks.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3 given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #5 given in Sandy, Utah on September 7, 2018;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original" given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night" given in St. George, Utah on March 19, 2017;
- His talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed" given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Utah on July 29, 2017;
- His comments at the Unity in Christ Conference in Utah County, Utah on July 30, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "That We Might Become One" given in Clinton, Utah on January 14, 2018;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents" given in Gilbert, Arizona on March 25, 2018;
- Denver's remarks entitled "Book of Mormon as Covenant" given at the Book of Mormon Covenant Conference in Columbia, South Carolina on January 13, 2019;

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #7 entitled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man" given in Ephraim, Utah on June 28, 2014;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer" held on May 13, 2015;
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work" given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, Utah on August 4, 2018;
- Denver's lecture entitled "Signs Follow Faith" given in Centerville, Utah on March 3, 2019;
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant" given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3, 2017;
- Denver's Q&A session at the Keeping the Covenant Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 22, 2019;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood" given in Orem, Utah on November 2, 2013;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope" given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Utah on July 28, 2018;
- Denver's blog entry entitled "Answer to an Email" posted August 11, 2015;
- An email Denver wrote to LDS Freedom Forum user Jesef which was posted on March 8, 2016.