



By Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Eternal Everyday

Humility about who we are and God's purpose for us is essential.

Since my service in the British Mission as a young man, I have enjoyed British humor. It is sometimes characterized by a self-deprecating, modest, humble approach to life. An example of this is how summer is portrayed. British summers are relatively short and unpredictable. As one author in a low-key way said, "I love the British summer, it's my favourite *day* of the year."¹ A favorite British cartoon character of mine was pictured in her bed waking up late in the morning and declaring to her dogs, "Oh my goodness! I think we've overslept and missed summer."²

There is an analogy in this humor to our life on this beautiful earth. The scriptures are clear that our precious mortal existence is a very short time. It could be said that from an eternal perspective, our time on earth is as fleeting as a British summer.³

Sometimes man's purpose and very existence are also described in very humble terms. The prophet Moses was raised in what some today might call a privileged background. As recorded in the Pearl of Great Price, the Lord, preparing Moses for his prophetic assignment, gives him an overview of the world and all the children of men which are and were created.⁴ Moses's somewhat surprising reaction was, "Now . . . I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed."⁵

Subsequently, God, in what amounts to a rebuttal to any feelings of unimportance that Moses may have felt, proclaimed His true purpose: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."⁶

We are all equal before God. His doctrine is clear. In the Book of Mormon, we read, "All are alike unto God," including "black and white, bond and free, male and female."⁷ Accordingly, all are invited to come to the Lord.⁸

Anyone who claims superiority under the Father's plan because of characteristics like race, sex, nationality,

language, or economic circumstances is morally wrong and does not understand the Lord's true purpose for all of our Father's children.⁹

Unfortunately, in our day in almost every segment of society, we see self-importance and arrogance flaunted while humility and accountability to God are denigrated. Much of society has lost its moorings and does not understand why we are on this earth. True humility, which is essential to achieve the Lord's purpose for us, is seldom evident.¹⁰

It is important to understand the magnitude of Christ's humility, righteousness, character, and intelligence, as exemplified in the scriptures. It is foolish to underestimate the necessity of continuously striving for these Christlike qualities and attributes on a day-by-day basis, particularly humility.¹¹

The scriptures are clear that while this life is relatively short, it is incredibly significant. Amulek, who was a missionary companion of Alma in the Book of Mormon, said, "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God;





yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.”¹² We do not want, like my cartoon character, to sleep through this life.

The Savior’s example of humility and sacrifice for all mankind is the most profound event in history. The Savior, even as a member of the Godhead, was willing to come to earth as a lowly infant and begin an existence that included teaching and healing His brothers and sisters and ultimately suffering indescribable pain in Gethsemane and on the cross in order to perfect His Atonement. This act of love and humility on the part of Christ is known as His condescension.¹³ He did this for every man and woman God has created or will create.

Our Heavenly Father does not want His children to be discouraged or to give up on their quest for celestial glory. When we really contemplate God the Father and Christ the Son, who They are, and what They have accomplished on our behalf, it fills us with reverence, awe, gratitude, and humility.

Humility Is Essential in Helping the Lord Establish His Church

Alma asked a question in his day that is pertinent today: “If ye have

experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”¹⁴ Alma continued, “Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, . . . that ye have been sufficiently humble?”¹⁵

Every time I read about Alma the Younger relinquishing his role as head of state to preach the word of God,¹⁶ I am impressed. Alma clearly had a profound testimony of God the Father and Jesus Christ and felt accountable to Them completely and without reservation. He had the correct priorities and humility to give up status and position because he realized that serving the Lord was more important.

Having sufficient humility in our lives to help establish the Church is particularly valuable. An example in Church history is revealing. In June of 1837, the Prophet Joseph was inspired while in the Kirtland Temple to call Apostle Heber C. Kimball to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to “England . . . and open the door of salvation to that nation.”¹⁷ Apostle Orson Hyde and a few others were assigned to accompany him. Elder Kimball’s response was remarkable. “The idea of being appointed to such an important

mission was almost more than I could bear. . . . [I] was nearly ready to sink under the burden which was placed upon me.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, he undertook the mission with absolute faith, commitment, and humility.

Sometimes humility is accepting callings when we do not feel adequate. Sometimes humility is serving faithfully when we feel capable of a more high-profile assignment. Humble leaders have verbally and by example established that it is not where we serve but how we faithfully serve.¹⁹ Sometimes humility is overcoming hurt feelings when we feel that leaders or others have mistreated us.

On July 23, 1837, the Prophet Joseph met with Elder Thomas B. Marsh, President of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Marsh was apparently frustrated that the Prophet had called two members of his quorum to go to England without consulting him. As Joseph met with Elder Marsh, any hurt feelings were put aside, and the Prophet received a remarkable revelation. It is now the 112th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.²⁰ It gives incredible direction from heaven with respect to humility and missionary work. Verse 10 reads, “Be thou *humble*; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”²¹

This revelation occurred the exact same day that Elders Kimball, Hyde, and John Goodson, full of humility, were declaring the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Vauxhall Chapel in Preston, England.²² This was the first time missionaries had proclaimed the restored gospel outside of North America in this dispensation. Their missionary effort resulted in almost immediate convert baptisms and led to numerous faithful members.²³

Subsequent parts of the revelation guide the missionary effort in our day. They read, in part, “Whosoever ye shall send in my name . . . shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation . . . inasmuch as they shall *humble* themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit.”²⁴

The humility that undergirded this incredible missionary effort allowed the Lord to establish His Church in a remarkable way.

Gratefully, we continually see this in the Church today. Members, including the rising generation, give up their time and defer education and employment to serve missions. Many senior members leave employment and make other sacrifices in order to serve God in whatever capacity they are called. We do not allow personal issues to distract or divert us from accomplishing His purposes.²⁵ Church service requires humility. We humbly serve as called with all our might, mind, and strength. At every level of the Church, it is important to understand the Christlike attribute of humility.

Everyday Humility Is Essential in Helping Prepare Individuals to Meet God

The goal of honoring the Lord and submitting ourselves to His will²⁶ is not as valued in today’s society as it has been in the past. Some Christian leaders of other faiths believe we are living in a post-Christian world.²⁷

For generations, the religious-based virtue of humility and the civic virtues of modesty and understatement have been the predominant standard.

In today’s world, there is an increased emphasis on pride, self-aggrandizement, and so-called “authenticity,” which sometimes leads to a lack of true humility. Some suggest



the moral values for happiness today include “be real, be strong, be productive—and most important, don’t rely on other people . . . because your fate is . . . in your own hands.”²⁸

The scriptures advocate a different approach. They suggest that we should be true disciples of Jesus Christ. This entails establishing a powerful feeling of accountability to God and a humble approach to life. King Benjamin taught that the natural man is an enemy to God and advocated that we need to yield ourselves “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.” He explained, among other things, that this requires becoming “submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love.”²⁹

Some misuse *authenticity* as a celebration of the natural man and qualities that are the opposite of humility, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and civility. We can celebrate our individual uniqueness as children of God without using authenticity as an excuse for un-Christlike behavior.

In our quest for humility, the modern internet creates challenges to avoiding pride. Two examples are the self-indulgent “look at me” approach or attacking others by ranting on social media. One more example is the “humblebrag.” It is defined as “an ostensibly modest or self-deprecating statement [or picture] whose actual purpose is to draw attention to something of which one is proud.”³⁰ The

prophets have always warned about pride and emphasizing the vain things of the world.³¹

The widespread deterioration of civil discourse is also a concern. The eternal principle of agency requires that we respect many choices with which we do not agree. Conflict and contention now often breach “the boundaries of common decency.”³² We need more modesty and humility.

Alma cautions against being “puffed up in the pride of your hearts,” “supposing that ye are better one than another,” and persecuting the humble who “walk after the holy order of God.”³³

I have found a genuine goodness among people of all faiths who are humble and feel accountable to God. Many of them subscribe to the Old Testament prophet Micah, who declared, “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”³⁴

When we are truly humble, we pray for forgiveness and forgive others. As we read in Mosiah, Alma taught that as often as we repent, the Lord will forgive our trespasses.³⁵ On the other hand, as indicated in the Lord’s Prayer,³⁶ when we do not forgive others’ trespasses, we bring ourselves under condemnation.³⁷ Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, through repentance our sins are forgiven. When we do not forgive those who trespass against us, we are in effect rejecting the

Savior's Atonement. Holding a grudge and refusing to forgive and refusing to humbly approach our relationships in a Christlike manner truly brings us under condemnation. Holding a grudge is poisonous to our souls.³⁸

Let me also caution against any form of arrogance. The Lord, through the prophet Moroni, makes a stark contrast between the arrogant and the humble: "Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek." The Lord further declared, "I give unto men weakness that they may be *humble*; and my grace is sufficient for all men that *humble* themselves before me; for if they *humble* themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."³⁹

Humility also includes being grateful for our numerous blessings and divine assistance. Humility isn't some grand identifiable achievement or even overcoming some major challenge. It is a sign of spiritual strength. It is having the quiet confidence that day by day and hour by hour we can rely on the Lord, serve Him, and achieve His purposes. It is my prayer that in this contentious world we will continuously strive for true humility every day. A favorite poem puts it this way:

*The test of greatness is the way
One meets the eternal Everyday.*⁴⁰

I bear a sure witness of the Savior and His Atonement and the overwhelming importance of humbly serving Him each and every day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Kathy Lette, in "Town and Country Notebook," ed. Victoria Marston, *Country Life*, June 7, 2017, 32; emphasis added.
2. Annie Tempest, "Tottering-by-Gently," *Country Life*, Oct. 3, 2012, 128.



3. See Psalm 90:4. Whether short or long in terms of earth years, our life span is very short from an eternal perspective. "All is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men" (Alma 40:8). The Apostle Peter declared, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).
4. See Moses 1:6–9. This is Christ speaking with divine investiture of authority (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* [2013], 47, footnote 11).
5. Moses 1:10.
6. Moses 1:39.
7. 2 Nephi 26:33; see also Doctrine and Covenants 1:34–35; 38:16; Official Declaration 2.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 begins, "All those who humble themselves before God." It then sets forth the requirements for baptism. See also Matthew 11:28.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
10. We know if we do not repent, receive the ordinances, and follow the covenant pathway that prepares us for eternity, "the night of darkness [comes] wherein there can be no labor performed" (Alma 34:33).
11. See 3 Nephi 27:27.
12. Alma 34:32.
13. See 1 Nephi 11:26–33; 2 Nephi 9:53; Jacob 4:7; Doctrine and Covenants 122:8.
14. Alma 5:26.
15. Alma 5:27.
16. See Alma 4:19.
17. Joseph Smith, in Heber C. Kimball, "History of Heber Chase Kimball by His Own Dictation," ca. 1842–1856, Heber C. Kimball Papers, 54, Church History Library; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle; the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (1888), 116.
18. Heber C. Kimball, "History of Heber Chase Kimball by His Own Dictation," 54; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 116.
19. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught: "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the

place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

20. See *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, ed. Brent M. Rogers and others (2017), 412–17. Vilate Kimball reported in a letter to her husband, Heber C. Kimball, that she had copied the revelation from "Elder Marshs book as he wrote it from Josephs mouth" (Vilate Murray Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, Sept. 6, 1837, in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, 412).
21. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10; emphasis added.
22. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 136–37.
23. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 149.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 112:21–22; emphasis added.
25. "While we do not ask to be released from a calling, if our circumstances change it is quite in order for us to counsel with those who have issued the call and then let the decision rest with them" (Boyd K. Packer, "Called to Serve," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 8).
26. See "Humility," in chapter 6 of *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 120.
27. See Charles J. Chaput, *Strangers in a Strange Land* (2017), 14–15; see also Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option* (2017).
28. Carl Cederstrom, "The Dangers of Happiness," *New York Times*, July 19, 2015, SR8.
29. Mosiah 3:19.
30. *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, "humblebrag," oxforddictionaries.com.
31. In some ways this echoes the book of Alma's description of those who had acquired "all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; . . . [but] were . . . lifted up in the pride of their eyes" (Alma 4:6). It has been noted that a "humblebrag" is still a brag.
32. David Brooks, "Finding a Way to Roll Back Fanaticism," *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 2017, A23.
33. Alma 5:53, 54.
34. Micah 6:8.
35. See Mosiah 26:30.
36. See Matthew 6:12, 15.
37. See Mosiah 26:31.
38. As Nelson Mandela said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies" (in Jessica Durando, "15 of Nelson Mandela's Best Quotes," *USA Today*, Dec. 5, 2013, usatoday.com).
39. Ether 12:26, 27; emphasis added.
40. Edmund Vance Cooke, "The Eternal Everyday," *Impertinent Poems* (1907), 21.