

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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The Key to Supernatural Power

The world cannot fathom strength proceeding from weakness, gain proceeding from loss, or power from meekness. Christians apprehend these truths very slowly, if at all, for we are strongly influenced by secular thinking. Let's stop and concentrate on what Jesus meant when He said that the *meek* would inherit the earth. Do we understand what meekness truly is? Think first about what it isn't.

It is not a naturally phlegmatic temperament. I knew a woman who was so phlegmatic that nothing seemed to make much difference to her at all. While drying dishes for her one day in her kitchen I asked where I should put a serving platter.

"Oh, I don't know. Wherever you think would be a good place," was her answer. I wondered how she managed to *find* things if there wasn't a place for everything (and everything in its place).

Meekness is not indecision or laziness or feminine fragility or loose sentimentalism or indifference or affable neutrality.

Meekness is most emphatically not *weakness*. Do you remember who was the meekest man in the Old Testament? Moses! (see Nm 12:3) My mental image of him is not of a feeble man. It is shaped by Michelangelo's sculpture and painting and by the biblical descriptions. Think of him murdering the Egyptian, smashing the tables of the commandments, grinding the golden calf to a powder, scattering it on the water and making the Israelites drink it. Nary a hint of weakness there, nor in David who wrote, "The meek will he guide in judgment" (Ps 25:9, KJV), nor in Isaiah, who wrote, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord" (Is 29:19, KJV).

The Lord Jesus was the Lamb of God, and when we think of lambs we think of meekness (and perhaps weakness), but He was also the Lion of Judah, and He said, "I am *meek* and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29, KJV). He told us that we can find rest for our souls if we will

come to Him, take His yoke, and learn. What we must learn is meekness. It doesn't come naturally to any of us.

Meekness is teachability. "The meek will he teach his way" (Ps 25:9, KJV). It is the readiness to be shown, which includes the readiness to lay down my fixed notions, my objections and "what if's" or "but what about's," my certainties about the rightness of what I have always done or thought or said. It is the child's glad "Show me! Is *this* the way? Please help me." We won't make it into the kingdom without that childlikeness, that simple willingness to be taught and changed and helped. "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas 1:21, KJV).

Meekness is an explicitly spiritual quality, a fruit of the Spirit, learned, not inherited. It shows in the kind of attention we pay to one another, the tone of voice we use, the facial expression. One weekend I spoke in Atlanta on this subject, and the following weekend I was to speak on it again in Philadelphia. As very often happens, I was sorely tested on that very point in the few days in between. That sore test was my chance to be taught and changed and helped. At the same time I was strongly tempted to indulge in the very opposite of meekness: sulking. Someone had hurt me. He/she was the one who needed to be changed! I felt I was misunderstood, unfairly treated, and unduly berated. Although I managed to keep my mouth shut, both the Lord and I knew that my thoughts did not spring from a depth of loving-kindness and holy charity. I wanted to vindicate myself to the offender. That was a revelation of how little I knew of meekness.

The Spirit of God reminded me that it was He who had provided this very thing to bring that lesson of meekness which I could learn nowhere else. He was literally putting me on the spot: would I choose, here and now, to *learn of Him*, learn *His* meekness? He was despised, rejected, reviled, pierced, crushed, oppressed, afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. What was this little incident of mine by comparison with my Lord's suffering? He brought to mind Jesus' willingness not only to eat with Judas who would soon betray Him, but also to kneel before him and wash his dirty feet. He

showed me the look the Lord gave Peter when he had three times denied Him—a look of unutterable love and forgiveness, a look of meekness which overpowered Peter's cowardice and selfishness, and brought him to repentance. I thought of His meekness as He hung pinioned on the cross, praying even in His agony for His Father's forgiveness for His killers. There was no venom or bitterness there, only the final proof of a sublime and invincible love.

But how shall I, not born with the smallest shred of that quality, I who love victory by argument and put-down, ever learn that holy meekness? The prophet Zephaniah tells us to *seek* it (Zep 2:3). We must walk (live) in the Spirit, not gratifying the desires of the sinful nature (e.g. my desire to answer back, to offer excuses and accusations, my desire to show up the other's fault instead of to be shown my own). We must "clothe" ourselves (Col 3:12) with meekness—put it on, like a garment. This entails an explicit choice: I *will* be meek. I *will not* sulk, will not retaliate, will not carry a chip.

A steadfast look at Jesus instead of at the injury makes a very great difference. Seeking to see things in His light changes the aspect altogether.

When Prudence, in the House Beautiful, asks Christian, "Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances at times, as if they were vanquished?"

"Yes," says Christian, "when I think what I saw at the Cross, that will do it."

The message of the cross is foolishness to the world and to all whose thinking is still worldly. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Cor 1:25, NIV). The meekness of Jesus was a force more irresistible than any force on earth. "By the meekness and gentleness of Christ," wrote the great apostle, "I appeal to you.... Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Cor 10: 1, 3-4, NIV). The weapon of meekness counters all enmity, says Von Hildebrand, with the offer of an unshielded heart.

Isn't this the simple explanation for our being so heavy-laden, so tired, so overburdened and confused and bitter? We drag around such prodigious loads of resentment and self-assertion. Shall we not rather accept at once the loving invitation:

Come to Me. Take My yoke. Learn of Me—I am gentle, meek, humble, lowly. I will give you rest.

Recommended Reading

J.I. Packer: *Rediscovering Holiness*. In the wonderfully lucid style we expect from Dr. Packer he tells us what holiness is and why it matters. His brilliance as a theologian does not prevent him from putting the hay where the sheep can reach it. It's a book for all of us who hunger and thirst to be more like Jesus. You can order the book from Servant Publications, P.O. Box 7455, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7455. \$16.99 + \$3.25 shipping/handling. MI residents add 4% sales tax.

Bible Study Helps for Children

Requests come to me for suggestions. Scripture Union publishes excellent helps for all ages, including adults. I recommend any and all. For children 7-10, ask for Quest; for 11-15, One-to-One. Each book covers three months, sent out four times per year, total cost \$15. 1-800-621-LAMP.

Chambers on Self-Realization

Our Lord's teaching is always *anti*-self-realization. His purpose is not the development of a man; His purpose is to make a man exactly like Himself, and the characteristic of the Son of God is self-expenditure.... Spiritually, we cannot measure our life by success, but only by what God pours through us, and we cannot measure that at all.

—Oswald Chambers,
My Utmost for His Highest, Sept. 2

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The Universal Thump

It's so refreshing to find some encouragement to work and to be cheerful and take orders, instead of what is more common today, an outright dislike, even hatred, of work and an unwillingness to take orders from anybody. We've really had just about enough of that, don't you think? So here's an antidote in the musings of a sailor in Herman Melville's great classic, *Moby Dick*:

What of it if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weigh, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Do you think the archangel Gabriel thinks anything the less of me because I promptly and respectfully obey that old hunks in that particular instance? Who ain't a slave? Tell me that. Well, then, however the old sea-captains may order me about, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way—either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder-blades, and be content.

Most of us are not exactly under the orders of "some old hunks of a sea-captain," but we *are* meant to be willing and cheerful servants of anybody who happens to need us. Have I a true servant-heart? I should have. I will not be anything like my Lord Jesus if I haven't, for He came not to be served but to serve. He set for us a radiant example of how practically He meant it. He washed feet. Knowing His own origin and destiny, He did it with grace and He did it with love.

And what is our origin? Our destiny? We, too, "come from God and are going back to God." Is there any job, then, that is really "beneath us"? Any "thump" that we really mind?

"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Gal 5:13, NIV).

Last summer a certain fifteen-year-old worked at a ranch, where his job included not only dishwashing but cleaning out the garbage truck. They weren't jobs he'd have opted for (he'd far rather have exercised horses or even mucked out stables), so I gave him "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive

an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. *It is the Lord Christ you are serving*" (Col 3:23-24, NIV). He wrote me a sweet letter, said God was helping him.

Boasting

A Sunday School teacher asked the children to comment on Jeremiah 9:23-24: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight" (NIV).

A ten-year-old named Christiana wrote,

This verse is talking about boasting about the things we own or have. Verse 24 talks about *only boasting about* knowing God.

Boasting is awful, as the verse is telling us. Because the verse says that God does *NOT* delight in boasting. Do you boast about your clothes, your children, your parents, your jewelry, your house, your pets, your TV, your Nintendo games, your cute little baby brother or sister ("gulp"), your warm bed? C'mon, say some things you have or boast about, or if you have heard other people boast about. But always remember, the only thing you *should* boast about is... (say it with me) **KNOWING GOD!**

A Model Worth 1,000 Words

Do you know someone contemplating an abortion, or someone who's a little shaky in his convictions about this issue? No argument will be as strong as this visual aid. You can obtain a plastic model of an 11-week-old fetus (the size of most aborted babies) from Project "Young One," Inc., 2125 West Lawn Ave., Racine, WI 53405, (414) 634-8697. Price: \$.30 each for 25 to 2,000 models, plus \$2 handling (\$3.50 Canadian).

He Has For Thee

A light for every shadow,
A plan for each tomorrow,
A key for every problem,
A balm for every sorrow.

(Quoted by Amy Carmichael in *Thou Givest*, p. 22. No source given.)

Travel Schedule *January-April 1993*

January 12 Laguna Hills, CA; Calvary Chapel; Peggy Estrada, (714) 770-6038, office (714) 770-7650.

January 12-14 Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

January 16 Valley Center, CA; Community Church; Nancy Meador, (619) 741-7218, office (619) 749-1127.

January 25 Jacksonville, TX; Jacksonville College, (214) 586-2518.

January 29-30 Boston, MA; Evangelistic Association of New England, (617) 229-1990.

February 5-6 Broomall, PA; Covenant Fellowship, (215) 359-1180.

February 12 (snow date, February 19) Plymouth, NH; Crisis Pregnancy Center, (603) 536-2111.

February 24-28 Olympic and Kitsap peninsulas, WA; Mrs. Neil Smith, (206) 683-8448.

March 13 Chattanooga, TN; Woodland Park Baptist Church; Debra Martin, (615) 899-9185, home (615) 894-0216.

March 22-24 Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

April 7-11 Madrid, Spain; Pocket Testament League.

April 16 Frederick, MD; Crisis Pregnancy Center, (301) 662-5300.

April 17 Sterling, VA; Faith Bible Church, (703) 430-1345.

April 18 Reston, VA; Reston Bible Church; Mary Wolfe, (703) 620-4263.

April 23 Kansas City; Christian Association for Psychological Studies convention; Dr. Mack Harnden, (913) 345-0033.

April 23-24 Hudson, FL; Word of Life, (813) 856-7575.

April 28-May 2 Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, AK; Mrs. Ann Graham, PO Box 5544, Ketchikan, AK 99901.

Prayer

Help us, Lord, to give all that we know of ourselves to all that we know of You, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Keep in Touch

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