

Episode 8

Personality Development

Growth to maturity. God, our loving heavenly Father is a person, not a mere force or thing. He has bestowed upon us his priceless gift of personality, which brings with it self-consciousness and relative free will. God, like any true Father, wants his children to *grow up*, to progress from an immature child through adolescence and early adulthood into a fully matured adult personality. God's will for us is that we each come to realize our unique personality and grow it to full mortal maturity. We achieve such personality growth through our intellectual decisions, moral choices, and spiritual development. Every decision we make either advances our personality growth or impedes it.

Dominance of self and environment. Personality is characterized by an inherent drive to control both itself and its environment. As we grow to maturity our power to gain such dominance also increases. Our potential for human success and mortal achievement is likewise enhanced. As God's *mature* son I may go forth through the maze and difficulties of life with increased courage and a new confidence in my own power to overcome the problems I face.

The danger of power. As we grow to maturity and thereby increase our power over ourselves and our environment we must take care to balance this

growth with humility and self-control. With increased power over our environment, we face an increased temptation to use this power for selfish purposes. We must remember that we are mere mortals; we are quite imperfect and ever subject to error and evil. It has been well said of human beings that, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

The danger of pride. Pride is our greatest weakness, and with our growth in courage and self-confidence comes also increased temptations to pride. The example of Lucifer serves as a stark reminder to us of the great danger of pride. He was a high son of God who was deceived by his pride and sought to make himself equal to the Most High. (Is. 14:14) Because of his pride he fell. Isaiah records this fall in chapter 14, verse 12, “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! If even a high son of God can be deceived and lead astray by his pride, we as weak and fallible human beings, should take very seriously the great danger of pride. As with Lucifer and countless other examples from history we must remember the proverb, “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov. 16:18)

Balanced growth. Personality growth means the growth of the *whole person*--body, mind, and spirit. This growth must also occur in a *balanced* way. An excessive focus on material realities makes it very difficult for such a material dominated mind to receive spirit direction. Purely intellectual growth makes

communion with God's spirit difficult and dangerous. Likewise, overly spiritual development tends to produce perverted and fanatical reactions to spirit communications. True balanced growth is reflected in the mind's better attunement to God's inner spirit presence, the emergence of our soul, and the enhanced reality of our personality. Persons become more real as they achieve true personality growth.

Unified personality. God not only desires for us to grow up and attain a mature personality; he also wants us to develop a *unified* personality. Such unification cannot be achieved if our minds are dominated by material concerns or purely intellectual knowledge. Our minds must respond to spirit guidance, and then, in turn, control our bodies to execute these spirit directives. We achieve a unified personality by increasing spirit dominance, by growing volitional response to the teachings and leadings of God's indwelling spirit.

Jesus' Example. If we would develop our personality to the best of our ability and to the highest perfection we are capable of, we may look to Jesus as our ideal and pattern personality. We are most fortunate in that Jesus has lived among us and demonstrated the perfection of human personality. His life example shows us the qualities and traits that can serve as a guide to our own personal development.

Jesus' unified and balanced personality. Jesus' personality was unified, balanced, and symmetrical. For example, he was imaginative but always practical, strong but always kind. He was prudent but never cowardly, unique but not eccentric. He was frank but always friendly, candid but always kind. He was original, but respectful of the truths of others. He loved the sinner but hated the sin. Jesus was great because he was good. He was always humble, yet he was the perfected man of a universe.

Jesus' faith, broadmindedness, proper relations, sincerity, and poise.

Jesus' personality perfection encompassed a wide spectrum of ideal characteristics. He trusted God; Jesus trusted the heavenly Father as a little child trusts his earthly parent. He never faltered in his faith and was immune to disappointment. The Master was very broad in his outlook and free from all narrow-mindedness. He was truly sincere and always genuine. Jesus was always a well-poised personality, and he could maintain this perfect poise because he was so perfectly unified.

Cheerfulness, gladness, duty, courage, patience, generosity, and reverence. Jesus was consistently cheerful, even though he endured many sorrows and disappointments. His word of exhortation was, "Be of good cheer." (Jn. 16:33) Jesus was not a man of sorrows; he was a soul of gladness. He urged his followers to, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." (Mt. 5:12) Yet when duty required he was willing to walk courageously through the "valley of the shadow of death." (Ps.

23:4) Courage was at the heart of his teachings. Jesus' great courage was lofty and heroic, but he was never audacious or reckless. Jesus' courage was equaled only by his patience; when tempted to act prematurely he responded, "My hour has not yet come." (Jn. 2:4) He was never in a hurry. His life demonstrated patient endurance as an ideal of strength of character. Jesus was generous but never wasteful; he taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Ac. 20:35) And the Master was a pattern of reverence; the prayer he taught his disciples began, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name." (Mt. 6:9)

Personality development. In summary, the God of personality, our loving heavenly Father, has bestowed upon us his great gift of free will personality. He loves us, his mortal sons and daughters, and wants us to make the best of our lives. The Father's will is that we develop the unique personality he has conferred upon us to the utmost. Jesus' life provides us with the pattern for an ideal and perfected human personality. By seeking to develop our personality along the perfected lines of Jesus' example we may achieve the mature, unified, and balanced personality that God wills for us.

