

On Being Teachable

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What does it mean to be teachable? This is a difficult concept for me to explain. I have experienced it in myself and in others with more certainty than I can articulate a description. Because of our individuality, the expression varies. The common characteristics seem to be (although listed separately, these form a tangible whole) a sense of one's incompleteness—a gnawing awareness of a desired, divine, and future state; a contrite spirit; a humble heart; a knowledge of one's worth; a reverence for the worth of others; the trusting readiness often most apparent in little children; a belief in one's abilities and one's capacity to grow and to contribute; and an acknowledgement of our interdependency as sons and daughters of our heavenly parents.

Perhaps, fundamentally, being teachable means that we *daily* open ourselves to the *consistency* of God's love for us. We accept we *are* loved and make real in our complex, earthly lives the cornerstone commandments to love our God and our neighbors as ourselves.

We can acknowledge that no matter who we are or where we are, encoded into each of us are two things: (1) this common language of learning that is love and (2) a most common bond of purpose: we came to learn and "to speak one with another concerning the welfare of [our] souls"¹—in fact, to progress eternally.

Our capacity to be taught is infinite—whatever our current circumstances, whatever the conditions of our physical abilities, and whatever status we may hold in the eyes of others. It is often easy to move away from such a compelling awareness of our potential. We can both allow and assist others in getting in the way of our being teachable. We can find for a variety of reasons—fear, doubt, convenience, comfort—ways to deny our capacity for learning, to lose faith in ourselves, to lose faith in the love of those around us, or to lose faith in God's love for us. By not believing in our capacity to learn (even from our mistakes), by not believing in our capacity to influence others for good, we attempt to deny the power of God in us. . . .

For each of us and for myself, I pray that we will realize that our obedience; our agency; our acknowledgment of God's love for us and our love for Him, for our neighbor, and for ourselves; our testimony of the truthfulness of His gospel; and our willingness to trust His further instruction are never more evident than when we can echo in a small way in our lives the words of our Elder Brother: "Here am I, send me."²

Notes

1. Moroni 6:5.
2. Abraham 3:27; see also Isaiah 6:8 and 2 Nephi 16:8.

This is an excerpt of a BYU devotional address delivered by Kate L. Kirkham, a BYU associate professor of organizational behavior, on May 19, 1987.