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Elders Neal A. Maxwell, *left*, and Bruce C. Hafen, 2003

# The Story of *A Disciple's Life*

## Preparing the Biography of Elder Neal A. Maxwell

*Bruce C. Hafen*

The story behind my work on the biography of Elder Neal A. Maxwell actually began in 1976, when he invited me to take leave from Brigham Young University and work for two years under his daily direction in the new Correlation Department at Church headquarters. In later years, when I was an administrator and a teacher at Ricks College and then at BYU, I saw him often in Church Educational System meetings, where he was a key figure on the Church Board of Education.

In 1996, I was called to the Seventy and assigned to an Area Presidency in Australia, where I would remain until returning to Utah in August 2000. Like so many other Church members, my wife, Marie, and I were stunned by the news of Elder Maxwell's leukemia in late 1996, and we worried and prayed about his health. During October conference 1999, he invited me to come by his office. As we talked, he was quite uncertain about his condition. He was receiving an experimental treatment, but "one of these days," he said, he fully expected the leukemia to return. That was the main reason why he had finally yielded to prodding from others that he allow the writing of his biography. I thought a book on his life story would be wonderful—until he asked if I would write it.

As honored as I felt, I honestly thought my doing this was not a good idea. I believed that he, his family, and the Church deserved thorough research and writing, and the work needed to be done at once to maximize the possibility of being published during his lifetime; he shared those hopes. But given the frightening uncertainty of his health; given that acceptable biographies can take years to document and write; given that he hadn't kept a personal journal, which would necessitate additional months

of original research; and especially given that I was half a world away on a full-time Church assignment, I thought we needed to find someone else who could give this project immediate and full-time attention.

Nonetheless, after more visits with Elder Maxwell and others, within a few days I had accepted the project and agreed to begin working on it as quickly as possible. In the weeks that followed, I still worried about having committed myself to something as unreachable as this task seemed. As I would awaken to hear the colorful birds that rule those fresh Australian mornings, I would sometimes wonder if—indeed, I would hope that—I had agreed to write Elder Maxwell’s biography only in a dream. Then the reality would hit me again. At times I would remember Nephi’s words about the Lord preparing a way for people who have a work to do.

As time went on and as I found able people who were eager to help, my anxiety gradually subsided. I learned about peaceful intensity. Marie and I increasingly sensed that we had been given a rare privilege and that whatever came of this experience would bless us. As we worked, we also prayed often that the Lord would lengthen Elder Maxwell’s life. After such prayers, I would sometimes recall a scriptural phrase I first heard him quote from the book of Daniel: “*But if not . . .*” (Dan. 3:17–18)—meaning, we must do everything we can to make each assignment work, and then if it doesn’t, as Abinadi said, “it matters not” (Mosiah 13:9).

Looking back now, I feel that I—and all of us in the Church—have witnessed firsthand a genuine miracle. Elder Maxwell’s oncologist, a Church member named Clyde Ford, told me that Elder Maxwell had beaten the statistical odds when his leukemia went into its first remission, which lasted fifteen months. When the illness returned in 1998, the odds were much worse. Dr. Ford knew that even if the standard medical treatment brought about a second remission, it would inevitably be shorter than the first remission. So he prayerfully studied the research journals until he discovered some reported success with leukemia patients in Sweden whose doctors were using a new treatment pattern. The sample size wasn’t large enough to justify predictable results, but the Maxwells and Dr. Ford decided to try it.

In April 2003, Elder Maxwell is still taking this same treatment as he goes about his normal duties each day. The preservation of his life was not, and could not have been, anticipated by medical science. Along with its far more substantial blessings, this miracle made it possible to have a biography that draws on lengthy interviews with him and reflects his having reviewed the entire text. Like you, I pray that the miracle will continue.

My work on this project has caused me to ask myself, Why do we read, let alone write, biographies? Since ancient days, we have been taught the gospel by stories. The accounts of the war in heaven, the Garden of Eden, and Cain and Abel are the first stories showing what happens when people try to live or don't live God's teachings. The New Testament is itself a story about Jesus—who he was, what he taught, and what he did. Christ's life is the story of *giving* the Atonement. The story of Adam and Eve is the story of *receiving* the Atonement. As we experience mortality the way our first parents did, struggling with the oppositions between good and evil, we can look at Eve or at Adam and say, "That is the story of *my* life." When we tell our own stories to others, we realize that the cosmic quest to overcome evil and find God is our very personal quest.

Our own testimonies are simply true stories that can capture in vivid detail how the Lord blesses us, protects us, changes us, and helps us to overcome. Nothing brings the Spirit into a conversation or a classroom more than hearing people bear honest testimony by telling the story of their personal experience. The Church membership is itself the aggregation of thousands of personal stories, or testimonies, from people all over the world. Every one of those stories is unique, richly textured, full of meaning, and full of lessons about life. Each story is daily developing its own fresh narrative, against the many oppositions in mortality.

The scriptures, too, are primarily a collection of stories, given to us because God directed prophets to recount their experiences to his people. In his desire to give us guidance about life, God could have given us a large rulebook or a series of grand philosophical essays. But he didn't. He gave us stories—stories about people like ourselves. Again and again, the Book of Mormon writers tell us about some person's experience and then say, "And thus we see . . ."

What *do* we see from these stories? We can see, for example, that "by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (1 Ne. 16:29) and that if people keep God's commandments "he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means" for them to keep going (1 Ne. 17:3). These stories teach us that "the devil will not support his children at the last day" (Alma 30:60), that "the children of men [are quick to] forget the Lord. . . . And we also see the great wickedness one very wicked man can cause" (Alma 46:8–9).

J.R.R. Tolkien's understanding of the power of stories played an important part in the conversion of his friend C. S. Lewis to Christianity. Tolkien helped Lewis see that the *story* of Christ's life conveys a fuller meaning to our minds than abstract statements of doctrine and reason can convey. He explained that the abstract "ideas" of Christianity "are too large and too all-

embracing for the finite mind to absorb them. That is why the divine providence revealed himself in a story.” This insight helped Lewis realize why he had *felt* that certain classical stories were “profound and suggestive of meaning beyond [his] grasp even tho’ [he] could not say in cold prose ‘what it meant.’”<sup>1</sup>

Elder Maxwell’s biography is the story of one man’s discoveries from applying the story of Jesus to his own life. The *story* of Elder Maxwell does offer more understanding than at least my “cold prose” could offer in an essay about Christian discipleship and “what it means.”

His life story is valuable at two levels: one as a chapter in the history of the Church and the other as an illustration of the process of trying to become a follower of Christ. One of my hopes in telling this story, then, was not only to record the life of a Church leader but also to offer his experience as one model to any individual for whom discipleship is a personal quest. The Latter-day Saint Bible dictionary defines “disciple” as “a pupil or learner; a name used to denote (1) [capital *D*:] the twelve, also called apostles, [and] (2) [lower case *d*:] all followers of Jesus Christ.” I have wanted to speak to both meanings, as suggested by the biography’s opening sentence: “All Apostles are Disciples of Jesus, but not all of Jesus’ disciples are Apostles.”

In fall 2001, Jeff Keith, a BYU geology professor, spoke at a campus devotional. At one point he quoted the last verse in the Gospel of John: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). Then Brother Keith explained why he believes Christ’s biography is so large that the world itself cannot contain it: because “the most complete biographies of each of our lives . . . are really contained in His biography.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, because of the Atonement, his life story includes the life story of every one of his disciples, both with a capital *D* and with a small *d*. For the same reason, our life stories can each include his life story. No wonder that in some personal histories and biographies, we find real evidence of the Savior’s influence and tangibly feel his love.

Church history work at Church headquarters is concerned primarily with the history of the institutional Church, which includes the experiences of its leaders. However, the “personal history” accounts of all disciples’ lives—quite apart from any role they may have played in Church institutional affairs—are also a crucial element in the history of the Lord’s people. We Church members typically view these “personal histories” as a part of *family history* more than of *Church history*. Perhaps an examination of that assumption will help us see new value in the recent merger of the departments of Family History and Church History at Church headquarters.

Both parts of the new department, each in its own way, are engaged in “telling the story” of the Lord’s dealings with both his Church collectively and his followers individually.

Regarding the research and writing process, I am now grateful I was forced to conduct the research as I did, because other people did much better work than I ever could have done had I been in Utah trying to do it myself. The day after I agreed to proceed, I had a heaven-sent conversation with my friend Elder Marlin K. Jensen, who had once worked as an adviser to the Church Historical Department. After hearing my worries about doing the needed research from Australia, Elder Jensen suggested I contact Gordon Irving, one of the Church’s primary oral historians.

I called Gordon on the phone but didn’t actually meet him until we had worked together via email for six months. As it turned out, Gordon became my principal collaborator. Using an agenda of research questions that we developed together in our frequent emails, he conducted eighteen interviews with Elder Maxwell, which when transcribed filled 560 pages. In addition to interviews I later did, Gordon also recorded, had transcribed, then edited interviews about Elder Maxwell with each member of the First Presidency, a number of other General Authorities, and several other people. Gordon would email the edited transcripts to me for my research base. His well-schooled and faithful touch made the biography a much better book.

My other indispensable email companion was Elder Maxwell’s son, Cory, who combed, inventoried, copied, and shipped, as weekly care packages across the Pacific, portions of large annual scrapbooks that Elder Maxwell’s secretaries have been compiling since the late 1960s.

As helpful as these materials were, I soon realized why a biography cannot be better than its primary source material. The parts of Elder Maxwell’s story that draw on such contemporaneous documents as letters, journals, and his personal writings are richer than other parts of the story. Always a “clean desk man,” he has not kept a great deal of correspondence and other personal papers. His written personal history is very brief, dealing with only a portion of his ministry. It was written mostly as an annual summary of key events in the 1970s and early ’80s without much commentary. I asked him if he had written letters to his family during his service in World War II and on his mission. He said, “Oh, there might be a few things around, but there is nothing profound in those old letters.” When I finally received copies of those letters and began reading them, that was a turning

point in my feeling for the entire process. Suddenly, I could sense for myself why Churchill's biographer, Martin Gilbert, called such letters "history's gold."<sup>3</sup> The issue here is the depth of real evidence. Memories recalled years after an event are helpful, but they are not the same as uninterpreted, contemporaneous evidence that allows readers to draw their own conclusions.

Here is one small example. Neal Maxwell's experience as an eighteen-year-old infantryman on Okinawa was a defining moment for his entire life. He was in a mortar crew during a ferocious battle. One night in May 1945, the shrieking noise of artillery fire caught Neal's attention with a frightening realization. Three shells in a row had exploded in a sequence that sent a dreadful message—the enemy had completely triangulated his position, and the next series of shots would hit home.

Suddenly a shell exploded no more than five feet away from him. Terribly shaken, Neal jumped from his muddy foxhole and moved down a little knoll seeking protection, and then, uncertain what to do, he crawled back to the foxhole. There he knelt, trembling, and spoke the deepest prayer he had ever uttered, pleading for protection and dedicating the rest of his life to the Lord's service. In his pocket, he was carrying a smudged copy of his patriarchal blessing, which gave him a special promise of protection. No more shells exploded near him after that moment. He came to know God that night in a way that changed him and directed his life's course. When the leukemia came, he would often compare that experience with Okinawa, both in its terror and in its deep spiritual impact on him.

I knew this was a significant event, but I knew almost nothing about Okinawa, so I began reading some historical sources about World War II. In addition to learning why the Japanese defense of Okinawa was so fierce, I came across some detailed accounts of the miserable battlefield conditions there. During the time of Neal's key battle, the place was a mess. The intensity of the fighting combined with the deplorable conditions made some people who survived this trauma unable to talk about it for decades. Heavy rains turned the battlefield into such a mud puddle that even "tanks disappeared into the ooze." Disease and dysentery plagued the soldiers. They were so exhausted that what little sleep they got was often while standing up in the mud. Supply trucks couldn't provide consistent food and ammunition, so the troops were always hungry and, especially, thirsty. One account recorded that the soldiers lived with "almost constant thirst," and even when they had water, it was too foul and oily to drink. According to this account, the only thing that saved them from the unrelenting thirst was coffee, which, having been boiled, was at least edible.<sup>4</sup>

Not long after reading these military histories, I came across this brief paragraph in the letters Neal hastily scrawled to his family during the battle for Okinawa:

Had a dream the other night. You folks were holding Carol [his sister] up to a window and I was saying Boo to her, and she laughed just as she does. Boy, if that didn't make me blue. . . . It's rough here. . . . It will be wonderful to bathe again. Still not smoking, drinking tea or coffee, nothing great, but *the coffee is tempting some times*.<sup>5</sup>

When I showed Elder Maxwell this letter, I asked him, "Do you remember why the coffee tempted you?" He couldn't remember. I asked if he remembered how thirsty he was and how hard it was to get water. He did remember that he had to collect rain water in his helmet to provide water for the sacrament he blessed for himself each Sunday. But he didn't remember the thirst, and he didn't remember the connection between the thirst and his comment in the family letter about the coffee.

Well, he never would drink the coffee. The combination of knowing the messy battlefield context and seeing his innocent reference to being tempted but not giving in was for me a moving discovery about the way that battle shaped his character. I believe his determination to avoid the coffee was a very practical, youthful expression of the commitment he made there to serve the Lord. I only dared hint about this in writing the Okinawa chapter, because I wanted to let the reader draw his or her own conclusion. I offer more about my conclusion here because of what this experience showed me about the place of specific details and contemporaneous sources in "telling the story."



Another area that offers rich contemporaneous evidence about Elder Maxwell's personal development is his prolific writing and speaking. Neal Maxwell is a very interesting personality, and his verbal style is so distinctive it can only be called, well . . . Maxwellian. As President Hinckley said, "[Neal] speaks differently from any of the other General Authorities. He just has a unique style all his own. We all admire it."<sup>6</sup>

I'll offer only a brief comment about Elder Maxwell's form and will later illustrate the development of his content. One distinctive aspect of his style is that his handwriting is nearly illegible. When his son, Cory, was in his teens, Elder Maxwell left him a handwritten note before going on a trip. Cory couldn't read the note, so he took it to his mother for help. She told him he was looking at it upside down. But even when they turned it around, they still couldn't read it. President Hinckley said at a recent dinner tribute for Elder Maxwell at the University of Utah, "Surely a man who has so many virtues must have a vice or two. Have you ever seen Neal's handwriting? . . . I don't know how in the world Colleen ever derived any comfort from the letters Neal sent."<sup>7</sup>

The tales about Elder Maxwell's use of language are legendary. A returned missionary who was translating general conference live into Mandarin Chinese a few years ago told me that the translation staff said they had categorized the conference talks according to "four . . . , well, five levels of difficulty for translators. Levels one through four are for everybody else, and level five is for Elder Maxwell."<sup>8</sup> The translators' challenge is not that he uses big academic words but that his language is so compressed and full of carefully chosen imagery, metaphors, and allusions. "One of his talks is like a bouillon cube," said his daughter-in-law, Karen B. Maxwell, using a pretty good metaphor of her own. Metaphors "are a great way to say a lot in a few words," but the listener must bring something to it before "it can expand for you."<sup>9</sup> Consider, for example, his general conference comment about religious risk takers who engage in "intellectual bungee jumping." Try translating that into Chinese!



At first I thought the main theme of Elder Maxwell's life might be his memorable contributions to the Church as a role model for educated Latter-day Saints. The evidence from my research, however, revealed a different focus: *discipleship* is without question the central message of his life and of his teachings. His background and contributions as an educator still matter—indeed, they matter even more in light of his life's more fundamental theme of personal discipleship. Consider some autobiographical reflections of my own about those two issues in his life.

In his generally sympathetic 1957 book *The Mormons*, a Catholic sociologist named Thomas O'Dea summarized the major "sources of strain and conflict" he believed the Church would face in the near future. Heading his list was the conflict he saw coming between the Church's emphasis on education and its authoritarian theology. He wrote, "Perhaps Mormonism's greatest and most significant problem is its encounter with modern secular thought." He noted that the Church had long emphasized education, but he observed correctly that higher education tends to reflect the secular culture of our age. O'Dea predicted that Latter-day Saint youth, who he said "usually [come] from a background of rural and quite literal Mormonism," would encounter in their university studies much "doubt and confusion," bringing "religious crisis to [them] and profound danger" to the Church. O'Dea believed this conflict was so significant that "upon its outcome will depend in a deeper sense the future of Mormonism."<sup>10</sup>

I encountered this conflict for myself as a university student. When I enrolled at BYU in 1963 after my mission, I seemed to bump against it

everywhere I turned. A friend who was a seminary teacher told me to avoid classes in subjects like history, literature, and philosophy because they would lead me into intellectual apostasy. Yet some of my professors in liberal arts classes told me to beware of anti-intellectual religion teachers who, as one person put it, “expect the Holy Ghost to do their thinking for them.” That year I took a superb religion course from West Belnap called *Your Religious Problems*. Here each student presented to the class the issue that concerned him or her most. I called my topic “Liberalism vs. Conservatism in the Church.” I was looking for a general framework in approaching many specific issues, from evolution and politics to women’s rights and constitutional law.

To one degree or another, I suspect my experience was not unusual. And the potential for the problem O’Dea identified was growing in the Church because the American boom in higher education in the last half of the twentieth century drew an ever higher percentage of young Latter-day Saints to college campuses. The apparent conflict between submissiveness to religious authority and the independence fostered by a liberal education creates a paradox that can seem difficult to resolve, both in general and in the specific issues in one’s field of interest. I suspect many of you have sat through sessions like those I have known where people talk and write at length in efforts to resolve such issues analytically. Those discussions can help, but I have found that the best resolution of this paradox lies not in abstract analysis, but in the lives of real people, whose actual experience demonstrates how a faithful spiritual life and a rigorous education can work together to yield *both* greater spiritual depth and a more abundant intellectual life.

The best way for Latter-day Saint students to grow their way through the natural paradox of freedom versus authority, then, is to have a good teacher—a mentor, whose modeling they can watch and follow. Usually such mentoring occurs in a personal, student-teacher relationship. That is a core part of the educational vision that guides everything that BYU aims to do. During the 1970s, I was blessed to enjoy such mentoring when I was invited into daily working relationships with Dallin Oaks and then with Neal Maxwell—both of them so competent academically and yet so faithful. Because of what these relationships meant to my own resolution of the O’Dea paradox, I was not surprised to discover in my research for the biography this statement from former BYU social sciences dean Martin Hickman regarding Elder Maxwell’s influence as commissioner of education. He said Neal Maxwell had become “a legend in the Church for the depth of his thought, his knowledge of the scriptures, the elegance of his language, . . . and for his compassion for those in and out of the Church who need comfort.”

Martin said that what a good mentoring teacher does for his college students “Neal Maxwell now provides for a generation of young Latter-day Saints, who come not only from the valleys of the Wasatch front but from the continents and isles of the sea” all over the Church.<sup>11</sup>

When I am on BYU campus, I can still hear the sound of Commissioner Maxwell’s voice from the 1970s echoing off Y Mountain in these quotes and paraphrases: “We cannot let the world condemn our value system by calling attention to our professional mediocrity.”<sup>12</sup> A disciple’s excellent scholarship is a form of consecration.<sup>13</sup> In a morally deteriorating culture, we must lean “into the fray” like Joseph of Egypt, rather than just being another hungry mouth to feed.<sup>14</sup> Keep your citizenship in Jerusalem, but use your passport to Athens.<sup>15</sup>

In this role, Commissioner Maxwell became a principal mentor for three future members of the Twelve whom he helped bring into leadership positions in the Church Educational System in the 1970s: Dallin H. Oaks, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Neal Maxwell learned the need for and the art of such significant mentoring from his two principal mentors during his own younger years: G. Homer Durham, who was Neal’s college professor at the University of Utah, and Harold B. Lee, whom he came to know through an assignment on the Church leadership committee in the 1960s.

When I learned who Elder Maxwell’s mentors were, I reflected on what I had learned from my earlier reading in the biographies of other Church leaders. I saw a short but potent “chain of title” for Neal’s own tutoring process in a complete vision of Church education. Karl G. Maeser had originally tutored Brigham Young’s children. Then Brigham Young sent him to Provo to start the Brigham Young Academy in 1876. There Karl Maeser let the best of his German intellectual discipline serve the broader aims of his unqualified commitment to Brigham Young’s primary request—not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God.

As the first general superintendent of Church schools from 1888 to 1901, Karl Maeser passed the torch of this vision to an entire generation of Latter-day Saint teachers, including young James E. Talmage, who mentored young J. Reuben Clark, who mentored young Harold B. Lee, who mentored young Neal A. Maxwell. And as if that weren’t enough, another young teacher mentored by Karl Maeser was Joseph Tanner, who later mentored young John A. Widtsoe, who later mentored young G. Homer Durham, who later mentored young Neal A. Maxwell.

My work on the biography reminded me, then taught me again with the depth that only experience and detail can provide, about the blessing of being mentored by teachers and leaders for whom Thomas O’Dea’s paradox is ultimately not a conflict but a source of great strength.

Neal Maxwell came from “a background of rural and quite literal Mormonism.” His parents had desired, but never enjoyed, higher education. He then encountered with zest the confusion and doubts of the modern secular world at sophisticated levels, emerging with a spiritual maturity that was enriched rather than undermined by his educational and professional experiences. Then, as a role model, Neal Maxwell taught what he had learned to other educated Latter-day Saints, nurturing and encouraging teachers and leaders whose encounters with O’Dea’s concerns had been as valuable and positive as was his own. I thank the Lord for raising up such teachers, not only in my own life, but in today’s generation of Latter-day Saints.



My final comment is about the doctrinal insight that comes from viewing through Elder Maxwell’s eyes the unfolding meaning of discipleship. His talks and his prolific writing over the years are a veritable library of his “letters to the Saints.” These messages also reveal a great deal about him. As much as any other biographical evidence, the evolving “word-print” of Neal’s writing faithfully tracks and illustrates both his personality and his spiritual growth. He has written autobiographically, even if he has never said so—or thought so—about his life’s journey. The eventual but central theme of his writing has become discipleship, becoming a true follower of Jesus. Discipleship has also been the central preoccupation of his own life, how he has tried to live and what has made him tick. So most of his writing consists of little notes he has left tacked on the trees for those who come afterward on his path of discipleship. “Having found the only passage,” he once wrote, “we should . . . willingly serve as guides for other wanderers.”<sup>16</sup>

Consider just a brief summary of the way his understanding of the term *disciple* moved gradually from bud to blossom, as reflected in his writing (his writing also reflected his life experience). In the 1960s when he was a teacher and leader at the University of Utah, Neal Maxwell used the word *disciple* essentially as a synonym for *Church member*. In the early 1970s, when he was commissioner of education for the Church, he saw further that a disciple was a Church member who disengaged from the unclean things of the secular world. A few years later, just after his call as a General Authority, his experience with two young fathers who had terminal cancer expanded his understanding, as he began seeing connections between discipleship and adversity. In a book he dedicated to these young men, he used a phrase that hauntingly anticipated the leukemia that would

strike him nearly two decades later: “The very act of choosing to be a disciple . . . can bring to us a certain special suffering. . . . [A]ll who will can come to know [what Paul called] ‘the fellowship of his suffering.’”<sup>17</sup>

About three years after writing these words, Elder Maxwell was called to the Twelve. That call soon focused him intently on discipleship as a personal relationship with Jesus—a master-apprentice tutorial in which the disciple has the duty to become more like the master. Now he began to see discipleship as a personal growth process designed to develop Christ-like attributes. This understanding let him see that suffering, when it is part of a divine tutorial, can be sanctifying in the sense of developing the very virtues a particular disciple needs to learn.

During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Elder Maxwell built on this foundation to focus both his personal discipline and his writing on such qualities as meekness and submissiveness—not only submitting to the commandments, but accepting whatever the Master may inflict on the apprentice to teach him how he, personally, may become more like the Master. Elder Maxwell then sensed that, in his words, “if we are serious about our discipleship, Jesus will eventually request each of us to do those very things which are most difficult for us to do.”<sup>18</sup>

This was what he came to call the “wintry doctrine.” At the funeral of a young father in 1996 he put it this way:

There are in the gospel warm and cuddly doctrines, and then there are some that are just outright *wintry* doctrines. . . . One of them, frankly, is that we cannot approach [real] consecration without passing through appropriate clinical experiences, [because we don’t achieve consecration] in the abstract.

. . . Sometimes [therefore,] the best people . . . have the worst experiences . . . because they are the most ready to learn.<sup>19</sup>

Just a few months later, the dark shadows of leukemia entered Neal Maxwell’s life. He immediately saw that his readiness to learn had qualified him for his own clinical experience in what he called the graduate curriculum in the school of discipleship. In his recent season of the wintry doctrine, Elder Maxwell says he has learned much about empathy. Now he is more able to know and feel what others are going through in their own wintry trials. He discovered experientially what he had already sensed and taught about Christ’s empathy for us: Christ understands and succors us in our sicknesses and afflictions because he has tasted such sorrow himself. Elder Maxwell calls this “earned empathy.”<sup>20</sup>

As I stretched to understand all of this enough to describe it, I realized that I can never really grasp it until I have been down a few more wintry

roads myself. But I did see a fresh doctrinal link. The increased empathy Elder Maxwell had found looked more and more to me like what the scriptures call charity. He was coming to taste more fully the pure love that Christ has for other people. Then came what was for me the most significant doctrinal link—the connection between charity and affliction.

Perhaps those who seek apprenticeship with the Master of mankind must emulate his sacrificial experience to the fullest extent of their personal capacity. Only then can they taste his empathy and his charity. For only then are they like him enough to feel his love for others *the way he feels it*—to love “*as I have loved you*” (John 13:34). That is a deeper, different love from “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 19:19). Perhaps it isn’t possible to have Christ’s charity without submitting to some form of his affliction—not only through physical pain but in many other ways—because they are two sides of the same, single reality.

Christ’s love for all mankind is fully bound up in his exquisite pain—“How sore you know not . . . how hard to bear you know not” (D&C 19:15). Perhaps we cannot know his love without knowing his pain. If so, the personal suffering we confront in the sanctification process, “the fellowship of his suffering,” could move the pure love of Christ from a concept in one’s head to a spirit in one’s heart. And once in the heart, charity will circulate all through the body, because it is being moved by “a new heart” (Ezek. 36:26).

I pray that I, and each of us, may learn from the lives of people such as Neal A. Maxwell how better to prepare ourselves to sacrifice and submit ourselves in whatever will help us to know the Savior and become more like him. May we not be surprised and may we not shrink when we discover, paradoxically, how dear a price we may need to pay to receive what is, finally, a gift from him—charity, the pure love of Christ.

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Elder Bruce C. Hafen is a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He received his B.A. in political science from Brigham Young University and his J.D. from the University of Utah. This article was first presented at the *Telling the Story of Mormon History Symposium*, sponsored by the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, on March 16, 2002. It will appear in a forthcoming collection of the symposium proceedings.

1. A. N. Wilson, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 126, quoted in Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), xiv.

2. Jeffrey D. Keith, “Feeling the Atonement,” *Brigham Young University 2001–2002 Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2002), 114.

3. Martin Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill: A Historian's Journey* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), 20, quoted in Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, xv.
4. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 107–8, quoting George Feifer, *Tennozan: The Battle of Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1992), 299–307.
5. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 108, quoting Neal A. Maxwell to family, May 13, 1945.
6. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 520, quoting Gordon B. Hinckley, oral history, 1.
7. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 530, quoting Gordon B. Hinckley, remarks at inauguration of Neal A. Maxwell Presidential Endowed Chair, video recording.
8. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 521, quoting David K. Hafen, conversation with author, about 1993.
9. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 521, quoting Karen B. Maxwell, oral history, 30–31.
10. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 333, quoting Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 222, 225–27, 235–36, 240.
11. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 397, quoting Martin B. Hickman, introduction of Neal A. Maxwell, G. Homer Durham Lecture Series, in 1987 scrapbook.
12. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 380.
13. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 379–80, quoting Neal A. Maxwell, “The Disciple-Scholar,” in *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar*, ed. Henry B. Eyring (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 7–22.
14. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 380, quoting Neal A. Maxwell, *The Mormon Milieu*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, Provo, Utah, February 23, 1971, 5.
15. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 379.
16. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 520, quoting Neal A. Maxwell, *A Time to Choose* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 19.
17. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 544, quoting Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 30, 32.
18. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 547, quoting Maxwell, *Time to Choose*, 46.
19. Hafen, *Disciple's Life*, 20, quoting Neal A. Maxwell, remarks at Joseph S. Clark funeral, February 23, 1996, in Douglas Parker, oral history, 55–57.
20. See Neal A. Maxwell, “From Whom All Blessings Flow,” *Ensign* 27 (May 1997): 12.