

# Simplicity in Christ

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## Enkelhed i Kristus

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*Applying the doctrine of Christ in a simplified and focused way will help us to find joy in our daily lives.*

*Anvendelse af Kristi lære er en forenklet og fokuseret måde, der vil hjælpe os til at finde glæde i hverdagen.*

### 1. Introduction

Thirty-three years ago, I received my call to serve as a missionary in the Utah Ogden Mission. Of course, because I was coming from Europe, some local Utah traditions like “green Jell-O with carrots” and “funeral potatoes” were a bit peculiar to me!

However, I was deeply impressed by the devotion and discipleship of many of the Saints, the sheer number of people attending Church meetings, and the scale of fully functioning Church programs. When my mission came to an end, I wanted to make sure that the joy I felt and the spiritual strength and maturity I observed would also be available for my future family. I was determined to return quickly to live my life in the “shadows of the everlasting hills.”

However, the Lord had different plans. On my first Sunday at home, my wise bishop called me to serve as the Young Men president in our ward. Serving this wonderful group of young men, I quickly learned that the joy that comes from being a disciple of Christ has very little to do with the size of Church meetings or the scale of programs.

So when I married my beautiful wife, Margaret, we joyfully decided to stay in Europe and raise our family in our home country of Germany. Together we witnessed what President Russell M. Nelson taught many years ago: “The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our

### 1. Indledning

For 33 år siden modtog jeg min kaldelse til at tjene som missionær i Ogden-missionen i Utah. Da jeg kommer fra Europa, var der selvfølgelig nogle lokale traditioner i Utah, såsom »grøn jello med gulerødder« og »funeral potatoes«, der var lidt underlige!

Samtidig var jeg dybt imponeret over de mange helliges hengivenhed og liv som disciple, det overvældende antal mennesker ved Kirkens møder og omfanget af fuldt fungerende kirkeprogrammer. Da min mission var ved at ende, ønskede jeg at sikre, at den glæde, jeg følte, og den åndelige styrke og modenhed, som jeg så, også ville være tilgængelig for min fremtidige familie. Jeg var fast besluttet på hurtigt at komme tilbage og leve i »de evige bjerges skygge.«

Herren havde imidlertid andre planer. På min første søndag hjemme kaldte min kloge biskop mig til at tjene som Unge Mænds præsident i vores menighed. Ved at tjene med denne vidunderlige gruppe af unge mænd lærte jeg hurtigt, at den glæde, der kommer ved at være Kristi discipel, har meget lidt at gøre med størrelsen af kirkemøder eller omfanget af programmer.

Så da jeg blev gift med min smukke hustru, Margaret, besluttede vi med glæde at blive i Europa og stifte vores familie i vores hjemland Tyskland. Sammen erfarede vi det, som præsident Russell M. Nelson sagde for mange år siden: »Den glæde, vi føler, har lidet at gøre med

lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”When the focus of our life is on Christ and His gospel message, we can experience the full blessings of discipleship wherever we live.

## 2. The Simplicity That Is in Christ

However, in a world that is increasingly secular, complex, and confusing, with different and often conflicting messages and demands, how can we avoid our eyes becoming blinded and our hearts becoming hardened and remain focused on the “plain and precious things” of the gospel of Jesus Christ?During a time of confusion, the Apostle Paul gave great advice to the Saints of Corinth by reminding them to focus on “the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The doctrine of Christ and the law of the gospel are so simple that even little children can understand them. We can access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ and receive all the spiritual blessings our Heavenly Father has prepared for us by exercising faith in Jesus Christ, repenting, being baptized, being sanctified through the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. President Nelson described this journey so beautifully as the “covenant path”and the process of becoming a “devout disciple of Jesus Christ.”

If this message is so simple, why does it often feel so challenging to live Christ’s law and follow His example? It may be that we misinterpret simplicity as something that is easy to achieve without effort or diligence. Following Christ requires constant effort and continual change. We need to “[put] off the natural man and ... [become like a little] child.”This includes putting our “trust in the Lord”and letting the complexity go, just as little children do.Applying the doctrine of Christ in a simplified and focused way will help us to find joy in our daily lives, give guidance in our callings, answer some of life’s most complex questions, and provide strength to face our greatest challenges.

But how can we practically implement this simplicity in our lifelong journey as disciples of Christ? President Nelson reminded us to focus on “pure truth, pure doctrine, and pure revelation” as we seek to follow the Savior.Regularly asking, “What would the Lord Jesus Christ have me do?” reveals profound direction. Following His example provides a safe path through uncertaintyand a loving, guiding hand to hold from day to day. He is the Prince of Peace and the

vores livsvilkår og alt at gøre med vores fokus i livet.«Når fokus i vores liv er på Kristus og hans evangeliske budskab, kan vi opleve de fulde velsignelser ved at være disciple, uanset hvor vi bor.

## 2. Den enkelhed, der er i Kristus

Hvordan kan vi i en verden, som i stadigt stigende grad er sekulær, kompleks og forvirrende, med forskellige og ofte modsigende budskaber og krav, undgå, at vores øjne forblændes, og vores hjerte forhærdes, og forblive fokuseret på de »tydelige og dyrebare ting« i Jesu Kristi evangelium?I en forvirrende tid kom apostlen Paulus med et fremragende råd til de hellige i Korinth ved at minde dem om at fokusere på »det oprigtige og rene forhold til Kristus.«

Kristi lære og evangeliets lov er så enkel, at selv små børn kan forstå dem. Vi kan få adgang til Jesu Kristi forløsende kraft og modtage alle de åndelige velsignelser, som vor himmelske Fader har forberedt til os, ved at udøve tro på Jesus Kristus, omvende os, blive døbt, blive helliggjort gennem Helligåndsgaven og ved at holde ud til enden.Præsident Nelson beskrev smukt denne rejse som »pagtens sti«og processen med at blive en »hengiven Jesu Kristi disciple.«

Hvis dette budskab er så enkelt, hvorfor føles det ofte så udfordrende at efterleve Kristi lov og at følge hans eksempel? Måske er det, fordi vi misfortolker enkelhed som noget, der er let at opnå uden indsats eller ihærdighed. At følge Kristus kræver en konstant indsats og stadig forandring. Vi må aflægge »det naturlige menneske og ... [blive] som et [lille] barn.«Det omfatter at stole på Herrenog se bort fra det komplekse, ligesom små børn gør.Anvendelse af Kristi lære er en forenklet og fokuseret måde, der vil hjælpe os til at finde glæde i hverdagen, vejledning i vores kaldelser, svar på nogle af livets mest komplekse spørgsmål og styrke til at møde vores største udfordringer.

Men hvordan kan vi praktisk implementere denne enkelhed i vores livslange rejse som Kristi disciple? Præsident Nelson mindede os om at fokusere på »ren sandhed, ren lære og ren åbenbaring«, når vi søger at følge Frelseren.At spørge regelmæssigt: »Hvad ville Herren Jesus Kristus have mig til at gøre?« afslører en dybere retning. At følge hans eksempel giver os en sikker sti gennem usikkerhedog en kærlig, vejledende hånd at holde fra dag til dag. Han er Fredens Fyrste og

Good Shepherd. He is our Comforter and Deliverer. He is our Rock and Refuge. He is a Friend—your friend and my friend! He invites us all to love God, keep His commandments, and love our neighbor.

As we choose to follow His example and move forward with faith in Christ, embrace the power of His Atonement, and remember our covenants, love fills our hearts, hope and healing raise our spirits, and bitterness and sorrow are replaced by gratitude and the patience to wait for promised blessings. At times, we may need to distance ourselves from an unhealthy situation or seek professional help. But in every case, applying simple gospel principles will help us navigate through life's challenges in the Lord's way.

We sometimes underestimate the strength we receive from simple acts like prayer, fasting, scripture study, daily repentance, partaking of the sacrament weekly, and regular worship in the house of the Lord. But when we recognize that we don't need to "do some great thing" and we center ourselves on applying pure and simple doctrine, we start to see how the gospel "works wonderfully" for us, even in the most challenging circumstances. We find strength and "confidence before God," even when we experience heartache. Elder M. Russell Ballard has reminded us many times, "It is in that simplicity that [we] will find ... peace, joy, and happiness."

Applying the simplicity that is in Christ makes us prioritize people over processes and eternal relationships over short-term behaviors. We focus on "the things that matter most" in God's work of salvation and exaltation instead of getting caught up in managing our ministering. We make ourselves free to prioritize the things we can do rather than being weighed down by the things we cannot do. The Lord reminded us: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great." What powerful encouragement to act in simplicity and humility, whatever our circumstances are.

### 3. Oma Cziesla

My grandmother Marta Cziesla was a wonderful example of doing "small and simple things" to bring great things to pass. We lovingly called her Oma Cziesla. Oma embraced the

den gode hyrde. Han er vor Talsmand og befrier. Han er vor Klippe og Tilflugt. Han er en ven – din ven og min ven! Han opfordrer os alle til at elske Gud, holde hans bud og elske vores næste.

Når vi vælger at følge hans eksempel og gå fremad med tro på Kristus, omfavne kraften i hans forsoning og huske vores pagter, fyldes vores hjerter med kærlighed, håb og helbredelse, løfter vores ånd, og bitterhed og sorg erstattes af taknemmelighed og tålmodighed til at vente på de lovede velsignelser. Til tider må vi trække os bort fra en usund situation eller søge professionel hjælp. Men i enhver situation vil anvendelse af enkle evangeliske principper hjælpe os til at navigere igennem livets udfordringer på Herrens måde.

Vi undervurderer nogle gange den styrke, vi får fra enkle handlinger som bøn, faste, skriftstudium, daglig omvendelse, ugentlig modtagelse af nadveren og regelmæssig tilbedelse i Herrens hus. Men når vi erkender, at vi ikke behøver at gøre »noget svært«, og vi fokuserer på at anvende den rene og enkle lære, begynder vi at se, hvordan evangeliet »virker fantastisk« for os, selv i de mest udfordrende situationer. Vi finder styrke og »selvtillid i Guds nærhed«, selv når vi oplever hjertesorg. Ældste M. Russell Ballard mindede os mange gange om, at »det er i den enkelhed, at [vi] finder fred, glæde og lykke.«

Anvendelse af den enkelhed, der er i Kristus, får os til at prioritere mennesker over processer og evige forhold over kortsigtet adfærd. Vi fokuserer på det, »der betyder mest«, i Guds arbejde med frelse og ophøjelse i stedet for at sidde fast i at organisere vores omsorg. Vi frigør os selv til at prioritere det, vi kan, snarere end at lade os tynge af det, vi ikke kan. Herren mindede os om: »Bliv derfor ikke trætte af at gøre godt, for I lægger grundvolden til et stort værk. Og af det, som er småt, udspringer det, som er stort.« Hvilken kraftig opfordring til at handle i enkelhed og ydmyghed, uanset hvilken situation vi er i.

### 3. Oma Cziesla

Min bedstemor Marta Cziesla var et vidunderligt eksempel på at gøre »små og enkle ting« for at få store ting til at ske. Vi kaldte hende kærligt for Oma Cziesla. Oma modtog evangeliet

gospel in the small village of Selbongen in East Prussia together with my great-grandmother on May 30, 1926.

Marta Cziesla (right) on the day of her baptism.

She loved the Lord and His gospel and was determined to keep the covenants she had made. In 1930 she married my grandfather, who was not a member of the Church. At this point it became impossible for Oma to attend Church meetings because my grandfather's farm was far away from the nearest congregation. But she focused on what she could do. Oma continued to pray, read the scriptures, and sing the songs of Zion.

Some people might have thought she was no longer active in her faith, but that was far from the truth. When my aunt and my father were born, with no priesthood in the home and no Church meetings or access to ordinances nearby, she again did what she could do and focused on teaching her children "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord." She read to them from the scriptures, sang with them the songs of Zion, and of course prayed with them—every day. A 100 percent home-centered Church experience.

In 1945 my grandfather was serving in the war far away from home. When enemies approached their farm, Oma took her two little children and left their beloved farm behind to seek refuge in a safer place. After a difficult and life-threatening journey, they finally found refuge in May of 1945 in northern Germany. They had nothing left except the clothes on their bodies. But Oma continued with what she was able to do: she prayed with her children—every day. She sang with them the songs of Zion she had memorized by heart—every day.

Life was extremely hard and for many years focused on simply making sure there was food on the table. But in 1955 my dad, then 17 years old, was going to trade school in the city of Rendsburg. He walked by a building and saw a small sign on the outside that read "Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage"—"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." He thought, "That is interesting; this is Mother's church." So when he came home, he told Oma that he had found her church.

You can imagine how she must have felt after almost 25 years of no contact with the Church. She was determined to attend the next Sunday

i den lille landsby Selbongen i Østpreussen sammen med min oldemor den 30. maj 1926.

Marta Cziesla (til højre) på sin dåbsdag.

Hun elskede Herren og hans evangelium og var fast besluttet på at holde de pagter, hun havde indgået. I 1930 blev hun gift med min farfar, som ikke var medlem af Kirken. Her blev det umuligt for Oma at overvære Kirkens møder, fordi min farfars gård lå langt fra den nærmeste menighed. Men hun fokuserede på det, hun kunne. Oma vedblev med at bede, læse i skrifterne og synge Zions sange.

Nogle ville måske tro, at hun ikke længere var aktiv i sin tro, men det var langt fra sandheden. Da min faster og min far blev født, var der intet præstedømme i hjemmet, og ingen kirke-møder eller adgang til ordinancer i nærheden. Hun gjorde igen det, hun kunne gøre, og fokuserede på at undervise sine børn i »at bede og at vandre retskaffent for Herren.« Hun læste for dem fra skrifterne, sang Zions sange med dem og bad selvfølgelig med dem – hver dag. En 100 % hjemmebaseret kirkeoplevelse.

I 1945 tjente min farfar i krigen langt hjemmefra. Da fjender nærmede sig deres gård, tog Oma sine to små børn og forlod deres elskede gård for at søge ly et mere sikkert sted. Efter en lang og livsfarlig rejse fandt de endelig ly i maj 1945 i det nordlige Tyskland. De havde intet andet end det tøj, de havde på kroppen. Men Oma fortsatte med det, hun kunne gøre: hun bad sammen med sine børn – hver dag. Hun sang sammen med dem de Zions sange, hun havde lært udenad – hver dag.

Livet var ekstremt hårdt, og i mange år lå fokus kun på at sikre, at der var mad på bordet. Men i 1955 gik min far, som dengang var 17 år gammel, på handelsskole i byen Rendsborg. Han gik forbi en bygning og så et lille skilt ud mod gaden, hvor der stod »Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage« – »Jesu Kristi Kirke af Sidste Dages Hellige«. Han tænkte: »Det er interessant; det er min mors kirke.« Så da han kom hjem, fortalte han Oma, at han havde fundet hendes kirke.

I kan sikkert forestille jer, hvad hun følte efter næsten 25 år uden kontakt med Kirken. Hun var fast besluttet på at besøge Kirken næste

and convinced my father to accompany her. Rendsburg was more than 20 miles (32 km) away from the little village where they lived. But this would not keep Oma from attending church. The next Sunday, she got on her bicycle together with my father and rode to church.

When the sacrament meeting started, my dad sat down in the last row, hoping it would be over soon. This was Oma's church and not his. What he saw was not very encouraging: only a few older women in attendance and two young missionaries who effectively ran everything in the meeting. But then they started to sing, and they sang the songs of Zion that my dad had heard since he was a little boy: "Come, Come, Ye Saints," "O My Father," "Praise to the Man." Hearing this little flock sing the songs of Zion he'd known since childhood pierced his heart, and he knew immediately and without a doubt that the Church was true.

The first sacrament meeting my grandmother attended after 25 years was the meeting where my father received a personal confirmation of the truthfulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. He was baptized three weeks later, on September 25, 1955, together with my grandfather and my aunt.

It has been more than 70 years since that tiny sacrament meeting in Rendsburg. I often think about Oma, how she must have felt in those lonely nights, doing the small and simple things she was able to do, like praying, reading, and singing. As I stand here today in general conference and talk about my Oma, her determination to keep her covenants and trust in the Lord notwithstanding her struggles fills my heart with humility and gratitude—not only for her but for so many of our wonderful Saints throughout the world who focus on the simplicity in Christ in their challenging circumstances, perhaps seeing little change now but trusting that great things will come to pass some day in the future.

#### 4. Small and Simple Things

I have learned through my own experience that the small and simple things of the gospel and faithfully focusing on Christ lead us to true joy, bring about mighty miracles, and grant us confidence that all promised blessings will come to pass. This is as true for you as it is true for me. In the words of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "Some

søndag og overbeviste min far om at gå med hende. Rendsborg lå over 32 km fra den lille landsby, hvor de boede. Men det forhindrede ikke Oma i at komme i kirke. Den næste søndag steg hun op på sin cykel sammen med min far og cyklede til kirke.

Da nadvermødet begyndte, sad min far ned på den sidste række og håbede på, at det snart var overstået. Det var Omas kirke og ikke hans. Det, han så, var ikke særligt opmuntrende: Nogle få ældre kvinder og to unge missionærer, som stort set stod for alt ved mødet. Men så begyndte de at synge, og de sang Zions sange, som min far havde hørt, lige siden han var en lille dreng: »Kom, kom, Guds folk«, »O, min Fader« og »Priser profeten«. At høre denne lille flok synge Zions sange, han havde kendt siden barndommen, ramte ham dybt i hjertet, og han vidste straks og uden tvivl, at Kirken var sand.

Det første nadvermøde, min bedstemor overværede efter 25 år, var det møde, hvor min far modtog personlig bekræftelse på sandheden af Jesu Kristi gengivne evangelium. Han blev døbt tre uger senere, den 25. september 1955, sammen med min bedstefar og min faster.

Der er gået mere end 70 år, siden dette lillebitte nadvermøde i Rendsborg. Jeg tænker ofte på Oma, hvordan hun må have følt det på de ensomme aftener, hvor hun gjorde de små og enkle ting, hun kunne gøre, som at bede, læse og synge. Når jeg i dag står her ved generalkonferencen og taler om min Oma, hendes beslutsomhed til at holde sine pagter og stole på Herren på trods af svære omstændigheder, så fyldes mit hjerte med ydmyghed og taknemmelighed – ikke blot for hende, men for så mange af vores vidunderlige hellige over hele verden, som fokuserer på enkelheden hos Kristus i deres udfordrende omstændigheder, hvor de måske kun ser små forandringer nu, men stoler på, at noget stort vil ske en dag i fremtiden.

#### 4. Små og enkle ting

Jeg har ved egen erfaring lært, at de små og enkle ting i evangeliet og trofast at fokusere på Kristus fører os til sand glæde, frembringer store mirakler og skænker os tillid til, at alle de lovede velsignelser vil blive opfyldt. Det er lige så sandt for jer, som det er sandt for mig. Med ældste Jeffrey R. Hollands ord: »Nogle velsignel-

blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, they come." Of this I also testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ser kommer hurtigt, andre kommer senere, og nogle kommer først i himlen, men for dem, som modtager Jesu Kristi evangelium, vil de komme.«Om dette bærer jeg også vidnesbyrd i Jesu Kristi navn. Amen.