

Simplicity in Christ

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Unyofu na Usafi kwa Kristo

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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.

Kutumia mafundisho halisi ya Kristo katika njia iliyorahisishwa na yenye fokasi kutatusaidia sisi kupata shangwe katika maisha yetu ya kila siku.

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

1. Utangulizi

Miaka thelathini na mitatu iliyopita nilipokea wito wangu wa kuhudumu kama mmisionari katika Misheni ya Ogden Utah. Hakika, kwa sababu nilikuja kutoka Ulaya, baadhi ya desturi za Utah kama vile “jeli ya kijani na karoti” au “viazi vya matangani” vilikuwa vitu vya kipekee sana!

Hata hivyo, nilifurahishwa sana na moyo wa ibada na uanafunzi wa wengi wa watakatifu, idadi tu iliyokuwa ikihudhuria mikutano ya Kanisa, na kiwango cha ufanyaji kazi kikamilifu cha programu za Kanisa. Wakati misheni yangu ilipofika tamati, nilitaka kuhakikisha kwamba shangwe niliyojisikia na nguvu ya kiroho na ukomavu niliouona vingepatikana pia kwa ajili ya familia yangu ya siku zijazo. Nilikuwa nimeazimia kurudi upesi kuishi maisha yangu katika “vivuli vya vilima vya milele.”

Hata hivyo, Bwana alikuwa na mipango tofauti. Jumapili yangu ya kwanza nyumbani, askofu wangu mwenye hekima aliniita nihudumu kama rais wa Wavulana katika kata yetu. Kuhudumia kundi hili la wavulana wazuri, nilijifunza upesi kwamba shangwe ambayo huja kutokana na kuwa mwanafunzi wa Kristo kwa vyo vyote vile haihusiani na ukubwa wa mikutano ya Kanisa au viwango vya programu.

Kwa hiyo nilipomuoa mke wangu mrembo Margaret, kwa shangwe tuliambia kuishi Ulaya na kulea familia yetu katika nchi yetu ya nyumbani ya Ujerumani. Kwa pamoja tulishuhudia kile Rais

M. Nelson taught many years ago: “The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our 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.

Russell M. Nelson alichofundisha miaka mingi iliyopita “Shangwe tunayojisikia haichangiwi na hali ya maisha yetu na kitu cho chote kinachohusiana na fokasi ya maisha yetu.” Fokasi ya maisha yetu inapokuwa katika Kristo na ujumbe wa injili Yake, tunaweza kupata baraka kamili za uanafunzi mahali po pote tunapoishi.

Unyofu na Usafi Ambao Uko katika Kristo

Hata hivyo, katika ulimwengu ambao unaongezeka kuwa wa kiulimwengu, changamani, na wenye kukanganya, ukiwa na jumbe na matakwa tofauti na mara nyingi kinzani, ni kwa jinsi gani tunaweza kuepukana na macho yetu kupofushwa na mioyo yetu kufanywa iwe migumu na kubaki tumefokasi kwenye “vitu vilivyo wazi na vyenye thamani” vya injili ya Yesu Kristo? Wakati wa mkanganyiko, Mtume Paulo alitoa ushauri mkuu kwa Watakatifu wa Korintho kwa kuwakumbusha wao kufokasi kwenye “unyofu na usafi kwa Kristo.”

Mafundisho ya Kristo na sheria ya injili ni rahisi sana kiasi kwamba hata watoto wadogo wanaweza kuelewa. Tunaweza kupata nguvu za Yesu Kristo za ukombozi na kupokea baraka zote za kiroho Baba wa Mbinguni yetu ameziandaa kwa ajili yetu kwa kufanya imani katika Yesu Kristo, kutubu, kubatizwa, na kupokea kipawa cha Roho Mtakatifu, na kuvumilia hadi mwisho. Rais Nelson alielezea safari hii vizuri sana kama “njia ya agano” na mchakato wa kuwa “mwanafunzi wa Yesu Kristo mwenye kumchamunga.”

Kama ujumbe huu ni rahisi hivyo, kwa nini mara nyingi ionekane kama changamoto kuisi sheria ya Kristo na kuufuata mfano Wake? Inaweza kuwa tunafafanua kimakosa unyofu na usafi kama kitu ambacho ni rahisi kukipata bila juhudi au bidii. Kumfuata Kristo kunahitaji juhudi za kila mara na mabadiliko endelevu. Tunahitaji “[kumvua] mtu wa asili na ... [kuwa kama mtoto] mdogo.” Hii hujumuisha kuweka “tumaini letu kwa Bwana” na kuacha uchangamani kuondoka, kama vile tu watoto wadogo wanavyofanya. Kutumia mafundisho ya Kristo katika njia iliyorahisishwa na yenye fokasi kutatusaidia sisi kupata shangwe katika maisha yetu ya kila siku, kutupa mwongozo katika miito yetu, kujibu baadhi ya maswali changamani sana ya maisha, na kutoa nguvu za kukabiliana na changamoto zetu kubwa sana.

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 uncertainty and a loving, guiding hand to hold from day to day. He is the Prince of Peace and the 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

Lakini ni kwa jinsi gani sisi kiutendaji tunatelekeza hili kwa urahisi katika safari yetu ya maisha yote kama wanafunzi wa Kristo? Rais Nelson alitukumbusha tufokasi kwenye “ukweli halisi, mafundisho safi, na ufunuo halisi” tunapotafuta kumfuata Mwokozi. Mara kwa mara tukiuliza, “Ni nini Bwana Yesu Kristo angetaka nifanye? kuna funua mwelekeo muhimu. Kufuata mfano Wake kunatoa njia salama kupitia kutokuwa na uhakikana mkono wenye upendo, wenye kuongoza ili tuushikilie siku hadi siku. Yeye ni Mfalme wa Amani na Mchungaji Mwema. Yeye ni Mfariji na Mkombozi Wetu. Yeye ni Mwamba na Kimbilio Letu. Yeye ni Rafiki—rafiki yako na rafiki yangu! Yeye anatalika sisi sote kumpenda Mungu, kushika amri Zake, na kumpenda jirani yetu.

Tunapochagua kufuata mfano Wake na kusonga mbele kwa imani katika Kristo, kukumbatia nguvu ya Upatanisho Wake na kukumbuka maagano yetu, upendo hujaza mioyo yetu, tumaini na uponyaji vinainua roho zetu, na machungu na huzuni vinabadilishwa na shukrani na subira ya kusubiria baraka zilizoahidiwa. Wakati mwingine, tunaweza kuhitaji kujitenga mbali wenyewe kutoka kwenye hali zisizo nzuri na kutafuta msaada wa kitaalamu. Lakini katika kila hali, kutumia kanuni rahisi za injili kutatusaidia kupita changamoto za maisha katika njia ya Bwana.

Wakati mwingine tunapuuza nguvu tunayopokea kutokana na vitendo rahisi kama sala, kufunga, kujifunza maandiko, toba ya kila siku, kupokea sakramenti kila wiki, na kuabudu kila mara katika nyumba ya Bwana. Lakini tunapotambua kwamba hatuhitaji “kufanya vitu vikubwa” na kujikita wenyewe kwenye kutumia mafundisho halisi na rahisi, tunaanza kuona jinsi injili “inavyofanya kazi ya kushangaza” kwa ajili yetu, hata katika mazingira yenye changamoto sana. Tutapata nguvu na “kujiamini mbele za Mungu,” hata wakati tunapatwa na machungu. Mzee M. Russell Ballard alitukumbusha sisi mara nyingi, “Ni katika urahisi huo ambapo [sisi] tutapata ... amani, shangwe, na furaha.”

Kutumia unyofu na usafi ambao upo katika Kristo hutufanya sisi kuweka kipaumbele kwa watu badala ya michakato na uhusiano wa milele badala ya tabia za muda mfupi. Tunafokasi kwenye “vitu ambavyo vina maana zaidi” katika kazi ya Mungu ya Wokovu na kuinuliwa badala ya kutekwa katika kusimamia utumishi wetu.

wecando rather than being weighed down by the things wecannotdo. 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 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

Tunajiweka wenyewe huru ili kuvipa vipaumbele vitu ambavyo sisitunawezakufanya badala kulemewa na vitutusivyowezakufanya. Bwana alitukumbusha: “Kwa hiyo, msichoke kutenda mema, kwa kuwa mnaijenga misingi ya kazi kubwa. Na kutokana na mambo madogo huja yale yaliyo makuu.” Ni himizo lililoje la kutenda katika urahisi na unyenyekevu, bila kujali hali zetu.

3. Oma Cziesla

Bibi yangu Maria Cziesla alikuwa mfano wa kupendeza wa kufanya “mambo madogo na rahisi” ili kuwezesha mambo makuu. Kwa upendo sisi tulimwita Oma Cziesla. Oma alikumbatia injili katika kijiji kidogo cha Selbongen katika East Prussia pamoja na bibi wa mama yangu mnamo Mei 30, 1926.

Marta Cziesla (kulia) katika siku ya ubatizo wake.

Alimpenda Bwana na injili Yake na alikuwa ameazimia kuyashika maagano aliyokuwa amefanya. Katika mwaka wa 1930 aliolewa na babu yangu, ambaye hakuwa muumini wa Kanisa. Wakati fulani ilikuwa vigumu kwa Oma kuhudhuria mikutano ya Kanisa kwa sababu shamba la babu yangu lilikuwa mbali sana kutoka kwenye mkusanyiko uliokuwa karibu zaidi. Lakini yeye alifokasi juu ya kile ambacho angeweza kufanya. Oma aliendelea kusali, kusoma maandiko, na kuimba nyimbo za Sayuni.

Baadhi ya watu wangefikiria yeye hakuwa hai katika imani yake, lakini hilo lilikuwa mbali sana na ukweli. Wakati shangazi yangu na baba yangu walipozaliwa, kukiwa hakuna ukuhani katika nyumba ile na hakuna mikutano ya Kanisa au ufikiaji wa ibada karibu, yeye tena alifanya kile ambacho angeweza kufanya na kufokasi kwenye kuwafundisha watoto wake “kusali, na kutembea wima mbele za Bwana.” Aliwasomea kutoka kwenye maandiko, akaimba pamoja nao nyimbo za Sayuni, na hakika alisali pamoja nao—kila siku. Asilimia 100 ya uzoefu wa nyumba iliyo kitovu cha Kanisa.

Mwaka 1945 babu yangu alikuwa akihudumu katika vita mbali sana na nyumbani. Wakati maadui walipokaribia shamba lao, Oma aliwatwaa watoto wake wawili wadogo na kuliacha shamba walilolipenda na kwenda kutafuta kimbilio katika sehemu salama. Baada ya safari ngumu na ya kutishia maisha, mwishowe walipata kimbilio katika mwezi Mei 1945 huko kaskazini mwa Ujerumani. Hawakuwa na cho chote kili-

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 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

chobaki isipokuwa nguo kwenye miili yao. Lakini Oma aliendelea na kile alichoweza kufanya; alisali pamoja na watoto wake. Aliimba pamoja nao nyimbo za Sayuni alizokuwa amezikariri moyoni—kila siku.

Maisha yalikuwa magumu sana na kwa miaka mingi alifokasi tu katika kuhakikisha kulikuwa na chakula mezani. Lakini mwaka 1955 baba yangu, wakati huo akiwa na umri wa miaka 17, alikuwa anahudhuria shule ya ufundi katika mji wa Rendsburg. Akitembea karibu na jengo aliona ubao mdogo nje ambao umeandikwa “Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage”—“Kanisa la Yesu Kristo la Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho.” Alifikiria, “Hiyo inapendeza; hili ni Kanisa la mama.” Kwa hiyo alipofika nyumbani, alimwambia Oma kwamba alikuwa amelipata kanisa lake.

Unaweza kufikira jinsi yeye alivyojisikia baada ya karibu miaka 25 ya kutokuwa na mawasiliano na Kanisa. Aliamua kuhudhuria Jumapili iliyofuata na kumshawishi baba yangu kuandamana naye. Rendsburg ilikuwa zaidi ya maili 20 (kilomita 32) kutoka kwenye kijiji kidogo pale walipoishi. Lakini hili halingemzua Oma kuhudhuria Kanisa. Jumapili iliyofuata, alipanda baiskeli yake pamoja na baba yangu na wakaenda kanisani.

Wakati mkutano wa sakramenti ulipoanza, baba yangu alikaa chini katika safu ya mwisho, akitumainia ingeisha punde. Hili lilikuwa kanisa la Oma na si lake. Kile alichokiona hakiku-pendeza sana: wanawake wakubwa wachache wakihudhuria na wamisionari vijana wawili ambao kwa ufanisi waliendesha kila kitu katika mkutano ule. Lakini kisha walianza kuimba, na waliimba nyimbo za Sayuni ambazo baba yangu alikuwa amezisikia tangu akiwa mvulana mdogo: “Njoo, Enyi, Watakatifu,” “Baba Yangu,” “Sifa kwa Aliyenena na Bwana.” Kulisikia hili kundi dogo likiimba nyimbo za Sayuni alizozijua tangu utotoni kulichoma moyo wake, na yeye alijua mara moja na bila shaka kwamba Kanisa lilikuwa la kweli.

Mkutano wa kwanza wa sakramenti ambao bibi yangu alihudhuria baada ya miaka 25 ulikuwa ndio mkutano ambao baba yangu alipokea uthibitisho binafsi juu ya ukweli wa urejesho wa injili ya Yesu Kristo. Alibatizwa wiki tatu baadaye, mnamo Septemba 25, 1955, pamoja na babu yangu na shangazi yangu.

Imekuwa miaka zaidi ya 70 tangu huo mku-

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 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.

tano wa sakramenti mdogo huko Rendsburg. Mara kwa mara ninafikiria kuhusu Oma, jinsi yeye alivyojisikia katika usiku wa upweke wa siku zile, akifanya vitu vidogo na rahisi alivyoweza kufanya, kama kusali, kusoma na kuimba. Ninaposimama hapa leo katika mkutano mkuu na kuzungumza kuhusu Oma wangu, maamuzi yake ya kushika maagano yake na kumwamini Bwana licha ya mapambano yanaujaza moyo wangu kwa unyenyekevu na shukrani—si tu kwa ajili yake pekee bali kwa wengi wa Watakatifu wa kupendeza kote ulimwenguni ambao wanafokasi kwenye unyofu na usafi kwa Kristo katika hali zao zenye changamoto, pengine kuona mabadiliko kidogo sasa lakini kutumainia kwamba mambo makubwa yatatokea siku nyingine katika siku zijazo.

4. Vitu Vidogo na Rahisi

Nimejifunza kupitia uzoefu wangu mwenyewe kwamba vitu vidogo na rahisi vya injili na kufokasi kwa uaminifu katika Kristo hutuongoza kwenye shangwe ya kweli, vikileta miujiza mikubwa, na hutupatia kujiamini kwamba baraka zote zilizoahidiwa zitakuja. Hii ni kweli kwa ajili yako kama ilivyo kweli kwangu. Katika maneno ya Mzee Jeffrey R. Holland, “Baraka zingine huja haraka, zingine huchelewa, na zingine haziji hadi tufikapo mbinguni; lakini kwa wale wanaokumbatia injili ya Yesu Kristo, zinakuja.” Juu ya hili pia ninashuhudia katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.