

No One Sits Alone

By Elder Gerrit W. Gong
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Hakuna Anayeketi Peke Yake

Na Mzee Gerrit W. Gong
Wa Akidi ya Mitume Kumi na Wawili

October 2025 general conference

Living the gospel of Jesus Christ includes making room for all in His restored Church.

I.

For 50 years, I have studied culture, including gospel culture. I began with fortune cookies.

In San Francisco's Chinatown, Gong family dinners concluded with a fortune cookie and a wise saying like "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

As a young adult, I made fortune cookies. Wearing white cotton gloves, I folded and tucked into shape the round cookies hot out of the oven.

To my surprise, I learned fortune cookies are not originally part of Chinese culture. To distinguish Chinese, American, and European fortune cookie culture, I looked for fortune cookies on multiple continents—just as one would use multiple locations to triangulate a forest fire. Chinese restaurants in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York serve fortune cookies, but not those in Beijing, London, or Sydney. Only Americans celebrate National Fortune Cookie Day. Only Chinese advertisements offer "Authentic American Fortune Cookies."

Fortune cookies are a fun, simple example. But the same principle of comparing practices in different cultural settings can help us distinguish gospel culture. And now the Lord is opening new opportunities to learn gospel culture as Book of Mormon allegory and New Testament parable prophecies are fulfilled.

Kuishi injili ya Yesu Kristo kunajumuisha kutoa nafasi kwa wote katika Kanisa Lake lililorejeshwa.

I.

Kwa miaka 50, nimejifunza utamaduni, iki-jumuisha utamaduni wa injili. Nilianza na biskuti za bahati.

Huko Chinatown ya San Francisco, chakula cha jioni cha familia ya Gong kilihitimishwa kwa biskuti ya bahati na msemu wa busara kama "Safari ya maili elfu huanza kwa hatua moja."

Kama mtu mzima, nilitengeneza biskuti za bahati. Nikiwa nimevaa glavu nyeupe za pamba, nilikunja na kuweka katika umbo biskuti za duara zilizopikwa ndani ya jiko.

Kwa mshangao wangu, nilijifunza biskuti za bahati sio sehemu ya utamaduni wa Kichina. Ili kutofautisha utamaduni wa biskuti za Kichina, Kimarekani na Ulaya, nilitafuta biskuti za bahati katika mabara mengi—kama vile mtu ange-tumia maeneo mengi kuwasha moto msituni. Mighahawa ya Kichina huko San Francisco, Los Angeles, na New York huandaa biskuti za bahati, lakini si zile za Beijing, London, au Sydney. Ni Wamarekani pekee wanaosherehekea Siku ya Kitaifa ya Biskuti ya Bahati. Matangazo ya Kichina pekee ndiyo hutoa "Biskuti Halisi za Bahati za Kimarekani."

Biskuti za bahati ni mfano wa kufurahisha, rahisi. Lakini kanuni hiyo hiyo ya kulinganisha desturi katika mazingira tofauti ya kitamaduni inaweza kutusaidia kutofautisha utamaduni wa injili. Na sasa Bwana anafungua fursa mpya za kujifunza utamaduni wa injili kadiri fumbo la Kitabu cha Mormoni na unabii wa mafumbo wa

Agano Jipya unavyotimizwa.

II.

Everywhere people are moving. The United Nations reports 281 million international migrants. This is 128 million more individuals than in 1990 and more than three times 1970 estimates. Everywhere, record numbers of converts are finding The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Every Sabbath, members and friends from 195 birth countries and territories gather in 31,916 Church congregations. We speak 125 languages.

Recently, in Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Switzerland, and Germany, I witnessed new members fulfilling the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive tree. In Jacob 5, the Lord of the vineyard and his servants strengthen both olive tree roots and branches by gathering and grafting together those from diverse locations. Today children of God gather as one in Jesus Christ; the Lord offers a remarkable natural means to expand our lived fullness of His restored gospel.

Preparing us for the kingdom of heaven, Jesus tells the parables of the great supper and wedding feast. In these parables, invited guests make excuses not to come. The master instructs his servants to “go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city” and “the highways and hedges” to “bring in hither” the poor, maimed, halt, and blind. Spiritually speaking, that’s each of us.

Scripture declares:

“All nations shall be invited” unto “a supper of the house of the Lord.”

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, ... that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come.”

Today those invited to the supper of the Lord come from every place and culture. Old and young, rich and poor, local and global, we make our Church congregations look like our communities.

As chief Apostle, Peter saw heaven open a vision of “a great sheet knit at the four corners, ... wherein were all manner of ... beasts.” Taught Peter: “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. ... In every nation he that feareth [the Lord], and worketh righteousness, is

II.

Kila mahali watu wanahama. Umoja wa Mataifa unaripoti wahamiaji milioni 281 wa kimataifa. Hawa ni watu milioni 128 zaidi ya mwaka wa 1990, na zaidi ya mara tatu makadirio ya 1970. Kila mahali, idadi kubwa ya waongofu wanapata Kanisa la Yesu Kristo la Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho. Kila Sabato, waumini na marafiki kutoka nchi na wilaya 195 za kuzaliwa ukusanyika katika mikusanyiko 31,916 ya Kanisa. Tunazungumza lugha 125.

Hivi majuzi, huko Albania, Makedonia Kaskazini, Kosovo, Uswizi, na Ujerumani nilishuhudia washiriki wapya wakitimiza fumbo la Kitabu cha Mormoni la mti wa mzeituni. Katika Yakobo 5, Bwana wa shamba la mizabibu na watumishi wake huimarisha mizizi na matawi ya mizeituni kwa kukusanya na kupandikiza ile kutoka sehemu mbalimbali. Leo, watoto wa Mungu hukusanyika kama wamoja katika Yesu Kristo, Bwana hutoa njia ya ajabu ya asili kupanua utimilifu wetu wa kuishi na ufahamu wa injili Yake iliyorejeshwa.

Yeye akituandaa kwa ajili ya ufalme wa mbinguni, Yesu anasimulia mifano ya karamu kuu na karamu ya harusi. Katika mifano hii, wageni waalikwa hutoa visingizio vya kutokuja. Bwana anaagiza watumishi wake ‘watoke upesi kwenye barabara na vichochoro vya jiji’ na “barabara kuu na viunga” ili ‘kuwaleta humu’ maskini, vilema, viwete, na vipofu. Kuzungumza kiroho, huyo ni kila mmoja wetu.

Maandiko yanasema:

“Mataifa yote yataalikwa” kwenye “karamu ya nyumba ya Bwana.”

“Itengenezeni njia ya Bwana, ... ili ufalme wake upate kuenea juu ya dunia, ili wakazi wake wapate kuupokea, na kuwa tayari kwa siku zijazo.”

Leo wale walioalikwa kwenye karamu ya Bwana wanatoka kila mahali na tamaduni. Wazee kwa vijana, matajiri na maskini, wenyeji na wa kimataifa, tunafanya mikusanyiko yetu ya Kanisa ione kane kama jumuiya zetu.

Kama Mtume mkuu, Petro aliona mbingu ikifungua ono la “shuka kubwa iliyosokotwa katika pembe nne, ... ambamo ndani yake mlikuwa na ... wanyama wa kila namna.” Petro alifundisha: “Kwa kweli natambua ya kuwa Mungu hana upendeleo. ... Katika kila taifa mtu amchaye

accepted with him.”

In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus invites us to come to each other and to Him in His inn—His Church. He invites us to be good neighbors. The good Samaritan promises to return and recompense the care of those in His inn. Living the gospel of Jesus Christ includes making room for all in His restored Church.

The spirit of “room in the inn” includes “no one sits alone.” When you come to church, if you see someone alone, will you please say hello and sit with him or her? This may not be your custom. The person may look or speak differently than you. And of course, as a fortune cookie might say, “A journey of gospel friendship and love begins with a first hello and no one sitting alone.”

“No one sits alone” also means no one sits alone emotionally or spiritually. I went with a brokenhearted father to visit his son. Years earlier, the son was excited to become a new deacon. The occasion included his family buying him his first pair of new shoes.

But at church, the deacons laughed at him. His shoes were new, but not fashionable. Embarrassed and hurt, the young deacon said he would never go again to church. My heart is still broken for him and his family.

On the dusty roads to Jericho, each of us has been laughed at, embarrassed and hurt, perhaps scorned or abused. And with varying degrees of intent, each of us has also disregarded, not seen or heard, perhaps deliberately hurt others. It is precisely because we have been hurt and have hurt others that Jesus Christ brings us all to His inn. In His Church and through His ordinances and covenants, we come to each other and to Jesus Christ. We love and are loved, serve and are served, forgive and are forgiven. Please remember, “earth has no sorrow that heav’n cannot heal”; earth burdens lighten—our Savior’s joy is real.

In 1 Nephi 19, we read: “Even the very God of Israel do [they] trample under their feet; ... they set him at naught. ... Wherefore they scourge

[Bwana] na kutenda haki hukubaliwa naye.”

Katika fumbo la Msamaria mwema, Yesu anatumia tuje kwa kila mmoja wetu pamoja na Kwake katika nyumba Yake ya wageni—Kanisa Lake. Yeye anatumia sisi kuwa majirani wema. Msamaria mwema anaahidi kurudi na kulipa uangalizi wa wale walio katika nyumba Yake ya wageni. Kuishi injili ya Yesu Kristo kunajumuisha kutoa nafasi kwa wote katika Kanisa Lake lililorejeshwa.

Roho ya “chumba katika nyumba ya wageni” inajumuisha “hakuna anayeketi peke yake.” Je, unapokuja kanisani, ukiona mtu yuko peke yake, tafadhali utamsalimie na kuketi naye? Henda hii isiwe desturi yako. Mtu huyo anaweza kuonekana au kuzungumza tofauti na wewe. Na bila shaka, kama biskuti ya bahati inaweza kusema, “Safari ya urafiki wa injili na upendo huanza na salamu ya kwanza na hakuna mtu anayeketi peke yake.”

“Hakuna anayeketi peke yake” pia inamaanisha hakuna anayeketi peke yake kihisia au kiroho. Nilienda na baba aliyevunjika moyo kumtembelea mwanawe. Miaka mingi mapema, mwana huyo alifurahi kuwa shemasi mpya. Hafla hiyo ilijumuisha familia yake kumnunulia jozi yake ya kwanza ya viatu vipya.

Lakini kanisani, mashemasi walimcheka. Viatu vyake vilikuwa vipya, lakini si vya mtindo. Kwa aibu na kuumia, shemasi huyo mchanga alisema kamwe hangeenda tena kanisani. Moyo wangu bado umevunjika kwa ajili yake na familia yake.

Katika barabara za vumbi kuelekea Yeriko, kila mmoja wetu amechekwa, ameabishwa na kuumizwa, labda amedharauliwa au kunyanyaswa. Na kwa viwango tofauti vya nia, kila mmoja wetu pia amepuuza, hajaona au kusikia, labda ameumiza wengine kimakusudi. Ni kwa sababu tumeumizwa na kuwaumiza wengine ndiyo maa—na Yesu Kristo anatumia sisi sote kwenye nyumba Yake ya wageni. Katika Kanisa Lake na kupitia ibada na maagano Yake, sisi tunakuja kwa mmoja na mwingine na kwa Yesu Kristo. Tunapenda na kupendwa, kutumikia na kutumikiwa, kusamehe na kusamehewa. Tafadhali kumbuka, “dunia haina huzuni ambayo mbingu haiwezi kuponya”; mizigo ya dunia kuwa nyepesi—furaha ya Mwokozi wetu ni ya kweli.

Katika 1 Nephi 19, tunasoma: “Hata Mungu wa Israeli mwenyewe [wanamkanyagia] chini ya miguu yao; ... wanamdharau. ... Kwa hivyo

him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it.”

My friend Professor Terry Warner says the judging, scourging, smiting, and spitting were not occasional events that occurred only during Christ’s mortal life. How we treat each other—especially the hungry, the thirsty, those left out alone—is how we treat Him.

In His restored Church, we are all better when no one sits alone. Let us not simply accommodate or tolerate. Let us genuinely welcome, acknowledge, minister to, love. May each friend, sister, brother not be a foreigner or stranger but a child at home.

Today many feel lonely and isolated. Social media and artificial intelligence can leave us yearning for human closeness and human touch. We want to hear each other’s voices. We want authentic belonging and kindness.

There are many reasons we may feel we do not fit in at church—that, speaking figuratively, we sit alone. We may worry about our accent, clothes, family situation. Perhaps we feel inadequate, smell of smoke, yearn for moral cleanliness, have broken up with someone and feel hurt and embarrassed, are concerned about this or that Church policy. We may be single, divorced, widowed. Our children are noisy; we don’t have children. We didn’t serve a mission or came home early. The list goes on.

Mosiah 18:21 invites us to knit our hearts together in love. I invite us to worry less, judge less, be less demanding of others—and, when needed, be less hard on ourselves. We do not create Zion in a day. But each “hello,” each warm gesture, brings Zion closer. Let us trust the Lord more and choose joyfully to obey all His commandments.

III.

Doctrinally, in the household of faith and fellowship of the Saints, no one sits alone because of covenant belonging in Jesus Christ.

Taught the Prophet Joseph Smith: “It is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, ‘the dispensation of

wanampiga kwa mijeledi, na anavumilia; na wanamchapa, na anavumilia. Naam, wanamtemea mate, naye anavumilia.”

Rafiki yangu Profesa Terry Warner anasema kuhukumu, kupigwa mijeledi, kumpiga, na kute-mewa mate havikuwa matukio ya hapa na pale ambayo yalitokea tu wakati wa maisha ya kibinadamu ya Kristo. Jinsi tunavyotendean—hasa wenye njaa, wenye kiu, wale walioachwa peke yao, ndivyo tunavyomtendea Yeye.

Katika Kanisa Lake lililorejeshwa, sisi sote ni bora wakati hakuna anayeketi pekee yake. Tusi-kubaliane tu au tuvumilie tu. Tuwakaribishe kwa dhati, tuwatambue, tuwatumikie, tuwapende. Na kila rafiki, dada, kaka asiwe wa kutoka nchi za nje au mgeni bali mtoto nyumbani.

Leo wengi huhisi upweke na kutengwa. Mitandao ya kijamii na akili mnemba inaweza kutuacha tukiwa tunatamani ukaribu wa binadamu na mguso wa kibinadamu. Tunataka kusikia sauti za kila mmoja wetu. Tunataka kuwa wa na wema wa kweli.

Kuna sababu nyingi ambazo tunaweza kuhisi kwamba hatufai kuwa kanisani—kwamba, tukizungumza kwa njia ya kitamathali, tunaketi peke yetu. Tunaweza kuwa na wasiwasi juu ya lafudhi yetu, nguo, hali ya familia. Labda tunajiona kuwa hatutoshi, harufu ya moshi; tunatamani usafi wa maadili; tumeachana na mtu na kuhisi kuumizwa na wenye aibu, tuna wasiwasi kuhusu sera hii au ile ya Kanisa. Tunaweza kuwa waseja, tumetalikiana, wajane. Watoto wetu wana kelele; hatuna watoto. Hatukuhudumu misheni au tuli-rudi nyumbani mapema. Orodha inaendelea

Mosia 18:21 inatualika kufuma mioyo yetu pamoja katika upendo. Ninakualikeni sisi tupunguze wasiwasi, tusihukumu sana, tusitake mengi kutoka kwa wengine—na, inapohitajika, tusiwe wagumu juu yetu wenyewe. Hatuumbi Sayuni kwa siku moja. Lakini kila “salamu,” kila ishara ya urafiki, huileta Sayuni karibu zaidi. Hebu tumwamini Bwana zaidi na tuchague kwa shangwe kutii amri Zake zote.

III.

Kimafundisho, katika nyumba ya imani na ushirika wa Watakatifu, hakuna anayeketi peke yake kwa sababu ya agano la kuwa wa katika Yesu Kristo.

Alifundisha Nabii Joseph Smith: “Imesalia kwetu kuona, kushiriki na kusaidia kupeleka mbele utukufu wa Siku za Mwisho, ‘kipindi cha

the fullness of times ... ’, when the Saints of God will be gathered in one from every nation, and kindred, and people.”

God “doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; ... that he may draw all men [and women] unto him. ...

“... He inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; ... and all are alike unto God.”

Conversion in Jesus Christ requires us to put off the natural man and worldly culture. As President Dallin H. Oaks teaches, we are to give up any tradition and cultural practice that is contrary to the commandments of God and to become Latter-day Saints. He explains, “There is a unique gospel culture, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all [the] members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Gospel culture includes chastity, weekly attendance at church, abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. It includes honesty and integrity, understanding we move forward, not upward or downward, in Church positions.

I learn from faithful members and friends in every land and culture. Scriptures studied in multiple languages and cultural perspectives deepen gospel understanding. Different expressions of Christlike attributes deepen my love and understanding of my Savior. All are blessed when we define our cultural identity, as President Russell M. Nelson taught, as a child of God, a child of the covenant, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The peace of Jesus Christ is meant for us personally. Recently a young man earnestly asked, “Elder Gong, can I still go to heaven?” He wondered if he could ever be forgiven. I asked his name, listened carefully, invited him to talk with his bishop, gave him a big hug. He left with hope in Jesus Christ.

I mentioned the young man in another setting. Later I received an unsigned letter that began, “Elder Gong, my wife and I have raised nine kids ... and served two missions.” But “I always felt I would not be allowed in the celestial kingdom ... because my sins as a youth were so bad!”

utimilifu wa nyakati ... ’, wakati Watakatifu wa Mungu watakapokusanywa mahali pamoja kuto-ka katika kila taifa, na kabila, na watu.”

Mungu “hafanyi lolote ila kwa manufaa ya ulimwengu; ... ili awavute wanaumewote [na wanawake] kwake. ...

“... Anawakaribishawotekuja Kwake na kupokea wema Wake; ... nawoteni sawa mbele ya Mungu.”

Uongofu katika Yesu Kristo unatuhitaji tumvua mtu wa asili na utamaduni wa kiulimwengu. Kama Rais Dallin H. Oaks anavyofundisha, tunapaswa kuacha utamaduni wa kimila na desturi yote ambayo ni kinyume na amri za Mungu na kuwa Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho. Anaeleza, “Kuna utamaduni wa kipekee wa injili, seti ya viwango na matarajio na desturi zinazofanana kwa waumini wote wa Kanisa la Yesu Kristo la Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho.” Utamaduni wa injili unajumuisha usafi wa kimwili, kuhudhuria kanisani kila wiki, kujiepusha na vileo, tumbaku, chai, na kahawa. Inajumuisha uaminifu na uadilifu, kuelewa tunasonga mbele sio juu au chini, katika nafasi za Kanisa.

Ninajifunza kutoka kwa waumini na marafiki waaminifu katika kila nchi na utamaduni. Maandiko yanapofunzwa katika lugha nyingi na mitazamo ya kitamaduni huongeza kina cha uelewa wa injili. Maonyesho tofauti ya sifa kama za Kristo huongeza kina cha upendo na ufahamu wangu juu ya Mwokozi wangu. Wote wanabarikiwa tunapofafanua utambulisho wetu wa kitamaduni, kama vile Rais Russell M. Nelson alivyofundisha, kama mtoto wa Mungu, mtoto wa agano, mwanafunzi wa Yesu Kristo.

Amani ya Yesu Kristo imekusudiwa kwetu sisi kibinafsi. Hivi majuzi, kijana mmoja aliuliza kwa dhiti, “Mzee Gong, bado mimi ninaweza kwenda mbinguni?” Alijiuliza ikiwa angeweza kusamehewa. Nilimuuliza jina lake, nikasikiliza kwa makini, nikamwalika yeye kuzungumza na askofu wake, nikampa kumbatio kubwa. Aliondoka akiwa na matumaini katika Yesu Kristo.

Nilimtaja mvulana huyo katika mazingira mengine. Baadaye nilipokea barua ambayo haijatiwa sahihi ambayo ilianza, “Mzee Gong, mke wangu na mimi tumelea watoto tisa ... na kuhudumu misheni mbili.” Lakini “Siku zote nilihisi singaruhusiwa katika ufalme wa selestia ... kwa sababu dhambi zangu kama kijana zilikuwa mbaya sana!”

The letter continued, “Elder Gong, when you told about the young man gaining hope of forgiveness, I was filled with joy, beginning to realize that maybe I [could be forgiven].” The letter concludes, “I even like myself now!”

Covenant belonging deepens as we come to each other and to the Lord in His inn. The Lord blesses us all when no one sits alone. And who knows? Maybe the person we sit next to may become our best fortune cookie friend. May we find and make place for Him and each other at the supper of the Lamb, I humbly pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Barua iliendelea, “Mzee Gong, uliposimulia kuhusu kijana huyo kupata tumaini la msamaha, nilijawa na shangwe, nikianza kutambua kwamba yawezekana [ningeweza kusamehewa].” Barua hiyo inamalizia, “Hata ninajipenda mwenyewe sasa!”

Agano la kuwa wa linaongezeka kina tunapokuja kwa kila mmoja wetu na kwa Bwana katika nyumba Yake ya wageni. Bwana hutubari-ki sisi sote inapokuwa hakuna anayeketi peke yake. Na nani anayejua? Pengine mtu tunayeketi karibu naye anaweza kuwa rafiki yetu bora wa bi-skuti ya bahati. Na tutafute na kuweka nafasi kwa ajili yake Yeye na sisi kwa sisi kwenye karamu ya Mwana-Kondoo, ninasali kwa unyenyekevukatika jina takatifu la Yesu Kristo, amina.