

Following Christ

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Kumfuata Kristo

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Mshauri wa Kwanza katika Urais wa Kwanza

October 2024 general conference

As followers of Christ, we teach and testify of Jesus Christ, our Perfect Role Model. So let us follow Him by forgoing contention.

This year millions have been inspired by the gospel study plan known by the Savior's invitation "Come, follow me." Following Christ is not a casual or occasional practice. It is a continuous commitment and way of life that should guide us at all times and in all places. His teachings and His example define the path for every disciple of Jesus Christ. And all are invited to this path, for He invites all to come unto Him, "black and white, bond and free, male and female; ... and all are alike unto God."

I.

The first step in following Christ is to obey what He defined as "the great commandment in the law":

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The commandments of God provide the guiding and steadying force in our lives. Our experiences in mortality are like the little boy and his father flying a kite on a windy day. As the kite rose higher, the winds caused it to tug

Kama wafuasi wa Kristo, sisi tunafundisha na tunashuhudia juu ya Yesu Kristo, Mfano wetu Kamili. Kwa hiyo acha tumfuate Yeye kwa kuachana na ubishi.

Mwaka huu mamilioni wamevutiwa na mpango wa kujifunza injili unaojulikana kwa kupitia mwaliko wa Mwokozi wa "Njoo, Unifuata." Kumfuata Kristo sio zoezi la juujuu au la mara moja moja. Ni dhamira endelevu na njia ya maisha ambayo inapaswa kutuongoza nyakati zote na katika mahali popote. Mafundisho Yake na mifano Yake huelezea njia kwa ajili ya kila mwanafunzi wa Yesu Kristo. Na wote wanaalikwa kwenye njia hii, kwani Yeye anawaalika wote kuja Kwake, "weusi kwa weupe, wafungwa na walio huru, waume kwa wake; ... wote ni sawa mbele za Mungu."

I.

Hatua ya kwanza katika kumfuata Kristo ni kutii kile Yeye anachokieleza kama "amri iliyo kuu katika torati":

"Mpende Bwana Mungu wako kwa moyo wako wote, na kwa roho yako yote, na kwa akili zako zote.

"Hii ndiyo amri iliyo kuu tena ni ya kwanza.

"Na ya pili yafanana nayo, Mpende jirani yako kama nafsi yako.

"Katika amri hizi mbili hutegemea torati yote na manabii."

Amri za Mungu zinatoa mwongozo na nguvu za kuimarisha katika maisha yetu. Uzoefu wetu katika maisha ya duniani ni kama mvulana mdogo na baba yake wakirusha tiara katika siku ya upepo mwingi. Jinsi vile tiara ilivyopaa juu sana,

on the connecting string in the little boy's hand. Inexperienced with the force of mortal winds, he proposed to cut the string so the kite could rise higher. His wise father counseled no, explaining that the string is what holds the kite in place against mortal winds. If we lose our hold on the string, the kite will not rise higher. It will be carried about by these winds and inevitably crash to the earth.

That essential string represents the covenants that connect us to God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. As we honor those covenants by keeping Their commandments and following Their plan of redemption, Their promised blessings enable us to soar to celestial heights.

The Book of Mormon frequently declares that Christ is “the light of the world.” During His appearance to the Nephites, the risen Lord explained that teaching by telling them: “I have set an example for you.” “I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.” He is our role model. We learn what He has said and done by studying the scriptures and following prophetic teachings, as President Russell M. Nelson has urged us to do. In the ordinance of the sacrament, we covenant each Sabbath day that we will “always remember him and keep his commandments.”

II.

In the Book of Mormon, the Lord gave us the fundamentals in what He called “the doctrine of Christ.” These are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, and becoming as a little child, which means to trust the Lord and submit to all He requires of us.

The Lord's commandments are of two types: permanent, like the doctrine of Christ, and temporary. Temporary commandments are those necessary for the needs of the Lord's Church or the faithful in temporary circumstances, but to be set aside when the need has passed. An example of temporary commandments are the Lord's directions to the early leadership of the Church to move the Saints from New York to Ohio, to Missouri, and to Illinois and finally to lead the pioneer exodus to the Intermountain West. Though only temporary, when still in force these

upepo ulifanya uzi ulioiunganisha kuvutwa toka mikononi mwa mvulana mdogo. Kwa kukosa uzoefu wa nguvu za upepo, alishauri kukata uzi ili kwamba tiara iweze kupaa zaidi. Baba mwenye hekima alishauri hapana, akielezea kwamba uzi ndio ulikuwa unashikilia tiara dhidi ya upepo mkali. Ikiwa tunashindwa kushikilia uzi, tiara haitapaa juu sana. Itabebwa na pepo hizi na hatimaye kuanguka chini ardhini.

Huo uzi muhimu unawakilisha maagano ambayo yanatuunganisha na Mungu, Baba yetu wa Mbinguni na Mwanawe, Yesu Kristo. Tunapoheshimu maagano haya kwa kutii amri Zao na kuufuata mpango Wao wa ukombozi, ahadi Zao zilizoahidiwa zinatuwezesha sisi kupaa hata viwango vya selestia.

Kitabu cha Mormoni mara kwa mara hutangaza kwamba Kristo ni “nuru ya ulimwengu.” Wakati wa kutokea Kwake kwa Wanefi, Bwana aliyefufuka alielezea mafundisho hayo kwa kuwaambia: “Nimewapatia mfano.” “Mimi ni mwangaza ambao mtainua—kwamba mfanye yale ambayo mmeniona nikifanya.” Yeye ni mfano wetu. Tunajifunza kile ambacho Yeye amekisema na kufanya kwa kujifunza maandiko na kufuata mafundisho ya kinabii kama vile ambavyo Rais Russell M. Nelson ametuasa tufanye. Katika ibada ya sakramenti, tunafanya agano kila siku ya Sabato kwamba “daima tutamkumbuka, na kuzishika amri Zake.”

II.

Katika Kitabu cha Mormoni, Bwana ametupa sisi misingi katika kile Yeye alichokiita “mafundisho ya Kristo.” Mafundisho hayo ni imani katika Bwana Yesu Kristo, toba, ubatizo, kupokea kipawa cha Roho Mtakatifu, kuvumilia hadi mwisho, na kuwa kama mtoto mdogo, ambayo inamaanisha kumtumainia Bwana na kujisalimisha kwa yote ambayo Yeye anahitaji kutoka kwetu.

Amri za Bwana ni za aina mbili, za kudumu kama vile mafundisho ya Kristo, na za muda. Amri za muda ni zile zilizo muhimu kwa mahitaji ya Kanisa la Bwana au waaminifu katika hali ya muda, lakini zinawekwa kando wakati hitaji linapokuwa limeisha muda. Mfano wa amri za muda ni maelekezo ya Bwana kwa uongozi wa mwanzo wa Kanisa ya kuwahamisha Watakatifu kutoka New York hadi Ohio, hadi Missouri, na hadi Illinois na mwishowe kuwaongoza waanzilishi kuondoka hadi Milima ya Magharibi. Ingawa zilikuwa ni za muda tu, wakati zikiwa zinatumika

commandments were given to be obeyed.

Some permanent commandments have taken considerable time to be generally observed. For example, President Lorenzo Snow's famous sermon on the law of tithing emphasized a commandment given earlier but not yet generally observed by Church members. It needed reemphasis in the circumstances then faced by the Church and its members. Recent examples of reemphases have also been needed because of current circumstances faced by Latter-day Saints or the Church. These include the proclamation on the family, issued by President Gordon B. Hinckley a generation ago, and President Russell M. Nelson's recent call for the Church to be known by its revealed name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

III.

Another of our Savior's teachings seems to require reemphasis in the circumstances of our day.

This is a time of many harsh and hurtful words in public communications and sometimes even in our families. Sharp differences on issues of public policy often result in actions of hostility—even hatred—in public and personal relationships. This atmosphere of enmity sometimes even paralyzes capacities for lawmaking on matters of importance where most citizens see an urgent need for some action in the public interest.

What should followers of Christ teach and do in this time of toxic communications? What were His teachings and examples?

It is significant that among the first principles Jesus taught when He appeared to the Nephites was to avoid contention. While He taught this in the context of disputes over religious doctrine, the reasons He gave clearly apply to communications and relationships in politics, public policy, and family relationships. Jesus taught:

“He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things

amri hizi zilitolewa ili zitiwe.

Baadhi ya amri za kudumu zimechukuwa muda mrefu ili kufuatwa. Kwa mfano, hotuba maarufu ya Rais Lorenzo Snow juu ya sheria ya zaka ilisisitiza amri iliyotolewa zamani lakini bado ilikuwa haifuatwi na wengi wa waumini wa Kanisa. Ilihitiwa kusisitizwa tena katika hali ya wakati huo iliyolikabili Kanisa na waumini wake. Mifano ya hivi karibuni ya kusisitiza tena imehitajika pia kwa sababu ya hali za sasa zinazowakabili Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho au Kanisa. Hii inajumuisha tangazo juu ya familia lililotolewa na Rais Gordon B. Hinckley kizazi kilichopita, na mwito wa Rais Russell M. Nelson wa hivi karibuni wa Kanisa kujulikana kwa jina lake lililofunuliwa, Kanisa la Yesu Kristo la Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho.

III.

Mengine katika mafundisho ya Mwokozi wetu yanaonekana kuhitaji kusisitizwa tena katika hali za siku yetu.

Huu ni wakati wa maneno makali na ya kuumiza katika mawasiliano ya umma na hata wakati mwingine katika familia zetu. Tofauti kubwa juu ya masuala ya sera za umma mara nyingi huleta matendo ya ugomvi—hata chuki—katika mahusiano ya umma na binafsi. Mazingira haya ya uhasama wakati mwingine hulemaza hata uwezo wa kutunga sheria juu ya mambo muhimu pale ambapo raia wengi wanaona haja ya dharura kwa ajili ya hatua katika maswala yanayohusu umma.

Je, Wafuasi wa Kristo wanapaswa kufundisha nini na kufanya nini katika wakati huu wa mawasiliano yenye sumu? Je, mafundisho na mifano Yake ilikuwa ipi?

Ni muhimu kwamba miongoni mwa kanuni za kwanza Yesu alizofunza wakati alipotokea kwa Wanefi ilikuwa ni kuepukana na ubishi. Wakati Yeye akifunza hili katika muktadha wa migogoro ya kidini kuhusu mafundisho, sababu Yeye alizozitoa kwa uwazi zinatumiwa kwa mawasiliano na uhusiano katika siasa, sera za umma na mahusiano ya familia. Yesu alifundisha:

“Yule ambaye ana roho ya ubishi siye wangu, lakini ni wa ibilisi, ambaye ni baba wa ubishi, na huchochea mioyo ya watu kubishana na hasira, mmoja kwa mwingine.

“Tazama, hili sio fundisho langu, kuchochea mioyo ya wanadamu kwa hasira, mmoja dhidi ya mwingine; lakini hili ndilo fundisho langu,

should be done away.”

In His remaining ministry among the Nephites, Jesus taught other commandments closely related to His prohibition of contention. We know from the Bible that He had previously taught each of these in His great Sermon on the Mount, usually in precisely the same language He later used with the Nephites. I will quote the familiar Bible language:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

This is one of Christ’s best-known commandments—most revolutionary and most difficult to follow. Yet it is a most fundamental part of His invitation for all to follow Him. As President David O. McKay taught, “There is no better way to manifest love for God than to show an unselfish love for one’s fellowmen.”

Here is another fundamental teaching by Him who is our role model: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

Peacemakers! How it would change personal relationships if followers of Christ would forgo harsh and hurtful words in all their communications.

In general conference last year, President Russell M. Nelson gave us these challenges:

“One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people. ...

“... True disciples of Jesus Christ are peacemakers.

“... One of the best ways we can honor the Savior is to become a peacemaker.”

Concluding his teachings: “Contention is a choice. Peacemaking is a choice. You have your agency to choose contention or reconciliation. I urge you to choose to be a peacemaker, now and always.”

Potential adversaries should begin their discussions by identifying common ground on which all agree.

To follow our Perfect Role Model and His prophet, we need to practice what is popularly known as the Golden Rule: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” We need to love and do good to all. We

kwamba vitu kama hivi viondolewe mbali.”

Katika huduma Yake iliyobakia miongoni mwa Wanefi, Yesu alifunza amri zingine zinahusiana kwa karibu na katazo Lake la ubishi. Tunajua kutoka kwenye Biblia kwamba Yeye awali alikuwa amewafundisha kila moja ya hizi katika Mahubiri Yake makuu ya Mlimani, kwa kawaida katika lugha ile ile Yeye aliyoitumia kwa Wanefi. Nitanukuu lugha inayofahamika ya Biblia:

“Wapendeni maadui zenu, wabariki wanao walaani, wafanyie mazuri wale ambao wanawachukia, na muwaombee wale ambao wanawatumia kwa madharau na kuwadhulumu.”

Hii ni mojawapo ya amri za Kristo zinazojulikana sana—ya kimageuzi sana na ngumu sana kufuata. Lakini bado ni sehemu ya msingi sana ya mwaliko Wake kwa wote kumfuata Yeye. Kama vile Rais David O. McKay alivyofundisha, “Hakuna njia bora ya kuonyesha upendo kwa Mungu zaidi ya kuonyesha upendo bila choyo kwa wanadamu wenzetu.”

Hapa kuna mafundisho mengine ya msingi juu ya Yeye ambaye ni mfano wetu: “Heri wapatanishi: maana hao wataitwa wana wa Mungu.”

Wapatanishi! Ingebadilishaje uhusiano wetu binafsi ikiwa wafuasi wa Kristo wangeachana na maneno makali na ya kuumiza katika mawasiliano yao yote.

Katika mkutano mkuu mwaka uliopita, Rais Russell M. Nelson alitupatia changamoto hizi:

“Njia moja rahisi sana ya kumtambua mfuasi wa kweliwa Yesu Kristo ni kwa kuangalia huruma kiasi gani mtu huyo huwaonyesha wengine. ...

“... Wafuasi wa kweli wa Yesu Kristo ni wapatanishi.

“... Njia moja nzuri sana ya kumkumbuka Mwokozi ni kuwa wapatanishi. ...

Akihitimisha mafundisho yake: “Ubishi ni uchaguzi. Upatanishi ni uchaguzi. Unayo haki yako ya kujiamulia kuchagua ubishi au mapatano. Ninawasihimchaguekuwa wapatanishi, sasa na daima.”

Maadui yamkini wanapaswa kuanza kwa kutambua jambo la pamoja ambalo juu yake wote wanakubaliana nalo.

Kufuata Mfano wetu Kamili na nabii Wake, tunahitaji kufanya kile kijulikanacho sana kama Sheria ya Dhahabu: “Yote mtakayo mtendewe na watu, nanyi watendeeni vivyo hivyo; maana hiyo ndiyo torati na Manabii.” Tunajitahidi kupenda na kutenda mema kwa wote. Tunahitaji kuepukana

need to avoid contention and be peacemakers in all our communications. This does not mean to compromise our principles and priorities but to cease harshly attacking others for theirs. That is what our Perfect Role Model did in His ministry. That is the example He set for us as He invited us to follow Him.

In this conference four years ago, President Nelson gave us a prophetic challenge for our own day:

“Are you willing to let God prevail in your life? Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life? Will you allow His words, His commandments, and His covenants to influence what you do each day? Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other?”

As followers of Christ, we teach and testify of Jesus Christ, our Perfect Role Model. So let us follow Him by forgoing contention. As we pursue our preferred policies in public actions, let us qualify for His blessings by using the language and methods of peacemakers. In our families and other personal relationships, let us avoid what is harsh and hateful. Let us seek to be holy, like our Savior, in whose holy name I testify and invoke His blessing to help us be Saints. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

na ubishi na kuwa wapatanishi katika mawasiliano yetu yote. Hii haimaanishi kulegeza sharti la kanuni zetu na vipaumbele vyetu bali kuachana na kuwashambulia wengine kwa ukali kwa sababu ya kanuni na vipaumbele vyao. Hicho ndicho Mfano wetu Kamili alichofanya katika huduma Yake. Huo ndio mfano Yeye aliotuwekea wakati alipotualika sisi tumfuate Yeye.

Katika huu mkutano mkuu miaka minne iliyopita, Rais Nelson alitoa changamoto ya kinabii kwa ajili ya siku yetu wenyewe:

“Je, weweuko radhi kuacha Mungu ashinde katika maisha yako? Je, weweuko radhi kuacha Mungu awe na ushawishi muhimu zaidi katika maisha yako? Je, utaruhusu maneno Yake, amri Zake, na maagano Yake, yashawishi kile unachofanya kila siku? Je, utaruhusu sauti Yake ichukue kipaumbele cha juu zaidi ya sauti zingine zote?”

Kama wafuasi wa Kristo, sisi tunafundisha na tunashuhudia juu ya Yesu Kristo, Mfano wetu Kamili. Kwa hiyo acha tumfuate Yeye kwa kuachana na ubishi. Tunapofuata sera zetu pendwa katika vitendo vya umma, acha tustahili kwa ajili ya baraka Zake kwa kutumia lugha na mbinu za wapatanishi. Katika mahusiano ya familia zetu na binafsi, acha tuepukane na kile kilicho cha ukali na chenye chuki. Acha tutafute kuwa watakatifu, kama vile Mwokozi wetu, ambaye jina Lake takatifu ninalishuhudia na kuomba baraka Zake ili kutusaidia kuwa Watakatifu. Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.