

Seeking Answers to Spiritual Questions

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Kutafuta Majibu ya Maswali ya Kiroho

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Our sincere gospel questions can provide Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with opportunities to help us grow.

I know this may come as a surprise, but I'm old enough to remember when we were taught in school that there were nine planets in our solar system. One of those planets, Pluto, was given its name by 11-year-old Venetia Burney of Oxford, England, after its discovery in 1930. And up until 1992, Pluto was believed to be the most distant object in our solar system. During this time, it was common to find childhood papier mâché models of our planetary neighborhood in classrooms and science fairs, each one illustrating Pluto's position on the known border. Many scientists believed that beyond that edge, the outer solar system consisted of empty space.

However, a lingering question remained within the scientific community regarding the origin of a particular type of comet that astronomers regularly tracked. And that question persisted for decades before the discovery of another distant region of our solar system. With the limited knowledge they had, scientists used those intervening decades to produce significant technological advances that allowed for further study and exploration. Their eventual breakthrough reconfigured our planetary zone and resulted in Pluto being rehomed to this new region of space and our solar system consisting of eight planets.

One leading planetary scientist and principal investigator for the New Horizons space mission tasked with exploring Pluto up close had this to say about this experience: "We thought we un-

Maswali yetu ya dhiti ya injili yanaweza kutoa fursa kwa Baba wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo kutusaidia tukue.

Najua hili linaweza kushangaza, lakini nimekua vya kutosha kukumbuka wakati tulipofunzwa shuleni kwamba kulikuwa na sayari tisa katika mfumo wa jua. Moja ya sayari hizo, Pluto, ilipewa jina lake na Venetia Burney mwenye miaka 11 wa Oxford, Uingereza, baada ya ugunduzi wake mnamo 1930. Na hadi kufikia 1992, Pluto iliaminika kuwa sayari ya mbali zaidi katika mfumo wa jua. Katika kipindi hiki, ilikuwa kawaida kupata mifano ya maumbo ya karatasi ya umbali wa sayari katika madarasa na maonesho ya sayansi, kila moja ikionesha nafasi ya Pluto kwenye mpaka unaojulikana. Wanasayansi wengi waliamini kwamba zaidi ya ukingo huo mfumo wa nje wa jua ulikuwa na nafasi tupu.

Hata hivyo, swali la muda mrefu lilibaki katika jamii ya wanasayansi kuhusiana na chanzo cha aina fulani ya kimondo ambacho wanajimu walikifuatilia mara kwa mara. Na swali hilo liliendelea kwa miongo kabla ya ugunduzi wa eneo jingine la mbali la mfumo wetu wa jua. Kwa ufahamu wenye ukomo waliokuwa nao, wanasayansi walitumia miongo hiyo ya mwingiliano kuzalisha maendeleo muhimu ya kiteknolojia ambayo yaliruhusu mafunzo na utafiti zaidi. Hatma ya ugunduzi wao ilisanidi ukanda wetu wa kisayari na kuleta matokeo ya Pluto kuwekwa kwenye eneo hili jipya la anga na mfumo wetu wa jua ukijumuisha sayari nane.

Mwanasayansi mmoja maarufu na mchunguzi mkuu kwa ajili ya misheni ya Ukanda Mpya wa anga aliyepewa jukumu la kuitafiti Pluto kwa ukaribu alikuwa na hili la kusema kuhusu uzoefu

derstood the geography of our solar system. We didn't. We thought we understood the population of planets in our solar system. And we were wrong."

What is striking to me about this period of space exploration history are some parallels and key distinctions between the metaphorical pursuit of expanding scientific horizons and the journey that we, as children of God, undertake to seek answers to our spiritual questions. Specifically, how we can respond to the limits of our spiritual understanding and prepare ourselves for the next stage of personal growth—and where we can turn for help.

Line upon Line

Asking questions and searching for meaning are a natural and normal part of our mortal experience. At times, not readily having complete answers can bring us to the edge of our understanding, and those limitations can feel frustrating or overwhelming. Wondrously, Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for all of us is designed to help us progress despite our limitations and accomplish what we cannot accomplish on our own, even without a complete knowledge of all things. God's plan is merciful toward the limitations of our humanity; provides us with our Savior, Jesus Christ, to be our Good Shepherd; and inspires us to use our agency to choose Him.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught that "asking questions isn't a sign of weakness," but rather "it's a precursor of growth." Speaking directly to our personal effort as seekers of truth, our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has taught that we must have "a deep desire" and "ask with a sincere heart[and] real intent, having faith in [Jesus] Christ." He has further taught that "'real intent' means that onereally intendsto follow the divine direction given."

Our personal effort to grow in wisdom may lead us to examine our questions, complex or otherwise, through the lens of cause and effect, seeking out and recognizing patterns and then forming narratives to give shape to our understanding and fill in perceived gaps in knowledge. When we consider our pursuit of spiritual knowledge, however, these thoughtful processes may be helpful at times but on their own can be incomplete as we look to discern things per-

huu: "Tulidhani tulielewa jiografia ya mfumo wetu wa jua. Hatukuelewa. Tulidhani tulielewa idadi ya sayari katika mfumo wetu wa jua. Na hatukuwa sahihi."

Kinachovuta umakini wangu kuhusu kipindi hiki cha ugunduzi wa kihistoria wa anga ni baadhi ya mifanano na utofauti muhimu kati ya utafutaji wa kisitiari wa ukanda mpana wa kisayansi na safari ambayo sisi, kama watoto wa Mungu, tunaifanya ili kutafuta majibu ya maswali yetu ya kiroho. Kwa upekee, jinsi tunavyoweza kushughulikia vizuizi vya uelewa wetu wa kiroho na kujitayarisha kwa hatua inayofuata ya ukuaji binafsi—na wapi tunageukia kwa ajili ya msaada.

Mstari juu ya Mstari

Kuuliza maswali na kutafuta maana ni sehemu ya asili na ya kawaida ya uzoefu wetu wa maisha. Kuna nyakati, kutokuwa na majibu kamili kunaweza kutuleta kwenye ukingo wa uelewa wetu, na vikwazo hivyo vinaweza kuleta hisia za hasira au za kuchosha. Cha kushangaza, mpango wa furaha wa Baba wa Mbinguni kwa ajili yetu sote umekusudiwa kutusaidia tupige hatua licha ya vikwazo na kufikia kile tusichoweza kufikia peke yetu, hata bila ufahamu kamili wa mambo yote. Mpango wa Mungu ni wa rehema kwa vizuizi vya ubinadamu wetu; unatupatia Mwokozi wetu, Yesu Kristo, kuwa Mchungaji wetu Mwema; na kutupatia msukumo wa kutumia haki yetu ya kujiamulia kumchagua Yeye.

Mzee Dieter F. Uchtdorf amefundisha kwamba "kuuliza maswali si ishara ya udhaifu," badala yake "ni mwanzo wa ukuaji." Akizungumza moja kwa moja kuhusu juhudi zetu binafsi kama watafutaji wa ukweli, nabii wetu, Rais Russell M. Nelson, amefundisha kwamba lazima tuwe na "nia ya dhati" na "tuombe kwa moyo wa kweli [na] kusudi halisi, tukiwa na imani katika [Yesu] Kristo." Amefundisha zaidi kwamba "kusudi halisi" humaanisha kwamba mtuanakusudia kwa dhatikufuata mwongozo wa kiungu unaotolewa."

Juhudi zetu binafsi za kukua katika hekima zinaweza kutuongoza kwenye kutathmini maswali yetu, magumu au vinginevyo, kupitia lenzi ya chanzo na madhara, tukitafuta na kutambua mipangilio na kisha kuunda masimulizi ili kuupa umbo uelewa wetu na kujaza nafasi wazi katika maarifa. Tunapozingatia utafutaji wetu wa maarifa ya kiroho, hata hivyo, michakato hii muhimu inaweza kuwa wakati mwingine yenye msaada lakini ikiwa peke yake inaweza kuwa haijakamilika

taining to Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, Their gospel, Their Church, and Their plan for all of us.

God the Father and His Son's way of imparting Their wisdom to us prioritizes inviting the power of the Holy Ghost to be our personal teacher as we center Jesus Christ in our lives and in our faithful seeking for Their answers and Their meaning. They invite us to discover truth through devoted time spent studying holy scripture and to seek for latter-day revealed truth for our day and our time, imparted by modern-day prophets and apostles. They entreat us to spend regular, worshipful time in the house of the Lord and to take to our knees in prayer "to access information from heaven." Jesus's promise to those present to hear His Sermon on the Mount is as true for us in our day as it was during His earthly ministry: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Our Savior assures that "your Father which is in heaven give[s] good things to them that ask him."

The Lord's method of teaching is "line upon line, precept upon precept." We may be required to "wait upon the Lord" in the space between our current line of understanding and the next yet to be delivered. This sacred space can be a place where our greatest spiritual conditioning can occur—the site where we can "bear with patience" our earnest seeking and renew our strength to continue to keep the sacred promises we have made to God through covenant.

Our covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ signals our prevailing citizenship in God's kingdom. And our residency therein requires aligning our life to divine principles and putting in the effort to grow spiritually.

Obedience

One key principle taught throughout the Book of Mormon is when God's children choose to demonstrate obedience and keep their covenants, they receive continual spiritual guidance and direction. The Lord has told us that through our obedience and diligence, we may gain knowledge and intelligence. God's laws and commandments are not designed to be an obstacle in our

pale tunapotazama ili kujua vitu vinavyohusiana na Baba wa Mbinguni na Mwokozi wetu, Yesu Kristo, injili Yao, Kanisa Lao, na mpango Wao kwetu sote.

Njia ya Mungu Baba na Mwanaye ya kutupatia hekima Yao huwekea kipaumbele kualika nguvu ya Roho Mtakatifu kuwa mwalimu wetu binafsi pale tunapomweka Yesu Kristo kuwa kiini katika maisha yetu na katika utafutaji wetu wa dhati wa majibu Yao na maana Yao. Wanatalika tuutambue ukweli kupitia muda uliotengwa kujifunza maandiko matakatifu na kutafuta ukweli wa siku za mwisho uliofunuliwa kwa ajili ya siku yetu na wakati wetu, uliotolewa na manabii na mitume wa siku za leo. Wanatusihi tutumie muda mwingi, wa kuabudu ndani ya nyumba ya Bwana na kupiga magoti katika sala "ili kufikia taarifa kutoka mbinguni." Ahadi ya Yesu kwa wale waliokuwepo kusikia Mahubiri Yake Mlimani ni ya kweli katika siku yetu kama ilivyokuwa wakati wa huduma Yake duniani: "Ombeni, nanyi mtapewa; tafuteni nanyi mtaona; bisheni nanyi mtafunguliwa." Mwokozi wetu anahakikisha kwamba "Baba yenu aliye mbinguni atawapa mema wao wamwombao."

Njia ya Bwana ya kufundisha ni "mstari juu ya mstari, kanuni juu ya kanuni." Tunaweza kuhitajika "kumngojea Bwana" katika nafasi kati ya mstari wetu wa sasa wa uelewa na ujao ambao bado haujatolewa. Nafasi hii takatifu inaweza kuwa mahala ambapo hali yetu kubwa zaidi ya kiroho inaweza kutokea—mahala ambapo tunaweza "kuvumilia kwa subira" utafutaji wetu wa dhati na kufanya upya nguvu yetu ya kuendelea kutii ahadi takatifu tulizozifanya kwa Mungu kupitia agano.

Uhusiano wetu wa agano pamoja na Baba wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo unaashiria uraia wetu wa kudumu katika ufalme wa Mungu. Na ukaaji wetu huko huhitaji kuyaoanisha maisha yetu kwenye kanuni za kiungu na kuweka juhudi ya kukua kiroho.

Utiifu

Kanuni moja ya msingi inayofunzwa kote katika Kitabu cha Mormoni ni wakati watoto wa Mungu wanapochagua kuonesha utiifu na kushika maagano yao, wanapokea mwongozo na maelekezo endelevu ya kiroho. Bwana ametuambia kwamba kupitia utiifu wetu na bidii, tunaweza kupata maarifa na akili. Sheria na amri za Mungu hazijakusudiwa kuwa vikwazo kati-

life but a powerful gateway to personal revelation and spiritual education. President Nelson has taught the crucial truth that “revelation from God is always compatible with His eternal law” and further that “it never contradicts His doctrine.” Your willing obedience to God’s commands, despite not having a complete knowledge of His reasons, places you in the company of His prophets. Moses 5 teaches us about a particular interaction between Adam and an angel of the Lord.

After the Lord gave Adam and Eve “commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord,” the scriptures say that “Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.” We go on to read that “after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.”

Adam’s obedience preceded his understanding and prepared him to receive the sacred knowledge that he was participating in as a sacred symbol of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Our humble obedience will, likewise, pave the way for our spiritual discernment of God’s ways and His divine purpose for each of us. Reaching to elevate our obedience brings us closer to our Savior, Jesus Christ, because obedience to His laws and commandments is effectually reaching out to Him.

Additionally, our fidelity to the knowledge and wisdom we have already inherited through our faithful adherence to gospel principles and sacred covenants is crucial preparation for our readiness to receive and be stewards of communications from the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are the source of all truth and share Their wisdom liberally. Also, understanding that we do not possess any personal knowledge independent of God can help us know who to turn to and where to place our primary trust.

Profound Trust

The Old Testament account of Naaman, the military leader who was healed of leprosy by the prophet Elisha, is a particular favorite of mine. The story illustrates how the firm faith of a “little maid” altered the course of one man’s life and, for all believers, revealed the reach of God’s mercy

ka maisha yetu bali njia yenye nguvu kuelekea ufunuo na elimu binafsi ya kiroho. Rais Nelson amefundisha ukweli muhimu kwamba “ufunuo kutoka kwa Mungu mara zote umeunganishwa kwenye sheria yake ya milele” na zaidi kwamba “kamwe haukinzani na mafundisho Yake.” Utiifu wako wa hiari kwa amri za Mungu, licha ya kutokuwa na maarifa kamili ya sababu Zake, unakuweka kwenye kombania ya manabii Wake. Musa 5 inatufunza kuhusu mchangamano fulani kati ya Adamu na malaika wa Bwana.

Baada ya Bwana kuwapa Adamu na Hawa “amri, kwamba wamwabudu Bwana Mungu wao, na wamtotee wazao wa kwanza wa mifugo yao, kwa ajili ya sadaka kwa Bwana,” maandiko yanasema kwamba “Adamu akawamtiifukwa amri za Bwana.” Tunaendelea kusoma kwamba “baada ya siku nyingi malaika wa Bwana akamtokea Adamu, akisema: Kwa nini wamtotea Bwana dhabihu? Na Adamu akasema: Mimi sijui, ila Bwana ameniamuru.”

Utiifu wa Adamu ulitangulia uelewa wake na ulimu andaayeye kupokea maarifa matakatiifu kwamba alikuwa akishiriki katika ishara takatifu ya Upatanisho wa Yesu Kristo. Utiifu wetu wa unyenyekevu, vile vile, utachonga njia kwa ajili ya uelewa wetu wa kiroho wa njia za Mungu na lengo Lake la kiungu kwa ajili ya kila mmoja wetu. Kupambana ili kuinua utiifu wetu hutuleta karibu na Mwokozi wetu Yesu Kristo, kwa sababu utiifu wa sheria na amri Zake ni matokeo ya kumfikia Yeye.

Kama nyongeza, uaminifu wetu kwenye maarifa na hekimatuliyorithi tayarikupitia utiifu wa kanuni za injili na maagano matakatiifu ni maandalizi muhimu kwa ajili ya utayari wetu wa kupokea na kuwa mawakala wa mawasiliano kutoka kwa Roho Mtakatifu.

Baba wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo ni chanzo cha ukweli wote na wanashiriki hekima Yao kwa ukarimu. Pia, kuelewa kwamba hatupati maarifa yoyote binafsi pasipo Mungu inaweza kutusaidia tujue nani wa kumgeukia na wapi pa kuweka msingi wa tumaini letu.

Tumaini Kuu

Hadithi ya Agano la Kale ya Naamani, kiongozi wa jeshi ambaye aliponywa ukoma na nabii Elisha, ndiyo hasa hadithi yangu pendwa. Hadithi inaelezea jinsi imani imara ya “mjakazi mdogo” ilivyogeuzwa hatma ya maisha ya mtu mmoja na, kwa waaminio wote, ilifunua mfiko

to those who place their trust in Him and His prophet. Though nameless, this young girl also helped to push our understanding forward. And Naaman's belief on her testimony inspired him to take his petition for healing to God's chosen servant.

Naaman's response to the prophet Elisha's instructions to wash in the river Jordan was at first skeptical and indignant. But an invitation for him to be obedient to the prophet's counsel made way for his healing and his dramatic understanding that God was real.

We may find that some of our spiritual petitions have reasonably discernible answers and may not create significant discomfort for us. Or, like Naaman, we may find that other needs are more challenging and may create difficult and complex feelings within us. Or, similar to the description of the astronomers' early conclusions about our solar system, in our search for spiritual truth, we may reach less accurate interpretations if we rely exclusively on our own limited understanding, a sorrowful and unintended consequence of which may lead us away from the covenant path. And moreover, some questions may persist until God, who "has all power" and "all wisdom, and all understanding," who "comprehendeth all things" in His mercy, provides enlightenment through our belief on His name.

One significant caution from Naaman's account is that resisting obedience to God's laws and commandments may prolong or delay our growth. We are blessed to have Jesus Christ as our Master Healer. Our obedience to God's laws and commandments can open the way for our Savior to provide the understanding and healing He knows we need, according to His prescribed treatment plan for us.

Elder Richard G. Scott taught that "this life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ, trust in His teachings, trust in our capacity as led by the Holy Spirit to obey those teachings for happiness now and for a purposeful, supremely happy eternal existence. To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see Prov. 3:5–7). To produce fruit, your trust in the Lord must be more powerful and enduring than your confidence in your own personal feelings and experience."

wa rehema ya Mungu kwa wale wanaoweka tumaini Kwake na kwa nabii Wake. Japo hakutajwa jina, binti huyu mdogo pia alisaidia kusu-kuma uelewa wetu mbele. Na imani ya Naamani kwenye ushuhuda wa binti ilimsukuma kupeleka ombi lake kwa ajili ya uponyaji kwa mtumishi mteule wa Mungu.

Mwitikio wa Naamani kwa maelekezo ya nabii Elisha ya kuoga ndani ya mto Yordani mwanzo ulikuwa wa mashaka na wa kuudhi. Lakini mwaliko wa yeye kuwamtii kwenye ushauri wa nabii ulifanya njia kwa ajili ya uponyaji na uelewa wake mkubwa kwamba Mungu ni halisi.

Tunaweza kukuta kwamba baadhi ya maombi yetu ya kiroho yana majibu ya sababu zinazojulikana na huenda yasilete usumbufu muhimu kwetu. Au, kama vile Naamani, tunaweza kukuta kwamba mahitaji mengine yana changamoto na yanaweza kuleta hisia ngumu na nzito ndani yetu. Au, sawa na maelezo ya hitimisho la mwanzo la wanajimu kuhusu mfumo wetu wa jua, katika kutafuta kwetu ukweli wa kiroho, tunaweza kufikia ufafanuzi usio sahihi sana ikiwa tutategemea uelewa wetu wenyewe wenye ukomo, matokeo ya huzuni na yasiyotarajiwa ambayo yanaweza kutuongoza mbali kutoka kwenye njia ya agano. Na zaidi, baadhi ya maswali yanaweza kuendelea hadi pale Mungu, mwenye "uwezo wote" na "hekima yote, na uelewa wote," ambaye "anaelewa vitu vyote" katika rehema Yake, hutoa uelewa kupitia uaminifu wetu kwa jina Lake.

Onyo moja muhimu kutoka hadithi ya Naamani ni kwamba kutokuwa mtiifu kwenye sheria na amri za Mungu kunaweza kuchukua muda mrefu au kuchelewesha ukuaji wetu. Tumebarikiwa kuwa na Yesu Kristo kama Mponyaji wetu Mkuu. Utiifu wetu kwenye sheria na amri za Mungu unaweza kufungua njia kwa ajili ya Mwokozi wetu kutoa uelewa na uponyaji anaojua tunauhitaji, kulingana na mpango Wake wa tiba uliopendekezwa kwetu.

Mzee Richard G. Scott alifundisha kwamba "maisha haya ni uzoefu katika tumaini kubwa—tumaini katika Yesu Kristo, tumaini katika mafundisho Yake, tumaini katika uwezo wetu kama tunavyoongozwa na Roho Mtakatifu kutii mafundisho hayo kwa furaha sasa na kwa maisha yenye malengo, yenye furaha halisi ya kuwepo milele yote. Kutumaini kunamaanisha kutii kwa hiari bila kujua mwisho kutokea mwanzo (ona Mithali 3:5–7). Ili kuzaa matunda, tumaini lako kwa Bwana ni lazima liwe na nguvu na lenye

Elder Scott continues: “To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it.”

Closing Testimony

Dear friends, I testify that our sincere gospel questions can provide Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with opportunities to help us grow. My personal effort to seek answers from the Lord to my own spiritual questions—past and present—has allowed me to use the space between the lines of my understanding and God’s to practice obedience to Him and fidelity to the spiritual knowledge that I currently possess.

I testify that placing your trust in Heavenly Father and in His prophets, whom He has sent, will help you to spiritually elevate and push you forward toward God’s expanded horizon. Your vantage will change because you will change. God knows that the higher you are, the farther you can see. Our Savior invites you to make that climb. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

kudumu kuliko ujasiri wako kwenye hisia na uzoefu wako binafsi.”

Mzee Scott anaendelea: “Kuonesha imani ni kutumaini kwamba Bwana anajua kile anachokifanya kwako na kwamba anaweza kukikamilisha kwa faida yako ya milele hata kama huwezi kuelewa jinsi Yeye anavyoweza kukikamilisha.”

Ushuhuda wa Hitimisho

Marafiki wapendwa, ninashuhudia kwamba maswali ya dhati ya injili yanaweza kutoa fursa kwa Baba wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo kutusaidia tukue. Juhudi yangu binafsi ya kutafuta majibu kutoka kwa Bwana kwa maswali yangu binafsi ya kiroho—yaliyopita na ya sasa—imeniruhusu kutumia nafasi kati ya uelewa wangu na wa Mungu ili kufanyia kazi utiifu Kwake na uaminifu kwenye maarifa ya kiroho ambayo ninayo sasa.

Ninashuhudia kwamba kuweka tumaini lako kwa Baba wa Mbinguni na kwa manabii Wake, aliowatuma, kutakusaidia kuinuka kiroho na kukusukuma mbele kuelekea uwanda mpana wa Mungu. Mtazamo wako utabadilika kwa sababu wewe utabadilika. Mungu anajua kwamba kadiri unavyokuwa juu, ndivyo unavyoweza kuona mbali zaidi. Mwokozi wetu anakualika upande juu. Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.