Joy Through Covenant Discipleship

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Fifaliana avy amin'ny maha-mpianatra manao sy mitandrina fanekempihavanana

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As we bind ourselves to act as covenant disciples, our relationship with the Father and Son is enriched, our joy enhanced, and our eternal perspective expanded.

Rehefa mamatotra ny tenantsika mba hiaina araka ny maha-mpianatra manao sy mitandrina fanekempihavanana antsika isika, dia hihatsara ny fifandraisantsika amin'ny Ray sy ny Zanaka, hitombo ny fifaliantsika ary hiitatra ny fomba fijerintsika izay mibanjina ny mandrakizay.

One day in 2023, Uyanga Altansukh was at work in the northern Mongolian city of Darkhan when the Mongolian mission president entered her workplace. In her words:

Indray andro tamin'ny taona 2023, raha iny niasa tao amin'ny tanàn'i Mongôlia avaratra tao Darkhana iny i Uyanga Altansukh no niditra ny toeram-piasany ny filohan'ny Misiônan'i Mongôlia. Hoy izy:

"I saw him and thought he had this bright light in his countenance. He was very kind and fun to those around him, and I felt warmth. Before he left, I asked him some questions. A few days later, he came into my work again and asked if I could attend his church. I thought it might be helpful. I was worried for my children's future, as society seemed to be full of stress and darkness. I wanted my children to be like this man with a light in their countenance, spreading joy to others around them.

"Hitako izy ary nieritreritra aho hoe nisy hazavana namirapiratra teny amin'ny tavany. Tena tsara fanahy sady sariaka tamin'ny manodidina azy izy ary nanana fahatsapana tsara aho. Talohan'ny nialany dia nametrahako fanontaniana vitsivitsy izy. Andro vitsivitsy taty aoriana dia nankao am-piasako indray izy ary nanontany raha afaka miangona any amin'ny fiangonany aho. Nihevitra aho hoe mety hanampy izany. Nanahy momba ny hoavin'ireo zanako aho noho ny amin'ny fiarahamonina izay toa feno zava-manahiran-tsaina sy haizina. Niriako mba ho toa an'io rangahy io ireo zanako ka hisy fahazavana hamirapiratra eny amin'ny tavan'izy ireo, hizara hafaliana amin'ireo hafa manodidina azy ireo.

"One day the missionaries taught us the law of tithing. My children said with excitement, 'We must pay our tithing, Mom.' I could see my children's faith at that moment. Before I joined the Church, I watched general conference and listened to President Russell M. Nelson speak. He announced new temples all over the world and said that a new temple would be built in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. I rejoiced and shed tears,

"Indray andro dia nampianarin'ireo misiônera anay ny lalàn'ny fahafolonkarena. Tamim-pientanentanana no nilazan'ireo zanako hoe: -Tsy maintsy mandoa fahafolonkarena isika Neny a!- Hitako taratra ny finoan'ireo zanako tamin'io fotoana io. Talohan'ny nikambanako tamin'ny Fiangonana dia nijery fihaonamben'ny Fiangonana maneran-tany ary nihaino ny lahatenin'ny Filoha Russell M. Nelson aho.

even though I did not understand why. With this joy, I could tell that my faith and testimony were growing."

Nanambara tempoly vaovao maneran-tany izy ka nilaza fa hisy tempoly vaovao haorina ao Ulaanbaatar, Mongôlia. Faly aho sady latsa-dranomaso, eny fa na dia tsy takatro aza hoe nahoana. Tamin'ny alalan'io fifaliana io no nahafahako nilaza fa nitombo ny finoako sy ny fijoroana ho vavolombeloko."

Uyanga, like millions of others, is part of the great gathering of Israel in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. She has begun her journey along the covenant path and has become a disciple of Christ. What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ? I appreciate the Japanese word for disciple—deshi—demeaning younger brother, andshimeaning child.

I Uyanga, tahaka ireo olona an-davitrisany hafa, dia tafiditra ao amin'ilay fanangonana lehibe an'i Isiraely ho fanomanana ny Fiavian'i Jesoa Kristy Fanindroany. Nanomboka ny diany teo amin'ny lalan'ny fanekempihavanana izy ary lasa mpianatr'i Kristy. Midika inona izany hoe mpianatr'i Kristy izany? Tiako ilay teny japôney ho an'ny teny hoe mpianatra:deshi; nydedia midika hoe zandry lahy ary nyshidia midika hoe zanaka.

Jesus Christ declared, "I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn."Because ofwhoHeisandwhatHe hasdone, we worship Him, we revere Him, we give glory to Him, and we follow Him. Christ has redeemed us,and we are forever grateful for His infinite and atoning sacrifice.

Nanambara i Jesoa Kristy hoe: "Izaho dia niaraka tamin'ny Ray tany am-piandohana sady ny Lahimatoa."Noho nymahaIzyAzysy nyzavatraizaynataonydia mitsaoka Azy, manaja Azy, sy manome voninahitra Azy ary manaraka Azy isika. Nanavotra antsika i Kristy,ary feno fankasitrahana mandrakizay isika noho ny amin'ny sorona fanavotana sady tsy manam-petra nataony.

We have a Heavenly Father, who loves us as His children. His love for us is perfect. Jesus Christ and His mission illustrate God's love for us. As John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Manana Ray any An-danitra izay tia antsika amin'ny maha-zanany antsika isika. Tonga lafatra ny fitiavany. I Jesoa Kristy sy ny iraka notanterahiny dia maneho ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra antsika. Nanoratra i Jaona hoe: "Fa toy izao no nitiavan' Andriamanitra izao tontolo izao: nomeny ny Zanani-lahy Tokana, mba tsy ho very izay rehetra mino Azy, fa hanana fiainana mandrakizay."

In our quest to understand what we do not know, we might sometimes rely on our familiar mortal experiences, or things wedoknow. For example, we can learn somewhat of God the Father through our own parenthood and mortal family relationships. However, we should be careful in applying these comparisons too far in our attempt to understand our Heavenly Father. The attributes of God the Father transcend any-less-than-perfectattributes of a fallen man. God the Father is the perfect Father. He is perfectly loving, kind, patient, and understanding and is perfectly glorious. We can trust Him perfectly. The love of Christ reflects the love of God the Father and is a representation of that love.

Ao anatin'ny fikatsahantsika hahatakatra ny zavatra tsy fantatsika dia indraindray isika no mety hiantehitra amin'ireo zavatra niainantsika teto amin'ny fiainana an-tany izay mitovitovy amin'izany, na zavatratenafantatsika. Ohatra, afaka mianatra sombintsombiny momba ny Ray any An-danitra isika amin'ny alalan'ny maha-ray aman-dreny antsika sy ireo fifandraisan'ny fianakaviantsika eto an-tany. Kanefa tokony hitandrina isika mba tsy ho lasa lavitra ny fampiharana ireny fampitahana ireny ao anatin'ny ezaka ataontsika mba hahatakatra ny Raintsika any An-danitra. Mihoatra lavitra noho ny toetra izaylavitry ny fahalavorarianaananan'ny olona lavo ireo toetran' Andriamanitra Ray. Ray lavorary ny Raintsika any An-danitra. Tia, tsara fanahy, maharitra, mahatakatra ary feno voninahitra tanteraka Izy. Afaka matoky Azy tanteraka isika. Taratry ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra Ray sady fane-

Jesus Christ is both the example and the means.InChrist, we can understand better the perfect attributes of the Father and His plan. ThroughChrist, we are given the enabling power to overcome the tendencies of natural men and women so that we might become more like the Father.

Just like our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ is perfectly merciful and just. These divine attributes of justice and mercy are not in opposition. They are complementary. Both justice and mercy illustrate God's perfect love for His children. We can trust God the Father and Jesus Christ because They are just and fair with all of us.

God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are perfectly aligned in purpose and love. Because God and Jesus Christ love us, we are given the opportunity and privilege as true disciples to make covenants with Them. By our doing so, our relationship with Christ is expanded: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters."

As disciples, when we make and keep sacred covenants, we are blessed with spiritual power. We are connected to Christ and God the Father in a special relationship and can experience Their love and joy in a measure reserved for those who have made and kept covenants.Our ability to sense a full measure of God's love, or to continue in His love, is contingent upon our righteous desires and actions.

InJohn chapter 15, verse 9, we read, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Andthenwe are given an invitation: "Continue ye in my love."

In thenext verse, we are given the way to continue in His love: "If ye keep my commandments,

hoana an'izany fitiavana izany ny fitiavan'i Kristy.

Sady ohatra i Jesoa Kristy no lalana.Aoamin'i Kristy isika dia afaka mahatakatra tsara kokoa ireo toetra tonga lafatry ny Ray any An-danitra sy ny drafiny.Amin'ny alalan'i Kristy isika no omena hery ahafahantsika mandresy ireo fironan'ny lehilahy sy ny vehivavy araka ny nofo mba hahafahantsika ho tonga tahaka ny Ray kokoa.

Tahaka ny Raintsika any An-danitra dia mamindra fo sy marina tanteraka i Jesoa Kristy. Tsy mifanohitra ireo toetran'ny fahamarinana sy famindram-pon' Andriamanitra ireo. Mifameno izy ireo. Samy maneho ny fitiavana tonga lafatr' Andriamanitra ho an'ireo zanany ny fahamarinana sy ny famindram-po. Afaka matoky ny Ray any An-danitra sy i Jesoa Kristy isika satria marina sy tsy miangatra amintsika rehetra Izy Ireo.

Mifanaraka tanteraka ny tanjona sy ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra Ray sy ny an'i Jesoa Kristy Zanany. Koa satria tia antsika Andriamanitra Ray sy i Jesoa Kristy dia nomena fahafahana sy tombontsoa isika amin'ny maha mpianatra marina antsika mba hanao fanekempihavanana amin'Izy Ireo. Rehefa manao izany isika dia miitatra ny fifandraisantsika amin'i Kristy: "Ary ankehitriny, noho ny fanekempihavanana izay efa nataonareo, dia hantsoina hoe zanak'i Kristy ianareo, dia zanany lahy sy zanany vavy; fa indro, efa niteraka anareo ara-panahy Izy androany; satria lazainareo fa ny fonareo dia efa miova amin'ny alalan'ny finoana ny anarany; noho izany, dia aterany ianareo ary efa tonga zanany lahy sy zanany vavy."

Amin'ny maha-mpianatra antsika, dia voatahy amin'ny hery ara-panahy isika rehefa manao sy mitandrina ireo fanekempihavanana masina. Fifandraisana manokana no mampifandray antsika amin'i Kristy sy Andriamanitra Ray ary afaka miaina ny fitiavana sy ny fifalian'Izy Ireo amin'ny fatra natokana ho an'ireo izay nanao sy nitandrina fanekempihavanana isika.Miankina amin'ny faniriana marina anantsika sy asa marina ataontsika ny fahafahantsika mahatsapa ny fatra fenon'ny fitiavan' Andriamanitra na mitoetra ao amin'ny fitiavany.

Mivaky toy izao ny ao amin'nyJaona toko 15, andininy 9: "Tahaka ny nitiavan'ny Ray Ahy no nitiavako anareo." Aryavy eoisika dia omena fanasana hoe: "tomoera amin'ny fitiavako hianareo."

Ao amin'nyandininy manarakaisika dia omena ny fomba hitoerana ao amin'ny fitiava-

ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

We then see the purpose of keeping the commandments inverse 11: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Through true covenant discipleship, we can begin to understand better the nature of God and the joy that He wants all of His children to experience. We can also begin to understand some principles that at first might seem confusing. For example, how can God have a fulness of joy when some of His children are suffering so much? The answer lies in God's perfect perspective and in His perfect plan. He sees us from the beginning to our glorious potential future. He has provided a way, through His Son, Jesus Christ, for all of us, His children, to overcome the pains, suffering, sins, guilt, and loneliness of our mortality.God has provided for us the way and the choice.

Examples of those who have experienced joy through discipleship might help us to better understand this concept. Perhaps you have heard the phrase that we are only as happy as our most unhappy child. I have seen that this does not need to be the case. My 94-year-old mother has over 200 living descendants. At any given point, at least one of the 200 is going to be unhappy. If this statement were true, my mother would be in a perpetual state of unhappiness, which she isn't. Those who know her know how joyful she is.

I now would like to share another experience. In January of 2019, my wife, Debbie, and I were invited into the office of President Nelson. He had positioned a chair close to us, and we sat almost knee to knee. After extending to us our current calling, President Nelson turned to Debbie and focused on her. He was kind, loving, gentle, and full of joy, like the perfect father or grandfather. He held Debbie's hand and patted it, reassuring her that it would be OK and that our

ny "Raha mitandrina ny didiko hianareo, dia hitoetra amin'ny fitiavako, tahaka ny nitandremako ny didin'ny Raiko sy ny hitoerako amin'ny fitiavany."

Avy eo dia hitantsika ao amin'nyandininy 11ny tanjon'ny fitandremana ny didy : "Izany zavatra izany dia efa nolazaiko taminareo, mba ho ao aminareo ny fifaliako, ka ho tanteraka ny fifalianareo."

Amin'ny alalan'ny fiainana marina ny maha-mpianatra manao sy mitandrina fanekempihavanana antsika dia afaka manomboka mahatakatra tsara kokoa ny toetran' Andriamanitra sy ny fifaliana tiany hiainan'ny zanany rehetra isika. Afaka manomboka mahatakatra fitsipika vitsivitsy izay toa manahiran-tsaina amin'ny voalohany ihany koa isika. Ohatra, ahoana no ahafahan' Andriamanitra manam-pifaliana feno kanefa misy zanany sasany mijaly mafy tokoa? Ao amin'ny fomba fijery lavorarin' Andriamanitra sy ny drafiny tonga lafatra no misy ny valiny. Mahita antsika hatrany am-piandohana ka hatramin'ilay olona be voninahitra hahatongavantsika amin'ny hoavy Izy. Nanome lalana Izy, amin'ny alalan'i Jesoa Kristy Zanany, ho antsika rehetra, izay zanany, mba handresy ireo jaly, fahoriana, fahotana sy fahatsapan-tena ho meloka ary ny fanirery mianjady amintsika eto an-tany.Nanome antsika lalana sy safidy Andriamanitra.

Mety hanampy antsika hahatakatra tsara kokoa an'io fotokevitra io ny ohatra asehon'ireo olona niaina fifaliana tamin'ny alalan'ny maha-mpianatra Efa renareo angamba ilay teny hoe raha fadiranovana ny zanatsika dia toy izany koa isika. Hitako fa tsy voatery ho izany no mitranga. Manana taranaka velona mihoatra ny 200 ny reniko izay 94 taona. Tsy maintsy hisy fotoana farafahakeliny ho fadiranovana ny iray amin'ireo 200 ireo. Raha marina io fomba fiteny io dia ho fadiranovana mandrakizay ny reniko. Kanefa tsy toy izany izy. Ireo izay mahafantatra azy dia mahafantatra fa olona falifaly izy.

Te hizara traikefa iray hafa aho izao. Tamin'ny janoary 2019, izaho sy i Debbie vadiko dia voasa hankao amin'ny biraon'ny Filoha Nelson. Nasiany seza iray teo akaikinay ary saika nifampikaso-dohalika mihitsy izahay. Taorian'ny nanomezany anay ny antsonay ankehitriny dia nitodika tany amin'i Debbie sy nifantoka taminy ny Filoha Nelson. Tsara fanahy, feno fitiavana sy malefaka ary feno fifaliana izy, tahaka ny ray na raibe tonga lafatra iray. Notazoniny ny tanan'i

family would be blessed. It seemed to us at that moment that we were the most important people to him and that he had all the time in the world for us. We left his office that Friday afternoon feeling reassured, loved, and joyful.

Debbie, nosafoiny mba ho tony, ary nanome toky azy izy fa tsy haninona izany ary ho voatahy ny fianakavianay. Toa nahatsapa izany izahay tamin'io fotoana io fa izahay no olona manan-danja indrindra taminy ary nanana ny fotoana rehetra ho anay izy Nahatsapa ho nahazo toky sy tiana ary falifaly izahay raha nandao ny biraony tamin'io zoma tolakandro io.

On Monday we saw the news. During that same day that President Nelson had spent with us, one of his daughters had passed away from cancer. We were stunned. Our hearts were full as we mourned for him and his family. Our hearts were also full of gratitude for his Christlike attention to us while mourning for his daughter who was suffering.

Nahita vaovao izahay ny alatsinainy. Tamin'io andro izay niarahan'ny Filoha Nelson taminay io, dia matin'ny homamiadana ny iray tamin'ireo zanany vavy. Ankona izahay. Feno ny fonay raha nisaona ho azy sy ny fianakaviany izahay. Feno fankasitrahana ihany koa ny fonay noho ny fifantohany tahaka izay ho nataon'i Kristy taminay na dia nisaona ho an'ilay zanany vavy izay nijaly aza izy.

As we pondered this experience, we asked ourselves, "How could he be so kind, loving, and even joyful at such a difficult time?" The answer is becausehe knows. He knows that Christ has been victorious. He knows he will be with his daughter again and will spend an eternity with her. Joy and eternal perspective come through being bound to the Savior by making and keeping covenants and through Christlike discipleship.

Rehefa nandinika an'io traikefa io izahay dia nanontany tena hoe: "Ahoana no ahafahany ho tsara fanahy sy be fitiavana sady falifaly mihitsy aza amin'ny fotoana toy izany?" Ny valiny dia hoe satriafantany. Fantany fa nandresy i Kristy. Fantany fa hiaraka amin'ilay zanany vavy indray izy ary hiaina mandrakizay miaraka aminy. Tonga amin'ny alalan'ny fifamatorana amin'ny Mpamonjy amin'ny alalan'ny fanaovana sy fitandremana fanekempihavanana ary amin'ny alalan'ny maha-mpianatra tahaka an'i Kristy ny fifaliana sy ny fomba fijery mandrakizay.

President Nelson has taught: "Just as the Savior offers peace that 'passeth all understanding' [Philippians 4:7], He also offers an intensity, depth, and breadth of joy that defy human logic or mortal comprehension. For example, it doesn't seem possible to feel joy when your child suffers with an incurable illness or when you lose your job or when your spouse betrays you. Yet that is precisely the joy the Savior offers."

Nampianatra ny Filoha Nelson hoe: "Tahaka ny anoloran'ny Mpamonjy fiadanana izay -mihoatra ny fahatakarana rehetra- [Filipiana 4:7] dia manolotra fifaliana lehibe sy lalina ary mivelatra izay tsy takatry ny fahaizana sy ny fahatakaran'ny olombelona ihany koa Izy. Ohatra, toa tsy ho vita velively izany hahatsapa fifaliana izany rehefa mijaly noho ny aretina tsy misy fanafany ny zanakao, na rehefa very asa ianao, na rehefa mamitaka anao ny vadinao. Kanefa izany indrindra ilay fifaliana atolotry ny Mpamonjy."

As we make and keep covenants, we will naturally turn outward and have a desire to help others feel the measure of joy and love we feel in our covenantal relationships. We can be part of the greatest cause on the earth today—the gathering of Israel.We can help to bring God's children to Christ. As the prophet Jacob taught, "And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, … ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard."

Rehefa manao sy mitandrina fanekempihavanana isika dia lasa mitodika ho azy any amin'ny hafa ary manana faniriana hanampy ny hafa hahatsapa ny fatran'ny fifaliana sy ny fitiavana tsapantsika ao amin'ireo fifandraisantsika ara-panakempihavanana. Afaka ny ho tafiditra ao amin'ilay asa lehibe indrindra eto an-tany ankehitriny isika, dia ny fanangonana an'i Isiraely izany.Afaka manampy amin'ny fitondrana ny zanak'Andriamanitra hankamin'i Kristy isika. Araka ny nampianarin'ny mpaminany Jakôba hoe: "Ary hotahiana anie ianareo; fa satria efa

As we bind ourselves to act as covenant disciples, in whatever our level of capacity, our relationship with the Father and the Son is enriched, our joy enhanced, and our eternal perspective expanded. We then are endowed with power and can feel joy in a measure reserved for God's true covenant disciples.In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

nazoto niasa niaraka tamiko tao amin'ny tanimboliko ianareo ary efa nitandrina ny didiko sy efa namoa ho ahy indray ny voa tsara, … hiaraka hanana fifaliana amiko noho ny voa avy amin'ny tanimboliko ianareo."

Rehefa mamatotra ny tenantsika mba hiaina araka ny maha-mpianatra manao sy mitandrina fanekempihavanana antsika isika, dia hihatsara ny fifandraisantsika amin'ny Ray sy ny Zanaka, hitombo ny fifaliantsika ary hiitatra ny fomba fijerintsika izay mibanjina ny mandrakizay. Tafiana amin'ny hery isika avy eo, ary afaka mahatsapa fifaliana amin'ilay fatra natokan' Andriamanitra ho an'ireo mpianatra manao sy mitandrina fanekempihavanana marina.Amin'ny anarana masin'i Jesoa Kristy, amena.