

Joy Through Covenant Discipleship

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Olioli E Ala i le Avea ma Soo i le Feagaiga

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O Le Fitugafulu

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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.

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:

“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.

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

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

A o tatou noatia i tatou lava e galulue o ni soo o le feagaiga, e faamauoaina la tatou sootaga ma le Tamā ma le Alo, e faateleina lo tatou olioli, ma e faalauteleina la tatou vaaiga faavavau.

I se tasi aso i le 2023, sa faigaluega Uyanga Altansukh i le aai i matu o Monokolia o Darkhan, ina ua ulufale atu le peresitene misiona i lona ofisa. I ana upu:

“Sa ou vaai ia te ia ma mafaufau sa i ai ia te ia lenei malamalama susulu i ona foliga. Sa agalelei lava o ia ma mālīe ia i latou sa siomia o ia, ma sa ou lagona le mafanafana. A o le’i aluese o ia, sa ou fai atu ia te ia ni nai fesili. I ni nai aso mulimuli ane, sa toe sau o ia i la’u galuega ma fesili pe mafai ona ou auai atu i lana lotu. Sa ou manatu atonu e aoga. Sa ou popole mo le lumanai o la’u fanau, ona sa pei ua tumu tagata i le popolevale ma le pogisa. Sa ou manao i la’u fanau ia pei o lenei tamaloa e i ai se malamalama i ona foliga, ma faasalalau atu ai le olioli i isi na latou faatasi.

“I se tasi aso sa aoao ai i matou e faifeautalai i le tulafono o le sefuluai. Sa sagisagi fialia la’u fanau ma fai mai, ‘E tatau ona totogi a tatou sefuluai, Mama.’ Sa mafai ona ou vaaia le faatuatua o la’u fanau i lena taimi. Ae ou te lei auai i le Ekalesia, sa ou matamata i le konafesi aoao ma faalogologo o saunoa Peresitene Russell M. Nelson. Sa ia faasilasila maia ni malumalu fou i le lalolagi atoa ma faapea mai o le a fausia se malumalu fou i Ulaanbaatar, Monokolia. Sa ou fialia ma loimata, e ui ina sa ou le malamalama pe aisea. Faatasi ai ma lea olioli, sa mafai ona ou iloa ua faatupula’ia lo’u faatuatua ma le molimau.”

O Uyanga, pei o le miliona o isi, o se vaega o le faapotopotoina tele o Isaraeli i le tapenaga mo le Afio Mai Faalua o Iesu Keriso. Na amata lana

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, and *shimeaning* child.

Jesus Christ declared, “I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn.” Because of who He is and what He has done, 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.

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.”

In our quest to understand what we do not know, we might sometimes rely on our familiar mortal experiences, or things we do know. 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-perfect attributes 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.

Jesus Christ is both the example and the means. In Christ, we can understand better the perfect attributes of the Father and His plan. Through Christ, 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.

malaga i luga o le ala o feagaiga ma avea ai o se so’o o Keriso. O le a le uiga o le avea ma se soo o Keriso? Ou te talisapaia le upu faaJapani mo le so’o—*deshi*—deo lona uiga o le tuagane laitiiti, ma leshio lona uiga o le tamaitiiti.

Na tautino mai e Iesu Keriso, “Sa ou i ai i le amataga faatasi ma le Tama, ma o A’u o le Ulumatua na Fanaua.” Ona olēaveaia Ia, ma lemeasa lafaia, ua tatou tapuai ai ia te Ia, tatou te āva ia te Ia, tatou te avatu le mamalu ia te Ia, ma tatou mulimuli ia te Ia. Ua togiolaina i tatou e Keriso, ma e faavavau ona tatou faafetai mo Lana taulaga togiola e lē gata.

Ua i ai so tatou Tama Faalelagi, o lē e alofa ia i tatou o Ana fanau. O Lona alofa mo i tatou e atoatoa. O Iesu Keriso ma Lana misiona ua faaalai ai le alofa o le Atua mo i tatou. E pei ona tusia e Ioane, “Aua ua faapea lava ona alofa mai o le Atua i le lalolagi, ua ia aumai ai lona Atalii e toatasi, ina ia le fano se tasi e faatuatua ia te ia, ae ia maua le ola e faavavau.”

I la tatou tulimataiga ia malamalama i mea tatou te le iloa, o nisi taimi atonu tatou te faalagolago ai i o tatou aafiaga ua masani ai, po o mea uatou iloa. Mo se faataitaiga, e mafai ona tatou aoao e uiga i le Atua le Tamā e ala i o tatou lava tulaga faamātua ma sootaga faaleaiga i le olaga nei. Peitai, e ao ina tatou faateete i le soona faaaogaina o nei faatusatusaga i a tatou taumafaiga ia malamalama i lo tatou Tama Faalelagi. O uiga paia o le Atua le Tamā e sili mamao atu i nisi lava uiga elē-taitai-atoatoa se tagata pā’ū. O le Atua le Tamā o le Tamā e atoatoa. E atoatoa Lona alofa, agalelei, onosai, ma malamalama ma atoatoa le mamalu. E mafai ona tatou faatuatua ina ma le atoatoa o Ia. O le alofa o Keriso e atagia mai ai le alofa o le Atua le Tamā ma o se faatusa o lona alofa.

O Iesu Keriso o le faa’oa’o ma le ala. Iā Keriso, e mafai ai ona tatou malamalama sili atu i uiga paia atoatoa o le Tamā ma Lana fuafuaga. E ala ia Keriso, ua tuuina mai ai ia i tatou le mana e mafai ai ona faatoilalo aga’iga a alii ma tamaitai natura ina ia tatou avea atili ai e faapei o le Tamā.

E faapei lava o lo tatou Tama Faalelagi, e alofa mutimutivale ma faamaoni atoatoa Iesu Keriso. O nei uiga paia o le faamasinotonu ma le alofa mutimutivale e le feteenai. E galulue felagolagoma’i. O le faamasino tonu ma le alofa mutimutivale ua faaalai ai le atoatoa alofa o le Atua mo Ana fanau. E mafai ona tatou talitonuina le

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.

In John chapter 15, verse 9, we read, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” And then we are given an invitation: “Continue ye in my love.”

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

Tamā ma Iesu Keriso ona La te faamaoni ma e le faaitu’au ia i tatou uma.

O le Atua le Tamā ma Lona Alo, o Iesu Keriso, e ogatusa atoatoa i le faamoemoega ma le alofa. Ona e alolofa le Atua ma Iesu Keriso ia i tatou, ua tatou maua ai le avanoa ma le faamanuiaga o ni soo moni e osifeagaiga ma i La’ua. O lo tatou faia o lona mea, ua faalateleina ai lo tatou sootaga ma Keriso: “Ma o lenei, ona o le feagaiga ua outou faia, o le a ta’ ua ai outou o le fanau a Keriso, o ona atalii, ma ona afafine; ona faauta, o le asō ua fanauina ai e ia outou faaleagaga; ona ua outou fai mai ua liua o outou loto e ala i le faatuatua i lona suafa; o lea, ua fanauina ai outou e ia ma ua aveia ai outou ma ona atalii ma ona afafine.”

I le aveia ai o ni soo, a tatou osia ma tausia feagaiga paia, e faamanuiaina i tatou i le mana faaleagaga. Tatou te fesootai ia Keriso ma le Atua le Tamā i se sootaga faapitoa ma mafai ai ona tatou iloa lo La’ua alolofa ma olioli ai i se fuataga ua faapolopolo mo i latou o ē ua osia ma tausia feagaiga. O lo tatou mafaia ona lagonaina o se fuataga atoa o le alofa o le Atua, pe tumau ai pea i Lona alofa, e faalagolago i luga o o tatou manao-ga ma faatinoga amiotonu.

I leloane, mataupu 15, fuaiupu 9, tatou te faitau ai, “Faapei ona alofa mai o le Tama ia te au, e faapea lava ona ou alofa atu ia te outou.” Onatatau maua ai lea o se valaaulia: “ia tumau pea outou i lo’u alofa.”

I lefuaiupu e sosoo ai, ua tuuina mai ia i tatou le auala e faaauau ai i Lona alofa: “Afai tou te tausia a’u poloaiga, ona tumau lea o outou i lo’u alofa; pei ona ou tausia poloaiga a lo’u Tama, ma ou tumau i lona alofa.”

Pe a tatou vaai i le faamoemoega o le tausiga o feagaiga i lefuaiupu e 11: “Ua ou fai atu nei mea ia te outou ina ia tumau ai lo’u olioli ia te outou, ia atoatoa foi lo outou olioli.”

E ala i le aveia ma soo moni i le feagaiga, e mafai ai ona tatou malamalama sili atu i le natura o le Atua ma le olioli e finagalo o la ia iloa e Ana fanau uma. E mafai ai foi ona tatou amata malamalama i nisi o mataupu faavae e foliga fenumiai i le taimi muamua. Mo se faataitaiga, e mafai faapefea e le Atua ona maua se atoaga o le olioli ae o loo mafatia naua nisi o Ana fanau? O le tali o loo taoto i le silafaga atoatoa a le Atua ma i Lana fuafuaga atoatoa. Na Te silafia i tatou mai le amataga e o’o i lo tatou lumanai mamalu e mafai ona tatou maua. Ua Ia saunia se ala, e ala

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 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.

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.

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 because he 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.

atu i Lona Alo o Iesu Keriso, mo i tatou uma, o Ana fanau, e faatoilalo ai tiga, mafatiaga, agasala, ta'usalaga, ma le tuuatoatasi o lo tatou olaga nei. Ua saunia e le Atua le ala mo i tatou ma le filifiliga.

O faataitaiga o i latou ua iloa le olioli e ala i le aveia ma soo e mafai ona fesoasoani tatou te malamalama lelei ai i lenei manatu faavae. Atonu ua outou faalogo i le fasifuitau faapea, ua na ona tatou fiafia e faapei o la tatou tamaitiiti e aupito lē fiafia. Ua ou vaai e le tataua ona faapena. O lo'u tina ua 94-tausaga ua silia ma le 200 i latou e tupuga mai ai o loo soifua. E i ai a se taimi, pe a itiiti e i ai a se toatasi o le 200 o le a lē fiafia. Afai e moni lea faaupuga, o le a i ai lo'u tina i se tulaga faifaipea o le lē fiafia, ae e leai. O i latou e silafia o ia, ua iloa lona fiafia tele.

O le a ou faasoa atu nei se isi aafiaga. Ia Ianuari o le 2019, sa valaaulia ai i ma'ua ma lo'u toalua, o Debbie, i le ofisa o Peresitene Nelson. Sa ia tuuina se nofoa e latalata mai ia i ma'ua, ma sa matou saofafai toetoe ina a fesootea tulivae. I le mae'a ai o le tuuina mai o lo ma'ua valaauga ua i ai nei, sa liliu mai Peresitene Nelson ia Debbie ma taulai atu ia te ia. Sa agalelei, alofa, agamalu, ma tumu i le olioli o ia, e pei o le tamā po o le tamāmatua atoatoa. Sa ia u'u le lima o Debbie ma pōpō, ma faamautinoa atu ia te ia o le a lelei ma o le a faamanuiaina lo ma aiga. Sa foliga mai ia i ma'ua o lena taimi, o i ma'ua o ni tagata ua sili ona taua ia te ia, ma sa lava lona taimi atoa i le lalolagi mo i ma'ua. Sa ma tuua lona ofisa i lena aoauli o le Aso Faraile ua lagona le toefaamautinoaina, alofaina, ma le olioli.

I le Aso Gafua na ma vaaia ai le talafou. I le aso foi lava lena na faaalu e Peresitene Nelson faatasi ma i ma'ua, sa malia ai se tasi o ona afafine i le kanesa. Sa ma tauvai ofo. Sa tutumu o ma'ua loto a o ma faavavau mo ia ma lona aiga. Sa tutumu foi o ma'ua loto i le faafetai mo lana gauai faaKeriso mo i ma'ua, a o faavavau ai mo lona afafine o lē sa mafatia.

A o ma manatunatu loloto i lenei aafiaga, sa ma fesili ifo ia i ma'ua lava, "Na mafai faapefea ona ia agalelei naua, alofa, ma olioli i se taimi faigata tele?" O le tali o le, onaua ia silafia. Ua ia silafia na manumalo Keriso. Ua ia silafia o le a la toe faatasi ma lona afafine ma o le a faaalu se faavavau ma ia. O le olioli ma le vaaiga e faavavau e maua i le noatia i le Faaola e ala i le osia ma le tausia o feagaiga ma le aveia ai ma soo faapei o Keriso.

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.”

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.”

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.

Na aoao mai e Peresitene Nelson: “E pei lava foi ona ofo mai e le Faaola le filemu lea e ‘silisili lava i mea uma e manatu i ai’ [Filipi 4:7], Ua Ia ofoina mai foi le malosi faateleina, loloto, ma le lautele o le olioli lea e tetee i manatu faaletagata po o le malamalama faaletino. Mo se faataitaiga, e lē mafai ona e lagona le olioli pe a mafatia lau tama i se ma’i e leai se togafiti, pe ua leai sau galuega po o ua faalata oe e lou toalua. Ae o le olioli tonu lava lena o loo ofo mai e le Faaola.”

A tatou osia ma tausia feagaiga, o le a tatou liliu atu lava i fafo ma i ai se naunautaga e fesoasoani i isi ia lagona le fuataga o le olioli ma le alofa tatou te lagonaina i a tatou sootaga faalefeagaiga. E mafai ona avea i tatou o se vaega o le galuega silisili i le lalolagi i le taimi nei—o le faapotopotoina o Isaraelu. E mafai ona tatou fesoasoani e aumaia fanau a le Atua ia Keriso. E pei ona aoao mai le perofeta o Iakopo, “Ma amuia outou; talu ai sa outou filiga e galulue faatasi ma a’u i lo’u togaolive, ma tausī a’u poloaiga, ma toe aumai ia te a’u le fua moni, ... o le a outou maua le olioli faatasi ma a’u ona o le fua o lo’u togaolive.”

A o tatou noatia i tatou lava e galulue o ni soo o le feagaiga, i soo se maua luga o lo tatou gafatia, e faamauoaina la tatou sootaga ma le Tamā ma le Alo, e faateleina lo tatou olioli, ma e faalauteleina la tatou vaaiga faavavau. Ona faaeina lea o i tatou i le mana ma mafai ona tatou lagonaina le olioli i se fuataga ua faapolopolo e le Atua mo soo moni o le feagaiga. I le suafa paia o Iesu Keriso, amene.