

Participate to Prepare for Christ's Return

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Kushiriki kwenye Kujitayarisha Kwa ajili ya Ujio wa Kristo

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Wa Sabini

April 2025 general conference

Callings and other ways we embark in God's work uniquely prepare us to meet the Savior.

A few months ago, I was standing in a hall when Elder Neil L. Andersen walked by. I had just been called as a new General Authority. Likely sensing my feelings of inadequacy, he smiled and said, "Well, there looks like a man who has no idea what he is doing."

And I thought, "There is a true prophet and seer."

Elder Andersen then whispered, "Don't worry, Elder Shumway. It gets better—in five or six years."

Have you ever wondered why we are asked to do things in God's kingdom that feel beyond our reach? With life's demands, have you asked why we even need callings in the Church? Well, I have.

And I got an answer in general conference when President Russell M. Nelson said, "Now is the time for you and for me to prepare for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ." When President Nelson said this, the Spirit taught me that as we participate in God's work, we prepare ourselves and others for Christ's return. The Lord's promise is compelling that callings, ministering, temple worship, following promptings, and other ways we embark in God's work uniquely prepare us to meet the Savior.

God Is Pleased When We Engage in His Work

Miito na njia zingine tunazotumia katika kazi ya Mungu kiupekee hututayarisha kukutana na Mwokozi.

Miezi michache iliyopita, nilikuwa nimesimama kwenye ukumbi wakati Mzee Neil L. Andersen alipopita. Ilikuwa si muda mrefu tangu nilipoitwa kama kiongozi Mkuu mwenye Mamlaka. Pengine akihisi hisia zangu za kujiona kutotosha, alitabasamu na kusema, "Inaonekana kuna mtu ambaye hajui anachofanya."

Ndipo niliwaza, "Kuna nabii na mwonaji wa kweli."

Mzee Andersen kisha alinong'ona, "Usijali, Mzee Shumway. Utakuwa bora—katika miaka mitano au sita."

Je, umewahi kujiuliza ni kwa nini tunaomba kufanya mambo katika ufalme wa Mungu ambayo yanaonekana kuwa nje ya uwezo wetu? Pamoja na mahitaji ya maisha, je, umejiuliza hata kwa nini tunahitaji miito katika Kanisa? Mimi nimejiuliza.

Nilipata jibu katika mkutano mkuu wakati Rais Russell M. Nelson aliposema, "Sasa ni wakati wako na wangu kujiandaa kwa ajili ya Ujio wa Pili wa Bwana na Mwokozi wetu, Yesu Kristo." Aliposema hivi, Roho alinifundisha kwamba tunaposhiriki katika kazi ya Mungu, tunajitayarisha wenyewe na kuwatayarisha wengine kwa ajili ya kurudi kwa Kristo. Ahadi ya Bwana inatoa msukumo kwamba miito, kuhudumu, ibada ya hekaluni, kufuata maongozi, na njia zingine tunazozitumia katika kazi ya Mungu kwa njia ya kipekee hututayarisha kukutana na Mwokozi.

Mungu Hufurahia Tunapojihusisha Kwenye Kazi Yake

In “the majesty of this moment,” as God’s kingdom expands and temples dot the earth, there is a growing need for willing souls to engage in God’s work. Selflessly serving is the very essence of Christlike discipleship. But serving is rarely convenient. This is why I admire you covenant-keeping disciples, including our dear missionaries, who set aside your desires and challenges to serve God by serving His children. God “delights to honor [you for serving Him] in righteousness.” He promises, “Great shall be [your] reward and eternal shall be [your] glory.” When we say yes to serving, we are saying yes to Jesus Christ. And when we say yes to Christ, we are saying yes to the most abundant life possible.

I learned this lesson while working and studying chemical engineering in college. I was asked to be the activities planner for a singles ward. This was my nightmare calling. Still, I accepted, and at first it was drudgery. Then at one activity a beautiful girl was smitten by the way I served the ice cream. She returned three times, hoping to catch my attention. We fell in love, and she proposed to me just two weeks later. Well, maybe it wasn’t quite that fast, and I was the one who proposed, but the truth is this: I shudder to think of missing out on Heidi had I said no to that calling.

Our Participation Is Preparation for Christ’s Return

We engage in God’s work not because God needs us but because we need God and His mighty blessings. He promises, “For, behold, I will bless all those who labor in my vineyard with a mighty blessing.” Let me share three principles that teach how our participation in God’s work blesses and helps us prepare to meet the Savior.

First, as we participate, we progress toward “the measure of [our] creation.”

We learn this pattern in the account of the Creation. After each day of labor, God acknowledged the progress made by saying, “It was good.” He did not say the work was finished nor that it was perfect. But what He did say was that there was progress, and in God’s eyes, that is

Katika “ukuu wa wakati huu,” wakati ufalme wa Mungu unatanuka na mahekalu yanaenea duniani, kuna ongezeko la uhitaji wa nafsi zilizo tayari kushiriki katika kazi ya Mungu. Kutumikia pasipo ubinafsi ni kiini hasa cha uanafunzi kwa Kristo. Lakini kutumikia si mara zote kitu kipendwacho. Hii ndio sababu ninavutiwa nanyi wanafunzi wenye kushika agano ambao mnaweka kando matamania na changamoto zenu ili kumtumikia Mungu kwa kuwahudumia watoto Wake. Mungu “hufurahia kuwaheshimu [wale wanaomtumikia Yeye] kwa haki.” Yeye anaahidi, “Tuzo [lao] litakuwa kuu na utukufu [wao] utakuwa wa milele.” Tunapoitikia ndiyo katika kutumikia, tunasema ndiyo kwa Yesu Kristo. Na tunaposema ndiyo kwa Kristo, tunasema ndiyo kwa maisha tele zaidi kadiri iwezekanavyo.

Nilijifunza haya nilipokuwa nikifanya kazi na kusomea uhandisi wa kemikali chuoni. Niliombwa kuwa mratibu wa shughuli kwenye kata ya waseja. Huu ulikuwa wito wangu wa kuogopesha. Bado, nilikubali na hapo mwanzoni ulikuwa mgumu. Kisha katika shughuli moja msichana mrembo alipovutiwa na namna nilivyogawa ice cream. Alirudi mara tatu, akitumaini kupata umakini wangu. Tulipendana, na tuliingia kwenye uchumba wiki mbili baadaye. Sasa, labda haikuwa haraka kiasi hicho, na mimi ndiye niliyependekeza, lakini ukweli ni kwamba: ninatetemeka kufikiria kukosa kukutana na Heidi ikiwa ningekataa wito ule.

Kushiriki Kwetu ni Kujitayarisha Kwa ajili ya Ujio wa Kristo

Tunajishughulisha na kazi ya Mungu si kwa kuwa Mungu anatuhitaji isipokuwa sisi tunamhitaji Mungu na baraka zake. Yeye anaahidi, “Kwani, tazama, Mimi nitawabariki wale wote watakaofanya kazi katika shamba langu la mزابيبو kwa baraka kuu.” Acha nishiriki kanuni tatu ambazo zinafundisha jinsi ushiriki wetu katika kazi ya Mungu hutubariki na kutusaidia kujitayarisha kukutana na Mwokozi.

Kwanza, tunaposhiriki, tunasonga mbele kuelekea “kipimo cha uumbaji [wetu]”

Tunajifunza muundo huu katika tukio la Uumbaji. Baada ya kila siku ya kazi, Mungu alikubali maendeleo yaliyofanywa kwa kusema “ilikuwa njema.” Hakusema kazi ilimalizika au kukamilika. Lakini alichosema kilikuwa kwamba kulikuwa na maendeleo, na machoni pa Mungu

good!

Callings do not determine or validate a person's worth or worthiness. Rather, as we labor with God in whatever way He asks, we grow into the measure of our own creation.

God rejoices in our progress, and so should we, even when we still have work to do. At times we may lack the strength or the means to serve in a calling. Still, we can engage in the work and protect our testimonies through meaningful ways like prayer and scripture study. Our loving Heavenly Father does not condemn us when we are willing but unable to serve.

Second, serving elevates our homes and churches into holy places where we can practice covenant living.

For example, our covenant to always remember Christ is made individually, but this covenant is lived as we serve others. Callings surround us with opportunities to "bear ... one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." When we serve because we love God and want to live our covenants, service that seems dutiful and draining becomes joyful and transformative.

Ordinances don't save us because they fulfill a heavenly checklist. Rather, when we live the covenants connected with these ordinances, we become the kind of person who wants to be in God's presence. This understanding overcomes hesitations to serve or preferences not to serve. Our preparation to meet Jesus Christ accelerates when we stop asking what God will permit and start asking what God would prefer.

Third, participating in God's work helps us receive God's gift of grace and feel His greater love.

We do not receive financial compensation for serving. Instead, scripture teaches that for our "labor [we are] to receive the grace of God, that [we] might wax strong in the Spirit, [have] the knowledge of God, [and] teach with power and authority from God." That is a very good trade!

Because of God's grace, our abilities or inabilities are not the principal basis for extending or accepting a calling. God does not expect perfect performance or exceptional talent to participate in His work. If so, Queen Esther would not

hiyo ni njema!

Miito haiamui au kuidhinisha thamani au ustahili wa mtu. Hakika, tunapofanya kazi pamoja na Mungu katika njia yoyote ile, tunakua katika kipimo cha uumbaji wetu wenyewe.

Mungu anafurahia maendeleo yetu, na sisi pia tunapaswa kufurahia hata kama bado tunayo kazi ya kufanya. Wakati fulani, tunaweza ku-kosa nguvu au njia za kutumikia katika wito. Bado, tunaweza kujishughulisha katika kazi na kuulinda ushuhuda wetu kupitia njia za maana kama vile sala na kujifunza maandiko. Baba yetu wa Mbinguni mwenye upendo hatuhukumu tunapokuwa na utayari lakini tunashindwa kutumikia.

Pili, kutumikia huinua nyumba zetu na makanisa hadi mahali patakatifu ambapo tunaweza kujifunza kuishi kimaagano.

Kwa mfano, agano letu la daima kumkumbuka Kristo hufanywa binafsi, lakini agano hili tunaliishi tunapowatumikia wengine. Miito hutuzunguka kwa fursa za "kubebana ... mizigo, na hivyo kutimiza sheria ya Kristo." Tunapotumikia kwa sababu tunampenda Mungu na kutaka kuyaishi maagano yetu, huduma ambayo ilionekana kama wajibu na yenye kuchosha inakuwa ya furaha na ya kuleta mabadiliko.

Ibada hazituokoi kwa sababu zinatimiza orodha ya ukaguzi ya mbinguni. Hakika, tunapoishi maagano yaliyounganishwa na ibada hizi, tunakuwa aina ya mtu anayetaka kuwa katika uwepo wa Mungu. Uelewa huu hushinda kusitasita kutumikia au upendeleo wa kututumikia. Matayarisho yetu ya kukutana na Yesu Kristo huarakishwa tunapoacha kuuliza kile ambacho Mungu ataruhusu na kuanza kuuliza kile ambacho Mungu angependelea.

Tatu, kushiriki katika kazi ya Mungu hutusaidia kupokea zawadi ya Mungu ya neema na kuhisi upendo Wake mkuu.

Hatupokei fidia ya kifedha kwenye kutumikia. Badala yake, maandiko yanafundisha kwamba kwa ajili ya "taabu [yetu] tunapaswa kupokea neema ya Mungu, ili [sisi] tupate kuwa na nguvu katika Roho, [kuwa] na ujuzi wa Mungu, [na] kufundisha kwa nguvu na mamlaka kutoka kwa Mungu." Hiyo ni biashara nzuri sana!

Kwa sababu ya neema ya Mungu, uwezo wetu au kutoweza kwetu sio kanuni ya msingi ya kutoa au kukubali wito. Mungu hatarajii utendaji mkamilifu au talanta ya kipekee ili kushiriki katika kazi Yake. Kama ingekuwa hivyo, Malkia

have saved her nation, Peter would not have led the early Church, and Joseph Smith would not be the Prophet of the Restoration.

As we act in faith to do something beyond our abilities, our weakness is exposed. This is never comfortable, but it is necessary for us to “know that it is by [God’s] grace ... that we have power to do these things.”

We will fall many times as we engage in God’s work. But in our effort, Jesus Christ catches us. He gradually lifts us to experience salvation from failure and fear and from feeling like we will never be enough. When we consecrate our meager but best effort, God magnifies it. When we sacrifice for Jesus Christ, He sanctifies us. This is the transformative power of God’s grace. As we serve, we grow in grace until we are prepared to “be lifted up by the Father, to stand before [Jesus Christ].”

Help Others Receive and Rejoice in the Gift of Callings

I do not know all the Savior will ask me when I stand before Him, but perhaps one question will be “Who did you bring with you?” - Callings are sacred gifts from a loving Heavenly Father to help bring others with us to Jesus Christ. So I invite leaders and each of us to more intentionally seek those without callings. Encourage and help them engage in God’s work to help them prepare for Christ’s return.

John was not active in the Church when his bishop visited and told him that the Lord had a work for him to do. He invited John to quit smoking. Although John had tried many times to stop, this time he felt an unseen power helping him.

Just three weeks later, the stake president visited John. He called him to serve in the bishopric. John was shocked. He told the stake president he had just quit smoking. If this meant he would have to abandon his tradition of attending professional football games on Sunday, well, that was just too much to ask. The stake president’s inspired response was simple: “John, I am not asking you; the Lord is.”

To which John replied, “Well, if that is the

Esta asingeliokoa taifa lake, Petro asingeongoza Kanisa la mwanzo, na Joseph Smith asingekuwa Nabii wa Urejesho.

Tunapotenda kwa imani kufanya jambo lililo nje ya uwezo wetu, udhaifu wetu unafichuliwa. Hili si jambo la kufurahisha kamwe, lakini ni muhimu kwa ajili yetu “kujua kwamba ni kwa neema [ya Mungu], ... kwamba tuna uwezo wa kufanya mambo haya.”

Tutaanguka mara nyingi tunaposhiriki katika kazi ya Mungu. Lakini katika juhudi zetu Yesu Kristo hutushika mkono. Taratibu hutuinua ili kupata uzoefu wa ukombozi kutoka kushindwa na woga na kutoka kuhisi kama kamwe hatutaweza kutosha. Tunapoweka wakfu juhudi yetu ndogo lakini bora zaidi, Mungu huikuza. Tunapojitoa dhabihu kwa ajili ya Kristo, Yeye hututakasa. Hii ni nguvu ya mabadiliko ya neema ya Mungu. Tunapotumikia, tunakua katika neema hadi tutakapokuwa tayari “kuinuliwa na Baba, kusimama mbele ya [Yesu Kristo].”

Wasaidie Wengine Kupokea na Kufurahia Zawadi ya Miito

Sijui yote ambayo Mwokozi ataniuliza nitakaposimama mbele Yake, lakini labda swali moja litakuwa, “Ni nani uliyemleta pamoja nawe?” Wito ni zawadi takatifu kutoka kwa Baba wa Mbinguni mwenye upendo ili kusaidia kuleta wengine pamoja nasi kwa Kristo. Kwa hiyo ninawaalika viongozi na kila mmoja wetu kwa kukusudia zaidi kuwatafuta wale wasio na miito. Wahimize na uwasaidie kujishughulisha katika kazi ya Mungu ili kuwasaidia kujiandaa kwa ujio wa Kristo.

John hakuwa mhudhuriaji Kanisani wakati askofu wake alipomtembelea na kumwambia kwamba Bwana alikuwa na kazi kwa ajili yake ya kufanya. Alimwalika John aache kuvuta sigara. Ingawa John alikuwa amejaribu mara nyingi kuacha, wakati huu alihisi nguvu zisizoonekana zikimsaidia.

Wiki tatu tu baadaye, rais wa kigingi alimtembelea John. Alimwita kutumikia katika uaskofu. Johna alishtuka. Alimwambia rais wa kigingi kwamba alikuwa hivi karibuni ameacha kuvuta sigara. Ikiwa hii ilimaanisha kwamba angelazimika kuachana na utamaduni wake wa kuhudhuria michezo ya soka ya siku ya Jumapili, basi hilo lilikuwa ni jambo kubwa sana kuombwa. Jibu la rais wa kigingi lilikuwa rahisi: “John, si mimi nikuombaye; ni Bwana.”

Ambapo John alijibu, “Ikiwa ni hivyo, nitatu-

case, I will serve.”

John told me that these sacrifices to serve were the spiritual turning points for him and for his family.

I wonder if we have a blind spot, failing to extend callings to individuals who, to our mortal view, appear unlikely or unworthy. Or we may be more concerned with a culture of performance than with the doctrine of progression, neglecting to see how the Savior increases capacity in the unlikely and the unproven by giving them opportunities to serve.

Elder David A. Bednar teaches the importance of the scriptural mandate to “let every [woman and] man learn [their] duty, and to act.” Do we do this? When leaders and parents let others learn and act for themselves, they blossom and flourish. While the easier path may be to give faithful members a second calling, the more excellent way is to invite the unlikely to serve and let them learn and grow.

If Christ were physically here, He would visit the sick, teach the Sunday School class, sit with the heartbroken young woman, and bless the children. He can do His own work. But He lives this principle of letting us act and learn, so He sends us in His place.

With participation in God’s work comes “the right, privilege, and responsibility to represent the Lord [Jesus Christ].” When we serve to magnify Christ and not ourselves, our service becomes joyful. When others leave our class, meeting, ministering visit, or activity remembering Christ more than they remember us, the work is energizing.

In earnestly seeking to represent the Savior, we become more like Him. That is the best preparation for the sacred moment when each of us will kneel and confess that Jesus is the Christ, which I witness that He is and that President Russell M. Nelson is His “voice ... unto the ends of the earth” to help us “prepare ... for that which is to come.” In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

mikia.”

John aliniambia dhabihu hizi za kutumikia zilikuwa sehemu za mabadiliko ya kiroho kwake na familia yake.

Ninajiuliza kama tuna upofu, na kushindwa kutoa miito kwa watu binafsi ambao, kwa mtazamo wetu wa maisha ya kibinadamu, wanaonekana kutowezekana au kutostahili. Au tunaweza kuhusika zaidi na utamaduni wa utendaji kuliko fundisho la kupiga hatua, tukipuuza kuona jinsi Mwokozi anavyoongeza uwezo kwa wale wanaoonekana kutowezekana na kutohibitishwa kwa kuwapa fursa za kutumikia.

Mzee David A. Bednar anafundisha umuhimu wa agizo la kimaandiko la “kumruhusukila [mwanamke na] mwanamumewajifunze-wajibu [wao], na kutenda.” Je, tunalifanya hili? Viongozi na wazazi wanapowaruhusu wengine kujifunza na kujitenda wao wenyewe, watu hao huchanua na kustawi. Wakati njia rahisi inaweza kuwa kuwapa waumini waaminifu wito wa pili, njia bora zaidi ni kuwaalika wasiotarajiwa kutumikia na kuwaruhusu wajifunze na kukua.

Kama Kristo angekuwa hapa kimwili, Angewatembelea wagonjwa, kufundisha darasa la Shule ya Jumapili, kuketi na msichana aliyevunjika moyo, na kuwabariki watoto. Anaweza kufanya kazi Yake Mwenyewe. Lakini Yeye anaishi kanuni hii ya kutuacha tutende na tujifunze, hivyo Yeye anatutuma kwa niaba yake.

Pamoja na kushiriki katika kazi ya Mungu huja “haki, fursa na jukumu la kumwakilisha Bwana [Yesu Krosti].” Tunapotumikia ili kumweka Kristo mbele na si nafsi zetu, huduma yetu huwa ya shangwe. Wakati wengine wanaondoka kwenye darasa letu, mkutano, ziara ya kuhudumu, au shughuli wakimkumbuka Kristo zaidi kuliko wanavyotukumbuka sisi, kazi hiyo inatia nguvu.

Katika kutafuta kwa dhati kumwakilisha Mwokozi, tunakuwa zaidi kama Yeye. Hayo ni maandalizi bora zaidi kwa wakati mtakatifu ambapo kila mmoja wetu atapiga magoti na kukiri kwamba Yesu ndiye Kristo, ambapo ninashuhudia kwamba Yeye ndiye, na kwamba Rais Russell M. Nelson ni “sauti Yake ... hata miisho ya dunia” ili kutusaidia “kujitayarisha ... kwa yale yajayo.” Katika jina takatifu la Yesu Kristo, amina.