

Joy Through Covenant Discipleship

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Shangwe Kupitia Ufuasi wa Agano

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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.”

Tunapojifunga wenyewe na kutenda kama wafuasi wa agano, katika kiwango cha uwezo wowote ule, uhusiano wetu na Baba na Mwana unarutubishwa, shangwe yetu inaongezeka na mtazamo wetu wa milele unapanuka.

Siku moja mnamo 2023, Uyanga Altansukh alikuwa anafanya kazi kaskazini mwa jiji la Darkhan Mongolia wakati rais wa misheni ya Mongolia alipoingia sehemu yake ya kazi. Kwa maneno yake:

“Nilimwona na niliwaza alikuwa na nuru hii angavu katika uso wake. Alikuwa mkarimu sana na mcheshi kwa wale waliomzunguka na nilihisi ukunjufu. Kabla hajaondoka, nilimuuliza baadhi ya maswali. Siku chache baadaye, alikuja kazini kwangu tena na kuniomba kama ningehudhuria kanisa lake. Nilidhani ingekuwa jambo la kufaa. Nilikuwa na wasiwasi kwa ajili ya kesho ya watoto wangu, kwani jamii ilionekana kujawa na msongo wa hisia na giza. Nilitaka watoto wangu wawe kama mtu huyu aliye na nuru katika nyuso zao, wakisambaza shangwe kwa wengine wanaowazunguka.

“Siku moja wamisionari walitufundisha sheria ya zaka. Watoto wangu walisema kwa msisi-mko, ‘Mama, sisi lazima tulipe zaka yetu.’ Niliweza kuona imani ya watoto wangu wakati ule. Kabla sijajiunga na Kanisa, nilitazama mkutano mkuu na kumsikiliza Rais Russell M. Nelson akizungumza. Alitangaza mahekalu mapya kote ulimwenguni na kusema kwamba hekalu jipya litajengwa katika Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Nilifurahi na kutokwa na machozi, ingawa sikuelewa ni kwa nini. Kwa shangwe hii, ningeweza kueleza kwamba imani yangu na ushuhuda wangu vilikuwa vinakua.”

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, 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

Uyanga, kama mamilioni wengine, ni sehemu ya mkusanyiko mkubwa wa Israeli kati ka maandalizi ya Ujio wa Pili wa Yesu Kristo. Ameanza safari yake katika njia ya agano na amekuwa mfuasi wa Kristo. Inamaanisha nini kuwa mfuasi wa Kristo? Ninathamini neno la Kijapani la mfuasi—*deshi*—deikimaanisha kaka mdogo nashiikimaanisha mtoto.

Yesu Kristo alitangaza, “Hapo mwanzo nilikuwepo na Baba, na Mimi ndiye Mzaliwa wa Kwanza.” Kwa sababu ya Yeyeninaninakile ambacho amekifanya, tunamwabudu Yeye, tunamheshimu, tunamtukuza na tunamfuata Yeye. Kristo ametukomboza sisi, na tuna shukrani daima kwa ajili ya dhabihu Yake isiyo na mwisho na ya upatanisho.

Tuna Baba wa Mbinguni, ambaye anatupenda sisi kama watoto Wake. Upendo Wake kwetu ni mkamilifu. Yesu Kristo na mishiye Yake inayonyesha upendo Wake kwa ajili yetu. Kama Yohana alivyoandika, “Kwa maana jinsi hii Mungu aliupenda ulimwengu, hata akamtoa Mwanawe wa pekee, ili kila mtu amwaminiye asipotee, bali awe na uzima wa milele.”

Katika hamu yetu ya kuelewa kile tusichokijua, tunaweza wakati mwingine kutegemea uzoefu wetu wa duniani, au vitutunavyovijua. Kwa mfano, tunaweza kujifunza kiasi fulani juu ya Mungu Baba kupitia uzazi wetu wenyewe na mahusiano ya kifamilia ya duniani. Hata hivyo, tunapaswa kuwa waangalifu katika kutumia mifanano hii sana katika jaribio letu la kumwelewa Baba yetu wa Mbinguni. Sifa za Mungu Baba zinazidi sifa za mwanadamu yeyotemwenye mapungufuna aliyeanguka. Mungu Baba ni Baba mkamilifu. Yeye anapenda kwa ukamilifu, ni mkarimu, mwenye subira, na anaelewa na ni mtukufu kikamilifu. Tunaweza kumtumainia Yeye kikamilifu. Upendo wa Kristo huakisi upendo wa Mungu Baba na ni mwakilishi wa upendo huo.

Yesu Kristo ni vyote mfano na njia. Katika Kristo, tunaweza kuelewa vyema sifa kamili za Baba na mpango Wake. Kupitia Kristo, tumepatiwa nguvu wezeshi za kushinda uelekeo wa wanaume na wanawake wa asili ili kwamba tuweze kuwa zaidi kama Baba.

Kama tu vile Baba yetu wa Mbinguni, Yesu Kristo ni mwenye rehema na haki kamilifu. Hizi sifa za kiungu za haki na rehema hazipo katika upinzani. Sifa hizi zinakamilishana. Vyote haki

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.

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,

na rehema huonyesha upendo kamili wa Mungu kwa watoto Wake. Tunaweza kuwatumainia Mungu Baba na Yesu Kristo kwa sababu Wao ni wenye haki na wema kwetu sote.

Mungu Baba na Mwanawe, Yesu Kristo, wamefungamana kikamilifu katika madhumuni na upendo. Kwa sababu Mungu na Yesu Kristo wanatupenda, tumepatiwa fursa na fadhila za kama wanafunzi wa kweli ili kufanya maagano na Wao. Kwa kufanya hivyo kwetu, uhusiano wetu na Kristo unapanuka: "Na sasa, kwa sababu ya agano lile ambalo mmefanya mtaitwa watoto wa Kristo, wanawe, na mabinti zake; kwani tama, siku hii amewazaa kiroho; kwani mnasema kwamba mioyo yenu inabadilishwa kwa imani katika jina lake; kwa hivyo, amewazaa na mkawa wanawe na mabinti zake."

Kama wanafunzi, tunapofanya na kushika maagano, tunabarikiwa kwa nguvu ya kiroho. Tunaunganika na Kristo na Mungu Baba katika uhusiano maalum na tunaweza kupata uzoefu wa upendo Wao na shangwe katika kipimo kili-chotengewa wale ambao wamefanya na kushika maagano. Uwezo wetu wa kuhisi kipimo kamili cha upendo wa Mungu, au kuendelea katika upendo Wake, unategemeana na hamu na matendo yetu ya haki.

Katika Yohana sura ya 15, mstari wa 9, tunasoma, "Kama vile Baba alivyonipenda mimi, ndivyo nami nilivyowapenda ninyi." Nakisha-tunapatiwa mwaliko: "kaeni katika pendo langu."

Katikamstari unaofuata, tunapewa njia ya kuendelea katika upendo Wake: "Mkizishika amri zangu, mtakaa katika pendo langu; kama vile mimi nilivyoizishika amri za Baba yangu na kukaa katika pendo lake."

Sisi kisha tunaona dhumuni la kushika amri katikamstari wa 11: "Hayo nimewaambia, ili furaha yangu iwe ndani yenu, na furaha yenu itimizwe."

Kupitia ufuasi wa kweli wa agano, tunaweza kuanza kuelewa vyema asili ya Mungu na shangwe ambayo Yeye hutaka watoto Wake wote wapate. Tunaweza pia kuanza kuelewa baadhi ya kanuni ambazo hapo mwanzo zilionekana kukanganya. Kwa mfano, ni kwa jinsi gani Mungu ana utimilifu wa shangwe wakati baadhi ya watoto Wake wanateseka sana? Jibu lipo katika mtazamo mkamilifu wa Mungu na katika mpango Wake mkamilifu. Yeye hutuona kutoka mwanzo hadi uwezekano wetu wa utukufu wa hapo baadaye. Yeye ametoa njia, kupitia Mwana-

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.

President Nelson has taught: "Just as the

we Yesu Kristo, kwa ajili yetu sote, watoto Wake, ya kushinda maumivu, mateso, dhambi, hatia na upweke wa maisha ya duniani. Mungu ametoa kwa ajili yetu njia na chaguo.

Mifano ya wale ambao wamepata uzoefu wa shangwe kupitia ufuasi inaweza kutusaidia kuelewa vyema dhana hii. Pengine umesikia kirai hiki kwamba tuna furaha tu kama vile mtoto wetu asiye na furaha. Nimeona kwamba hili halihitaji kuwa hivyo. Mama yangu mwenye umri wa miaka 94 ana zaidi ya wazawa 200 walio hai. Wakati wowote ule, angalau mmoja wa hawa 200 atakuwa hana furaha. Kama kauli hii ni kweli, mama yangu angekuwa katika hali ya kila siku ya kukosa furaha, wakati sivyo hivyo. Wale wanao-mjua wanajua jinsi alivyo na shangwe.

Sasa nitashiriki uzoefu mwingine. Mnamo Januari ya 2019, mimi pamoja na mke wangu, Debbie, tulialikwa kwenye ofisi ya Rais Nelson. Alikuwa ameweka kiti chake karibu nasi, na tuliketiki magoti yetu yakikaribia yake. Baada ya kutupatia wito wetu wa sasa, Rais Nelson alimgeuka Debbie na kufokasi kwake. Alikuwa mkarimu, mwenye upendo, mpole na aliyejawa na shangwe, kama baba mkamilifu au babu. Aliushikilia mkono wa Debbie na kuugonga taratibu, akimhakikishia kwamba itakuwa SAWA na kwamba familia yetu ingebarikiwa. Ilionekana kwetu wakati ule kwamba sisi tulikuwa watu muhimu sana kwake na kwamba yeye alikuwa na wakati wote ulimwenguni kwa ajili yetu. Tuliondoka ofisini kwake mchana ule wa Ijumaa tukihisi hakikisho, kupendwa na wenye shangwe.

Jumatatu tuliona habari. Wakati siku ile ile ambayo Rais Nelson alikuwa pamoja nasi, mmoja wa mabinti zake alikuwa amefariki kutokana na saratani. Tulishangaa. Mioyo yetu ilijaa tulipoomboleza kwa ajili yake na familia yake. Mioyo yetu pia ilijawa na shukrani kwa ajili ya usikivu wake wa kama Kristo kwetu hali akiomboleza binti yake ambaye alikuwa anateseka.

Tulipotafakari uzoefu huu, tulijiuliza wenyewe, "Ni kwa jinsi gani yeye angekuwa mkarimu hivi, mwenye upendo, na hata mwenye shangwe katika wakati mgumu kama huu?" Jibu ni kwa sababu yetu anajua. Anajua kwamba Kristo amekuwa mshindi. Anajua atakuwa binti yake tena na atakuwa naye milele yote. Shangwe na mtazamo wa milele huja kupitia kuunganishwa kwa Mwokozi kwa kufanya na kushika maagano na kupitia ufuasi wa kama Kristo.

Rais Nelson amefundisha: "Kama vile

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.

Mwokozi anavyotoa amani ambayo ‘inapita akili yote,’ [Wafilipi 4:7], Yeye pia anatoa kiwango, kina, upana wa furaha ambayo inapita uelewa wa mwanadamu au uelewa wa kimwili. Kwa mfano, inaonekana haiwezekani kuwa na furaha wakati mtoto wetu anapoumwa na ugonjwa usiotibika, au unapopoteza kazi yako, au mwenza wako anapokusaliti. Hata hivyo hiyo ndiyo furaha anayotoa Mwokozi.”

Tunapofanya na kushika maagano, sisi kiasili tunageukia kuwa na shauku ya kuwasaidia wengine kuhisi kipimo cha shangwe na upendo tunaohisi katika uhusiano wetu wa kimaagano. Tunaweza kuwa sehemu ya hii kazi kubwa sana hapa ulimwenguni leo—kuikusanya Israeli. Tunaweza kuwaleta watoto wa Mungu kwa Kristo. Kama vile nabii Yakobo alivyofundisha: “Na heri ninyi; kwani kwa sababu mmekuwa na bidii katika kutumikia na mimi katika shamba langu la mizabibu, na mmetii amri zangu, na kuniletea tena matunda ya kawaida, ... mtapokea shangwe na mimi kwa sababu ya matunda ya shamba langu la mizabibu.”

Tunapojifunga wenyewe na kutenda kama wafuasi wa agano, katika kiwango cha uwezo wowote ule, uhusiano wetu na Baba na Mwana unarutubishwa, shangwe yetu inaongezeka na mtazamo wetu wa milele unapanuka. Kisha sisi tunavikwa na nguvu na tunaweza kuhisi shangwe katika kipimo kilichotengewa kwa ajili ya wafuasi wa kweli wa agano wa Mungu. Katika jina takatifu la Yesu Kristo, amina.