

Charity—a Sign of True Discipleship

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Hisani—Ishara ya Uanafunzi wa Kweli

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The real destination of discipleship is literally to become as Jesus Christ is.

President Russell M. Nelson recently invited us to “make our discipleship our highest priority.” That powerful invitation has stirred me to ponder deeply about my personal discipleship of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship Is Deliberate

A disciple is a follower or student of another. Disciples are “apprentices” who devote their lives to becoming like their teacher. Thus, being a disciple of Jesus Christ implies more than believing His teachings and doctrine. It even implies more than acknowledging His divinity and accepting Him as our Savior and Redeemer, as vitally important as that is.

President Dallin H. Oaks explained: “Following Christ is not a casual or occasional practice. It is a continuous commitment and way of life that should guide us at all times and in all places.” Discipleship is a deliberate journey that we take to become transformed through the Lord’s atoning sacrifice and His enabling power. The real destination of discipleship is literally to become as Jesus Christ is—even to the point where we receive “his image in [our] countenances.”

To be the Lord’s disciples, we must intentionally imitate His thoughts and actions every day—for example, His obedience, humility, and patience. As we gradually incorporate these attributes into our own identities, we become “partakers of [His] divine nature.” This emulation of the Savior’s character is at the heart of

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Rais Russell M. Nelson hivi majuzi alitualika “kufanya uanafunzi wetu kuwa kipaumbele chetu cha juu zaidi.” Mwaliko huo wenye nguvu umenichochea kutafakari kwa kina kuhusu uanafunzi wangu binafsi kwa Yesu Kristo.

Uanafunzi Ni Juhudi ya Makusudi

Mwanafunzi ni mfuasi au anayejifunza kwa mwingine. Wanafunzi ni “wanagenzi” ambao hujitolea maisha yao kuwa kama mwalimu wao. Hivyo, kuwa mwanafunzi wa Yesu Kristo kunamaanisha zaidi ya kuamini mafundisho na injili Yake. Inamaanisha zaidi ya kuukubali uungu Wake na kumkubali kama Mwokozi na Mkombozi wetu, kadiri ambavyo hilo ni muhimu sana.

Rais Dallin H. Oaks alieleza: “Kumfuata Kristo si jambo la kawaida au la wakati fulani. Ni dhamira endelevu na njia ya maisha ambayo inapaswa kutuongoza nyakati zote na katika mahali popote.” Uanafunzi ni safari ya makusudi ambayo tunachukua ili kubadilishwa kupitia dhabihu ya upatanisho ya Bwana na nguvu Yake ya kuwezesha. Hatma halisi ya uanafunzi ni kuwa jinsi Yesu Kristo alivyo—hata kufikia kiwango ambapo tunapokea “mfano Wake katika nyuso [zetu].”

Ili kuwa wanafunzi wa Bwana, lazima tuige mawazo na matendo Yake kwa makusudi kila siku—kwa mfano, utiifu Wake, unyenyekevu, na subira. Tunapojumuisha sifa hizi hatua kwa hatua katika utambulisho wetu wenyewe, tunakuwa “washiriki wa asili [Yake] ya uungu.” Ugaji huu wa tabia ya Mwokozi ndio kiini cha kumwabudu

worshipping Him. As President Nelson taught, “Our adoration of Jesus is best expressed by our emulation of Jesus.”

The Sign of True Discipleship

Of all the many divine attributes of Jesus Christ we are to emulate, one stands preeminent and embodies all others. That attribute is His pure love, or charity. Both the prophet Mormon and the Apostle Paul remind us that without charity, “[we] are nothing.” Or, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, without “charity, [we] can do nothing.”

The Savior Himself identified love as a mark or sign by which His true disciples would be recognized when He declared:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Charity is a rich concept that can be difficult to define but is easily perceived by all who are touched by it. Preach My Gospel teaches that “charity, like faith, leads to action.” Indeed, charity may be described as “love in action.” This description provides great insight into the summary statement of the Savior’s life—He “went about doing good.”

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should seek to emulate the way our Master demonstrated His pure love for others. Although the Savior manifests charity in many ways, I would like to call attention to three particular patterns of His charity that are readily seen in His true disciples.

Charity Is Showing Compassion

First, the Savior showed charity by being compassionate. During His ministry among the Nephites, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, the Lord invited the people to return home and ponder on the things He had taught and to prepare for His return the following day. The record then states:

“They were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little

Yeye. Kama Rais Nelson alivyofundisha, “Kumwabudu kwetu Yesu kunaonyeshwa vyema zaidi kwa kumwiga Yesu.”

Ishara ya Uanafunzi wa Kweli

Kati ya sifa nyingi za kiungu za Yesu Kristo tunazopaswa kuiga, moja inasimama kama sifa kuu na kujumuisha zingine zote. Sifa hiyo ni upendo Wake msafi, au hisani. Wote wawili, nabii Mormoni na Mtume Paulo wanatukumbusha kwamba bila hisani, “[sisi] si kitu.” Au, kama ilivyofunuliwa kwa Nabii Joseph Smith, bila “hisani, [sisi] hatuwezikufanyalolote.”

Mwokozi Mwenyewe alibainisha upendo kama alama au ishara ambayo kwayo wanafunzi Wake wa kweli wangetambuliwa wakati alipotangaza:

“Amri mpya nawapa, Mpendane; kama nilivyowapenda ninyi, nanyi mpendane vivyo hivyo.

“Hivyo wote watatambua ya kuwa ninyi mmekuwa wanafunzi wangu, mkiwa na upendo ninyi kwa ninyi.”

Hisani ni dhana tajiri ambayo inaweza kuwa ngumu kufafanua lakini inatambulika kwa urahisi na wote wanaoguswa nayo. Hubiri Injili Yanguinafundisha kwamba “hisani, kama imani, huongoza kwenye matendo.” Kwa kweli, hisani inaweza kufafanuliwa kuwa “upendo kwa vitendo.” Maelezo haya yanatoa umaizi mkubwa katika tarifa ya muhtasari wa maisha ya Mwokozi—Yeye “alienda huku na huko akitenda mema.”

Kama wafuasi wa Yesu Kristo, tunapaswa kutafuta kuiga jinsi Bwana wetu alivyoonyesha upendo Wake safi kwa wengine. Ingawa Mwokozi hudhihirisha hisani kwa njia nyingi, ningependa kutilia maanani mifumo mitatu maalum ya hisani Yake ambayo inaonekana kwa urahisi kwa wanafunzi Wake wa kweli.

Hisani Ni Kuonyesha Huruma

Kwanza, Mwokozi alionyesha hisani kwa kuwa na huruma. Wakati wa huduma Yake miogoni mwa Wanefi kama ilivyoandikwa katika Kitabu cha Mormoni, Bwana aliwaalika watu kurudi nyumbani na kutafakari juu ya mambo Aliyofundisha na kujiandaa kwa ajili ya kurudi Kwake siku iliyofuata. Kisha kumbukumbu inasema:

“Walikuwa wakitokwa na machozi, na walimtaazama kwa uthabiti kana kwamba

longer with them.

“And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.”

Compassion is the portion of charity that seeks to alleviate suffering. Filled with compassion, the Lord healed the sick and afflicted among the people. Afterward, He blessed their children while angels descended from heaven and surrounded them. He performed these tender, loving acts, and many more, because He was “moved with compassion.”

While serving as a young missionary in South America, I likewise benefited from the compassion of a dear friend. One evening while I was driving with my companion to the home of our mission president, a young man on a bicycle turned suddenly in front of the vehicle. It happened so quickly that I could not avoid the collision. Tragically, this young man was killed by the impact. I was devastated over the loss of his life. Terrified and in shock as the awful reality of what had just occurred crashed down upon me, I was taken to jail and locked up. I have never felt more frightened and alone. I was filled with despair and fear that I would be imprisoned for the rest of my life.

A fellow missionary, Elder Brian Kochevar, learned of the accident and was moved by compassion. He came to the jail and pled with the officers to be allowed to stay with me in the cell so that I would not be alone. Miraculously, they agreed. To this day, I feel profound gratitude for this disciple's act of Christlike love, which calmed, comforted, and consoled me during the greatest moment of distress in my life. His charitable compassion was a telling sign of his discipleship. As President Nelson observed, “One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people.”

Charity Is Ministering to Unspoken Needs

Another example of how the Savior demonstrates His love is through His observance of and ministry to the unspoken needs of others. To the man who had been lame for 38 years with no one to help him, the Lord made him whole and encouraged him to live righteously. To the woman

wangemwomba akae nao kwa muda mrefu kido-go.

“Na akawaambia: Tazama, matumbo yangu yamejawa na huruma juu yenu.”

Huruma ni sehemu ya hisani inayotaka kupunguza mateso. Akiwa amejawa na huruma, Bwana aliwaponya wagonjwa na walioteseka kati ya watu. Baadaye, Aliwabariki watoto wao huku malaika wakishuka kutoka mbinguni na kuwazunguka. Alifanya matendo haya ya huruma, ya upendo, na mengine mengi, kwa sababu Yeye “alisukumwa na huruma.”

Nilipokuwa nikitumikia kama misionari kijana huko Amerika Kusini, mimi pia nilinufaika kutokana na huruma ya rafiki mpendwa. Jioni moja nilipokuwa nikiendesha gari kuelekea nyumbani kwa rais wetu wa misioni, kijana mmoja akiwa kwenye baiskeli aligeuka ghafla mbele ya gari langu. Ilifanyika haraka sana kiasi kwamba sikuweza kukwepa mgongano. Kwa bahati mbaya, kijana huyu alifariki kwa mgongano ule. Nilihuzunika sana kwa kupoteza maisha yake. Nikiwa na hofu na mshtuko wakati ukweli wa kutisha wa kile ambacho kilikuwa kimetoka uliponiingia, nilipelekwa jela na kufungwa. Sikuwa nimewahi kuogopa vile na kuwa peke yangu. Nilijawa na kukata tamaa na hofu kwamba ningefungwa gereza maisha yangu yote.

Mimisionari mwenzangu, Mzee Brian Kochever, alipata habari kuhusu ajali hiyo na akasukumwa kwa huruma. Alikuwa gereza na kuwasihia maofisa waruhusiwe kukaa na mimi katika chumba cha gereza ili nisiwe peke yangu. Kwa muujiza, walikubali. Hadi leo, ninahisi shukrani nyingi kwa kitendo cha mwanafunzi huyu cha upendo kama wa Kristo, ambao ulinituliza, kunifariji, na kunipa ujasiri wakati wa dhiki kuu maishani mwangu. Huruma Yake ya hisani ilikuwa ishara ya uanafunzi wake. Kama Rais Nelson alivyosema, “Njia moja rahisi ya kumtambuamfuasi wa kweliwa Yesu Kristo ni kwa huruma kiasi gani mtu huyo huwatendea wengine.”

Hisani Ni Uhudumiaji kwa Mahitaji Yasiyosemwa

Mfano mwingine wa jinsi Mwokozi anavyoonyesha upendo Wake ni kupitia kukumbuka Kwake na huduma Yake kwa mahitaji ambayo hayajasemwa ya wengine. Kwa yule mtu aliyekuwamlemavu wa miguu kwa muda wa miaka 38 bila mtu wa kumsaidia, Bwana alimwinua na

caught in adultery, He offered hope and comfort rather than condemnation. For the man with paralysis who was lowered from the roof, the Lord offered forgiveness of sins, not just healing of body.

When I was called to serve as a bishop, our six young children made sacrament meetings challenging for my wife, Cristin, who had to manage them alone while I sat on the stand. As you may imagine, our children were often less than reverent. Noticing her situation, two members of our ward, John and Debbie Benich, began sitting with her each Sunday to help. Their kindness continued for years, and they became surrogate grandparents to our family. Like the Lord, these disciples had noticed the unspoken need and acted in love—a prominent sign of their discipleship.

Charity Is Helping Others Along the Covenant Path

Lastly, the Savior's perfect love is focused on enabling all of God's children to fulfill our divine potential that we may "partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption." As we become more like our Master, our desire to help our brothers and sisters along the covenant path will naturally increase.

For instance, we can uplift and befriend those who feel offended or forgotten, help those who are new to our congregation feel welcome, or invite friends to worship with us at sacrament meeting—perhaps this coming Easter. There are countless ways to encourage and assist others in their progression if we deliberately and prayerfully seek heaven's help to have eyes to see and a heart to feel how Jesus Christ sees and feels for them.

Helping others along their covenant path may take the form of an unconventional act of service. As an example, during my current assignment in the Philippines, I learned of the Agamata family. They were baptized in 2023, and then they eagerly set a date to be sealed as a family in the nearby Urdaneta Philippines Temple. However, just before the family's appointment, several typhoons struck the region. Brother Agamata, a rice farmer, was unable to plant his crops

kumtia moyo kuishi kwa haki. Kwa mwanamke aliyekamatwa katika uzinzi, Alitoa tumaini na faraja badala ya hukumu. Kwa mtu aliyepooza ambaye alishushwa kutoka juu ya paa, Bwana alitoa msamaha wa dhambi, sio uponyaji wa mwili tu.

Nilipoitwa kuhudumu kama askofu, watoto wetu sita wadogo walifanya mikutano ya sakramenti kuwa changamoto kwa mke wangu, Cristin, ambaye alilazimika kuwamamia peke yake wakati mimi nikiwa nimeketi jukwaani. Kama unavyoweza kufikiria, watoto wetu mara nyingi hawakuwa na staha. Walipotambua hali yake, washiriki wawili wa kata yetu, John na Debbie Benich, walianza kuketi na Cristin kila Jumapili ili kusaidia. Ukarimu wao uliendelea kwa miaka mingi, na wakawa babu na bibi mbadala wa familia yetu. Kama vile Bwana, wanafunzi hawa walikuwa wameona hitaji lisilosemwa na wakatenda kwa upendo—ishara kuu ya ufuasi wao.

Hisani Ni Kuwasaidia Wengine Katika Njia ya Agano

Hatimaye, upendo mkamilifu wa Mwokozi unafokasi katika kuwawezesha watoto wote wa Mungu kutimiza uwezekano wetu wa kiungu ili tuweze "kushiriki wokovu wake, na nguvu za ukombozi wake." Tunapozidi kuwa kama Bwana wetu, hamu yetu ya kuwasaidia kaka na dada zetu kwenye njia ya agano itaongezeka kwa njia za asili.

Kwa mfano, tunaweza kuinua na kufanya urafiki na wale wanaohisi kuchukizwa au kusahauliwa, kuwasaidia wale ambao ni wapya kwenye mkutano wetu kujisikia wamekaribishwa, au kuwaalika marafiki kuabudu pamoja nasi katika mkutano wa sakramenti—pengine Pasaka hii ijayo. Kuna njia zisizo na idadi za kuwatia moyo na kuwasaidia wengine katika upigaji wao hatua ikiwa kwa kukusudia na kwa sala tutatafuta msaada wa kimbingu ili kuwa na macho ya kuonana moyo wa kuhisi jinsi Yesu Kristo anavyowaona na kuhisi kwa ajili yao.

Kuwasaidia wengine kwenye njia yao ya agano kunaweza kuchukua namna ya tendo lisilo la kawaida la huduma. Kwa mfano, nilipokuwa katika jukumu langu la sasa huko Ufilipino, nilijifunza kuhusu familia ya Agamata. Walibatizwa mwaka 2023, na kisha kwa shauku wakaweka tarehe ya kuunganishwa kama familia katika Hekalu la karibu la Urdaneta Ufilipino. Hata hivyo, kabla tu ya miadi ya familia, vimbunga kadhaa vilipiga eneo hilo. Kaka Agamata, mkuli-

during the harsh storms. When the tempests finally passed, he needed to quickly plant the rice while the ground was soaked with water—ideal conditions for planting. Sadly, the temple trip would have to be postponed.

Two disciples, Elder and Sister Cauilan, along with three young service missionaries, heard of the Agamata family's struggle and offered help despite having no farming experience. Working under the blistering sun, they helped plant the seedlings, allowing the Agamatas to complete their task and attend their temple sealing as scheduled. Elder Cauilan observed that “[the Agamatas’] countenances glowed as we saw them dressed in white in the house of the Lord. The joy we felt ministering to the one is a joy beyond compare!”

The Agamatas now enjoy the rich blessings of being sealed as an eternal family because a few fellow disciples who were filled with charity—a sign of their discipleship—determined to help their brothers and sisters forward along their covenant path.

Brothers and sisters, discipleship of Jesus Christ is the only way to obtain enduring happiness. It is a path filled with deliberate and purposeful acts of love toward others. While the path of discipleship may be difficult and challenging, and while at times we may struggle and fall short, we can take comfort that God is mindful of us and yearns to help us every time we try. Isaiah reminds us that “God will hold [our] hand, saying ... , Fear not; I will help thee.”

With this assurance from our Father in Heaven in mind, I earnestly pray that we may follow President Nelson's invitation to prioritize our discipleship. May we “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart” to “be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; ... that when he shall appear we shall be like him” because we will carry a sign of true discipleship, which is “charity ... the pure love of Christ.”

I testify that Jesus Christ is our living, glorious Savior, Redeemer, Exemplar, and Friend. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ma wa mpunga, hakuweza kupanda mazao yake wakati wa dhoruba kali. Tufani zilipopita, alihi-taji kupanda mpunga haraka huku ardhi ikiwa imelowa maji—hali bora ya kupanda. La kusikit-isha, safari ya hekaluni ingelazimika kuahirishwa.

Wanafunzi wawili, Mzee na Dada Cauilan, pamoja na wamisionari wa huduma watatu vijana, walisikia kuhusu matatizo ya familia ya Agamata na wakatoa msaada japokuwa hawakuwa na uzoefu wa ukulima. Wakifanya kazi chini ya jua kali, walisaidia kupanda miche, na kuwaruhusu akina Agamata kukamilisha kazi yao na kuhudhuria kuunganishwa hekaluni kama ilivyopangwa. Mzee Cauilan alisema kwamba “[nyuso za akina Agamata] ziling'ara wakati tulipowaona wamevaa mavazi meupe katika nyumba ya Bwana. Shangwe tuliyoisikia wakati tukimhudumia yule mmoja ni furaha isiyo na kifani!”

Akina Agamata sasa wanafurahia baraka tele za kuunganishwa kama familia ya milele kwa sababu wanafunzi wenzao wachache ambao wali-jawa na hisani—ishara ya ufuasi wao—walianua kuwasaidia kaka na dada zao kusonga mbele katika njia yao ya agano.

Akina kaka na akina dada, uanafunzi wa Yesu Kristo ndiyo njia pekee ya kupata furaha ya kudumu. Ni njia iliyojaa matendo ya makusudi na yenye lengo la upendo kwa wengine. Ingawa njia ya ufuasi inaweza kuwa ngumu na yenye changamoto, na wakati fulani tunaweza kuhangaika na kukosea, tunaweza kupata faraja kwamba Mungu anatukumbuka na anatamani kutusaidia kila wakati tunapojaribu. Isaya anatumkumbusha kwamba “Mungu atatushika mkono, akisema ... , Usiogope, mimi nitakusaidia.”

Tukiwa hakikisho hili kutoka kwa Baba yetu wa Mbinguni akilini, ninasali kwa dhati kwamba tuweze kufuata mwaliko wa Rais Nelson wa kufanya ufuasi wetu uwe kipaumbele. Na “tusali kwa Baba kwa nguvu zote za moyo” ili “tujazwe na upendo huu, ambao ameuweka juu ya wafuasi wa kweli wa Mwana wake, Yesu Kristo; ... ili wakati atakapoonekana tuwe kama yeye” kwa sababu tunabeba ishara ya uanafunzi wa kweli, ambayo ni “hisani ... upendo msafi wa Kristo.”

Ninashuhudia kwamba Yesu Kristo ndiye Mwokozi wetu aliye hai, mtukufu, Mkombozi, Mfano, na rafiki yetu. Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.