

The Love of God

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Upendo wa Mungu

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Wa Sabini

April 2025 general conference

I joyfully witness that the Savior Jesus Christ is the love of God. His love for us is perfect, personal, and perpetual.

One summer while traveling in a remote area, our family spent an evening sleeping outdoors under a cloudless sky. Clearly visible above us was the magnificent Milky Way, filled with innumerable stars and the occasional shooting star. While we marveled at the majesty of God's creation, we felt a reverent connection to Him. Our young children, who had grown up in Hong Kong, had never experienced anything like this before. They innocently asked if we lived under the same sky back home. I tried to explain to them that it was the same sky, but air and light pollution where we lived prevented us from seeing these stars even though they were there.

The scriptures teach us that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While disorienting distractions and terrestrial temptations cloud our spiritual vision, when we exercise faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ, we receive clear assurance of Their reality and of Their concern for us.

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi saw "a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" and was the "most sweet, above all." When he tasted the fruit, his soul was filled with great joy, and he wanted his family to taste it also. We learn that this tree represents "the love of God," and like Lehi, we too can receive a joyful witness of God when we invite Him into our lives.

Kwa shangwe ninashuhudia kwamba Mwokozi Yesu Kristo ni upendo wa Mungu. Upendo Wake kwetu ni mkamilifu, binafsi na endelevu.

Wakati mmoja wa majira ya kiangazi tukisafiri eneo la nje ya mji, familia yetu ilitumia jioni moja kulala nje chini ya anga safi lisilo na mawingu. Kilichoonekana wazi kabisa juu yetu ulikuwa Mfumo wa Anga, uliojaa nyota zisizo na idadi na kimondo adimu. Wakati tulipostaajabia ukuu wa uumbaji wa Mungu, tulihisi muunganiko wa unyenyekevu Kwake. Watoto wetu wadogo, waliokuwa wamekulia Hong Kong, hawakuwahi kupata uzoefu huu hapo kabla. Bila hatia waliuliza ikiwa tuliishi chini ya anga sawa na lile huko nyumbani kwetu. Nilijaribu kuwafafanulia kwamba ni anga lilelile, lakini uchafuzi wa hewa na mwanga kule tulikoishi ulituzuia kuona nyota hizi japokuwa zilikuwepo.

Maandiko yanatufundisha kwamba "Imani ni kuwa na hakika ya mambo yatarajiwayo, ni bayana ya mambo yasiyoonekana." Wakati vivuruga mawazo na matamania ya kiterestia vinapoweka wingu kwenye uoni wetu wa kiroho, tunapotumia imani kwa Mungu na Mwana Wake Yesu Kristo, tunapata hakikisho la wazi la uhalisia wao na kujali kwao juu yetu.

Katika Kitabu cha Mormoni, nabii Lehi aliona "mti, ambao matunda yake yalitamanika kumfurahisha mwanadamu" na yalikuwa "matamu zaidi ya yote." Alipolionja tunda, nafsi yake ilijawa shangwe, na alitaka familia yake walionje pia. Tunajifunza kwamba mti huu unawakilisha "upendo wa Mungu," na kama vile Lehi, sisi pia tunaweza kupokea ushahidi wenye shangwe juu ya Mungu wakati tunapomwalika Yeye ndani ya maisha yetu.

Jesus Christ embodies Heavenly Father's love for us. Through His atoning sacrifice, He took upon Himself our sins and was bruised for our iniquities. He has personally borne our griefs, carried our sorrows, and taken upon Himself our pains and sicknesses. He sends the Holy Ghost to comfort us, and the fruits of the Spirit include joy, peace, and faith, which fill us with hope and love.

While the love of God is accessible to all, many search earnestly for it, while others desire to feel God's love but do not believe that they deserve it. Some others are desperately trying to hang on to it. The scriptures and the Lord's prophet teach us that we can consistently experience God's love when, through the grace of Jesus Christ, we repeatedly repent, frankly forgive, strive to keep His commandments, and selflessly serve others. We feel God's love when we do things that draw us closer to Him, such as conversing with Him daily through prayer and scripture study, and stop doing things that distance us from Him, such as being prideful, contentious, and rebellious.

President Russell M. Nelson has invited us to "remove, with the Savior's help, the old debris in our lives" and to "lay aside bitterness." He has encouraged us to "bolster our spiritual foundations" through "centering our lives on [the Savior] and on the ordinances and covenants of His temple." He promised that "as we keep our temple covenants, we gain greater access to the Lord's strengthening power. ... We experience the pure love of Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father in great abundance!"

I have a friend who was blessed with a beautiful family and a promising career. This changed when an illness left him unable to work, which was followed by a divorce. The years since have been difficult, but his love for his children and the covenants he has made with God have sustained him. One day he learned that his former spouse had remarried and had requested a cancellation of their temple sealing. He was troubled and confused. He sought peace and understanding in the house of the Lord. The day after his visit, I received the following message from him:

Yesu Kristo ni dhihirisho la upendo wa Baba wa Mbinguni kwetu. Kupitia dhabihu Yake ya kulipia dhambi, alijichukulia juu Yake dhambi zetu na alijeruhiwa kwa makosa yetu. Yeye binafsi amechukua huzuni zetu, amejitwika simanzi zetu, na kujichukulia juu Yake maumivu na magonjwa yetu. Yeye anamtuma Roho Mtakatifu kutufariji, na matunda ya Roho hujumuisha shangwe, amani na imani, ambavyo hutujaza na tumaini na upendo.

Wakati upendo wa Mungu unapatikana kwa wote, wengi wanautafuta bila kuchoka, wakati wengine wanatamani kuhisi upendo wa Mungu lakini hawaamini kwamba wanaustahili. Wengine baadhi wanajaribu kwa juhudi zote kuendelea kuuhisi. Maandiko na nabii wa Bwana hutufundisha kwamba tunaweza daima kuhisi upendo wa Mungu wakati, kupitia neema ya Yesu Kristo, tunapotubu mara kwa mara, tunasamehe kwa dhati, tunajitahidi kutii amri Zake na kuwatumikia wengine pasipo ubinafsi. Tunauhisi upendo wa Mungu pale tunapofanya mambo ambayo yanatusogeza karibu Naye zaidi, kama vile kuzungumza Naye kila siku kupitia sala na usomaji wa maandiko na kuacha kufanya mambo yanayotuweka mbali Naye, kama vile kuwa na kiburi, kubishana na kuasi.

Rais Russell M. Nelson ametualika "tuondoe, kwa msaada wa Mwokozi, uchafu wote wa zamani katika maisha yetu" na "tuweke kando hasira." Ametuhimiza "tuimarisha misingi yetu ya kiroho" kupitia "kuweka msingi wa maisha yetu juu ya [Mwokozi] na juu ya ibada na maagano ya hekalu Lake." Ameahidi kwamba "Tunapotii maagano ya hekaluni, tunapata ufikiaji mkubwa wa nguvu ya Bwana ya kuimarisha. ... Tunapata uzoefu wa upendo msafi wa Yesu Kristo na Baba yetu wa Mbinguni kwa wingi!"

Ninaye rafiki ambaye alibarikiwa kwa kuwa na familia nzuri na kazi nzuri. Hili lilibadilika wakati ugonjwa ulipomwacha bila uwezo wa kufanya kazi, jambo lililofuatiwa na talaka. Miaka iliyoendelea imekuwa migumu sana, lakini upendo wake kwa watoto wake na maagano aliyoyafanya na Mungu yameendelea kumuimarisha. Siku moja aligundua kwamba mwenza wake wa zamani ameolewa tena na alikuwa ameomba ubatilishaji wa kuunganishwa kwao hekaluni. Alifadhaika na kukanganyikiwa. Alitafuta amani na uelewa katika nyumba ya Bwana. Siku moja baada ya kuzuru huko, nilipokea ujumbe ufuatao kutoka kwake:

“I had an amazing experience in the temple last night. I think it was obvious that I still held quite a bit of resentment. ... I knew that I must change, and I have been praying all week to do so. ... Last night in the temple I literally felt the Spirit remove the resentment from my heart. ... It was such a relief to be freed from it. ... An ominous physical burden bearing down on me has been lifted.”

While he still has his challenges, my friend treasures that experience in the house of the Lord, where the liberating power of the love of God has helped him to feel closer to God, more optimistic about life, and less anxious about his future.

When we experience the love of God, we can bear up our burdens with ease and submit patiently and cheerfully to His will. We have confidence that God will remember His covenants with us, visit us in our afflictions, and deliver us from bondage. We will also desire to share the joy we feel with our family and loved ones. As with Lehi’s family, each person has agency to choose whether to partake of the fruit or not, but our opportunity is to love, share, and invite in such a way that those we love can feel the love of God.

To help others feel God’s love, we need to cultivate in ourselves Christlike attributes such as humility, charity, compassion, and patience and help turn others towards the Savior through following the two great commandments of loving God and loving our fellow men.

One of our sons struggled with fitting in and self-esteem during his teenage years. My wife and I prayed to know how to help him, and we were willing to do whatever the Lord would have us do. One day I felt prompted to ask my elders quorum president if he knew of anyone in need who I could visit together with my son. After some thought, he asked us to visit a woman with significant health challenges and, with permission from the branch president, to bring the sacrament to her each week. I was elated but also concerned about how my son would react to this weekly commitment.

On our first visit, our hearts ached for this

“Nilipata uzoefu wa kustaajabisha hekaluni jana usiku. “Nahisi ilikuwa kawaida kwamba bado nilikuwa na chembe ya uchungu. ... Nilijua kwamba lazima nibadilike na nimekuwa nikisali wiki nzima ili nibadilike. ... Jana usiku ndani ya hekalu nilihisi waziwazi Roho akiondoa uchungu kutoka moyoni mwangu. ... Ilikuwa nafuu kubwa iliyoje kuwekwa huru dhidi ya uchungu. ... Mzigo wa kutisha wa kimwili ulionilemea umeondolewa.”

Akiwa bado na changamoto zake, rafiki yangu anathamini uzoefu huo ndani ya nyumba ya Bwana ambapo nguvu ya kuweka huru ya upendo wa Mungu imemsaidia kuhisi yu karibu zaidi na Mungu, kuwa zaidi na tumaini kuhusu maisha na kutohofia sana kuhusu siku zake za baadaye.

Tunapopata uzoefu wa upendo wa Mungu, tunaweza kuibeba mizigo yetu kwa urahisi na kunyenyekea kwa furaha na subira kwa mapenzi Yake. Tuna ujasiri kwamba Mungu atakumbuka maagano Yake na sisi, atatutembelea katika mateo yetu na kutukomboa kutoka utumwani. Sisi pia tutatamani kushiriki shangwe tunayoihi na familia zetu na wapendwa wetu. Kama ilivyokuwa kwa familia ya Lehi, kila mtu ana haki ya kuji-amulia kuchagua kula tunda ama la, lakini fursa yetu ni kupenda, kushiriki na kualika katika njia ambayo wale tunaowapenda wanaweza kuhisi upendo wa Mungu.

Ili kuwasaidia wengine kuhisi upendo wa Mungu, tunapaswa kukuza ndani yetu sifa kama za Kristo kama vile unyenyekevu, hisani, huruma na uvumilivu na kusaidia kuwageuza wengine kuelekea kwa Mwokozi kupitia kufuata amri mbili kuu za kumpenda Mungu na kuwapenda wanadamu wenzetu.

Mmoja wa wana wetu alihangaika kujumuika na kuhisi hana thamani wakati wa miaka yake ya ujana. Mimi na mke wangu tulisali kujua jinsi ya kumsaidia na tulikuwa radhi kufanya chochote ambacho Bwana angetutaka tufanye. Siku moja nilihisi msukumo kumuuliza rais wangu wa akidi ya wazee ikiwa alimfahamu mtu yeyote mwenye uhitaji ambaye ningeweza kumtembelea nikiwa na mwanangu. Baada ya mawazo kadhaa, alituomba tumtembelee mwanamke mwenye changamoto za kiafya na kwa ruhusa kutoka kwa rais wa tawi, kumpelekea sakramenti kila wiki. Nilifurahi lakini pia nilikuwa na wasiwasi jinsi ambavyo mwanangu angeitikia ahadi hii ya kila wiki.

Katika matembezi yetu ya kwanza, mioyo

dear woman, as she was in constant pain. She was very grateful for the sacrament, and we enjoyed visiting with her and her husband. After a few visits, one Sunday I was away and could not accompany my son, but I reminded him of our assignment. When I got home, I couldn't wait to hear how the visit went. My son replied that he didn't think his classmates got to do cool things like this. And he elaborated by saying that he brought his brother with him to help and that the sacrament went smoothly, but this dear sister had been sad during the week because she had invited friends to her home to watch movies, but her video player would not work. My son said he searched online, found the problem, and fixed it for her on the spot. He felt useful, happy, and trusted to do something that brightened her day. He felt God's love for him.

If despite your best efforts life is overcast, if you feel that your prayers are not heard, or if you can't feel God's love, please know that your every effort matters and, as certain as the stars above us, that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ know, hear, and love you.

On one occasion, when His disciples were in a boat being "tossed [by the] waves," the Savior walked towards them on the water and assured them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." When Peter wanted to walk to the Savior on the water, Jesus beckoned to him, saying, "Come." And when Peter lost his focus and began to sink, the Savior immediately reached out His hand to catch him and led him to safety while saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

When the winds are against us in our lives, are we willing to be cheerful and courageous? How can we remember that the Savior does not forsake us and that He is near us, perhaps in ways we don't yet recognize? Are we willing to go to Him in faith, especially when the path before us seems impossible? And in what ways does He lift us to safety when we flounder? How can we faithfully look unto Him in every thought, without doubt or fear?

If you would like to feel the love of God more

yetu iliumia kwa ajili ya mwanamke huyu, kwani alikuwa kwenye maumivu yasiyoisha. Alikuwa na shukrani kwa ajili ya sakramenti, na tulifurahia kumtembelea yeye pamoja na mume wake. Baa-da ya matembezi kadhaa, Jumapili moja nilikuwa mbali na sikuweza kumsindikiza mwanangu lakini nilimkumbusha juu ya jukumu letu. Nilipofika nyumbani, nilitamani sana kusikia matembezi yalikuwaje. Mwanangu alijibu kwamba haku-fikiria kama wana darasa wenzake walipaswa kufanya jambo zuri kama hili. Na alifafanua kwa kusema kwamba alimleta kaka yake asaidiane naye na kwamba sakramenti ilienda vizuri, lakini dada huyu mpendwa alikuwa na huzuni katikati ya wiki kwa sababu aliwaalika marafiki nyumbani kwake kuangalia sinema, lakini kifaa cha kuonesha picha hakikufanya kazi. Mwanangu alisema alitafuta mtandaoni, akapata tatizo na akamsaidia kukitengeneza pale pale. Alihisi kuhitajika, mwenye furaha na kuaminiwa kufanya jambo ambalo lilimfurahisha mwanamke yule. Alihisi upendo wa Mungu kwake.

Ikiwa licha ya juhudi zako, maisha bado ni magumu, ikiwa unahisi kwamba sala zako hazisikiki au ikiwa huwezi kuhisi upendo wa Mungu, tafadhali fahamu kwamba kila juhudi yako ina thamani na, kwa uhakika kama vile nyota angani juu yetu, Baba wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo wanakujua, wanakusikia na wanakupenda.

Katika tukio moja wakati wanafunzi Wake walipokuwa ndani ya mashua "wakisukwasukwa [huku na huko] na mawimbi," Mwokozi aliwaendea juu ya maji na kuwahakikishia, akisema "Jipeni moyo; ni mimi; msilogope." Wakati Petro alipotaka kumfuata Mwokozi juu ya maji, Yesu alimwita, akisema, "Njoo." Na wakati Petro alipopoteza fokasi yake na kuanza kuzama, Mwokozi kwa haraka alinyosha mkono Wake kumshika na kumwongoza kwenye usalama wakati akisema, "Ewe mwenye imani haba, mbona uliona shaka?"

Wakati pepo ziko dhidi yetu katika maisha yetu, je, tuko radhi kuwa wenye furaha na ujasiri? Tunawezaje kukumbuka kwamba Mwokozi hajatutelekeza na kwamba Yeye yu karibu nasi pengine katika njia ambazo hatujazitambua bado? Je, tuko radhi kwenda Kwake katika imani, hususani wakati njia mbele yetu inapoonekana kutowezekana? Na ni kwa njia zipi Yeye anatupeleka kwenye usalama wakati tunapopata misukosuko? Tunawezaje kumtegemea kwa uaminifu katika kila wazo, bila kutia shaka au kuogopa?

Ikiwa ungependa kuhisi upendo wa Mungu

abundantly in your life, may I invite you to consider the following:

First, pause frequently to remember that you are a child of God and think of the things you are grateful for.

Second, pray daily, asking Heavenly Father to help you know who around you needs to feel His love.

Third, ask sincerely what you can do to help that individual to feel the love of God.

And fourth, act promptly on the inspiration you receive.

If we consistently pray and ask on the behalf of others, God will show us the people we can help. And if we act promptly, we can become the means through which He answers their prayers. By doing so, in time, we will receive answers to our prayers and we will feel God's love in our own lives.

A few months ago while traveling in Vietnam, my wife and I were on a flight that took off in a heavy storm. The turbulence was severe, and dark clouds, heavy rain, and lightning could be seen from our window. After a long and volatile ascent, our airplane finally rose above the storm clouds and emerged to this glorious vista. We were reminded once again of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and felt Their great love for us.

Dear friends, as one who has experienced God's love, I joyfully witness that the Savior Jesus Christ is the love of God. His love for us is perfect, personal, and perpetual. As we faithfully follow Him, may we be filled with His love and may we be a lighthouse that guides others to His love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

kwa wingi zaidi katika maisha yako, ninakualika uzingatie yafuatayo:

Kwanza, tulia mara kwa mara ili kukumbuka kwamba wewe ni mtoto wa Mungu na fikiria mambo ambayo una shukrani kwayo.

Pili, sali kila siku, ukimwomba Baba wa Mbinguni akusaidie ujue ni nani kando yako anahitaji kuhisi upendo Wake.

Tatu, uliza kwa nia ya dhatikile unachoweza kufanya ili kumsaidia mtu huyo ahisi upendo wa Mungu.

Na nne, tenda harakajuu ya mwongozo wa kiungu unaoupokea.

Ikiwa daima tunasali na kuuliza kwa niaba ya wengine, Mungu atatuonesha watu tunaoweza kuwasaidia. Na ikiwa tunatenda haraka, tunaweza kuwa njia ambayo kupitia hiyo Yeye anajibu sala zao. Kwa kufanya hivyo, baada ya muda, tutapokea majibu ya sala zetu wenyewe, na tutahisi upendo wa Mungu katika maisha yetu wenyewe.

Miezi michache iliyopita wakati nikisafiri huko Vietnam, mimi na mke wangu tulikuwa ndani ya ndege iliyopaa katika dhoruba kali. Msukosuko ulikuwa mkali, na mawingu meusisi, mvua kubwa na mwanga wa radi ungeweza kuonekana kupitia dirisha letu. Baada ya kupaa muda mrefu kwenye hali tete, ndege yetu hatimaye iliinuka juu ya mawingu ya dhoruba na kutokea kwenye mwonekano huu mtukufu. Tulikumbushwa kwa mara nyingine tena juu ya Baba yetu wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo na tulihisi upendo Wao mkuu kwetu.

Marafiki wapendwa, kama mtu ambaye nimepata uzoefu wa upendo wa Mungu, ninashuhudia kwa shangwe kwamba Mwokozi Yesu Kristo ni upendo wa Mungu. Upendo Wake kwetu ni mkamilifu, binafsi na endelevu. Tunapomfuata kwa uaminifu, hebu tujazwe na upendo Wake na tuwe nuru ambayo inawaongoza wengine kwenye upendo Wake. Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.