

“The Faith to Move the Mountains in Your Life”

*President Brian and Sister Melinda Ashton
BYU-Pathway Worldwide*

President Ashton: My dear BYU-Pathway students, missionaries, and employees, my name is Brian Ashton, and this is my wife, Melinda. I am honored to be able to serve you as the new president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

Sister Ashton: I'd like to tell you just a little bit about us. I was born in Portland, Oregon, in the United States but spent much of my life in Las Vegas, Nevada, where my dad was a dentist. Education was important in our household. My mother is a Ph.D. chemist, and many of my siblings have graduate degrees. I received a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University (also known as BYU) and attended medical school at Northwestern University. I served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Spain.

Brian was born in Provo, Utah, in the United States. He moved a lot during his growing up years. He was a foreign exchange student in Japan and has traveled to over 50 countries. He received his bachelor's degree from BYU. Brian also has a Master of Business Administration degree from Harvard University. Brian served a mission in Peru.

We met at BYU, where Brian was my home teacher. For those of you who do not know what a home teacher is, Brian was assigned to visit me and my roommate each month by our Church leaders. Brian knew the moment he met me that he wanted to marry me. I took a little longer to figure out that I wanted to marry him — about five years longer. But I'm incredibly glad I finally came to that conclusion.

We have seven children and a daughter-in-law. They range in age from 9 to 22. As a family, we have lived in several cities in the United States and traveled extensively internationally. From 2012 to 2015, our whole family served a mission in Houston, Texas, in the United States. We love to travel, go on hikes, and spend time together. Education and learning are important to us. We currently have two sons at BYU and a daughter-in-law at Utah Valley University. We also have a son who is taking time off from his studies at BYU to serve a mission in Alaska in the United States.

Pres. Ashton: This coming semester, our most important hope for you is that you will exercise more faith in Jesus Christ. Of all the things we could hope for you, why did we choose that you would exercise more faith? You see, Jesus Christ is the source of truth, miracles, and blessings. It is by exercising faith in Jesus Christ that you can obtain all good things.¹ This includes help to learn more effectively. Help to get a better job. Help having enough to eat. Help to find secure housing. Help to get along with your family.

Recently President Russell M. Nelson, whom we in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regard as God's prophet on the earth, said, “Your growing faith in [Jesus Christ] will move mountains — not the mountains of rock that beautify the earth but the mountains of misery in your lives.”² He further added: “Only your unbelief will keep God from blessing you with miracles to move the mountains in your life.”³

Sis. Ashton: I'd like to share with you how faith in Jesus Christ helped me while I was in medical school.

¹ See [Moroni 7:20–25](#)

² Russell M. Nelson, “[Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains](#),” *Liahona*, Apr. 2021

³ *Ibid*

Medical school was overwhelming for me. There was so much to read and learn. I was not a fast reader and, sometimes, even if I did nothing besides eat, sleep, attend my classes, and study, I could not get through all the pages I was supposed to read. As a result, I spent almost all my time studying my first year of medical school.

And I was miserable, but I didn't know how else to do things. Each test I took I scored within a couple points of the class average. I was afraid if I studied less that I would fall far below the class average or possibly fail.

About the time I started my second year of medical school, Brian shared with me a story he had heard in which President Henry B. Eyring told one of his sons that if he would do the best he could with his studies while also devoting the time he needed to his family and Church calling, he could have faith that Jesus Christ would help him to do as well as he needed to accomplish the works that God had for him to do.

I decided I needed to exercise more faith and make some changes in my life. I thought about all the areas of my life that I had been neglecting. I wanted to have more time to spend with my husband. I wanted to do more than the minimum to fulfill my assignments at church. I wanted to exercise and create friendships.

I began praying and asking Heavenly Father how much time I needed to spend studying to do well enough to accomplish the works He had for me to do. After prayerfully analyzing what I should do for a few days, I felt that I needed to commit to studying three hours on each weekday and five hours on Saturday. And that I didn't need to study on Sunday. All our tests were on Mondays, so on the Friday and Saturday before a test, I also felt that I should study a few additional hours.

Once I had completed my predetermined study time, I would close my books and enjoy all the other aspects of my life. And I was much happier. Amazingly, despite studying significantly less, I continued to always score within a couple points of the class average.

The Savior did not have to bless me that way. My scores could have gone down. In the end, my life path led me to be a full-time mother rather than practice medicine as a doctor. But I think God was trying to teach me a lesson. I think He wanted me to know that I could do things on my own if that is what I chose, but if I asked Him for help, He would help me. He would do part of the work.

Pres. Ashton: Now you may struggle to manage your time as Melinda did. Or you may have other challenges, concerns, or hopes in your life. Finding solutions to those issues should always begin with exercising faith in Jesus Christ.

President Russell M. Nelson recently taught, "Faith in Jesus Christ is the greatest power available to us in this life. All things are possible to them that believe."⁴

How does this work? Because Jesus Christ fulfilled the mission given to Him by Heavenly Father, including sacrificing Himself on our behalf, He has been given all power in heaven and in earth.⁵ But the miracles that we seek are dependent upon first exercising faith in Him. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Moroni taught: "And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed on the Son of God."⁶ "Wherefore, ye may also have hope, and be partakers of the gift [of miracles], if ye will but have faith."⁷

⁴ Ibid; see also [Mark 9:23](#)

⁵ See [Mathew 28:18](#)

⁶ [Ether 12:18](#)

⁷ [Ether 12:9](#)

Now faith consists of “things which are hoped for and not seen.”⁸ We hope for these things because we believe that Jesus Christ can grant them to us. Melinda believed that Jesus Christ could help her do well in her studies if she tried to have more balance in her life, but she didn’t know for certain that the Savior would help her. Rather, she experimented upon my testimony and the testimony of others, and she trusted in her knowledge of the goodness and love of God.⁹

This is what it means to exercise faith — move forward believing that, if you act, God will help you. As you do this, you are enabled to access God’s power, mercy, and grace. Grace “is divine means of help or strength ... to do good works that [we] otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to [our] own means.”¹⁰ That is what Melinda accessed — Christ’s grace — through her faith in Him.

Sis. Ashton: Now because Jesus Christ knows everything and has our best interests at heart, He doesn’t always do things as we would do them or in the timeframe we would like. But if we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, He will not forsake us and He will exercise His power in our behalf. President Russell M. Nelson said it this way: “The mountains in our lives do not always move how or when we would like. But our faith will always propel us forward. Faith always increases our access to godly power.”¹¹

Pres. Ashton: Our invitation to you this semester is to seek to increase your faith in Jesus Christ. Prayerfully determine one or two things that you need God to help you with in your life. Ask for His help. Then move forward in faith expecting to see God’s hand in your life in His time and in His way.

What’s more, we invite you to help someone else this semester to further develop their faith in Jesus Christ. Please pray for that desire and for the opportunity to help someone else.

Sis. Ashton: Our Heavenly Father and our Savior want us to succeed, and they want us to be happy. They understand the challenges we face, and they want to help us. As we exercise faith in Jesus Christ and trust in their love, power, and wisdom, we allow their influence to bless us more fully in our lives. I know they will help you this semester if you will ask in faith.

Pres. Ashton: I testify that as you choose to exercise faith in Jesus Christ, you will see miracles this semester. I know Heavenly Father is the Father of our spirits. We are His children. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. They love you and want to help you now and forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

⁸ [Ether 12:6](#); see also [Alma 32:21](#)

⁹ See [Alma 32:27](#)

¹⁰ Bible Dictionary, “[Grace](#)”

¹¹ Russell M. Nelson, “[Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains](#),” *Liahona*, Apr. 2021