

“The Truth Shall Make You Free”

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I consider it a great blessing to speak today to the nearly 60,000 students from more than 180 countries who are studying to complete online degrees and certificates around the world. In my mind’s eye, I can visualize you in the Philippines, Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand, Australia, Asia, Europe, Brazil, Mexico, South America, Africa, and the United States. Those are some of the places that I have visited and where I have met members and students just like you who are not only dedicated to the gospel of Jesus Christ but are working diligently to become outstanding leaders in your community and in your professions. I want you to know that we are very proud of you for your desire to continue to seek out of the best books words of wisdom by study and by faith.¹

From the very beginning of the Restoration, the Lord has made it clear to us that whatever intelligence we attain in this life will rise with us in the Resurrection. Even more importantly, we have been taught that if we gain more knowledge and intelligence in this life through our diligence and obedience, we will have so much the advantage in the world to come.² Isn’t it gratifying to know that all you are learning you will be able to carry with you through eternity?

I am fascinated by the Savior’s teaching in John 8:31–32 of the New Testament. He simply says this, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

I have pondered what it means that the truth will make us free. In John chapter 8, those to whom the Savior was speaking were confused. They told Him that they were of Abraham’s seed and that they had never been in bondage; in other words, they were already free. Why would the Savior say that they would be made free? The Savior teaches them that He was speaking of freedom from sin, which includes the blessings that His Atonement would bring to the world.

In my life I have learned that knowing the truth has set me free. Understanding that God is my Father, that I am His son, that I have the ability to become like Him, and that the Savior Jesus Christ was sent in the meridian of time to not only atone for my sins but also to help me through difficult trials makes me free indeed. With that knowledge I can move forward with faith that the Lord will go before my face, that He will be on my right hand and on my left, and that He will be there to bear me up.³ And you can do the same.

But can I share with you, the students of BYU-Pathway, that gaining an education, continuing to seek out of the best books, and training yourself to become a valuable member of society also sets you free. I am grateful for the guidance of prophets and apostles on this topic:

President Gordon B. Hinckley, in his talk about the six Bs, said, “You are moving into the most competitive age the world has ever known. All around you is competition. You need all the education you can get. Sacrifice a car; sacrifice anything that is needed to be sacrificed to qualify yourselves to do the work of the world. That world will in large measure pay you what it thinks you are worth, and your worth will increase as you gain education and proficiency in your chosen field.”⁴

¹ [Doctrine and Covenants 88:118](#)

² [Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19](#)

³ [Doctrine and Covenants 84:88](#)

⁴ Gordon B. Hinckley, “[A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth](#),” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001

President Russell M. Nelson shared the following experience regarding obtaining an education: “I remember a conversation many years ago with a very bright 16-year-old high school student. He was uncertain about his religious commitment and undecided about his career. He wondered about the possibility of becoming a doctor of medicine. He asked me a simple question: ‘How many years did it take for you to become a heart surgeon?’

“I quickly made the calculations: ‘From the time I graduated from high school until I first collected a fee for service as a surgeon, it took me 14 years.’

“‘Wow!’ he replied. ‘That’s too long for me!’

“Then I asked, ‘How old will you be 14 years from now if you don’t become a heart surgeon?’

“‘Just the same,’ he replied. ‘Just the same!’”⁵

I loved that response. President Nelson was encouraging him to continue with his education and to become what he wanted to become, even though it would require sacrifice and it would require a number of years to get there. With that additional education, with the opportunity to become a physician, this young man would become free. Instead of having just one option for employment, he would have thousands of options for employment. He could choose where he would live. He could choose the type of income he would make. He would be free. It is that freedom to choose that education provides for each of us.

Pictured on the screen is a building that is a sacred place to me and my wife, Marcia. We worked there when we were striving to complete our education. At the time we were married, I was beginning law school at the University of Utah and Marcia still had two years left to get her bachelor’s degree at BYU. We knew that in order to accomplish our education goals we would need to have a job that would allow us to support ourselves during the next three years. We obtained a job managing this building where we were janitors. Every day, Marcia and I would clean the bathrooms and the toilets in the common areas. We would mow the lawn and clean the parking garages. I went to law school during the day, and Marcia went to school at night. During our three years there, we had two children.

Each day we would vacuum all the floors of the condominium. In the last year of our education, I would put our oldest son, Brent, in a backpack and would start vacuuming on the 10th floor. Marcia would have our daughter, Emily, in her backpack, and she would begin on the first floor. We would meet on the fifth floor. Although those were difficult times, they are some of our most sacred memories. It is a time when we worked together to get our education and to become who the Lord wanted us to become. Upon our graduations, and both of us graduated the same year, our options for where we would live and where we would work and what we would do became unlimited. The truth — our education — had set us free. Our options to choose were unlimited because of our education.

My hope for you as students is that you will do as President Hinckley encouraged and seek as much education as possible. That you will remember President Nelson’s encouragement to a young man that 14 years was going to pass anyway, and he might as well be a heart surgeon. I would also hope that you will see that the sacrifices you make along the way will be a blessing, and at the end of that road is your freedom to choose.

In addition, as you persist in your studies, much of what you learn at BYU-Pathway will allow you to be free from unnecessary challenges. For example, learning about nutrition will help you remain healthy; learning interpersonal

⁵ Russell M. Nelson, “[Youth of the Noble Birthright: What Will You Choose?](#)” (CES Devotional for Young Adults, Sept. 6, 2013), broadcasts.churchofjesuschrist.org

skills will help you minimize conflict with others; learning discipline will help you to master your time; learning math will help you budget your money so you can use it wisely.

It is my testimony to you that the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ will set you free, just as the Savior taught. I also testify to you that getting as much education as possible and improving your skills will set you free and give you opportunities to do things that you never thought you could do. Please move forward with faith. Please be diligent in your studies. Please prepare yourself for life, and you will find that the Lord will be there to bless you every step of the way.

May the Lord bless you and help you as you serve Him faithfully and as you continue to seek your education by study and by faith is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.