

“The Power of Covenants”

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President Ashton: Our dear BYU-Pathway Worldwide students, missionaries, partners, and employees, welcome to a new semester!

This semester many of you will have moments that will be difficult. These challenges may come in your schoolwork, employment, calling at Church, family, or because of your personal weaknesses. As these challenges arise, we hope that you seek God’s help. The life of Caleb Cooper, one of your fellow students, provides a powerful example of how to do this.

Sister Ashton: Caleb was one of our missionaries when we were mission leaders over the Texas Houston South Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Caleb was an excellent missionary with tremendous faith, a love for his companions and the people he served, a great desire to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a willingness to work very hard. By every measure, Caleb’s mission was a great success. Caleb did, however, face at least one long-term challenge: he struggled to read and write. Caleb has a form of dyslexia where every time he looks at a word, his brain sees the word differently. You can imagine how difficult it would be to try to learn how to read or write if the words were always spelled differently.

When Caleb first arrived in our mission, he could not read the scriptures or write a coherent email. Fortunately, Caleb consistently prayed for help and worked at learning to read the scriptures and write his emails to us every week. Over the two years of his mission, with the Lord’s help, Caleb’s ability to read and write improved. By the end of his mission, Caleb had learned to study the scriptures, and we could read his emails without too much difficulty even though they contained many errors.

President Ashton: In one of my interviews with Caleb, I felt to tell him that the Lord wanted him to attend university. It was hard to imagine how Caleb could earn a university degree with his limited reading and writing skills. But I have learned when the Lord gives us a commandment, He will provide a way for us to accomplish the thing which He has commanded.¹ And so, I told Caleb that the Lord wanted him to go to university. Needless to say, this message was troubling to Caleb as he had always struggled in school. I then gave him a priesthood blessing. In this blessing, God promised Caleb that he would get a university degree.

After Caleb returned from his mission, I would remind Caleb from time to time that he needed to enroll in university. It took five years before Caleb finally enrolled in BYU-Pathway. Caleb told me that his life became very stagnant until he enrolled in BYU-Pathway. In his first semester of PathwayConnect, Caleb met his wife, Sadie. They married in his third semester.

PathwayConnect was not easy for Caleb. He required certain accommodations, had to ask for help, and worked harder than many of his classmates. But through prayer and by trusting in God and the promise made in the blessing he received, as well as the help of Sadie and others, Caleb received all A grades in PathwayConnect. Caleb is now only a semester or two away from completing his bachelor’s degree. He has gotten mostly As in his degree courses. He has also received increased job responsibilities, a raise, and multiple job offers. Caleb is even considering getting a master’s degree. His academic success is not something either he or I could have predicted when he was on his mission.

¹ [1 Nephi 3:7](#)

Sister Ashton: What made the difference in Caleb’s academic endeavors? Caleb attended school for 12 years before he went on his mission. His academic achievements were limited at best. Yet, on his mission, Caleb finally made progress in learning to read and write. After his mission, Caleb has excelled in his university studies while working full time. The answer to this question comes as we understand the power of covenants.

Covenants are sacred promises that we make with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We make covenants in holy ordinances or ceremonies like baptism. God sets the terms of these covenants. When we keep our covenants, God gives us access to His divine help or power to do things that we could not otherwise do on our own.²

When Caleb was baptized, he made covenants with Jesus Christ to keep God’s commandments, always remember Jesus Christ, and take Christ’s name upon him by doing God’s work and serving others.³ Caleb kept these covenants, in part, by serving a mission and, after his mission, by continuing to keep the commandments, share the gospel, and serve in his congregation.

President Ashton: Caleb testified of this power himself. He said, “Being able to make and keep covenants throughout my life, especially on my mission, has given me the opportunity to see the importance of education. By serving a full-time mission and fulfilling that commandment, I was able to see the importance of not only spiritual education but of secular education as well.”

As Caleb sought God’s power to learn to read and write and do well in his university studies, he was eligible for divine help because he had made and kept these covenants. Because of his dyslexia, Caleb did not have the skills he needed to progress academically on his own. In fact, Caleb had tried for years to learn how to read and write with essentially no success. Without Jesus Christ’s help, Caleb could have worked extremely hard but not progressed in his reading or writing or his other studies. Yet, with God’s power, Caleb’s hard work yielded fruit, and, over time, he became very capable of doing well academically.

Sister Ashton: Each of us can have God’s power in our lives. The key is to make and keep covenants with God. If you want God’s power to help you in your challenges, make covenants with Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, through baptism, receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, or through the ordinances of the temple. If you don’t know how to make covenants or which covenant you need to make, talk with your gathering missionaries, a friend, or a local leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If you need help to keep the covenants you have already made, talk with your bishop. If you are keeping your covenants, continue to keep them and have faith that God will give you the help and power you need at the right time.

I know God loves you. He wants to be part of your life. He wants to lift your burdens, help you overcome weaknesses, and give you strength to succeed. Covenants invite and allow Him to participate more fully in your life and provide a means for you to become more than you can be on your own.

President Ashton: I testify that God has called prophets and apostles in our day. I know that President Russell M. Nelson is God’s prophet on the earth today. President Nelson has been teaching us to make and keep covenants. I know that God is our Heavenly Father. He loves you. Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, we can receive every needful blessing, including access to divine power. I promise that if you will make and keep sacred covenants with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, you can receive help with the problems in your life that seem impossible. This has happened to me throughout my life. I know it can happen to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

² [Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21](#); Bible Dictionary, “[Grace](#)”

³ [Moroni 4:3](#) and [Doctrine and Covenants 20:77](#); see also [Mosiah 18:8–10](#) and [Doctrine and Covenants 20:37](#)