

“Thinking Celestial”

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President Ashton: Our dear BYU-Pathway students and colleagues, welcome to a new term!

Sister Ashton: President Russell M. Nelson, God’s prophet on the earth, recently encouraged us to “think celestial!”¹ When we think celestial, we put Jesus Christ first in our lives and exercise faith in Him and His sacrifice for us. We also take an eternal perspective, which means that we remember that our choices on earth determine where we will be and whom we will be with after this life. If we will think celestial by receiving the ordinances of baptism and the temple, and keeping the associated covenants, we can live with our families in a state of peace and joy forever. Fortunately, as President Nelson noted, the things that allow us to be happy after this life are the same things that will make us happy here on earth.

President Ashton: As we think celestial, we focus our thoughts more on Jesus Christ. We think about what the Savior would do if He were in our position and then strive to act as He would act. We trust Jesus more. We remember His perfect example and suffering for us. We take the sacrament more reverently and more intentionally.

Sister Ashton: When we think celestial, we pay our tithing. Each of us needs God’s blessings in our lives. God has promised that if we will pay our tithing, He will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”²

President Ashton: When we think celestial, we obey the law of chastity. This law requires that we keep our thoughts, words, and actions morally pure. As President Nelson has taught, “Physical intimacy is only for a man and a woman who are married to each other.”³ Living the law of chastity brings peace and confidence before God.⁴ Breaking the law of chastity will drive away the Spirit,⁵ complicate your life,⁶ and possibly lose your testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sister Ashton: When we think celestial, we repent daily by striving to become more like the Savior. If there are things we are doing wrong, we stop doing them and we start doing what we should. For example, if you haven’t been attending church, you start going every week so that you can partake of the sacrament and be “nourished by the good word of God.”⁷ If you haven’t been paying tithing, you start paying a full tithe. If you have broken the law of chastity, you talk with your bishop and make things right before the Lord. My experience is that Jesus Christ *wants* to forgive us!⁸ His “bowels are filled with mercy.”⁹ Jesus Christ suffered and died for us precisely so that we could repent.¹⁰ Repentance is one of the greatest gifts we have been given.

¹ Russell M. Nelson, “[Think Celestial!](#)” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023

² [Malachi 3:10](#)

³ Russell M. Nelson, “[Think Celestial!](#)” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023

⁴ See [Doctrine and Covenants 121:45](#)

⁵ See [Doctrine and Covenants 63:16](#)

⁶ Russell M. Nelson, “[Think Celestial!](#)” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023

⁷ [Moroni 6:4](#)

⁸ See Craig A. Cardon, “[The Savior Wants to Forgive,](#)” *Liahona*, May 2013

⁹ [3 Nephi 17:7](#); see also [Mosiah 15:9](#); [Alma 7:12](#)

¹⁰ See [Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19](#)

President Ashton: With respect to education, when we think celestial, we choose to always be learning, and we get as much education as we can. God has commanded us to “seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”¹¹ President Nelson has taught, “In the Church, obtaining an education and getting knowledge are a religious responsibility. We educate our minds so that one day we can render service of worth to somebody else.”¹²

Too often, BYU-Pathway students stop their education early. Many get better jobs after PathwayConnect or a first certificate. Sometimes this leads us to think, “I’m making more money than I ever have in my life. It was a lot of work getting here. Maybe I will stop pursuing my degree for a time.” Then sadly, many don’t come back to finish their degrees.

Sister Ashton: Our dear students, the world is changing rapidly. If you want a career that will last, get your degree and continue to learn. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who was President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1995 to 2008, taught, “It is so important that you ... get all the education you can. ... Education is the key which will unlock the door of opportunity for you. It is worth sacrificing for. It is worth working at, and if you educate your mind and your hands, you will be able to make a great contribution to the society of which you are a part.... [T]ake advantage of every educational opportunity that you can possibly afford.”¹³ What’s more, the Lord has taught that “whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.”¹⁴ You see, getting your degree helps you not only in this life but also in the next.

With seven-week classes and our new three-year and 90-credit degree coming in April, if you take two classes per term, you can finish your degree in three years. If you take one class per term, you can finish in less than five years. What’s more, the three-year degree has cut the total cost of the degree by 25%!

President Ashton: We want to close with the story of Dumazedier Kabasele, one of your fellow students from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After his mission, Dumazedier earned a medical degree in his home country. Then, wanting more education, he pursued a post-graduate degree in India. While in India, he heard about BYU-Pathway Worldwide. Upon returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dumazedier was one of the first students to enroll in BYU-Pathway in DR Congo. Dumazedier has earned his associate degree and is close to completing his bachelor’s degree from BYU-Idaho. Because Dumazedier has a certificate in public health, he was hired by the United States’ Centers for Disease Control, one of the most prestigious public health organizations in the world. Dumazedier now helps oversee the response to highly contagious diseases in his country, including Ebola, COVID-19, and Mpox. Dumazedier is a leader in his country, but none of this would have happened if he had decided to cut short his education. The more education you have, the more you too can make a difference in your family, the Church, your community, and your nation.

Sister Ashton: We are so blessed to have the understanding that this life is only part of an eternal existence. As we remember to keep an eternal perspective, we can experience more confidence in our Savior, His Atonement, and our Heavenly Father’s plan for us, His children. They love us and are helping us to become what we need to become to return to live with Them.

¹¹ [Doctrine and Covenants 88:118](#)

¹² Russell M. Nelson, “[Focus on Values](#),” *New Era*, Feb. 2013

¹³ Gordon B. Hinckley, “[Inspirational Thoughts](#),” *Ensign*, June 1999; President Hinckley also taught, “There can be no doubt, none whatever, that education pays. Do not short-circuit your lives. If you do so, you will pay for it over and over and over again” (“[A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth](#),” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001).

¹⁴ [Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19](#)

President Ashton: I promise that as we think celestial, as we take an eternal perspective, we'll have more faith and more power in our lives. I bear witness that we are children of a Heavenly Father who loves us and who wants to help us, and that we can become like Him. I testify that Jesus Christ lives, that He has the power to allow us to do all things that are needful. And I bear witness that we have a prophet on earth, Russell M. Nelson, who leads and guides us as the Savior would. And I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.