

## “Inauguration Remarks”

*Jeffery R. Holland*

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

Thank you, President Ashton. Sister Holland and I are delighted to be with you tonight for this unique installation. We welcome President Ashton as president now of BYU-Pathway Worldwide. We welcome him into our Church Educational System. In the same breath, we honor his wife, Melinda, and their children, who are in attendance tonight, for their support of President Ashton and their commitment to this educational endeavor. We heard a wonderful expression from Sister Ashton in the honorary dinner before this service. Brian and Melinda, this audience tonight is only a symbol, a gesture, a representative few of the larger circle of students, and colleagues, and friends, and family, and donors, and administrators who love you and have been blessed by you and are going to be blessed by you. So many more would be here if they could, including the other Officers of the Board, the other participants in our Church Educational System. In their busy lives, they have asked the rest of us to be representative of them, and we are honored to do that tonight.

President Ashton, you already know that BYU-Pathway Worldwide is an application of and an extension of the glorious, visionary doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This inspiring and exalting church that sponsors your work has as part of its founding revelations this kind of language, and I quote:

“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.”<sup>1</sup>

And this: “As all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”<sup>2</sup>

And this: “He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. Man was ... in the beginning with God. ... The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake [the] evil one.”<sup>3</sup>

From these and many, many other revelatory beginnings laid down as the gospel was being restored, we now have a Church Educational System serving nearly one million students; with over 60,000 instructors; several major campuses for primary, secondary and higher education; plus what is now a worldwide footprint through BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

President Ashton, one of the thrilling elements of your new assignment is your opportunity to *witness* history as measured against these early revelations but also to lead out in a new era to *make* history as a result of contemporary revelation. I consider the creation of BYU-Pathway Worldwide to be the most important and most far-reaching development in the Church Educational System since the creation of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion over a century ago. Your program is different and exciting in kind as well as degree from anything we have ever done, with all the marks of individuality and excitement that characterize an idea whose time has come. The instant success of this educational service is evidence enough of the reception it will continue to get around the world, holding aloft for all to see the hope that it instills and the good that it does for one generation after another, after another.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 88:118](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 93:28–29, 36–37](#)

Part of your charge, President, in undertaking this exciting new program is to help your students of whatever age become self-reliant and independent, as you have just said, able to improve their lot in life and pass those advantages on to their children and their children's children. This has obvious temporal day-to-day application, but it is important as a spiritual blessing even more than a temporal one. Certainly, your educational program will add to the quality of your students' lives by increasing their ability to make a living for themselves and for their families. But spiritually speaking, it will fortify that divine reach — that spiritual impulse within all of us — that helps us grow into the full measure of divinity that God intends for us to achieve. That is why love for and loyalty to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His gospel must be the ultimate end product of your educational efforts and the ultimate mark of your success.

In this inspired program, Brian, about which you already know so much and to which you have already given an immense amount of time and energy, you will be associating not only with our exceptional professional colleagues here in Salt Lake City, Provo, Rexburg, and Laie, but also with legions spread out across the earth. You will be out in the vanguard of this movement where individual lives are being molded and shaped on location, where hope is coming to many who had so little to be hopeful about, where the Church is often in its first generation. You are our multi-skilled specialist who goes into the fray first, meets immediate needs where you can, and boosts many of your students on to further education, productive professional lives, participatory citizenship, and strong family lives. And the need has never been more evident.

President Dallin H. Oaks said to your students just a month ago, "We live in challenging times.... More important [than the wars and earthquakes and tsunamis is the fact that] values and standards honored for thousands of years are now being denied or cast aside. Selfishness is replacing service. Evil is being called good, and good is being called evil."<sup>4</sup> So you and your associates come to the kingdom, like Esther, "for such a time as this."<sup>5</sup>

President Ashton, you, your faculty, and staff will, as noted, be serving in real time with real lives that are being molded and shaped before your very eyes. Yours is the privilege to "connect" with them first and quickly — "connect" being a key word in the BYU-Pathway vocabulary — and to start them out (or in some cases, restart them) on their life-changing journey. This forms a very sweet bond of sisterhood and brotherhood along this "pathway" you and they now walk together.

Even as we say that, we are saddened by the conflicts that continue to unfold around the globe. If, in the course of working together there exists some disagreement, whether that be among individuals or nations, the way of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only answer to bringing peace and harmony into those lives. Violence, greed and avarice, a lack of a sense of history or a lack of a sense of respect when considering the rights of others — whatever the problem — an education, especially an education in discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ, should be a central, majestic part of any solution. We hold firmly to the Savior's declaration that we should know the truth, and the truth would make us free.<sup>6</sup> That truth is the truth He teaches. That truth is the truth that He is.

So, President Ashton, enjoy this brotherhood and sisterhood (Melinda too) of all those learners around the world. Be ready for growth when it comes because the need and the appetite are immense. We smile to keep from crying when we hear of entire stake presidencies, high councils, bishoprics, Relief Society presidencies, and elders quorum presidencies in which all or part are enrolled in BYU-Pathway, even as they were initially being charged to provide it to others. It is as if those manuals, workbooks, and English grammar texts are now placed on the table as the way to gain access to the standard works of the Church and its handbooks. So, President, do what you do well. Serve and strengthen the students you have, and legions will come to join you. When you have done the best you

---

<sup>4</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, "[Leadership](#)" (BYU-Pathway Worldwide devotional, Feb. 8, 2022) [byupathway.org/speeches](http://byupathway.org/speeches)

<sup>5</sup> [Esther 4:14](#)

<sup>6</sup> See [John 8:32](#)

---

can by them, we will grow the operation to serve more nations, more cultures, and more languages. The possibilities in the future are staggering, quite frankly. But as the marvelous hymn by Cardinal Newman says:

“I do not ask to see  
the distant scene —  
one step enough for me.”<sup>7</sup>

President Ashton, I conclude with an invitation to you to take your own very good counsel given to BYU-Pathway students in a devotional three years ago. To those learners you said, and I quote, “Trust that ‘with God all things are possible.’ Don’t give up because learning something seems impossible,” you counseled. “Don’t ‘take counsel from your fears.’ Rather, move forward in faith. If you can’t see the solution to your problems now,” continuing President Ashton’s quote, “believe that those solutions will come as you move forward if you are doing what God wants you to do.”<sup>8</sup>

That sounds to me like excellent advice, the kind of thing we would want to hear from the president and principal teacher of an educational endeavor. So when you are having a hard day and the hurdles seem almost too much to overcome, get out your talk and read your advice. Always know that you go forward with our love and complete support. May God bless you with every needful thing, especially His guiding Spirit always. Without that you cannot hope to succeed, but with it you cannot possibly fail. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

---

<sup>7</sup> [“Lead, Kindly Light,”](#) *Hymns*, no. 97

<sup>8</sup> Brian K. Ashton, [“Learning is a Spiritual Endeavor”](#) (BYU-Pathway Worldwide devotional, Apr. 30, 2019), [byupathway.org/speeches](http://byupathway.org/speeches)