

“Believe in Yourself: Trust in the Lord”

Neil L. Andersen, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Brian Ashton, president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide

President Ashton: I’m Brian Ashton, president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide, and I’m pleased to be here with Elder Neil L. Andersen, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Thank you for addressing our students today.

Elder Andersen: We’re so proud of you! Proud of you all across the world, and your hard work to delve into BYU-Pathway, which [always] you have to do on top of the other things you’re doing. So we’re just very proud of you, and we love you. I thought, just before we started, of something that was here in my office (we’re filming this in my office), of something I brought back from Brazil. I’m just going to hold it up here. I always have people look at this, and I say, “What do you see?” And they say an old rock or whatever. But, of course, Brazil is famous for beautiful rocks. I lived four years in Brazil, and you look inside, and you see there’s so much more inside than what you see on the outside. And what BYU-Pathway allows men and women across the Church and out of the Church to do is take that power that they have inside and affect, to some extent, what happens to them on the outside.

President Ashton: Elder Andersen, how will strengthening my faith in Jesus Christ and seeking first to build the kingdom of God lead me to be more serious in my educational pursuits?

Elder Andersen: The Savior said, of course, “Seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God and establish His righteousness...”¹ And President Nelson, in this beautiful talk he gave at this last conference, he helped show us that by having faith in Christ and really loving Him you can push away a lot of the difficulties that plague people in the world. “While the world insists that power, possessions, popularity, and pleasures of the flesh bring happiness, they do not! They cannot!”² Of course, we’d like to have a nice place to live. We’d like to have clothes on our back. We want food on our table, but it is not the excess of those that brings happiness.

He also said, “You can overcome the spiritually and emotionally exhausting plagues of the world, including arrogance, pride, anger, immorality, hatred, greed, jealousy, and fear.”³ Those are items that he taught us [that] just weigh upon us. And if you have a pure faith in Christ, then those negative issues of the adversary need not weigh you down, and you can focus on making your life better and happier.

President Ashton: And we’ve talked a lot about covenants at BYU-Pathway, and what I hear you saying is, look, keep those covenants, and all the things that President Nelson promised will happen.

Elder Andersen: That’s true.

President Ashton: Great. You’ve traveled all over the world and met a lot of successful people. What advice would you give to BYU-Pathway students about making the most of their education?

Elder Andersen: Well, thank you for that question because, of course, I’ve loved the people I’ve met across the world and especially the members of the Church. I’ve lived 12 years of my life outside of the United States — never really of my own choosing, just assigned there either as a missionary or a General Authority. And wherever you go, of course, you come first to this idea that the choices in life are not between wealth and poverty; they’re not really between fame and obscurity; they’re really between good and evil. So, when you meet the people, the good

¹ [Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38](#) (in Matthew 6:33, footnote a)

² Russell M. Nelson, “[Overcome the World and Find Rest](#),” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022

³ *Ibid*

people of the world, and each country has its own challenges economically. So, the first thing I would say is look carefully at what you *can* do well and what you *want* to do. I just got an email from someone in the Philippines who was really specialized in farming. So, I say that to say, you look around and you see things you could do. And, of course, one of the things that BYU-Pathway opens up to so many is the English language.

And if you have the capacity to learn English, on EnglishConnect, then you are going to immediately move your possibilities up. So, that's kind of the first thing. The second thing I would say is the ability to show that you've accomplished something. And that's what the magic of the certificates in BYU-Pathway is that you don't have to get a degree; you can start with a certificate, and a certificate can mean a lot to separate you from others. And I will use this great quote from President Nelson: "Because of our sacred regard for each human intellect, we consider the obtaining of an education to be a religious responsibility."⁴ So, in your own country, wherever you are, there are places you can find a way to take your unique talents, develop them, and then have them being used in a way that would help your ability to make a living.

President Ashton: That's a great segue into our next question, which is, "It seems that oftentimes success comes from doing things differently. How does one figure out what to do differently and then have the courage to follow that path?"

Elder Andersen: That is a very good question. How would you answer that?

President Ashton: Well, I found in my own career that it really requires two things. One is, I want to understand something really well. When I know the details of something, then I can see why it's done a certain way and what the challenges are with that. And then that allows me to be creative and think about how might it be done differently. But because all truth and even ways to do things better ultimately comes from the Lord, I found that if I pray and ask for the Lord's help, then I'm much more creative. I'm much more able to come up with things that will add value and really make a difference. And then, of course, if I feel like that's come from the Lord, that gives me a lot of courage to move forward.

Elder Andersen: I think it helps to find something that in your unique talents you could learn to do. What came to my mind when you gave that example is President Nelson, of course, was a surgeon. I don't think I could ever do that. I don't even like blood on my fingers, you know. And he talks about how revelation came to him on a certain technique that is now practiced widely in heart surgery, so the Lord works on that.⁵ But I think you have to think, "What are in my natural capacities?" And then you find a niche that you really believe in yourself, and then you go after it.

I'll give you a couple of examples. I thought this example of Malvin Kadzomba, originally from Zimbabwe living in South Africa. It gave him the confidence, as he was doing PathwayConnect, to pitch some new knowledge that he was learning to his employer, which connected him with some very prosperous hotels, and he's been successful in that way. Or this one from Maria Jose Mercau, who lives in Argentina, and she pursued a degree in applied technology, and now she works on a help desk. So, you have to see what you can do, and then you have to have determination. Because it's usually kind of a long road, isn't it?

President Ashton: Persistence makes a huge difference.

Elder Andersen: It does. You have to set out your course. You have to treat it almost like your covenants, you know, where you say, "I don't care what happens." You know, like you would say about the Word of Wisdom. You'd say, "I don't care what happens. I'm not going to break the Word of Wisdom. I'm going to live the law of

⁴ Russell M. Nelson, "[Where Is Wisdom?](#)" *Ensign*, Nov. 1992

⁵ See Russell M. Nelson, "[Sweet Power of Prayer](#)," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003

chastity. I'm going to be honest in what I do." And then you take those same qualities, and you apply them to your learning in academic or technical skills or whatever you're learning or your apprenticeship with others. And BYU-Pathway, of course, opens many of those doors, and you just stay so determined to keep following through.

President Ashton: I love that because, you know, one of the challenges I think our students face, like everyone, is that things don't always go as planned, and they don't always have success right away. And you find you've got to put in a little more effort — sometimes a lot more effort. But as you persist in doing that, the Lord's help comes and you're successful.

Elder Andersen: A good example of that is learning English. I just did an interview with a prospective mission president in Spanish in Honduras just a few moments ago. And I've never lived in a country where you speak Spanish, but I'm up there doing it. But I find, and I'm a little uncomfortable doing it because it's not easy for me. But if I'm ever going to be able to speak in Spanish, I have got to find somebody to speak Spanish with. I can't learn it just in a book. And that's kind of the same way with EnglishConnect. If you really want to learn English, you're going to have to talk to people.

President Ashton: And make mistakes.

Elder Andersen: And make mistakes. Well, don't ask this potential mission president how many mistakes I made.

President Ashton: I speak Spanish and am learning Portuguese, and I make lots of mistakes. Thank you. For us as disciples, how does our faith in Jesus Christ guide us in everything else that we do?

Elder Andersen: I think when I was the age of many of the young students, it's probably been 50 years ago, and my faith was, I think, strong in those days. But faith is something that grows, if you allow it to. Or, if you don't, it'll diminish; it rarely stays the same. And so, if your faith is growing, if you feel answers to your prayers, if you sense that you're becoming more unselfish, you're doing good, you care about other people, you try hard to be very honest in a culture that doesn't reward honesty. All of these things give you the chance to receive the approval of our Heavenly Father. And you feel His love and His tender sense of "I'm proud of you. I know you're not perfect. I know you're still learning, and you don't always move forward straight, but you're on the right path." And that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that all things will be made right — any injustice, any unfairness, any difficulty that we experience here that is caused by others will be made right, and that allows you to think beyond your current circumstances and allows you to become someone you hope to become.

Well, I just maybe say to our wonderful students as we conclude how much, again, I admire you. I love you, and we are so very, very proud of you for the effort you're making to make something of your life, to build up (in your own way) what you can become — of course, most important, a righteous son or daughter of God, but also someone of capacity, of skill, of intellect. These are qualities that will go with us through the veil and be with us forever. I want to just give you my sure witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; that He lives; that He guides this holy work; and that, in our own way, we — the small band of believers across the world — we are preparing for His return to the earth. And I share that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.