

Discipleship: Our Way Safely Home

A Conversation with Elder Patrick Kearon and President Brian K. Ashton

President Ashton: We're here with Elder Kearon, Senior President of the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Kearon, welcome.

Elder Kearon: Thank you.

President Ashton: We're grateful to have you here.

Elder Kearon: Delighted to be here.

President Ashton: You know, the mission of BYU-Pathway is to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who are leaders in their homes, the Church, and the community. So we're really about developing disciples of Jesus Christ. And I'm curious, what does it mean to you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Elder Kearon: I think one of the great foundations of becoming a disciple is to have a really clear understanding in our heads and in our hearts of who our Father in Heaven is and who our Savior is and, particularly, how They feel about us. They love us. They treasure us. I can almost hear someone tuning in today saying, "No, but not me!" Well, They do. They love each and every one of us. And Father in Heaven yearns to have us home again safe and sound after this very brief moment that we have here. And He sent His Son to do all the heavy work in relation to getting us home safe and happy.

I relate to this, probably most keenly through my relationship with my children, who inevitably make mistakes, like all children. And I'm not sitting there counting their mistakes. I'm yearning for them to learn, to grow, and to be happy. And I want to address, if I can, that image of the intimacy we have with our Savior, in particular. And one of the best ways of portraying that comes — for me, at least — in 3 Nephi, the eleventh chapter, which many of us who are at all familiar with the Book of Mormon know. We've spent over 400 pages waiting for the Savior to come at this point. And when He comes, He's introduced by the Father, He then introduces Himself, and then He does one of the most intimate things that He could possibly do. He invites all of those present to come, and as it says, to "come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know" — that ye may know — "that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world"¹ — and have been slain for the sins of the world.

That's why He came; He tells them that's why He came. And before they come and have this extraordinary moment with Him, He tells them the why. And so, He didn't say, you know, He didn't look at them as He might've done and recount their sins. He says, "Come, this is Me. I have come to take your sins upon me." And then they have this moment, each of them, one by one with Him. That gives me the most extraordinary, overwhelming reassurance in relation to my sins and those of anybody tuning in today.

President Ashton: Yeah, I love that one-by-one imagery. You know, many of our students grew up in situations where it was difficult at home. And they didn't have parents who treat them the way Heavenly Father treats us. What advice would you have for those students?

Elder Kearon: Well, first of all, I'd say how sorry I feel for anyone in that situation. We are treasured and loved in ways that we do not have words to describe. Paul, to the Philippians, described "the peace of God, which passeth

¹ [3 Nephi 11:14](#)

all understanding.”² That means there’s peace. We can’t begin to describe the true love that our Father in Heaven and Savior have for us. And that’s where we’d guide our friends who’ve had a difficult start.

President Ashton: So I see this devotional. I hear what you’re saying. What do I do tomorrow morning to start to feel this love and see myself the way Heavenly Father sees me?

Elder Kearon: A friend of mine and yours, Elder Lance Wickman, said faith is simply a trust in the Lord.³ And I believe that’s the case. So you asked, what do you do tomorrow morning? Well, wake up trusting that we all fit into a great eternal plan, however bumpy the day may be. I would say that we’re here just for a moment, that this is just a tiny, tiny fraction of our vast eternal existence. And approach the day with faith, with joy, of course, with prayer and some scripture study. That’s enough advice for one morning, isn’t it? Yeah.

President Ashton: Yeah. Thank you for that. I think that’s very helpful. You know, we asked some of our students questions about what they want to know about becoming disciples of Jesus Christ. And several of them said, “I’m so busy. It feels like one more thing I have to do.” What advice would you have for those students?

Elder Kearon: Yeah. We all hear that a lot — indeed, feel that a lot. We all feel busy. And we probably get busier as we get older, so that doesn’t go away. I would say that everything we do — the other components of our day, our studies, our work, our caring for somebody or other — these are not separate from our faith. These are not separate from our spiritual development. These are all part, these are all wrapped together as part of our spiritual development. So we have to apply our faith to our work, to our studies, to our relationships — on our best days, to every engagement that we have with anybody, and practice that. And that’s how we begin to get over the feeling of, “Oh, I’m too busy to do that.” No, our faith behavior should become part of us in everything that we do.

President Ashton: So it’s not “one more thing that I have to do.” It *is* what I do. It’s what I become.

Elder Kearon: It’s what I become. It’s how I am.

President Ashton: And, you know, I find that sometimes I’m a little impatient with myself and expect myself to, you know, get it today. I can’t make any mistakes.

Elder Kearon: Well, we have to be patient. We have to be patient with ourselves; otherwise, we’d be constantly frustrated. If we have that attitude, it’s a downward spiral. We’ve got to be patient. Elder Holland said we have to remember “we get credit for *trying*”⁴ — or something very close to that. He said we get credit just for trying, and we do. The Atonement is infinite. And so we have to be patient with ourselves as we come to that understanding and just try a little more each day.

President Ashton: And if we mess up, just start over.

Elder Kearon: Start again.

President Ashton: We’ve noticed a trend in people being unkind online, and it seems like we’ve forgotten the Savior, oftentimes in our public discourse.

Elder Kearon: We’ve forgotten the Savior in our public discourse, and we’ve run almost in the other direction. So much of our public discourse has become ugly and poisonous, and we need to change that. And, of course, the

² [Philippians 4:7](#)

³ See Lance B. Wickman, “[But If Not](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2002, 31

⁴ Jeffery R. Holland, “[Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2016, 125

people we have power over are ourselves. And so, we can practice being kind on social media and in what we say out loud, or in any setting. We become kind and act as a counterbalance to the often dark public discourse.

President Ashton: So we become disciples as we serve others. We're kind. We bring up the Savior in our discourse with others.

Elder Kearon: Yes, yes.

President Ashton: But we've made a covenant at baptism, and we renew it every week that we're going to remember Him. How do you always remember the Savior?

Elder Kearon: I've heard President Ballard ask that question. In fact, several times I've heard him ask that question. What he does is — when asked "How do you always remember the Savior?", he says, "I do this." And he (I should have had one) pulls a picture — just a little card of the Savior out of his shirt pocket — and he says, "I look at Him." And he literally looks at Him. You can see it working on him as he does that. I think we can do that. I suppose a good way these days is to put a picture of the Savior on your phone, on your screensaver or whatever, and just look at Him. And remember Him that way. Another way is just any kind act. Any kind act we're serving Him and we're remembering Him.

President Ashton: One of the challenges in being a disciple of Jesus Christ is loving those who have hurt us. How do you do that?

Elder Kearon: Oh, that takes work, doesn't it?

President Ashton: It does.

Elder Kearon: I mean, in reality that takes work. That's a hard thing to do to people who are unkind to us, particularly consistently unkind to us. And the Savior most clearly understood this when He gave the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use [you], and persecute you."⁵ Now, that's a tall order when you're in the middle of some of that. But it is the way to find peace.

President Ashton: Sometimes I have to remember the Savior's longsuffering with me. Maybe I can be longsuffering with someone else.

Elder Kearon: That's a great point. You speak for all of us there.

President Ashton: Well, unfortunately, He has to be longsuffering with me often.

Elder Kearon: Me, too.

President Ashton: Elder Kearon, we're so grateful for your time. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your counsel. We're grateful for your service and just love you.

Elder Kearon: Well, thank you. And I'd like to express love and gratitude to you and to you dear students, who will experience so many challenges at the moment. And try to balance your lives and find your path of discipleship. I pray that you will.

⁵ [Matthew 5:44](#)

And I want to share my testimony with you that I love my Father in Heaven. I love my Savior. I'm so grateful for Them. I'm so grateful for the Restoration of the gospel, that we have it in its purity. I'm so grateful and testify of a living prophet today who will guide us. And I know that we will have prophets to guide us until our Savior returns. And I share these thoughts with you, and with my love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.