

## “A Time of Unprecedented Opportunities”

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We are living in an amazing time in human history. It's truly extraordinary. This is a time that ancient prophets spoke of but knew they would not be a part of. How blessed we are to live during this wonderful time. Previous generations could not have imagined the benefits that science has brought to our lives. The invention of smartphones alone, and our easy access to them, would leave many of our grandparents speechless.

My family and I love soccer. If my grandfather, who passed away many years ago, could be here and see how easy it is for me to find and watch any soccer game in the world, even in high definition, he would be shocked and would die again!

Hopefully, you use these modern marvels for more than just entertainment. With all the breakthroughs in technology, we have amazing opportunities that previous generations did not have. The abundance of these opportunities might lead us to take them for granted. I hope we do not lose our ability to be amazed.

In the second chapter of 3 Nephi, it says, “...and the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds...”<sup>1</sup> One of the great opportunities we have is participating in the gathering of Israel in these days. President Russell M. Nelson has said:

“You were sent to earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world, to help gather Israel. There is *nothing* happening on this earth right now that is more important than that. There is *nothing* of greater consequence. Absolutely *nothing*.... [I]f you want to, you can be a big part of it. You can be a big part of something big, something grand, something majestic!”<sup>2</sup>

Along with this opportunity today, you have the blessing of having access to high-quality education, which will better help you contribute to the gathering of Israel. As our beloved prophet has said: “Education is the difference between *wishing* you could help other people and *being able* to help them.”<sup>3</sup>

When I was serving in the area presidency of the Caribbean, I met with President Clark Gilbert and talked about the expansion of BYU Pathway Worldwide to the people there. I know that BYU-Pathway offers an incredible opportunity to receive a higher education. With BYU-Pathway, you start by earning a certificate, which takes 15 credit hours, or one year, and which will help you be better qualified to enter the labor market as you expand your educational plans. Each certificate builds into your bachelor's degree. This educational option allows you to gain skills that will give you more opportunities to get a better job. I invite you to gain an education that will help you develop valuable working skills.

My brothers and sisters, I promise you that pursuing a certificate will give you new job skills, as well as new insights and motivation to deepen your testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> [3 Nephi 2:1](#)

<sup>2</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “[Hope of Israel](#)” (worldwide youth broadcast, June 3, 2018), [hopeofisrael.churchofjesuschrist.org](http://hopeofisrael.churchofjesuschrist.org)

<sup>3</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “[Youth of the Noble Birthright: What Will You Choose?](#)” (Church Educational System devotional for young adults, Sept. 6, 2013), [broadcasts.churchofjesuschrist.org](http://broadcasts.churchofjesuschrist.org)

Let me share with you the story of Ricardo Ledesma, a BYU-Pathway student in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Ricardo is 38 years old. A few years ago, he was looking for a way to get a university degree when he heard about PathwayConnect at a devotional. Maybe this is like your story? After PathwayConnect, he completed a certificate in computer information technology, then a certificate in system administration. With those skills, he received a much better job and became a valuable resource for his employer. This past July, he became the first person from Dominican Republic to earn his bachelor's degree [online through BYU-Idaho]!

He now works as a database administrator. Ricardo shared that his gospel-centered education helped him not only get a better job, but become a better husband to his wife, Elisa; a better father to his four children; a better leader; and a better disciple of Jesus Christ.

Education has always been part of the gospel of our Savior. In our day, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught, "For members of the Church, education is not merely a good idea — it's a commandment."<sup>4</sup>

From Book of Mormon times, we learned that King Benjamin made sure that his children learned a skill so that they "might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord."<sup>5</sup>

I know we are living in an extraordinary time. This is a time where we have so many opportunities. These opportunities stem from the fact that the Restoration of the gospel took place, that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son, and the Book of Mormon is a living witness of that reality. This dispensation is preparing for the Second Coming through the gathering of Israel, as we have been taught by President Nelson. I bear my testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that He is real, and I testify of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "[Two Principles for Any Economy](#)," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 58

<sup>5</sup> [Mosiah 1:2](#)