

**President Brian K. Ashton:** Brothers and sisters, welcome to this special BYU-Pathway Worldwide broadcast with the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education. My name is Brian Ashton, and I am the president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide. Elder D. Todd Christofferson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and chairman of the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education, presides over this meeting and has asked me to conduct.

We are privileged to meet tonight in Mexico City. It is the first time that the Executive Committee meets at an international BYU-Pathway location. We have many BYU-Pathway students and guests in attendance, with thousands more watching online throughout Spanish-speaking Latin America. We extend our warmest welcome to all of you who are watching this historic broadcast.

In addition to Elder Christofferson, we would like to welcome the other members of the Executive Committee, including Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who serves as vice-chair of the Executive Committee; Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Presidency of the Seventy, who previously served as Commissioner of the Church Educational System; and President Camille N. Johnson, Relief Society General President.

We would also like to welcome Elder Clark G. Gilbert, General Authority Seventy and current Commissioner of the Church Educational System; the Mexico Area Presidency, Elders Hugo Montoya, Adrian Ochoa, and Sean Douglas; as well as Elder Alvin F. Meredith III, General Authority Seventy and president of BYU-Idaho; Bruce C. Kusch, president of Ensign College; Chad H. Webb, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion; and R. Kelly Haws, Assistant Commissioner and Secretary of the Education Committee.

Now, we will have the pleasure of watching a video prepared especially for this occasion. After the video we will have the honor of listening to tonight's speakers. First, we will be pleased to hear from President Camille N. Johnson. President Johnson was sustained as Relief Society General President on April 2, 2022. She previously served as Primary General President.

President Johnson earned a bachelor's and law degree from the University of Utah and practiced law for nearly 30 years. She and her husband, Douglas, served as mission leaders in the Peru Arequipa Mission from 2016 to 2019. They are the parents of three sons.

After her remarks, we will hear from Elder Ronald A. Rasband. Elder Rasband was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 3, 2015. He previously served as the Senior President of the Seventy, as counselor in the Central Europe Area Presidency, as Utah Salt Lake City Area President, and as Executive Director of the Temple Department. Elder Rasband presided over the New York New York North Mission from 1996 to 1999. Elder Rasband attended the University of Utah. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Business and Commerce from Utah Valley University. He and his wife, Melanie, are the parents of five children.

The last speaker will be Elder D. Todd Christofferson. Elder Christofferson was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on April 5, 2008. At the time of his call, he was serving in the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Christofferson previously served as Executive Director of the Family History and Church History Department and as president of the Mexico South Area here in Mexico City. Elder Christofferson earned his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and his law degree from Duke University. He and his wife, Katherine, are the parents of five children.

Brothers and sisters, now unlike what we see in general conference, it is not common for us to hear from two special witnesses of the Savior Jesus Christ in one night. As it becomes more difficult to recognize the truth, the guidance of prophets and apostles will become increasingly crucial in helping us stay close to the Savior.

Having met with them frequently and having followed their counsel in my own life, I know that Elder Christofferson and Elder Rasband are special witnesses of the Savior Jesus Christ. If you follow their advice and that of President Russell M. Nelson, you will draw closer to the Savior, find greater peace and joy, and better withstand the trials and temptations you will face in your own life.

After Elder Christofferson, the last prayer will be offered by Ulises Alejandro Rivero Garcia, a BYU-Pathway student from Toluca, Mexico.

### [Video]

**President Camille N. Johnson:** I'm so happy to be with you in Mexico City and throughout the area of this broadcast and to have the opportunity to speak with you in my beloved mission language. I was not a missionary when I was young; I served with my husband as a mission leader in Arequipa, Peru, from 2016 to 2019. It was there that I learned the little Spanish I know.

How was I to learn Spanish and communicate with my missionaries, most of whom were native Spanish speakers who did not speak English? I was determined to solve two problems at the same time.

The missionaries needed to learn English to increase their ability to serve the Lord and bless their families. I needed to learn Spanish to fulfill my responsibilities as a mission leader and because I wanted to communicate with my missionaries who I love so dearly.

And so, the mission became my classroom! I did not have a tutor, but I did have missionaries! While my husband was interviewing a missionary, I would sit in the hallway with his or her companion. I would try to speak to Spanish to them, and I asked them to speak English back to me. We all used our hands to try to explain ourselves. They corrected my Spanish, and I corrected their English. We all made a lot of mistakes and laughed together. Laughter is a universal language, and we all kept trying!

Our missionaries studied English every day as a companionship, and I kept working at Spanish. If I had waited to try to speak Spanish until I felt confident that I knew Spanish, I never would have learned. So, I talked to my missionaries and my new Peruvian friends. I studied the Spanish books they give the English-speaking missionaries in the MTC. I put Duolingo on my phone and did that every day.

Spanish was not easy for me. I made a lot of mistakes. And, sometimes, that was frustrating for me because I am a words person! I need words to express my feelings and my ideas and my love. Words are my love language.

I wanted to be out with my missionaries. I wanted to get to know them, and help them, and serve with them. That required words, and I didn't know many words in Spanish. But I kept working at it.

I had the right desire to express my love for my missionaries and the Peruvian people and to strengthen them in preparation for Second Coming of the Savior. I included Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in my righteous desire, asking in prayer for help, including that the Spirit would do the teaching when my Spanish was inadequate. My efforts to learn were combined with my efforts to for personal worthiness so that I could receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Was I miraculously blessed with the ability to speak perfect Spanish? No! You now know that! But I was blessed with the ability to communicate the things of most importance: my love for my missionaries and my testimony that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ and the word of God. My missionaries know I love them. And my missionaries know I expect them to study the Book of Mormon every day. They know that doing so will bring heaven's help into their lives.

I was blessed with exactly what I needed to accomplish the will of the Lord for me as a mission leader. And knowing some Spanish now allows me to communicate with more of my brothers and sisters around the world.

Did learning Spanish require effort and commitment on my part? Yes! Did involving the Savior in my effort to learn make a difference? Absolutely!

I have been blessed to know that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ is the strength of BYU-Pathway students.

I testify that as you involve the Lord in your efforts to learn, He will bless you and guide you. I know that He helped me learn Spanish. And He helped me when I was a university student.

Heavenly Father wants His daughters and sons to always be learning for both temporal and spiritual reasons. Education increases our capacity to earn money, to support ourselves, and to provide for our families. President Dallin H. Oaks said that “Education is mandatory for personal security and well-being.”<sup>2</sup>

But money is not the only reason to pursue an education. Your example in choosing to be educated will impact your posterity and their capacity for self-reliance.

My maternal and paternal grandmothers both received bachelor’s degrees in education. They completed their degrees after their children were born and had begun attending school. It required self-motivation, planning, and a short-term financial sacrifice for them to afford to pay tuition.

My mother, likewise, studied and received a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

These examples of strong women in my life — who pursued a degree even when it required tremendous personal sacrifice — instilled in me a desire and determination to be educated and self-reliant. You will provide that same example to your peers, your families, and your posterity. I have never regretted my commitment of time, money, and energy to be educated.

And I continue to learn everything I can about the world and about the Savior, who created the world. Part of the course of lifelong learning is studying about Jesus Christ, His life, and His teachings.

The Savior said, “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.”<sup>3</sup> That is a glorious promise of peace from the Prince of Peace! What a blessing it is for you to combine your secular studies with a study of God and His purposes.

Learning is part of becoming more like Heavenly Father. Education increases your ability to serve the Lord. It empowers you to bless others, especially your family. The more you learn, the more you can help build God’s kingdom and influence the world for good.

So, I invite you, even after you complete your degree, to always be learning. Look for opportunities to expand your mind and your skills. Learning with the help of the Spirit is not just for your BYU-Pathway studies; it applies to everything you do — at home, at church, and at work.

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<sup>1</sup> See [Philippians 4:13](#)

<sup>2</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, “[Learning and Latter-day Saints](#),” *Liahona*, April 2009, 28

<sup>3</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 19:23](#)

Your enrollment in BYU-Pathway is part of your advancement on your journey home to our loving Heavenly Father. You are becoming more like Him. I testify that the path to our heavenly home is available because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can be relieved of the burden and consequences of weakness, mistakes, and sin. *And* we can be strengthened to do difficult things: like learning English or Spanish; like managing time when you are caring for your family, fulfilling a Church calling, working and studying; like living within a budget.

I testify that Jesus Christ is the strength of BYU-Pathway students. He is aware of you. He loves you. He wants you to be happy. He has prepared a way for you to return home to Him and to our Heavenly Father. My dear friends, trust Him, rely on Him. That is my prayer for you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Elder Ronald A. Rasband:** Good evening, dear brothers and sisters. I'm grateful that I have Alberto here by my side. Unfortunately, I do not know your beautiful language, so Alberto will make my words even better for you tonight. Thank you, Sister Johnson, for your beautiful message. I saw all of you sisters smiling a little brighter as she spoke tonight. She represents all the sisters in the Church throughout the world, and we are so grateful to her.

I feel like a missionary tonight. I feel like a junior companion on my mission. I'm grateful to be here with my senior companion, Elder Christofferson. As Brother Ashton said, it's very unusual that two of us ever go to a meeting together. I am just as anxious to hear him as you are.

Now, I want to welcome all of you to this devotional tonight. Thank you here in Mexico City and throughout Mexico and throughout all Latin America, who are watching our broadcast. We love you, and we're grateful to be with you.

I want to give a short message tonight to those of you involved in BYU-Pathway, future members of BYU-Pathway, moms and dads of those in BYU-Pathway — basically, to all of you. I want to speak about the classroom of BYU-Pathway. We don't talk about the classroom very often. But the classroom of BYU-Pathway is your own home or apartment or the chapels that you may meet in for your gatherings — just a bit about the importance of those places.

Before that, let me give you a little background. We have been told by prophets and apostles of old that we live in very special times — challenging times. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."<sup>4</sup>

Nephi also saw our day. In 2 Nephi 28, Nephi says this: "For behold, at that day shall he [the devil] rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good."<sup>5</sup> The word I want you to remember in that verse is *rage*.

So, from Paul, we're told of perilous times. From Nephi, we are told of a day when the devil will rage in the hearts of men. And in our day of the Restoration, the Lord said this to Joseph Smith, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants 1:17: "Wherefore I, the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments."<sup>6</sup> The word I ask you to remember there is *calamity*.

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<sup>4</sup> [2 Timothy 3:1](#)

<sup>5</sup> [2 Nephi 28:20](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 1:17](#)

Now, you put those words together — perilous, rage, calamity: Welcome to our day. This is the day you're studying in. These are the times that you're trying to improve your education, in a day when there are great challenges upon the earth.

But the Lord did not leave us without comfort. In Doctrine and Covenants 45:32, the Lord says this: "But my disciples shall stand in holy places and shall not be moved."<sup>7</sup>

And then in verse 35, He says this: "And I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled."<sup>8</sup>

Stand and study in holy places. That's the simplicity of my message. You study in your homes. I am struck by the emphasis on standing in holy places. Just a word about some holy places that I think about. Your homes — in your homes, it's not the bricks and mortar that make them holy; it's the environment that you all create in your homes and apartments that make them holy. We can pray in our homes. We can study the scriptures. We can study our curriculums for BYU-Pathway, creating in our homes and apartments a holy place.

Your chapels, like this beautiful place, and all the chapels throughout Latin America that you attend, where we gather not only for church meetings but for BYU-Pathway meetings — these chapels are also holy places. When you stand in them and when you study in them, you invite the Lord and the Holy Ghost into your life.

The last one I'll mention to you tonight is the house of the Lord, the temple. Perhaps of all the holy places that we stand in, the house of the Lord is the most sacred and special place. The temple is an important part of BYU-Pathway and education. Remember, it was the Lord who said, "The glory of God is intelligence."<sup>9</sup>

So, dear friends, brothers and sisters, I bear my witness to you tonight that you need not be troubled in these days as you stand more frequently in holy places. In BYU-Pathway, in Church education, we have the perfect opportunity to do this.

I ask the Lord to bless you in your studies and in your efforts to create an environment where you will stand in a holy place. And I promise you, in the name of the Lord, you need not be troubled.

I love the Lord. I know He is our Savior. I know Russell Marion Nelson is his prophet on the earth. I'm honored and grateful to serve with my brother Elder Christofferson and recommend him to you now. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Elder D. Todd Christofferson:** It strikes me that tonight you have here two Apostles, two members of the Quorum of the Twelve, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, the General President of the Relief Society, and five other General Authorities. I think you are either very good or very bad. Surely, very good.

I thank my Heavenly Father for the privilege I have to address you tonight, to be present physically, personally — personally with you and with those who join us via broadcast. I want to add a strong "amen" to the messages of Elder Rasband and Sister Johnson, my companions. It is a privilege to be joined tonight by all the companions that Brother Brian Ashton mentioned.

First of all, I wish to express to you the greetings and a message of love from President Russell M. Nelson. As you know, last week he celebrated his 99th birthday. I don't know if I'll make it to that birthday, and I don't know

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<sup>7</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 45:32](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 45:35](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 93:36](#)

about you either. He is very active, alert, and has a great desire to express through us his love, his appreciation, and his gratitude for your prayers.

Also, as you may have noticed, we are delivering messages from the Church Educational System, specifically the BYU-Pathway Worldwide program. We are on this occasion, me and my companions, in meetings focusing on the progress and future of this program — what we can do to improve it and make it accessible to everyone who wants to participate in any country on earth.

We have seen progress, a very important improvement, very impressive. I hope no one thinks that this is just an English course. We already have EnglishConnect, which it is, but BYU-Pathway Worldwide is much more. It provides opportunities to earn certificates and also bachelor's degrees in several subjects — and, soon, in three years instead of four.

So it's going to provide everyone who desires an unparalleled opportunity of preparation and education that we don't find elsewhere. Now tonight I would like to speak to you as one person; so I address you, each one, personally. So, I'm going to talk to you that way. I begin by saying that your education is a preparation for a better quality of life, for you and, perhaps most importantly, for those who depend on you or who look to your example to guide them in their own choices. It is a preparation for a life of service.

Education is even a preparation for eternity, for we know that whatever principle of intelligence we attain in this life will rise with us in the Resurrection. Consider the example of the Savior Himself. The first 30 years of His life were devoted to preparing for the last three crucial years of His life. We see how important and valuable that preparation was to the success of His ministry and mission.

Former BYU football coach LaVell Edwards used to say that in sports people often talk about the will to win, but even more important than the will to win, he said, "It's the will to prepare."

Many players expect to win or want to win, but only those who do the work and make the sacrifices to train and practice hour after hour and day after day are the ones who become the winners. You are demonstrating a willingness to prepare through continued education and training, and I congratulate you on that.

Now, you need to always remember that you are not alone in this. There are people who love you and pray for you. Maybe there are some skeptics who tell you that you can't do it or that for some reason they don't want you to succeed, but they can't stop you. There are more who support you than those who don't. Most importantly, your Heavenly Father and Savior know you and can and will grant you heavenly help. Make God your partner.

At Christmas, when my family and I reread the Nativity account from the Savior, my mind is focused on two words we have all read many times: "Fear not." Remember when the angel first appeared to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of God's Son? She was worried, she says, but the angel quickly told her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God."<sup>10</sup>

Later, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."<sup>11</sup> When the angels announced the birth of the Savior to the shepherds in Bethlehem, they were very afraid, but the angel said to them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [Luke 1:30](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Matthew 1:20](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Luke 2:10](#)

This theme is found throughout scripture. For example, Paul to Timothy, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting how often the Lord repeats this counsel in Doctrine and Covenants, suggesting that we need to hear it especially in our time, as Elder Rasband has commented. For example, “Whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear.”<sup>14</sup> “Fear not, little children, for you are mine.”<sup>15</sup> “Be of good cheer, and do not fear.”<sup>16</sup>

The statement that impresses me most strongly is the Lord’s tender counsel to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery a year before the Church was organized. He said, “Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.”<sup>17</sup>

So, fear not. “Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. ... Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”<sup>18</sup>

Then the Lord declares the ultimate reason why they and we need not fear. He said, “Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>19</sup> We need not fear because we have a Redeemer. If we build on His rock, nothing can permanently harm us or take away our ultimate happiness. Because of His infinite Atonement we can, with His help, overcome all things.

One of the ways we build on the rock of Christ is to remember and recommit to Him when we partake of the sacrament. In the Book of Mormon, Jesus commands us to partake of the bread broken in remembrance of His body and to drink the wine (the water) in remembrance of His blood shed for us.<sup>20</sup>

Then He adds, “It shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.”<sup>21</sup> He adds, “I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.”<sup>22</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson reminds us, “The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives. When the focus of our lives is on God’s plan of salvation, ... and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. ...

“Joy is a gift for the faithful. It is the gift that comes from intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ. ... When we choose Heavenly Father to be our God and when we can feel the Savior’s Atonement working in our lives, we will be filled with joy. Every time we nurture our spouse or guide our children, every time we forgive someone or ask for forgiveness, we can feel joy.

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<sup>13</sup> [2 Timothy 1:7](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 10:55](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 50:41](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 68:6](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 6:33](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 6:34, 36](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 6:37](#)

<sup>20</sup> See [3 Nephi 18:1–11](#)

<sup>21</sup> [3 Nephi 18:7](#)

<sup>22</sup> [3 Nephi 18:12](#)

“Every day that you and I choose to live celestial laws, every day that we keep our covenants and help others do the same, joy will be ours.”<sup>23</sup> Thus the words of the prophet.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I plead with each of you to go forward in your life with faith, not fear. Don't be afraid of the future. I tell you that you were foreordained — you were each of you foreordained to be born and enter the Church of Jesus Christ at this time, because you possess the ability through the grace of Jesus Christ to succeed in a difficult world and bring others to Christ.

As you build your life on the rock of Christ and strive to do His will, you will overcome and prosper in many ways. As you turn to the Savior in your trials, you will come to know Him, you will come to know God, and you will find comfort in the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

Now, I want to read to you two paragraphs of the prophet's words, published in *Liahona* magazine in October of last year (2022), entitled “The Everlasting Covenant.” He teaches us something (for me, it was new), something important in terms of this message that I'm trying to emphasize of holding on to our Lord and with Him going forward and overcoming every challenge.

This is what the prophet said: “Once we make a covenant with God, we leave neutral ground forever. God will not abandon His relationship with those who have forged such a bond with Him. In fact, all who have made a covenant with God have access to a special kind of love and mercy. In the Hebrew language, that covenantal love is called *hesed* (חֶסֶד).

“*Hesed* has no adequate English [or Spanish] equivalent. Translators of the King James Version of the Bible must have struggled with how to render *hesed* in English. They often chose ‘lovingkindness.’ This captures much but not all the meaning of *hesed*. Other translations were also rendered, such as ‘mercy’ and ‘goodness.’ ... Because God has *hesed* for those who have covenanted with Him, He will love them. He will continue to work with them and offer them opportunities to change. He will forgive them when they repent. And should they stray, He will help them find their way back to Him.

“Once you and I have made a covenant with God, our relationship with Him becomes much closer than before our covenant. Now we are bound together. Because of our covenant with God, He will never tire in His efforts to help us, and we will never exhaust His merciful patience with us. Each of us has a special place in God's heart. He has high hopes for us.”<sup>24</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I speak to you as one who knows that God is your Father and that Jesus Christ is your Redeemer. He is living today, a glorious and risen being. He is leading The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints personally, the kingdom of God on earth.

All the promises I have spoken of are true. The proof is that Jesus Christ was resurrected. I bear this testimony as one of your witnesses and invoke His love and blessings upon you. Each of you is infinitely precious to Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>23</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “[Joy and Spiritual Survival](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82, 84

<sup>24</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “[The Everlasting Covenant](#),” *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 5–6