

“Leadership”

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I.

I am very pleased with this opportunity to begin a new year by speaking to BYU-Pathway Worldwide students. You are a remarkably diverse group. You number nearly 60,000 students. You live in many different circumstances, in over 180 countries. I cannot speak to each of your circumstances, so I will try to speak of things each of us share — eternal truths that apply to each of us, whatever our circumstances.

A majority of you live outside the United States. Many of you are adult learners. Your average age is 36 in North America and 30 in other areas of the world. Most of you are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but about 10% of you are not. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sponsors BYU-Pathway Worldwide, which means that it determines its curriculum and directs its policies. Its sponsorship also means that the tuition you pay at BYU-Pathway — as is true of tuitions paid at other BYU institutions — covers only a small fraction of the cost of the education. Most of the cost of your education is paid by the sponsoring Church. The Church does this to help develop disciples of Jesus Christ who are or will be leaders in their homes, their congregations, and their communities.

All of you are enrolled in BYU-Pathway to acquire knowledge, skills, and patterns of personal effort that will help you become self-reliant servants of Jesus Christ and of your fellowmen. Many of you are in leadership positions already, and in years to come most of you will be leaders in your families, your church congregations, your communities, and your nations. In this talk I will give primary emphasis to principles of gospel leadership that will help you in the various leadership responsibilities that will come your way.

II.

Speaking of leadership, we have recently encouraged enrollment for all of our returned missionaries who desire to pursue their education. We do this because those who have served missions have already demonstrated their faith and leadership in pursuing eternal truths, and we want to help them proceed with their education and personal development.

We live in challenging times: wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, tornadoes, tsunamis, and the prospects of financial disasters. More important, 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.

Though men’s hearts are failing them, you should take heart. There have always been challenging times. We, the generations of your predecessors, have survived serious challenges, and so will you. The answer to all of these challenges is the same as it has always been. We have a Savior, and He has taught us what we should do. At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, He declared, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹

As His witness I testify that His teachings are true and that the way He has marked out is the way to peace in this world and everlasting life in the world to come.

III.

Foremost among the things you should remember from your BYU-Pathway education and experiences are the principles of right and wrong you are learning. At BYU we like to quote the teachings of our educational founder,

¹ [John 16:33](#)

President Brigham Young. He spoke as an extraordinarily wise leader and also as a prophet. He taught this about the purpose of education in the gospel of Jesus Christ: “All our educational pursuits are in the service of God, for all these labors are to establish truth on the earth, and that we may increase in knowledge, wisdom, understanding in the power of faith and in the wisdom of God, that we may become fit subjects to dwell in a higher state of existence and intelligence than we now enjoy.”²

Brigham Young had a receptive and inclusive attitude toward his fellowmen that each of us should understand and emulate in a world where many do not share our values: “It has never altered my feelings towards individuals, as men or as women, whether they believe as I do or not. Can you live as neighbors with me? I can with you; and it is no particular concern of mine whether you believe with me or not.”³

At another time he said: “Our religion is adapted to the capacity of the whole human family. It does not send a portion of the people to howl in torment for ever and ever, but it reaches after the last son and daughter of Adam and Eve, and will pluck them from the prison, unlock the doors, and burst the bonds and bring forth every soul who will receive salvation.”⁴

IV.

Father Lehi taught that the children of God exist “that they might have joy.”⁵ That great truth is fundamental to our philosophy of life. The kind of joy referred to in the scriptures is not the happiness we experience in temporary rushes of pleasure. The joy we were created for is enduring. We may properly say it is eternal. Where do we find this greatest joy? The gospel of Jesus Christ includes many principles that come together to produce the eternal joy we are seeking. I will focus on one of these — the exercise of the power of creation. Mothers realize that joy in bringing life and growth to a child, and fathers too, though for them the joy of children tends to come later.

You will recognize examples of the joy of creation in other less eternal activities. Surely the process of cultivating living things and seeing them come to maturity creates joy in shepherds and in farmers. Teachers can experience that joy, as I know from personal experience. There is also joy in writing or creating a work of art, or in a performance that brings one of these to life for an audience. And exceeding all of these is the joy we experience in many forms of service to our fellowman. But all of these illustrations are only mortal or temporary examples of the joy of exercising the power of creation.

I believe that our greatest joy is found through the gospel of Jesus Christ, which explains our origin as spirits, the creation of the world, our purpose in mortality, and our destiny in eternity. Explanations of the plan of salvation often use the word “joy.” When the foundations of the world were laid, we spirits “shouted for joy.”⁶ The Bible also records that the announcement of the Savior’s birth was a message “of great joy.”⁷ The Book of Mormon, our second witness of Christ, has many such teachings. Our Savior’s Atonement and Resurrection “filled [us] with great joy.”⁸ His love, “the most desirable above all things,” is described as “the most joyous to the soul.”⁹ Finally, the Lord Jesus Christ described the experience of returning to dwell with God as a “fulness of joy.”¹⁰

² [Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young](#) (1997), 317

³ *Ibid* at 219

⁴ *Ibid* at 292

⁵ See [2 Nephi 2:25](#)

⁶ [Job 38:7](#)

⁷ [Luke 2:10](#)

⁸ [Alma 4:14](#)

⁹ [1 Nephi 11:22–23](#)

¹⁰ [3 Nephi 28:10](#); see also [Doctrine and Covenants 93:33](#)

Surely our greatest eternal joy will be in the process and effects of the powers of creation that extend beyond this mortal life, giving joy throughout all eternity. That is why, as God has revealed, “eternal life ... is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”¹¹

And so I come to this concluding advice to you who study through BYU-Pathway: Treasure and enlarge your family connections. Cherish and use your opportunities for creation in eternal marriage. And value your friendships and opportunities for learning and service, for those efforts can also lead to the joy that is eternal.

I testify that these things are true. Our greatest eternal joy is found through the gospel of Jesus Christ, as we seek the eternal life His teachings and Atonement make possible. I testify of Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.¹² And by the power of His holy priesthood, I bless you to understand these truths. And I bless you to hear the promptings of His Spirit to guide you as righteous leaders to make and teach the decisions that establish us on the covenant path that leads to our destiny as children of God: eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God.”¹³ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹¹ [Doctrine and Covenants 14:7](#)

¹² See [Moroni 6:4](#)

¹³ [Doctrine and Covenants 14:7](#)