

“Becoming a Finisher with Christ”

Sister Shamiso Mberengwa Makasi

Lecturer, National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe

My dear BYU-Pathway Worldwide friends, I am so grateful to be with you today. I grew up in Mkoba township in Gweru, Zimbabwe, where my mother taught my family to plant and nurture seeds. We would take time to water, weed, and fertilize, lest the weeds overrun the crop or eradicate or reduce our whole harvest. Because of this practice, we always harvested more food than our neighbors, who planted the same seeds as us but never returned to the fields to weed, dig around, or fertilize them. Planting and caring for seeds taught me an important principle: it is good to be someone who starts something, but the real reward comes in being a finisher.

Since that lesson, my life has been characterized by constantly studying and gaining qualifications that I use to work and earn a living as I help my hardworking husband to provide for our family. I now work as a university lecturer, teaching students financial accounting. In my work, I have noticed a pattern among our highly successful students: they finish what they start, and they submit their assignments on time.

Enrolling in any short course, degree program, or qualification, or certification is a good beginning; it is like planting seeds. But it is not the end; working hard and finishing differentiates achievers from non-achievers. As a BYU-Pathway Worldwide student, you can finish any course you started and finish it well. You can submit all your assignments on time and follow through on your promise to complete your course, your certificates, and eventually your degree to the best of your ability with the resources with which the Lord has blessed you.

You become something good when you develop this attribute of finishing tasks and seeing them through. You become an achiever and eventually a certificate and degree earner, a stand-out employee or entrepreneur, a strong leader in the Church, and a provider for your family who establishes your home as a sanctuary of faith. Finishers have a title and recognition that those who start and give up may never receive. The goal is to never give up midway through a course when you have been blessed with all the resources you need to complete the task.

I draw from the perfect example of our Savior, who never gave up when He agreed to undertake the infinite Atonement for all of us. His journey was coupled with pain, ridicule, loneliness, false accusations, and eventually death. In His final moments on the cross, I find it significant that His last words included, “It is finished.”¹ The Savior finished what He started, and He finished it well.

In today’s language, we may say He was focused and resilient as He faithfully fulfilled His heart-wrenching mission. The Savior did not just start the process and then give up along the way. He finished the work Heavenly Father gave Him to do, and He finished it well and fully.² He is a finisher.

Like our Savior, we can’t allow failure or ridicule to keep us from becoming a finisher. I shudder to think of where my life would be if I had given up when I was ridiculed as a 14-year-old girl coming to Church on my own. Instead, I chose to listen to those who welcomed me in the Church, and I eventually got baptized.

In my university studies, I failed a major course and had to go back another full year to repeat it. I missed graduating with my friends. But the course that I failed no longer defines me because I chose to overturn that failure by repeating the course and, ultimately, passing it. I now hold a bachelor’s degree in accounting, a master’s degree in finance and investments, and I am now pursuing a PhD. I choose every day to finish what I started.

¹ [John 19:30](#); see also [Luke 23:46–47](#)

² See [John 17:4](#)

Still, I am imperfect. Some days are worse than others, and I sometimes feel like quitting, but then I remember that you and I have divine help from above to help us in our studies. As we invite the Savior into our lives, our studies become not only temporal but a spiritual preparation to provide for ourselves and our families, serve in the Church, and carry all the knowledge we gain with us to heaven. Every qualification, certificate, lesson, or experience we gain will help us build the kingdom of Heavenly Father on this earth and beyond. President Russell M. Nelson has taught:

Your mind is precious! It is sacred. Therefore, the education of one's mind is also sacred. Indeed, education is a religious responsibility. ... When you leave this frail existence, your material possessions will remain here, but the Lord has declared that the knowledge you acquire here will rise with you in the resurrection (see D&C 130:18–19).³

Studying, like planting and caring for seeds, is an act of faith. I have seen this in my life. My company once asked me to complete a payroll management course. I did not appreciate it then and wanted to quit. Fortunately, I didn't. Eventually, I used the skills I learned in that course when my husband and I were serving our mission in the Zimbabwe Harare Mission. When COVID-19 struck, the couple missionaries serving in the finance office had to leave. I was asked to assist in paying expenses to keep the mission running. I was able to accomplish the task and help move the Lord's work forward during those difficult times.

When we finish what we start, we eventually become accomplished in our fields. The Lord wants us to succeed. He does not want us to quit on good things. The only quitting and giving up He wants us to do is to quit our sins, give up our bad habits, and repent.

Do not give up on your studies for you are building the foundation of a great work. You are building strength of character and resilience. You are making yourself more employable. You are building a legacy for your children and your posterity. You are emulating the Savior, who never quit on doing good things. If we just enroll and then give up, the weeds of life will eventually run over our efforts, and the harvest which we would have gotten will be eroded. We may even start to doubt ourselves and lose our self-confidence in starting any good thing. Finishing tasks well boosts our self-esteem. We can then take on bigger tasks and develop a pattern of moving mountains and accomplishing great things throughout our lives.

Earning certificates and degrees offered through BYU-Pathway Worldwide is just the beginning of the many accomplishments that the Lord has in store for you, so grab this opportunity the Church has given you to get a quality education. Utilize all the learning resources the Lord has blessed you with to your very best.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has said, "Don't you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. ... Trust God and believe in good things to come."⁴ I add to his words and encourage you to never give up, aim higher and higher, look to the Savior, and succeed! This is my humble prayer for all of you BYU-Pathway Worldwide students. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

³ Russell M. Nelson, "[Education: A Religious Responsibility](#)" (Brigham Young University-Idaho devotional, Jan. 26, 2010), byui.edu/speeches

⁴ Jeffrey R. Holland, "[An High Priest of Good Things to Come](#)," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 1999