

“Special Devotional”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

President Camille N. Johnson, Relief Society General President

President Brian K. Ashton

Our dear BYU-Pathway students, I’m here with Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Sister Camille N. Johnson, Relief Society General President; and Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. As you know, Elder Christofferson and Elder Rasband are special witnesses of Jesus Christ and prophets, seers, and revelators. I want to bear witness of that. And as you listen to them and Sister Johnson today, you’ll be blessed. Thank you for being with us.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Thanks for the opportunity.

President Ashton

Our first question today is this: President Nelson said, “Now is the time for you and me to prepare for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.”¹ How will a BYU-Pathway education help our students prepare for the return of the Savior?

Elder Christofferson

As you think about the Second Coming, preparations for the Second Coming, the real preparation is people. You know, it’s a people preparing a people to receive the Lord. And so it’s all about not so much events as it is about people. And that means, I think, that each of us ought to strive to be the best we can be and then influence others, serve, and lift, and help others in the same way. To me, a BYU-Pathway education is a big part of that — being the best we can be and having an influence for good really everywhere we go, with whomever we have the opportunity to be with and to serve.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband

Brian, I know that months ago when I was preparing my general conference talk, I had the strongest of impressions to include a portion about BYU-Pathway, for the benefit of the students, so that they would know all over the world how much the Lord loves them and how important they are in the majesty of this moment and the hastening of the Lord’s work. So, I just say that the Lord loves them. The Lord wants them to proceed and to get blessed both temporally and spiritually through their BYU-Pathway education, to bless the Church and the kingdom prior to the Lord’s coming.

President Ashton

Thank you.

President Camille N. Johnson

You know, President Nelson’s invitation for us to prepare for the Second Coming of the Savior and the invitation to you to prepare yourself by receiving a BYU-Pathway education made me think a little bit about a scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants. It’s from section 88, and it actually says we are to “teach diligently ... be instructed in doctrine, in the law of the gospel.”² That makes me think of the spiritual learning that we work on, and that’s part of your BYU-Pathway education.

But then the scripture goes on and says the Lord revealed we are also to learn “of things both in heaven and in the earth and under the earth, things that have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass, things

which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms.”³

And then it concludes with this: “That you may be prepared in all things.”⁴ And I think that’s key. As we prepare for the Second Coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we’re prepared when we obtain an education; not just that spiritual learning but also learning that prepares us temporally and that allows us then to participate more fully in building up His kingdom. As we have and receive that education and take advantage of the opportunities that have been provided to us to obtain greater knowledge, then we can participate in building up His kingdom and support our families.

Elder Christofferson

Amen.

President Ashton

Thank you. Because the Holy Ghost is the teacher and witness of all truth, BYU-Pathway students are taught that they need to rely on the Holy Ghost in their studies. How did you learn to obtain, recognize, and follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost in your lives?

Elder Christofferson

Elder Rasband gave a whole talk about this back in April 2017: “Let the Holy Spirit Guide.”⁵ Wasn’t that — wasn’t that the title?

Elder Rasband

That was it. Thank you.

Elder Christofferson

And I remember one thing you said there was we should go with our first prompting — that is, be attuned to the Spirit. But usually that first prompting that comes to us will be the right one, and we shouldn’t second guess or try to overthink it. If it’s good, it’s going to turn out all right. And I think that’s a good part of listening to the Spirit — it’s been my experience anyway; if it’s good, it very likely is the Spirit guiding. Maybe. I don’t know if you want to add any more to your own talk.

Elder Rasband

Well, first of all, I’m honored that you would even bring it up. That is very nice, and I appreciate it. I was thinking of a scripture in Moroni, chapter 7, verse 16, and this is kind of how to obtain the Spirit and how to know if it’s good: “For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore I show unto you a way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ.”⁶ So, one of your questions is, how do they know? My response is, how do you feel? If you feel good, who is it coming from? It’s coming from the Lord. And you ought to follow that prompting.

President Ashton

You feel and it’s prompting you to do good.

Elder Rasband

Correct. And then you ought to do it. Act upon it.

President Ashton

Yes, thank you.

President Johnson

I think I have learned to appreciate and understand better how the Holy Ghost speaks to me in different ways. It's not always the same for me. I think I was taught as a child that the Holy Ghost would be a comforter, would feel like a warm blanket. That's not the way the Holy Ghost always works for me now. Certainly, the Holy Ghost provides me with comfort, but sometimes I feel a little bit of a prompting, a nudge. And as I've listened —

Elder Christofferson

And it may not be comfortable.

President Johnson

— And it's a little bit uncomfortable, suggesting that I do something that's maybe outside of my comfort zone. But as I act on those promptings, because they are prompting to do something good or to say something, I get that feeling. As I've acted upon it, I've realized that that's the source of that prompting. And so I think I've been blessed with more of those promptings as I've acted on those feelings — expressions from Him.

Elder Christofferson

I think we all need to learn the language of the Spirit. That's what we're talking about. And it's like learning any language. It takes some effort, some practice, some experience. And I think of this verse in section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants, where the Lord talks about scripture, because I think the curriculum for learning the language of the Spirit is the scriptures. And the more we're in the scriptures, the more attuned we are to the Spirit and the more we recognize the Spirit, and this is what He says when He talks about those who study the scriptures: "Wherefore you can testify that you've heard my voice and know my words."⁷ So here, *here* is where we learn the language of the Spirit — hear the voice and distinguish the voice of the Spirit from all others.

President Ashton

So read the scriptures. And what I heard from you, Sister Johnson, is practice. Every time you have a good — an impression that's good, as Elder Rasband talked about — act upon it, and you'll begin to learn the language.

Elder Rasband

So, I think a key word, Brian, is "act." Not just feel good. Not just have an emotional experience, but act upon it and do something. And I think our students will learn how to move forward in their life if they act upon these feelings and these promptings.

President Ashton

Thank you.

President Johnson

When we're confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, someone with priesthood authority puts hands on head and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost." And that suggests that we have to — well, it's a directive — we have to do something to receive it. We have to be prepared. We have to want it.

President Ashton

Thank you. I just returned from Brazil, and one of the things I heard from students in Brazil is that they have a lot to do. In fact, many of our students feel overwhelmed with schoolwork, with their job, with callings, family, and other expectations. And sometimes they want to give up. You three do so much. Do you ever get discouraged or overwhelmed? And what is your best tool for lifting your spirits when you do feel discouraged?

President Johnson

I'll tell you what I do every single morning. I listen to President Nelson. I have, I know I have, and I know all of you have 15 minutes to listen to the words of the prophet, seer, and revelator and the Lord's mouthpiece on the

earth today. And that makes a difference for me. He's optimistic. He's joyful. Listening to him and his words reinvigorates me. And I head out the door thinking, I can do this because President Nelson's doing it. So that's a tool that I use that keeps me ready to go.

President Ashton

What a great idea.

Elder Rasband

What a beautiful thing you do.

President Johnson

I love him, and I love his words.

Elder Christofferson

Amen.

Elder Rasband

I learned a long time ago, even before coming into Church ministry, so to speak, that not all things in our day are created equal. And I learned from this scripture — this is Matthew, chapter 6, verse 33. And I recommend it to our students: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."⁸ And so, as I had my to-do list of what I needed to get done during the day, I always made sure that the kingdom of God and Heavenly Father and those things were first. That's as simple as prayer. That's as simple as scripture study. It's as simple as telling my wife I love her. And then the other things that are on that to-do list, they just seem to happen better when I put the things of most importance first.

President Ashton

So Heavenly Father orders things for you.

Elder Rasband

He helps order them. But if you're not willing to let Him and get just overwhelmed by this mass of things that you have to do, it can be very confusing and debilitating to all of us. I mean, we've all been there. You were right. We've all been there. But I think ordering it in that priority of putting God first and His kingdom helps get the rest of it right.

President Ashton

Very helpful.

Elder Christofferson

I hope it's all right to feel overwhelmed at times, because I do. And I hope there's nothing evil about that. But as has been said, I think the key is putting the most important things first. You can't do everything. You really can't. But if you do the most important and work your way through priorities, somehow it does get done, and there's no reason you can't call on God for help. I mean, you're striving to do what He wants. You're striving to get an education. You're striving to serve. You're striving to bless others, especially those close to you. You're on His path, His covenant path, so why wouldn't He help you?

And I, I think of this verse at the end of chapter 32 in 2 Nephi: "You must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul."⁹ He's inviting us, I think, to ask for His help day by day, moment by moment.

President Ashton

I like the moment by moment. I find myself praying throughout the day: “Heavenly Father, please help me to know what I need to do now,” when it’s sometimes unclear. Thank you.

Elder Rasband

Brian, just one more thought. Heavenly Father has given us lots of helpers in this process, too. I think of all your students. I think of their instructors. I think of their teachers. I think of their parents, even good friends. There is no harm in asking a mentor, if you will, or a teacher for some advice. How would you handle this? What order would you put this in? And sometimes the Lord provides answers to us through living angels that surround us every day.

President Ashton

Great suggestion, thank you. As our concluding question, the purpose of BYU-Pathway Worldwide is to develop disciples of Jesus Christ. What would you teach us about becoming more like Him?

President Johnson

When President Nelson delivered that invitation to us to “make discipleship our highest priority,”¹⁰ he shared his personal experience that he made a decision once and for all that he would be a disciple of Jesus Christ and build his life on the rock of that foundation when he was a student. And I think that’s really telling for all of you. He made that decision, and he said that it affected all the other decisions he made thereafter, and it made all the other decisions he had to make easier. It didn’t mean his path was easy, but it made the other decisions he had to make easier, and his path was made more smooth.

And so I invite you in your discipleship to choose now, to choose today — as President Nelson has invited us to do — to be a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ, to make and keep covenants with Him. Because I know that, when you do, you will be blessed by His healing and strengthening power. I’m sure of that.

Elder Christofferson

Well said.

Elder Rasband

That’s a beautiful response, and it makes me think that Heavenly Father wants us to say the same things, because I felt the same way. And I was going to suggest to the students that they make decisions early in their life, that they don’t have to continue to debate and make crises time and time again later in their life.

When I decided as a young person that I was going to live and obey the Word of Wisdom, I made that decision once. And I remember promising my mother, when I was a 14-year-old boy, that I was always going to live the Word of Wisdom.¹¹ And remarkably, since that day, I have been able to keep the Word of Wisdom and remember the promise I made to my angel mother in doing it. Make your decisions early, even commit them unto the Lord, maybe through another loved one or person that you trust. And the Lord will help you to keep your discipleship throughout your life.

Elder Christofferson

That’s very good advice. One thing that occurs to me I would add to what’s already been said — which really is the most, is the core of the answer — would be to love the Lord, to love the Father, and express gratitude. Feel and express your gratitude to Them continually. There’s something about feelings and expressions of gratitude that brings the Spirit and, I think, would strengthen anyone’s discipleship. And we do have a lot to be grateful for. There’s no question. Our blessings are constant.

And I think also it’s worth studying and learning more about the life of the Savior. We have the references in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the reference guides that have a heading called “Jesus Christ,” and have a series of

citations in the scriptures about Him and His life. It's worth reading those and getting better acquainted — I guess you could say — with Him in that way. And you've got *Preach My Gospel* with that wonderful chapter on the attributes of Christ that we can all seek to emulate.

In the end I think it's serving Him. And so whenever you have a chance to serve in the Church, whatever the calling may be, take it. Do it well. Do it the best you can. It doesn't matter if it's one that's high visibility or nobody else sees you in your service. It doesn't matter. Just always have a calling. Always have — be involved in His work and be serving Him as His disciple.

I speak for the three of us. The four of us really, as we have this moment with you to bear witness that Jesus is the Christ. He is the very Son of God. God lives and is the Father of our Savior and *our* Father. And He is resurrected, and His Resurrection is proof of His divinity and of everything else about His gospel and His covenants and His promises. He does have all power in heaven and in earth. You're His. You're His disciple, and He yearns to bless you as you prepare. And we bless you that you'll have His influence with you through the Holy Spirit continually. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Ashton and Elder Rasband

Amen.

¹ Russell M. Nelson, "[The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again](#)," *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 121

² [Doctrine and Covenants 88:78](#)

³ [Doctrine and Covenants 88:79](#)

⁴ [Doctrine and Covenants 88:80](#)

⁵ Ronald A. Rasband, "[Let the Holy Spirit Guide](#)," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 93

⁶ [Moroni 7:16](#)

⁷ [Doctrine and Covenants 18:36](#)

⁸ [Matthew 6:33](#)

⁹ [2 Nephi 32:9](#)

¹⁰ Russell M. Nelson, "[The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again](#)," *Liahona*, Nov. 2024, 121

¹¹ See [Doctrine and Covenants 89](#)