

*November 1, 2018*

**President Gilbert:** Brothers and sisters, welcome to this special broadcast for BYU-Pathway students around the world. My name is Clark Gilbert, and I am the president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide. We're gathered tonight with approximately 450 BYU-Pathway students, employees, and guests in the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City, Utah, with thousands more viewing online, both individually and as part of their Pathway gatherings across the Church.

I'd like to extend a special welcome to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and chairman of the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education. Other members of the Church Board of Education with us tonight are Elder David A. Bednar, Elder Quentin L. Cook, Sister Jean B. Bingham, and Elder Robert C. Gay. I'd also like to welcome Elder Kim B. Clark, General Authority Seventy and commissioner of the Church Educational System, as well as Kevin Worthen, president of Brigham Young University; Henry J. Eyring, president of BYU-Idaho; Bruce C. Kusch, president of LDS Business College; and Chad H. Webb, administrator for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. I'd also like to welcome my wife, Christine.

Our opening hymn will be "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," conducted by Jon Linford, the vice president of curriculum at BYU-Pathway Worldwide, and accompanied by Herbert Klopfer. Following the hymn, an opening prayer will be offered by Bruna Giancoli, a BYU-Pathway student from Midvale, Utah.

**[Hymn: "Come Ye Children of the Lord"]**

**[Opening prayer]**

**President Gilbert:** Thank you, Sister Giancoli. We will now be pleased to hear a special musical number from a choir composed of BYU-Pathway Worldwide students and employees who live in the greater Salt Lake area. The choir will be led by Jon Linford and accompanied by Rebecca Martin. Sister Martin is actually the author of the hymn entitled "Father, Wilt Thou Lead My Learning." The hymn was written specifically about learning and with BYU-Pathway students in mind. I invite you as you listen to the text to look for associations with your experiences in BYU-Pathway Worldwide. After the musical number, we will be blessed to have a panel discussion with members of the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education, which will include Elder Holland, Elder Bednar, Elder Cook, Sister Bingham, Elder Gay, Elder Clark, myself, and my wife, Christine. We'll turn the time to the choir.

**[Musical Number: "Father Wilt Thou Lead My Learning"]**

**Overcoming Obstacles: The Doubter**

**President Gilbert:** What a beautiful musical number, “Father Wilt Thou Lead My Learning.” And that is a great segue to this discussion we'd like to now have with the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education. They think a lot about you, our students of BYU-Pathway, both here in Utah and all across the Church. Elder Holland has given me the assignment to moderate a panel discussion, and we're going to walk through a number of concerns students in BYU-Pathway face as they work through the program. Tonight, I'd like to introduce four different students, and I'm going to start out with the first student and then, Elder Holland, we're going to ask you for some counsel. I hope this can be informal and that the Executive Committee and Elder Clark can share thoughts that will inspire us and help us understand how to stay the course and pursue our education, even when things get tough.

The first student I'd like to introduce to you is the student we call the Doubter. And if you look on the screen here you'll see a picture of her. She's not sure if she can make it. She's not even sure who signed her up for PathwayConnect—a friend, a mother, a bishop—but she's there the first week and the lessons are getting hard and it's tough, Elder Holland. She doesn't know if she has what it takes and she doubts herself. This is a situation many of our students face. As you think about these students all across the Church, what counsel will you give to students who doubts their ability to succeed?

**Elder Holland:** Well, thank you, President Gilbert. What a wonderful issue to start off with because I think it's so broad and so common. And everyone in this audience—and I want to greet everyone in this audience, those who are here in the audience with us and those who are across the face of the Earth—we're part of a monumental moment in Church education in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is one of those pivotal marks in our history that we won't fully understand until we look back at it years and maybe decades from now. I say that by way of introduction for the panel to you. We are grateful for what you are doing, and we are thrilled to participate. We want to be supportive.

Now, the Doubter. I don't want this to immediately have to get theological, but who do you suppose is the father of doubt? If you had to have an antonym to doubt, wouldn't it be perilously close to faith? Easy to say, not always as easy to do, but I would start with the idea that perhaps, above all else, that God is on your side in this. This is a battle for the souls eternally of men and women. This is part of the plan of eternity. And it was not meant for us to come here and to be doubtful, or discouraged, or depressed, or blunted, or muted. We are here to grow and blossom and develop eternally. So, while there are some practical things we can talk about, keep the doctrine in mind and remember who you are. Related to that, I would say—in this audience, the extension of families in this panel, and everyone out there listening—there are people who have said exactly what this student says. We've all had doubts some way, we've all had difficulty some way, we've all worried about things, whatever it might be. We have just untold stories. There would be legions of stories in Pathway right now of people who have already overcome some of those doubts and been able to succeed and be on the road to

success. So, look around you. I say this to missionaries all the time—fearing and trembling and terrified, and “I can’t do this and I’m going to go to the MTC,” and “What does that mean?” and “I don’t know this language.” I just tell them to stop hyperventilating, take a breath, look at tens of thousands (now millions) who have done it. It gives you a little hope and a little help to say that others have done it and I can do it, too. We’re newer than that in Pathway, but you’re going to be the people to whom others will look and say, “They did it. I can do it.”

One doctrinal point to cap it off, and I’ll defer to my panel colleagues. Back to the doctrine, back to the divinity of this. You’ve got help. You have divine help. You are able. You are far more able than you think. We are all more able than we think. We’re all capable of infinitely more than we do, and we must not let our fears get in the way of that. But, beyond your own help, beyond your own ability, you have help. We are children of God. We have divinity in us. We have potential and promise and covenants and privilege that we haven’t even begun to tap. There are the legions of heaven that are prepared to help you fulfill that destiny. Here is your first homework assignment, okay? This is school, you’ve got an assignment, alright? I want you sometime in the next 24 hours to read the sixth chapter of 2 Kings. Syria is at war with Israel. Israel has an advantage because it has a prophet. And the prophet has a little helper who is terrified at the onslaught, the army that is coming toward them. Talk about doubt. Talk about fear. Talk about terror. This escapee from the Aaronic priesthood program is wondering, “Who’s going to help us? How are we going to survive?” And the prophet Elisha says, “There are more that be with us than be with them.”

May I give you a little lead into this story, and I’ll ask you to read it when you get home. “When the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth ... an host compassed the city ... with horses and chariots. And [the] servant said unto [the prophet], Alas, my master! how shall we do? And [Elisha] answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes [or hers], that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about [the prophet] Elisha.”<sup>1</sup>

Please have the eternal vision of this work that a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is entitled to. You know things no one else knows about education, about heritage, about divinity, about angels, about answers to prayers, about prophets, about promises. Remember where the doubts come from, dismiss it, and be believers.

That was more of a speech than you wanted....

**President Gilbert:** That was great. Elder Cook, how would you add to this?

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<sup>1</sup> [2 Kings 6:15-17](#)

**Elder Cook:** As I came in here and looked out over the auditorium, Rich Bennett, my good friend and barber is out here. He told me last Tuesday, when I got my haircut, a little bit about being in this program. Now, he cuts my hair every two weeks. That would be a little bit of a surprise to Elder Bednar that somebody with my haircut needs to have a cut every two weeks.

**Elder Bednar:** I thought it would be about every two years.

**Elder Cook:** But my good friend cuts my hair every two weeks. I've just been so impressed. It's been a few years since he was in school, and I don't know that you'd call him a doubter. He's very talented. He's somebody who has great depth to him. I just have to say that I am so impressed. He looked back and said, "You know. Do I really want to do this in school? I've been out a few years." And then I've been to him a few times since he started and he's loved it. He's felt like it was such a spiritual growth situation for him. He's found that the things he's studying are giving him a great insight and a blessing with what he's already doing. So, I'm just very impressed that somebody—and anybody, and all of you out there—would get rid of the doubts and be willing to jump in and do this. So, I'm grateful that you're here in this audience and across the world and are undertaking this significant step in your lives.

**President Gilbert:** Elder Bednar.

**Elder Bednar:** I would recommend a very simple thing. When you have those doubts, just repeat to yourself the first Article of Faith. "We believe in God, the Eternal Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."<sup>2</sup> It's the Father's plan of eternal progression. We have come to the Earth to learn from our own experience the good from the evil. We're blessed through the Atonement of Christ to learn from that experience without being condemned by it. His Atonement helps us overcome sins and mistakes, and it strengthens us to do what we otherwise could not do. And the Holy Ghost is a teacher. So, the first Article of Faith indicates the resource from heaven that is available to every person who will act in faith and follow the teachings of Christ. The plan, the Atonement, the teacher.

**President Gilbert:** Would others like to comment?

**Elder Clark:** I learned this from Elder Bednar. If it sounds really good, it came from him. So, there's a classic scripture about this in Ether 12:27, and we sometimes read this scripture incorrectly. The scripture reads, "And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me." Sometimes we read that as "weaknesses," but it's "weakness." That means we all have weakness of the natural man. We get lazy. We get afraid.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Articles of Faith 1:1](#)

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We doubt. We get subject to all sorts of maladies. But the Lord says that if you will humble yourself and come unto Him, He will make weak things, that is what is naturally, strong through the power of His Atoning sacrifice—through His redeeming power. And it says here, “For if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong.” And there is a kind of lesson in there, which is exactly what Elder Bednar just taught, which is we have to act in faith. Faith is a principle of action and power. That is the first principle of the [learning model](#). We have to act, but act in faith. If we do, power flows into our lives through the redeeming and strengthening power of the Savior. It’s a true principle and it’s a marvelous blessing to each of us through our whole lives. So, the pattern you’re learning in Pathway as you take on hard things will stay you through your whole life, because if you think Pathway is hard, wait until the next phase of your life, and the next one after that, and the next one after that. There’s just lots of hard things that come, and we’re learning how to deal with them in exactly the way the Lord ordained: to act in faith.

## Overcoming Obstacles: Misplaced Zeal

**President Gilbert:** Great. I think we’ve heard to remember that we have help and that the heavens are lined up to help us, the Atonement [of Jesus Christ] can help us, that everyday people can do great things, and that we shouldn’t be afraid to have weaknesses because the Lord can make them strengths.

Let’s next look at another student. As you listen to each of these students, maybe some of them are more true to you, maybe all of them are true to you. I don’t know how many of you felt you were the Doubter. Let’s go to the next student. This is two students. We call this the Student with Misplaced Zeal. We’ll talk about the young woman, first, and the young man, second.

Look at this young woman. They just got engaged. She is really excited. But the last thing she wants to be told is to think about her career. She’s about to get married, she has a ring, she’s excited to be a mother. “Why do I even have to worry about all this education stuff?”

Sister Bingham, I’m going to start this with you. We have so many sisters in BYU-Pathway all across the Church. What would you say to this young sister, or some of our sisters who later in life go back to get their education, about why it’s a blessing and an important calling for the sisters of the Church. Even those who say, “I just want to be a mom.”

**Sister Bingham:** That’s a wonderful thing to want to be. None of us would disagree with that. I think the key is, President Gilbert, keeping an eternal perspective. We don’t have a crystal ball. We don’t know how our life is going to turn out. So, when we shortchange ourselves on education as a woman, we are not prepared to bless others and really fulfill our divine potential as a daughter of God. I think about friends of mine who have had opportunities to raise a family, others who have not, and we just don’t know. The other thing that comes to my mind is

that we are commanded to learn in this life. I think about the scripture that came to my mind, and you'll recognize this one, "Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection."<sup>3</sup> We are never handicapped by learning. The second verse, "If a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he [or she] will have so much the advantage in the world to come." We are all wanting to become like our Heavenly Parents. We need to learn everything we can.

I can tell from my personal experience that I always wanted to be a mother, and I tried to go to college for a little while and I was in the nursing program. Everything I learned in those classes, even though I didn't finish my degree at that time, I used in my mothering—the child development, the nutrition—every one of those classes helped me. Years later, I was able to go back to school. I really wanted to finish my degree. I ended up going into education, in teaching. It was fascinating to see that there was not one class that was wasted. It helped me to become a better person, a better mother. It helped me to serve in the Church. It helped to bless other people's lives, as well as my own. I feel that if we work toward our divine potential, anything that we learn is an advantage.

**President Gilbert:** That's powerful. I think what you're saying is that it's not just for schooling. We don't know what will happen in life's circumstances. We also see blessings as a mother and as someone building the kingdom. I'd like to ask my wife, Christine. We're parents of eight children. It's a busy household at the Gilbert home. We've talked about this. What about your education has blessed you as a mother?

**Sister Gilbert:** I think my education has really just helped me to establish—helped us to establish—a learning environment in our home. Our home is busy, and President Nelson's counseled us as parents to establish houses of learning with our new home-centered curriculum. I am grateful for the things that I learned in school that have helped us establish it. It comes up in a lot of different ways, but a few of those that I've thought of are the time management that I needed to learn in school. That showed up in school, being able to take tests on time or turn in papers. I don't do that anymore, but I am still blessed knowing how to manage our time and our schedules and the things that go on in our home.

Another thing that I learned while I was getting my education was really to observe and ask good questions. That's something that I need every single day as I observe our children, and think about them, and the things that they might need. Then I go to Lord and ask questions, good questions, that might lead us to know, as parents, what they need. And maybe one more thing, as I was going to school, I really learned during that time to invite the Spirit into my life every day to help guide and direct me in the things that I needed to do. That's just an essential

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<sup>3</sup> [Doctrine and Covenants 130:18-19](#)

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thing that we need in our homes right now, having the Spirit guiding and directing us, and inviting the Spirit into our home.

**President Gilbert:** Well, this is great counsel to our sisters. Elder Gay, I am going to ask you to look at this returned missionary. You were a mission president in West Africa. I am sure you've had lots of returned missionaries who come home and say, "I want to go back to those glory days when I was building the kingdom and doing things that mattered. Now I just have to do all this secular stuff, and is education really part of the Church? Is it really building the kingdom?" What would you say to this returned missionary who doesn't see the connection between education and service in the Church?

**Elder Gay:** First of all, when I look at that picture, it reminds of when I returned as a missionary, and I was engaged six months after I returned home. I remember the day when we both walked into that course and the final exam was being given, and neither of us knew that it was the final exam day. It's easy to get defocused. It's easy to let the bliss of life get you going on many different paths. Any missionary knows that missionary work is hard work. It's not just running from spiritual high to spiritual high. It's down in the nitty gritty of planning, seeking, knocking, and really moving people along. As I was listening to Sister Bingham, I cannot think of anything that you would learn in a classroom that is not applicable in some other setting. If anybody thinks getting married and having kids and raising them and nurturing doesn't require problem-solving, creativity, discipline—all of which you learn in a classroom setting in education—and, ultimately, the importance of working toward achieving goals in your life (even if you never use that educational degree in the field you go into), you will always use that experience to teach people what you have to do to move your life and the lives of others ahead. There is no other path. Learning is all part of what Heavenly Father sent us here to do, to work and to grow, so that we may help and bless.

**President Gilbert:** Love it! Elder Holland, you started this out on the doctrine. For both of these young students, what is it about our doctrine that tells them that their zeal and commitment to the Church doesn't include their education. What would you teach them about the doctrine itself that would help them understand the connection?

**Elder Holland:** Well, I think it's already coming out in both of these questions and certainly Sister Bingham, right at the outset on this one, noted that it is doctrine. She's citing passages from the Doctrine and Covenants. I'm reminded of a woman I met through my mission president, interestingly enough. She was 85 years old and had just begun to study Russian. Well, it wasn't because she was going to go on a mission to Russia, and it wasn't because she thought she was going to move there. But when my president invited me to be with him, when he pressed her a little, quizzed her a little bit, about "Why would you do this at 85 or 86?" And she was shocked. She was stunned to think that there be any reason not to: "I'm in this for the whole trip. I'll get this mortuary part taken care of later, and ... who knows what I'll do with my Russian." But it was an attitude. It was a view of learning and eternally, really, eternally. One of

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the things that I would add in conjunction to that, and it's still about attitude, it's still about vision. I think Abraham Lincoln is probably credited with being among the most unsuccessful politicians in the history of American political life, losing election after election after election. As his would-be career unfolded and it wasn't going anywhere, somebody asked him why did he persist and why did he keep running? And, by implication, "Why do you keep losing?" His simple answer was, "I will prepare and perhaps one day my time will come."<sup>4</sup> He was in his 30s and his time came. I think the Lord has to use what we give Him, and He would like to use us a lot more than He can or does. We have to give Him some help. We have to give Him something to work with. I think that's what arguably the one or two greatest presidents the United States ever did. I say that with love for all nations out there that are hearing this broadcast. It just happens to be a nearby application here.

**Elder Bednar:** Can I build on that briefly? We ought to become consecrated Saints. Consecrated means "to dedicate to a holy purpose," but there's also an element of "develop and dedicate." So, we're not just what we are. If we are consecrated, we are to develop ourselves with God's help to be the best that we can be and dedicate ourselves to a holy purpose. So, you come home from a mission, there's a bit of a structure and a scaffolding that's been around you in the mission field. And the question is, can you continue to develop and dedicate yourself to a holy purpose when you don't have that protective scaffolding. That's part of the test, but it's develop and dedicate. It takes both.

**Elder Holland:** Can I add one more? The insights of the gospel bring so much to us. Perhaps the most famous line from Shakespeare might be Hamlet's "To be or not to be." That's not the question for us. We're going to be. The question is, "To become or not to become?" We just have these gospel gifts and insights that can add something to the finest minds and messages in the world, and we bring the gospel insight to it—like consecration—and to be is a given. The big question is, "What are we going to become?" That's largely, greatly, perfectly, and beautifully in our hands.

**President Gilbert:** Elder Cook.

**Elder Cook:** I've always been impressed that the early Church leaders in this dispensation, Joseph Smith and his associates, almost to the man, had very, very little education. But they had an enormous desire to learn. I think of the School of the Prophets. I think of the many efforts they made to increase their education. Many of them were engaged in things, such as farming and other things, that should say, "Well that wouldn't require a lot." But they were pretty determined to move forward and get the education. We've had that history in this

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<sup>4</sup> "[ForbesQuotes](#)," last modified 2015

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, act 3, scene 1, line 56.

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dispensation, and it's a wonderful thing to have this Pathway and to have that go forward among future generations. It'll be a great, great blessing.

## Overcoming Obstacles: Happy As I Am

**President Gilbert:** Thank you. So we've covered the Doubter and the Student with Misplaced Zeal. I'd like to introduce you to a third student we meet occasionally. Let's go to this student. Maybe you recognize him. This is the student who is just "Happy As I Am," and he's too busy watching or playing video games and binge-watching Netflix, and he says, "President Gilbert, why do I have to do all this stuff? I'm just good how I am. I'm a nice guy. I get to church. Just lay off me. This isn't that important." What do we say to this student? And all joking aside, it may be video games, but it may be other things that distract us from the hard work that needs to be done to accomplish the work in your education. Sister Bingham.

**Sister Bingham:** I just have a thought, President, thinking about this student who's struggling to move beyond. Sometimes it's fear, sometimes it's fear of failure. You think it's just going to be too hard. I really can't do it, so I'm just not even going to try. I'm going to back down, I'm just going to not expect much because then I won't fail. I think this particular Pathway program is an inspired way to help those students get beyond that fear, to be able to feel like I have the support system. I have my Heavenly Father that's going to help me through this. If I make that decision to move forward, I can accomplish, with the Lord's help. But sometimes I think we don't want to move beyond our comfort zone.

**President Gilbert:** Thank you. Other thoughts from the group?

**Elder Bednar:** If we go back to the "returned missionary syndrome," something that just drives me crazy is that you are in a fast and testimony meeting, somebody has been home for 12 years and they say, "The most spiritual time in my life was when I was in the mission field." And I just want to stand up and scream, "So what have you been doing for the last 12 years?" You can't just be "happy as I am." This is what Elder Holland was just talking about. What are you becoming? And again, develop and dedicate. The development is the antithesis—it's the opposite of—I'm happy as I am.

**Elder Gay:** Elder Bednar, I'd add to that, sometimes we hear missionaries say when they come home, "Now I'm going to get back to the real world." You were always in the real world. You are continuing to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, progressing to receive everything that God has. It is about becoming, and we have to get that deep down in the hearts. The question is not, "Am I happy?" but rather "What lack I yet?"<sup>6</sup> And what do I need to do to move my life ahead in the

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<sup>6</sup> [Matthew 19:20](#)

way that Heavenly Father would have me move it ahead.”

**Elder Holland:** Brigham Young is reputed to have said, because I've heard it repeatedly, quotes attributed to him that “The tragedy in life is not failure. The tragedy in life is diminished expectations.” We expect too little of ourselves. We aim too low. I would much rather—I'm elaborating on the thought—but the implication is I'd much rather have a goal, and if there's failure or limitation or inadequacy along the way you keep working at it and you're there. But to not even have the goal, or to have the goal too low, and then to say, “Couch potato that I am, I'm home free.” That really does smack of tragedy. Again, when you think of the gospel implications of that.

**President Gilbert:** So this student, it's really a story of missed potential. This is hard work. It takes hard work. This isn't a weekend workshop and you're done. This is hard, hard work. And to overcome being “happy as you are” will take that kind of grit and and persistence.

## Overcoming Obstacles: Basic Survivor

**President Gilbert:** Let's go to our last student. This student we call the Basic Survivor. This student is not lazy. This student is not carefree. This student is working two or three jobs. They work full, long work hours, and they say, “President Gilbert, you want me to stop and go back to school? I don't have time. I've got to pay bills. I might have a family I'm supporting. I can't afford it.” They're hard working. They're working really, really hard. But the idea of stopping to get more education means I come out of the workforce a little bit. It means I might not make enough money. It means sacrificing things for my family right now. What would you counsel to this student who is working really hard, but doesn't know if they can really take the time to invest in their education?

**Sister Bingham:** Maybe just as a beginning, keeping that eternal perspective. Sometimes we have to give up what's at hand in order to have something better in the future. And I know that the Lord will bless those who are trying to develop their divine potential to their fullest. That sometimes it does—we have to step off into the dark and trust that the Lord will help us to be able to accomplish the things that we need to accomplish. I think each one of us have had experiences in our lives where we've had to do that, and we've recognized as we step off that step into the dark we have felt those lifting hands. It may be fellow students, it may be teachers in this situation, it may be our mentors, but it is always the Lord. It really does take faith and keeping the eternal perspective. We cannot become all that we can become by looking at what's right in front of us.

**President Gilbert:** Elder Cook.

**Elder Cook:** As we go around the world and meet with lots of people, I'm always touched by the fact that so many of them that are in places of leadership, when you ask them about earlier in their life, there were huge sacrifices and times of want and times of deprivation. But most of them look back on that with great joy and happiness as a time of preparation, not just a time of sacrifice. And sacrifice does bring forth the blessings of heaven. We're maybe being a little quiet here because our hearts are so touched by anybody who is having to work several jobs and then trying to get an education at the same time. You have our admiration and our appreciation. But it's worth it. It's worth it to do it. It's worth it in this life, and it's worth it in the eternities.

**Elder Bednar:** I'd like to take just a minute to bear a personal testimony. The situation may not sound similar, but I believe it is. As I was pursuing a graduate degree, in the particular group of students that I was admitted with, there were five of us. I was married. My wife and I had two children. One of the faculty members with whom I was working called me in after a few months, and he said, "I know that you members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are devoted to your religion. I've never had a student that had a wife and two children. You're doing very well, but given the demands of this program, I don't see how you'll ever finish." I didn't go home and tell my wife that. And, to make an even happier note, shortly after that I was called to be the early morning seminary teacher. I remember lying in the bed, and I said, "Susan, I just don't see how this can work."

To make a very long story short, of the five people that were admitted, only the Latter-day Saint finished. That wasn't me! When we talk about our capacity being enlarged because of and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, that is a blessing available to every covenant-keeping Latter-day Saint. And so, it doesn't mean it gets easier. In the midst of it, you do have questions and you wonder, "Can I do this?" But through that stretching, our capacity is being increased. And I would suggest to you I'm just a very ordinary man, but I have an absolute witness of the fact that when we do our best—not perfect, but we do our best—and we're striving to live the gospel, then there are compensating blessings, and there is a strength in the power—a strength beyond our own—that helps us do what we otherwise could never do.

**President Gilbert:** Elder Gay.

**Elder Gay:** I was actually an instructor in our quorum meeting earlier today, and we were talking about the power of absolute truth. And I was in Soweto, South Africa, and there was a young single mother—new convert to the Church of three years, had two children, no father around—and she was working 17 hours a day and just barely able to put enough food on the table. And she said to me, "Elder Gay, I need to go back and finish my nursing degree, and I'm going to have to quit one of my shifts to be able to do that." I said, "Well, how are you going to afford to do that?" She said, "Well, God will never forsake me." I said, "Well, what's the most important thing that you've learned since becoming a member of the Church?" Without hesitating, she said, "The power of absolute truth to bless your life." That was a profound

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lesson I never forgot. Ultimately, questions like this are questions of “What does God need me to do?” and “Do I have faith in that journey?” He is able to provide. It’s one of the great scriptural promises that we have: He will provide for His Saints if we truly act in faith, I believe.

**President Gilbert:** Thank you. Elder Clark.

**Elder Clark:** I think one of the most important questions, I mean—the person like this, the Basic Survivor, it’s also the guy on the couch—same question is “What does the Lord want me to do? What is His plan for me? What’s His will for me?” When we face those kinds of individuals who seem to be stuck—one was stuck because they were lazy or afraid, the other’s stuck because they’re working all the time—you have to ask, “What does the Lord want? What’s the plan?” It comes back to the Father’s plan. What is the plan? If you can get people to ask that question and seriously ponder it and pray about it, then the Lord begins to guide. Then we all know this marvelous verse in the Book of Mormon in 1 Nephi 3, verse 7, where Nephi has to go get the plates and he has no idea what to do. But he gives us this marvelous advice for these kinds of circumstances. But you have to figure out, is this a commandment of the Lord or is this just somebody’s idea? Is this the Lord’s commandment? He says, “For I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”<sup>7</sup> So, if you know in your heart the Lord wants you to do it, it doesn’t matter if you have two kids and you’re in a hard graduate program. He will prepare the way, as long as you’re willing to do your part. So, you do have to sign up for the program, and you do have to go, and you do have to study, but He will prepare the way. And that was true for Nephi, it’s true for Elder Bednar, it’s true for Elder Gay. It’s true for all of us. It’s He who prepares the way.

## Concluding Remarks

**President Gilbert:** Thank you. Elder Holland, this has been a great discussion. If it’s okay with you, I’d like to invite Elder Clark and then the whole Executive Committee to share a closing thought.

**Elder Holland:** We’d love to.

**President Gilbert:** After they’re done with their closing thoughts, we’ll sing “Hope of Israel,” and then Brian Stewart, a BYU-Pathway student from Farmington, Utah, will say our closing prayer. Elder Clark, we’ll start with you.

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<sup>7</sup> [1 Nephi 3:7](#)

**Elder Clark:** Brothers and sisters, it's been a great blessing to be with all of you and to feel the love of the Lord for you. I hope you'll remember that. I know from my own experience that BYU-Pathway, PathwayConnect, and all the programs that are open to you are an expression of the love of the Lord for you and for all of His children. He wants you to learn. He wants you to grow and become what you can become. This is part of that. It's part of His plan. It's part of the kingdom that He has put here on Earth to bless and help us. I know that's true. I know God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ, and I know He loves us. I know He has all power over all things, and if we will put our minds and hearts into this work, He will bless you and help you become what you can become. And I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Elder Gay:** I was very touched as I walked in this room, because as I looked in your faces, I had this great feeling come over me. Here is a group of truly great Saints who just want to move ahead in their lives. And I think what we heard tonight is that God will always honor that righteous desire, and He will help you come through the obstacles. He will send help from both sides of the veil. There isn't anybody out here that mentors people as much as the Lord does—anybody that will help you get through the education, help you figure out how to get through the financial needs, how to how to finish. That's the greatest testimony I have.

When I went to school, my wife and I both worked, and we were raising a family of five children by the time we finished. There's always a way. The most important thing that I've found is—as a journey of faith—the most important thing I found was never to study on Sundays and that empowered me to finish what we needed to finish. I promise you God will help you finish your righteous desires and education. There's not many more things that are more righteous than that. To grow in learning is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Sister Bingham:** Earlier tonight, we heard from some Pathway students, and it was marvelous to hear their testimonies. One woman is a mother of nine children. She started the program when she had eight children. As I listened to her, and she talked about the influence that the Pathway program has had on her life, she talked about how she started out wanting to improve herself. She said, “By the time I finished my first semester my perspective had changed. I wanted to become what Heavenly Father wanted me to become. I wanted to be able to contribute to the Kingdom in as many ways as I am capable of doing.”

When we look at our education from that point of view, how could we stop? There is so much good that each individual can accomplish. When I look at this audience and all who are throughout the world, you are so unique. Each one of you has just a particular bundle of talents and abilities. You can be used as an instrument in the Lord's hands when you develop those talents for the use of yourself, your family, those around you, and certainly for the Lord's purposes. I know that Heavenly Father loves each one, that He knows you, that He knows your challenges, He knows your strengths, He knows your weaknesses, and He loves you—loves you more than we can even comprehend. I know that our Savior, Jesus Christ, through the power of

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the Atonement has made it possible for each one of us to become all that we can become. And I am so grateful that we have had the opportunity to come together tonight, and to feel the Spirit, and to be taught by the Spirit. I am so grateful for each one of you and for all that you are doing wherever you are in your sphere of influence. And I express my love in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Elder Cook:** I just feel an enormous feeling of appreciation and love and respect for who you are and what you're trying to do. I was impressed this evening as we heard some of those that are participating about how much the gathering means to you and how the Spirit of having the religion side of this with the education side. What a bonus that is, beyond anything that normal education would have. About six months ago, I was with a Seventy, and he had been a recent returned mission president. His wife had engaged in the program, and she was in the math semester, and she said she had hated math when she was younger in high school. And she said, "It's really been spiritual. When we get together, it is just absolutely wonderful: the helping each other and trying to bless each other." It's in the hard times, in the hard classes, to have that fellowship and that friendship and to be able to be in it together seems to me to be uniquely wonderful.

I also am touched many that are striving to do this and some of those that we were talking about it earlier have had some very hard times in their lives and have had circumstances that often weren't their fault. And I'm so grateful that the Atonement, in addition to overcoming death and in addition to overcoming sin through repentance, overcomes all those things that seem unfair in life. I'm grateful that this program is one of the ways that we can partake of the Atonement and get our lives in a position where we'll have those things we need to have and want to have in our lives. I testify to you of that divinity of the Savior and His Atonement in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Elder Bednar:** I both love and admire all of you. I'm going to speak very directly. I think some of you believe in Christ but don't believe what He says applies to you. I think you hear us tell stories and you go, "Well of course, you're all General Authorities and the General Relief Society President. You're different." We're not different. We're just like you. If I had the wish of my heart—you can't do this in the world in which we live anymore—but if I could get close to you, I would take my hands. I would put them on your face. I would say, as a servant of the Lord, He's talking to you. This is for you. He knows you by name. He is that focused on individuals one by one. I invite you to not only believe in Him but believe that what He says is for you, individually, personally. I am a witness that that is true. I pray that you will open your heart and that you will let the Holy Ghost carry that message into your heart so that you understand it's for you. He would say to you, "You can do this. I will help you do this, and I'm talking to you." I witness that He lives, that He is the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, and He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**Elder Holland:** We've talked about doing hard things. Encouraging to do hard things and to believe that probably the great things in life, for any generation, come by people who do hard things and put forth hard work. Let me ask you to do another hard thing. However tough you think you've got it, somebody near you has got it tougher than you do. They may not be started on Pathway—or maybe they are—but they, as limited your dream might be and as worried as you are, they're more worried. Will you remember them? And you'll do a lot better if in all of your travail you realize that there's a neighbor, in the New Testament parable sense, who needs you. We've talked about divine help, and I'm going to close with a word of divine help, but I'm going to ask that you give each other help, mortal help. In this little verse that you don't need to remember, but you can remember that I said it:

“[I've] wept in the night for the shortness of sight that to [someone's] need [I was] blind, but I never have yet [had an ounce] of regret for being a little too kind.”<sup>8</sup>

Remember even in your difficulty—and they're real—even in your difficulty, make sure you step outside yourself and bring somebody along. It's amazing how much better two of you will make it than one, or three of you make it than two. And that's the spirit of the gathering. Coupled with that is the spirit of the whole evening. This is my second, I'm the only one giving you any homework here so this is this your second commandment. I want you to read the eighth chapter of Romans tonight, okay? And I'm just going to give you a teaser again:

“The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, ... we may be also glorified together. For I reckon,” says Paul, “that the sufferings of this present time”—think of what you're facing—“are not worthy”—they are not worthy—“to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”<sup>9</sup>

Shame on us, a little, for thinking we're so wounded and so difficult, which we've all done in which I've probably done more than any of you. But that's not worthy when compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us, for “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, [and] to them who are ... called according to his purpose. ... What [should] we ... say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He ... spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us ... shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”<sup>10</sup>

Let me conclude my testimony with a blessing to you, if I'm entitled to do that for the group. Two great things that the Savior did in all of his ministry, in which we're commissioned to do, is

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<sup>8</sup> Author unknown, in Richard L. Evans, “The Quality of Kindness,” *Improvement Era*, May 1960, 340.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 8:16-18

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:28, 31-32

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to teach, testify, and to bless. And so we want you near and far in this auditorium and across the breadth of the Earth, and President Gilbert and Sister Gilbert in their duties, all who assist: we'd like to leave a collective blessing on you—each one of you—partly because you've just come to this devotional. You've cared enough to engage with Pathway. You've cared enough to want to improve. You've cared enough to dream dreams and see visions. In response to that, God is fully prepared and anxious and eager and never sleeps nor slumbers in an effort to bless us. That's all God does. That is all that God does, and so to His Beloved Son, who now stands at His right hand, and, with the agency of the Spirit, Their entire existence is committed to the salvation and safety and happiness of the children of God: the family of mankind, us, covenant people. So trust that those prayers will be answered and that help will be given and those problems will be resolved. If God be for us, who on earth or what could be against it? I bless you with financial concerns. I bless you regarding your health. I bless you to make sure you get some sleep. Make sure that you eat properly. Do some basic things that facilitate these blessings, but then trust in God and know that He is a covenant-keeper. We're supposed to be, but He always is. Every promise ever expressed to you, including this one, will be fulfilled. We have to do our part. We have to do some bit of our part. None of us are too good at doing all of it, but if we'll make a good faith effort, every single solitary promise and word and blessing and benediction God has ever given you—from the time you were blessed as a baby, as you may have been, or when you were baptized or your temple covenants—*all* of those promises are still in force. There is no statute of limitations on the priesthood and power and promises of God. I remind you of that as you leave here that the good guys and gals always win. The white hats always win in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I give you that promise and that love from all of us. From the President of the Church, First Presidency, all of the officers and people who love you and pray for you and cheer you on. You're going to make it. You're making it now. You bless us by the very privilege of being in your presence. And I say that in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**[Hymn: "Hope of Israel"]**

**[Closing prayer]**