

“I Have Learned for Myself”

A conversation with Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles hosted by Clark G. Gilbert, president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

President Gilbert: We’d like to welcome Elder David A. Bednar, who is our first assigned Church speaker to the BYU-Pathway Worldwide devotionals. Welcome, Elder Bednar.

Elder Bednar: Thank you very much.

President Gilbert: In our pre-reading assignments, you asked us to read some scriptural references [1 Nephi 10: 17-19 and Joseph Smith History 1:20]—one of them around Nephi and looking at his father’s dream and one about Joseph Smith seeking more knowledge. Tell us what you were hoping we would see and think about as we prepared those scriptures.

Elder Bednar: If I had the wish of my heart, every person involved in Pathway would have burned into his or her brain the statement, “I have learned for myself.” This is what Joseph said when he returned from the sacred grove. His mother is in their home. She notices something has happened, and he says, “Mother, I am well enough off, I have learned for myself...” You see that exact same pattern with Nephi. He believed his father’s vision, but because he believed his father’s vision, he had a desire to see and know for himself. So, we find that same pattern in both Nephi and Joseph Smith of desiring and seeking to learn for themselves.

President Gilbert: You know, we have students all over the Church participating in this, and many of the BYU-Pathway students will look at this and say, “You know, I don’t know if I can do this. This is really hard. I don’t know if I have the abilities to finish my education and other responsibilities.” How would these principles apply to that type of a student?

Elder Bednar: I think all of us have those reservations. We’ve all thought, “I don’t have what it takes to do this.” You do not have to do this alone. You don’t learn alone. The Holy Ghost is a teacher. He’s a Comforter, but He brings all things to our remembrance. So, if we put forth the effort to input whatever the subject matter, not just spiritual things—chemistry, algebra, English, learning a foreign language—we are assisted by the Holy Ghost. That doesn’t minimize the amount of work we have to do, but it provides hope that we have assistance beyond our own.

President Gilbert: That’s great. You know, many students are really busy. And not only do they doubt they can complete it, but life kind of gets in the way. How would this principle, what can we learn from this that would help students who say, “Oh, I’ve got so many other responsibilities.” What is knowing it for myself mean in this kind of a setting?

Elder Bednar: I would suggest that’s probably only going to get worse. If there’s no time now, I don’t think you’re going to find a lot of time in the future. In my experiences and the experience I’ve seen in the lives of so many people, is that as we honor our covenants and keep the commandments, our capacity is enlarged. Do you remember when you were in high school and you were a sophomore and you thought, “*Oh gee, it was so easy to be a freshman,*” and then when you’re a junior you look back, you say, “*What was I thinking? Sophomore life was simple.*” Our capacity is enlarged, and that great blessing is available to every single covenant-keeping member of this Church.

President Gilbert: Many of our students, Elder Bednar, are mothers, and they say, “Well, I know education is important, but if I just teach my children that it’s important they’ll do it, but I’m already a mother. I’m already

busy.” Why do you think it’s important that they continue their education, even when they already maybe are focused on being a parent and a mother?

Elder Bednar: You and I are both parents. I’m a grandpa, and the truth of the matter is children do what they see us do. They do relatively little of what we tell them to do. So, for a child to see a mother engaging in this pattern of learning—that’s the most powerful example that could ever be, far more impactful than just simply admonishing and saying, “Here’s what you need to do.”

President Gilbert: Great. As you talk to these students from all across the world, any closing thoughts that you would share with us...admonitions or encouragement that you’d like to share with the students who are going through the program.

Elder Bednar: I think the key to learning is learning how to learn. The issue is not learning a formula in mathematics or memorizing a series of concepts from an economics book, or something else. For me, the value of education is figuring out what to do when you don’t know what to do. That’s what education provides. You can go to books, you can go to Google, you can go to all kinds of reference materials. But what do you do when there’s no answer in the books? Everyone thinks Google knows everything—it doesn’t. What do you do when you don’t know? That’s what learning does. It equips you. This is fun. This is engaging. This is at the heart of the gospel—learning, growing, progressing. So, I would invite all of these young people to seek for the assistance of the Holy Ghost so they can learn how to learn and learn to love learning.

President Gilbert: Well, it’s an honor to have you with us. This is a powerful message. We appreciate your care for our students and the teaching you shared with us. It’s been a wonderful thought, and we look forward to seeing how the students engage and take this into their own lives. Thank you very much.

Elder Bednar: You’re very welcome. And the final thing I want to say to every single one of these students is how much I love you and how much all of the Brethren love you. We commend you for the efforts that you’re expending and the things that you’re trying to do and to accomplish. And I promise that the Lord will assist you as you do your very best. You don’t have to be perfect, you just have to expend the effort and do your best. Keep the commandments and honor your covenants, and you will have help.

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