

# *The Lord's Pattern*

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I count it a great blessing and a privilege to speak today at this university conference. I love to come to this campus.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I am going to tell you a little story about why I feel so strongly about this place. It is not only because as a student here for a year after my mission I found my professional calling to be a teacher and a scholar at the feet of truly, truly inspiring teachers like Larry T. Wimmer and others, but it is also because I met Sue here.

I want to tell you this little story about why I get a chill that just covers me when I walk on this campus. I had met Sue, and we were in the same family home evening group. We went for a walk one night, and I had the very distinct impression from the Spirit: "This is your eternal companion." Fortunately, she had the same feeling.

Just a couple of days later I was walking along a diagonal sidewalk toward where in those days the sidewalks met in a big X, right about where the Harold B. Lee Library annex is now. I was walking along toward that X when the national anthem began playing, so I stopped. When it finished playing, I walked along the sidewalk and came to where the sidewalks crossed in an X. I ran into Sue

right there in the middle of the X. It was on a Wednesday afternoon, and there were thousands of students in that area. And I ran into my eternal companion in the center of the X! I didn't say this to the Lord, but *I got it*.

Just a few weeks ago we celebrated our forty-fifth anniversary. She is the love of my life. I came here to find her because she wasn't in Boston. She was here. I am so grateful. And whenever I walk on this campus I feel the same way.

So I love to come here. And I love you. The Lord has blessed me with the gift of love for you. I believe He wants me in my responsibilities now to see you and love you the way He sees you and loves you.

I pray that you will feel that love today. I also pray that the Holy Ghost will be with us as we consider together the implications of a very simple message. This message has come to me personally, but I feel that I should share it with you.

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### The Need to Be Better

Here it is: Whatever level of spirituality we now enjoy in our lives; whatever degree of faith in Jesus Christ we now have; whatever strength of commitment and consecration; whatever degree of obedience, hope, or charity is ours; and whatever level of professional skill or ability we have obtained, it will not be sufficient for the work that lies ahead.

I believe this message fits into a beautiful pattern the Lord has established in the Restoration, beginning with His appearance with His Father to Joseph Smith in 1820. Line upon line, precept upon precept, and step by step, Jesus Christ has built up His Church and His people. He has said:

*For I will raise up unto myself a pure people, that will serve me in righteousness.*<sup>1</sup>

*That the work of the gathering together of my saints may continue, that I may build them up unto my name upon holy places; for the time of harvest is come, and my word must needs be fulfilled.*<sup>2</sup>

*My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion.*<sup>3</sup>

This is the Lord's pattern: He is raising up, building up, and preparing His people and His Church. President Thomas S. Monson's call to all of us to rise up and build the kingdom of God is evidence of that pattern in our day. Listen to President Monson's invitations to us to do more and to be better:

[Our] challenge is to be more profitable servants in the Lord's vineyard.<sup>4</sup>

*Wishing will not make it so. The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. . . . He expects our devotion.*<sup>5</sup>

*There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save.*<sup>6</sup>

*I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, . . . there will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.*

*My beloved brothers and sisters, fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith.*<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, you and I need to be much better than we are now. The scriptures teach us that the world is now and will continue to be in commotion. Wickedness and darkness will increase. Yet in that darkening world there will be increased divine light. The Lord Jesus Christ has a great work for us to do with the rising generation. It is a greater work than we have ever done before. The Lord is working in power to strengthen teaching and learning in His true and living Church. He is hastening His work, and He is preparing the earth and His kingdom and us for His return. The Lord is opening more opportunities for education to many more of His children.

### Two Assignments of the Church Educational System

In that spirit I believe there are two overarching assignments we have in the Church Educational System.

*First*, we need to educate more deeply and more powerfully than we have ever done before—more than *anyone* has ever done before. As President Henry B. Eyring said many years ago, education in God's kingdom is "the struggle for perfection."<sup>8</sup> It only happens through learning that enlightens the mind, strengthens understanding of the heart, and deepens spirituality and conversion unto the Lord. This is what President Kevin J. Worthen called "inspiring learning."<sup>9</sup> That kind of learning leads to increased skill, capacity, and power to act and increased strength of character.

Deep learning is inherently a spiritual experience. The rising generation will learn deeply as they diligently work and seek learning and

as the redeeming and strengthening powers of Christ work more powerfully in their lives.

Inspired teaching that supports deep learning is also a spiritual experience. Like President Worthen, I want to reinforce this important idea that no matter what you do, every person who works on this campus teaches and every person influences students. So all of us need the Atonement of the Savior to work more powerfully in our lives so that we can help the rising generation learn more deeply.

*Second*, we have a sacred responsibility to do all we can to help many more of the rising generation and many of the older generation to obtain that kind of education. Increased opportunities for education are vital for building up the kingdom of God and establishing Zion all across the earth. That not only means we need to open up greater access, but we need to do it in a way that lowers relative cost. Whatever we do needs to be sustainable in and scalable to a much larger Church.

When I served a mission many years ago, there were 3 million members of the Church. Today there are more than 15 million. There are five times as many members of the Church today as there were when I began my missionary service. I want you to ponder in your minds about a church that is five times bigger than it is now. Think about a church that has 75 million members. Or think about a church that has 100 million members. We live in a time like that, when God will do His work all across the world and the Church will spread and fill the earth.

### **The Global Educational Initiative**

One way in which we will address this responsibility that we have to educate many more of God's children is through the Global Educational Initiative that we have launched in the Church Educational System. I would like to share with you today a brief overview of the Global Initiative.

This work has been inspired and guided by our experience in seminary and in Pathway. The seminary and institute programs and Pathway have been great teachers for us, helping us to see how the Church Educational System might take additional educational opportunities to members of the Church wherever they live.

In November 2015 the Church Board of Education approved the following proposed concept:

*The Church Educational System (CES) will seek to provide opportunities for education to the members of the Church wherever the Church is organized.*<sup>10</sup>

The basic idea is that Church members may access educational opportunities where they live through online courses, classes from local education providers, and local gatherings at chapels and institutes. The opportunities we envision include

- religious education—this is an essential part of every program we offer
- English language instruction—from novice to intermediate level
- secondary education support—to help students be successful in their local public or private schools
- Pathway—a one-year program designed to prepare students for further higher education
- technical and skills-based training and certificates
- undergraduate degrees in selected fields (both associate's and bachelor's degrees)
- and, eventually, master's degrees

There are four guiding principles in the initiative:

**Principle 1:** Education—"the struggle for perfection"—is a spiritual experience and is essential for building the kingdom of God and establishing Zion. Religious instruction,

gathering experiences, and a spiritual focus in online learning will be essential.

**Principle 2:** The initiative will be a collaborative, systemwide effort—involving all Church Educational System institutions—and will build as much as possible on resources, courses, and programs that already exist.

**Principle 3:** Instruction will be delivered online and in local gathering activities at institutes and chapels.

**Principle 4:** Students will access programs through their local Church units, guided by priesthood leaders and supported by the Church Educational System and Self-Reliance Services.

#### **BYU's Role in the Global Initiative**

Of the many development efforts underway in the Global Initiative, I want to highlight two: one in English language learning and the other in secondary education. BYU is centrally involved in both.

In English language learning we are developing a suite of programs with the potential to teach individuals who have no English skills to be able to speak, comprehend, read, and write English all the way from novice to an intermediate level. The vision we have is that these programs will be used all across the Church—for students in CES programs, of course, but also for missionaries—at the MTC and in the mission field, in companionship study, and in teaching investigators—and for Self-Reliance Services. Faculty and staff from BYU's English Language Center are working on the project as a whole and are developing a common assessment system for placement and certification.

Our development work in secondary education is focused on three pilot projects in the Pacific. We are working with BYU Independent Study to adapt their online secondary education courses for use in an educational support program. In the pilot projects we are focusing on educational support for students who have dropped out of school or who are at risk. The

programs involve after-school workshops and tutoring to support students in English and math homework, in reading and doing math at grade level, and in preparing for national exams.

This is an exciting time in the Church Educational System, not only in the Global Initiative but in everything we do. Last year, in all of our programs combined, we taught more than a million students. That number will continue to grow. And the quality of what we do must also rise to meet the imperative of deep learning all across the system—which brings me to you and your work at BYU.

I began this talk with a simple message: In order to accomplish the great work that lies before us and that lies before you and this university, each of us needs to be better than we have ever been.

I want to focus on two reasons that apply specifically to BYU:

**Reason 1:** BYU is under attack in the great war between good and evil.

People sometimes describe Utah County as “Happy Valley” and the BYU campus as a bubble that is removed from the world. I hope this place will always be a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit and a great temple of learning protected by legions of angels. But the reality is that BYU is on the front lines of the war between good and evil. BYU is a hot spot—a battle zone—in that war.

A part of that war is fought in the hearts, minds, and souls of God's children who come here to learn. A part of that war is fought in the interactions you have with people all over the world in academia, in government, in the media, in business, in the arts, and in the sciences—wherever you love, teach, invite, and stand for truth.

BYU is the flagship of the Church Educational System. You are called upon to be a great shining light in God's kingdom. And because you are that light and because you

stand for truth and righteousness, you are a lightning rod for all who would attack BYU and the Lord's Church. Those attacks may well increase in frequency and intensity. We need the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the protection of angels in greater measure.

I believe this means that we have to be better than we have ever been. I don't think BYU has ever been stronger or better than it is now. But where BYU is as an institution and where we all are personally in our obedience, our faith, and our commitment to the Lord will not be sufficient for what lies ahead.

**Reason 2:** The Lord will ask you to do hard things.

This is the Lord's way. He asks us to do things that seem impossible or even unwise. He asks us to build ships that no one has ever built before and to go places that no one has ever gone before.

In the work that lies ahead, the Lord will call upon us to do exactly those kinds of things—hard things. We all will need much greater faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We will need more revelation. We will need increased spiritual power. We will need all of these to move forward to do things that seem impossible—such as educate more deeply, serve many more students, and do all of it at a lower relative cost. The Lord will break the trade-offs that seem ironclad. He will open doors that are closed. He will inspire and guide and provide. He is in charge.

This call of the Lord to do hard things—things that the world thinks are impossible or even unwise—is nothing new for the people of BYU. I am reminded of something President Worthen said at his inauguration:

*As we ascend to the tops of the mountains in these ways as a university, we will discover that new peaks lie ahead. . . . We will encounter new and exciting challenges and opportunities that we have not seen before. As President Spencer W. Kimball explained some thirty years ago: "It should be*

*obvious to us all that the ultimate future of BYU is partially hidden from our immediate view. Until we have climbed the hills just ahead, we cannot glimpse what lies beyond. And the hills ahead are higher than we think. We cannot be transported over them without meeting demanding challenges. . . . You will not always be able to see the future, but by drawing close to our Heavenly Father, you will be guided."*<sup>11</sup>

### **What We Need to Do Now**

And so what do we need to do now? Each of us needs to do what the Lord wants done in our lives. I hope the following experience will be helpful to you as you ponder and pray about what the Lord wants you to do.

Many years ago, in a very difficult time in our lives, I felt under attack from the adversary. At that time the Lord made it very clear to me that I needed to do more and to be better. Let me give you just a little background.

Sue and I had been married at that time for more than thirty years, and we had been active and involved in the Church all our lives. We served in the Church; we attended the temple every week; and we prayed with our children, studied the scriptures with them, and held family home evening. We tried to be good Latter-day Saints. And yet the Lord said to me, "You need to do more."

One night I had a terrible nightmare. I awoke very anxious and concerned, and I knelt and prayed to my Father in Heaven for help. As I prayed, there came into my mind a passage from Ephesians:

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*<sup>12</sup>

In the morning I looked up the scripture and read these words:

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*



*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*<sup>13</sup>

When I read the words “put on the whole armour of God,” I felt a powerful witness of the Spirit that this was the answer to my prayers. I needed to put on the whole armor of God—every bit of it.

Sue and I talked about what that might mean, and we prayed for guidance. I learned that we needed to ask ourselves two questions. I believe these are the questions whose answers will lead us to do what we need to do to prepare for what lies ahead. Here they are:

1. What am I doing that I should stop doing?
2. What am I not doing that I should start doing?

As we asked those questions in prayer, we received very specific answers. We changed how we spent our time, what media we allowed into our home, how we served in the temple, how we studied the scriptures, and how we served the Lord. We needed to increase our spirituality. Through this process of repentance the Lord Jesus Christ reached out and changed our lives. We felt His mercy, His grace, His love, and His power in greater measure. Through His matchless power He changed our hearts and our minds and lifted us up to Him. It was a turning point in our lives.

Now my dear brothers and sisters, I know that I am speaking to faithful, covenant-keeping Latter-day Saints. I know that you are very, very good at what you do. Yet I know from my own experience that we need to ask ourselves these two questions regularly. We need to change and repent so that the Atonement of Christ can work even more powerfully in our lives. If we do, our Heavenly Father will bless us with greater spiritual power. I know that is true.

And that, I believe, is the whole key to meeting the great opportunities and responsibilities

that lie before us. Many, many more of the rising generation all across the earth need to learn and to be taught—with increased love, with greater spiritual power, and with deeper impact in their lives.

I believe that impact will come because the gospel of Jesus Christ will be more powerfully rooted in our hearts and in our minds. The redeeming and strengthening powers of the Atonement of Christ will work more powerfully in our lives. Our lives will more fully and completely reflect the teachings of the Savior. The Holy Ghost will be our constant companion, and we will have greater faith, greater courage, and greater ability to step beyond the light along the path the Lord directs.

Then, when we create new programs, develop curriculum, implement new pedagogy, hire and train new people, counsel students, write new software, launch a new project, or walk into a classroom to teach God’s children, we will receive the revelation we need, we will be magnified far beyond our native ability, and we will do the work with the pure love of Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost. The rising generation will learn deeply; they will rise up in great numbers all across the earth.

We know this will happen. We know how this all turns out. The Lord Jesus Christ will come, and His people and His Church will be prepared to receive Him.

When I think of you and of what you are going to do in God’s kingdom and are doing now, I think of that marvelous tableau in 3 Nephi 17 when the Savior gathered the children around Him. I want you to picture that scene in your minds because you are in that scene: Parents bring their precious children to the Savior, He gathers them around Him, He is at the center, He prays for them and their parents in a miraculous way, and He blesses the children one by one. Then angels descend from heaven “as it were in the midst of fire”<sup>14</sup> and minister to the children—and that holy fire encircles the children.

In a powerful sense, this is what you do at BYU. Indeed, this is the whole purpose of the Church Educational System: Parents bring their children to us, and the Savior is at the center—the heart of everything that happens to the children. He prays for them and for us, and He is our Advocate with the Father. We are the angels—you are the angels—who come to minister to those children in holy fire. That, my dear brothers and sisters, is who we need to be.

And that is who we will be, because there is a God in heaven. He is our Father. His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. He lives! I bear witness of His holy name. I have seen Him work, I know His mercy and grace, and I feel His love. He has all power to cleanse us from sin, change our hearts, lift us, and strengthen us to become everything He wants us to be. I know that if we turn to Christ, who always stands with His arms outstretched to us, He will bless us to be better and to do more in this, His holy work. I so testify, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. D&C 100:16.
2. D&C 101:64.
3. D&C 136:31.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Ensign*, May 2013.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “To the Rescue,” *Ensign*, May 2001; emphasis in original.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Willing and Worthy to Serve,” *Ensign*, May 2012.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign*, May 2009.
8. Henry B. Eyring, “Inaugural Response,” at his inauguration as president of Ricks College (now Brigham Young University–Idaho), 10 December 1971.
9. Kevin J Worthen, “Inspiring Learning,” BYU university conference address, 22 August 2016.
10. Kim B. Clark, “The CES Global Education Initiative: The Lord’s System for Education in His Church,” Seminars and Institutes of Religion Annual Training Broadcast, 14 June 2016, [lds.org/broadcasts/article/satellite-training-broadcast/2016/06/the-ces-global-education-initiative-the-lords-system-for-education-in-his-church?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/satellite-training-broadcast/2016/06/the-ces-global-education-initiative-the-lords-system-for-education-in-his-church?lang=eng).
11. Kevin J Worthen, “Enlightened, Uplifted, and Changed,” BYU inaugural address at his inauguration as president of BYU, 9 September 2014; quoting Spencer W. Kimball, “Installation of and Charge to the President,” at the inauguration of Jeffrey R. Holland as president of BYU, in *Inaugural Addresses*, 14 November 1980, Brigham Young University, 10.
12. Ephesians 6:12.
13. Ephesians 6:10–11.
14. 3 Nephi 17:24.