

# “One by One”

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It is wonderful to gather in the Marriott Center for the second devotional of the year. We express thanks to the ballroom dance team for their outstanding performance last week. On the one hand, many of you have returned for a second, third, or fourth year. You come with anticipation and excitement as you renew friendships, look forward to new relationships, and continue the learning process. Earlier experiences have taught you how to navigate the campus, what to expect in terms of homework, how to study effectively, and the importance of staying current on assignments.

On the other hand, more than 8,000 are new to campus—6,000 freshman and 2,000 transfer students enter Brigham Young University each year. They replace more than 8,000 who graduate annually. The student body now represents all 50 states and 108 foreign countries. As Vice President Wilkins has noted on occasion, some of the new freshmen now are in classes larger than their hometown. Some may be the first person from their high school or family to attend the university. In spite of freshman orientation, some are experiencing a feeling of being alone and lost.

Two weeks ago I shared an experience with the freshmen that captures the theme of my remarks for today. The incident concerns a

young woman who desired to attend BYU from the time she was very young but believed she would never have the opportunity because of difficult financial circumstances. Consequently she did not apply last spring during her senior year in high school even though her grades were excellent and she was worthy.

As is customary, university advisement personnel hold meetings for newly selected freshmen each spring. On the day this meeting was held in her hometown, the young woman received in the mail a notice that she was a National Merit finalist. This meant her tuition would be paid by a national scholarship. Still, she did not have the financial means to cover the additional costs associated with moving from home and living in another state and city. However, the confluence of the notice and the meeting for new BYU freshmen rekindled a spark of hope, and she decided to attend even though she was not on the invitation list.

I happened to be in the city that day on other business and was invited by our

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advisement people to speak to the new freshmen at the evening gathering. Following the main session, the freshmen were divided into small discussion groups and sent to other parts of the building. As I left the chapel, I stopped momentarily to visit with waiting parents. While conversing, I suddenly felt the presence of someone behind me. The feeling was followed by an impression that my help was needed. I turned, and there stood two women a few feet distant quietly conversing. They noticed my movement and looked up. I could tell they were waiting to see me. As I approached them, the mother introduced herself and indicated that her daughter would like to ask some questions. The young woman told me of her lifelong dream to attend Brigham Young University and how because of financial circumstances she had not applied. She then proceeded to tell me of the letter that had arrived that day notifying her of the National Merit Scholarship. She further stated that even though her tuition could be paid, her circumstances were such that it still appeared impossible to attend. She then asked if I knew of any way a door might be opened. As I listened, the thought came that her hope had been rekindled by the Holy Spirit and that I had been made aware of her presence by the same source. Additional thoughts came regarding university resources, including student jobs that are available. With the help of BYU admissions personnel, a way was found for the young woman to attend. I suspect she is in the audience today, as she was two weeks ago.

In the intervening two weeks, I received a short note from her. It has prompted me to speak on the subject I have chosen. The note read as follows:

*Dear President Bateman,*

*I would like to thank you for sharing my story last night. I came here feeling lost and lonely and a little bit without purpose. I cannot tell you how I felt when I realized you were talking about me.*

*I know God wants me here and I know I am here to serve him. Thank you!*

The note is then signed by the young woman.

As I reflected on the letter, I realized that all of us feel lonely, lost, and weighed down at times. It is not a freshman phenomenon. It is part of life. It is part of the “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). For that reason, I want my young friend and all of you to know that we are not alone. First, Brigham Young University is a family. It is a community of close friendships, of brothers and sisters who share testimonies and values and who treasure each other. In this regard I was impressed with an article in last week’s *Daily Universe*. The author is a professor on campus. The article was written about a student friend whose life was taken in a tragic automobile accident two weeks ago. In concluding the article, Professor Rudy stated:

*I hope students can learn from Lindsay to dare to have conversations with their professors. We want to talk with you about our courses, but also about the problems and challenges in your lives, about the big and important decisions you are making, about your hopes and dreams. . . . Together, here and now, we can continue to help each other attain the experiences and learning that will help us fulfill our missions in this life and in the life to come. [Jill Terry Rudy, “Student’s Death Teaches Lessons of Life,” *Daily Universe*, 4 September 1997, p. 4]*

Given the special nature of the university, there are many friends who will listen, provide counsel, and share your hopes and dreams. In addition to faculty, staff, and fellow students, bishops wear a special mantle and are entitled to the gift of discernment in your behalf.

Second, there is a special friend who knows us intimately, who stands by us in critical moments, and whose request is that we come to know him and his Father (see John 17:3). He

is the Lord Jesus Christ. His sojourn in mortality and his atoning experience provide him with unique insights regarding our challenges, sorrows, and infirmities. As Paul testified, we worship a Savior who has a “feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15), who has “compassion” for us because he was “compassed with infirmity” (Hebrews 5:2). His personal knowledge, his great love, and his atoning powers combine in tailoring his assistance to meet our peculiar needs. To honor the gift of agency, he invites each person to come to him and establish a “one by one” relationship through the Holy Spirit (see John 16:12–14; 3 Nephi 11:15, 17:21). There are two passages in the Book of Mormon that clearly illustrate the level of his personal interest and many passages that provide understanding regarding his awareness of our problems and willingness to help. Let me share a few passages with you.

During the Savior’s visit to the Nephites in the Western Hemisphere, he told them that he had “drunk out of that bitter cup” (3 Nephi 11:11). He then extended the following invitation to the multitude gathered:

*Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and . . . feel the prints of the nails in my hands and . . . feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.* [3 Nephi 11:14]

The record indicates that the multitude went forth “one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety” (3 Nephi 11:15; emphasis added). Although the multitude totaled 2,500 souls, the record states that “all of them did see and hear, every man for himself” (3 Nephi 17:25). If each person were given 15 seconds to approach the resurrected Lord, thrust their hand into his side, and feel the prints of the nails, more than 10 hours would be required to complete the process.

The record indicates that later in the day the Savior “took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (3 Nephi 17:21; emphasis added). The scriptures do not indicate how many children were there, but one surmises that in a multitude of 2,500, there must have been a few hundred. Again, it would have taken hours to complete the blessings.

Why did Jesus take the time to invite each individual to feel the wounds in his hands and feet and put their hand into his side? Why did he bless each child rather than give a collective pronouncement? Would the personal touch of his hands and the power of his spirit be more efficacious in a “one by one” relationship? The answer is given by the Savior himself when he said:

*And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world.* [3 Nephi 18:25]

Suppose you had been in Bountiful that day and experienced a “one by one” relationship with the Savior of the world. You would have fallen at his feet. You, too, would know that he had drunk out of the bitter cup. You would feel some responsibility for the print of the nails in his hands and feet and the wound in his side. You would have seen the engraving of your image in “the palms of [his] hands” (1 Nephi 21:16). On occasion, speakers note that the impact of his appearance produced a season of peace that lasted two hundred years. The truth is that his appearance and teachings had an eternal impact on the lives of those present and for generations to come.

The Savior’s “one by one” invitation is consistent with the principle that salvation is an individual matter. The saving ordinances are administered “one by one.” Baptism, confirmation, and priesthood ordinations are performed

individually. Missionaries are sent “two by two” to teach individuals and families and baptize “one by one.” Home teachers and visiting teachers are sent to “visit the house of each member” (D&C 20:47). Although the highest exalting ordinances are administered “two by two” and in families, saving covenants administered one person at a time form the foundation. The gospel plan provides for each individual to receive his or her own witness (see Alma 32, Moroni 10:3–5). Men and women are expected to know for themselves. More than that, the Savior knows each of us for who we are. As Paul told the Corinthians, “Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

As I have stated previously, there were many years in which I believed that the atoning process involved an infinite mass of sin being heaped upon the Savior. As I have become more familiar with the scriptures, my view of the Atonement has expanded. The Atonement involved more than an infinite mass of sin; it entailed an infinite stream of individuals with their specific needs. Alma records that Jesus took upon himself the pains, afflictions, temptations, and sicknesses of his people. In addition, he experienced their weaknesses so that he would know how to help them (see Alma 7:11–12). Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would bear “our griefs, and [carry] our sorrows”; that he would be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:4–5). Paul explained to the Hebrews that Jesus tasted “death for every man” and woman (Hebrews 2:9). No wonder “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood” coming from “every pore” (Luke 22:44, D&C 19:18). Isaiah and Abinadi stated that when “his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed” (see Isaiah 53:10, Mosiah 15:10). And who are his seed? Those who follow the prophets (Mosiah 15:11–17).

Brothers and sisters, the Atonement was not only infinite in its expanse but intimate in the

lives of God’s children. The Redeemer of the world is acquainted with each person’s infirmities. He knows your problems. He understands your joys as well as your sorrows. He knows the nature of the temptations that beset you and how they interface with your weaknesses. Above all he knows you and knows how and when to help you. Generally his help is given through the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit speaks quietly by generating thoughts and feelings within. The promptings received a few months ago for the young woman wanting to study at BYU were not happenstance. I do not know what the Lord has in store for her, but I do know that her desires to attend this university were important to him.

Do you understand the process by which you “come to Christ” in order to know him and his Father? I suspect you do! Nevertheless, I wish to review four important steps every person must follow in order to nurture a “one by one” relationship with the Savior.

The first step is to believe in him and to exercise faith in his character and being by praying to the Father in his name.

The second involves becoming familiar with his words, his promises, and his covenants.

The third is to ponder over his teachings and internalize them.

The fourth is to follow the Savior by serving the one, by showing respect to each and every person, and by obeying the commandments.

During the Savior’s visit to the Nephites, he instructed them that they were to pray always so they would not enter into temptation. He warned them that “Satan [desires] to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (3 Nephi 18:18). The word *sift* means to separate or divide. There is strength in unity. Beware of the world’s philosophies that claim to be unifying but are divisive. If Satan can separate an individual from the righteous influence of his or her family and the Church, the person becomes vulnerable to temptation. Satan’s most effective

tool is to teach a person not to pray (see 2 Nephi 32:8). Alma promised his son Helaman that if he would counsel with the Lord in all his doings both morning and night, he would be lifted up at the last day (see Alma 37:37). Prayer is a master key that opens heaven's door. It also opens the door to one's own heart and gives the Holy Spirit access. Students, will you pray at least morning and evening of every day?

Faith in Christ grows as we become familiar with the Lord's teachings and apply them in our lives. Alma teaches that if a person plants the word of the Lord in his or her heart and then nurtures the seed, it will grow into the tree of life with all the fruits thereof (see Alma 32). The Savior told Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 18 that those who study the scriptures will hear his voice, feel his Spirit, and know his words (see D&C 18:34–36). Just as study of academic subjects expands one's mind and provides tools for earthly success, so a study of eternal truths expands one's soul and provides the strength to be successful in heavenly things. Students, will you study the scriptures every day even if it is only for a few minutes?

When Nephi wanted to understand his father's dream, the scriptures state that he pondered the meaning in his heart (see 1 Nephi 11:1). Deep spiritual understanding does not come through casual thinking or study. Profound mental searching is required. Often, spiritual insights come after we have done all that we can do and then with the aid of the Spirit. Students, it is important that you take a few minutes each day to review your life, reflect on your spiritual status, make the necessary adjustments in order to stay on the "strait path" (2 Nephi 33:9), and recommit to be obedient to the commandments.

Finally, brothers and sisters, serve one another by showing respect for each person and by helping those in need who cross your path. Nephi states that the Lord invites "all to

come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he [denies] none that come . . . black and white, bond and free, male and female" (2 Nephi 26:33).

As I stated in the beginning, the student body comes from all 50 states and 108 countries. There are many cultures and subcultures represented. The campus is a rich milieu. There is much we can learn from one another. A distinguishing feature of this campus is that we care about each other, "black and white, bond and free, male and female." It would be rare to find hate on any campus in America, but it is not difficult to find indifference. That condition must not exist here. Visitors to campus immediately notice a difference. It is because we have respect for each person, "for there is no respect of persons with God" (Romans 2:11). The Master does not hold one of us above the rest. He loves each man and woman and asks us to do the same. The prophet Alma asked the following question:

*Is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother [or sister], or that heapeth upon him persecutions?*

*Wo unto such an one, for he is not prepared, and the time is at hand that he must repent or he cannot be saved!* [Alma 5:30–31]

We ask men and women to honor each other. Each woman and man "has the right and the responsibility to direct her [or his] own life" (Spencer W. Kimball, *My Beloved Sisters* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979], p. 23). Each person is of infinite worth as measured by the plan of mercy. Christ suffered for and experienced the pains of "every living creature, . . . men, women, and children" (2 Nephi 9:21).

Almost four years ago Marilyn and I attended a district conference in Kanazawa, Japan. The theme for the Saturday evening session was "The Atonement of Christ." We spoke about the Savior's sacrifice, his knowledge

concerning each person, his invitation to have a “one by one” relationship, and his desire to help each individual overcome the trials and temptations in his or her life. At the end of the Sunday morning session, a young Japanese woman sought me out. She wanted to share a special experience she had had during the morning session. While listening to the sermons, she had reflected on the message of the previous evening. Suddenly she realized that the Savior knew the songs of her heart. He knew how she felt about the gospel. He could

read the thoughts and feelings that were hers. With tears rolling down her cheeks, she told how wonderful it was to know that the Savior of the world knew her.

May each of us accept the Savior’s invitation to approach him and to spiritually see and feel the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. May we exercise faith in him as the Redeemer of the world. May we honor him by loving one another as he loves us I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.