

Connected for Good

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Congratulations on your graduation from BYU! What an accomplishment! It is my privilege to speak to you today on behalf of the BYU Alumni Association.

I wish all of you were sitting here in the Marriott Center, including my own son Matt and my niece Hadley, who are both graduating today. But, thanks to technology—something we have all become very familiar with this past year—I share in your excitement and celebration for this milestone in your life.

What a year it has been! I have heard that no one wants to hear the word *unprecedented* ever again, so let's just call it "memorable"!

What We Have Learned

We have learned a lot of things over this memorable year. For example:

- We have learned that you can get just about anything you want delivered directly to your doorstep!

- We have learned that business casual can also include pajama bottoms.
- We have learned, ironically, that we can't walk into a bank *without* wearing a mask.
- And, speaking of masks, some people, including my own son, have learned that sometimes dating is even more successful when they are wearing them! (Sorry, Matt!)

Our Connection

While we have learned many things over this past year, perhaps one of the most important lessons we have learned is the power of human connection. We have learned that relationships add meaning to our lives and that we really need each other. We need our family, our friends, our fellow classmates, and, yes, even our professors. Apparently Troy Bolton had it right: "We're all in this together"!¹

Not only are we all in this together, but we are all *connected* to each other through our shared experiences. How fitting that our BYU Alumni

Karen Bybee, president of the BYU Alumni Association, delivered this commencement address on April 22, 2021.

motto is Connected for Good. As alumni, we are connected to students, alumni, and the community around us. You may even find yourself connecting with fellow alumni in some unexpected ways.

Back when we were still traveling, some friends and I—all of whom had BYU ties—were in Berlin, Germany, visiting another friend who had recently relocated there. Our local friend drove us to the Ritter Sport chocolate store so that we could replenish our diminishing stash of fine European chocolate. As we entered the store, a couple, their young children, and their two friends visiting from the States were exiting the store. All of them were wearing BYU gear, and it wasn't even Rep the Y Friday! I was so shocked to see the BYU logo in such an unexpected place that I said something really profound like, "BYU!" We made an instant connection with this family, who it turns out, had just recently moved to the country. On a busy street curb not far from the Brandenburg Gate, we reminisced together about common experiences at BYU, and my Berlin friend shared her best recommendations and resources with this family. Encounters like this may seem random, but they are not uncommon, as we find ourselves part of something greater binding us together. We are connecting for good.

It is now my privilege to confer upon you membership in the BYU Alumni Association and to welcome you into an organization of more than 430,000 alumni around the world. That is a lot of connections with like-minded people who have a vested interest in your success!

Graduation brings out all sorts of emotions as you face life after college. You may be feeling a bit overwhelmed, inadequate, or frustrated as you are starting down a new path. Or maybe you are feeling just the opposite: joyous, excited, and full of hope. Maybe it is a combination of both. Either way, BYU graduates before you have walked this path and can relate to what you are experiencing. You are not alone! The support you have felt as a BYU student doesn't end just because you are graduating. As an alumni organization, we are here to help. Here are some of the many ways that being a BYU alum can benefit you.

How the BYU Connection Helps You

We have more than eighty-five regional alumni chapters located throughout the country. Our chapters host activities such as freshman send-offs, on-campus student gatherings, tailgate and watch parties, community food drives, and firesides, to name only a few. This year, chapters even held nonsocial socials! All these activities help build relationships and keep you feeling connected to your BYU community.

If you are staying in the Wasatch Front area, we have also got you covered, with more than twenty-five professional chapters affiliated with BYU departments and colleges to help with networking and mentoring.

For employment support, our online platform, BYU Connect, links students and graduates with other professionals in the field. These connections and our ever-increasing database allow you to expand your BYU network and maximize your exposure for employment opportunities. This is a great tool to supplement your job search, and some of you might need this right now!

It is also significant to note that our alumni replenishment grant program provided more than \$1 million in replenishment funds to more than five hundred students just last year. We hear frequently from students who tell us the replenishment grant program was life changing for them, as they otherwise could not have stayed in school without this generous financial support from our alumni chapters.

As a new BYU alum, we hope you will cultivate a culture of giving in generously sharing your time, talents, and, yes, even your treasure. We recognize that some of you may have more of the former than the latter right now, and that is okay! As you progress through life, we hope that you will have a desire to pay forward your BYU education by looking for ways to give back.

Take a moment to explore these resources and find the chapter nearest you by going to alumni.byu.edu.

Conclusion

Your graduation today marks a new chapter in your lives. You are now part of something greater,

and, going forward, wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be representing BYU.

The world needs you. It needs the lessons you have learned both inside and outside the classroom during this memorable year. Your education, combined with the inspired learning, relationships, spiritual impressions, and service opportunities that you have experienced while here at BYU, have all helped to shape who you are and who you will become.

As you go forward, may you do so in faith and testimony. May you pursue your dreams with passion. May you understand the power you have to make a difference in the lives of others in ways both large and small. May you always be connected for good.

Congratulations!

Notes

1. "We're All in This Together!" *High School Musical* (2006).