

# *Walking Each Other Home*

EMILEE L. CARR

Good morning, Elder and Sister Palmer, President and Sister Worthen, university administration, faculty, honored guests, and, of course, the reason we are here today, our amazing graduates.

My fellow graduates, we made it! Our college experience looked unlike anything we could have expected. If you did expect it, I would love to speak with you afterward about your prophetic skills. Our budgets, previously allocated to nice school clothes and Aloha Plate, quickly shifted to being spent on impressive pajama collections and DoorDash hidden fees. We are all still thinking of at least one person who looks completely different without their mask. Are they actually the same person? And, most important, we are all excited to watch our futures open up as the world opens back up.

There has been a constant thread throughout this frayed time, however. It is the reminder that we cannot do it alone. Spiritual teacher Ram Dass shared a beautiful phrase: “We’re all just walking each other home.”

We have been through a long journey. It started out full of untapped opportunity, excitement, and some anxiety. There were beautiful moments; there were tragic ones. Sometimes we skipped down the sidewalk to our home, and other times we sat on the curb, truly unsure of where home was. Along the path, we have walked with some people who have been walking with us since the very beginning. Others have come and gone. Some lucky people may have found a permanent add-on.

Now, for me, as a true Southern Californian, walking in the snow is a beautiful but dangerous endeavor. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day my freshman year, I signed up for a BYU service project like the ones many BYU students organize and participate in. It had snowed previously, so I bundled up and ventured out to walk to campus. In just the few sidewalk squares it took me to get to the crosswalk, I slipped, I spun, and I lurched. I then crawled on hands and scraped knees back to my apartment door. My dignity was far more important than any service I was to render that day.

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*Emilee L. Carr spoke as the representative of her graduating class at BYU commencement on April 21, 2022.*

Sometimes our walks home have looked a little bit like this—a little clumsy and embarrassing, and we have wanted to quit. Don't be me though. What I didn't see was my friend across the street, hunched over laughing but making her way over to me. She wanted to teach me how to skate.

As you go forward into employment, graduate school, or another adventure, know that there will be moments when you slip. Find the people who will hold you up and teach you how to glide. For me, some days it was my research mentor, Dr. Julianne Grose. Other times those people were my roommates. And there was also my mom, who was there for me daily, in five-minute phone calls between classes. Maybe your people are sitting next to you right now, or maybe they are still out there. But know that they *are* out there, waiting to walk you home.

Just as for many of you, for me, college quickly became a balancing act with employment. As a premedical student, I worked a job in the hospital operating room to get a firsthand look into the medical field. One freezing December morning, I was called in at 4 a.m. to sit with a patient. Grumbling, I dragged myself out of my warm bed, scraped the ice off my car, and wound my icicle self through the icy streets to the operating room. With a Post-it Note telling me where to collect the patient, I headed up the stairs.

The first thing the patient asked me was, "How are you today?"

The man had been riding his bike home when a horrific event left him fighting for his life. He enthusiastically exclaimed, "I hope you are having a great day!" His legs were immobilized.

Months later, before his seventh surgery, he said, "Emilee, I remember you! Are you doing okay today?"

He knew the names of those who cared for him. We loved the sound of his. His positivity was as infectious as the diseases we were fighting daily.

He went through surgery after surgery to regain the function of his legs, and through it all, he was walking everyone in that hospital home. Like that man, we too can find ways to mentor others and brighten their day, no matter our circumstances.

Ultimately, if we ever feel like our sidewalk is empty, we must remember that some of our walking companions are celestial. I often think about Jesus in Gethsemane, perfectly knowing the plan but suffering in such great agony that He asked His Father to "remove this cup" (Luke 22:42). That could not be done, so His Father sent an angel to strengthen Him (see Luke 22:43) and to provide Him comfort in His moment of great need.

I am sure we have all had moments like this over our college careers. Sometimes they were silly—experiencing the temporary panic at 11:55 p.m. with only four minutes left to finish an assignment or thinking our time had come when we were halfway up the RB stairs with three more flights to go. Other moments have stayed with us for longer: feeling the dread of opening the Testing Center tab on the BYU app after a test or having to completely rethink the path we were taking in life.

We are never trudging the sidewalk alone though. God will send angels, and God will also send us—because here is the reality: We are not on our own sidewalks, meandering to an unknown destination. We are on the same sidewalk. We are headed to the same place, and it's not a race.

So if you are crawling through an icy patch, don't be afraid to cling to those who are gliding until you can get your footing back. And if you find yourself skipping, please look for someone sitting on the curb, because they just might be the person coming around the corner when you are on the curb next.

Graduates, congratulations on how far you have come, and good luck on the next stretch! Thank you.