

Comfort in Christ

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Good morning, and welcome to the beginning of the school year. President Reese and I are so excited to start this semester together with all of you! We are looking forward to meeting you, and we can't wait to get to know you better. We love you and are praying for you as you start this new semester.

Preparing for this devotional has brought to mind my first semester at BYU. I grew up in a very small town in Utah called Holden, which has a population of about four hundred. President Reese is always quick to tell me that he thinks that number includes cattle. Not true! The population would double if you included cattle!

I loved growing up in Holden. People often ask me what we did for fun in such a small town. Aside from cow tipping and snipe hunting, we did things such as camping, waterskiing, driving up and down Main Street (which we called "dragging Main"), going to the one-screen movie theater, taking piano and dance lessons, and, of course, driving up to Provo to go to BYU football games.

Ever since I was a little girl, I have loved BYU. For as long as I can remember, my nightly prayer always included two things. One was that I would find a man who I loved and who could take me to the temple. President Reese wanted me to say that I got more than I bargained for. I also got a man who is smart, funny, athletic, and incredibly good-looking!

The second thing I prayed for every day was that I would go to BYU. My parents were huge BYU fans, and all my siblings graduated from BYU. Even my grandma would listen to BYU basketball games on the radio in her living room. It is fair to say that I come from a long line of avid BYU fans.

Part of what I love about BYU is that it is a place where I feel both comfort and comfortable. Feeling comfortable and feeling comfort are different. Feeling uncomfortable is a necessary part of life. It often helps us grow and tests our capacity to do hard things.

My level of comfort at BYU wasn't always high. My freshman year was an exciting time for me,

Wendy W. Reese, wife of BYU president C. Shane Reese, delivered this devotional address on September 12, 2023.

but there were many challenges. My classes were a lot harder than I was expecting. It felt as if I had to study harder and longer than everyone around me. I struggled to juggle my student job with my studies. Learning to live with roommates was very different from living at home with my family. It is fair to say that my first few weeks were not comfortable in several dimensions. Perhaps some of you here today can relate.

Different from being comfortable is feeling comfort. Feeling comfort, especially from the Savior and through the Holy Ghost, can bring a sense of peace and strength into our lives that will help us overcome and endure life’s challenges.

One of the people in my life who has always been a source of comfort is my grandma. I remember coming down with chicken pox when I was about eight years old. I could not go to school and my mom taught first grade, so she would drop me off at my grandma’s house on her way to school. Going to Grandma’s house was the best! My grandma would feed me homemade bread and butter and let me watch Scooby Doo and Shirley Temple reruns all day. I felt so comfortable at her home; I never wanted to go to school again. I may have even faked being sick for a few days just so that I could feel my grandma’s comfort.

Besides the time I was miserable with chicken pox and during my freshman year, there have been many other times in my life when I have been uncomfortable—such as when I was asked to give a devotional talk to twenty thousand people. How could I find comfort when I had to do something that made me feel so uncomfortable?

In the scriptures, Alma found comfort in Christ:

*O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me— . . . yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ.*¹

To find comfort that is long-lasting, we can turn to Christ. He will comfort our souls in ways that no one else can.

While driving to Provo one day, I was worrying about this devotional, and I thought to myself, “I can’t do this.” Almost immediately I had the distinct impression of the Lord saying He loved

me, trusted me, and would be a source of comfort to me.

In Isaiah 41:10 we read, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed . . . : I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee.” To me, this scripture reassures us that the Lord will comfort us even in our most difficult times.

There are many ways to find comfort in Christ, but today I want to focus on three specific actions.

Finding Comfort in Prayer

The first way that we can find comfort in Christ is to love the Lord and speak with Him daily through prayer. The first and great commandment is to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”²

Through personal experience, I know that prayers can be a source of peace and comfort for each of you in whatever you are going through. Personal prayer strengthens our relationship with the Lord, and, in turn, He provides us comfort and support.

In Alma 37 we read that Alma entrusted the care of the sacred plates to his son Helaman and shared some fatherly advice that included the perfect formula for staying close to the Lord:

Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support . . . ; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord. . . .

*Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good.*³

As we pray and counsel with the Lord daily, our relationship with Him will be strengthened. We will feel His love, and He will guide and direct our paths.

Finding Comfort in Service

The second way that we can find comfort in Christ is to follow the second great commandment to “love [our] neighbour as [ourselves].”⁴ We can show love to our neighbors by serving and ministering to them.

I want to share a story from one of my daughters from her freshman year at BYU. She said:

During my freshman year at BYU, I was assigned what was then called a visiting teacher from my ward.

This sister came and introduced herself to me my first day at church. We made small talk for a little bit with get-to-know-you questions like favorite drinks and foods, hobbies, etc. I didn't think much of the conversation and went throughout the semester with occasional texts from this sister to check in and an occasional drop-by to share a message.

Finals week came, and I remember feeling completely overwhelmed. I was spending hours and hours in the library each day studying and was ending each day exhausted. I remember in these hours feeling alone and unimportant.

I came home one night after a long night in the library to find a bottle of apple juice and a handwritten note next to my door. I picked up the note. It was from my visiting sister. The card read something like "I hope you are doing okay during finals! You have been on my mind all week, and I wanted to find a way to serve you but knew you were busy and wouldn't be home much. I remembered that when we talked that first Sunday, you told me your favorite drink was apple juice. It's not much, but hopefully it's enough to get you through the next few days! I love you!"

In reality, this was a small gesture, but to me it spoke volumes to God's power to answer our prayers. I'm grateful that sister was so Christ centered that she was able to forget her own finals-week stresses to serve me.

As you go throughout this semester, think of someone you can serve. Be aware of those around you who may be struggling. It doesn't have to be something big—look for a way to serve that would be meaningful to them. Serving others will draw you closer to the Savior.

In his talk titled "The Doctrine of Belonging," Elder D. Todd Christofferson suggested that belonging or feeling comfortable happens when we sacrifice for and serve others.⁵ When we do this, we not only feel the comfort in Christ but also help others feel it.

Finding Comfort in the Temple

The third way that we can find comfort in Christ is by going to the temple. Whether it be to sit on the temple grounds and look at the beautiful surroundings or to go inside to make sacred covenants, we can feel peace and comfort there. As Elder Quentin L. Cook reminded the faculty and

staff here a few weeks ago, the close proximity of so many temples to BYU is no coincidence.⁶ I hope you will take time to visit the temple regularly during the semester. It will help you find answers to your prayers, learn more about the Savior, and strengthen your testimony of Him.

A few years ago, my son was getting ready to leave on his mission. He went through the Payson temple in August 2020—a time you will all recognize as being in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time there was so much we didn't know. We didn't know how long the pandemic would last, we didn't know when we would be able to resume normal lives, and we didn't know who might be next to get sick. It was a time of uncertainty and distress for so many of us. Because our visit was during the pandemic, we were only allowed a limited number of family members in the temple. It was a unique experience as we put on our masks and went inside. I didn't see anyone else in the temple aside from the temple workers. It was as if we had the whole temple to ourselves. It was also the first time that all our children were able to be in the temple together with us. Words cannot describe the peace and comfort I felt to be surrounded by my family in the house of the Lord during a time of turbulence and uncertainty. The temple can be a place of peace in our most difficult times.

President Russell M. Nelson reiterated the peace and safety that come from being in the temple:

If you don't yet love to attend the temple, go more often—not less. Let the Lord, through His Spirit, teach and inspire you there. I promise you that over time, the temple will become a place of safety, solace, and revelation.⁷

Conclusion

There will be times in life when you will feel uncomfortable, but that does not mean you cannot be comforted. Please remember that you have access to the greatest source of comfort of all—a source who can be with you at all times. If you will strive to access the Savior's power through prayer, service, and temple attendance, I promise that you will find comfort in Christ. God is

with you. He knows you. He will strengthen you and help you. He loves you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Alma 31:32.
2. Matthew 22:37.
3. Alma 37:36–37.

4. Matthew 22:39.

5. See D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Belonging,” *Liahona*, November 2022.

6. See Quentin L. Cook, “Preparing Students for Eternity,” BYU university conference address, 28 August 2023.

7. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, November 2021.