

Being “Doers of the Word”

WENDY W. REESE

Welcome back to campus! We are so excited for this new semester. New semesters provide new opportunities. They are a chance to make new connections in your classes, study groups, wards, and, yes, even in an eternal companion.

For you men, you undoubtedly see a lot of amazing women on campus. You might think to yourself, “I would really like to go out with one of these women.”

Yet for some reason she never walks up to you and says, “Hi, there! I would love to go on a date with you.”

While that might seem like a plausible scenario, it is going to take more doing on your part to make it a reality.

Put another way, you can’t lean on a shovel and expect a hole! Action is required if we expect results.

One of the most fundamental characteristics of a disciple of Jesus Christ is doing the will of the Father. The Savior Himself said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”¹ The apostle

James taught powerfully the difference between just hearing the words of the Lord and acting on those words:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.²

I love how James taught us so clearly that to understand our true nature, we need to be doers of the word and not just hearers. He also described that even if we feel our efforts are only a feeble offering, when we are doing the will of the Lord, we will be “blessed in [our] deed.” I think this is suggesting that the Lord will magnify our efforts if we put into action His teachings.

Wendy W. Reese, wife of BYU president C. Shane Reese, delivered this devotional address on January 9, 2024.

Today I want to share a few thoughts on how we can be doers of the word rather than just hearers of the word. It is a topic that is central to our beliefs, and it challenges us to move beyond passive engagement with our faith to actively living the principles of the gospel that we hold dear.

To truly become doers of the word, we must first recognize the need to shift our mindset. We must move beyond the mere accumulation of knowledge and internalize and apply the teachings of the restored gospel. Imagine owning the most exquisite recipe collection but never walking into the kitchen to make any of the recipes. Similarly, our faith remains dormant when confined to intellectual understanding alone. Living the gospel, acting on promptings from the Spirit, and heeding the words of prophets and apostles draw us closer to the Savior and strengthen our testimony of Him.

Examples of Doers

For me, President Reese is an example of a doer.

Recently our stake president encouraged us to be more intentionally friendly and kind. He asked us to wave to everyone we pass in our cars. Shane took this to heart! He not only heard the invitation from the stake president but actually tried to do it every time he saw a car. He would always wave when we passed anyone on the road. In fact, most of the time, several cars in a row would pass, and Shane would quickly wave at each one.

I would say, “You do realize no one is waving back, don’t you?”

Shane just responded with something like, “I got one wave out of seven. That’s not horrible. It’s more than 10 percent.”

“Doing,” regardless of the outcome, will strengthen our resolve to be more like the Savior. While this is a trivial example, there are many people who exemplify this principle of being doers of the word and not hearers only. I want to touch on some of these—you amazing students and the perfect example, Jesus Christ.

BYU Students Are Doers

Some of the most inspirational examples of doers of the word that I have seen are the students

at BYU. I am truly amazed at the way you go and “do”! One of the things I have loved the most about the first few months that President Reese and I have been serving together is the time we have been able to spend with you, our amazing students. So often we recognize that you are so much better than you think you are! We see such light in your countenances and love it when you let your light shine so others can see that light. We love how you are so committed to your education, both academic and spiritual. You are truly examples of what President Spencer W. Kimball described as “a double heritage”:

*The uniqueness of Brigham Young University lies in its special role—education for eternity. . . . This means concern . . . for not only the “whole man” but for the “eternal man.” . . . This faculty has a double heritage—the preserving of the knowledge of men and the revealed truths sent from heaven.*³

Embracing our double heritage—or being “bilingual”⁴—is part of what it means to “become BYU.”⁵ One of the fundamental assumptions of becoming BYU is that we must not only hear the words of prophets, seers, and revelators, but we must act on those words. We must be doers and not just hearers. We are grateful for our students who preserve “the knowledge of men and the revealed truths sent from heaven.” Here are some examples of students who have been exceptional in exhibiting what President Kimball called “a double heritage.”

Sarah Davila, a first-generation college student, knew that there was no other school that would mix her faith with her education like BYU. Her training and classes led her to become a language coordinator for the BYU Speeches website, where she works with other students to translate not only what speakers are saying literally “but also the message and spirit they are trying to convey.”⁶ She said, “My experiences at BYU have been empowering. The fact that there can be a beautiful blend of scholarly and spiritual knowledge is incredibly special. To be able to learn this way has been irreplaceable to my testimony.”⁷

Fritz-Carl Morlant, BYUSA's elected student body president, has been instrumental in helping organize "Utah's inaugural College Day of Service—an opportunity for more than 400,000 college students across the state to give back to their communities and develop a sense of unity and belonging."⁸

Adam Johnson was named a 2023 Truman Scholar, which "recognizes college juniors who display exceptional leadership potential and are committed to effecting change through public service."⁹ Adam said, "BYU gave me a lens through which I can view the world more like the Savior views the world. Because of that, I want to consecrate my life to God to build up His kingdom, and I think everyone has the power to do that."¹⁰

"A group of BYU students . . . recently returned from a . . . study abroad trip to Poland serving in Ukrainian refugee centers. The students provided medical aid, taught classes on health and wellness, and donated thousands of dollars' worth of medical supplies."¹¹ Nadia DeVol, one of the students who participated in this amazing inspiring learning experience, said, "I'm endlessly grateful to have been offered the resources and access to be part of this project because of BYU. I have family in Ukraine, and I had been praying for opportunities to help these people who are going through so much. BYU gave me these resources and led me to professors who made this happen."¹²

These are just a few of the hundreds of examples of BYU students who are following the Savior's example to "[go] about doing good."¹³ We are grateful that so many of you are doing more than just accumulating knowledge; you are doing good. We know that your efforts, however big or small, will be magnified by the Lord, as He promised in the book of James.

Jesus Christ Was a Doer

The Savior is a perfect example of someone who did the Father's will. In Acts 10:38 we read that the Savior "went about doing good." During part of His earthly ministry, He said unto the people:

Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

*Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.*¹⁴

Jesus did more than just feel compassion for others; He acted to serve and lift those around Him. Following the example of our Savior by "doing" will help us feel of His love and in turn show our gratitude and love for Him.

I know that Jesus is the great example of one who does our Father's will. The Savior loves you. We love you. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. John 14:15; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:29.
2. James 1:22–25.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, "Education for Eternity," address to BYU faculty and staff, 12 September 1967.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Second Century of Brigham Young University," BYU devotional address, 10 October 1975.
5. C. Shane Reese, "Becoming BYU: An Inaugural Response," address delivered at his inauguration as BYU president, 19 September 2023.
6. Shelby Clark, "BYU Student Uses the Gift of Language to Bless Others," Intellect, BYU News, 1 November 2023, news.byu.edu/intellect/byu-student-uses-the-gift-of-language-to-bless-others.
7. Sarah Davila, quoted in Clark, "BYU Student Uses the Gift of Language to Bless Others."
8. Tyler Stahle, "BYU Student Unites Utah Colleges for Historic Day of Service," Character, BYU News, 9 October 2023, news.byu.edu/character/byu-student-unites-utah-colleges-for-historic-day-of-service.
9. Tyler Stahle, "Awards Season 2023: BYU Students Honored with Prestigious Scholarships, First-Place Finishes," Intellect, BYU News, 9 May 2023, news.byu.edu/intellect/awards-season

-2023-byu-students-honored-with-prestigious-scholarships-first-place-finishes. See also Suzana Dvorak, “How Positive Collaboration Drives Learning and Service: Adam Johnson, Brigham Young University Student, Selected as 2023 Truman Scholar,” *BYU Undergraduate Education*, 28 April 2023, ugrad.byu.edu/how-positive-collaboration-drives-learning-and-service-adam-johnson-brigham-young-university-student-selected-as-2023-truman-scholar.

10. Adam Johnson, quoted in Stahle, “Awards Season 2023.”

11. Tyler Stahle, “From Classroom to Compassion: BYU Students Extend Helping Hand to Ukrainian Refugees in Poland,” *Intellect, BYU News*, 13 June 2023, news.byu.edu/intellect/from-classroom-to-compassion-byu-students-extend-helping-hand-to-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland.

12. Nadia DeVol, quoted in Stahle, “From Classroom to Compassion.”

13. Acts 10:38.

14. 3 Nephi 17:6–7.