

# “Believe in Him to Come”

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## Introduction

Early in his tenure at what was then called Ricks College, President Henry B. Eyring suggested that after the Savior returns, universities might become obsolete—“replaced with . . . more effective institutions.”<sup>1</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball, who heard this suggestion, responded after

*what seemed . . . a lengthy silence . . . that over the centuries universities had proved to be the most effective institutions we had developed to find, conserve, and transmit knowledge across numerous fields of inquiry, so why not expect that they would serve as well [during] the Millennium.*<sup>2</sup>

During this same era, in his imperishable second-century address, President Kimball invoked these words from Charles H. Malik, former president of the United Nations General Assembly:

*One day[, Malik hoped,] a great university will arise somewhere . . . to which Christ will return in His full*

*glory and power, a university which will, in the promotion of scientific, intellectual, and artistic excellence, surpass by far even the best secular universities of the present, but which will at the same time enable Christ to bless it and act and feel perfectly at home in it.*<sup>3</sup>

“Surely,” President Kimball added, “BYU can help to respond to that call!”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, we can. We have done so in the past, and we will do so in the future. At the beginning of a new school year—and inspired by the First Presidency’s recent announcement of a BYU medical school—I am more convinced than ever that BYU truly is destined to become “a school in Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 97:3), a school worthy to greet the Savior when He comes and equipped to flourish throughout His millennial reign.

President Gordon B. Hinckley once invited the Saints “to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension . . . of the grand millennial mission of this The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”<sup>5</sup> Today I invite us all “to lift our eyes and

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*Justin Collings, BYU academic vice president, delivered this address in the faculty session of university conference on August 26, 2024.*

stretch our minds” as we contemplate together “the grand millennial mission” of Brigham Young University.<sup>6</sup>

The Book of Mormon describes ancient disciples who were taught “to look forward unto the Messiah, and *believe in him to come as though he already was*” (Jarom 1:11; emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> I have wondered what it might mean for us, in our time and season, to “believe in [Christ] to come as though he already was.” What might our work as BYU faculty look like during the Millennium? What might we do differently without the pressures and encroachments of a surrounding secular milieu? What might we do differently even now?

Under President C. Shane Reese’s inspired leadership, we are striving toward “becoming BYU,”<sup>8</sup> toward becoming the “Christ-centered, prophetically directed university of prophecy.”<sup>9</sup> As BYU university librarian Rick Anderson has observed, this motto of becoming BYU is “as gentle in its formation as it is clear and direct in its implication”<sup>10</sup>—namely, that we have work to do before fully becoming the BYU of prophecy, that we have “miles to go before [we] sleep”<sup>11</sup> and mountains to climb before we reap.<sup>12</sup> But even as we survey “the hills ahead,”<sup>13</sup> I invite us all to believe in the prophetic university to come as though we worked there now, to live in the presence of prophetic promises about this school, to labor as though those promises have already been fulfilled.

I want to extend this invitation in three contexts: teaching, scholarship, and general education. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will inspire us all concerning our individual roles within BYU’s grand millennial mission as well as teach us collectively how to become the faculty that will lead this university and its students toward our “rendezvous with destiny.”<sup>14</sup>

## I. Teaching

Teaching students is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that we do at BYU. Our students are this university’s *raison d’être*, the only justification for the munificent annual appropriation we receive from our sponsoring church.<sup>15</sup> Our faculty are committed to teaching—first, last, and always—and you teach surpassingly well. Our

students report overwhelmingly that your teaching expands their minds and strengthens their spirits—that it builds their character, deepens their discipleship, and motivates them to spend the rest of their lives learning for the Savior’s glory and serving others in His name.

Every day you heed prophetic charges to teach all subjects by the Spirit of God,<sup>16</sup> to bathe your subject materials “in the light and color of the restored gospel,”<sup>17</sup> and, on occasion, to bear formal testimony of the truth. You are both mentors and models for our students. You embody for them the fully integrated life<sup>18</sup>—a life of exacting scholarly inquiry and devoted covenant living, of professional achievement and consecrated discipleship, of perspiration and inspiration, toil and prayer, study and faith. I cannot thank you enough for how good you are, how hard you work, and how richly you bless our students’ lives.

I am especially grateful to the 280 of you who have prepared yourselves, prayerfully and painstakingly, to teach a fall semester section of University 101: BYU Foundations for Student Success. This has been a prodigious undertaking, attended by marvels each step of the way. I acknowledge all who have crafted curriculum, refined pedagogy, and resolved a bewildering array of logistical challenges. I thank you with a vocabulary I simply do not have.

The British poet-preacher John Donne once asked, “What if this present were the world’s last night?”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, we might ask how our teaching would change if we truly believed in Christ to come as though He already was—as if we had already become the “Christ-centered, prophetically directed university of prophecy.”

We might answer these questions in slightly different ways, but I suspect all of us would hope to harness our subject matter ever more fully to the full power of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We would hope to weave Restoration insights and revealed doctrine throughout our courses. We would hope to help our students view our disciplines—and, as needed, to criticize them—from the vantage of the restored gospel, rather than the reverse.

To that end, we might heed President Russell M. Nelson’s invitation to “immerse [ourselves] in the

glorious light of the Restoration.”<sup>20</sup> A year ago, I encouraged us to feast daily on the words of Restoration scripture.<sup>21</sup> I am increasingly convinced that becoming BYU will require us to drink deeply from the Book of Mormon and the revelations. If we are to become the great Restoration university toward which prophets have beckoned, the Restoration’s founding texts must illuminate our souls and permeate our teaching.

In recent instruction to new mission leaders, President Nelson and President Jeffrey R. Holland both underscored the centrality and power of the Book of Mormon.

*Please teach [your missionaries, President Nelson entreated,] that the truths of the Book of Mormon are filled with power—power to help them do the impossible on their mission, power to help them become increasingly pure, power to help them teach with authority from God.*<sup>22</sup>

President Holland likewise besought mission leaders to

*teach out of the scriptures, especially and specifically the Book of Mormon. A mission leader’s message[, he thundered,] should not come from the Reader’s Digest or Chicken Soup for the Soul. Teach from the word of God. I promise you that the degree to which you make your mission a Book of Mormon mission is the degree to which you will convert your missionaries with lifelong permanence and affection.*<sup>23</sup>

Now, I realize that we are a university, not a proselytizing mission, and that we are academics, not mission leaders. But we too are under prophetic charge to advance an inspired mission and to help young people become lifelong disciples. My strong belief is that the Book of Mormon, as the keystone of our religion, should also serve as the keystone of our campus. May I invite us all—at least once each semester, in every course we offer—to quote from, teach from, and testify of this mighty witness of the living Christ. Doing so, I believe, will bless our students forever. It will help us claim President Kimball’s promise

that “the scriptures contain the master concepts for mankind.”<sup>24</sup>

In addition to immersing ourselves in the Restoration’s foundational texts, we hope to align ourselves ever more completely with the Lord’s living prophets. As Elder Ronald A. Rasband taught us so powerfully this morning, we have at BYU the almost unimaginable blessing of a board of trustees whose officers comprise the First Presidency of the Church, all three of whom have extensive experience in higher education as teachers, scholars, and administrators.<sup>25</sup> We hope never to say or do anything that might cause any student—or anyone else, for that matter—plausibly to question our total allegiance to and our exact alignment with those whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

Let me speak quite plainly as I underscore this point. We will never, I submit, become the “Christ-centered, prophetically directed university of prophecy” unless we are, in every facet of our lives, Christ centered and prophetically directed. For thirty-one years, our campus has been guided by an Academic Freedom Policy that is wise, robust, insightful, and (even though it is a policy) beautifully written. We would all do well to read it again. That policy strikes a sensitive balance in securing both individual and institutional academic freedom, even as it imposes reasonable limits on expression that “contradicts or opposes, rather than analyzes or discusses, fundamental Church doctrine or policy,” as well as expression that “deliberately attacks or derides the Church or its general leaders.”<sup>26</sup>

That policy remains in force, and we continue to honor its principles and enforce its provisions. But we will not become the BYU of prophecy merely by avoiding expression that the BYU Academic Freedom Policy proscribes. No, to achieve our prophetic destiny, we must be aligned, visibly and completely, with the fundamental doctrine of the Savior’s Church and the consistent teachings of His special witnesses.

This applies, for instance, to “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,”<sup>27</sup> which President Dallin H. Oaks has described as “founded on irrevocable doctrine.”<sup>28</sup> Earlier this year, Professor

Grant J. Jensen summarized his devotional message as “a full-throated, unqualified, unreserved endorsement of marriage, family, and the proclamation on the family.”<sup>29</sup> I hope our students will hear such endorsements often—in many courses and from many professors.

My colleagues and friends, it will not be enough in coming days to feel aligned with prophets, seers, and revelators in our personal lives and our private thoughts. We need to be aligned in ways that our students recognize as aligned—and that prophets, seers, and revelators themselves would recognize as aligned. President Harold B. Lee once cautioned that it isn’t enough to teach the gospel so clearly that we can be understood; we must teach the gospel so clearly that we cannot be misunderstood.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, when issues arise in our courses that implicate fundamental Church doctrine or policy, our alignment with living prophets must be unmistakably clear. In this respect, as in all others, our greatest impact on our students will stem from their observation of who we are and their perception of where we stand.

For centuries it was maintained that universities stood vis-à-vis their students *in loco parentis*—in the place of parents.<sup>31</sup> In the spirit of that disappearing ideal, I hope President Holland will forgive me for appropriating toward BYU faculty counsel he once offered to parents: “Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can,” he said. “Keep the covenants your [students] know you have made. . . . And bear your testimony!”<sup>32</sup> Some students might someday break our hearts by shedding the faith we currently share.

*But even in such painful hours[, President Holland continued,] it will be comforting for you to know that your [students] knew of your abiding faith in Christ, in His true Church, in the keys of the priesthood and in those who hold them. It will be comforting then for you to know that if your [students] choose to leave the straight and narrow way, they [will] leave it very conscious that their [BYU professors] were firmly in it.*<sup>33</sup>

Dear friends, I realize that I have spoken plainly. I have spoken plainly because the stakes are so high. I have spoken plainly because I know very well how deeply committed you are, how

urgently you hope to build our students’ faith, and how totally aligned you strive to be. I have spoken plainly because I hope that you will “let your light so shine” that our students—together with their parents, our board of trustees, and the Saints at large—will “see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

## II. Scholarship

Some of those good works will unfold through your “scholarly research and creative endeavor,” which our mission statement declares to be “essential.”<sup>34</sup> As “the flagship [university] of [the] Church Educational System,”<sup>35</sup> and as the Church’s “educational ambassador”<sup>36</sup> to the world, we at BYU enjoy the opportunity and bear the obligation to produce superb scholarship that advances our mission and blesses God’s children.

Scholarship at BYU is conducted in a “spirit of service.”<sup>37</sup> It is not a distraction from our teaching mission; it is an indispensable bulwark of our teaching mission. In a 2017 memo to President Dallin H. Oaks, President Kevin J. Worthen illuminated the connection:

*For us . . . , [scholarly research] is an extension of our teaching mission. We do value top-flight research, but not exclusively—nor even primarily—for the discoveries that may result. We value it for the impact it can have on students, both in the way it enhances our teaching and [in] the more direct impact it can have on students’ lives if we involve them in that research. In that respect, research . . . is . . . just an extension of our teaching role.*<sup>38</sup>

I like to think of our academic mission as *teaching centered and research supported*. That approach is unusual in higher education. Our “yes, both” approach to teaching and research is one of our many “paired aspirations,”<sup>39</sup> but it is not readily reflected, say, in the Carnegie research classifications. As President Reese outlined this morning, the American Council on Education recently revised the Carnegie classification criteria to focus on just two metrics: annual research expenditures and production of PhDs. As President Reese noted, well before these new criteria were announced, we had launched an effort at

BYU to account more fully for our research spending. The combination of Carnegie's revised criteria and our own more complete accounting makes it possible, perhaps highly likely, that BYU (along with many other universities) will receive an R1 designation for the first time when the updated classifications appear this coming spring.<sup>40</sup>

This possible shift in designation emphatically does *not* represent a shift in our core priorities and fundamental mission. We view this possible reclassification the way President J. Reuben Clark said we should view Church callings: something we neither seek nor decline.<sup>41</sup> But the revised criteria do provide an opportunity to affirm our commitment to research and to reflect upon its place within our primary teaching mission. More expansively, they provide an occasion to contemplate our research commitments within the grand millennial mission of Brigham Young University—an occasion to consider how we might approach research and creative work differently if we truly believed in Christ to come as though He already was and if we truly believed in the BYU of prophecy as though it were already here.

We might even contemplate what our research might look like *after* the Savior comes—what questions we might be inspired to ask, what challenges we might hope to explore, and what might motivate our inquiry when we are freed from the pressures of seeking rank or status, funding or acclaim.

Invoking the scriptural caution against aspiring toward the honors of men, President Worthen once said:

*In the academy . . . there will always be a pull for us to become like others. The prestige lies in doing **research that may not be exactly [what] we would do . . . if there were not outside peer pressure.***<sup>42</sup>

For me, at least, that sentence stings. It stirs reflection and prompts hard questions. It makes me wonder whether I have sometimes pursued research questions that were transitorily trendy rather than enduringly important, whether I have sometimes been engaged in the rote production of scholarship rather than the earnest pursuit of truth, or whether I have sometimes chosen topics

with an eye to selfish gratification or professional aggrandizement rather than with an eye to what might improve my teaching and involve my students. I wonder how my research might have looked different if, in President Worthen's words, "there were not outside peer pressure."

Before going any further, let me stress the difference between *peer review*, which refines and strengthens our work, and *peer pressure*, which might distort our work or distract us from our highest values. Peer review deepens our engagement with the broader academy and enlarges our "influence in a world we wish to improve."<sup>43</sup> Peer pressure, if we yield to it, robs the academy and the world of the unique contributions we might otherwise make.

President Hinckley once exhorted BYU faculty "to strengthen our scholarship in every discipline that is followed here."<sup>44</sup> So many of you are doing just that and are "do[ing] it superbly well."<sup>45</sup> And yet—with apologies to Mr. Wordsworth—I wonder if sometimes, in our scholarly and creative efforts, "the world is too much with us."<sup>46</sup> I wonder how we might more effectively respond to President Kimball's impassioned, prophetic plea:

*Your light must have a special glow, for while you will do many things in the programs of this university that are done elsewhere, these same things can and must be done better here than others do them. **You will also do some special things here that are left undone by other institutions.***<sup>47</sup>

With President Kimball's summons ringing in our ears, I invite us all during the coming year—in private pondering and hallway conversations, in formal gatherings and department meetings—to consider the following questions:

- What is being "left undone" in my discipline?
- What questions am I—armed with my academic preparation and illuminated by the truths of the Restoration—uniquely positioned to answer?
- What gospel concepts and insights—gleaned from prophetic teachings and Restoration scripture—should be shaping my research agenda and infusing my scholarly work?

- What secular ideologies and assumptions have hitherto influenced my work—even if subtly or almost imperceptibly? How, in my future work, can I assert my independence from such ideologies and assumptions?
- Is my scholarship genuinely focused on students? Are there things I could change to make my scholarship more student centered?
- Am I doing work that I honestly love? Am I exploring the questions that drew me to the academy in the first place? If not, why not?

Now, we obviously don't yet enjoy the measure of independence that might mark scholarly endeavor during the Millennium. But we are, I submit, more independent than we often realize. Although next spring might bring us an R1 designation, our external research budget remains modest—just a fraction of what one finds at major research universities. That is unlikely to change soon, if ever. But despite the relative modesty of our external research funding, we might well lead the nation in the portion of research funding that flows from internal support. Internal funding accounts for a portion of our research expenditures almost exactly commensurate with the portion of our operating budget that comes as an annual appropriation from the Church. In both cases, the Church's support is generous and substantial.

Most internal research funding comes in the form of faculty salaries. We might rarely pause to appreciate that our salaries don't depend on external grants, but that is a blessing not universally enjoyed among our colleagues on other campuses. That blessing affords us the freedom, if we will exercise it, to be bolder and more imaginative in our scholarly and creative work than we have sometimes been in the past.<sup>48</sup> It affords us the freedom to seek the necessary inspiration and exert the required effort to do those special things that are elsewhere left undone.

Doing what others leave undone, however, holds no enduring value unless we communicate our work, effectively and persuasively, to outside peers. When he implored us to “do special things” inspired by “gospel methodology, concepts, and insights,” President Kimball also insisted that we “speak with authority and excellence

to [our] professional colleagues in the language of scholarship.”<sup>49</sup>

Professor Bonnie Brinton once described what this looked like for her and Professor Martin Fujiki, her husband and collaborator:

*We . . . constantly evaluate the focus and nature of our research program[, she wrote.] Through the lens of the [restored gospel], we try to decide what research questions are important and how they can best be addressed. More than once, a research focus has crystallized during [our] temple worship, and we have concluded: Here is an issue that matters. . . . Let's chase it down. Let's find out more. . . . The sometimes unconventional focus of our work has required us to exercise an annoying amount of rigor and care to place our work in the mainstream literature, but that, too, has been a refining experience.*<sup>50</sup>

Friends, I believe that with relentless rigor and meticulous care—through diligence and daring, imagination and resolve—we will fulfill the prophetic vision for research on this campus. We will do so in ways that enrich our teaching and engage our students. In the process, we will find ourselves lifted and drenched by a rising tide of exhilaration and joy.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said:

*My expectations for this institution . . . include not only teaching “out of the best books” but also having [BYU's] faculty and graduates write some of the best books!*<sup>51</sup>

May we meet that apostolic expectation as we establish a research program that will help prepare the world for the Savior's return—one that will prosper and endure through the thousand years that follow.

### III. General Education

In meeting this millennial mandate, we might take our bearings from President Holland's recent call for increased faith:

*We need to believe[, he said,] in angels and miracles and the promises of the holy priesthood. We need to believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost, the influence*

*of good families and friends, and the power of the pure love of Christ. We need to believe in revelation and prophets, seers, and revelators and President Russell M. Nelson.*<sup>52</sup>

During my first year as academic vice president, I have experienced something of angels, miracles, and priesthood blessings. I have learned something about revelation and about living prophets, seers, and revelators—including through their quiet ministry to people I love. I have seen the pure love of Christ manifest through the best family, friends, and colleagues anyone could ever imagine. In a special, sacred, and miraculous way, I have felt that love flowing from my brilliant, beautiful, indomitable wife, Lia, who has been for me a tower of strength and a pillar of light, an inexhaustible fountain of courage and conviction, compassion and consecration, friendship and faith, loyalty and love. Just thirteen days ago, Lia gave birth to our eighth child, a baby girl named Miriam. Lia, if you're somehow listening, I simply adore you. I love you to the depth and breadth and height, now and forever, in time and eternity, worlds without end.

For today's purposes, I want to accentuate the conclusion of President Holland's petition. "We need to believe," he said, "that with prayer and pleading and personal righteousness, we really can ascend to 'Mount Zion, . . . the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.'"<sup>53</sup> On this campus, I submit, we must "believe that with prayer and pleading and personal righteousness, we really can" erect the "school in Zion" about which prophets have spoken and our forebears dreamed.

One of those forebears is President Holland himself. On this occasion thirty-six years ago, in 1988, President Holland delivered his final fall conference address as BYU's ninth president. The title of his address, appropriately enough, was "A School in Zion." In that powerful message, he envisioned a unique, BYU-specific brand of general education—"an absolutely unequaled liberal arts general and religious education,"<sup>54</sup> he called it. Of our honors and general education programs, President Holland said:

*I consider them . . . crown jewels at the very heart of the most important contributions BYU can make to the world of higher education. . . . Our sisterhood and brotherhood and gospel-based goodwill here give us a distinct GE advantage. . . . We simply have a very muscular leg up on the rest of the academic world. . . . We must seize that advantage.*<sup>55</sup>

To that end, he proposed three guiding principles:

**First**, our general education must "cross disciplinary and departmental lines."<sup>56</sup>

**Second**, in our GE curriculum "we must constantly resist the centrifugal force that habitually plagues GE programs and target our limited resources on a relatively small number of very significant offerings."<sup>57</sup>

**Third**, "we need to guard carefully against the tendency to let general education offerings become mere introductory courses to a discipline. They simply must remain more universal than that."<sup>58</sup>

Like President Holland, I regard general education as one of the crown jewels in the BYU treasury. My whole heart resonates with his "unabashed appeal for a distinctly [Restoration] approach to [general] education" and with his vision of the "grand, consummate, unparalleled, and integrated undergraduate education" that BYU aspires to provide.<sup>59</sup>

And yet I fear that we have drifted from the general education principles that President Holland outlined in 1988. Far from a "small number of very significant offerings," our general education now includes 489 distinct courses, many of them unmistakably "introductory courses to a discipline." The "centrifugal" forces that President Holland decried have been with us powerfully, to the point that we might never find two students who follow the same path through general education. Many students chart a labyrinthine course through GE with the primary goal of maximizing substitutions and double-counting. Insofar as we have strayed from the ideal of a universal, inter-, and transdisciplinary core curriculum, we have forfeited the power of shared knowledge.

I am not the first to note these challenges. For several years, an effort has been underway to refine and reform our general education. I am immensely grateful to the dedicated colleagues who have devoted their sharp thinking, enormous energies, and tremendous faith to this initiative. In the fall of 2021, a proposed GE redesign was forwarded to the Academic Vice President’s Council and the Dean’s Council, where for three years it has been the subject of sustained and spirited discussion. During these deliberations, it soon became clear that the constraints imposed on the redesign process had required compromises that prevented the full realization of the project’s promise. We wondered how we might magnify the proposal if we lifted those constraints. Accordingly, across many months I have been working with the leadership in Undergraduate Education, with the AVP Council, and with our deans to refine the proposal that was forwarded three years ago.

We are seeking to honor the principles President Holland outlined in “A School in Zion” as well as the aspirations he inscribed in our mission statement seven years earlier. We are trying to craft a general education that is truly general—a sinewy, centripetal core common to all students, with no substitutions or double-counting, focused “on a relatively small number of very significant offerings.” We are trying to apply lessons learned from University 101, including lessons about the primacy of pedagogy and the power of smaller sections.

We are trying, above all, to craft a general education that promotes “the balanced development of the total person,” fosters “the full realization of human potential,” and cultivates “those moral virtues which characterize the life and teachings of the Son of God.”<sup>60</sup>

A general education that nurtures men and women of virtue and faith,

*broadly prepared individual[s who] will not only be capable of meeting personal challenge and change but will also bring strength to others in the tasks of home and family life, social relationships, civic duty, and service to mankind.*<sup>61</sup>

A general education linked inextricably to religious education—one that vindicates President

Holland’s insight that “our fourteen hours of religious education ought to be seen as the very heart of our general education experience.”<sup>62</sup>

Our mission statement declares that “all students at BYU should be taught the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ” and that “because the gospel encourages the pursuit of all truth, students at BYU should receive a broad university education.”<sup>63</sup> These goals are complementary, not competing; symbiotic, not distinct. By pursuing them together, we hope that our general education requirements can draw strength from our religious education requirements, with University 101 forging an essential bond between the two.

Such a general education would honor the revelations’ sweeping curricular mandate:

- “Teach one another . . . of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations . . . ; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:77, 79).
- “Study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people” (Doctrine and Covenants 90:15).
- “Hasten . . . to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:53).
- “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118).

We hope that a refined general education will immerse our students in “the best books” and initiate them into the grand tradition of thought and faith that descends in a double helix from Athens and Jerusalem to Philadelphia and Palmyra. As President Kimball once promised, we will

*stir [our students’] blood with the messages of the ages. And they will sing songs of accomplishment, eternal marriage, and exaltation, and we at BYU shall encourage and train them.*<sup>64</sup>



A strong general education

*will help students think clearly, communicate effectively, understand important ideas in their own cultural tradition as well as that of others, and establish clear standards of intellectual integrity.*<sup>65</sup>

Accordingly, we hope a revised GE will emphasize quantitative reasoning and empower effective writing. Smaller sections, we hope, will allow us to reinforce these foundational skills across the GE curriculum.

We hope to do all of this in a general education that is simple and lean—universal in its reach, common for all students, focused “on a relatively small number of very significant offerings,” anchored in BYU’s inspired mission, and “bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel.”<sup>66</sup>

If we proceed down this path—guided at each step by the inspired counsel of our board of trustees—it will require herculean labors from all of us. Frankly, it will require miracles. But I believe in miracles, and I believe in you. With your united and consecrated efforts, and with a special endowment of heaven’s help, I believe that we can establish a general education fitly framed for the second half of our second century—a general education that will prepare legions of students to fulfill prophecy and to greet the Savior when He comes.

### Conclusion

Colleagues and friends, I have spoken about becoming the BYU of prophecy and about believing in Christ to come as though He already was. I have invited us all to live in the presence of God’s promises as though those promises had already been fulfilled. I have suggested how doing so might shape our approach to teaching, research, and general education. In closing, I contend that becoming the BYU of prophecy stretches beyond specific promises about BYU and merges with broader prophecies about the university and the kingdom, about Zion and gathering, about the Savior’s latter-day work, and about His glorious return.

Becoming the BYU of prophecy obviously encompasses President Kimball’s second-century

address. But it also intersects with these resounding predictions from President Nelson:

*Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, [he said,] will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory.*<sup>67</sup>

And again:

*So many wonderful things are ahead. In coming days, we will see the **greatest** manifestations of the Savior’s power that the world has **ever** seen. Between now and the time He returns “with power and great glory,” He will bestow countless privileges, blessings, and miracles upon the faithful.*<sup>68</sup>

I believe that some of those indications and some of those manifestations will blossom on this campus.

The term *manifest* comes from the Latin *manus*, meaning “hand,” and from the suffix *-festus*, which *manifest* apparently shares with *infest*. For the Romans, *manifestus* was a legal term denoting something clear and palpable, proven by direct evidence. To *manifest* is to reveal one’s hand and disclose one’s work. When President Nelson says that “we will [yet] see the *greatest* manifestations of the Savior’s power that the world has *ever* seen,” I understand him to be saying that the Savior’s hand will be at work in unmistakable ways.

*Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel. [1 Nephi 22:11]*

I spoke earlier about the Book of Mormon as the keystone of our campus. That record’s title page defines its dual purpose:

*To show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal*

*God, manifesting himself unto all nations.* [Book of Mormon title page; emphasis added]

At the other end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni describes one way in which the Savior is thus manifest:

*Deny not the gifts of God, [Moroni pleads,] for they are . . . given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God. . . . And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ.* [Moroni 10:8, 17]

I believe that in coming days, the Savior will manifest His power through the individual and collective spiritual gifts that He has bestowed and will yet bestow upon this university—its faculty, students, and staff. With those gifts and in His strength, we really can build up a school in Zion—a crown and glory, alongside the temple in the city of our God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. With prayer and pleading and personal righteousness, we really can become the BYU of prophecy—a university and a people ready to receive our king when He returns in final glory.

As we await that dawn of grace—a day when “he will swallow up death in victory; and . . . wipe away tears from off all faces” (Isaiah 25:8), when “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, [nor] . . . any more pain” (Revelation 21:4)—may we resolve to dry tears now, to soothe some sorrow, to relieve some pain.

And when every hour on the hour we hear the carillon bells faithfully toll our great anthem of the prairie—“All is well! All is well!”<sup>69</sup>—may we foresee the time foretold by the saintly Julian of Norwich: a time when “all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”<sup>70</sup>

Until that splendid dawn bursts forth, may we embrace this sweet appeal, which serves as this year’s conference theme:

*And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved.* [Omni 1:26]

God bless you, my dear friends, in this grand and glorious work.

I testify of the inspired mission and prophetic destiny of Brigham Young University, our embryonic school in Zion destined, “in the process of time, . . . [to] become the fully anointed university of the Lord about which so much has been spoken in the past.”<sup>71</sup>

I testify of angels and miracles and the everlasting covenant, of prophets and priesthood and the pure love of Christ.

Above all, I testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Living Son of the Living God, the Holy One of Israel, and the Savior of the world. I testify that in His coming day of might, He will descend to earth once more, draped in robes of crimson red, riding the crest of the clouds in power and great glory. I testify that He will make bare His holy arm, disclosing thus His matchless might, His pierced palms, His wounded wrists.

*He comes with healing in His wings,  
Deep crimson burns His robe;  
He speaks, and with a single word,  
He shakes the very globe.*

*He bares His strong, majestic arm,  
Displays His sacred scars;  
Ten thousand-thousand angels rain  
A cataract of stars.*<sup>72</sup>

We have been taught that at that day each knee shall bow, each tongue confess, that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>73</sup>

I do so now. I declare Him to be “the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star,”<sup>74</sup> “the captain of [our] salvation”<sup>75</sup> and the rock of our redemption, “the author and finisher of our faith.”<sup>76</sup> With every atom of my soul, I worship and adore Him. I don’t know why I am so blessed to spend my professional life in this magnificent corner of His vineyard, but I will thank Him all my days that I get to share this work with you.

“Shall we not go on in so great a cause?” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:22).

In the resplendent name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. Henry B. Eyring, speaking of his time as the president of Ricks College in “A Charted Course,” BYU annual university conference address, 27 August 1996; see also Robert I. Eaton and Henry J. Eyring, *I Will Lead You Along: The Life of Henry B. Eyring* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 202.

2. Spencer W. Kimball, quoted in Eyring, “A Charted Course”; see also Eaton and Eyring, *I Will Lead You Along*, 202.

3. Charles H. Malik, “Education in Upheaval: The Christian’s Responsibility,” *Creative Help for Daily Living* 21, no. 18 (September 1970): 10; quoted in Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” BYU devotional address, 10 October 1975; also in *Foundations and Dreams*, ed. John S. Tanner, vol. 1, *Envisioning BYU* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 2022), 53.

4. Kimball, “Second Century”; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 53.

5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995.

6. Ours is a school, President Jeffrey R. Holland once said, with “millennial aspirations” (“A School in Zion,” BYU annual university conference address, 22 August 1988). His address “A School in Zion” will be included in the third and final volume of *Envisioning BYU*.

7. In a similar spirit, the prophet Abinadi spoke “of things to come as though they had already come” (Mosiah 16:6).

8. C. Shane Reese, “Becoming BYU: An Inaugural Response,” address delivered at his inauguration as BYU president, 19 September 2023; also in *Learning and Light*, ed. John S. Tanner, vol. 2, *Envisioning BYU* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 2024), 303–13.

9. C. Shane Reese, “Developing Eyes to See,” BYU devotional address, 9 January 2024; see also Reese, “Perspective: Becoming BYU,” *Opinion*, *Deseret News*, 11 December 2023, [deseret.com/opinion/2023/12/11/23997519/c-shane-reese-what-byu-must-become](https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2023/12/11/23997519/c-shane-reese-what-byu-must-become).

10. Rick Anderson, “The Tree, the Fruit, and the Building,” BYU devotional address, 2 April 2024.

11. Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” (1923), stanza 4.

12. President C. Shane Reese said:

*The exciting aspect of becoming BYU is that we’re not there yet. We’ve got work to do. And what an incredibly exciting prospect that is. I don’t look at that as “we’re not there yet and woe is me.” I actually look at it as “we’re not there yet and it’s going to be a thrill to be a part of how this unfolds.” [In Aaron Sorenson, “Q&A with President Reese on ‘Reinforcing Mission-Aligned Hiring,’” *Intellect*, BYU News, 22 August 2024, [news.byu.edu/intellect/q-a-president-reese-mission-aligned-hiring](https://news.byu.edu/intellect/q-a-president-reese-mission-aligned-hiring)]*

13. Kimball, “Second Century”; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 57.

14. Neal A. Maxwell, “Why a University in the Kingdom?” *Ensign*, October 1975; excerpted in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 152.

15. See Kevin J. Worthen, “This Is a Student,” BYU university conference address, 22 August 2022; excerpted in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 299–300; see also Merrill J. Bateman, “A Zion University,” BYU devotional address, 9 January 1996; also published in Bateman, *Learning in the Light of Truth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 24.

At his inauguration as president of BYU, Dallin H. Oaks said:

*Our reason for **being** is to be a university. But our reason for **being a university** is to encourage and prepare young men and women to rise to their full spiritual potential as sons and daughters of God. [“Response,” *Addresses Delivered at the Inauguration of Dallin Harris Oaks*, 12 November 1971 (Provo: BYU Press, 1971), 18; emphasis in original]*

16. Brigham Young said to Karl G. Maeser, “You ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God.” Maeser soon realized he had been given this guiding directive: “Teach nothing, do nothing, without the Spirit of God.” (From Reinhard Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser: A Biography by His Son* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1928], 79, 80; see also excerpt in “Brigham Young’s 1876 Charge to Karl G. Maeser,” *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 14. Spencer W. Kimball quoted Brigham Young in

“Education for Eternity,” address to BYU faculty and staff, 12 September 1967; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 173.)

17. Kimball, “Education for Eternity”; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 173.

18. See Ruth L. Okediji, “The Costly Arc of Religious Freedom,” BYU forum address, 30 January 2024.

19. John Donne, *Holy Sonnets* (1633), no. 13, line 1.

20. Russell M. Nelson, “Closing Remarks,” *Ensign*, November 2019.

21. See Justin Collings, “Gifts of Light,” BYU university conference faculty session address, 28 August 2023.

22. Russell M. Nelson, “The Converting Power of the Book of Mormon,” address delivered at the 2024 Seminar for New Mission Leaders, 23 June 2024; quoted in Sydney Walker, “President Nelson to New Mission Leaders: ‘The Truths of the Book of Mormon Are Filled with Power,’” *Leaders and Ministry, Church News*, 23 June 2024, [thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/06/23/president-russell-nelson-new-mission-leaders-2024-book-of-mormon-truths](https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/06/23/president-russell-nelson-new-mission-leaders-2024-book-of-mormon-truths).

23. Jeffrey R. Holland, address delivered at the 2024 Seminar for New Mission Leaders, 20 June 2024; quoted in Trent Toone, “President Jeffrey R. Holland: ‘Becoming Lifelong Disciples of Jesus Christ,’” *Leaders and Ministry, Church News*, 20 June 2024, [thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/06/20/president-jeffrey-r-holland-2024-seminar-new-mission-leaders-lifelong-disciples-christ](https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders/2024/06/20/president-jeffrey-r-holland-2024-seminar-new-mission-leaders-lifelong-disciples-christ).

24. Kimball, “Second Century”; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 57.

25. See Ronald A. Rasband, “A Prophetically Directed University,” BYU university conference address, 26 August 2024.

26. BYU Academic Freedom Policy (1 April 1993), [policy.byu.edu/view/academic-freedom-policy](https://policy.byu.edu/view/academic-freedom-policy).

27. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (23 September 1995).

28. Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” *Liahona*, November 2023.

29. Grant J. Jensen, “Choosing God’s Best Blessings: Family,” BYU devotional address, 7 May 2024.

30. President Harold B. Lee stated:

*You’re to teach the old doctrines, not so plainly that they can just understand, but **you must teach the***

*doctrines of the Church so plainly that no one can misunderstand.* [“Loyalty,” in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 64; emphasis in original; quoted in *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ, 1999), 52]

31. Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote, “This campus is a place where the doctrine of *in loco parentis* is alive and well” (“Why a University in the Kingdom?”; excerpted in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 152).

32. Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Prayer for the Children,” *Ensign*, May 2003. Elder Dale G. Renlund similarly applied President Holland’s words to BYU faculty in a university conference message five years ago (see “Creating and Conveying a Christlike Culture: More Than a Job,” BYU university conference address, 26 August 2019).

33. Holland, “A Prayer for the Children.”

34. The Mission of Brigham Young University (4 November 1981); also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 66.

35. Marion G. Romney, “Why the J. Reuben Clark Law School?” dedicatory address and prayer of the J. Reuben Clark Law Building, 5 September 1975.

36. Rachel Sterzer Gibson, “Elder Gilbert Explains Why the Church Educational System Must Have the Courage to Be Different,” *Living Faith, Church News*, 17 August 2022, [thechurchnews.com/living-faith/2022/8/17/23308942/elder-gilbert-byu-education-week-church-educational-system-courage-to-be-different](https://www.thechurchnews.com/living-faith/2022/8/17/23308942/elder-gilbert-byu-education-week-church-educational-system-courage-to-be-different).

37. Spencer W. Kimball taught:

*We should deal statistically and spiritually with root problems, root issues, and root causes in BYU’s second century. We seek to do so, not in arrogance or pride but in the spirit of service.* [“Second Century”; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 53]

38. Kevin J. Worthen, memo to Dallin H. Oaks, 12 April 2017; quoted in Oaks, “Challenges to the Mission of Brigham Young University,” BYU leadership conference address, 21 April 2017; also in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 179. John S. Tanner once made a similar point:

*The fundamental purpose of scholarship at BYU . . . is not, and must never be, to satisfy our own vain-glory nor to advance our own careers. Nor even is it solely to advance truth and knowledge, though this is a worthy purpose and one specifically endorsed by BYU's institutional objectives. The primary purpose for the Church's large investment in faculty scholarship and creative work at BYU is to enable us to be a refining host for our students. ["A House of Dreams," BYU annual university conference faculty session address, 28 August 2007; excerpted in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 242; quoted in Oaks, "Challenges to the Mission of Brigham Young University"]*

39. James R. Rasband, "Paired Aspirations," BYU university conference faculty session address, 28 August 2017; excerpted in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 121–40. See Justin Collings and C. Shane Reese, "False Dichotomies, Paired Aspirations, and 'Becoming BYU,'" Perspective, *Deseret News*, 25 March 2024, [deseret.com/education/2024/03/25/religious-education-at-byu-school-mission](https://www.deseret.com/education/2024/03/25/religious-education-at-byu-school-mission). See also John S. Tanner, "Notes from an Amateur on Academic Excellence," BYU annual university conference faculty session address, 24 August 2004; also in Tanner, *Learning in the Light: Selected Talks at BYU* (Provo: BYU Studies, 2017), 8–9.

40. See C. Shane Reese, "Building Positive Momentum," BYU university conference address, 26 August 2024; see also "2025 Research Designations," Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, [carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/carnegie-classification/research-designations](https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/carnegie-classification/research-designations).

41. See J. Reuben Clark Jr., *CR*, April 1951, 154.

42. Kevin J Worthen, "Two Challenges Facing Brigham Young University as a Religiously Affiliated School," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2015): 9; emphasis added; quoted in Oaks, "Challenges to the Mission"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 180.

43. Mission of BYU; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 66.

44. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Remarks at the Inauguration of President Cecil O. Samuelson," BYU inauguration address, 9 September 2003.

45. Kimball, "Education for Eternity"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 162.

46. William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807), line 1.

47. Kimball, "Second Century"; emphasis added; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 46.

48. While he was president of BYU, Dallin H. Oaks asked the faculty and staff:

*Are we secure enough in our professional preparation and attainments and strong enough in our faith that we can, as President Kimball said, "break with the educational establishment . . . for good reason . . . in order to find gospel ways to help mankind"? Although we are beginning to see some brilliant examples of gospel approaches in secular subjects at BYU, many of us are not yet ready to be this bold and this creative. As more and more of us acquire superior professional preparation and unshakable faith, we will see our overall performance improve. And when it does, the results will be spectacular. ["A House of Faith," BYU annual university conference address, 31 August 1977; also in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 20–21; quoting Kimball, "Second Century"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 55]*

49. Kimball, "Second Century"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 49, 55, 46.

50. Bonnie Brinton, "The Academic Analeps," address at a BYU-hosted academic conference, 27 February 2009; also excerpted in *Envisioning BYU: Learning and Light*, 102.

51. Neal A. Maxwell, "Out of the Best Faculty," BYU annual university conference faculty session address, 26 August 1993; emphasis in original; quoting Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.

52. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Motions of a Hidden Fire," *Liahona*, May 2024.

53. Holland, "Motions of a Hidden Fire"; quoting Doctrine and Covenants 76:66.

54. Holland, "A School in Zion."

55. Holland, "A School in Zion."

56. Holland, "A School in Zion."

57. Holland, "A School in Zion."

58. Holland, "A School in Zion."

59. Holland, "A School in Zion."

60. Mission of BYU; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 65.

61. Mission of BYU; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 65.

62. Holland, "A School in Zion."
63. Mission of BYU; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 65.
64. Kimball, "Education for Eternity"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 175.
65. Mission of BYU; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 65–66.
66. Kimball, "Education for Eternity"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 173.
67. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018.
68. Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," *Liahona*, November 2022; emphasis in original; quoting Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:36.
69. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, 2002, no. 30.
70. Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, revelation 13, chapter 27, lines 10–11; in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 209; spelling modernized.
71. Kimball, "Second Century"; also in *Envisioning BYU: Foundations and Dreams*, 55.
72. Justin Collings, "All Flesh Shall See It Together" (unpublished).
73. See "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles" (1 January 2000); see also Philippians 2:10–11; Mosiah 27:31; Doctrine and Covenants 88:104.
74. Revelation 22:16.
75. Hebrews 2:10.
76. Hebrews 12:2.