

November 16, 2017

## “Inauguration of Clark G. Gilbert”

President Russell M. Nelson

*President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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Elder Dallin H. Oaks, members of the Board of Trustees, Commissioner Kim B. Clark, President Clark G. Gilbert, distinguished guests, dear brothers and sisters: It is a pleasure to be here with you tonight. I am honored to have been asked by the First Presidency to preside at this inauguration of President Clark G. Gilbert, the first president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

I am grateful to those who have offered remarks and tributes during this service, including Elder Kim B. Clark, Church Commissioner of Education, and those PathwayConnect students who delivered video greetings to President Gilbert.

I would like to pay a personal tribute to President Gilbert and his wife, Sister Christine Calder Gilbert. Like Nephi, both of these exceptional individuals were born of goodly parents who taught them correct gospel principles, which they, in turn, have taught to their own children. They have consecrated their lives unto the Lord.

President Gilbert has excelled in his professional career at Harvard University, the *Deseret News*, Deseret Digital Media, and most recently, at BYU-Idaho. His love of education, his entrepreneurial spirit, and his keen intellect have helped him make worthwhile contributions wherever he has served. While at BYU-Idaho, President Gilbert constantly approached his work with boundless energy and enthusiasm while he focused on helping the “everyday student” find success. By instituting Date Night with the Gilberts, he and Sister Gilbert modeled dating activities, answered questions, and inspired all in attendance to embrace the doctrine of the family.

Sister Gilbert will be the perfect inaugural first lady of BYU-Pathway Worldwide. Her devoted sacrifice and support of President Gilbert have been unwavering throughout their many years of married life. Sister Gilbert has simultaneously and selflessly given of her time, talents, and energy as the marvelous mother of eight choice children. And I happen to know that she is also a very good skier.

To the Gilbert children—James, Paige, John, Emma, Mary, Grace, Lucy, and Claire—I wish to extend thanks to each of you for your willingness to move multiple times—leaving behind both friends and schools—as your father has been asked to take on increasingly important responsibilities. We love this very precious Gilbert family! Now, brothers, sisters, and friends, this is an historic occasion. These proceedings are being broadcast to PathwayConnect and BYU-Idaho online students throughout the world.

Your numbers are impressive! Throughout 2017, 38,297 students have been enrolled in programs affiliated with BYU-Pathway Worldwide. Some 2,473 Church service missionaries donate their time to facilitate gatherings at 458 sites around the globe.

PathwayConnect has served nearly 73,000 students, many of whom have graduated and gone on to either online or campus degree programs. Think of it: PathwayConnect started with only 50 students at three pilot locations in the fall of 2009!

From the earliest days of this restored Church, education for Latter-day Saints has been regarded as a religious responsibility. In April 1843, the Prophet Joseph Smith so instructed Saints at Ramus, Illinois, saying, “Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more

knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, the creation of BYU-Pathway Worldwide brings an innovative approach to education—one unique to the Church Educational System (to which I will refer subsequently as “CES”), and to the world. Because many students cannot go to CES campuses, PathwayConnect has found a way to take the CES experience to the students.

I hope that each of you special students can realize the inspiration of this program and the blessing it has been—and will continue to be—in your lives. PathwayConnect has already been a life-changing force in the lives of many students. One might ask, “How can BYU-Pathway Worldwide help change *my* life?” Let me share a few examples of how your life can be changed academically, professionally, and spiritually.

PathwayConnect’s overarching purpose is to help students continue their education. But it also helps students build self-confidence in a supportive environment.

President Thomas S. Monson has urged: “[D]on’t take counsel of your fears. Don’t say to yourselves, ‘I’m not wise enough, or I can’t apply myself sufficiently well to study this difficult subject..., so I shall choose the easier way.’ I plead with you to tax your talent, and our Heavenly Father will make you equal to those decisions.”<sup>2</sup>

Yes, PathwayConnect students tax their talents by preparing and leading discussions in their weekly gatherings. Students also learn the skills necessary to succeed in life, not just in school.

Felipe Bento of Santo André, Brazil, always dreamed of learning English. When he realized he would never be promoted at work without English, he knew it was time to fulfill his dream. He said, “In my first PathwayConnect gathering, I understood nothing and I thought, ‘[This] is not for me. I will give up.’ And I cried. But I asked help from God, and I felt His hands in my life, helping me with my challenges.”

Through diligent study of a topic foreign to him, Felipe learned a new language.<sup>3</sup> But it was only after he exercised faith in his Father in Heaven that Felipe was able to learn and grasp the English language.<sup>4</sup> You may be interested to know that Felipe received a promotion at work and is now a better provider for his family. The PathwayConnect program truly helps students find courage, go forward with faith, and achieve their life goals, whether professional or educational.

PathwayConnect also helps students develop skills that will enable them to gain meaningful employment.

President Howard W. Hunter taught: “Our Heavenly Father loves us so completely that he has given us a commandment to work. This is one of the keys to eternal life. He knows that we will learn more, grow more, achieve more, serve more, and benefit more from a life of industry than from a life of ease.”<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, PathwayConnect helps students become better providers. President Gordon B. Hinckley said that by gaining an education and developing vocational skills, young people can escape the cycle of poverty.<sup>6</sup>

Trevon Morris of Kingston, Jamaica, had struggled with debt for many years. He always wanted to complete his education, but he knew adding to his debt was not a good idea. Through PathwayConnect, Trevon learned to take control of his finances.

He explained: “Pathway[Connect] gave me a new perspective financially. During the math course, I learned how to create a proper budget—something our family never had before. I learned to recognize the financial leaks that were hurting us and how to plug them up.”

By applying PathwayConnect lessons, Trevon was able to pay off his five-year debt in just one year! As he continued his education through BYU-Idaho, he earned a promotion and eventually started his own small business.<sup>7</sup>

It is through education and vocational training that students like Trevon have been able to break the cycle of poverty, become better providers for their families, and grow in leadership responsibilities, both in their careers and in the Church.

Most importantly, PathwayConnect encourages each of you students to grow spiritually as you participate in courses taught within the framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This very act of gathering in Institutes and Church buildings dedicated to the Lord—in whatever nation you may reside—allows the Holy Ghost to testify of all truth more easily.<sup>8</sup>

A key aspect of PathwayConnect is studying the Book of Mormon alongside principles of time management, budgeting, and self-reliance. As students prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day, “they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual.”<sup>9</sup> It is no wonder so many PathwayConnect students have seen such transformative changes in their lives.

After raising her family of five children, Allison Olson from Idaho Falls, Idaho, felt it was time to continue her education. She had been held back in school when she was in second grade and told not to pursue a college education. However, Allison’s patriarchal blessing told her of her great gifts of faith, wisdom, and knowledge.

Allison said: “Because I know God cannot lie, I believed I could get a college education. Over the years, this truth began to fade. While attending the PathwayConnect Life Skills course, I was reminded of who I really am—a daughter of God. If God wanted me to learn something, I could learn it because I am His daughter.... Whenever I struggled with a concept, theory, or principle, I remembered this truth and exercised my faith in the Lord to help me. He was always there.”<sup>10</sup>

Allison had a desire to learn more and fulfill the promises in her patriarchal blessing. Her testimony was strengthened through her pursuit of a faith-based education.

I encourage each person, regardless of age, to continue to learn. Pursue whatever path will be most valuable to you and your family. You will be blessed as you do this. You will grow academically, professionally, and spiritually as you seek to enhance your education.

I pray that our Father in Heaven may bless each of you and your loved ones. I add my testimony that we are all engaged in the work of Almighty God. He lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, we are His covenant people! I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas S. Monson, “Life’s Greatest Decisions,” CES Devotional, Sept. 2003

<sup>3</sup> Felipe Bento, video interview by Silvio Guimarães, April 22, 2016

<sup>4</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19

<sup>5</sup> Howard W. Hunter, “Prepare for Honorable Employment,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975

<sup>6</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Perpetual Education Fund,” *Ensign*, May 2001

<sup>7</sup> Trevon R. Morris, interview by Neal Buckles, October 11, 2016

<sup>8</sup> See Moroni 10:4–5

<sup>9</sup> Mosiah 2:41

<sup>10</sup> Allison Olsen, BYU-Pathway Worldwide Survey Response, June 21, 2017