

LIGHT REFLECTIONS

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Power to Become

The Lord promised the Kirtland Saints that by faith they would perform miracles: the blind would see, the deaf would hear, the lame would leap, and the sick would be made whole. The Lord also extended a special promise to those whose faith was still developing. “And they who have not faith to do these things,” He said, “but believe in me, have power to become my sons” (D&C 42:52).

Power to become—a power possessed in the present tense by imperfect souls who turn unto Him.

In recent years, we’ve heard a lot on this campus about becoming. President Reese first used the phrase “Becoming BYU” exactly two years ago, when he spoke at the annual President’s Dinner on May 2, 2023—his second day in office. Four months later, in his inaugural response, he planted the flag of Becoming BYU unmistakably and unforgettably:

Our task, I submit, is to claim in our day the prophecies of the past. Our task is to become the university that prophets have foretold . . . This, then, is our challenge during my administration: becoming BYU.¹

President Reese has repeatedly emphasized that “becoming BYU” means becoming “the Christ-centered, prophetically directed university of prophecy.” I am convinced that I cannot assist in that process unless my own life is Christ-centered and prophetically directed—unless I myself continually strive toward becoming.

At last month’s general conference, Elder Michael B. Strong observed that “discipleship is a

deliberate journey . . . [t]he real destination of [which] is . . . to become as Jesus Christ is.”² Becoming, then, is the essence of discipleship. It is both a journey and a destination.

President Dallin H. Oaks has taught that becoming forms the heart of our Father’s plan of mercy. “The gospel of Jesus Christ,” President Oaks said, “is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”³

Central to the gospel plan, becoming infuses and informs each of our primary identities.⁴ As children of God, we inherit the capacity to become more like our Heavenly Father. As children of the covenant, we embrace the transformative power of the covenant path. And as disciples of Jesus Christ, we strive to become more like Him.

None of this would be possible without the Savior’s Atonement. His Atonement empowers our moral agency, which fuels the power to become. “And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time,” Lehi foretold, “that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever . . . to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Ne. 2:26).

Lehi’s son Jacob taught further that without the Savior’s Atonement, we would lack the power to become—indeed, we would be doomed to “become like unto [Satan],” condemned to “become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself” (2 Ne. 9:7, 9).

No wonder Jacob marveled, “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! . . . O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster” (2

Ne. 9:8, 10). Because of the Savior’s Atonement, “the power is in [us]”—the power to become—and we “are agents unto [ourselves]” (D&C 58:28).

The power to become is beautifully underscored in our foundational documents. *The Aims of a BYU Education* describes BYU as a covenant band of “brothers and sisters seeking together to master the academic disciplines while remaining mastered by the higher claims of discipleship to the Savior.”⁵ The Aims document further explains that “BYU graduates . . . draw on an educated intellect to enhance not only what they know but also what they do and, ultimately, what they are.”⁶

¹ C. Shane Reese, “Becoming BYU: An Inaugural Response,” in John S. Tanner (ed), *Envisioning BYU: Volume 2—Light and Learning* (2023) 306.

² Michael B. Strong, “Charity—a Sign of True Discipleship,” *Liahona*, May 2025.

³ Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” *Liahona*, November 2023.

⁴ See Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity,” *Worldwide Devotional*, 15 May 2022.

That, in the end, is what Becoming BYU is all about. Becoming the Christ-centered, prophetically directed university of prophecy means helping our students become the Christ-centered, prophetically directed disciples whom prophets have foreseen—“brilliant stars” whose “unique light” will “provide the music of hope for the inhabitants of this planet.”⁷

We are blessed to witness firsthand the fulfillment of prophecy—what President Nelson has called “the majesty of this moment.”⁸

And the best, of course, is yet to come. The best is yet to come as we continue to *become*.

⁵ “The Aims of a BYU Education” in John S. Tanner (ed), *Envisioning BYU: Volume 1—Foundations and Dreams* (2022) 72.

⁶ *Ibid* 77.

⁷ Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” in *ibid* 49, 46, 59.

⁸ Russell M. Nelson, “The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again,” *Liahona*, November 2024.