

“Assistance Beyond Our Own: The Power of Spiritual Learning”

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Hello, BYU-Pathway Worldwide students and faculty. I am speaking to you today from one of our many Institutes of Religion. Our Institutes look different all over the world but they all have one thing in common. They are wonderful places where hundreds of thousands come each year to learn the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and connect with others that are striving for deepened discipleship.

As many of you know, throughout BYU-Pathway you will be able to take religion courses. Four of those courses are what we call “cornerstone courses”:

1. *Jesus Christ and His Everlasting Gospel,*
2. *Teachings and Doctrines of the Book of Mormon,*
3. *The Eternal Family, and*
4. *Foundations of the Restoration.*

These courses are required for students of all Church schools: Brigham Young University, BYU–Hawaii, BYU-Idaho, Ensign College, and BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

In addition to these four courses, you will also be able to select three other elective religion courses. Institute of Religion courses are a vital part of a BYU-Pathway education and are part of what makes BYU-Pathway different from other schools you may have chosen.

Integrating both spiritual and academic learning is at the core of your education. We believe that the two work together and make us better students and leaders now and in the future. This is more than just another form of personal study. In an institute course you will read and study doctrinal truths that you otherwise might not have considered. You will be able to learn from and teach other class members as you connect in your gathering. Each course of study will expand your doctrinal understanding and deepen your conversion to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. For these reasons and others, we encourage you to take a religion course each block of your chosen field of study.

President Boyd K. Packer who served as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from 1994 to 2015, once taught that taking academic courses without the counterbalance of spiritual courses, such as seminary for youth or institute for young adults and university students, would be like adding one more brick to the house of knowledge with little mortar to hold it all together.²

Speaking of the unique nature of a Church education, President Dallin H. Oaks quoted President Russell M. Nelson as saying the following:

There is a major difference, however, between the responsibilities of secular educators and my responsibility as the senior Apostle on earth. Their job is to educate and prepare you for your mortal experience — meaning, how to succeed in your life’s work. My responsibility is to educate and prepare you also for your immortal experience — meaning, how to gain eternal life.¹

President Oaks then added, “The uniqueness of our Church education has the same purpose: education for eternity as well as education for our mortal experience. We go forward with that goal.”²

Your education at BYU-Pathway Worldwide will prepare you for your mortal experience as well as your immortal experience. When you invite the Lord to be a part of your education, He will strengthen you and aid you in your academic pursuits. The choice you have made to enroll in BYU-Pathway is a choice to involve the Lord in your education. You have the ability to draw on the power of heaven to assist you in your educational pursuits. You are not alone in your educational journey.

President D. Todd Christofferson of the First Presidency taught:

You need to remember always that you are not alone in this. There are people who love and pray for you. Maybe there are some skeptics who tell you that you can't do it or who, for some reason, don't want you to succeed. But they can't stop you, and there are more who support you. Most importantly, your Heavenly Father and your Savior know you and can and will grant you heavenly help. Make God your partner. ... Your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son love you as much as They do me, and you are entitled to Their help just as much as I am. With Their help, you can succeed in [your education] and every other worthy endeavor in your life. You do not labor and study alone.³

Think of that. In our education and in every other worthy endeavor, we can receive divine help.

Some years ago, I experienced the strengthening power of God to help me and my family when we were faced with an educational Mount Everest. In 2014, my wife and I were called to serve as mission leaders and were excited to give full-time service to the Lord. We were shocked, however, when we received our assignment. I had served as a young man in a Spanish-speaking mission, and as a family we were considerably comfortable in speaking that language. Because of that, we anticipated being called to labor in a Spanish-speaking mission. To our shock, when we opened our assignment letter, we were assigned to labor in the Brazil Recife Mission where we would be speaking Portuguese. We felt like we had been asked to do something so far beyond our capability and that it would only be possible with God's help.

There is not time enough to outline the tender mercies we received during our preparation, but let me say this: the moment we meekly invited the Lord to help us learn Portuguese and prepare, miracles began to occur in our lives. Our study of the language did not require less effort; rather, we felt the power and blessings of God to help us understand and retain what we were studying, and our ability to speak the language was magnified.

Elder David A Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

I think all of us have those reservations. We've all thought, "I don't have what it takes to do this." You do not have to do this alone. You don't learn alone. The Holy Ghost is a teacher. He's a Comforter, [and] He brings all things to our remembrance. So, if we put forth the effort to input whatever the subject matter — not just spiritual things — chemistry, algebra, English, learning a foreign language — we are assisted by the Holy Ghost. That doesn't minimize the amount of work we have to do, but it provides hope that we have assistance beyond our own.⁴

I know by personal experience that what Elder Bednar taught in that statement is true. You and I do not have to do this alone, and combining the spiritual with our academic study gives us access to "assistance beyond our own." I feel like, when it comes to personal growth and improvement, we often live far beneath our privileges. Our Father in Heaven wants us to progress and improve. If invited, He will assist us.

As you move through your courses of study, please don't neglect your religion courses. They will help you maintain a constant connection with heaven and provide access to the power of God in all that you do. I encourage you to spread your religion courses throughout the year so you can have that power at every moment of your education. Sometimes when we are feeling overwhelmed with all of life's responsibilities, don't be like the person who eats all their weekly calories in one day, only to starve

themselves on the other six. I think we can all see that it is better for us physically to spread our food intake evenly over the course of the week.

Our spiritual growth works very much the same way. It is better for us to develop a daily habit of scripture study and a consistent connection with God than to connect to heaven only once a week or a month.

Your religion courses will expand your understanding of God's plan for us and deepen your conversion to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. As you blend your spiritual and academic studies, I promise you that you will be magnified and strengthened.

Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer, and His power can strengthen us and guide us throughout our lives. My prayer is that you and I can find great success in every righteous endeavor we pursue as we connect to Christ and His great power. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Dallin H. Oaks, "[Going Forward in the Second Century](#)" (BYU devotional, Sept. 13, 2022), [speeches.byu.edu](#)

² Ibid

³ D. Todd Christofferson, "[The Will to Prepare](#)" (BYU-Pathway Worldwide devotional, Nov. 12, 2019), [byupathway.edu/speeches](#)

⁴ David A. Bednar, "[I Have Learned for Myself](#)" (BYU-Pathway Worldwide devotional, Oct. 23, 2018), [byupathway.edu/speeches](#)