

The Habit of Curriculum



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As an early teen I enjoyed watching reruns of the original Star Trek series. In my mid-20s, I watched some of the sequel series that developed. I was particularly fascinated with the gadgets and technology. Amazingly, in the last ten years, I have come to own several of them: my own flip phone communicator and my own tablet.

But the device that seemed most attractive will likely never be part of my mortal experience: the teleporter. There was something so appealing about beaming up and beaming down—to just be there right now without the time and effort of the journey.

Getting from place to place, going the distance, can be one of the sore trials of mortality. In fact, the English word for travel is related to travail, something that can cause us to mourn because of the difficulty, but it is precisely because of the challenge of the journey, the trial of moving from one place to another over time and with effort and difficulty, that we have come to mortality.

I would like to spend some time today talking about another word and idea that captures this sense of journey and going the distance to move from the beginning to the end of a race: “curriculum.” I’d like to share some tools for thinking about curriculum and also use curriculum as a tool for thinking about what *really* matters. Until I started writing this address, I hadn’t given much thought to the actual term “curriculum” itself. That’s pretty ironic since I’ve been immersed in the world of curriculum for the last four years. Let me share some things I’ve learned since I asked that question. We’ll start with its roots as a word, its etymology, and then look at ways that it’s used.

The word curriculum means course of study or training and comes from Latin. It was first used in Scottish universities in the Seventeenth Century and came into wider use in the Nineteenth Century. It has its roots in the Latin word *currere*—“to run.” And so curriculum would figuratively be a course to run or a race to run. We can see in the English word “current,” a linguistic cousin, another word descended from the Latin word to run. In both words, you can see a sense of motion. You can see that with both the current of a river and current of electricity. There is a starting and ending. There is progress and direction. I think this image of a course or race to run is most helpful if we don’t think of it as a competition against others but a challenge for ourselves. There is a distance to go, and the only way to get to the end of the race is to begin the journey and to keep going.

One way to see this course of study is very literally as a progression of the academic courses that are offered and the information that a student is supposed to gain in them. We know that there are different stages in a course of study. The university curriculum is divided into different levels. Students who are starting at the university typically start with 100-level courses, and students who are getting closer to graduating are usually taking 400-level courses. One approach to these stages of learning is just to see them as a progression in information that must be memorized. You start with 100-level information and end with 400-level information. In this narrow sense, curriculum is information to learn progressively over a certain amount of time.

A challenge with this approach is that at almost every stage, we learn information and then forget. With this limited sense of what learning is, we may start to feel apathetic about both learning and our college curriculum—why bother, we can look everything up online anyways, why am I here, what is the point of college other than to get a piece of paper to get a job?

A better and deeper way to think about learning and curriculum is taking on new mental models. If we just see learning as mastery of content rather than taking on new ways of thinking and acting, we risk the classic result reported in Ken Bain's book, *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Students in a physics class learned the information and passed the test, but at the end of the class, a post-test showed that their view of the world had not changed; they were still using mental models of physical reality that they had before the class. The information they had learned had not restructured their view of the physical world as taught by the principles of physics. It was as though they hadn't taken the class at all. They had learned in a narrow sense of gaining information but not in a deeper sense of thinking differently—of taking on new mental models.¹

This sense of learning as taking on new mental models follows an older sense of knowledge in which knowing isn't just memorizing information. There is a long tradition about learning that recognizes stages of progress in learning and mastery, stages of taking on a new way of being. In the ancient world, one became a disciple of a master. The biblical term for disciples in the Greek is *mathetes*, “those who direct their minds to something,” learners or pupils, even apprentices.² Disciples subject themselves to the authority of a master in order to learn and become like him. In the Middle Ages and early modern world, those who learned trades worked through the stages of being an apprentice, a journeyman, and finally a master of a particular skill and body of knowledge. One became a master through practice, feedback, and progressive experience. We also see those stages in the tradition of the universities with the degrees of bachelor's, master's, and doctor.

This learning as becoming, stages in taking on a new way of being, happens intuitively as we grow up in families and cultures. We unconsciously take on ways of thinking and acting that shape the way we carry ourselves and the way we live in the world. We learn a language. We how to walk and talk, what to eat, what to do, what to value. We are raised with an invisible cultural curriculum. The curriculum of our upbringing is the sequenced experiences that create ways of thinking and acting that becomes habits.

Pierre Bourdieu, a Twentieth-century French social and cultural theorist, uses the term *habitus* to describe this invisible cultural curriculum. He emphasizes that knowing is not just facts but that this practical knowledge entails an embodied disposition that we are not even aware of. It shapes how we are in the world. He uses the term “learned ignorance” to describe this “practical understanding,” a way of being that we absorb so unconsciously from our families and culture.³ Many of you are now or have lived in foreign cultures and face this daily as you try to understand and know cultural cues and meanings that natives of the culture don't even realize they know. They have this “learned ignorance.” Bourdieu explains that to seek this practical understanding, or to try to pick up a new culture from the outside, is to seek a “theory—which cannot be found through theoretical experience alone—of what it is to be ‘native,’ that is, to be in that relationship of ‘learned ignorance,’ of immediate but unselfconscious understanding which defines the practical relationship to the world.”⁴ The invisible cultural curriculum of our childhood provides our individual “learned ignorance.” We

are not born knowing a language or how to live as a native in a culture, but we learn it so quickly and so effortlessly that we are not conscious of having been taught.

The invisible curriculum of childhood is implemented by parents and absorbed by children without much reflection. As small children, we are humble, meek, and teachable. We learn to take on, step by step, the *habitus*, the embodied disposition of our family and culture. Living here in Laie, I've come to appreciate the amazing way in which culture is taught and passed along at very early ages. Small children perform beautiful hula and Tahitian dancing, even fire knife. Small children display remarkable athleticism and are constantly playing and being reinforced and coached by parents and siblings. My parents didn't dance or have any interest in sports, and therefore, I never received any of that coaching or encouragement. Physical grace and kinetic intelligence are not my family and cultural legacy. My parents were, however, constantly reading and talking about ideas. My mother read to us before we could read. We learned to sit. We learned to pay attention. My mom took us to the local library weekly, and we came home with stacks of books that piled up in our living room. My dad sat with us at the breakfast table, and we talked about the issues of the day we were reading about in *The Washington Post*. We sat at the dinner table and analyzed what we were learning in school and Church and any other issues on our minds. It's not surprising that all three of us children ended up in academia as a profession. We unconsciously absorbed what they cared about, and we unconsciously mastered the skills they had.

Outside a family setting, we have to be more intentional about the experiences that sequence learning. As teachers and learners, we are trying to supplement the learning that came so easily as little children. We are still learning; we are still taking on a new way of being, but it just gets harder. We get set in our ways. It is harder to do new things and to see things differently. My mother had a beautiful house full of pictures, plants, music, books, and games. She took every occasion to take us to enjoy nature and art and music and museums in the Washington, D.C. area where we lived. She didn't, however, have a great love of housework. The mending pile sat there. She made wonderful meals and kept us clean and healthy, but she didn't insist that we spend hours cleaning the house every week. My memories of cleaning the house are always tied to when people were coming over to visit. And so, even today, I know I should do more to clean my house on a regular basis, but it is a struggle. If people aren't coming over to visit, it doesn't seem like a priority. In this case, the embodied disposition or *habitus* of my childhood is something that I need to keep repenting of. It's not that mediocre housecleaning is a sin (I hope), but here, I'm using repent in the sense of changing the way we think and feel and act.

Formal learning and curriculum follows the experiences of childhood to sequence experiences to help us change how we think and feel and act, but it must be much more intentional. From a gospel point of view, we can see why we talk about being born again and becoming as little children. We can see how learning is repenting—in the Greek, literally thinking and feeling differently. We can see how curriculum is the Way, the path of becoming. It is important to stress, however, that learning itself is a neutral activity. We are always learning. We are always becoming.

The question becomes “Who are we learning from and what are we becoming?” When we don't realize that we are always in the process of learning and becoming, we can start unconsciously adopting ways of thinking and acting and find ourselves becoming something that we don't want to become. The Lord exhorts parents to bring up their children in light and truth, but we can also be brought up in darkness and deception ([D&C 93:40](#)). The most obvious example is people in prisons who are released but then come out with the equivalent of an advanced degree in crime. But learning paths of darkness and deception can be so much more subtle and insidious. Everything we read, everything we watch, everything we listen to is teaching us. Without realizing it, we can be taught attitudes and ways of living that are hurtful and ungodly. We can take on practices that one day we will be ashamed of and regret.

The idea of curriculum is a tool to help us think about learning and becoming. The more we are intentional about what we are learning, the safer we will be from slipping into attitudes and behaviors that we will regret and then find that we need to unlearn and change from. Unlearning attitudes and habits, ways of being, is possible but can be very, very hard.

We can use this perspective about learning as becoming to think about the curriculum of our university, the curriculum of the Church, and the curriculum of life. There are some patterns we want to look for with each of these subjects: What knowledge is being sequenced? What is the aim of the sequenced experiences—what are we supposed to become? Who is developing those experiences?

Let's look first at the curriculum of the university, and I will divide this into three parts: General Education, Religious Education, and Major Education. In each of these, we will see how experiences both over many semesters and within the design of each course are sequenced to help you take on new ways of thinking and acting.

First, General Education. There is content, the required curriculum in the narrow sense—English, Math, Foreign Language, Science, breadth of knowledge—but really the goal is studying and engaging to learn to think and act in new ways, taking on a way of being of disciple-leaders, increasing our ability to inquire, analyze, communicate, and the disposition to act with integrity, stewardship and service. We talk about these as Institutional Learning Outcomes and try to make sure we are succeeding in helping you learn them. It is important to us that you are learning to think critically, communicate effectively in written and oral form, that you are literate and discerning with information, and have some quantitative reasoning skills. We want you to have skills to succeed and to serve. General Education coursework is designed to help you become even more effective thinkers and to have a deeper disposition to live with integrity, stewardship, and service. We want to help you become generally educated, broadly educated, Latter-day Saints.

Second, Religious Education. Again, there is content, the required curriculum in the narrow sense—Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants—but really the goal is studying and engaging to learn to think and act in new ways. The goal of the curriculum is helping you take on a way of being as an even more effective disciple of Christ and teacher and leader. As a department, like all departments, we have Program Learning Outcomes that help us focus on the skills that you will need in your future discipleship and leadership in the Church.

1. Factual Learning Outcome - Students will learn the ancient and modern settings of the scriptures and they will have the ability to recall the factual information sufficient for demonstrating a basic understanding of LDS scripture, doctrine, and history.
2. Conceptual Learning Outcome - Students will be able to analyze and interpret LDS scripture, doctrine and history.
3. Application of Learning Outcome - Students will be able to use the factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of LDS scripture, doctrine and history in problem-solving and life application tasks.
4. Spiritual Learning Outcome - Students will have developed a deeper testimony of LDS scripture, doctrine and history, and have a greater desire to seek the Holy Ghost as an aid in studying, pondering, and living the doctrines of the Church.

Some of these outcomes tie into the Institutional Learning Outcomes of inquiry, analysis, communication, integrity, stewardship, and service, but some are particular to the mission of Religious Education and its role in helping prepare you for lives of Church service. Religious Education is designed to help you have experiences of study, analysis, and application that increase your abilities to live and teach the gospel. We want to help you become university-educated and faithful Latter-day Saints.

Finally, Major Education. Here also there is content, the required curriculum in the narrow sense, classes that you must take and a sequence in which you must take them. However, this curriculum is designed as a taking on way of being of a particular discipline. The experiences in coursework, ordered by prerequisites, ensure the sequential nature of progress. Through this curriculum, you are moving towards knowledge, skills, and disposition of various fields—learning to think and act in new ways, becoming a musician, becoming an historian, becoming a social worker, becoming a business professional, becoming an artist, becoming an information technology professional, becoming a scientist, becoming a mathematician or psychologist. I know I'm leaving out fields, but you get the general sense. The academic disciplines are discipline-specific ways of knowing, experiencing, and being in the world.

I'll give one example of this disciplinary focus with the Program Learning Outcomes of the History department, a department that I have taught with as well as Religious Education.

1. Develop information literacy skills for evaluating historical and library sources.
2. Communicate effectively about the past through written and oral presentations.
3. Analyze arguments and perspectives of others.
4. Develop historical ways of thinking to assess critically the past.
5. Learn context from at least three of four major geographical areas (Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania)
6. Connect to related disciplines, such as political science, geography, etc.
7. Value the past and present of world communities

Some of these outcomes tie into the Institutional Learning Outcomes of inquiry, analysis, communication, integrity, stewardship, and service, but some are particular to the discipline of history and its role in helping prepare history students for their future lives of learning and service. History coursework is designed to help students have experiences in reading, analysis, research, and writing to help them think and act like historians.

In all these cases, curriculum is designed by faculty that are specialists and know what you need to know and experience to take on the attributes of an educated person both generally but also in their specific fields. Of course, you can receive this curriculum for general and major education at many universities, but the Lord also warns us to trust no one to be our teacher unless “he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments” (see [Mosiah 23:14](#)). This is not to say that we can't learn information from worldly people, but it expresses a deeper sense that we are learning from who people *are*, from how they live; as we are studying with them, we are being influenced by them to become more as they are.⁵ Wherever we study, we have to be careful who we are learning from—who we are imitating and becoming like without even realizing it.

This is why the hiring of those who teach at Church universities is carefully supervised by the Church leadership. We are not perfect, and the curriculum we develop and teach is not perfect. We don't always all agree on every particular of what you need and how to sequence your experiences at the university to help you become what you need to be. Curriculum is adjusted over time, and there is a long-term assessment process to help us as we try to keep working through these issues to see if what we are having you do as we sequence your learning experiences is helping you become what you need to become.

But as we work through curriculum development as a university and department by department, you can have

confidence that it is a curriculum and learning process designed and shared by faculty that care about your eternal success, faculty who have developed skills and knowledge and disposition as educated Latter-day Saints and who want to help you develop those same attributes and knowledge. We have a shared vision of your potential and value as individuals and as servants in the Lord's Kingdom.

To this point, I have discussed the curriculum others develop for you during your time at the university, but I want to stress that curriculum is not a passive experience. These experiences with university curriculum help you to develop the habit of curriculum for yourself, the habit of sequencing experiences to learn and become what you want to become. We become what we do, and we can decide what we do. The habit of curriculum, the habit of intentionally sequencing our own choices and actions, can apply to how you sequence the events of the day (we call this time management) or how you make long-term plans to sequence experiences over many years to gain new skills and knowledge.

With this practice in thinking about curriculum, let's apply this concept of curriculum as the sequencing of learning and becoming to the curriculum of the Church. Again, we want to look for patterns: What knowledge is being sequenced? What is the aim of the sequenced experiences—what are we supposed to become? Who is developing those experiences?

Yes, there is content, required curriculum in the narrow sense—manuals and lessons and readings for Primary, Seminary, Sunday School, Relief Society, and Priesthood classes—but really the goal is studying and engaging to learn to think and act in new ways. This sequenced learning, the deeper sense of curriculum and learning, is not just the information we learn in Church classes; the information goes through the "Curriculum Committee" in Salt Lake City and into the Sunday School, Relief Society, and Priesthood manuals.

The entire organization of the Church is the Lord's curriculum. He knows us, and He knows what we need to become, so He has sequenced our life experiences in the Church to help us grow and become what we need to become. For all, there is a sequence or path of covenants and ordinances that help us grow and become like Christ—baptism, confirmation, receiving the endowment, being sealed. For all, there is the path of daily living of our covenants through lives of service and obedience as well as weekly renewing our covenants to help us be forgiven and keep moving forward on the path. In addition to this general, foundational discipleship, the Lord has also designed paths that are tailored to us as women and men. For girls and women: Primary, Young Women experiences, Relief Society experiences; for boys and men: Primary, Aaronic priesthood experiences, Melchizedek priesthood experiences.

Some people look at the curriculum of the Church, the sequenced growth and learning experiences for men and women and see antiquated, human, patriarchal social structures, but with a personal witness that Christ has restored His Church in the Latter-days, we can have confidence that He has organized it in a way to help us grow and become what we need to become. When we have the assurance that He is actively guiding those who are called to preside and that they are called by Him, we can have confidence in the order and organization of the Church. When we have trust that He wants us all to receive His fullness and that all the blessings and power to become like Him are available to all through the covenants and ordinances of the priesthood, then it will not worry us when the Lord's curriculum involves men, and not women, being ordained to priesthood offices. When we have confidence in who is developing the curriculum, we know that the aim of these sequenced experiences is our exaltation as husbands and wives, growing and serving together through eternity. With this perspective, we can see the curriculum of Church organization as inspired by a loving Heavenly Father who knows the eternal nature of men and women and wants us all to grow into our full potential.

Sister Julie B. Beck, a recent General President of the Relief Society, has made this observation about the learning and becoming that Relief Society is designed to help women develop: "Through Relief Society we practice being disciples of Christ. We learn what He would have us learn, we do what He would have us do, and

we become what He would have us become.”⁵ “Relief Society prepares women for the blessings of eternal life by helping them: increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen their homes, and help those in need.”⁶ Relief Society is organized as a sisterhood under the authority of the priesthood and after the pattern of the priesthood to help the daughters of God more fully become disciples of Christ. It, and all the service that women give in the Church, is part of a curriculum of sequenced experiences that are tailored to help them take on the divine nature.

The Lord, in His wisdom, has ordained men to priesthood offices and thereby organized them into quorums. A classic explanation of a quorum was given by Elder Stephen L. Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve in 1938: “A quorum is three things: first, a class; second, a fraternity [or brotherhood]; and third, a service unit.”⁷ The Lord has organized priesthood quorums and priesthood responsibilities to help the sons of God more fully become disciples of Christ. These quorums, and all the service that men give in the Church, are part of a curriculum of sequenced experiences that are tailored to help them take on the divine nature.

The organization of the Church, giving different assignments to different people, is part of the Lord’s curriculum. In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul teaches: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” ([Ephesians 4:11-13](#)).

The teachings and revelations that come through prophets and apostles are not to lift them up but to lift us all up to the knowledge of the Son of God, “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Through prophets, we have the scriptures. Through the prophetic invitation to study the scriptures daily, especially the Book of Mormon, the Lord is giving us a curriculum to become like Him. Likewise, through prophets, we have the temple ordinances, and through the prophetic invitation to attend the temple as often as possible, the Lord is further establishing our education for eternity. These ordinances are an essential part of our curriculum in taking on godly ways of thinking and acting. Through these, we are being shown the way, the race to run. We are being invited to take upon ourselves a new way of being, to take upon ourselves the name and nature of Christ, to receive the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ as we gradually develop the ways of being that we symbolically embody in the ordinances.

The way of sanctification is long. We need to keep returning to the curriculum of the temple. In the temple, we ritually participate in a sacred sequence of experiences that points to the way we need to live as we move through this race or journey of life. Through our participation in these sequenced experiences, we learn to become obedient, chaste, willing to sacrifice and consecrate ourselves. The organization and the ordinances of the Church provide us with the path to follow, the race to run, our curriculum to prepare for eternity. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” ([Hebrews 12:1-2](#)).

Lastly, I want to apply this pattern of thinking about curriculum to the curriculum of life. Many people see in life randomness and meaninglessness. Things happen, and it is hard to see why or what to make of it. Believing in a loving Father in Heaven that has a plan for us gives us confidence that we have been sent us down to earth to develop new ways of thinking and feeling and acting. Faith in God allows us to see the curriculum of life. Again, we want to look for patterns: What knowledge is being sequenced? What is the aim of the sequenced experiences—what are we supposed to become? Who is developing those experiences?

Our life experiences are our individual curriculum from a Father that knows each of us individually and wants each of us to develop and become like Him. The knowledge that we are here on earth to gain is best understood not as facts or information but taking on His nature, coming to know Him as we become like Him. In the

Intercessory Prayer in [John 17:3](#), Christ taught, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” This is knowledge that we gain over time. It is sequenced through the experiences that each of us go through.

It is important to recognize that while God is using our life experiences as a chance to help us learn and grow, He does not cause everything to happen. People have agency, and there are conditions in mortality that are part of living in a fallen world.⁸ But trusting our Father and our Savior allows us to have confidence that “all things work together for good to them that love God” ([Romans 8:28](#)). Our trust in God comes from knowing that while He doesn’t cause everything to happen, He can consecrate everything that does happen to our gain ([2 Nephi 2:2](#)).

This perspective and promise is not just for those of us that are members of the Church and have access to the curriculum of priesthood ordinances and the temple; every mortal life experience gives everyone unique and personal opportunities to respond to the light of Christ and the Spirit of the Lord. In section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn that “the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father” ([vv. 46-47](#)).

We feel hope knowing that the light of Christ is given to teach and lead all in mortality but can feel darkness and grief seeing the trials and pain that also come to all who live on earth. It can sometimes be hard for many to understand the meaning or existence of this suffering if there is truly a loving God. Understanding the concept of curriculum and the purpose of life as sequenced experiences to help us grow can be a powerful tool in grappling with the tragedies and inequality of mortality.

Elder Orson F. Whitney, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles early in the Twentieth Century, taught, “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God ... and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire.”⁹

President Ezra Taft Benson gives a second witness of that assurance that God is using the events of our lives as our curriculum: “God loves us. He is watching us. He wants us to succeed. We will know some day that He has not left one thing undone for the eternal welfare of each of us.”¹⁰ The scope of that promise can give us peace that there will be meaning and purpose in the trials and life experiences of everyone who has come to earth. We may not see the patterns and purposes of the curriculum of mortality now, but “we will know some day that He has not left one thing undone for the eternal welfare of each of us.”

Making sense of our life experiences and getting the most from the school of mortality happens most fully when we have access to the power of Christ's Atonement that is possible through the Church of Christ and His covenant curriculum for taking on His nature. We are able learn and change more fully when we are completely humbled by His infinite love and mercy. We are able to learn and change more fully when we receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost that gives us access to the enabling power of Christ’s grace. We are able to learn and change more fully when we are completely in harmony with His covenant curriculum, when we accept Him as our master and accept our role as disciples and hearken to the words of His servants as if from His own mouth. The good news is that the opportunities to follow this curriculum will eventually be available to all His children through the preaching of the gospel in the spirit world and through the vicarious ordinances of temples.

Learning is hard; change is hard. Taking on new ways of thinking, new mental models, new ways of acting is hard. Jesus Christ gave His life in order to be able to offer us the chance to change and grow. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” ([John 10:10](#)). He wants us to develop and

grow into the kind of life that He has. He is inviting us and to “learn of [Him] and listen to [His] words” and to “walk in the meekness of [His] Spirit” ([D&C 19:23](#)). He is inviting us to follow His curriculum, to take His covenant yoke upon us to learn of Him (see [Matthew 11:28-30](#)).

Part of that learning is making and keeping covenants, but part of it is also investing ourselves in the education here at BYU–Hawaii. We can tell how important it is to Him because prophets and apostles continue to be inspired to make these sacred funds available for us. The Lord cares about your success in the curriculum of the university. He is the one who commanded us, as part of our covenant obligation, “seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” ([D&C 88:118](#)).

Through the university curriculum at BYU–Hawaii, you have the opportunity to develop habits of thought and action of servant-leaders prepared to build the Kingdom. By fully engaging in the sequenced learning experiences of the university curriculum, Church curriculum, and your own life curriculum, you can learn and become what you need to be to fulfill the missions that He has for each of you. During your undergraduate years, you also have the opportunity to make curriculum a habit—make a habit of sequencing your experiences in an intentional way. Every day, we are each deciding what we will do and what we will become. We are choosing our curriculum, the path we will follow. We are here to run the race, not to watch as spectators. No one can run the race for us. No one can learn for us. No one can repent for us. No one can become for us. We must walk the path He has established, but He promises that He “will go before [our] face” and that He will “be on [our] right hand and on [our] left hand”; His Spirit shall be in our hearts and His “angels round about, to bear [us] up” (see [D&C 84:88](#)). We must run the course He has set, but He has promised that He will strengthen and empower us to return to His presence.

As we go through the curriculum of the university, the curriculum of the Church, and the curriculum of life, we can have confidence that we are being cheered on and supported through these races of life. I repeat again President Benson’s words of encouragement: “God loves us. He is watching us. He wants us to succeed. We will know some day that He has not left one thing undone for the eternal welfare of each of us. If we only knew it, heavenly hosts are pulling for us—friends in heaven that we cannot now remember who yearn for our victory. This is our day to show what we can do—what life and sacrifice we can daily, hourly, instantly make for God. If we give our all, we will get His all from the greatest of all.”¹¹

1. Ken Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press), 22-23.
2. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, “*Manthano*,” 555.
3. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 18.
4. Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 18-19.
5. I find it significant that in Mosiah 23:14 Alma’s warning to “trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments” focuses on the *ethos* and character of the potential teacher. To be broadly educated we must learn about many different belief systems and ways of seeing the world, even if we do not agree with them. It is essential to be able to understand what others believe and why. I think it would be unwise to take this warning to suggest that we can only study with or about Latter-day Saints. In this passage I understand the terms being “a man of God” and “walking in his ways and keeping his commandments” as a warning to be careful not become a “disciple” of someone who might have the right belief system, but not be living in the right way. It is the way of being of someone that we can easily start to imitate. When someone we admire and are learning from is impatient, has a feeling of entitlement, is belittling to others, and embodies other ungodly ways of being we risk adopting those character traits.

6. Julie B. Beck, "[What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable](#)," *Ensign* (Nov. 2007), 109; see also *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 7.
7. [Handbook 2: Administering the Church, 9.1.1](#).
8. Stephen L. Richards, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1938, 118; quoted in D. Todd Christofferson, "[The Priesthood Quorum](#)," *Ensign*, Oct. 1998.
9. Spencer W. Kimball, "[Chapter 2: Tragedy or Destiny?](#)" *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006), 11–21.
10. Orson F. Whitney, in Spencer W. Kimball, "[Chapter 2: Tragedy or Destiny?](#)" *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006), 11–21. See also Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City: Desert Book, 1972), 98. Elder Whitney finished the quote by observing that "And it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in Heaven."
11. Ezra Taft Benson, "[Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations](#)," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988.
12. *Ibid.*