

Why Institute Graduation Matters

By Matthew Porter Wilcox

Seminaries and Institutes

“What we need now is the greatest generation of young adults in the history of the Church,” said Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to young adults in the April 2015 general conference. “Young adults should enroll in an institute of religion. Institute . . . classes will provide balance to your life and add to your secular education by giving you another opportunity to spend time studying the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and apostles.”¹

In order to deepen young adults’ understanding of the gospel, strengthen their testimony and commitment to Jesus Christ, and help them find personal guidance for their lives, the institute program has emphasized the need to elevate learning for every young adult. This elevation is reflected in three major ways: by offering four new cornerstone courses, by placing

greater importance on graduating from institute, and by inviting all students to take a more active role in their spiritual learning by completing assigned readings and learning assessments.

What are the four new cornerstone classes?

While classes such as Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants will continue to be offered, four new cornerstone classes now serve as the center of institute coursework. They include (1) Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel,

(2) Foundations of the Restoration, (3) The Eternal Family, and (4) Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon. As the name implies, these cornerstone classes deal with foundational doctrine, history, and teachings of the gospel, as found in the scriptures and the words of the living prophets.

You can elevate your gospel learning as you take the four new cornerstone institute classes.





The cornerstone classes will be available in about 30 languages.

“[These new cornerstone classes] may lead to more in-depth scripture study than in the broad survey-type courses of the past,” stated Brent L. Top, dean of religious education at Brigham Young University. Chad Webb, administrator for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, added, “The scriptures are woven together, and as they grow together, there are insights and understanding and strength that come from a study across all the standard works.”²

This young woman agrees: “I wondered how much I could really learn about the Restoration that I didn’t already know, but I found myself making connections I had never previously made. The course included topics such as plural marriage, priesthood to all worthy males, and the Mountain Meadows massacre. These class discussions gave me information rooted in faith rather than doubt. The course also tied the Restoration into current-day events, so I recognized that I am actually part of the Restoration. It’s not just the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young, and other pioneers. It’s me too!”

Why should I make institute graduation a goal?

Here’s what some other students are saying about graduating from institute:

“I made a goal to graduate from institute, and though I made many sacrifices, I was rewarded with understanding, knowledge, and a stronger testimony.”

“After graduation I felt stronger and ready for new experiences. I’m going to encourage others to graduate too.”

“Graduation was a spiritual achievement that keeps me moving toward my goal of eternal salvation.”

As you also elevate your learning by working toward graduation, you will learn to prioritize study time and enhance your gospel scholarship. You will see these truths woven together into a grand tapestry of testimony. After all, institute graduation is really about you becoming spiritually stronger. ■

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Young Adults,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 68.
2. In Marianne Holman Prescott, “Four New Classes Added to Curriculum for Church Schools,” *Church News*, Nov. 11, 2014.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO GRADUATE?

You are being asked to step up and make institute graduation a priority and part of your gospel foundation. As a result, you will increase your knowledge and deepen your conversion as you earn the needed 14 credits.* To obtain these credits, you need to:

- Take each of the two-credit cornerstone classes listed below.
 1. Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel
 2. Foundations of the Restoration
 3. The Eternal Family
 4. Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon
- Earn six more credits by taking other classes of your choice.
- In addition, you’ll need to receive an ecclesiastical endorsement from your bishop or branch president.

* To receive credit for a class, you need to attend at least 75 percent of class sessions, complete the assigned readings, and complete the course learning assessment.