

What Is Institute?

By **Wayne L. Davis**

Seminaries and Institutes

When Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged young adults to become “the greatest generation of young adults in the history of the Church,” one thing he recommended they do was enroll in an institute of religion. He promised that by doing so, they would be better prepared for a mission, eternal marriage, and life as an adult, and better able to receive inspiration and guidance from the Spirit.¹

But if you’re not exactly sure what the Church’s institute of religion is or how it can bless your life after high school, I’ll try to answer a few questions you might have.

Who Can Attend?

Most youth choose to participate in seminary, but then what? Some students go on to attend a Church university or college, where religion courses are built into their school

schedule. Why? Because having a spiritual education experience along with an academic experience is crucial.

But what if you don’t attend a Church school? A lot of young adults don’t realize that a combined academic and spiritual education is available almost anywhere they go. As you attend college, an institute of religion program is usually close by, often across the road from the college or in a local Church building. Some colleges even allow institute classes to be taught right on their campuses. Even after college graduation, you are welcome to attend.

You don’t even have to be a college student. All young adults, ages 18–30, married or single, can attend institute.

Visit institute.lds.org to find an institute near you.

Why Attend?

The program started with just 57 students near a college in Moscow, Idaho, USA, and now has over 250,000 students worldwide. They see great

strength and blessings pouring into their lives. In a recent survey, institute students in 10 different countries were asked what institute did for them. Why did they go? How was it helping? Thousands of responses were gathered and revealed three main themes: Institute helps students (1) strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) progress spiritually, and (3) gain confidence to make important life decisions.

Don’t miss out on the friendships, spiritual protection, and gospel knowledge.

Think of the decisions you face: picking a college; deciding whether or not to go on a mission; and choosing a career, friends, and a spouse. These are huge decisions. And as President Thomas S. Monson said, “Decisions determine destiny.”² Certainly these critical decisions should be made with the help of the Holy Ghost. The needed divine help can be found as you connect with the Spirit, the scriptures, and friends who share your values through a religion class at institute or a Church school.

Laura is one student who benefits from institute. When she began attending a university in Ontario,

Canada, she felt lost and felt that her testimony wasn’t as strong as it once was. She started going to institute and once again “felt like herself” and “knew who she was.” (See her story and the stories of other young adults at InstituteIsForMe.lds.org.)

When you truly know who you are—a son or daughter of a loving Heavenly Father who wants you to become someone incredible—you can make important decisions leading to happiness and success.

As you build upon what you learned in seminary and other Church experiences, attending institute will strengthen your relationship with Jesus Christ at a very crucial period of

life and help you continue your spiritual progression.

Heavenly Father loves you. He will provide ways for you to continue to become like Him. Institute is one of those ways that is making a difference in hundreds of thousands of lives every year. ■

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Young Adults,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 68, 69.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Follow the Prophets,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Jan. 2015, 5.

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

Institute offers a variety of courses. All students are invited to take the four cornerstone courses:

- Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel teaches about Christ’s divine mission and how you can appreciate His role in your life.
- The Eternal Family explores topics such as understanding the relationship between gender and eternal identity, exercising faith in difficult family situations, and improving temple worship.
- Foundations of the Restoration explains the doctrinal foundation and historical context of Church history and how it relates to you today.
- Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon will help you understand the key doctrinal themes of this book of scripture that was written for our day.

