

Institute Is for Us

By Leah Welker
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We've got a lot on our plates. Some of us are students. Some are working long hours. Some of us are away from friends and family, or have responsibilities that weigh heavily on us. Some of us are trying to adjust after returning from a mission, or have just graduated from high school and aren't sure what comes next.

It might seem counterintuitive to add institute on top of everything else. Many of us have wondered at one time or another, will institute really help me?

The answer is *yes*.

Thousands of young adults across the world, many of them in situations like yours, find strength, support, friendship, and spiritual enrichment at institute. Here are just two examples of incredible young adults who, despite all their challenges, know that institute is for them.

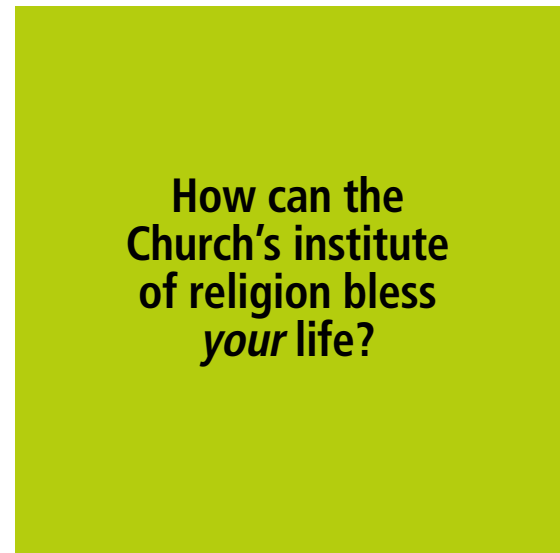
Institute Is Good for the Heart

Aric's story, Toronto, Ontario

Aric (pictured top right) is a PhD student at the University of Toronto, working with heart tissue and regenerative medicine.

In describing his research, he explains, "Certain types of stem cells can turn into anything in your body. We can put stem cells in a petri dish and grow them into a heart cell. After two weeks, they'll start beating themselves. We then use these to model different diseases and to test different drugs. My goal is to one day grow a heart in a laboratory setting like this."

Aric had his own change of heart during his mission to Belo Horizonte, Brazil. "When I served a mission, I learned how to listen to and follow the Spirit. It helped me learn how to study, to learn how to apply



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myself." He changed so much that he was concerned about coming home. "I didn't really know how to act or what to do," he admitted. "I had to relearn how to act in certain situations. Going to institute helped me."

The social network at institute is important to Aric. "I've been able to befriend people who needed friends.



I've been able to comfort people when they needed to be comforted. That's important to me, to help other people, but then it's also important for me to feel that from other people as well."

He jokes about how long he has been going to institute, but he keeps going. "Every time that I go, I feel the Spirit that is present there. And it helps me be a better person, stay in good places, and do well in my work."

Aric draws a comparison between his work and institute. "If we put a cell in a good environment, there are internal changes that happen in the cell that make it more receptive to those positive changes or those positive signals that we want to give it. Over time, the cell changes—it morphs into something better, something bigger than itself. For me, that's something very, very special. If I put myself into the right environment, then I'm going to become more receptive to these spiritual aspects of life and less receptive to the negative influences that happen in the world."

He concludes, "God is real. That's something that I feel deep down inside myself. I haven't always felt His love in my life. I'm starting to realize that that's because of decisions that I've made. I realize that He's there to help me, that He really wants me to be my best self."

Institute Helps Me Remember Christ

Veronica's story, Madrid, Spain

When Veronica (pictured below) was 17, her twin sister died in her arms. Three years after her sister's death, on her own and struggling through life, Veronica started going for walks to work out her feelings of sadness. She had always believed in God,

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INSTITUTE

All young single adults who have not graduated from a Church university or institute of religion should be encouraged to enroll in and graduate from institute.

Local leaders counsel together to create an effective plan to identify and invite each young single adult to attend institute. Seminary and institute personnel are prepared to assist priesthood leaders in these efforts.

The most effective efforts involve the following:

- **Priesthood leaders** lead the initiative.
- **Personal invitations** are extended to the young adults.
- Leaders use a **system of accountability** to report back on invitations.

so one day while she was walking, she prayed, "Lord, why are you doing all of this to me?"

At that moment, she looked up at an LDS Church building she had always passed by. Really seeing it for the first time, she became curious; she went inside and introduced herself to two sister missionaries, who taught her later that week.

Veronica says that after the first lesson, "I stood up and told them, 'You're all crazy,' and I left." She didn't want any of it, but eventually she began to reconsider.

"I think it was the first time I prayed so much. I felt like God was telling me, 'I am sending you this opportunity so that you can get to know me better. Don't you want it?'"

She decided she *did* want it. Despite losing her home and her job because of the gospel, she was baptized. Even though her life continued to be difficult sometimes, she trusted in the Lord. "Before I knew about the Church, I would cry or get mad if I didn't know how I was going to pay my rent. But now I know that the Lord will provide."

Veronica's patriarchal blessing told her that she was to serve a mission, but she didn't have any skirts or any way to buy them. A member of the Seventy and his wife were passing through the area and heard about her need; the wife had felt inspired to pack extra skirts for the

trip, and she gave many of them to Veronica. She also encouraged Veronica to attend institute. When Veronica's bishop started an institute program for their area, she began attending regularly.

Institute has given her peace and happiness. "I think what I like the most about institute is that during the week, we have a lot of different tasks to do. We have Sundays to renew our covenants with Heavenly Father. But on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, what do we have? I am grateful that we have institute at least once during the week because it is a way to remember Jesus Christ. Institute is one way He's helping me progress."

And Veronica did serve a mission. In October 2016 she left to serve in the Chile Osorno Mission.

She says, "I know that I'm here today because of Him. I know that He has prepared a plan perfect for each one of us. He will give us opportunities throughout our lives. I can feel His love every day, even though sometimes I say, 'Father, why is this happening to me?' But before



INVITING YOUNG ADULTS TO INSTITUTE: A SUCCESS STORY

Inviting all young adults to attend institute is one of the goals of the Church. Depending on the stake, this effort could involve several leaders:

- Institute coordinators
- Stake presidency members and bishops
- Institute teachers
- Young single adult representatives
- Students



A small town in New Zealand offers an amazing example of how the leaders in one stake came together to create an institute class to better serve the needs of their area.

The bishop of the Ngaruawahia Ward, Sam Higgins, wanted to know how he could help the young adults in his ward. President Bobby Hamon, second counselor in the Hamilton New Zealand Stake presidency, suggested institute, and he got in touch with Jonathan Warwick, the institute coordinator for that area.

Brother Warwick explains, “At first, we proposed increased advertising and personal contact to encourage students to make the 30- to 45-minute journey to Hamilton to attend the institute class there. But everyone felt that having a class in Ngaruawahia would help the students feel at home.”

With the help of a senior missionary couple, they created an institute class in Ngaruawahia. The class has grown from 2 students to over 40.

Brother Warwick says, “The Ngaruawahia institute class has become a miraculous answer to prayers. Through this class, individuals are reminded that the Lord truly loves each of His children and is anxious to provide solutions that will strengthen their testimonies of Jesus Christ, help them experience lasting conversion to the gospel, and help them feel the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in their lives.”

For more thoughts from these leaders about this successful experience or for help on how to collaborate in strengthening the young adults in your stake, visit lds.org/go/81747.

I go to sleep, He responds, “This is happening because of this. Now go to sleep.’ And I love Him, too. Maybe I had to go through everything I went through to come to feel so much love for Him.” ■

INSTITUTE IS FOR ME—VIDEO STORIES

Watch the stories of Aric, Veronica, and other young adults at lds.org/go/81749.



MAKE INSTITUTE A PRIORITY

“Think of it. Friends will be made, the Spirit will be felt, and faith will be strengthened. I promise you

that as you participate in institute and study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased. That is a promise which I leave with you.”

President Thomas S. Monson, Apr. 21, 2009, si.lds.org.