

# Seminary Changed My Life

By Taylor Smith

I can still picture them. Those unforgettable, incredibly quiet Sundays spent outside in a neighborhood filled primarily with Latter-day Saints—and I wasn't one of them.

I used to imagine a tumbleweed rolling slowly down my street as they did in old Western films, indicating that no one was around. I knew where my neighbors were (at church), I understood why my friends couldn't play on Sundays, and I knew why only my family would be outside doing yard work on a blistering Sunday afternoon. At least, I thought I knew. Little did I realize that seminary and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would give me true insight and change my life for the better.

Fast-forward a few years from those childhood days: I was baptized when I was 11 years old. I'm not sure if an 11-year-old can choose to be baptized for the wrong reasons, but I believe I did. I didn't fully understand the role of the Holy Ghost, and all I remember about my baptism was thinking, "I will finally be like my friends."

To my dismay, I was still nothing like them. I assumed that once I was a member of the Church, my family would automatically attend church with me. When I realized my family

was not going to attend church, I wondered if my friends knew how lucky they were. They would talk about how they didn't like going to church or how they seemed to dread saying family prayers. I wanted so badly to tell them they shouldn't be wishing away something so precious. I knew they had something special.

## EXTEND AN INVITATION

Seminary is a great blessing, and it also provides a wonderful missionary opportunity when you ask your friends to come. Consider praying to find out if there's someone you could invite to seminary, and then listen for gentle promptings from the Spirit. Remember, it never hurts to invite people to attend with you! It's often as simple as asking. Some people may not be interested, but you never know until you try.

Yet I also didn't fully embrace all that the gospel and the Church had to offer, even though I was baptized. Then one day when I was a freshman in high school, something happened that changed everything: I ran into Brother Esplin.

"Excuse me," he said as I tried to walk past him.

"Yes?" I replied.

"I'm Devin Esplin, Melissa Esplin's husband. My wife talks about your volleyball potential all the time, and I just wanted to formally introduce myself."

I stood there silently until a lightbulb finally went off in my head.

"Oh! Right, I love Coach Esplin!"

"Me too!" he said. "Anyway, I'm the seminary teacher here, and I was wondering if you would like to transfer into my class."

"Well, I would, but I can't," I replied. "But I promise that next year I will!"

"I sure hope you do. It will be a great experience."

"I will! I promise," I said as I walked away. As I walked back to class, I couldn't hide the smile on my face. This was my opportunity to find out for myself what the Church had to offer. This time I was going to learn about the Church for the right reasons. I was given a second chance, and I wasn't going to pass it up.

My sophomore year was incredible. I was so excited to go to seminary and learn! The first few weeks were pretty crazy. I felt like a little child—I had a lot to learn. People would use words like *repentance* and *the Atonement*, and I felt ashamed because I had no idea what those terms meant. Mercifully, my class



I'd joined the Church years before, but attending seminary led to my true conversion.

helped me learn and never made me feel like an outsider.

As the year progressed, I found myself craving more knowledge. I was amazed by the things that my peers would discuss. I learned that I wasn't the only one who suffered trials. I was saddened that I had made it so far in life without focusing on the Savior and the gospel. As I began to understand what being a Latter-day Saint is all about, I knew I never wanted to give it up.

My junior year was the major

turning point of my life. Because of seminary, I read the Book of Mormon for the first time. As I studied daily, my testimony grew, and I grew closer to my Heavenly Father. I learned that I can strengthen my testimony every day. I understood that I'm never alone.

Seminary is a blessing that has altered the course of my life forever. Every day, I now think about how grateful I am that I have my Savior to get me through trials and temptations. **NE**

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



### SEMINARY WILL BLESS YOU

“Do not squander these years of seminary instruction. Take advantage

of the great blessing you have to learn the doctrines of the Church and the teachings of the prophets. Learn that which is of most worth. It will bless you and your posterity for many generations to come.”

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “How to Survive in Enemy Territory,” *New Era*, Apr. 2012, 5.