

# SEMINARY *or* SPORTS?

*I no longer felt a sense of balance. I couldn't continue to juggle church, academics, and sports.*

**By Carolina Tenorio Picado**

**W**hen I began high school, I participated on my school's athletic team. Running was my passion—I had been a runner since I was nine years old—and I worked hard at it. I attended training sessions at least three times a week in the evenings. I even had opportunities to represent my city at Costa Rica's national games.

Often, the practices went until late at night. That made getting up early for seminary, which started at 5:00 a.m., extra challenging, but I continued to make that sacrifice.

Halfway through high school, however, when I was 16 years old, I realized that I wasn't putting my heart into seminary. I went, but I wasn't as well rested, prepared, or attentive as I could have been. I also knew that being stretched thin by my very late and very

early hours was affecting my physical performance, which wasn't fair to my team.

Even though I had always thrived on participating in many activities and had been able to juggle church, academics, and sports up to that point, I no longer felt a sense of balance. I began to wonder if I needed to give something up. Running was a wholesome, healthy activity, one I was good at. It was an opportunity for me to use my talents and to establish patterns of discipline. And at my school, being an athlete was prestigious. I had good friends on my team, and if I left it, I'd miss those associations.

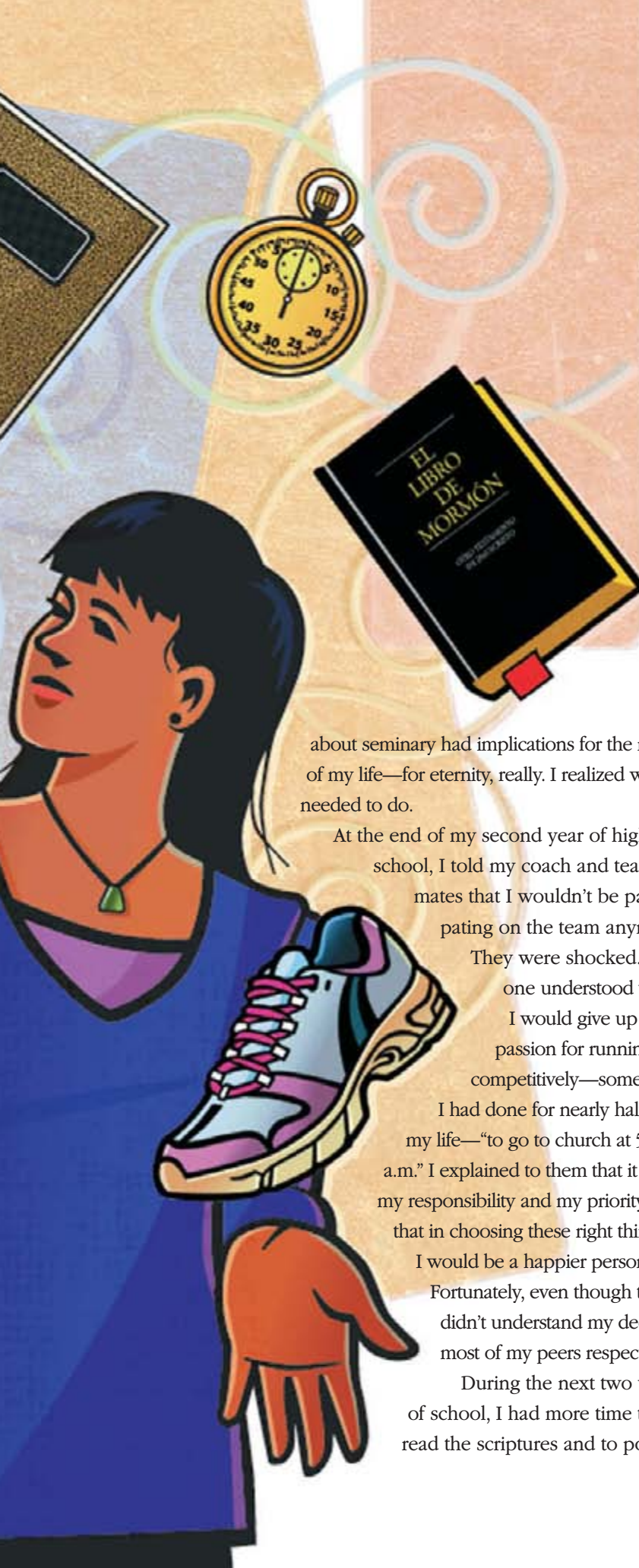
On the other hand, I had a goal of graduating from seminary, and I knew if I stayed on the team, I wouldn't be able to do that.

As I weighed my decision, I thought about what would most benefit all aspects of my life, both during my high school years and for the rest of my life. I thought about my long-term goals. I realized that my attitude



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT GREER





about seminary had implications for the rest of my life—for eternity, really. I realized what I needed to do.

At the end of my second year of high school, I told my coach and teammates that I wouldn't be participating on the team anymore.

They were shocked. No one understood why I would give up my passion for running competitively—something

I had done for nearly half of my life—"to go to church at 5:00 a.m." I explained to them that it was my responsibility and my priority and that in choosing these right things, I would be a happier person.

Fortunately, even though they didn't understand my decision, most of my peers respected it.

During the next two years of school, I had more time to read the scriptures and to ponder



#### SETTING PRIORITIES

**I**n choosing how we spend time . . . , we should be careful not to exhaust our available time on things that are merely good and leave little time for that which is better or best."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Good, Better, Best," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 105.

them. Because I wasn't so rushed all the time, I found myself receiving inspiration more frequently. Those things gave my life balance, peace, and happiness that I had never experienced before.

At the end of high school, I graduated from seminary. That achievement meant a great deal to me. I gained a love of the scriptures and the stories and lessons they contain, I learned discipline in getting up early, and I was blessed with good friendships strengthened by that early-morning hour we spent together each day. But most important, I learned through seminary about making sure that I always put the Lord first.

That pattern continues to bless my life now as I study at a university. My classes are more difficult than they were in high school. I have more responsibilities at church. But because I established a habit of putting the Lord first, it has been easy to continue to set correct priorities, and I hope I can continue that pattern for the rest of my life. **NE**