

SEMINARY MAKES YOU A MORNING PERSON

BY JANET THOMAS
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Seminary makes me a morning person.” At least that’s what Patrick Hildoer of the Acworth Ward in Atlanta, Georgia, says. And for him, it’s just one of the real pluses about regularly attending early-morning seminary. “There is something about seminary that energizes me.”

He’s not the only one in his class who feels that way. Kittye Bowen says, “If you start the day off uplifted, it’s going to be hard to bring you back down the rest of the day at school.”

Amy Caldwell of the Mars Hill Ward really noticed a difference when she had to give up seminary for several weeks. “I had a basketball practice every morning. I missed four days of seminary each week. It was horrible. When I went to seminary, I could feel the Spirit so much more throughout the day.”

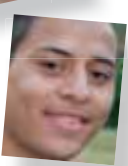
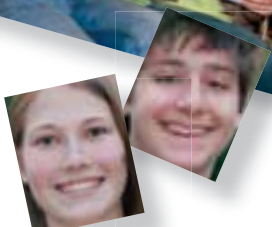
“I had a friend tell me once,” said Kerilyn Graham of the Acworth Ward, “‘Oh, that’s why you get such good grades. You start your day with the Lord.’ That’s true. We start our day with the right attitude and the right perspective.”

Being Prepared for Any Question

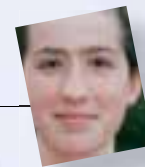
Getting a good start to the day is just one reason to go to seminary. Most of the students in the Cartersville Georgia Stake seminary classes talk about what a boost it gives to their testimonies.

Brian Collier of Mars Hill Ward said, “When I have missionary experiences at school, I can always remember what I learned in seminary and the good lessons I’ve been taught. It makes talking to people about the Church a little easier.”

Brian goes on, “My favorite lesson was when we got a chance to bear our testimonies of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The whole year, my testimony has become stronger. I just felt a peace that I had knowledge of the truthfulness of the gospel. I don’t remember



S^{tu} Atlanta start the day off right with seminary. (Far left, left to right) Heidi Hetzer, Curtis Clinch, Rachel Chase, Stephen Chase. (Right, top to bottom) Four-year seminary graduates of the Acworth Georgia Stake. Searching the magazine for an answer; participating in a New Era bowl; relaxing after class.



everything that I said, but I do know that I know.”

For Tyler Weeks, also of the Mars Hill Ward, learning of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon made for a memorable seminary year. “I’d read the Book of Mormon before, but reading it again, knowing how it is from God, gave me a new perspective.”

All Four Years

Each year seminary provides the chance to study a new set of scriptures. And each year it gives students a chance to build on their previous knowledge. Memorizing scripture mastery verses each year gives them a pool of great scriptures to remember and apply to situations that come up in their lives. The goal to attend all four years is a worthy one.

When Rachel Chase started seminary, she had her older sister, Jessica, to take her and get her up on time. Rachel tried persuading her sister to be a little late and get five minutes’ more sleep. “But she told me,” said Rachel, “that it’s so important to be there on time, to be there for the whole thing. When she

graduated, I had my third year by myself until my little brother was old enough to go. I found out you need every year to build up your testimony.”

Shelby Hailstone has a little sister who will be starting seminary soon. “She says she’s glad she doesn’t have to go to seminary because it’s so early. I call her every morning after class and talk to her about the lesson. She thinks it’s the neatest thing. Although she’s not looking forward to waking up, but she loves the lessons. That’s what she can’t wait for—the Spirit of the Lord she knows she is going to feel every day.”

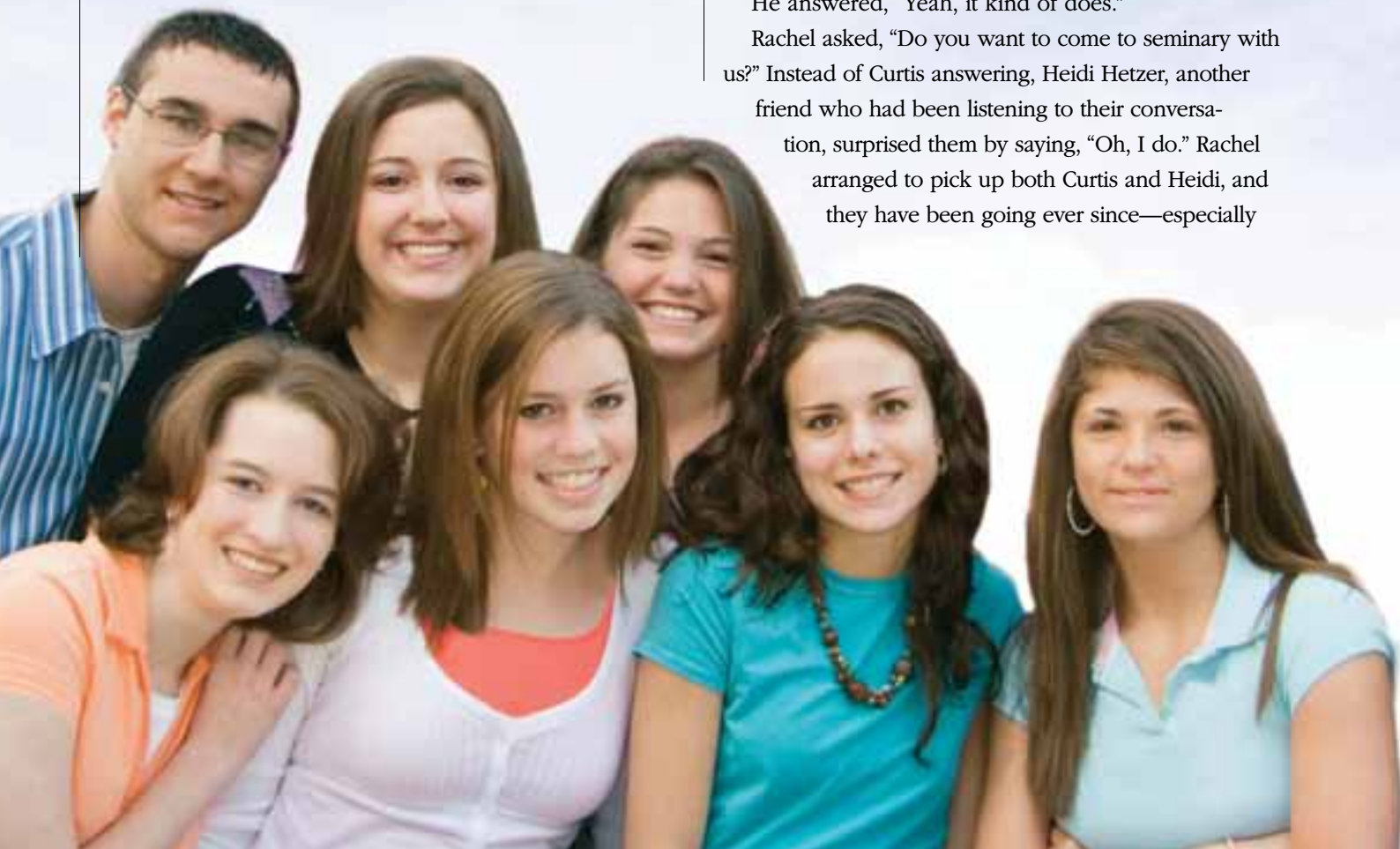
Inviting Friends to Seminary

One day on the school bus, Rachel Chase and Lauren Smith, both in the Acworth Ward seminary, were talking about what a good seminary lesson they had that day. Curtis Clinch repeated something his pastor had told him about the Latter-day Saints being one of the fastest growing religions.

Rachel agreed and said, “It kind of makes you think, doesn’t it, Curtis?”

He answered, “Yeah, it kind of does.”

Rachel asked, “Do you want to come to seminary with us?” Instead of Curtis answering, Heidi Hetzer, another friend who had been listening to their conversation, surprised them by saying, “Oh, I do.” Rachel arranged to pick up both Curtis and Heidi, and they have been going ever since—especially





after their baptisms a couple of months later.

Heidi said, “I’ve known Rachel and her brother, Stephen, since they moved to Georgia. I’ve seen how close their family is. And I’ve known other members. They all seem happier than the rest of us. I’ve been interested in the Church for a while, but I didn’t have the opportunity to learn more. So when Rachel was talking to Curtis and invited him to seminary, I just said I wanted to come. After that first day in seminary, I went to school with a newfound happiness. Since then, it’s been lasting.”

In fact, on her baptism day, Rachel’s dad noticed her happy attitude. And her friends asked if she was wearing different makeup or something because she had a glow about her.

Heidi said, “Rachel invited me over to talk to the missionaries, and I went to a fireside that same night. I dove right into the Church.”

Curtis had a similar experience, although he thought Rachel was kidding when she invited him to seminary. “She asked me again and came and picked me up. I really liked it. The lessons are powerful and very detailed. Everyone is really welcoming. I didn’t mind waking up early.”

Curtis’s mother didn’t think he would keep it up. When he continued to get up by himself, she came and checked out seminary. “She said it was good and supported me.”

Other class members have invited friends. Mostly they want to see what their friends do every morning so early instead of getting an extra hour of sleep. The seminary students report that their friends really enjoy visiting class.

Memorable Lessons

Most seminary students have a favorite lesson that somehow connected with them and affected the decisions they are making in their lives.

Kelly Cadogan remembers how impressed she was by the great sacrifices made by the pioneers. Stephen Chase remembers the folk dancers from BYU–Idaho coming to their class and reading scriptures about happiness. Tyler Graham remembers the lesson on the Word of Wisdom. Chris Erni can remember the lesson on Joseph Smith and the Spirit that testified of the Prophet. Riley McRae remembers the lesson about showing compassion for others and going out of your way to be kind.

Frank Wheat’s favorite lesson was more personal. He said, “Our teacher asked about our full names and what each of our names came from and what they stood for. I was named after both my grandfathers. Even though one died before I was born and the other died shortly after my birth, it made me think about how I live my life. Maybe they are looking down on me and asking, ‘What are you doing with my name?’ I’m trying to live a good life because of that.”

So why become a morning person? For teens in Georgia, seminary is worth getting up for each morning, and the payoff for their time and energy is a big one—a testimony of their own. As Kitty Bowen said, “After four years of waking up every morning and studying the scriptures and growing to know that the gospel is true for yourself, it’s like that one final leap of developing your own testimony before you have to go off to college. It’s like a prep class for the real world.” **NE**

For more on seminary, go to www.ldsces.org/seminary.

A *fe d*
from the
Acworth
Ward early-morning
seminary class
(far left).

(Right, top) Sister
Cadogan teaching
one of the Mars Hill
Ward seminary
classes.

