



THE BLESSINGS OF SEMINARY

During my second year in seminary, we had only three students in our class, but we had an incredible teacher who enjoyed sharing the gospel with us. In one class, we learned about how many people thought that the Church would come apart following the deaths of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. But other early members of the Church remembered that this is God's Church, not man's Church. Our teacher taught us that the Church would not fail, because it is the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt that our lives were changed by that lesson. That

afternoon, we decided that we would serve the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We would prepare to serve full-time missions. I continued attending seminary.

Over the following two years, I could tell how my life was being blessed from attending seminary, as well as how preparing to serve the Lord nourished my testimony and my desire to serve.

Attending seminary confirmed to me how special I am to Heavenly Father. It has helped me apply the gospel in my life, and above all it has helped me understand that the gospel is not something we live only

on Sundays. Seminary confirmed my desire to serve a mission. There is no doubt in my mind that the blessings of seminary remain present in my life. No one said it would be easy, but if we do decide to attend seminary, the Lord will bless us and will give us the strength necessary to fulfill the desires of our heart.

Begoña C., Guayaquil, Ecuador

WHEN PEOPLE OPEN THE BOOK

On my mission I've seen people who drink, smoke, and use drugs open the Book of Mormon, turn from their ways, and come back to their families and the Church. I've seen prodigal sons return home and serve missions after they opened this book. I've seen broken families read the Book of Mormon together and be sealed in the temple afterward. I've seen people who are totally desperate and don't know what to do open this book, and everything begins to fall into place.

The moment I open the Book of Mormon and use a verse to help someone, miracles happen. The power of God lies beneath those pages, waiting for a life to change, waiting for a miracle to unfold. I can promise you that miracles happen every time you open the Book of Mormon. They may not always be what we want them to be or happen when we want them to happen, but they will happen.

Elder Benjamin Baradi, Philippines Bacolod Mission

STRENGTHENED BY ROCKS

A few years ago I went on a week-long trip to Guatemala to work at a hospital. Shortly after our arrival, we went on a tour of the hospital. We passed by a courtyard, where I saw a little citrus tree. I noticed that someone had attached several large rocks to the limbs of the tree with wires.

"What a strange way to decorate a tree!" I thought.

I was about to walk away when one of our team leaders came up to me. She explained that the rocks had been placed on the limbs of the tree to strengthen it. Each rock had been selected to place just enough weight on the limb to bend it but not break it. By growing stronger under the weight of their rocks, the limbs were preparing to support the weight of the fruit that the little citrus tree would bear throughout its life.

In a way, we are all like the little citrus tree. Our Heavenly Father is the Master Gardener. Each of us has a set of rocks that come in the form of trials and challenges. Although these rocks can be heavy, we can trust that we will never have a trial or a challenge that we are unable to bear with His help. The weight will bend us but never break us—if we stay faithful. And the added strength we gain through our trials and challenges prepares us to support the weight of the fruit we will bear throughout our lives as chosen sons and daughters of God.

Tori Anne S., Texas, USA

