

*Throughout the world, seminary is bringing youth like you closer to Jesus Christ.*



# The Blessings of SEMINARY

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**Y**ou are not alone in your decision to attend seminary. Throughout the world, hundreds of thousands of youth make seminary a part of their lives, reaching their classrooms by bus, canoe, bicycle, and more. Some youth wake up early and travel long distances to arrive in time, others make the journey in the evenings, and still others study at home for several days of the week.

Attending seminary requires sacrifice, but youth throughout the world are finding that seminary participation is worth every effort. And those who participate have something in common: their seminary experience brings them closer to the Savior and to our Heavenly Father.

## Receiving Promised Blessings

Why is seminary so important for you? Some of the reasons include these promises from latter-day prophets and apostles:

- It “become[s] a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel in a most challenging hour.”<sup>1</sup>
- It “will prepare you to present the message of the restored gospel to those you have opportunity to meet.”<sup>2</sup>
- It helps you “gain vital understanding of truth.”<sup>3</sup>

- Seminary “provides wonderful opportunities to learn the doctrines that will make you happy. It provides wonderful opportunities for socializing with those of your own kind.”<sup>4</sup>
- “Your knowledge of the gospel will be increased. Your faith will be strengthened. You will develop wonderful associations and friendships.”<sup>5</sup>
- “It yields . . . spiritual enrichment, moral strength to resist the evil that is all about us, as well as a tremendous increase in gospel scholarship.”<sup>6</sup>
- It is “one of the best preparations for a mission.”<sup>7</sup>

## Finding a Way to Attend

Going to seminary often means you’ll have to give up something else you enjoy doing in order to find the time to attend. But it’s a sacrifice that’s worth making. Elijah Bugayong of the Philippines chose to make that decision during her last year of high school. Throughout high school, she had always been second in her class. She was determined to place first her senior year and had even considered foregoing seminary, which she had attended in the years before, in order to meet her goal.

Then one day her thoughts changed. “I



## A BLESSING WITH LIFELONG EFFECTS

"Many years ago I had the privilege of teaching early-morning seminary. The class was held between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. each school day. For two years I watched sleepy students stumble into class, challenging their instructor to wake them up. After prayer was offered and an inspirational thought given, I watched bright minds come alive to increase their knowledge of the scriptures. The most difficult part of the class was to terminate the discussion in time to send them on to their regular high school classes. As the school year progressed, I watched each student gain greater confidence, closer friendships, and a growing testimony of the gospel.

"A few years ago I was in a grocery store in a city not far from here when I heard someone call out my name. I turned to greet two of my former seminary students. They were now husband and wife. They introduced me to their four beautiful children. As we visited I was amazed with the number of seminary classmates they still had contact with after all these years. It was an evidence of a special bonding that had occurred in that very early morning seminary class."

**Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Receive Truth," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 62.**

[looked at] my study table," she says. "I saw a pile of books near it, my quadruple combination together with my seminary notebook and manual. Deep inside I asked myself, 'Which matters most?'"

Elijah found her answer in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." She decided to faithfully attend seminary and find other ways to balance her time in order to work on her academics. At the end of the year, she was named valedictorian and even won a university scholarship.

Spencer Douglas of Alabama, USA, decided to give up some social events so he could get the most from seminary. For his first two years of seminary, he woke up at 4:00 a.m. to attend, and the last two years he woke up at 5:00 a.m. He says, "I couldn't participate in a lot of late-evening activities with my friends because I would need to be in bed early. If I didn't, I would not be able to fully participate and learn the next morning." For Spencer, it wasn't just about showing up to class, it was also about being awake and prepared to learn.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "Just because something is good is not a sufficient reason for doing it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time

available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives."<sup>8</sup> That is important counsel to remember as you decide how to prioritize seminary in your schedule.

## Preparing for Missions

Seminary also serves as a great preparation for the missionary work you will do—as a member missionary today and also if you serve as a full-time missionary in the future. Franco Huamán Curinuqui of Peru knows that his scripture study in seminary has been helping him prepare for his mission.

He says this preparation is worth getting up for seminary at 4:00 a.m., riding canoes when months of flooding hit the area, and then wading through mud to get to class. He says, "I want to finish seminary and start institute classes in order to be prepared for a mission. I am going to keep growing in the Church." Seminary is important to him because he learns about the scriptures and memorizes important verses, which will help him be a better missionary.

## Being Blessed in All Aspects of Life

As youth around the world make the effort to attend seminary, they're receiving strength in much more than scripture study. Cameron Lisney of

England found that he was blessed in all areas of his life. “Not only does seminary help with the spiritual side of things, but it also helps with school and education,” says Cameron.

He says that “an early start to the day gets your brain into gear. Some of my friends said they were too busy to attend—well, it’s not like you’re going to be reviewing math at 6:00 a.m., are you?” As you study, “the Lord will help you in your exams, and if you go to seminary, He will help you even more,” says Cameron.

Of course, seminary helped Cameron strengthen his testimony as well. He says, “The beginning of my testimony came from the seminary program. At the youthful age of 14, I was really struggling in the gospel. I did not enjoy church, and I got up to things that I shouldn’t have. It was only a matter of months before I would have given up entirely.” But when a friend invited Cameron to attend seminary, he decided to go with her. Then the blessings really began to come.

“I began to feel the Spirit again,” says Cameron. “I started paying more attention in church and attended my Sunday School and priesthood lessons. It became easier, and I started to feel happier. I finally gained a

testimony of the gospel for myself.”

After two months of seminary, Cameron met with his bishop and was ordained a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood.

Cameron knows that seminary helps him stand strong against the temptations of the world. “As seminary continued,” he says, “I found it easier to deal with the challenges that the world presents. It’s pretty tough being a youth in the world we live in—sin is surrounding us from all sides. I testify to you that if you attend seminary, you will find the strength to defend yourself against it. Seminary creates a spiritual shield to protect you. Many different trials and temptations have been thrown my way, and seminary has been such a huge help in keeping me on the strait and narrow.”

### Strengthening One Another

Seminary also lets you gather with other teens who share your beliefs. Vika Chelyshkova of Russia says, “I am inspired by like-minded people who hold similar moral standards and who believe in God as I do.” She adds, “If I have any questions, I can discuss them with my seminary teacher and other students. I can share my thoughts and my testimony with others to strengthen my own and others’ faith. By reading the scriptures together and pondering on their spiritual content, we get closer to God and each other.”

Ksenia Goncharova of Ukraine has seen similar results. She says, “When we share our experiences with each other, we become stronger and we understand the scriptures better. When we





## SEMINARY INFLUENCED THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

Mildred Bennion was among the first class of seminary students at the Granite Seminary in 1912. She would later become the mother of President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

She understood the importance of seminary in her life, and she wanted her children to have the same blessings she had felt from seminary, so her family made a big decision: “We moved to Utah at a considerable financial sacrifice in order that our sons could attend Seminaries and Institutes and find friends among our own people. That should answer the question of my feelings about such things” (quoted in C. Coleman, *History of Granite Seminary*, 142).

The importance of Church education continued in the Eyring family as President Henry B. Eyring in 1971 became president of Ricks College (now BYU–Idaho), a Church-owned college, and served as Commissioner of Church Education from 1980 to 1985 and again from 1992 to 2005.

talk about examples from our lives during the lessons, I see the way the gospel works in my life and in the lives of others.”

### Coming to Know Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ

A group of youth were recently asked how seminary has blessed them. Their answers reveal a major theme—that seminary helps them draw closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: “All of the topics that you study in seminary are important. Each year as you focus on one of the volumes of scripture, the central focus is the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

Here’s what several of the teens said about how seminary has brought them closer to Jesus Christ:

- “I’ve learned what the Savior does for me, reading all of these accounts from numerous prophets and realizing how important I am to Him. I realize that He loved me enough to die and suffer for my pain.”
- “Seminary is a great way to start my day. No matter how tired I am, I feel the Spirit and feel strengthened so that when hard things come up in my day, I know without a doubt that my Savior loves me, and I’m more confident to stand up for what is right.”
- “I am a convert to the Church. I started taking seminary before I even got baptized. Without seminary, I don’t know if I would have got baptized at all. Without seminary, I wouldn’t have the Savior in my life right now or know that I can be forgiven for my sins. I never really had Heavenly Father or Jesus Christ in my life. Seminary helped me find Them and have Them become forever a part of my life and my future kids’ lives.”
- “Going to seminary every day helped me grow closer to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through learning about His teachings, His great love for me, and how I can return to live with Him.”
- “When I am in seminary, I find a deeper meaning in the scriptures. It helps remind me every morning to be Christlike in my daily doings.”
- “Seminary taught me how to read my scriptures and not only to enjoy it but also to find application in the text. I learned doctrines and principles that helped strengthen my testimony of a loving Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, which I will take with me for the rest of my life.”

With so many blessings that come from attending seminary, it’s easy to see why youth around the world are making it a priority in their schedules. ■

## NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach the Scriptures* (address to Church Educational System educators, Oct. 14, 1977), 3.
2. L. Tom Perry, "Raising the Bar," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 48.
3. Richard G. Scott, "Realize Your Full Potential," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 42.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand True and Faithful," *Ensign*, May 1996, 93.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Miracle Made Possible by Faith," *Ensign*, May 1984, 47.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The State of the Church," *Ensign*, May 1991, 52.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, "Our Responsibility to Share the Gospel," *Ensign*, May 1985, 7.
8. Dallin H. Oaks, "Good, Better, Best," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 104.
9. David A. Bednar, "Conclusion and Testimony," *Welcome to Seminary 2010–2011*, [seminary.lds.org/welcome](http://seminary.lds.org/welcome).

## THE HISTORY OF SEMINARY

Here's a look at how seminary has grown over the years.

- 1888: President Wilford Woodruff oversees the formation of the Church Board of Education to direct the Church's educational efforts, including after-school religion classes.
- 1912: Organization of the first daily released-time seminary classes, totaling 70 students who leave high school for one class period to attend seminary. Classes are taught across the street from Granite High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.
- 1925: Enrollment reaches 10,000 students.
- 1948: Made available in Canada, the first country outside of the United States to have seminary.
- 1950: Organization of daily seminary (previously called "early-morning seminary") classes in California, where students meet in Church meetinghouses before school starts.
- 1958: Enrollment reaches 50,000 students.
- 1958: Made available in Central America, introduced first in Mexico.
- 1962: Made available in Europe, introduced first in Finland and Germany.
- 1963: Made available in Asia, introduced first in Japan.
- 1965: Enrollment reaches 100,000 students.
- 1967: Launch of home-study seminary in rural communities, where students study at home four days a week and meet together for one day each week.
- 1968: Made available in Australia.
- 1969: Made available in South America, introduced first in Brazil.
- 1972: Made available in Africa, introduced first in South Africa.
- 1983: Enrollment reaches 200,000 students.
- 1991: Enrollment reaches 300,000 students.
- 2012: Available in 134 countries and territories worldwide, with around 370,000 students enrolled.

