

Blessed by Seminary in Spite of Myself

I struggled with seminary, but my parents and leaders didn't give up on me.

By Jeremy Vick

I was the kind of kid who spent most of his time in early-morning seminary with a hoodie over his head and his head on his desk. My early-morning seminary teacher was the bishop's wife. She put up with a lot from us students. And even though I didn't want to be there, she wasn't pushy, and her patience made me feel safe. Still, the only reason I graduated was because my parents made sure I attended.

After high school graduation, I went to college. My only real goal was having fun. After about a year, I woke up one morning following a late-night party and had no idea where I was or what had happened the night before. I wondered what I was accomplishing with my life. Where was I going? At that moment I realized how far I was from living what I had learned in seminary and church. I was making mistakes and filling my life with meaningless and even dangerous activities. I had failed my God and my Savior. I had failed my parents and was a bad example for my siblings. I concluded that I was going to hell.

Picking Myself Up from Rock Bottom

A few days later I parked my car in a deserted area of town and poured out my heart to God. I was there for a couple of hours. I apologized for my failures and mistakes and let Heavenly Father know that although I was likely lost forever, I would do the best I could to be a

good example to my brothers and sister. I committed that I would not drag my siblings down with me.

That next Sunday I went to church to set the example. My mother was shocked when I arrived in a white shirt and tie, wearing socks. At that moment, and perhaps because I had met there for seminary every morning during high school, it felt like a safe place. Before long, my bishop was pulling me into his office to talk and soon after asked me if I had received my patriarchal blessing. When I told him no, he suggested I get it. I agreed. Even though our discussion was difficult as he interviewed me, I felt such relief as I realized I wasn't beyond help and that I could repent of my mistakes. I was so happy as I felt the Savior and His Atonement at work in my life. I thought back to my lessons in seminary and tried to understand how it was possible for someone like me to be forgiven. As I recalled the lessons, I felt the Spirit confirming that it was possible.

A Mission and Marriage

Receiving my patriarchal blessing gave me a desire to serve a mission. Surprisingly, I remembered more from my time in seminary than I had realized. That knowledge blessed me on my mission. I was grateful to my parents and seminary teacher for their encouragement.

After my mission, I remained active in the Church. I met my future wife. On one of our visits to get to know her

family, they asked me a lot of questions to learn about me and my priorities. One of the last questions they asked me was, “Did you graduate from seminary?” I was so grateful that I could say yes!

Hope for Parents

I look back on seminary as a place where I learned so much, even if I didn't realize it at the time. Just being in class allowed me to feel the Spirit, even if I didn't always recognize it. It helped change me. But it never would have

happened if my parents had caved in to my complaining about having to go. And today, as a parent, I can look my 14-year-old and 16-year-old in the face and tell them it's worth it—even if they don't get it yet.

I am grateful for parents who didn't give up on encouraging me to do what was right. I am grateful for a seminary teacher and a bishop who loved me, guided me, and taught me, even when I didn't want to be. Even though I didn't realize it at the time, seminary helped change my life. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

