

How Seminary Can Now Enhance Your Family's *Come, Follow Me* Experience

Parents, here's how seminary can make your family gospel study even better.

By Jeffrey Coleman and Brittany Ann Reece

In March 2019 the First Presidency announced a significant change to seminary. Seminary classes around the world are now studying the same book of scripture that individuals and families are studying at home and at church as part of *Come, Follow Me*. As seminary teachers (and parents), we couldn't be more excited about it!

One obvious blessing is how it will simplify our teenagers' lives. On top of school, sports, work, family time, and a social life, many youth in the past tried to study from three different books of scripture: one for seminary, one for Sunday School, and another one for family study. That's a lot.

Once Church leaders aligned family and Sunday School study in the same scriptures, aligning seminary as well just made sense. It allows the youth to take a deeper dive into one book of scripture. But simplification is just the beginning.

Strengthening the Home

Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President, taught that as youth are asked to be “a part of the teaching, to be a part of that great movement at home,” they will help in “strengthening the home.”¹

The youth are hungry for truth and excited to share! That might be a little hard to believe if you've ever gotten a blank stare from a teenager. As parents and teachers, we all have! As seminary teachers, we ask teenagers questions all the time. Sometimes we get a blank stare in return simply





In the past, families may have struggled to align Church, seminary and family scripture study. Recent changes can help gospel discussion be better for all family members.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EVA VAZQUEZ

because our youth don't have the answers. But when the seminary and *Come, Follow Me* curriculum are aligned, our seminary-age children can more easily apply the things they are learning in seminary to a family gospel discussion and vice versa. We've already seen it in our seminary classes.

Bringing Scripture Study from Home to Seminary

At the beginning of 2019, when the new *Come, Follow Me* was just beginning, we could feel the excitement of the students. Even though we were studying from the Doctrine and Covenants in seminary, they started sharing things they had learned from studying the New Testament with their families. They were so excited about it. When we studied Doctrine and Covenants 89 (the Word of Wisdom) in seminary, it was around the same time we were studying John 2 (when Jesus Christ turns water into wine) in *Come, Follow Me*. Finding common principles and ideas between the two readings allowed the students to share with their peers what they had learned at home. They were much more engaged, and the discussion was much more invigorating because the students had things to talk about. They were able to apply the things they had learned at home to what we were learning at seminary.

Bringing Seminary into the Home

In 2020, studying the Book of Mormon at home, in seminary, and in Sunday School opens the door even wider for students to share even more of what they learn in those places.

There are a few learning strategies we use in seminary that can help your family's scripture study. Knowing about them can help you see ways to get your teenagers more involved in your home-centered scripture study.

As you sit down as a family, your teenager will have already been studying the same principles from the same book of scripture, and they will have insights if they have already studied those principles in seminary. They won't feel as "put on the spot" when you ask them to share because they will actually have things to share. Their experiences at seminary will help empower them to talk about the gospel at home. Family home evenings and family scripture study will become more of a time to share personal insights with one another.

Some open-ended questions you might use to invite your teens to share in your home are:

1. What spiritual experience did you have in seminary today?
2. What impacted you the most today?
3. What principle did you learn in seminary that you feel can help us as a family?
4. What scripture story did you learn today that you feel you can share with us?
5. What scripture story affected your life in seminary?
6. How were you inspired in seminary to be better today?
7. What did you learn about the Savior because of what you learned in seminary?

There may be times when your family study is ahead of what is being studied in seminary.

During these times, the questions above could be adapted by seminary teachers to draw on what youth are learning at home.

Doctrinal Mastery

Seminary's approach to scripture study is no longer just about memorization. We focus on doctrinal mastery—helping students understand, apply, and gain a testimony of the doctrine taught in the scriptures. It's more about deepening conversion to true doctrine and knowing how to teach it with power.

For example, if a verse teaches about the Godhead, when we study that scripture in seminary, we search for other verses that teach about the Godhead. Then we encourage the students to note what we can learn about the Godhead from those verses. Finally, we come up with scenarios in which the students role-play how they might explain our beliefs about the Godhead using those scriptures.

You could use this approach at home and invite your teen to:

1. Teach the principles in the scripture.
2. Share cross-references to other scriptures about the topic.
3. Help your family memorize or remember how to find the verses.
4. Discuss how these teachings apply to your lives.

Preparation for Deep Learning

There's a big emphasis in seminary on something we call deep learning—learning that leads to conversion. One key to deep learning is improving preparation to learn. Improving student preparation is different for every seminary class, but one thing some seminary classes are trying is a preparation assignment. We send students home with the assigned scripture block and some study questions to get them reading the scriptures that we'll be studying in class. When seminary and *Come, Follow Me* curriculums are more closely aligned, preparation assignments for seminary can be shared with a student's family. It will give families one more way to learn together.



You could invite your teen to:

1. Share preparation assignments with the family.
2. After the seminary lesson, share what else he or she learned on the topic.

For example, if a teenager sets a goal to develop more patience, the next step is planning how they are going to develop it. In what ways or settings do they feel they struggle with patience? One student decided he could use more patience when he was driving. When we talked about how he could practice patience in the moment, he came up with a plan to listen to calming music in the car and put a note on the dashboard reminding him to pray for patience every time he gets in the car.

You could invite your teen to:

1. Talk about his or her goals.
2. Share how you can set and achieve similar goals as a family.

Empower Your Children to Strengthen Your Home

You have an incredible opportunity to inject a bit of enthusiasm into family scripture study, and now with the aligned curriculum, you can invite your seminary-age children to share what they are learning. When they study the same scriptures in seminary and with their families in *Come, Follow Me*, they will be more empowered than ever to strengthen their families with their insights into the gospel.

This next step in the Church's efforts to become "a home-centered Church, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings"² empowers the youth to play an even bigger role in strengthening their homes. We agree with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles when he said: "We think this is a tremendous development at this time when our young people need ever more strength. We think this is a wonderful alignment to bring that coordination with what the rest of the Church is doing, and we believe that it's going to be wonderfully symbiotic with the Church-supported—and now that we add seminary-supported—home-centered gospel study."³ ■

The authors are seminary teachers in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Bonnie H. Cordon, "Seminary Curriculum to Support Home-centered Learning" (video, Mar. 22, 2019), [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Seminary Curriculum to Support Home-centered Learning."



Setting Specific Goals

You may have noticed that the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum often encourages us to set goals. It's something we're emphasizing in seminary as well. We're teaching our students to set specific goals, not just general goals like "Be more healthy." When a student sets a goal, they plan *when*, *where*, and *how* they're going to achieve that goal.