

FEELING THE **SPIRIT** OF **INSTITUTE**

The sometimes negative environment of the university weighed on me. As I felt the atmosphere in institute, I knew I was not alone.

By Jennifer Bohorquez Gomez

When I started college, I loved being part of the educational environment and seeing the enthusiasm of my peers. Thanks to my Father in Heaven, the Perpetual Education Fund, and the support of my family, my dream was unfolding.

During the first weeks of classes, I realized the hard work that awaited me during the next five years: homework,

quizzes, tests, and projects. I started to love my career choice and my college, but I also realized that until then I had lived in a bubble. I saw clearly that I was different from the other college students. They listened to music with obscene lyrics, and their conversations tended to be about being immoral, using illegal drugs, and drinking alcohol on the weekends.

My classmates invited me many times to participate with them in their weekend activities. After I explained my standards and my religion, many respected my views and stopped insisting that I join them, but many more ridiculed my beliefs. I tried to be indifferent to these comments, but I wondered, "Could I live with this all the time?" I prayed constantly to receive strength and not feel alone. But I did not feel that these prayers were answered. Then I realized the things going on around me in the university were not going to change.

Though I was in the university, I continued to attend Young Women, so

I learned about institute one Sunday in sacrament meeting. I decided to go to institute the following Wednesday to ask a question I had about the Perpetual Education Fund.

After a long hectic day at the university, I headed over to institute. I got on public transportation, sat down, and started reading the next chapter for homework. I sighed deeply, wanting a break, and looked up, only to see something inappropriate taking place near me. At my stop I got off and walked to institute, thinking a lot about the homework I needed to turn in the following day.

Though I lived gospel standards, the environment of the university weighed on me as I entered the institute building. I walked in and saw young adult college students dressed modestly and heard them speaking respectfully to each other. Which courses would they take this semester? The Doctrine and Covenants? The Book of Mormon? Missionary preparation?

I approached the clerk, received the answer to the question I had come to ask, and turned to leave. Near the exit I turned around, feeling the atmosphere of institute. I went out the door, and tears flooded my eyes as I felt great joy. I took public transportation back to my house, crying and smiling. An indelible thought came to me: I was not alone.



In that moment I received the answer to my prayers. I felt the Spirit, thought about my experience, and I thanked my Heavenly Father for the joy of believing in the gospel.

When I got home, I hugged my mom and told her about my wonderful experience feeling the love of God. He had never left me and had always been with me, as He is with each of us when we need Him the most. I attended institute throughout my time in college and met many people who remain my good friends. But Jesus Christ is our best source of love and support, and He never leaves us alone. ■

The author lives in Colombia.



THE POWER OF INSTITUTE

"I know the power that comes from associations in the seminary and institute programs. It has enriched my life, and I know it will do the same for you. It will put a shield of protection around you to keep you free from the temptations and trials of the world. There is a great blessing in having a knowledge of the gospel. And I know of no better place for the young people of the Church to gain a special knowledge of sacred things than in the institute."

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Receive Truth," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 61–62.