

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

When Elizabeth Lewis was serving in the U.S. military in Alaska during Christmas, she turned to her Alaskan ward for support. “Participating in the Relief Society’s Christmas activity deepened the holiday spirit in my heart,” she says. “I spent Christmas Eve with one family and Christmas Day with another. The ward members were truly like my family. E-mailing the pictures of the celebrations to my husband back home in Nebraska lessened the distance that separated us. When I returned home, my husband and I celebrated as if it were Christmas Day. That year I received the gift of two Christmases.”

Sister Lewis is one of many women and men in the military who find themselves temporally separated from their families. The following are suggestions from her and others that can help bring joy and peace during the holiday season to military personnel and their families.

1. Strive to draw closer to the Savior. This increases your spirituality and results in positive experiences for the entire family.

2. Consider using telephone calls, e-mail, and other forms of Internet and Web cam communication so that the family member who has been deployed can participate in scripture study, family prayers, and family home evening.

3. Display pictures of the loved one who is away. This can help young children stay connected to their parent.

4. Families at home can build friendships with ward members throughout the year, especially if they have

children of similar ages. These friendships can provide support beyond the holidays.

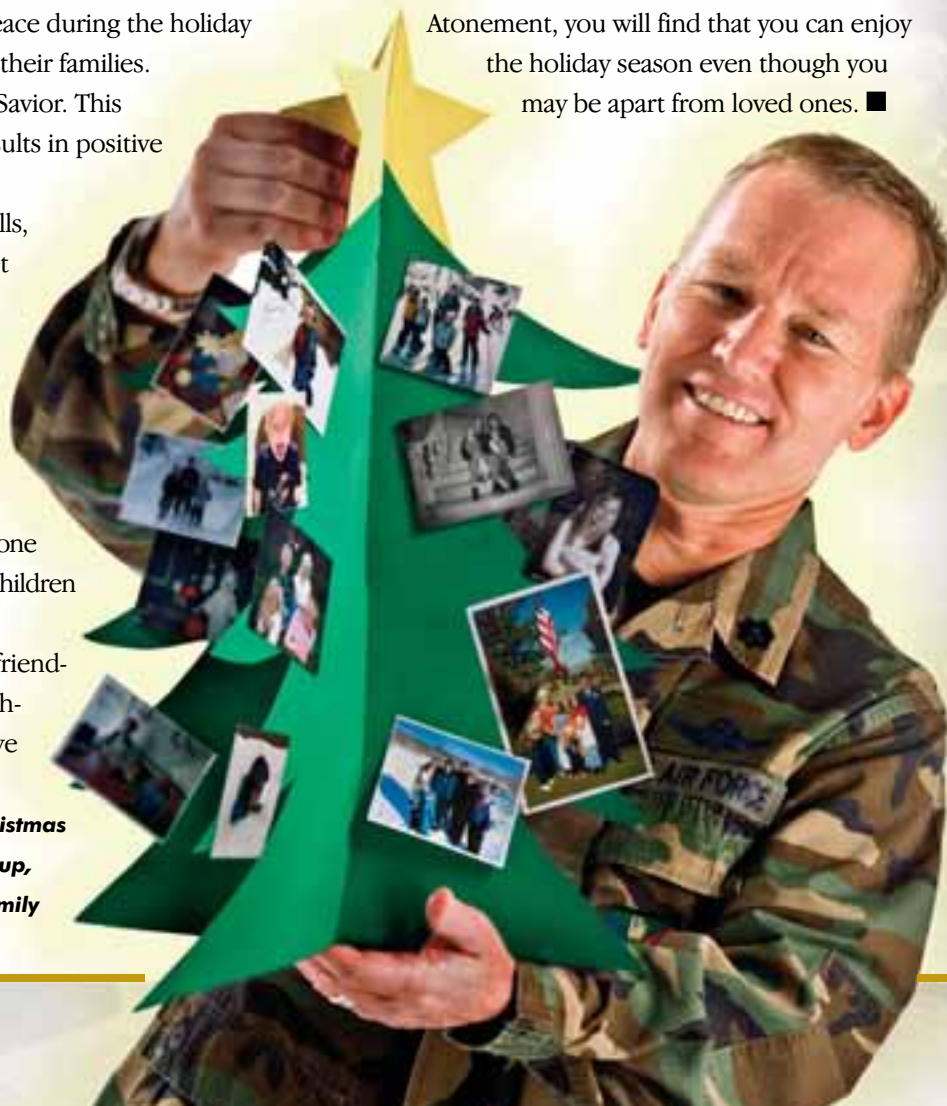
5. Continue to observe family traditions or create new ones that involve the family member who is away.

6. Lose yourself in service. This is a great way to dispel the blues during the holidays or any time.

7. If you are the deployed parent, communicate frequently with each of your children one-on-one.

8. Set up decorations while deployed. They foster the Christmas spirit and will remind you of Christ’s love and the joy He wants you to feel during this season.

Remember the true reason we celebrate Christmas—the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. As you rejoice at His birth and ponder the significance of His Atonement, you will find that you can enjoy the holiday season even though you may be apart from loved ones. ■



One family sent their soldier a Christmas tree made from paper. He hung it up, and everyone decorated it with family pictures.