

Liahona

The Living Christ, p. 9

**Joseph Smith: Prophet
of the Restoration, p. 37**

**Decorate Temple
Square, p. F8**



Liahona



ON THE COVER
Pondering Mary, by Jeffrey Hein, may not be copied.



THE FRIEND COVER
His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful, by Simon Dewey, courtesy of Altus Fine Art, American Fork, Utah, may not be copied.



SEE "MORE THAN A FARM BOY," P. 37



SEE "A CHRISTMAS CROSS-STITCH," P. 16

FOR ADULTS

- 2 First Presidency Message: The Power of Peace
President James E. Faust
- 6 He Lives
- 9 The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles
- 14 Strengthening the Family: The Family Is Central to the Creator's Plan
- 16 A Christmas Cross-Stitch *David Toy*
- 20 Book of Mormon Principles: How Could I Testify?
Elder Hans H. Mattsson
- 22 Book of Mormon Principles: Come unto Christ
Elder Robert R. Steuer
- 25 Visiting Teaching Message: Feeling the Love of the Lord through Service
- 26 Strong Hands and Loving Hearts
- 43 Latter-day Saint Voices
 - Christmas Eve Breakfast *Toni Hakes*
 - The Appalachian Christmas Tree *Laurie Hopkins*
 - Open the Card First *Samuel Osorio Mendoza*
 - Missionaries on the Metro *Rémy van der Put*
- 48 Comment

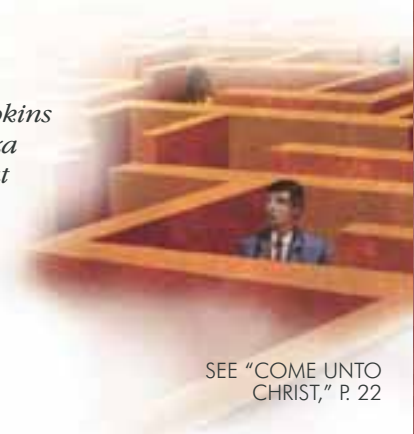
FOR YOUTH

- 10 The Divine Touch *Elder M. Russell Ballard*
- 19 Poster: Give of Yourself
- 31 Did You Know?
- 32 Birthplace of the Prophet *Janet Thomas*
- 37 Gospel Classics: More Than a Farm Boy *Elder Mark E. Petersen*
- 40 Questions and Answers: I'm Not Attractive. Please Don't Tell Me That I Am. Why Was I Born This Way?

SEE "COME UNTO CHRIST," P. 22

THE FRIEND: FOR CHILDREN

- F2 A Wonderful Time of Year: A Christmas Message from the First Presidency to the Children of the World
- F4 Poster Article: Jesus Had Righteous Earthly Parents
- F6 From the Life of President Heber J. Grant: Charitable Businessman
- F8 Christmas on Temple Square *Kimberly Webb*
- F10 Sharing Time: Christmas Gifts All Year *Sheila E. Wilson*
- F12 A Cabbage for Christmas *Trisa Martin*
- F16 Special Witness: Keep the Commandments
Elder Robert D. Hales



The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley,
Thomas S. Monson, James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry,
Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,
Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales,
Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring

Editor: Jay E. Jensen
Advisers: Monte J. Brough, W. Rolfe Kerr
Managing Director: David Frischknecht
Planning and Editorial Director: Victor D. Cave
Graphics Director: Allan R. Loyborg

Magazines Editorial Director: Richard M. Romney
Managing Editor: Marvin K. Gardner
Editorial Staff: Collette Nebeker Aune, Susan Barrett,
Shanna Butler, Ryan Carr, Linda Stahle Cooper, LaRene
Porter Gaunt, Jenifer L. Greenwood, R. Val Johnson, Carrie
Kasten, Melvin Leavitt, Sally J. Ode Kirk, Adam C. Olson,
Judith M. Paller, Vivian Paulsen, Don L. Searle, Rebecca M.
Taylor, Roger Terry, Janet Thomas, Paul VanDenBerghe,
Julie Wardell, Kimberly Webb, Monica Weeks

Managing Art Director: M. M. Kawasaki
Art Director: Scott Van Kampen
Production Manager: Jane Ann Peters
Design and Production Staff: Kelli Allen-Pratt, Howard G.
Brown, Thomas S. Child, Reginald J. Christensen, Kathleen
Howard, Denise Kirby, Tadd R. Peterson, Randall J. Pixton,
Kari A. Todd, Claudia E. Warner

Marketing Manager: Larry Hiller
Printing Director: Craig K. Sedgwick
Distribution Director: Kris T. Christensen

For subscriptions and prices outside the United States and
Canada, contact your local Church distribution center or
ward or branch leader.

Send manuscripts and queries to *Liahona*, Room 2420,
50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220,
USA; or e-mail: cur-liahona-imag@ldschurch.org.

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning "compass"
or "director") is published in Albanian, Armenian (East),
Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Croatian,
Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish,
French, German, Haitian, Hungarian, Icelandic,
Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian,
Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian,
Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian,
Samoan, Sinhala, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog,
Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, and
Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

© 2004 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America.

Text and visual material in the *Liahona* may be copied for
incidental, noncommercial church or home use. Visual
material may not be copied if restrictions are indicated in the
credit line with the artwork. Questions should be addressed to
Intellectual Property Office, 50 East North Temple Street,
Salt Lake City, UT 84150, USA; telephone: 1-801-240-3959;
e-mail: cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org.

The *Liahona* can be found in many languages on the
Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on "Gospel
Library." For other languages, click on the world map.

For Readers in the United States and Canada:
December 2004 Vol. 28 No. 12. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480)
English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 East North
Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription
price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$16.00 plus applicable
taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah, and
at additional mailing offices. Sixty days' notice required for
change of address. Include address label from a recent issue;
old and new address must be included. Send USA and
Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at
address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971.
Credit card orders (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) may
be taken by phone. (Canada Poste Information: Publication
Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Salt Lake
Distribution Center, Church Magazines, PO Box 26368,
Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368.

Family Home Evening Ideas



"The Divine Touch," p. 10:

Tell some of the stories in
Elder M. Russell Ballard's
article. Give family members a few
minutes to think of someone they
know who has a special need. Have
them write down something they can
do during the coming week to help
meet that need.

"A Christmas Cross-Stitch," p. 16:

Read this story together; then ask
family members what the possibility
of having an eternal family means to
them. Family members could per-
haps randomly select one another's
names and express in specific terms
why they want to be close to that par-
ticular family member forever. These
expressions of love may be one of the
best Christmas presents your family
receives this year.

"How Could I Testify?" p. 20:

Elder Hans H. Mattsson describes the
challenge of going on a mission with
no language training. Tell your family
about an experience from your own
life in which the Lord has required
something difficult of you. Explain
how weak things can become strong
with the Lord's help.

"More Than a Farm Boy," p. 37:

Discuss with your family one or
more aspects of the Prophet Joseph
Smith's life and mission. Testify to the
truthfulness of his mission and of the
Book of Mormon.

"A Cabbage for Christmas,"

p. F12: Have family members
portray the story about Annie
going to find a cabbage. Ask family
members to think of Christmas tradi-
tions that are related to the Savior's
birth and mission. As a family, think of
a new tradition that would remind you
of the true meaning of Christmas.

"Keep the Commandments,"

p. F16: Tell your children the story of
Abinadi. Explain that sometimes the
Lord asks us to do things that are diffi-
cult. Ask if they find it difficult to keep
some of the commandments. Talk
about the blessings that come from
obedience.

TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE

F= <i>The Friend</i>	Missionary work, 20, 43,
Adversity, 20	F12
Book of Mormon, 20, 22,	Obedience, F4, F16
37, F16	Peace, 2, 10
Christmas, 2, 16, 19, 31,	Plan of salvation, 14, 22
43, F2, F8, F10, F12	Prayer, 43
Divine nature, 40	Primary, F10
Family, 14, 16, F4, F10	Prophets, 6, 9, 10, 32,
Forgiveness, 2	37, F6
Friendship, 26	Protection, F12
Healing, 10	Relief Society, 26
Holy Ghost, 22	Restoration, 32, 37
Home teaching, 5	Self-worth, 40
Inspiration, 43	Service, 10, 19, 25, 26,
Jesus Christ, 2, 6, 9, 10,	43, F6, F8, F10
22, 25, F2, F4, F8, F10	Talents, 19, 40
Joseph Smith, 32, 37	Teaching, 1
Leadership, 31	Temples, 14, 16, F8
Love, 25, F2, F6, F10	Testimony, 6, 9, 32
Marriage, 14	Visiting teaching, 25, 26



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

The Power of Peace

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

With all of you, I rejoice in this wonderful holiday season. I am old enough to have enjoyed many Christmases. As I get older, I seem to enjoy these special holidays more each year. Perhaps this is because there are many more than just our own families to love and be loved by.

Among the Christmas experiences that are etched most sharply in my memory are the ones spent away from home and loved ones while serving in the mission field or in military service. Each Christmas when I was in the military in World War II, I wondered when the terrible suffering and agony of war would end and we could all go home. And as we sang, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men,"¹ I wondered if the Germans and the Japanese who were Christians were also singing this familiar refrain with the same yearnings in their hearts. Then it all ended 59 years ago after the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan. Mankind had never before seen such destructive power. There was a concern in our hearts about the beast that had been unleashed.

I would like to recount a story told by Kenneth J. Brown, who was serving as a U.S. Marine in Japan following the dropping of the bomb. His moving story about a Japanese Christian he met at Christmas-time in Nagasaki is as follows.

"I watched him turn from the street and climb the path leading to our shelter. He was groping, hesitating. As he came near he folded his umbrella and stood quietly a long moment. His thin coat soon dampened from the cold rain that was falling from the same sky that had brought death to nearly half his townspeople three short months before. I concluded that it must take some special courage to confront one's conquerors without invitation. It was little wonder that he hesitated.

"His polite bow to me was no bow of submission. Rather his squared shoulders and lifted head let me feel as if I were looking up at him even . . . though I towered over him a foot or more. I recall being disturbed that I hadn't yet become used to the near sightless eyes of those who had looked heavenward that morning when the bomb dropped. . . .



The power of the Christ has influenced for good the hosts of His followers on the earth for more than 2,000 years. It is the power in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, our Savior.

“. . . I respectfully asked if I could be of service. [In his clear English] he introduced himself as Professor Iida. . . .

“‘I am Christian,’ he said. ‘I am told this is the head minister’s office. Are you a Christian? It is good to talk with a follower of Christ; there are so few Christian Japanese.’

“I took him to the inner office of the division chaplain and waited while the two men conversed. Professor Iida stated his request briefly. He was a teacher of music in a Christian girls’ college until it was closed by imperial command. . . . He had been imprisoned because of his professed Christianity. After being released he had returned to Nagasaki and continued his music instruction in his home even though it was forbidden. He had been able to continue a small chorus and would be pleased if . . . they [could] sing a concert for the American Marines.

“‘We know something of your American Christmases,’ he said. ‘We should like to do something to make your Christmas in Japan more enjoyable.’

“I felt sure the chaplain would give a negative reply. Our unit was one of hardened fighters, four years away from home, who had fought the enemy from Saipan to Iwo Jima. . . . Yet there was something about the man that bespoke sincere desire to do a good deed so that . . . permission was granted. The concert would be Christmas Eve.

“The rains had stopped and a calm settled over the atomic bowl reminiscent of the calm that night long ago. The concert was well attended; there was nothing else to do. The theater . . . had been cleared of its fallen roof and men were sitting on the jagged walls. The usual momentary hush fell over the audience as the performers filed on stage. . . .

“The first thing we noticed was that they were singing in English and we became aware that they didn’t understand the words but had memorized them for our benefit. Professor Iida had taught his students well; they sang beautifully. We sat enthralled as if a choir from heaven were singing for us. . . . It was as if Christ were being born anew that night.

“The closing number was a solo, an aria from ‘The Messiah.’ The girl sang with all the conviction of one who

knew that Jesus was indeed the Savior of mankind and it brought tears. After that there was a full minute of silence followed by sustained applause as the small group took bow after bow.

“Later that night I helped Professor Iida take down the trimmings. I could not resist asking some questions that propriety forbade but curiosity demanded. I just had to know.

“‘How did your group manage to survive the bomb?’ I asked.

“‘This is only half my group,’ he said softly, but seemed unoffended at my recalling his grief so that I felt I could ask more.

“‘And what of the families of these?’

“‘They nearly all lost one or more members. Some are orphans.’

“‘What about the soloist? She must have the soul of an angel the way she sang.’

“‘Her mother, two of her brothers were taken. Yes, she did sing well; I am so proud of her. She is my daughter.’ . . .

“The next day was Christmas, the one I remember best. For that day I knew that Christianity had not failed in spite of people’s unwillingness to live His teachings. I had seen hatred give way to service, pain to rejoicing, sorrow to forgiveness. This was possible because a babe had been born in a manger [and] later taught love of God and fellowmen. We had caused them the greatest grief and yet we were their Christian brothers and as such they were willing to forget their grief and unite with us in singing ‘Peace on earth, goodwill to all men.’

“The words of Miss Iida’s song testimony would not be stilled, ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.’ They seemed to echo and re-echo over the half-dead city that day.

“That day also I knew that there was a greater power on earth than the atomic bomb.”²

That power has influenced for good the hosts of His followers on the earth for more than 2,000 years. It is the power in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, our Savior, our Advocate with the Father, the King of kings,



“The girl sang with all the conviction of one who knew that Jesus was indeed the Savior of mankind. . . . I had seen hatred give way to service, pain to rejoicing, sorrow to forgiveness.”

the Lord of lords, and the Prince of Peace. It is the power by which, through faith and obedience to His teachings, we can find joy and happiness, peace and comfort.

It is the priesthood power by which the world was created and the plan of salvation and happiness was put in place to bless our lives eternally if we are true to our covenants. It is the power that was magnified by His agony on the cross, bringing the single most important blessing to mankind. The greatest of all acts in all history was the atoning sacrifice of our Savior and Redeemer.

We remember that sacrifice at this time of year when we celebrate His birth. It is only through the atoning sacrifice of the Prince of Peace that we may know the true power of peace in our own lives. ■

NOTES

1. “Far, Far Away on Judea’s Plains,” *Hymns*, no. 212.
2. “A Greater Power,” in *Christmas I Remember Best: A Compilation of Christmas Stories from the Pages of the Deseret News* (1983), 51–53.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully considering this message, choose a teaching method that will encourage participation by family members. Following are some examples:

1. Display a picture of the Savior praying in Gethsemane, of the Crucifixion, or of the resurrected Lord showing the wounds in His hands (see Gospel Art Picture Kit 227, 230, or 234). Ask family members what great gift Jesus gave us through His Atonement. How can this gift give us peace?
2. Point out the professor’s example of forgiveness, and ask family members to consider whether there is anyone they need to forgive. Then ask family members to consider whether they might be in need of another’s forgiveness and what they might do to receive this forgiveness.
3. Ask family members to consider seeking out an individual or family to bless this Christmas—as Professor Iida did.

He Lives

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have earnestly borne testimony of our Savior Jesus Christ. Their testimonies stand as witnesses that Jesus is our Heavenly Father's Only Begotten Son—the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Messiah of the New Testament.

Individually in the following pages and collectively on page 9, the latter-day prophets, seers, and revelators teach of the Savior and bear witness that He lives.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

“He lives, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind, whose Atonement came as an act of grace for the entire world. . . . He has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. He has brought meaning to our mortal existence. He has given us the gift of eternal life. . . . God be thanked for the gift of His Son, the Redeemer of the world, the Savior of mankind, the Prince of Life and Peace, the Holy One” (“A Testimony of the Son of God,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Dec. 2002, 4–5).

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency

“[Jesus Christ] is a teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He is the literal Savior of the world. . . . I testify to you that He lives and that through Him, we too shall live” (“The Way of the Master,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 7).

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency

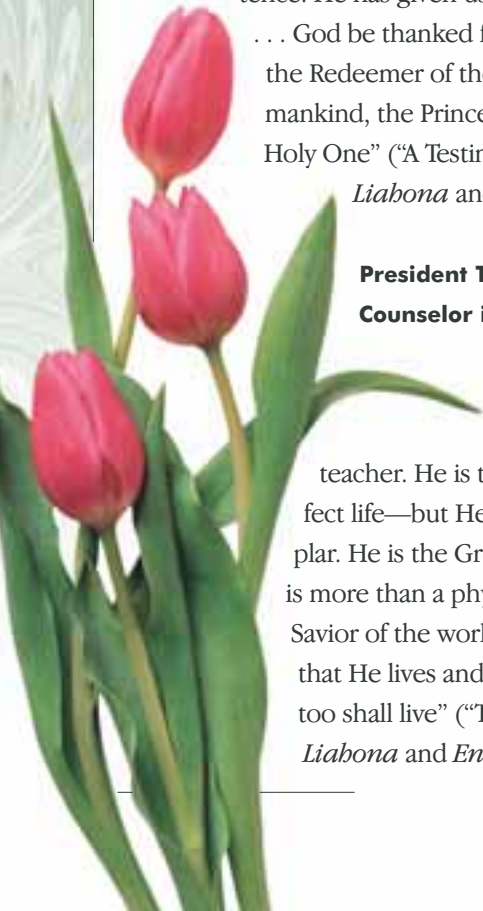
“As the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh, Jesus inherited divine attributes. He was the only person ever born into mortality who could perform this most significant and supernal act. As the only sinless Man who ever lived on this earth, He was not subject to spiritual death. Because of His godhood, He also possessed power over physical death. Thus He did for us what we cannot do for ourselves” (“The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2002, 20; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 19).

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“I bear witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives. He is our Redeemer and is our Savior. He presides over this Church. He is no stranger to His servants here, and as we move into the future with quiet confidence, His spirit will be with us” (“The Peaceable Followers of Christ,” *Liabona*, Dec. 1998, 24; *Ensign*, Apr. 1998, 67).

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“[Jesus Christ's] atoning sacrifice for all mankind is the centerpiece of the history of our Father in Heaven's children here on earth. Each of us who accepts the divine plan must accept the role of our Savior and covenant to keep his laws that our Father has developed for us. As we accept Christ in spirit and in deed, we may win our salvation” (“Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 53).





Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“It is imperative that we do our utmost to expand our understanding of [Jesus Christ’s] premortal commission, His earthly ministry, His unjust crucifixion, the agony of His suffering, His final sacrifice, and His resurrection. Each of us is profoundly indebted to Him, for we were purchased by the shedding of His own precious blood” (“Jesus of Nazareth,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 75).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“We cannot really learn any deep or lasting things about Jesus unless we take His yoke upon us. Then, though on our small scales compared to His, the relevant experiences will teach us keenly and deeply about Him and His divine attributes. There is nothing abstract about it at all. It becomes a very personal thing for us” (“Jesus, the Perfect Mentor,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2001, 13).

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“Just as a well-educated musician can recognize the composer of a symphony by its style and structure, so a well-educated surgeon can recognize the Creator of human beings by the similarity of style and structure of our anatomy. . . . This similarity provides additional evidence and deep spiritual confirmation of our divine creation by our same Creator” (“Jesus the Christ: Our Master and More,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 6).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“When we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must have trust in him. We must trust him enough that we are content to accept his will, knowing that he knows what is best for us. . . . We understand the meaning of the Savior’s words: ‘If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me’ (Moro. 7:33)” (“Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 99–100).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“God our Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have spoken again from the heavens and have called prophets and Apostles to teach the fulness of the everlasting gospel. . . . That is a glorious thing to know. . . . It changes the course of your life to a safer one because it provides an anchor that helps hold you fast to the teachings of the gospel” (“Steadfast in Christ,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1993, 50).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“In a premortal council at which we were all present, [the Savior] led the forces of good against those of Satan and his followers in a battle for the souls of men that began before this world was formed. That conflict continues today. We were all on the side of Jesus then. We are on the side of Jesus today” (“Christians in Belief and Action,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 71).



Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“I know that the Savior lives, that He is a resurrected, glorified personage of perfect love. I witness that He gave His life that we might live with Him eternally. He is our hope, our Mediator, our Redeemer” (“He Lives,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2000, 108; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 89).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“Jesus Christ . . . is the Light of the Atonement fulfilled in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, that all mankind may obtain eternal salvation. He is the Light of the empty tomb. . . . He is *my* Light, *my* Redeemer, *my* Savior—and yours” (“Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light,” *Liabona*, July 2002, 79–80; *Ensign*, May 2002, 71–72).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“I testify of God’s love and the Savior’s power to calm the storm. Always remember in that biblical story [of Peter walking on the water] that [Christ] was out there on the water also. . . . Only one who has fought against those ominous waves is justified in telling *us—as well as the sea*—to ‘be still’ [Mark 4:39]. Only one who has taken the full brunt of such adversity could ever be justified in telling us in such times to ‘be of good cheer’ [John 16:33]” (“An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2000, 43; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 37).

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“Jesus Christ is the light and the life of the world. If we do not choose to move toward Him, we will find that we have moved away. . . . Whether or not you choose to keep your covenant to always remember Him, He always remembers you” (“Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 12). ■

THE LIVING CHRIST

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth.

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come.

He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary's cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.

We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to "become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His "other sheep" (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised "dispensation of the fulness of times" (Ephesians 1:10).

Of the Living Christ, the Prophet Joseph wrote: "His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

"I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father" (D&C 110:3-4).

Of Him the Prophet also declared: "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

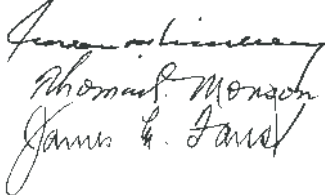
"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22-24).

We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—"built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

We testify that He will someday return to earth. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.

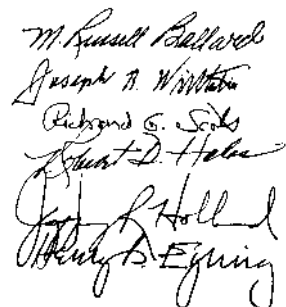
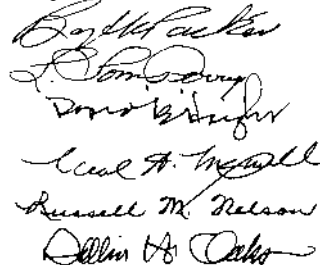
We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY



January 1, 2000

THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE





THE DIVINE TOUCH

BY ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I have learned firsthand that the wounds of those who suffer spiritually can be healed when you and I put forth the extra personal effort required to reach out to them.

Jesus Christ has the power to heal all manner of illness, whether spiritual or physical. A woman was healed by simply touching the border of His garment, as recorded in the book of Luke:

“And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

“And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

“And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:46–48).

Can the Master touch others’ lives through you and me? Oh yes, He can, and He will if we will just do our part.

Doing Her Part

A Young Women teacher had a blind girl in her class whose participation was limited because she could not study in the usual way. The teacher would go to the girl’s home and read out loud while the girl translated her Personal Progress book into braille. The work took two years. The teacher also encouraged the other girls in the class to help. Under her direction, they went to the blind girl’s home and read to her from the manual until it was translated into braille.

The Master’s touch through that teacher reached out and blessed not only this girl but many others who are blind, because the braille translation was made available at the general offices of the Young Women organization.

Little Piece, Big Heart

Sometimes the Savior’s touch can reach others through little bodies with big hearts. A lovely woman had received the missionary discussions but had not made the final commitment to be baptized. One Sunday she decided to attend sacrament meeting in a ward where she was not acquainted. She



Can the Master touch others’ lives through you and me? Oh yes, He can, and He will if we will just do our part.



As we were leaving the Church offices, we caught a glimpse of President Spencer W. Kimball, and my young friend asked, “Does President Kimball ever talk to someone like me?” The short time with him was unforgettably impressive. His instructions were eternal, and his love for this young man was unquestionable.

wanted a place where she could be alone with her thoughts. She sat beside a little boy. As the sacrament was passed, this little boy noticed that she did not take the sacrament bread. When it came to him, he carefully broke a piece in two and gave half to her. The woman was very impressed that a child would perform such a meaningful act of kindness. That day she contacted the missionaries and said, “If this is what you teach the children in your church, I want to become a member.”

Help Him Understand

The Lord taught the Nephites, “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up” (3 Nephi 18:24). An example of the light of the Lord touching someone who needed it desperately came when I called upon a very close friend shortly after the death of his eternal companion. I asked him, “What can I now do to help?” He answered, “Help my son to understand.” You see, this son loved his mother very much. When he saw her suffer month after month, he began to feel that the prayers and the priesthood blessings went unanswered. This

caused his faith in our Heavenly Father to waver, and he lost the light of the Lord in his life.

The words rang in my ears: “Help my son to understand.” I asked myself, “How? What can I do?” Finally, I invited him to come to Church headquarters to talk with me. When he arrived and we went to the lunchroom, a most unusual circumstance unfolded while we were eating. During our visit, many General Authorities came by our table and greeted us. He shook hands with eight of the Twelve Apostles. Never before or since have I seen that many members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the lunchroom at one time.

As we were leaving the Church offices, another unusual thing happened. We caught a glimpse of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), and my young friend asked, “Does President Kimball ever talk to someone like me?” Circumstances that would rarely happen again placed us with President Kimball for a few minutes. The short time with him was unforgettably impressive. His instructions were eternal, and his love for this young man was unquestionable. My friend’s heart and mine were touched deeply during those few minutes.

President Kimball’s final statement to this young man, after he gave him a loving embrace, impressed my friend very much. He said, “My boy, when you come home from your mission, you will understand more fully the things we have been talking about.” That day a prophet of God reached out as I suppose only a prophet can. Through him, the Savior touched the life of my friend and turned him toward the light of the Lord.

As we returned to the parking area, I

put my arm around him and said, "I know that your mother knows you are here today. Because of her love and devotion to the Lord and her great love for you, I am sure our Heavenly Father has allowed her influence to be felt here today." Tears flowed, attitudes changed, directions became clear, and commitments were made.

What a thrill it was to report a few months later to President Kimball that this fine young man was serving faithfully and diligently as a full-time missionary!

The Savior's Touch

Finally, may I share how the Lord will touch our personal lives through our own faith and prayers. A beautiful baby girl came to our son's home only to stay with them here on earth for less than five months. The love and care given to her by her parents was deeply touching. The struggle of this infant granddaughter for life was almost more than we could bear. The night before her passing, we went to the hospital, giving what support we could to our children.

Later that evening in my son's home, his mother and I knelt with him and prayed for guidance. When we returned to the hospital and I took my tiny little grandchild's hand and looked at her, I felt the Savior's touch. Into my mind came the words, as though spoken by her to me, "Don't worry, Grandpa; I'll be all right." Peace came into my heart. The Master's touch fell upon all of us. Soon thereafter she was released to go home again to her heavenly parents.

Oh yes, we can feel the Savior's touch, and we can help others feel that divine touch. We can bless each other by reaching

out to the wayward youth, the less-active adult, the widowed, the aged, the sick, and to all of God's children everywhere, whether of our faith or not.

We somehow need to realize the vital importance of feeling the blessings of the gospel and the peace of the Lord in our lives individually. We can bless each other when we administer the Savior's touch to the benefit of our fellowmen.

I realize that many of you are very conscious of the needs of others. I also know that you and I can do much more. Let us make the choice never to let a day pass without striving to touch the life of someone through our service! Then we can cherish and appreciate more the Savior's beautiful admonition: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). ■

From an October 1980 general conference address.

When I took my tiny little grandchild's hand and looked at her, I felt the Savior's touch. Into my mind came the words, as though spoken by her to me, "Don't worry, Grandpa; I'll be all right."





STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

THE FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE CREATOR'S PLAN

*A continuing series giving insights for your study and use of
"The Family: A Proclamation to the World."*

"We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."¹

Efforts to Destroy the Family

The family, the most fundamental institution of society, is under attack from all sides. Adultery, divorce, cohabitation, child and spouse abuse, homosexuality, abortion, teen pregnancies, pornography, disobedient



children, economic struggles, an increasing unwillingness among married couples to bear and rear children—all these and more are proof that the adversary understands very well the central role the family plays in the destiny of God's children.

"Because of the importance of the family to the eternal plan of happiness," said Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Satan makes a major effort to destroy the sanctity of the family, demean the importance of the role of men and women, encourage moral uncleanness and violations of the sacred law of chastity, and to

discourage parents from placing the bearing and rearing of children as one of their highest priorities.”²

Even in such circumstances, we need not fear. God is with us. In the end good will conquer evil. In the here and now, however, we must take our place on the front line in this war that began in the premortal world and do all we can to preserve and protect the sanctity of the family.

Marriage Is Ordained of God

The first thing we can and must do is prepare ourselves and our children for the temple ordinances that seal families together eternally. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come. . . . There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units.”³

Temple marriage is the beginning of a new entity that can endure forever—an eternal family. It is therefore most important that husband and wife keep the covenants they make in the house of the Lord. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) said: “Marriage according to the law of the Church is the most holy and sacred ordinance. It will bring to the husband and the wife, if they abide in their covenants, the fulness of exaltation in the kingdom of God.”⁴

Eternal Salvation—a Family Affair

“The fulness of eternal salvation is a family affair,” said Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “The gospel plan originated in the council of an eternal family, it is implemented through our earthly families, and has its destiny in our eternal families.”⁵



There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units.”

“Birth into a family was the way God chose to send His spirit children to earth. Marriage and family relationships are the central means He has prepared to achieve His purposes. We learn the lessons of life, not in an Edenic garden, but in a context where we face challenge, opposition, hardship, and temptation (see 2 Ne. 2:11).”⁶ Thus, we should not fear the troubles of our day but should view them as an environment in which faith can be strengthened and obedience refined. As Elder Joe J.

Christensen, former member of the Presidency of the Seventy, observed, “How many truly great individuals do you know who never had to struggle?”⁷

The family is the primary support structure in God’s plan to help us resist evil, overcome weakness, and work out our salvation. For this reason we should do all we can to strengthen the family in these days of confusion and opposition.

Hope in a Failing World

As Satan and his emissaries work to tear down the family, many people are losing sight of the joys and blessings a strong and loving family can offer. In this gathering gloom, the teachings and ordinances of the restored gospel shine as a unique beacon of hope. As we build our families upon the gospel’s firm foundation, our light will shine brighter and attract those who are seeking hope and happiness in a deteriorating world that offers neither. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. “The Eternal Family,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 65.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 27.
4. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:84.
5. “Parental Leadership in the Family,” *Ensign*, June 1985, 7.
6. Daniel K Judd, Guy L. Dorius, and David C. Dollahite, “Families and the Great Plan of Happiness,” in David C. Dollahite, ed., *Strengthening Our Families: An In-Depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family* (2000), 8.
7. “Greed, Selfishness, and Overindulgence,” *Liabona*, July 1999, 10; *Ensign*, May 1999, 9.

A Christmas Cross-Stitch

*After my mother died during the Christmas season,
we learned that we could feel peace again.*

BY DAVID TOY

I am a first-time dad. Now, perhaps more than ever, I want and need an eternal family.

The principle of eternal families changed my life before I was even born. When my dad asked my mother to marry him, she expressed her convictions about going to the temple in a letter that has been invaluable to our family. Part of that letter reads:

“Temple marriage is forever. It lasts beyond death. Children born to parents [who] married in the temple [and] who live up to their vows will rejoin their parents in heaven. The family unit is preserved for time and eternity. Steve, I believe as clearly as I believe the sun will rise tomorrow that this is true. And I also believe that as much as my Heavenly Father loves me, as much as He loves you, He could not preserve any other kind of relationship beyond death because He is a God of truth, bound by His word.

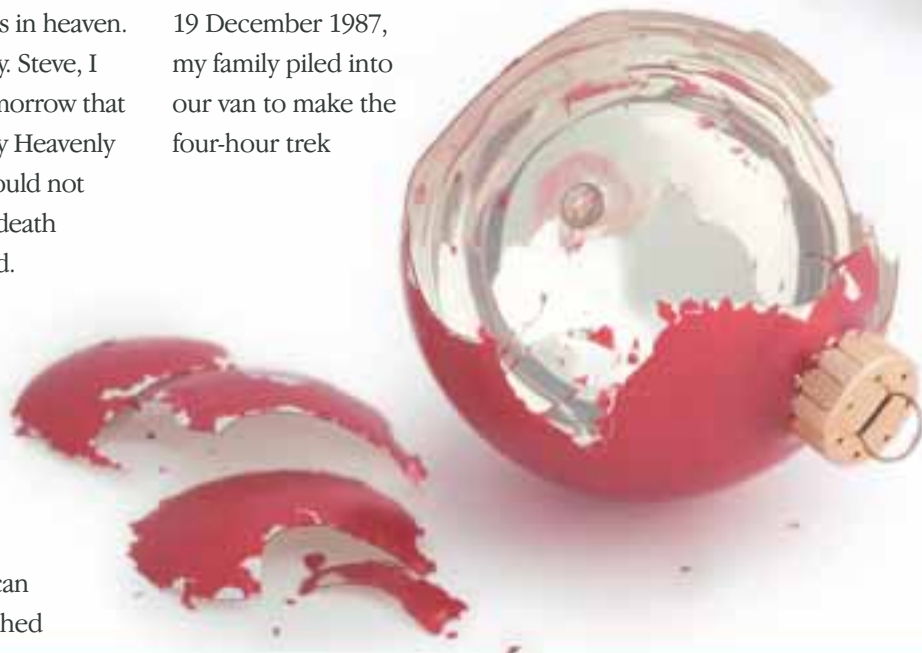
“Steve, if I love you this much, and I have known you only two and a half years, how much more will you mean to me as time goes by? If I can’t answer you now because I can’t face what the consequences might be, how could I ever, ever face them later?

“Without the covenant of God, two people can build their lives together, only to see it all snatched

away in an unexpected nightmare. There can be no peace of mind.”

Those words supplied the added encouragement my father needed to join the Church. My mother committed to marriage, and my parents were sealed in the temple for time and eternity. My father’s testimony was strengthened by the peace of mind found through temple marriage—a peace of mind that would become very meaningful years later.

Early on a Saturday morning, 19 December 1987, my family piled into our van to make the four-hour trek





from Shelley, Idaho, to Salt Lake City, Utah, to finish our Christmas shopping and to see the lights on Temple Square. The trip felt routine. We had made it several times before, and I quickly fell asleep in the backseat.

After less than an hour I awoke in terror as the van jerked to the left, then to the right. Suddenly I was thrown from the vehicle and landed on my backside on the cold, snow-covered roadside. Only moments before, my mother had fastened my one-year-old sister into her car seat after feeding her but failed

to buckle her own seatbelt. I sat rubbing my hip, listening to our van tumble in the background and trying to recall the circumstances in which I had fallen asleep.

When the van came to a rest, everything was silent for a moment. Then, as I caught sight of our mangled van, I began to realize what had happened, though still not understanding the magnitude of the tragic event.

Bruised slightly and quite confused, I walked to the wreckage and my family.

My one-year-old sister chose the first gift, and Dad removed the wrapping paper for her from a framed cross-stitch my mother had prepared. It read, "The circle of our love is Forever."



JOSEPH SMITH, BY ALVIN GITTINS

I frequently reflect on the comforting words of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy.”

Everyone appeared to be in pain. I stepped close to my mother, who sat leaning against the van’s tire, and asked how she was. The indecisive phrase “I don’t know” satisfied my frightened mind.

Within minutes an emergency helicopter arrived to rush my mother and five-year-old brother, Josh, to a nearby hospital. I climbed into one of two ambulances that carried the rest of my battered family to the emergency room. Suffering from a mere scrape on my back, I was the least injured.

My family dispersed into various examination rooms for individual treatment before we were reunited an hour or so later in a small hospital room at the request of my father. I looked around the room at family members whose medical treatments were temporarily postponed and began to worry about the effects of this unthinkable tragedy. Two of our family were missing: Josh, who I later learned was in a coma in critical condition, and Mom.

The words my father then spoke will never fade from memory.

“Mom is dead,” he mumbled beneath his tears.

My heart sank, and my eyes also filled with tears. The room was silent for a few moments as these words sank in.

“Who’s going to cook for us?” nine-year-old Sarah asked.

Dad replied with the best words of comfort he could think of under the circumstances. “I don’t know. We’ll work something out.”

Christmas was different that year, falling only six days after the accident. We postponed celebrating the holiday until Josh had recuperated enough to join

the family. Then, on our special Christmas morning, my seven brothers and sisters and I gathered in a circle around the tree with my dad to open presents. As was tradition in our family, the youngest, my one-year-old sister, picked the first present to open. She chose a gift my mother had prepared for the family before her death.

Dad removed the wrapping paper from a framed cross-stitch that read, “The circle of our love is Forever.” The implication of that simple phrase brought peace to my family in that time of trial, and the meaning behind the words has bound us together ever since with the knowledge that we will see our mother again.

Today, nearly 17 years later, I’m reminded of the powerful truth of eternal families as I begin to build my own. Now my constant reminder to live my life worthily comes not only from my desire to see my mother again but also from my desire to live forever with my wife and baby boy.

I frequently reflect on the comforting words of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C 130:2).

The cross-stitch we unwrapped many years ago still hangs on my family’s living room wall, reminding me and my siblings of our beloved mother, providing continued hope in the divine plan of our Heavenly Father, and bringing us peace of mind because of the promise of eternal families made possible by the sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ. ■

David Toy is a member of the Tates Creek Ward, Lexington Kentucky Stake.

GIVE OF YOURSELF

From: Me
To: You



USING YOUR TIME AND TALENTS TO HELP OTHERS IS THE
BEST WAY TO AVOID GETTING TOO WRAPPED UP IN YOURSELF.

(See Acts 20:35.)



How Could I Testify?

BY ELDER HANS H. MATTSSON

Area Authority Seventy
Europe Central Area



With great gratitude these many years I have felt strength radiating from the words that are recorded in the book of Ether.

Many years ago my twin brother and I left our home in Göteborg, Sweden, to serve the Lord as full-time missionaries in England. During our flight to London, numerous thoughts ran through my head. For one thing, my brother and I would have to separate in London, and for the first time in our lives we would not be together every day. But the thing that worried me most was that I didn't know the English language well. At that time missionaries from Sweden did not receive language instruction or any other training; they were sent straight from home to the mission field. I thought of my twin brother, who was gifted in languages. My interests leaned more toward technical subjects, and for this reason I had not spent much time studying languages in school.

After I arrived in London and then finally in Birmingham, the headquarters of the England Central Mission, the mission president and his wife greeted me with huge smiles and all possible warmth. Everyone I met at the mission office was happy and

enthusiastic and spoke with me about things such as study guides, tracting, companions, and so forth. But I could not understand much because their language was new and foreign.

Despite the kindness of the people around me, I felt overwhelmed. How could I ever testify of the gospel in this strange language? I spent much of that first night on my knees, asking Heavenly Father why He had sent me here and if there had possibly been a mistake.

The following day an assistant to the mission president showed me a scripture—Ether 12:27. I got out my Swedish Book of Mormon and read: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

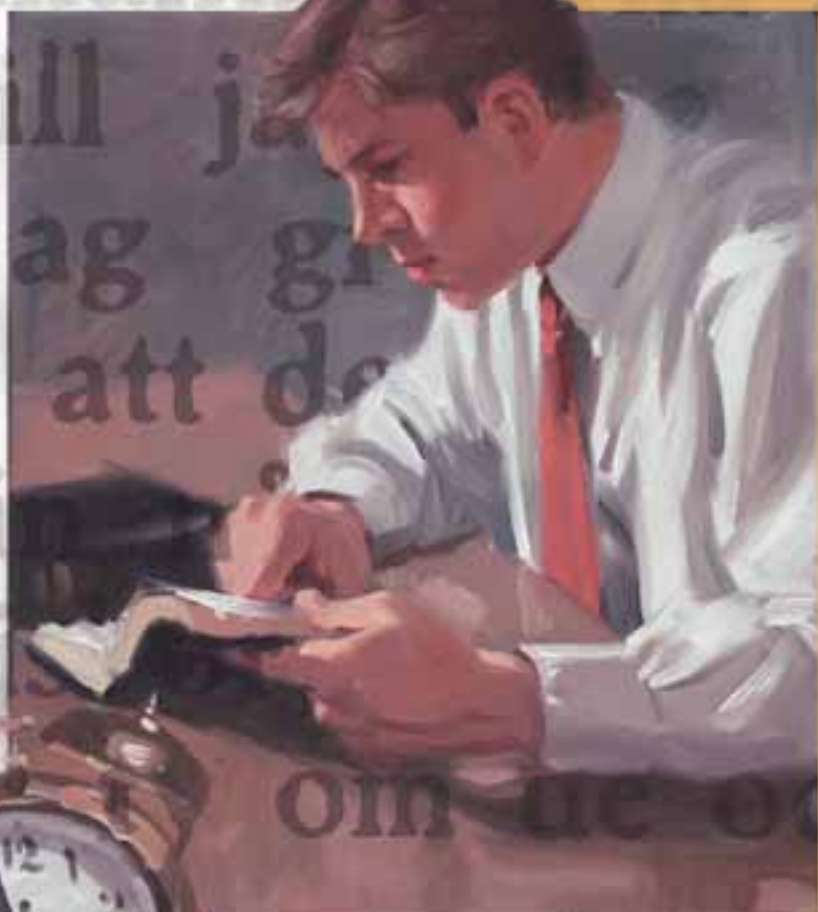
If anyone had a weakness, I did. Questions arose in my mind: Do you believe what is written in this verse? If so, do you have the courage to exercise the faith required? And can you humble yourself

before the Lord so that your weakness can become your strength?

My thoughts went back to the time when my twin and I were teenagers and our father challenged us to develop testimonies of our own rather than relying on the faith of our parents. I had decided to follow his counsel. I made an effort to carefully read and ponder the Book of Mormon, and then I asked Heavenly Father in prayer if what I read was true. I asked if Joseph Smith really had heard and seen the holy and wondrous manifestations he described.

In answer to my prayer, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon me. My heart burned within me in confirmation of the truth of what I had read and asked Heavenly Father about. At last I could testify that I had a testimony of the Book of Mormon and of the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

As a struggling young missionary, I thought back on this experience and realized that because I had received a confirmation from the Lord that the Book of Mormon is true, then what I read in the book of Ether was also true. I knelt in humble prayer before my Heavenly Father and expressed my inner feelings about my mission call and my language weakness. I promised Him that I would get up early every morning to study and memorize the 70 pages of lessons and scriptures we were to use to teach the people. I told Him I had faith that He, in return, would help me learn the language so that



I could testify of Him and of His Son.

Early every morning thereafter, I prayed to Heavenly Father and said, “Here I am; let us start.”

In a relatively short time

I was able to testify that the scripture in Ether is true. My ability to speak English—a weakness when I first started serving my mission—became a strength to me.

This experience has been a blessing to me all of my life. Many times I have thought new Church callings were beyond my abilities. Then the Spirit has testified to me and reminded me of the experience I had as a young missionary in England. With great gratitude these many years I have felt strength radiating from those words that are recorded in the book of Ether. Through the power of the Spirit, they can give each of us strength, guidance, and hope. ■

I promised Heavenly Father that I would get up early every morning to study. I had faith that He, in return, would help me learn English.



Come unto Christ



Why come unto Christ? How can we find the way? And how can we know we are on the right path?

BY ELDER ROBERT R. STEUER
Of the Seventy

In a wonderfully fitting conclusion to the Book of Mormon, the prophet Moroni exhorts us to “come unto Christ” (Moroni 10:30, 32). As I have pondered the meaning of this urgent plea, several questions have come to my mind: Why come unto Christ? How can we find the way? And how can we know we are on the right path?

Why Come unto Christ?

The world offers us many choices of whom or what to “come unto.” Diverse religions, philosophies, social systems, political ideologies, and business or personal interests clamor for our allegiance. Many people believe there are many roads to heaven and it simply does not matter which one you are traveling on.

During Jesus’ mortal ministry there was a time when thousands of people followed after Him. Perhaps they were simply curious or wanted something. He fed them from five loaves and two fishes and taught them, “I am [the] bread of life” (John 6:48). Learning of the obedience that would be required, many then chose no longer to come unto Him. Jesus asked His Twelve Apostles, “Will ye also go away?” (v. 67).

Peter replied: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (vv. 68–69).

Why come unto Christ? Simply stated, because all other ways do not lead to eternal life. Jesus made this bold declaration: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The scriptures declare that “no unclean thing can enter” the holy presence of God. To become clean—to “stand spotless . . . at the last day”—we must be cleansed through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 27:19–20; see also Moroni 10:33). Christ is the only name, way, or means to come unto the Father (see Mosiah 3:17; Helaman 5:9).

At times we may look in the wrong places—to other people and other things—for answers to life’s crucial questions when we should be looking to the Savior and seeking guidance from the Holy Ghost. When we make the decision to look to Christ and follow the noble thoughts and feelings from within, our character begins to gain substance. As President David O. McKay (1873–1970) said, “What you sincerely in your heart think of Christ will determine what you are

[and] will largely determine what your acts will be.”¹

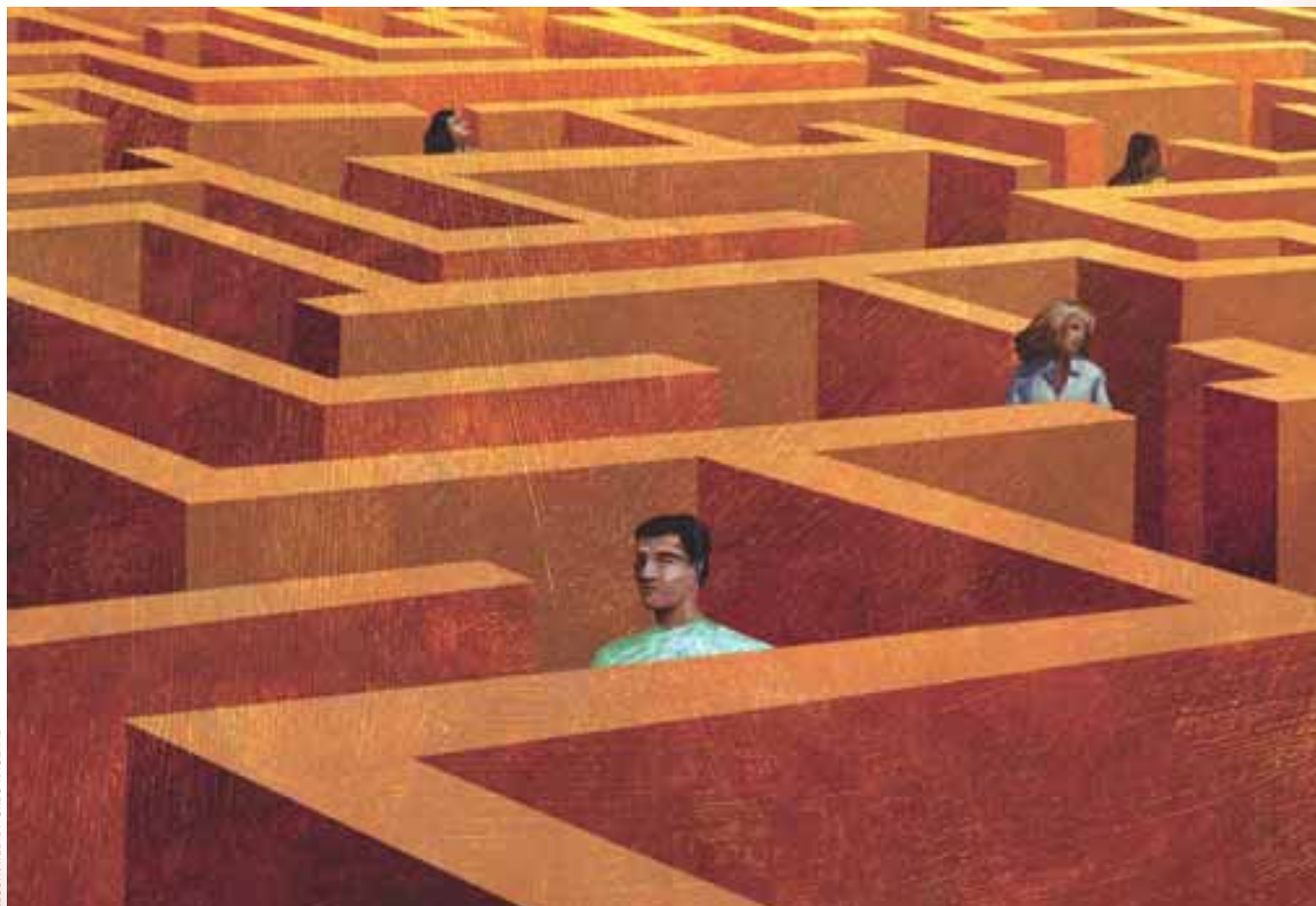
How Can We Find the Way?

By divine plan we are constantly faced with important decisions. We may ask ourselves questions such as: Why is there so much suffering and hatred? Does God exist? What does He think of me? We eventually come to the conclusion that we do not know all the answers and that surely there must be someone who can see more clearly. If we realize that someone is Jesus Christ, we are likely to become more humble and teachable and to desire, like Abraham, “to be a greater follower of righteousness” (Abraham 1:2).

In our quiet moments of reflection, we can search our thoughts for the way to Christ. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “Hold your soul very still, and listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Follow the noble, intuitive feelings planted deep within your souls by Deity.”² The Holy Spirit is a revelator whose responsibility it is to lead us to Christ (see Moroni 10:5–7; D&C 11:12–14). As we begin to yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19), we will admit to ourselves our faults and truly repent.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can now humbly obey the laws of obedience and sacrifice, enduring the adversity that comes

The world would have us believe that there are many ways to get to heaven. But Christ has declared that He is the only way.



ILLUSTRATED BY GREG RAGLAND



The straight path is the shortest distance between the natural man and the disciple of Christ.

to us. We then begin to develop personal worthiness and a soft and understanding heart. If we can avoid murmuring, our works become “meet for repentance” (Alma 9:30), giving us the required broken heart and contrite spirit. Thus, in coming to Christ, our way becomes His way.

As we enter this narrow and straight way (see 2 Nephi 9:41), we may ask at times, Why so straight? Yet somehow we know that all other paths waste our common gift—time. The straight path is still the shortest distance between the natural man and the disciple of Christ.

How Can We Know We Are on the Right Path?

We can know we are on the right path by the blessings and manifestations of the Holy Ghost in our lives. He will graciously give us knowledge, instruction, and correction so that we can return to the Father’s presence. As we honor the priesthood and participate in sacred ordinances, “the power of godliness

[will be] manifest” in our personal lives (see D&C 84:20). “The words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do” (2 Nephi 32:3), leading us to a joy that none save the humble and penitent know (see Alma 27:18).

As we search the scriptures, we will be able to say we have heard the Savior’s voice (see D&C 18:34–36). In our afflictions, we will be able to feel and identify with His pain and suffering. As we repent, His Atonement will draw us even closer to Him.

If we follow the path, we allow Him to work on and through us. We find He is able to do more with us than we could do; we serve with more capability than we thought we could.

We are truly blessed as we choose to come unto Christ. To taste of His atoning love is a joy beyond measure. To be His disciple and follow His way is the best decision we will ever make. He is the very Christ. ■

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 93.
2. “How Near to the Angels,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 97.

Feeling the Love of the Lord through Service

Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

How Does Service Bring Us Closer to the Savior and His Love?

D&C 76:5-6: “I, the Lord . . . delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end. Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.”

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency:

“As we love our God, as we love our neighbor, we can be the recipients of our Heavenly Father’s love. Of all the blessings I have had in my life, one of the sweetest is that feeling the Lord provides when I know that He has answered the prayer of another person through me. As we love the Lord, as we love our neighbor, we discover that our Heavenly Father will answer the prayers of others through our ministry” (“How Do We Show Our Love?” *Liabona*, Feb. 1998, 7; *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 6).

What Does It Mean to Serve with Heart and Mind?

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “When we

think of service, we usually think of the acts of our hands. . . . It is not enough to serve God with all of our *might and strength*. He who looks into our hearts and knows our minds demands more than this. In order to stand blameless before God at the last day, we must also serve him with all our *heart and mind*. Service with all of our heart and mind is a high challenge for all of us. Such service must be free of selfish ambition. It must be motivated only by the pure love of Christ” (“Why Do We Serve?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 12–15).

Kathleen H. Hughes, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “[Heavenly Father] is a vastly loving God, and it has always been his intention to support us. . . . We have accepted [the] challenge to bear one another’s burdens. Now bearing one another’s burdens sounds like a chore, but it’s amazing how lightened we quickly feel when we do the work. Think for a moment why that is. When we bear one another’s burdens, we are acting as an agent for Christ, and by so doing we’re coming to Christ. . . . How blessed and grateful we should be that our Heavenly Father knew what we would need and then provided



the means—Relief Society—where these needs could be met through the hearts and hands of others who love” (“Serving and Supporting One Another,” in *The Rock of Our Redeemer: Talks from the 2002 BYU Women’s Conference* [2003], 53–54).

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“A call to service should be primarily a matter of the heart. . . . You are called to represent the Savior. Your voice to testify becomes the same as His voice, your hands to lift the same as His hands. . . . The Father and His Beloved Son will send the Holy Ghost as your companion to guide you. Your efforts will be magnified in the lives of the people you serve. And when you look back on what may now seem trying times of service and sacrifice, the sacrifice will have become a blessing, and you will know that you have seen the arm of God lifting those you served for Him, and lifting you” (“Rise to Your Call,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 75–78). ■

Strong Hands and Loving Hearts



Visiting teaching gives us an opportunity to reach out in love and to care for one another as sisters in the gospel.

I remember more than 30 years ago when I was first called to be a visiting teacher, I was assigned a young woman who never came to church,” recalls Catherine Carr Humphrey of the Hillside Ward, Rancho Cucamonga California Stake. “She impressed me in those early 1970s as a hippie type. I faithfully went every month and knocked on her door. She would open the inside door but leave the screen door shut. I was never really sure what she looked like. She would not say anything. She would just stand there. I would look cheerful and say, ‘Hi, I’m Cathie, your visiting teacher.’ And as she would say nothing, I would say, ‘Well, our lesson today is on . . .’ and try briefly to say something uplifting and friendly. When I was through, she would say, ‘Thank you,’ and shut the door.

“I did not like going there. I



felt embarrassed. But I went because I wanted to be obedient. After about seven or eight months of this, I got a phone call from the bishop.

“‘Cathie,’ he said, ‘the young woman you visit teach just had a baby who lived only a few days. She and her husband are going to have a graveside service, and she asked me to see if you would come and be there with her. She said you are her only friend.’

“I went to the cemetery. The young woman, her husband, the bishop, and I were at the graveside. That was all. I had seen her only once a month for a few minutes at a time. I hadn’t even been able to tell through the screen door that she was expecting a baby, yet even my inept but



hopeful visiting had blessed us both.”

Scenes of service such as this are repeated in various forms over and over again throughout the Church. Relief Society general president Bonnie D. Parkin recently said: “I see legions of faithful sisters around the world going forward on the Lord’s errands, performing simple yet significant service. Why do we do visiting teaching? Sisters, it’s because we’ve made covenants. Mosiah described it this way: ‘To bear one another’s burdens, . . . to mourn with those that mourn; . . . comfort those that stand in need of comfort’ (Mosiah 18:8–9). . . .

“One morning . . . I received an e-mail from a college friend. She wrote, ‘Ray died this morning.’ And then she said, ‘Visiting teaching works. It really works.’ . . . Here was my dear friend bearing testimony to me that what we call visiting teaching is really so much more than a visit or a thought. It’s how we connect with one another. . . .

“Mourn, comfort, stand as witnesses. All of those promises came together for my friend. . . . [The Lord] had sent her two sisters who had entered into a covenant with Him. . . . They were sisters in the gospel who understood their charge to do this work with heart and soul. . . . That’s the essence of visiting teaching.”

And, Sister Parkin continued, “visiting teaching is the heart and soul of Relief Society.”¹

Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, said in the second meeting of Relief Society, “We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together.”²

We are reminded: “The purposes of visiting teaching are to build caring relationships with each sister and to offer support, comfort, and friendship. In visiting teaching, both the giver and the receiver are blessed and strengthened in their Church activity by their caring concern for one another.”³

Mentor Others

Teaching our new young Relief Society sisters that visiting teaching is the heart and soul of Relief Society is critical.

Training and mentoring can be provided by assigning a new sister to exemplary visiting teachers and, for some, to be a companion to her own mother.

Cara S. Longmore, now of the BYU 176th Ward, Brigham Young University Second Stake, was called to be a visiting teacher with her mother as her companion. Her mom was excited, but Cara considered herself too young for Relief Society. She remembers: “We were assigned to two wonderful women. As I look back, I realize the significant impact these sisters had on my life at that difficult time. They became not only examples to me, but also friends in a true sense—not just older mentors. When we would visit, I felt calm, secure, and truly loved.

“I am also so very thankful for that time with my mom. Now that I am at college, I realize how valuable those visiting teaching visits were to our relationship. I feel so grateful that I got to see my mom in that setting, hear her strong testimony, and learn more about the love she has for her ‘sisters in Zion’ [see *Hymns*, no. 309]. Because we were in the context of a team, we were more equal and I truly felt that we were ‘sisters in Zion’ as well.”

Provide Watch-Care

While visiting teachers are asked to make monthly contact, some circumstances require more. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said: “Your duties in many ways must be like those of the home teachers, which briefly are ‘to watch over the church always’—not twenty minutes a month but always—‘and be with and strengthen them’—not a knock at the door, but to be with them, and lift them and strengthen them, and empower them, and fortify them.”⁴ This type of visiting teaching is “watch-care.”

Watch-care was experienced by a sister who worked nights at a hospital. Her visiting teachers began coming each month to the hospital during her lunch hour, which was in the very, very early hours of the morning. She was amazed that they were willing to make such a sacrifice but greatly appreciated it.



Cynthia E. Larsen of the Heritage Ward, Calgary Alberta Stake, discovered the joy of watch-care with a challenging visiting teaching assignment. She says: “I remember being filled with apprehension the first time I visited Deanna. I thought we were complete opposites. She was single, an executive with an

oil company, and a recent convert to the Church. Yet with each visit we found that we had much in common.

“After Deanna developed cancer, she put my anxiety to rest as she calmly answered my questions with honesty and courage. From that day on, she began to teach me by example what dignity and endurance are.

“In the following months, she enthusiastically educated herself and others about cancer. She organized a cancer information night for our Relief Society. She joined a local cancer support group.

“Eventually the medication and chemotherapy treatments sapped Deanna of her strength and energy. On her ‘good days,’ she went for walks and encouraged other cancer patients. On her ‘bad days,’ she worked at maintaining her optimism, conserving her strength, and building her testimony.

“As Deanna’s condition worsened, our visits became daily. We laughed, we cried, we were silly, and we were intensely serious. She anticipated death, hesitantly at first, then confidently. She worked to make each day the best she could.

“For months before her death I watched my dear friend and sister in the gospel find opportunities to serve. Yes, I served Deanna as her visiting teacher, but it was she who taught me about the blessings of living the gospel.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley explains: “We have some of our own who cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness.”⁵





Be Flexible

Watch-care is certainly the goal of visiting teaching and can be achieved even though some situations call for creativity and flexibility. In the Anchorage Alaska Bush District, for example, visits can usually be made only by snowmobile. If the nearby river is frozen solid enough to drive on, they can be made by car. Obviously, the preferred monthly face-to-face visit in each home is not possible. These sisters must connect hearts and souls through telephone and e-mail visits. Sister Parkin has counseled: "If monthly visits aren't possible, please don't do nothing. Be creative and find a way to connect with each sister."⁶ Remember President Hinckley's encouraging statement: "Do the very best you can."⁷

Certainly this was the thinking of Florence Chukwurah of Nigeria when she was assigned to visit teach a sister who was having difficulties in her marriage and in her home, making it necessary to meet at the marketplace for a visit. After listening to and observing this sister's challenges, Sister Chukwurah asked her

husband for a priesthood blessing so that she might know how to help this troubled sister. Following the blessing she felt prompted to discuss with this sister the importance of tithing. "She tearfully told me that she did not pay her tithes because she was not making enough money," Sister Chukwurah remembers. "I suggested that she and I discuss Malachi 3:10 and that we do so in my house so we could relax and be alone for the discussion. She consented. After our discussion I encouraged her to exercise her faith and pay her tithes for at least six months. I bore my testimony to her by the Spirit."

Sister Chukwurah testifies that within a few months of this meeting, this sister's circumstances changed dramatically. Her daughter received a scholarship to complete her high school education, her husband worked with the bishop to become active and accept a calling, husband and wife teamed up to improve their financial situation and their relationship, and eventually they became an inspiration to others.

One of the purposes of visiting teaching is to build caring relationships by offering support, comfort, and friendship. Some circumstances require more than a monthly contact, and it is a responsibility and privilege for visiting teachers to give more.





To give your heart and soul to visiting teaching requires you to be prayerful about those you visit. The Lord will direct you in doing His work as you listen and respond.



Give Friendship

One young woman remembers how her visiting teacher shared a spirit of caring, concern, and friendship with her. She had moved into a new ward at the end of her last year of law school and found herself to be the youngest member there by about 30 years. “Feeling uncomfortable and not knowing anyone,” she recalls, “I drifted into semiactivity. I would appear and disappear in Church like a shadow without exchanging words with anyone.

“In the next few weeks there appeared at my door a vibrant, good-humored, white-haired lady who announced she was my visiting teacher. I received visits from her on an almost weekly basis, many times with other sisters of the ward in tow so that I might become acquainted. [Before long] I was no longer a shadow in Church. [My visiting teacher introduced] me into a vast army of friends. After having been away from [this ward] for several years, I still count its members [as] some of my most cherished friends.”⁸

Follow Inspiration

To give your heart and soul to visiting teaching requires you to be prayerful about those you visit. The Lord will direct you in doing His work as you listen and respond.

As a Relief Society president in São Paulo, Brazil, Elizabeth Contieri Kemeny felt impressed to assign herself to visit a shy, pregnant sister who attended church alone as her husband was often away on business. The ward Relief Society had just participated in a stake project to make baby layettes consisting of blankets, clothing, and other supplies for infants. The layettes were supposed to be delivered to the stake on a particular Sunday morning. On that day Sister Kemeny awoke at

6:00 A.M. with a strong impression she should deliver the layettes to the home of this sister, rather than to the stake.

Taking along her counselor and the bishop, Sister Kemeny arrived at this sister’s apartment only to learn that she had already gone to the hospital in labor. Pressing on to the hospital, they found her holding her new baby in her arms, with tears streaming down her own cheeks. She had been praying that Heavenly Father would send somebody to help her. Her husband was out of town, and she had nothing—not a blanket to wrap the baby in nor money for a bus ride home.

That afternoon at the stake meeting this ward had no layettes to contribute. They had been given to bless a sister both temporally and spiritually—all because a visiting teacher had prayed and listened to the promptings of the Spirit.

President Hinckley reminds us “to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them.”⁹ As a visiting teacher you have this responsibility and privilege. ■

NOTES

1. *Visiting Teaching: The Heart and Soul of Relief Society* (address delivered at Relief Society open house, fall 2003), 3–4, 15–16.
2. Quoted in *History of Relief Society, 1842–1966* (1967), 20.
3. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 202.
4. “A Vision of Visiting Teaching,” *Tambuli*, Dec. 1978, 2; see *Ensign*, June 1978, 24.
5. “Reach with a Rescuing Hand,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 86.
6. *Visiting Teaching: The Heart and Soul of Relief Society*, 12.
7. “Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69.
8. Quoted in Barbara B. Smith, “A Story of New Beginnings,” in *A Woman’s Choices: The Relief Society Legacy Lectures* (1984), 8.
9. *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 86.

Did You Know?



THE REAL SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

“Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit. Enemies are forgiven, friends remembered, and God obeyed. The spirit of Christmas illuminates the picture window of the soul, and we look out upon the world’s busy life and become more interested in people than things.”

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Christmas Gifts, Christmas Blessings,” *Liahona*, Dec. 1995, 2–3; *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 2.

Leadership Tip: True Christmas Stories

Our perfect leader, Jesus Christ, allows us to qualify for God’s greatest gift—eternal life (see D&C 14:7). When you read the story of the Savior’s birth, also read some of the stories from His earthly ministry. His example of selfless giving can guide you as you seek for ways to serve this Christmas.



“Stille Nacht”

One Christmas carol was written, set to music, and performed for the first time all in one day. On Christmas Eve in 1818, the organ at a small Austrian church was not working. Knowing music was needed for the evening service, Joseph Mohr, an assistant parish priest in Oberndorf, Austria, wrote the words for a new hymn in a flash of inspiration. He took the lyrics to the church organist, Franz Gruber, who wrote a melody to be played on his guitar. Franz and Joseph performed their beautiful new hymn “Stille Nacht,” or “Silent Night,” that evening. Its popularity spread quickly throughout the world. (See *Hymns*, no. 204.)

BIRTHPLACE OF THE PROPHET



Born nearly 200 years ago, on 23 December 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, the Prophet Joseph Smith became the leader of the great Restoration of the gospel in the latter days. His birthplace is a place of peace.

BY JANET THOMAS
Church Magazines

About in the middle, from top to bottom, of the small New England state of Vermont are the little towns of Sharon and South Royalton. Most cars and trucks on the freeway whiz by these small towns. But every year groups of tourists, intent on learning more about events in Church history, get off Highway 89 on Exit 2 and drive slowly through the town of Sharon, past the country store, where authentic maple syrup is sold, following the river, until they come to an intersection with a brass sign. The sign tells these travelers where to turn to go up Dairy Hill, past little farms on wooded hills, until they come to a lane lined with sugar maple trees. Another sign announces that this is the place where the Prophet Joseph Smith was born. It's the entrance to a memorial that was built nearly a hundred years ago to a great event and a great man.

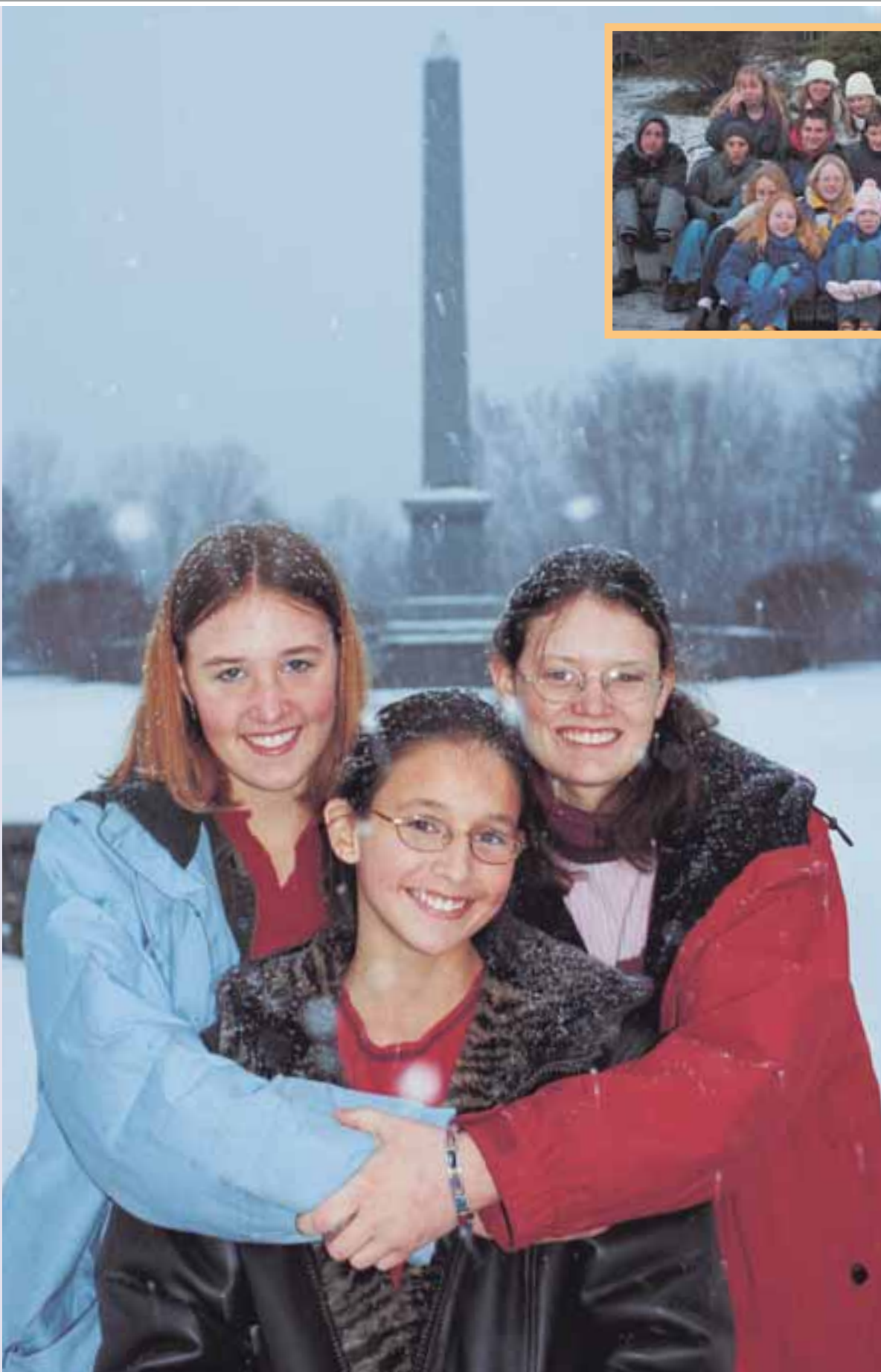
After visitors turn onto the lane, the first thing they see is a beautiful white Latter-day Saint chapel with a sloping meadow of grass in front. But as they drive up the lane,

between the sugar maples, they notice a change. There comes a great feeling of calm and peace.

They won't be the first or the last to notice this change. Kevin Burkholder of the Middlebury Branch remembers his family bringing his aunt to visit the birthplace. As soon as their car pulled onto the property, Kevin remembers her asking, "What happened here? Why does this place feel like this?" Kevin says they tried to explain: "It's not any different in appearance than any other place, but it really has a special spirit. If you have any doubt about the Church, it will be erased. It seems your thoughts are so much clearer here."

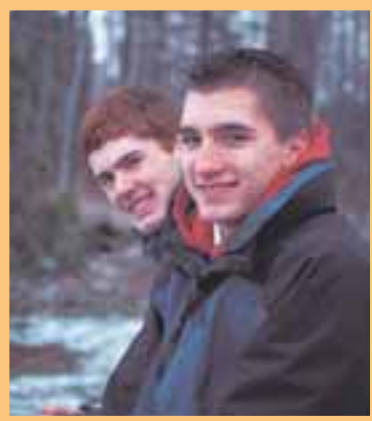
Teens like Caitlin Shamp of the Essex Ward, Montpelier Vermont Stake, get to go often to the Joseph Smith Memorial Birthplace. She also comments on the feeling of the place: "I feel it is holy. It is so peaceful and calm."

As visitors drive past the chapel, the lane dips a little and approaches two low brick buildings with porches that are mirror images



Left: Lisa, Kim, and Michelle Francis don't let the snow bother them as they stand in front of the monument at the Prophet Joseph's birthplace. Above: The Essex Ward youth from nearby Burlington enjoy visiting the birthplace often. Below: Meghan Tracy reads the plaque that marks where the cabin stood when Joseph was born.





Above right: Katelynn Peck stands by the hearth from the original cabin.

Above, from top: The South Royalton Ward building; the visitors' center at the birthplace; Stephen Brown and Andrew Lords of the Essex Ward.

of each other. One is the visitors' center, and the other houses the offices for the missionaries who serve at the birthplace. The buildings are on both sides of the stairway leading to the monument.

Smooth Polished Granite

The monument is set upon a small hill. It is a polished granite shaft, 38 1/2 feet (11.7 m) high, each foot representing a year of Joseph's life. The shaft is mounted on a large square block. When it was cut in 1905, it was the largest spire in America cut from a single piece of rock, the unblemished stone representing the outstanding qualities of the man it honors. Kristin Simmons of the Burlington Ward says: "I thought it was a very good symbol of what the Prophet Joseph stood for. The monument is pure stone, a foundation. It's an example of who he was." Allishia

Adams of the South Royalton Ward explains in a similar way, "I think the memorial is a symbol of the Church being grounded."

In the afternoon the sun hits the front of the shaft and makes it blaze, as if a spotlight has suddenly been turned on. In the summer the monument is surrounded by flowers and gardens, but in the winter the hill is covered in bright, white snow, appropriate to the time of year, 23 December, in which the Prophet Joseph was born. Each December the Montpelier Vermont Stake presents a live

EXTRA! EXTRA!

For a map to the birthplace and more information, go to www.lds.org. Click on "Church History," then "Historic Sites." Click on "Places to Visit," then "Northeastern USA." Then select "Joseph Smith Memorial Birthplace."

nativity at the birthplace, participating with the community in the celebration of the Savior's birth. The site is decorated with thousands of lights.

Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith lived on this farm owned by Solomon Mack, Lucy's father, for only a couple of years. Their son, Joseph Jr., was the only one of their nine children born here. The farmland has remained pristine, with more than 300 acres (120 ha) of land and beautiful trees surrounding the memorial.

It is not difficult to imagine what it must have looked like that chilly December day when Joseph was born. The original cabin collapsed long ago and is now rubble, but the front step and the hearthstone have been saved.

The stone that was used as the cabin's front step is outside by a bench, to the side of the memorial, approximately where the cabin originally stood. The hearthstone is inside the visitors' center, set in front of a fireplace. It is easy to picture a mother holding her newborn boy close to the warmth of the fire while sitting on the hearthstone. Christal Collette and Stephani Wright, both of the Essex Ward, have had similar thoughts. Stephani says, "I like sitting by the hearthstone and just thinking." And Christal says: "He was born right here. His mother must have dressed and changed him right here."

Finding Answers

Carved around the base of the monument is the scripture that meant so much to the Prophet Joseph at age 14. The verse reads, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). The Prophet said, "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did . . . to mine" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). The teens who live in Vermont and have the chance to go often to the birthplace value what Joseph's example has taught them. They have come to know that if they lack wisdom, they can ask for help.

Stephen Brown of the Essex Ward says: "The only way you're going to know for yourself that the Church is true is by asking. It comes only through personal revelation. The way you find out is by praying and listening."

Andrew Lords, also from the Essex Ward, had an experience with asking to know the truth: "I had never really read the Book of Mormon on a regular basis. I picked it up and prayed, 'Please tell



ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN CALL

ABOUT JOSEPH'S PARENTS

Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's mother, was born in New Hampshire. When Lucy was still in her teens, her sister Lovina died, which caused Lucy great grief. Her brother Stephen came for a visit and asked their father if Lucy could come to the town of Tunbridge, Vermont, and stay with his family for a while. They thought it would help Lucy recover from the grief over her beloved sister.

While visiting in Tunbridge, Lucy met a young man named Joseph Smith and married him. The marriage took place on 24 January 1796. Lucy was 20 years old and Joseph was 24 at the time. Together they would be the parents of Joseph Smith Jr., the man destined to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ, the very truth Lucy had been searching for most of her life.

The young couple, Lucy and Joseph Sr., had a small farm and ran the country store (illustrated above) in Tunbridge, a store that, although repaired and expanded, is still there today. While the Smiths lived in Tunbridge, the oldest children, Alvin and Hyrum, were born. The young family moved to a farm owned by Lucy's father, outside Sharon, Vermont. The small cabin they built on that property sat on the boundary line between the towns of Sharon and South Royalton. The day after his son Joseph was born on 23 December 1805, Joseph Sr. walked into town and registered his birth in the town of Sharon. (See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [1958].)



Above: Kristen Brown and Caitlin Shamp enjoy visiting the birthplace any time of year, but they especially enjoy attending stake Young Women camp at Camp Joseph, held during the summer on a section of the property. The grounds also have a picnic area visitors can use.

me if this is true.’ Then I started reading the introduction. I was overwhelmed with the Spirit. I thought, ‘Wow, and that’s only the introduction.’ That was definitely my answer.”

Searching for Truth

Just as Joseph’s search led him to wonderful answers, the teens in the Essex Ward in Vermont have been led to understand answers to their prayers by searching in ways similar to what Joseph did. Dawn Doney says: “Joseph’s parents supported him in his search for the true Church. If I have a question or something is on my mind, I discuss it with my parents.” Dawn also turns to the scriptures just as Joseph did.

“If something comes to my mind,” Kristen Brown says, “I get a burning feeling. It’s like a key fitting into a lock. I know that it’s the answer to my prayer.”

Caitlin Shamp says, “You should make time, when no one’s around and you don’t have anything else to do, to just think and really pray.”

Autumn Doney adds: “At 14, you’re worrying about if a guy likes you or if you’re popular. Joseph Smith cared about finding the truth and the true gospel. I wish I had that much faith. We need to get down on our knees and pray every morning and night.”

What You’ll Find

Some teens, like those in the South Royalton Ward, come to the birthplace every Sunday for church and every Wednesday for Mutual. Meghan Tracy says: “I’ve taken it for granted living here my whole life. Now that I’ve realized how sacred it is, I can feel the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. It’s comforting to have it this close to where I live.”

Kevin Burkholder has a suggestion for those who visit the Joseph Smith Memorial Birthplace: “Walk around in the woods. Take the trail up the hill that we’ve nicknamed Mount Patriarch. From there, you can look down on the monument. You can sit up there for hours and think about things. A smile will spread across your face. You can’t help it.” ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN

THE PROPHET SAID OF HIMSELF

“I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else. . . . Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:401.

MORE THAN A FARM BOY

BY ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN
(1900–84)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

... testify to the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and ... declare my faith in the miracle by which the Book of Mormon was translated and published.

Joseph Smith did more for the salvation of men in this world than anyone else who ever lived in it, with the sole exception of our Lord and Savior—our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God.

Joseph was the instrument through whom the true Church and kingdom of God were again restored to earth. He brought forth the

Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God. He was the means of having it published in his own day on two continents. He sent the everlasting gospel, now restored, to the four quarters of the earth.

He received numerous revelations from the Lord, which have been published in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and our Church history. . . .

He lived great, and he died great, a martyr to the cause of Christ; and, like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, he sealed his mission and his testimony with his life's blood (see D&C 135:3).



Mark E. Petersen was called as an Apostle in 1944. He served in that calling for 40 years—until his death in 1984. Here he teaches that from a humble beginning, Joseph Smith became the mighty prophet of the Restoration.

He left a name and a fame that will never die, and as the years roll on and the Church continues taking the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, his name will be magnified even further, honored and blessed by the millions of faithful who come to know how truly great his calling was. He was foreordained in heaven to this mighty work in latter days. He fulfilled his mission with honor and inspiration, a beacon to all who follow him, giving glory always to God on high, for whom he labored.

But great as this mighty prophet was, he had but a humble beginning. He was raised as a farm boy, with little formal education. His home as a youth was in western New York, then on the frontier of the United States.

The family cleared trees in the forest to make their farm. They were a humble people. They knew poverty and hardship, but by diligent effort and the blessings of heaven they lived successful lives.

Isaiah's Prophecy

The work of Joseph Smith was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, who spoke of [Joseph's] humble beginning and his lack of early education. . . .

As he opens the subject in his 29th chapter, Isaiah describes a nation which would be destroyed suddenly, but which would speak in modern times, literally from the grave, by means of a book. . . .

We testify that Isaiah's prophecy has been fulfilled and that the book is now available. It is the Book of Mormon. . . .

The Book of Mormon

On the 22nd day of September 1823, near Palmyra, New York, an angel of God revealed [the Book of Mormon's] resting place to a 17-year-old boy named Joseph Smith, at this time as yet an unlearned, uneducated farm laborer, but now called of God to be His modern prophet.

The book was of metal having the appearance of gold.

It consisted of metallic pages as thin as common tin. Each page measured about seven by eight inches [18 by 20 cm], and all were bound together at the back with metal rings which allowed the pages to be turned over easily. The book was about six inches [15 cm] thick. Each page was covered on both sides with ancient writing in small but beautifully engraved characters. The book lay in a stone box which had protected it from the elements for centuries. . . .

Many stone boxes have been found, especially in Mexico and Central America: Some are small, beautifully engraved, and contain jewelry; others are large enough for food storage. The use of stone boxes was common in ancient times.

By the Gift and Power of God

But let us consider . . . the actual translation of this record. Joseph Smith says he did it by the gift and power of God, through the use of the Urim and Thummim. As unlearned as he was at that time in his life, he could have done it in no other way. . . .

. . . Oliver Cowdery, his scribe, said the same thing, adding, "I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet [Joseph Smith] as he translated it by the gift and power of God."¹

Martin Harris, another assistant scribe, bore the same testimony. And Emma Smith, the beloved wife of the Prophet, who . . . assisted at times as a scribe, bore this testimony:

"I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when [I acted] as his scribe, [Joseph] would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. . . . It would have been improbable



that a learned man could do this; and, for one so . . . unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.”² . . .

The Book of Mormon is a literary and a religious masterpiece and is far beyond even the fondest hopes or abilities of any farm boy. It is a modern revelation from end to end. It is God-given. . . .

The whole task of translation was a miracle. The book is “a marvellous work and a wonder,” as Isaiah said (Isaiah 29:14). . . .

From cover to cover the Book of Mormon is a revelation, an inspired translation, the

work of God and not of any man. From cover to cover it is true. . . .

So out of Joseph Smith’s humble beginning came this new volume of scripture, a new revelation from God, a second faithful witness to the divinity of the Savior of the world. ■

From an October 1977 general conference address; subheads added; spelling and punctuation modernized.

NOTES

1. Reuben Miller Journals, 1848–49, Family and Church History Department Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 21 Oct. 1848.
2. “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Herald*, 1 Oct. 1879, 290.

The angel Moroni revealed the Book of Mormon’s resting place to Joseph Smith, who later translated the book by the gift and power of God.

Questions & Answers

*“I’m not attractive. Please don’t tell me that I am.
Why was I born this way?”*

L I A H O N A

What do you see when you look in the mirror?

Instead of thinking about your appearance, you might think about your relationships. You are a daughter or son. If you have siblings, you are a sister or brother. You are a cousin, a friend, a ward or branch member. Many people love and appreciate you just as you are.

You might think about your best qualities. Maybe you are a kind person, a hard worker, or a good friend. Whatever your abilities, you are blessed with important talents, a unique personality, and a purpose for your life.

You might want to ask Heavenly Father who you are and how He feels about you. “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, *but the Lord looketh on the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7; emphasis added). Prayer, scripture study, and keeping the commandments will help you know that you have a noble heritage; you are

Heavenly Father and many others love you.

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

Don’t compare yourself with others. Focus on becoming your best self.

You inherited your basic physical traits. But how you speak, dress, and take care of your health is up to you. A smile, a pleasing personality, or a light in your countenance can make you attractive.

Physical appearance won’t stop anyone from serving God, receiving essential ordinances, or living faithfully to the end.

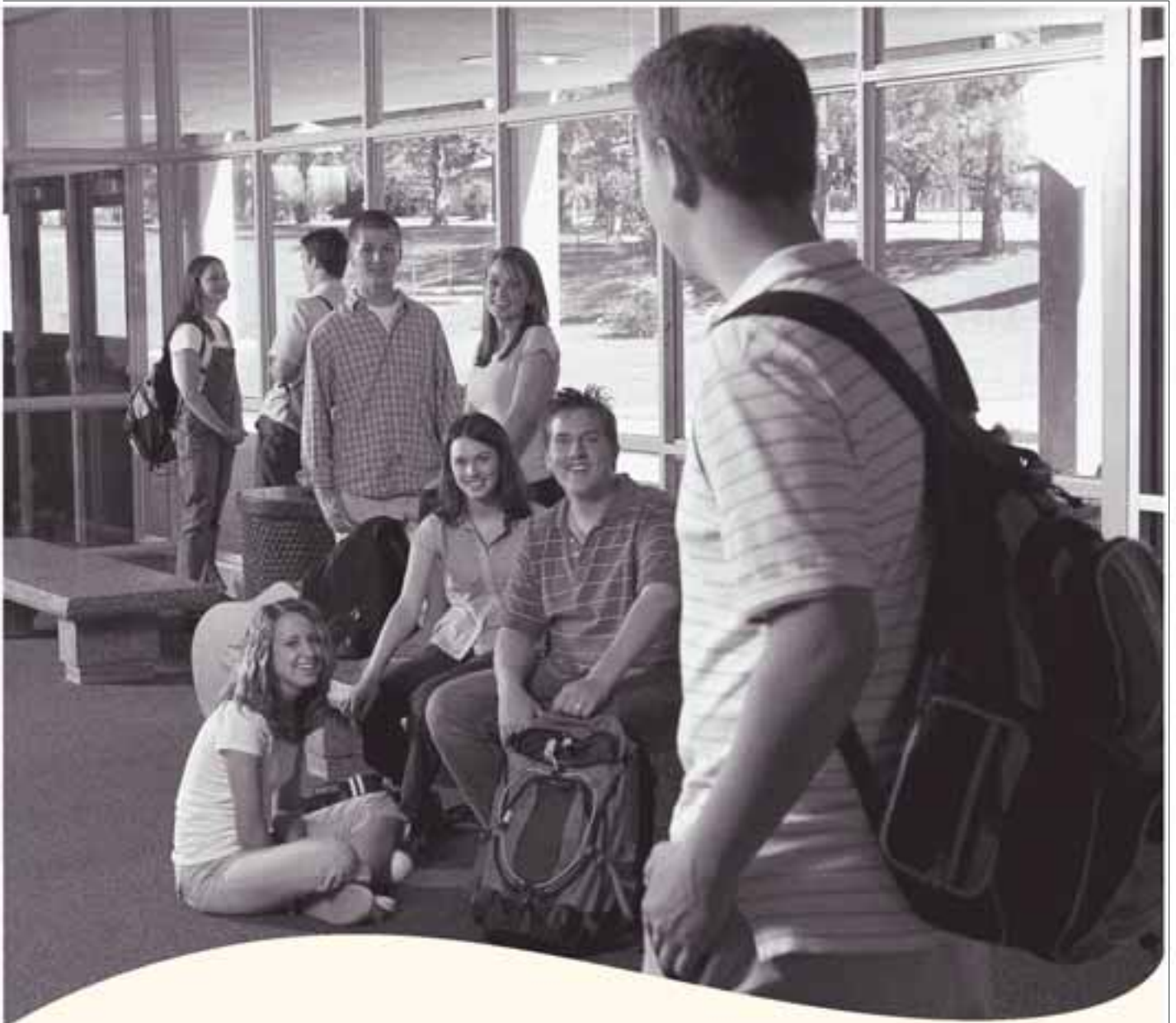
a spirit son or daughter of our Heavenly Father, who loves and cares for you.

Look Inward

You may feel bad about the way you look when you compare yourself to others, based on the world’s view of what is important. People sometimes feel discouraged or envious when they think others are better looking (or smarter or more popular) than they are. Or they might feel prideful when they see others they think are not as good looking (or as smart or popular) as they are. A healthy comparison is comparing who you are now with who you could be—your best self.

Do What’s in Your Control

Some things about your physical appearance aren’t within your control. But other things that can make you more attractive are within your control, such as sharing your talents, improving your personality, being neat and clean, and increasing your spirituality. Working on those things can help you feel better about yourself too.



Look Up

The Savior knows how you feel; He experienced your hurts and pains (see Alma 7:11–12). With His help, you can use this life the way it was intended—to live by faith and learn to do Heavenly Father’s will (see Abraham 3:25).

Developing inner beauty—including a pure, kind, grateful heart—will bring you peace and happiness, and your challenges won’t seem as troubling.

READERS



God knows that you’re hurting, but sometimes life’s problems will help you to grow spiritually. Heavenly Father wants you to do your best with the gifts He has given you. If you do your best to help others and help them be happy, they will see your inner beauty, and you will feel better about yourself.

Lynnette Drouin, 18, Whitecourt Branch, Edmonton Alberta Riverbend Stake



We may not have a perfect body in this life, but just remember the wonderful blessings our Father in Heaven has given us: family, friends, and the gospel.

Ammalyn C. Loterte, 19, Lopez First Ward, Lopez Philippines Stake

Heavenly Father created us in His image and likeness (see Genesis 1:26–27). We should accept ourselves as we are since He loves us as we are. For Him there are no

favorites, no ugly ones or beautiful ones. He looks on our hearts, and if we have a pure heart and kind feelings, our appearance isn't important.

Alma Iris Sánchez Echeverría, 17, Siguatopeque Ward,
Comayagua Honduras Stake



Heavenly Father knows you have many good qualities, but He wants you to discover them. He wants you to love yourself as much as He loves you. Most teenagers compare themselves to others, but we should simply be the best we can be and choose the right. Others will notice the Light of Christ peeking through.

Nikelle Bird, 16, Shoreline Ward,
Richland Washington Stake

Our physical appearance can stop us from being the most popular in school, but it will never stop Heavenly Father from loving us. Happiness isn't found in appearance. Happiness comes from knowing we are children of God, who wants us to find happiness by loving and helping others.

Elder Moroni Abraham Jiménez Pérez, 20,
Mexico Mexico City West Mission

I considered myself unattractive. But my mom told me I was beautiful because of what I had on the inside. Now I am happily married to a good man who took me to the temple. If you do what is right, the Lord can help you find the person who will see the beauty that others cannot see.

Claudia Alonso, 20, Woodlake Ward,
San Antonio Texas East Stake

In the sight of God, you are a precious jewel. He has blessed you with the gifts you need to live a righteous life. Beauty fades with time, but the values and things you have done won't.

Rex Daniel D. Lomboy, 16, Binalonan Second Branch,
Urdaneta Philippines Stake



I testify that no one of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. I testify that He loves each of us—insecurities, anxieties, self-image, and all. He doesn't measure our talents or our looks; . . .

He cheers on every runner, calling out that the race is against sin, not against each other."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Other Prodigal," *Liahona*, July 2002, 72; *Ensign*, May 2002, 64.



It seems that just about every girl thinks she is unattractive. When I have those thoughts I am forgetting how much Heavenly Father loves me. Each person has beauty and

uniqueness. Most important is to have a beautiful spirit and inner peace.

Svetlana Kopitova, 18, Kolpino Branch,
St. Petersburg Russia District

I believe that the most important thing is a person's spirit. Not being physically attractive doesn't stop you from being a good person. The day will come when our bodies will be perfected.

Angeles Natalia Tissera, 15, Roque Sáenz Peña Branch,
Roque Sáenz Peña Argentina District

Thanks to the teachings of my family, I know that true beauty is not what strikes man but that which pleases God. Let's cultivate more humility, patience, and love to cheer up those around us.

Merirani Johnston, 15, Fautaua Ward, Papeete Tahiti Stake

Liahona and readers' answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Youth readers: Send your answer, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and a photograph to:

Questions and Answers 1/05

50 East North Temple Street, Floor 24

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail: cur-liahona-imag@ldschurch.org

Please respond by 15 January 2005.

QUESTION

"My friend says he would be interested in joining our Church if he just didn't have to believe the Joseph Smith story. How do I answer him?" ■

Christmas Eve Breakfast

By Toni Hakes

About 18 years ago on Christmas Eve, I was a young mother very painfully aware of the wide gap between my household reality and what I thought the ideal Christmas looked like—the ideal Christmas as portrayed on television and in magazines, the Christmas of beautiful decor, exquisite meals, and happy, smiling children. I had tried hard to finish wrapping and cleaning, all the while attempting to achieve some order and peace in my home as I cared for my three little sons, one of whom was a very cranky baby. There was a heavy feeling weighing me down that night—I was overwhelmed.

It was starting to get dark. I had the baby in the highchair, trying to feed him and get him settled. Dinnertime was fast approaching, and there was no candlelit table, no warm feast, nothing ready on the stove. Just then my husband, who had been out doing some last-minute shopping, walked into the kitchen and

placed on the counter a bag of pancake mix, some frozen orange juice, and a package of sausage. In his own way, he was telling me that he knew I was at the end of my rope and, if worse came to worst, he was prepared to make our Christmas Eve dinner.

And so that Christmas Eve, our family shared breakfast. I don't remember how it tasted, but I remember how it felt to be loved and understood. From then on, breakfast has always been our

I was overwhelmed and tired. Then my husband walked into the kitchen with a bag of pancake mix, some frozen orange juice, and a package of sausage.

Christmas Eve fare. Our children probably don't understand its significance; nevertheless, breakfast is our tradition and it stands fast.

The small act of service my husband performed for me that Christmas Eve so long ago may seem insignificant, but it taught me that through small and thoughtful acts in the midst of the mundane, our lives can be changed. Through our own and others' selfless service, the Spirit can work in our hearts and Christ can enter our lives, which is what this season is all about. Perhaps decor sets the stage, but love and service are at the very heart of Christmas. ■

Toni Hakes is a member of the Willow Canyon Eighth Ward, Sandy Utah East Stake.



The Appalachian Christmas Tree

By Laurie Hopkins

Christmas of 1977 was not a happy one for me. No family members were close enough to visit, we had almost no money, and we had no pretty decorations to boost my spirits—only a scraggly little Christmas tree strung with colored paper and popcorn chains. If not for the wide-eyed hope of our small children, I probably wouldn't even have bothered with the tree.

My husband had to drive our car about 45 minutes to get to work, taking with him our only means of transportation. I was stuck at home all day, every day, miles away from anything and everything. The nearest town was a 20-minute drive over insanely twisting mountain roads. The chapel and most of the members of our tiny branch were nearly an hour away.

We had moved to this isolated Appalachian valley in a spasm of youthful idealism and adventurousness. My husband heard of cheap land in Virginia, and before I could say, "Middle of nowhere," we had moved there. He built us a little house on the side of a mountain, with water piped in from a nearby spring.

I somehow managed to balance the tree and the children without major mishap and arrived safely at the cabin door.

We did have neighbors, though they were few and far between. The closest house was an 1801 log cabin, rented for a short while by a young family from our branch, the Andersons (names have been changed). They were poor like we were. Donald, the dad, was working six and sometimes seven days a week. Donald and Ruth had three small children, as we did, and Ruth was in a constant state of exhaustion.

It was a fairly precarious hike from my house to Ruth's, over a deeply rutted, muddy road. For either of us—with a baby in our arms and two small children in tow—visits were a bit tricky. On one of our rare visits, however, Ruth mentioned to me that they hadn't been able to get a Christmas tree. Donald left home before dawn and didn't get back until late evening. Ruth just wasn't up to traipsing about the countryside in search of a tree.



One evening just before Christmas I was struck with a sudden, passionate urge to find a Christmas tree for the Andersons. Out of nowhere the idea hit me—I just had to get them a tree. As pathetic as my own tree might be, it brought at least a portion of the Christmas spirit into our home.

I spent the rest of the evening making paper chains, popcorn strings, and, of course, a yellow star

with glitter for the treetop. In the morning I hiked out onto the mountainside and searched until I found a small tree. I hacked it down and found an old can to decorate and fill with dirt for a base. The end product was more laughable than beautiful, but it looked cheery enough—if you sort of squinted your eyes.

I called to ask Ruth if I could come down, then bundled up my kids and

made the hike down the mountain. I somehow managed to balance the tree and the children without major mishap and arrived safely at the cabin door. When Ruth answered my knock, she took one look at my comical little tree and burst into tears. I entered the house very much afraid that my idea had not been such a good one after all.

When Ruth regained her composure, she explained her tears. It was

Open the Card First

By Samuel Osorio Mendoza

When we're young, sometimes all we think about at Christmastime is what we are going to receive. In 1991 I received the best gift of all.

The previous year I had decided to serve a mission, because my mother and several other relatives had set an example for me. So I left the university after my 18th birthday and worked at a fire station for a year to save money and help relieve my family of the financial burden of supporting me on my mission.

I finally sent my papers in, certain that by 1 December I would be

leaving to serve the Lord. When the first two weeks of December passed, I became more anxious to receive a reply than to get any Christmas gift.

But no letter came. I thought perhaps the Lord didn't love me or maybe my worthiness was in question; I had all kinds of discouraging thoughts.

On Christmas Eve I left early in the morning to play handball with my brother at a club near our house. When I got home, I noticed several Christmas cards hanging on the tree, including a very large card wrapped in gift paper. It had my name on it. I wanted to open it, but



my mother said it would be better to wait until evening when our family had gathered.

After dinner we decided to open our gifts. I headed for the biggest gift I had, but my family told me to open the card first. When I did, I saw that it was a letter and the sender was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was addressed to Elder Samuel Osorio.

By then all I could see were camera flashes, as my father took pictures of my astonished face. I was so happy and grateful to receive my call on Christmas Eve.

That was my best Christmas present ever. My mission was one of the greatest experiences of my life, and my call from the Lord is the best gift I've ever received at Christmas. ■

Samuel Osorio Mendoza is a member of the Palmas Ward, Poza Rica Mexico Palmas Stake.

late the evening before when Donald finally arrived home from work. With nearly empty cupboards, the family had piled into the car for the long ride to the store. After a while three-year-old Michael said, “Daddy, can we say a prayer?”

Donald asked Michael if he would like to say it. Then with the simple faith of a child, Michael asked Heavenly Father to help them get a Christmas tree. After saying, “Amen,” Donald and Ruth looked at each other, knowing they would have to try harder to satisfy the longing of their little boy’s heart. They were not able to come up with a plan that night and went to bed more than a little perplexed.

So it was that when we appeared with the little tree, we were an answer to more than one prayer. As soon as the Anderson children caught a glimpse of us, they squealed with joy and made a place of honor for the funny looking tree. There could never have been a Christmas tree more loved.

The miracle of that Christmas, however, was not just the prayer that bounced from a little boy’s heart to heaven and back again to the heart of someone who could help. It was also the healing power I found in the act of giving.

From the moment the thought of finding a tree for the Andersons struck me, the spirit of Christmas began to fill my own heart. I was grateful that the Lord loved me enough to try to get through to me and teach me. And

I was reminded anew that it is in losing ourselves that we find ourselves. As we serve, we find that “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3). ■

Laurie Hopkins is a member of the Big Thompson Ward, Loveland Colorado Stake.

Missionaries on the Metro

By Rémy van der Put

The first Christmas I experienced on my mission in France was very enjoyable. We were invited to celebrate with a wonderful member family, and I felt comfortable and at home. But the second Christmas stands out in my memory and will always be precious to me.

The thrill of the holiday season was in the air in the small French town where I was serving: Christmas music in the stores, advertisements everywhere, and Christmas cards in the mail.

A few days before Christmas the missionaries in our zone went caroling in the buses, metro stations, and shopping malls. We tried to share the joy of Christmas with our French brothers and sisters by singing carols, handing out brochures, and presenting copies of the Book of Mormon wrapped in Christmas paper. We wished the people a very merry Christmas. Just like the previous year, we were planning to spend Christmas Eve at a member

family’s home. My companion and I had received an invitation and were looking forward to a wonderful home-made Christmas dinner.

On 24 December we worked hard the entire morning. When we returned home for lunch, we received a call from the family who had invited us for dinner that evening. They had to cancel the appointment because of a death in the family. We couldn’t go to their home because of their family commitments, so we tried to comfort them as best we could over the telephone. After we hung up, I realized this was going to be a very lonely Christmas Eve. The other elders in our apartment had been invited elsewhere. We ate our lunch and left again to work.

The evening fell, and a cold wind blew. As I looked at the Christmas trees lit up in warm homes—homes filled with happy faces—my thoughts wandered home to my own family in the Netherlands. They would be sitting together, singing Christmas carols, and reading the story of the Nativity. Then they would listen to Christmas music while my dad lit the candles on our Christmas tree. All of a sudden I felt very homesick.

We returned to our apartment, and I sat down at my desk, feeling very sorry for myself. I turned on a Mormon Tabernacle Choir Christmas tape and started to write in my journal.

One of the many things I learned on my mission was that those I served with were always my companion for a



I approached a man who was sitting alone by a window, and we started talking about our families and Christmas.

reason. Such was the case with Elder Wagner. After a while he got up from his desk and said he had a plan. “Why don’t we take some of our wrapped copies of the Book of Mormon, go down to the metro station, and talk to those who also feel lonely on Christmas Eve?” he suggested. I said I would join him, although I was pretty reluctant about the whole idea. I just wanted to sit in my chair and feel sorry for myself.

We left our apartment and started walking toward the metro. The closer we got to the station, the more I felt this wasn’t such a bad idea and might possibly turn out to be a good experience. When we boarded the metro, it was nearly empty. A few people were scattered about. I approached a man who was sitting alone by a window. Introducing myself, I asked if we

could join him. He agreed. We started talking about families—his family, my family—and Christmas. He told me he was a refugee and had had to leave his country and his family. He told me about his wife and child and how much he missed them. Though our situations weren’t the same, I could sympathize because my family was also far away. Then I started talking about Jesus Christ, how much He meant to me, and how much Christmas meant to me. “The Savior came to earth,” I testified.

Instantly there was a fire burning in my soul. I felt the same burning sensation later that evening while I talked and testified of Jesus Christ to other people on the metro. When my

companion and I finally left to return to our apartment, I was filled with a wonderful sense of appreciation. As we discussed the events of that evening I learned that my companion was feeling the

same thing. We had truly felt the spirit of Christmas, and I felt as if my heart would burst with joy. The Savior was born in Bethlehem for me and for the entire world! How blessed I felt to have the gospel in my life and to have felt His love for me that night.

It was a Christmas I will always cherish, for it was on that Christmas Eve I finally learned what Christmas is all about. It is about Christ and sharing my precious testimony of the living Son of God. ■

Rémy van der Put is a member of the Kirkland Second Ward, Kirkland Washington Stake.



Prophecy Fulfilled

The prophecy that the everlasting gospel will be preached to all the inhabitants of the earth is being fulfilled, and the *Liabona* magazine is part of that fulfillment. I receive with excitement the words of President Gordon B. Hinckley.

*Zenón Cabrera C.,
Llallagua Branch,
Llallagua Bolivia District*

Help from Members

When my *Liabona* comes, I read it all in one day. I especially enjoy reading about the spiritual experiences of other members. Those experiences keep me moving forward.

*Ruth Caballero,
Pedro Juan Caballero Third Branch,
Pedro Juan Caballero Paraguay District*

Blessed by Gospel Classics

Whenever I read the *Liabona*, my mind is calmed. I love the Gospel Classics section. The words of the prophets and Church leaders touch my heart and have brought great blessings to my life.

*Liao Alin,
Tai Tung Branch,
Hua Lien Taiwan District*

Missionary Magazine

The *Liabona* has helped me so much while I have been on my mission. The articles from Church leaders help me give good advice to members, investigators, and companions. I can also do missionary work by mail by sending my friends articles from the magazine. In this way I can obey the counsel of our leaders to spread the gospel however we can.

*Elder Abraham Ordaz,
Mexico León Mission*

Liabona Is a Treasure

I read every issue of the *Liabona* with delight. Those who share their experiences and testimonies help me find answers to questions just when I need them the most. The *Liabona* is a treasure.

*Olga Kbripko,
Zaporozhe Tsentralny Branch,
Dnepropetrovsk Ukraine District*

Call for Suggestions on Modesty

Dressing modestly is a challenge in today's world. How do you ensure that your everyday wear, exercise clothing, or formal wear is modest? How have you promoted modesty in your family or ward and stake (branch and district)? Send your comments to Modesty, *Liabona*, Room 2420, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA; or e-mail to cur-liabona-imag@ldschurch.org.

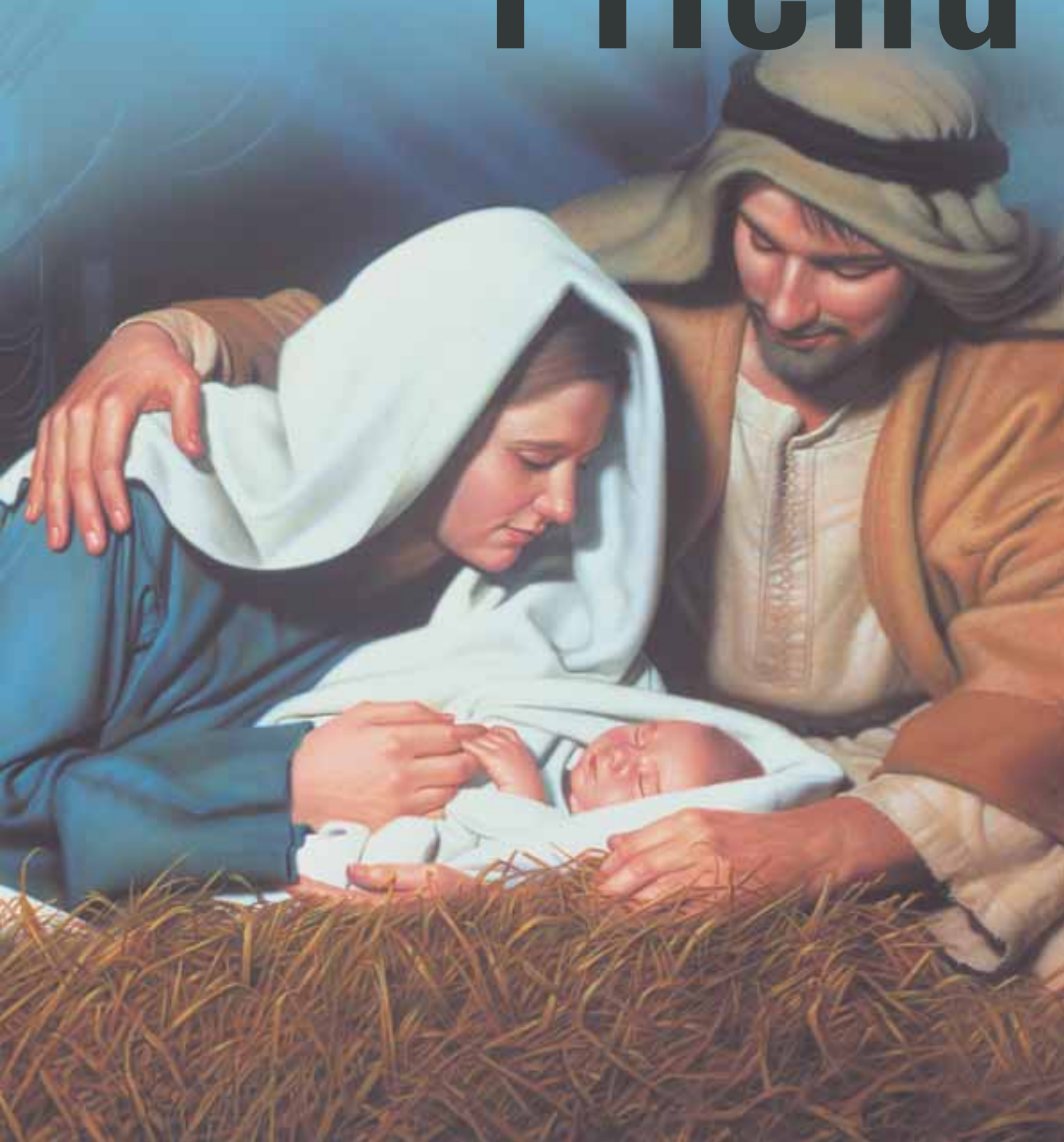
Give a Gift of the *Liabona*

Remember that friend at work who occasionally asks questions about the Church? That less-active family you home teach? That child or family member who needs strengthening? That returned missionary who learned a new language on his or her mission? They are all perfect candidates for a gift subscription to the *Liabona*.

You can order and receive the *Liabona* for yourself or as a gift in any of the following languages (frequency varies by language): Albanian, Armenian (East), Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Haitian, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Sinhala, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.

Contact your ward or branch leaders or your local distribution center for subscription and ordering information.

the Friend



**A Christmas Message from the First Presidency
to the Children of the World**



A Wonderful Time of Year

*M*erry Christmas to the children of the world! This is a joyous time of year when our hearts are filled with love as we think about the birth of the Savior and feel sincere gratitude to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Because of the Savior's birth and mission, we will receive the blessing of the Resurrection. Through the Savior's Atonement, as we keep the commandments, serve others, and do what the Lord has asked us to do, we will return to live with our Heavenly Father.

Our sincere prayer is that each of you and your families will feel the Savior's love at this wonderful time of year. We bear our witness that Jesus is our Savior, the Son of God.

*With love,
The First Presidency*

THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM, BY JOSEPH BRICKEY, MAY NOT BE COPIED





Jesus Had Righteous Earthly Parents

“And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. . . . I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world” (Ether 4:12).

Heavenly Father gives us parents and families to teach us righteous principles so we can return to Heavenly Father and live with our families forever. Heavenly Father planned for Jesus Christ to be born into a family too. Jesus had righteous parents on earth to take care of and teach Him.

Before Jesus was born, an angel came to His mother, Mary. The angel told her that she would have a son and that she should call Him Jesus. The angel told her, “The Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). Mary told the angel that she would do as she was commanded: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38).

The angel also appeared to Joseph. The angel told him that Mary would have a son and that His name would be Jesus. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would save His people from their sins (see Matthew 1:20–21).

Mary and Joseph had faith. They did what they were commanded to do. When we remember Jesus Christ and follow His example and the example of Mary and Joseph, our families will be blessed. ●

Family Home Evening Activities and Ideas

1. Color the picture on page F4. Hang it in your room to help you remember that Jesus had an earthly family too.
2. For a family home evening activity, make copies of the picture on page F4 for your family. Color the pictures, and roll them up to look like scrolls. Tie a ribbon around each one, and give them to people who have helped your family this year (for example, a neighbor, a grandparent, or your bishop or branch president).
3. For a family home evening lesson or Primary talk, read about Joseph in Matthew 1:19–25, and read about Mary in Luke 1:26–56 and Alma 7:10. Talk about good qualities Mary and Joseph had. (For example, Matthew 1:19 describes Joseph as “a just man.”) Pick a quality you would like to develop that would help you become a better member of your family.

Note: *If you do not wish to remove pages from the magazine, this activity may be copied, traced, or printed out from the Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on “Gospel Library.” For other languages, click on the world map.*

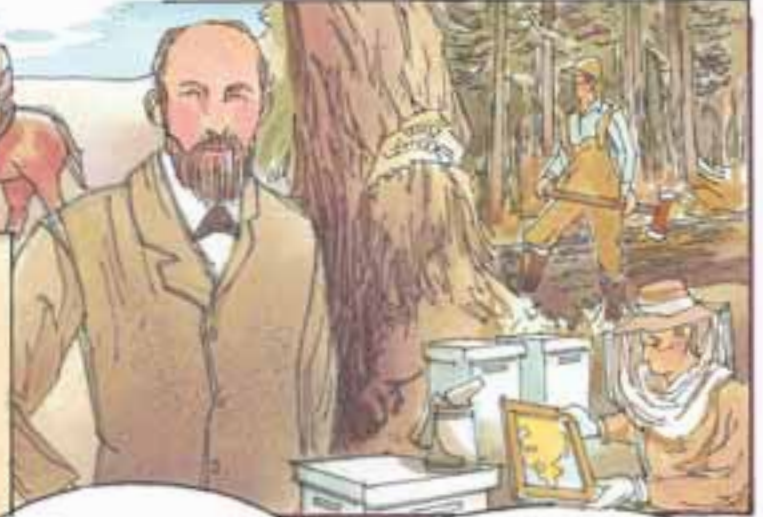


FROM THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

Charitable Businessman



Heber J. Grant tried his hand at several business ventures: lumber, wool, vinegar manufacturing, sugar refining, insurance, ranching, newspaper publishing, soap making, and beekeeping, to name a few.



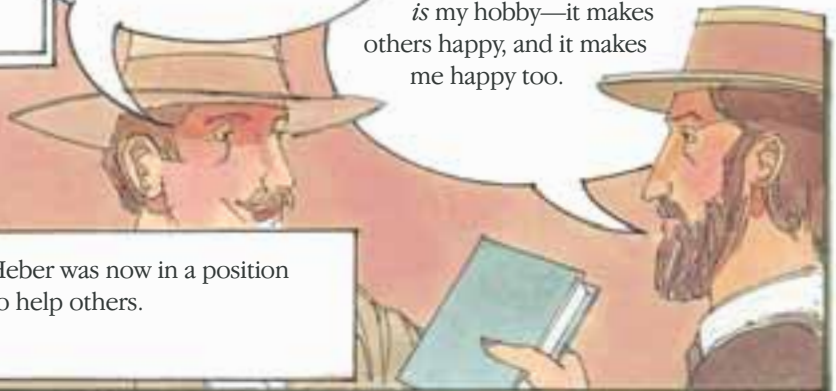
His greatest talent in business was banking. He did all he could to learn about it, starting at a young age and eventually becoming president of a bank.

Heber, how can you afford to spend hundreds of dollars giving books away to your friends?

I don't spend any more on giving books away than you do on some of your hobbies. Giving *is* my hobby—it makes others happy, and it makes me happy too.



Heber was now in a position to help others.



Heber gave much more than books. He bought a poor family some land to farm, and he bought a house for one of his relatives. He often paid for patients' hospital bills.



He had never even met some of the people he helped.

Look, Papa. There's an article in the newspaper about a widow who has two sons on missions. It sounds like she's struggling with money.

Tell me her name, and I'll contact her. I can help keep those two boys on missions.



One day a poor artist came to the door selling paintings. Heber didn't have any wall space for a new painting.

Here is another \$50 for the lovely piece I bought from you a while back. I've always felt bad that I let you sell it to me for so little.

Thank you, sir!

Now go sell this painting to someone who will have the space to enjoy it.



Heber continued sharing until the end of his life. Only a few days before he died, he wrote a letter to a widow. He would forever be remembered for his love and generosity.

Adapted from Emerson Roy West, Profiles of the Presidents (1972), 209-10, 213; Bryant S. Hinckley, Heber J. Grant: Highlights in the Life of a Great Leader (1951), 203-5, 207, 216.

Will you please tell me how much you are owing on your home and let me join with you 50-50 in paying it off at once?



CHRISTMAS ON TEMPLE SQUARE

BY KIMBERLY WEBB
Church Magazines

When Jesus Christ came to earth, He was born in a lowly stable. Today majestic temples all over the world are dedicated to Him.

This Christmas season, celebrate His birth by helping to decorate Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Instructions: Cut out pages F8–F9, and mount them on heavy paper. Cut out the pictures on page F15, and put them in an envelope. Beginning on 1 December, read the activity listed and complete it during the day. Then find the picture that fits in the corresponding numbered space, and glue it in place.

- 1 Send a Christmas card to a loved one.
- 2 Do a secret act of kindness.
- 3 Remember to thank a family member.
- 4 Help with a chore when it's not your turn.
- 5 Remember to think of Jesus during the sacrament.
- 6 Talk about your ancestors. What was Christmastime like in their day?
- 7 Sing a Christmas song with your family.
- 8 Compliment each family member.
- 9 Give a small gift anonymously.
- 10 Write (or draw) a family Christmas tradition in your journal.



11 Make a Christmas craft for a neighbor or the missionaries.

12 Read Isaiah 9:6 and Mosiah 3:1–8 with your family.

13 Go caroling with your family.

14 Draw a picture of your favorite temple.

15 Write down your testimony, and keep it in your journal.

16 Look at the sky, and remember the sign given at Jesus' birth.

17 Ask your parents to tell a Christmas memory from their childhood.

18 Visit someone who may be lonely.

19 Draw a picture of what Christmas means to you.

20 Help your family make a favorite Christmas treat.

21 Name one way you can better prepare to meet the Savior someday.

22 Name one way you can follow the Savior.

23 Read 3 Nephi 1:1–23 with your family.

24 Read Luke 2:1–20 with your family.

Note: *If you do not wish to remove pages from the magazine, this activity may be copied, traced, or printed out from the Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on "Gospel Library." For other languages, click on the world map.*



Christmas Gifts All Year

“And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. . . . I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world” (Ether 4:12).

BY SHEILA E. WILSON



More than 2,000 years ago Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem. Joseph tried to find a place for them at an inn, but there was no room. They found a stable where Mary could give birth.

This was the first Christmas. There were no large family gatherings. There were no decorations. There were no brightly wrapped presents. But there were carols and singing and rejoicing. The angels in heaven joined in a great chorus of rejoicing and praise at the birth of the Son of God (see Luke 2:13–14). Heavenly Father gave us a great gift. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave us the gift of the Atonement and eternal life. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He gave the gift of a perfect example for us to follow. He showed us the gift of love and taught us to love one another.

We can also give gifts of service and love. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). We can show our love for Jesus by keeping His commandments and serving others, not just at Christmas-time but throughout the year.

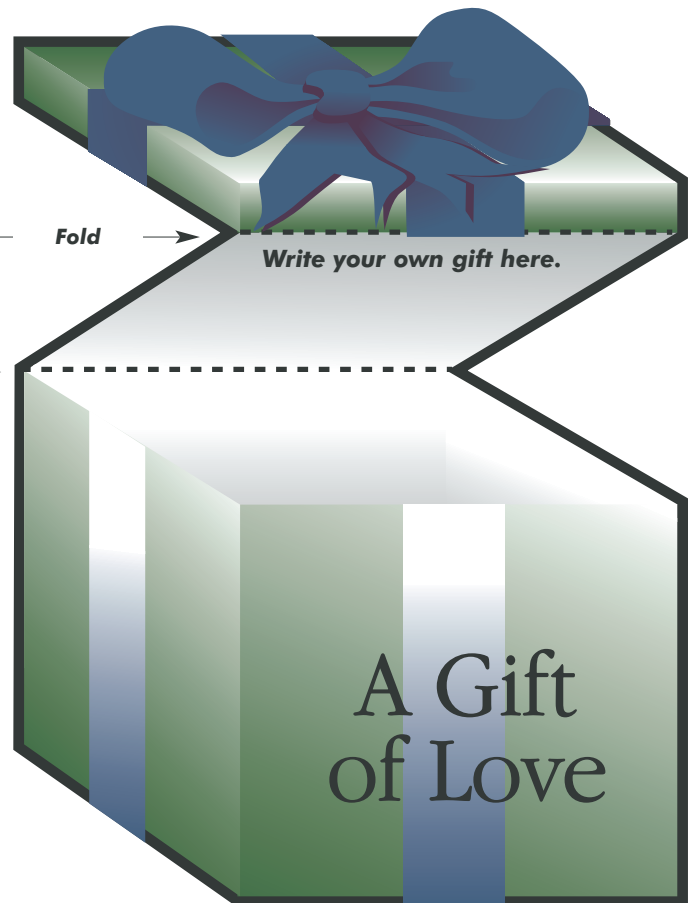
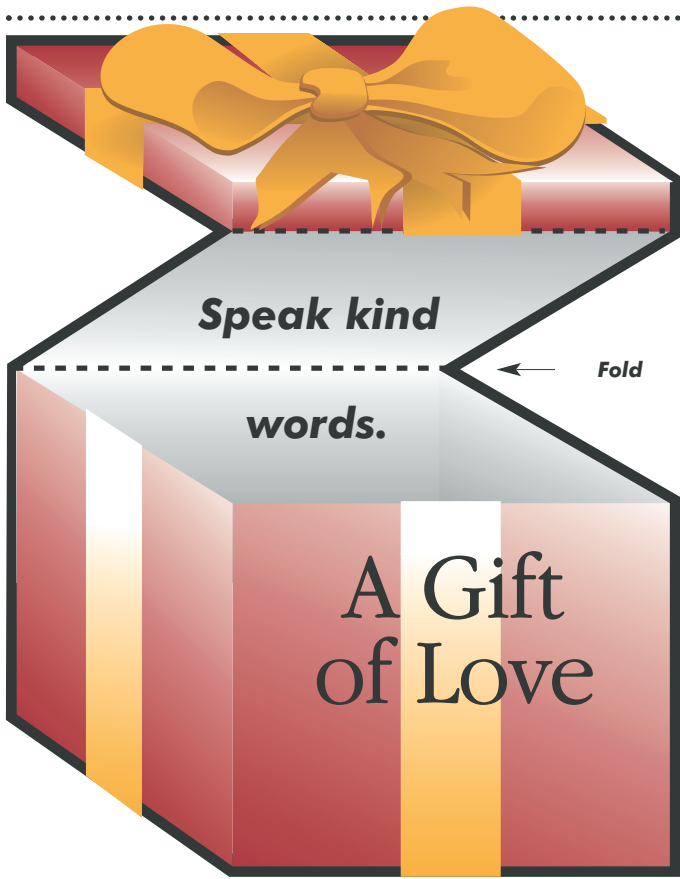
Gift Ornaments

Cut out the gifts on page F11 along the solid lines. Fold on the broken lines; then tape the lids down. Punch a hole at the top of each gift, and attach string. Hang the gifts where you can see them. Every few days, open a “gift” and do the activity inside. Remember, you can give these gifts throughout the year!

Sharing Time Ideas

1. Show a picture of the Last Supper. Before Jesus’ Crucifixion, He gave His Apostles the sacrament so they would have a way to always remember Him and so they could have His Spirit with them. Read together Luke 22:19. Show a picture of Christ visiting the Nephites. Following His Resurrection, Jesus taught the Nephites to partake of the sacrament. Read together 3 Nephi 18:6–7, 11. Jesus Christ taught the disciples that when they partook of the sacrament, they were renewing their baptismal covenants to always remember Him, to take His name upon them, and to keep His commandments. Show pictures of blessing and passing the sacrament today. We can participate in the same ordinance that Jesus taught. The sacrament prayers tell us that if we remember Jesus Christ and keep His commandments, we will always have His Spirit with us. Read the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4:3 and 5:2. Remind the children that without the Atonement, which we remember as we take the sacrament, we would not celebrate Christmas. Sing a song or hymn.

2. Post on the board the pictures suggested in the idea above, and discuss each one. Above the pictures write “Sunday.” Discuss ways the children can remember Jesus. On Sunday we can think of Him at church, during the sacrament, and as we sing Primary songs. Divide the children into six groups, and give each group a day of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday). Invite them to write or draw ways they can remember the Savior throughout the week (for example, forgiving others, choosing the right, keeping the commandments, being kind, being grateful). Give each group a chance to share. Then say “I will remember Jesus by _____.” Toss a beanbag to one child. Have the child complete the phrase and toss the beanbag to another child. Repeat. Remind the children that we can remember the Savior throughout the week. ●



Note: If you do not wish to remove pages from the magazine, this activity may be copied, traced, or printed out from the Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on "Gospel Library." For other languages, click on the world map.



“He will preserve the righteous by his power” (1 Nephi 22:17).

A Cabbage for Christmas

BY TRISA MARTIN

A true story

Annie, we need a cabbage for Christmas dinner tomorrow,” Mother said. “Please go to the Olsens and trade these potatoes for one. Hurry now. Night’s coming.”

Eleven-year-old Annie sighed, dropping her knitting and picking up the burlap bag of potatoes. It was a tradition in Norway for families to have a cabbage for Christmas dinner, and Annie knew it would be delicious. But she didn’t want to leave the warm fire. “Can Gunnild come too?” she asked hopefully.

“No, she must feed the goats and help your father.”

Annie buttoned her sheepskin coat and hurried outside into the brisk air. The snow crunched under her feet and the sharp wind whipped her blonde braids as she scurried down the path.

A few minutes later she reached the Olsens’ cabin and rapped on the wooden door. Mrs. Olsen peeked out, her blue eyes wide with surprise.

“Why, Annie! What are you doing out in this bitter wind? Your cheeks are as bright as strawberries. Come in and warm yourself.”

Annie’s fingers and toes tingled as she stood by the crackling fire. “Mother asked me to trade these potatoes for a cabbage,” she said.

“Oh, child, I’m sorry. I have no more cabbages. We

ate our last one yesterday.” Mrs. Olsen stirred the big black kettle hanging over the fire. “Would you like some porridge?”

“No, thank you,” Annie replied. “I can’t stay. Do you know where I can get a cabbage?”

“The Petersens may have one. Jens had a good crop this year. But if you go there, you must hurry. It feels like there’s a storm brewing.”

“Thanks, Mrs. Olsen,” Annie said as she hurried outside. Tucking the bag under her arm, she plunged her hands deep into her pockets and trudged forward. The icy wind slapped her face, and black clouds rumbled overhead.

After what seemed like hours, she reached the Petersens. Luckily, Mrs. Petersen had an extra cabbage to trade for Annie’s potatoes. Waving good-bye, Annie headed home. Tiny snowflakes fluttered around her, covering the path with a goose-feathery whiteness.

Annie thought of her family’s warm cabin. She could almost smell the savory *lutefisk* (dried codfish) and potatoes cooking. Perhaps her mother was also making *riskrem* (rice pudding) and hiding an almond inside. Maybe Annie would be the lucky one to find it.

The snow began to fall faster. Thick flakes coated her eyelashes and buried the path. Annie stared at the



landscape ahead of her, struggling to find the trail. “Is that our cabin?” she thought, noticing a dark shape in the swirling snow. But it was only a thicket of trees. Annie was confused. “Where am I?” she wondered. “Why do the mountains look like giants?” She felt like she was in a dream.

Huge snowdrifts seemed like a warm, white feather bed, urging her to stop and sleep. At first she resisted by thinking about home. She plodded forward on what felt like wooden-post legs, clutching her cabbage. But finally her weary legs collapsed, and she lay down, wrapping herself in a soft blanket of snow.

Back at home, Annie’s father stared out into the whirling whiteness. Where was Annie? He bundled up in his heavy coat and grabbed his lantern. He hurried down the trail, shouting into the wind, “Annie, Annie!”

Next to a giant spruce tree he noticed a strange mound. He rushed forward, swinging his lantern. In the dim light, he saw a pale figure in the snow. Was it Annie? He rushed to her, gathering her in his arms and wrapping his fur coat around her.

“Please, God,” he prayed, “let her live.”

A faint breath stirred Annie’s lips as she whimpered, “Papa.”

“Annie, you’re alive! It’s a miracle!” he cried. “God has preserved your life for a special purpose.”

* * * *

Nine years later Annie married Soren Hansen. They had eight children. When Soren died, Annie sold sawdust to the butcher shops to support her family. Every day she hitched her yellow pony to a little cart and carried a load of sawdust to nearby Oslo.

One day as Annie neared the open-air market, she heard a strange commotion. Two young men were speaking to a crowd gathered near the vegetable market. Annie was curious and stopped to listen. They spoke about a prophet and the Book of Mormon.

Their message stirred Annie’s heart. On 2 March 1857 she was baptized as one of the first converts in Norway.

Annie became a powerful missionary. She shared the gospel with everyone who would listen. Even Mr. Gulbrandsen, who owned the sawmill, joined the Church after Annie taught him the gospel. She continued to share her testimony until she died in Norway



“God will preserve and protect us, and will prepare the way before us, that we shall live and multiply . . . and always do His will.”

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), in Conference Report, Oct. 1905, 5–6.

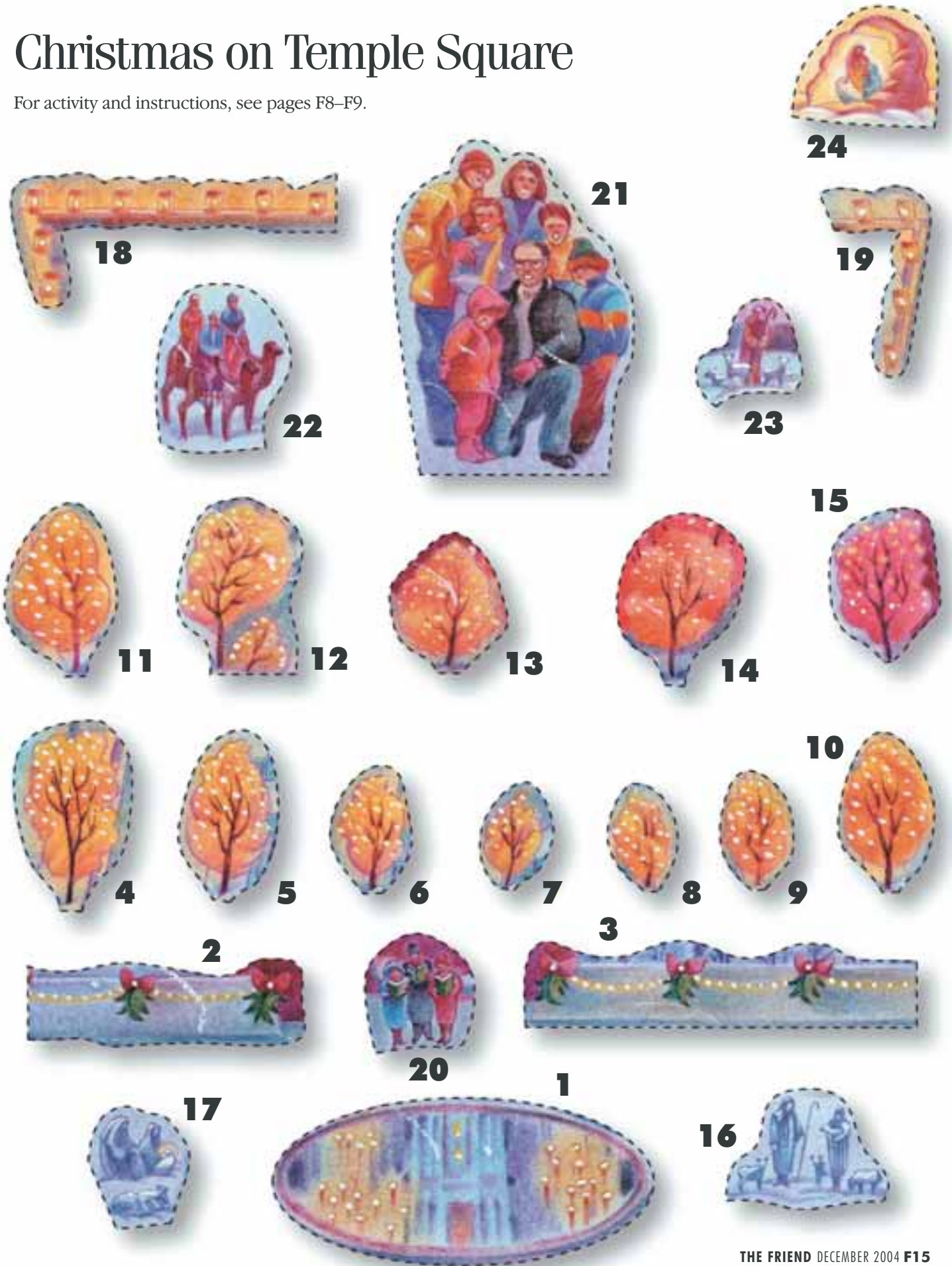
at age 81. Some of her children and grandchildren emigrated to America.

Today her great-great-grandchildren still love to hear about the miracle of Annie, who went to get a cabbage for Christmas. ●

Trisa Martin is a member of the Bountiful 30th Ward, Bountiful Utah East Stake.

Christmas on Temple Square

For activity and instructions, see pages F8–F9.



ILLUSTRATED BY DILLEN MARSH

Keep the Commandments



Did you know that Elder Hales served as a pilot in the United States Air Force? He shares his love for commandments that guide and protect us and allow us to return to Heavenly Father.

BY ELDER ROBERT D. HALES
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I would like to tell you a true story about a man named Abinadi. Abinadi was a prophet who preached repentance to a wicked people and a wicked king. He preached boldly and courageously.

Wicked King Noah angrily ordered his priests to kill Abinadi. Abinadi withstood them, saying: “Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver. . . . I must fulfil the commandments wherewith God has commanded me.”

The people of King Noah were afraid to touch Abinadi because the Spirit of the Lord was with him. Abinadi declared that he would finish the message that God had sent him to deliver—and then it wouldn’t matter what King Noah and the people did to him. (See Mosiah 13:1–9.)

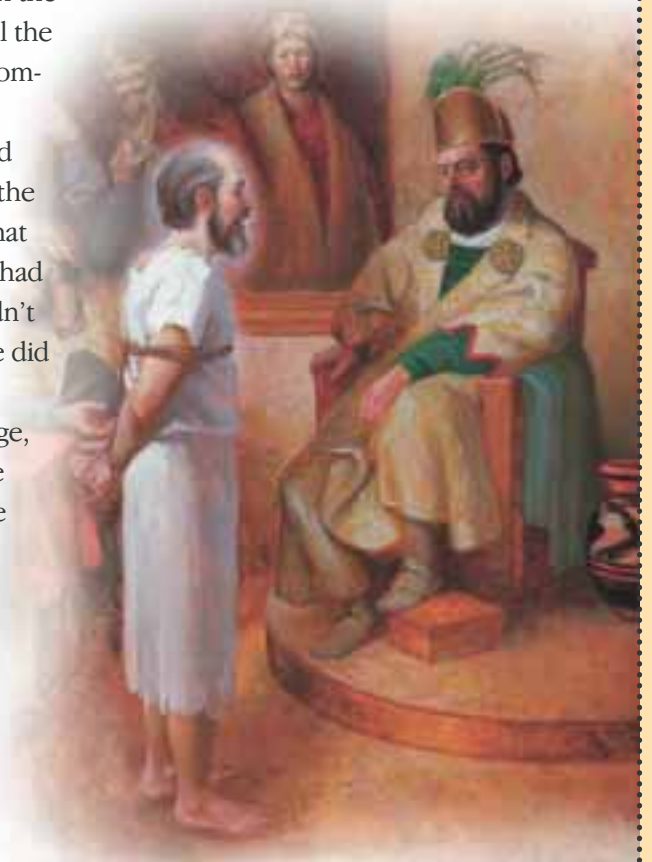
When Abinadi concluded his message, King Noah demanded that he deny the words he had spoken—or he would be put to death. But Abinadi refused.

What a powerful example Abinadi should be to all of us! He courageously obeyed the Lord’s commandments—even though it cost him his life!

Choosing to live the commandments frees us from the shackles of sin and allows us to experience true happiness.

Let our lives reflect our love of the Lord by being obedient to the commandments and reaping the promised blessings both in this life and in the life to come. ●

From an April 1996 general conference address.





Mary, by James C. Christensen

“And the angel [Gabriel] said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. . . . And Mary said, . . . Be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:30–31, 38).



The greatest of all acts in all history was the atoning sacrifice of our Savior and Redeemer. We remember that sacrifice at this time of year when we celebrate His birth. It is only through the atoning sacrifice of the Prince of Peace that we may know the true power of peace in our own lives.” See President James E. Faust, “The Power of Peace,” p. 2.