

CHRISTMAS THROUGH MY DAUGHTER'S EYES

A quiet calm settled over my family and me as we walked into a barn to see a live nativity. Animals lined the stalls, and a man and woman, dressed as Joseph and Mary, stood with a baby wrapped in the woman's arms. They were quiet and focused on the little child. The whole atmosphere was very peaceful.

My older children, my wife, and I stood while my youngest daughter sat on a hay bale in front of us. She was quiet and still, and her eyes stayed focused on the baby. When the rest of my family was ready to go, I placed a hand on my daughter's shoulder and whispered that it was time to leave. She said she wanted to stay with baby Jesus. Her words touched my heart, and I decided to stay with her.

A few minutes later, I gently took my daughter by the hand and told her we needed to leave. She said

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she still wanted to stay. I put my arm around her and knelt beside her.

It didn't take long for me to feel as if I had traveled back in time and was with Mary and Joseph. I then understood why my daughter wanted to stay. I felt the Spirit wash over me. In that place, I felt that I was in the presence of the Savior. Tears glistened in my eyes as I felt of His love. When it was finally time to leave, I picked up

my little girl. As I turned toward the exit, I heard her tell baby Jesus goodbye and how much she loved Him.

That evening I shared an experience with my daughter that I will treasure for the rest of my life, and I almost missed it. That night, I was given a gift. I felt closer to God and felt His love for me. I am grateful for the Savior and the

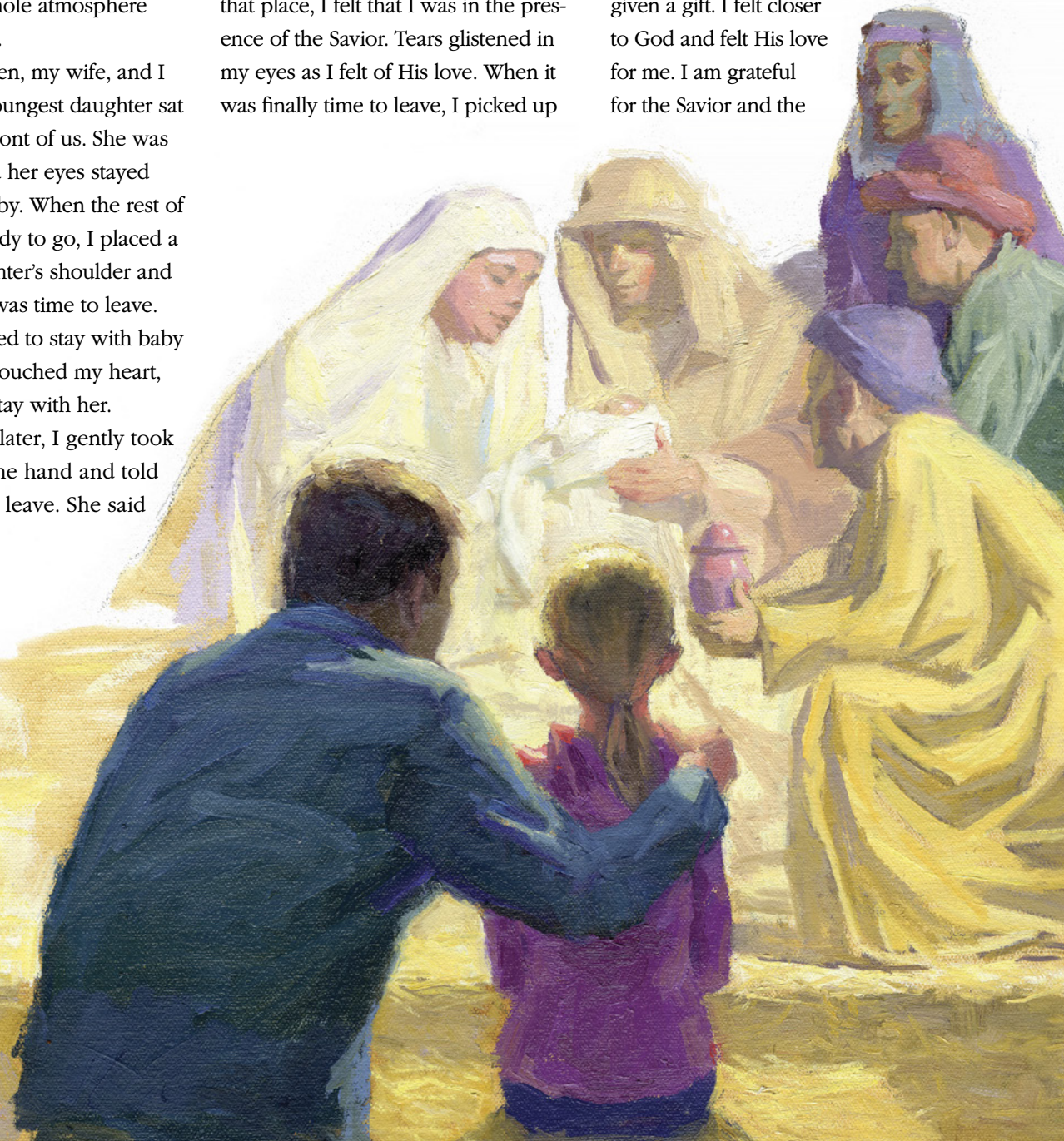


ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARNIS

A FAMILY GIFT FOR THE SAVIOR

opportunity to remember His birth. I know that the Savior's life, example, and Atonement constitute a wonderful gift of never-ending love from God to all His children. I will always cherish this gift deep in my heart. ■

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As December approached, I was busy preparing for the rush of the Christmas season. For four years, Christmas festivities had been held in our home, but this year I felt overwhelmed. When I discussed with my husband everything we needed to do—buy presents, prepare food, and do many other things—we decided to cancel the Christmas party and do something different this Christmas. We wanted to do something that we could give as a gift for the Savior.

Throughout December, we held family home evenings about the life of Jesus Christ, went to the temple, and planned family service projects. My husband was a bishop at the time, and we decided that on Christmas Day we would sing for all the widows in the ward. As a family, we began to practice several hymns we would sing. My children loved to sing “Away in a Manger” (*Hymns*, no. 206).

On Christmas Eve, we made cards with special Christmas messages and prepared treats to take on our visits. I was pleased to see our family so united and happy to serve others with such love. I could feel the spirit of Christmas.

On Christmas Day, our children were eager to make the visits. With each home we visited, we felt happier, and it seemed that the hymns became better each time we sang. When we arrived at the last house, it looked like no one was home. We waited a few minutes, and the children began to get restless. Eventually an elderly widow came out to meet us with her Sunday clothes on and her hair nicely combed. When she saw us, her eyes filled with tears. I became emotional as well and could hardly sing.

As we returned home, our five-year-old daughter told us she didn't want to go home but wanted to keep singing. Before I could respond, my nine-year-old said, “We'll just do it again next year!”

For our family, this was an unforgettable Christmas because we lifted others and showed our love for Jesus Christ. As I reflected on the events of the day, I felt the love of the Lord and remembered His words, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). ■

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