

THE New Era

DECEMBER

2001



**COVER STORY:
WINDOWS ON
ETERNITY,
P. 26**

**CHRISTMAS
WITH JOSEPH
P. 8**

**EVERY YEAR,
THE SAME
PRESENT,
P. 25**

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Editorial Offices:

New Era
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3225

E-mail address:
cur-editorial-newera
@ldschurch.org

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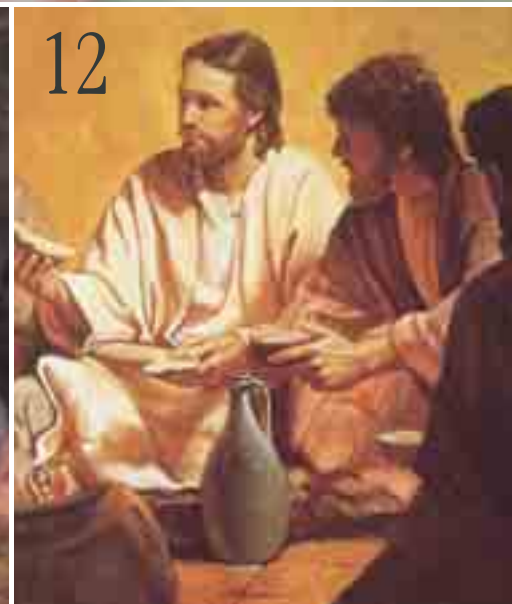
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from the American Fork
Utah Hillcrest Stake
works on temple
windows. See "Windows
on Eternity," on p. 26.

Cover photography:
Willie Holdman (front),
Kelly A. Larsen (back).

These
windows
helped some
LDS teens see
things in a whole
new light.
See "Windows on
Eternity,"
p. 26.



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A Gift REMEMBERED

There is no better time to rededicate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus the Christ.

As we commence the Christmas season, with all of its beauty and meaning, we are reminded that from the Lord came the long-awaited declaration: “Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets” (3 Ne. 1:13).

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Promised Messiah, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick. He caused the lame to walk, the



**by President
Thomas S. Monson**
First Counselor in the
First Presidency

blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

What was the reaction to His message of mercy, His words of wisdom, His lessons of life? There were a precious few who appreciated Him. They bathed His feet. They learned His word. They followed His example.

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of beautiful Galilee, He said, “Follow me.” To Philip of old came the call, “Follow me.” To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, “Follow me.” And to you and to me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, “Follow me.”

As we follow in His steps today, we too will have an opportunity to bless the lives of others. Jesus invites us to give of ourselves. “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34). The same thought is captured beautifully in this poem by Christina Rossetti:

*What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb.
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part,
Yet what can I give Him?
Give my heart.*

*(In Jack M. Lyon and others, eds.,
Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People,
1996, 166–67.)*



Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved.

There is no better time than now, this very Christmas season, for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus the Christ. It is the time to love the Lord our God with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves. It is well to remember that he who gives money gives much, he who gives time gives more, but he who gives of himself gives all.

Someone has appropriately said, “We make a living by what we get, but we build a life by what we give.” It is through giving, rather than getting, that the Spirit of Christ enters our lives.

Let us listen for the sound of His sandaled feet. Let us reach out for the Carpenter’s hand.

Recently I went to an Alzheimer’s care facility in Salt Lake City to visit a long-time friend, Mayre Nielsen, who is 97 years of age. I was escorted by a young woman attendant to Mayre’s bedside. As I greeted her, she looked at me with glistening eyes but did not speak a word. I said to her, “Mayre, do you remember when we first met?” Still there was no answer. I continued, “It was long years ago, when you were a member of the Primary General Board and accompanied Sister Monson and me to an assignment in Sydney, Australia.”

Without uttering a sound, Mayre watched me carefully as I continued. “You will recall, Mayre, that you were to stay at the home of the stake Primary president, Sister Beryl Lord. You had learned, however, that Sister Lord was married to a nonmember who was indifferent toward the Church. For this reason, you were concerned about staying in Sister Lord’s home and asked if you could stay at a local hotel instead. I told you I felt we should wait until we met Sister Lord and her husband and then decide where you should stay. You asked how you should act, were you to stay in their home. I told you to act as a Latter-day Saint, to be yourself, to offer the blessing on the food and to offer your evening and morning prayers.

“Do you remember, Mayre, that when

we arrived at the airport in Sydney, Australia, the stake Primary president, Sister Lord, welcomed you and said, ‘I hope you are going to stay at our home?’

“You looked at me pleadingly, Mayre, obviously hoping I would suggest you stay in a hotel. However, I was impressed to suggest otherwise and told you I thought you should stay at Sister Lord’s home and meet her husband and family. I asked Sister Lord where her husband was, and she pointed to the lobby of the airport and indicated that he was standing behind a pillar, out of view. We met Frank Lord, and then you departed with them to an unknown fate.”

I paused in my narrative. Mayre Nielsen still had not spoken to me, and yet her eyes remained fixed on me. I continued speaking. “Mayre, just over a year later,” I said, “I returned to the Sydney stake to divide it and create the Sydney South stake. Following the conference, a man I recognized approached me with tears in his eyes. He told me he was Frank Lord, husband of the stake Primary president, and that just a few months earlier he had entered the waters of baptism and had become a member of the Church. I asked him how

he had gone from being one who was indifferent toward the Church to one who had become a member.

Mayre, he told me that it was your example and your sweet spirit when you stayed in their home that had prompted him to commence his study of the gospel and to become a member of the Church.

He asked if I would be sure to thank you for the profound influence for good you

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of beautiful Galilee, He said, “Follow me.” To Philip of old came the call, “Follow me.” To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, “Follow me.” And to you and to me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, “Follow me.”



Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved.

had on him.

“When I returned home from attending that conference, Mayre, I telephoned you and expressed to you Brother Frank Lord’s great gratitude that you had stayed in his home and had had such a powerful effect on his life. I recall that you, too, were most grateful for the inspiration which directed that you stay with the Lord family.”

I continued speaking: “Shortly after that, Brother Lord served as a counselor in his ward bishopric and then was called to the stake high council. Since there was no temple in Australia at that time, Brother and Sister Lord journeyed to the New Zealand Temple for their endowments and sealing. Over the years Brother Lord’s testimony has remained strong. He has filled many Church positions and continues active to this day.

“Mayre Nielsen, thank you for having the truth, living the truth, and sharing the truth.”

I stopped speaking, and the attendant said, “President Monson, Mayre doesn’t know people. She is unable to recognize anyone and doesn’t know who you are. I’ll show you what I mean.”

Turning to Mayre, the attendant said, “Mayre, do you know who this man is?”

Mayre looked at the young woman and said, as clear as clear could be, “Of course. This is Brother Monson.” She then turned back to me, took my hand in hers, and pressed it to her lips. The young attendant also had tears in her eyes as she looked at Mayre in disbelief. Mayre had remembered; Mayre had spoken.

The promise found in the third verse of the beautiful Christmas carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem” had been fulfilled:

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heav’n.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him,
still*

*The dear Christ enters in.
(Hymns, no. 208)*

Adapted from a December 2000 First Presidency Christmas devotional.



Christmas with



The Saints in the 1840s spent Christmas evening with family and friends enjoying good food and sometimes festive music and dancing.

by Caroline H. Benzley



Joseph Smith



Celebrating Christmas in old Nauvoo was simpler, yet the holiday was just as happy as it is today.

Can you imagine going to school on Christmas? What about having Christmas without trees, lights, Christmas cards, or even presents? Although Christmas without these things seems hard to imagine, this describes Christmas Day for the early members of the Church living in Nauvoo.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was born December 23, 1805, just two days before Christmas is celebrated. There is no record of any specific ways the Prophet

celebrated his birthday, but in 1843, on the Prophet's 38th birthday, he recorded that he spent the day preparing for a celebration—a birthday celebration of sorts, but not his own. Rather he spent the day preparing for Christmas, the observed birthday of the Savior.

“Saturday, December 23, 1843—At home, counseling the brethren who called on me, and attending to my domestic duties, making preparations for a Christmas dinner party” (History of the Church, 6:133).

Christmas in Nauvoo

When America was first settled in the 1600s, most of the early settlers did not believe that Christmas should be a time of festivity. They avoided the “impure” Christmas traditions of England. For

Joseph's family and many of the other Saints with New England backgrounds, Thanksgiving was traditionally more celebrated than Christmas. But during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Christmas Day gradually became recognized as a day of celebration as well as a sacred day.

A 19th Century Celebration



Even though Christmas for the Saints in Nauvoo seems to have been very different from Christmas today, the purpose was the same—to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Christmas was still much less festive in those days than it is today. Records show that the Latter-day Saint children in Nauvoo even attended school on December 25th because Christmas was not a legal holiday in the state of Illinois. Christmas trees were not common, and very few of the Saints gave Christmas gifts or cards. Rather than focusing on giving and receiving gifts, the Saints in the 1840s spent Christmas evening with family and friends enjoying good food and sometimes festive music and dancing.

Although there is no record of what

the Saints in Nauvoo served at these dinner parties, the dishes likely contained ingredients used throughout the rest of the winter—flour, sugar, beans, corn, salt, dried meat, and dried fruit. Christmas celebrations also probably included some of the Saints' favorite sweets such as ice cream made from snow, sugar, and flavoring; candy made from molasses; and cookies made with dates or figs.

Christmas with the Prophet

In the *Journal History of the Church* the Prophet did record some memorable Christmas celebrations. These records show how much the Prophet enjoyed the Christmases that he could spend with family and friends. One such entry is on Christmas Day of 1835.

“Friday, December 25, 1835—Enjoyed myself at home with my family, all day, it being Christmas, the only time I have had this privilege so satisfactorily for a long period” (2:345).

Eight years later, on Christmas Day of 1843, the Prophet recorded another memorable Christmas. The celebration began quite early in the morning when carolers serenaded the Prophet's home around 1:00 A.M. This surprise visit made the Prophet very happy; he recorded that the singing “caused a thrill of pleasure to run through [his] soul” (*History of the Church*, 6:134).

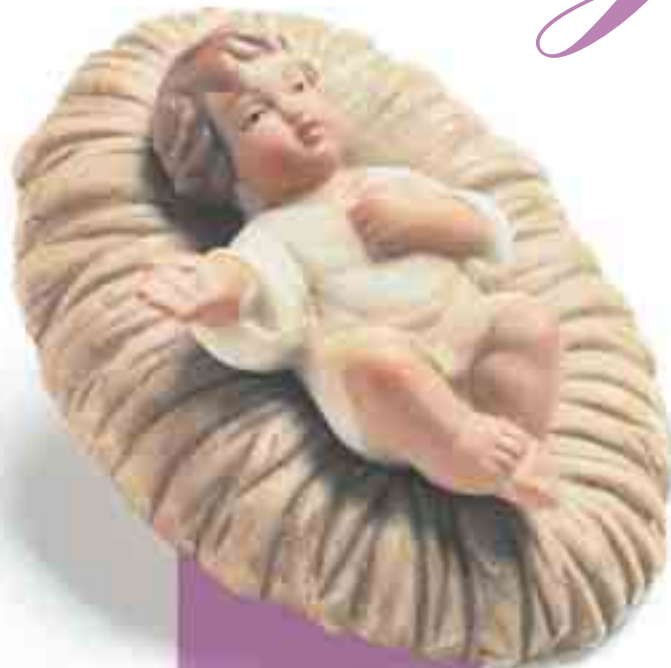
The day continued with a large party. That afternoon Joseph and Emma hosted about 50 couples for dinner, and Joseph recorded the following about the gathering:

“Monday, December 25—A large party supped at my house, and spent the evening in music, dancing, &c., in a most cheerful and friendly manner” (*History of the Church*, 6:134).

The Savior's birthday

Even though Christmas for the Saints in Nauvoo seems to have been very different from Christmas today, the purpose was the same—to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. And few men understand the glory of that birth as did the Prophet himself. For Joseph had seen the Savior, “even on the right hand of God,” and had borne witness through personal knowledge “that he lives” (D&C 76:22–23). **NE**

DOORSTEP *Nativity*



This family Christmas tradition started on a doorstep and ended up in the mission field.

Every December since I can remember my family has bought a nativity set, and every year we give it away. As a family we decide who we will give it to. Usually we choose someone in our ward or neighborhood who does not have family in the area, or someone who may feel lonely over the Christmas season.

Twelve days before Christmas we begin delivering our gifts. Each night we secretly deliver one piece of the nativity set with a poem attached, starting with the camel. On Christmas Eve, we deliver the baby Jesus. We do not run and hide when we deliver this last gift as we do with the others. Instead we deliver this

The best present I get every year is seeing the happiness of the people when they receive that final, most important gift.

by Brent Simkins

last piece with some goodies in person.

The best Christmas gift I get every year is seeing the happiness of the people when we give them the baby Jesus—the piece to complete their set. I always get a wonderful feeling inside when I deliver the nativity set with my family. I know the Lord is pleased with what I am doing.

Last year we chose a young couple who had moved into our ward from across the country. On fast Sunday after Christmas, the woman told how they had felt so alone being so far from their families. She also talked about how much it meant to her that someone had remembered them at that time of year.

My brother is on a mission right now, and last Christmas we sent him a nativity set so he could carry on the tradition even while he was serving. I really enjoy this family tradition. It is something that I plan to continue when I get married. I thank my parents for starting this tradition that helps us focus on the Savior and His birth. **NE**

Jesus

IS OUR SAVIOR



Your Heavenly Father wants you to know His Son and what He has done for you.

In the hearts of all mankind, of whatever race or station in life, there are inexpressible longings for something they do not now possess. This longing is implanted in man by a loving Creator.

It is God's design that this longing of the human heart should lead to the one who alone is able to satisfy it. That fulness is found only in Jesus the Christ, the Son of our Eternal Father in Heaven. Paul declared, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19).

Jesus Christ was chosen and ordained to be the one and only Savior and Redeemer of the world. To the brother of Jared He said:

"Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to

by Elder
David B. Haight
of the Quorum of the
Twelve

When our Lord entered into Jerusalem, the multitudes, as described by Matthew and John, "spread their garments in the way" (Matt. 21:8)





redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name” (Ether 3:14).

He taught His disciples:

“I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. . . .

“That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:38, 40).

Jesus taught and ministered to His disciples

When our Lord entered into Jerusalem, the multitudes, as described by Matthew and John, “spread their garments in the way” (Matt. 21:8), and “took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him” (John 12:13).

It was the time of the annual feast of the Passover. For some time the chief priests of the Sanhedrin had conspired together to find an excuse for taking Jesus and plotted to put Him to death. They felt their opportunity had arrived.

The day preceding the eating of the

Passover, Jesus instructed His disciples where to find a room so they could meet together and receive His instructions. In that room Jesus met with the Twelve, and they sat down to eat. After they had finished, Jesus taught them and ministered to them. He washed their feet and said to them:

“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:13–14).

Then He taught them:

“Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. . . .

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; . . .

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:31, 33–35).

He continued to teach:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye

While in that upper room, Jesus, initiating the sacrament, picked up bread, broke it, prayed over it, and passed it to the disciples, saying: “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).



Of His suffering in the garden, the Savior has said: *“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit (D&C 19:18).*

believe in God, believe also in me.
 “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
 “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know” (John 14:1–4).
 But Thomas asked, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). The Savior replied:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
 “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him” (John 14:6–7).

“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father” (John 16:28).
 “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23).

Jesus initiated the sacrament and prayed for believers

While in that upper room, Jesus, initiating the sacrament, picked up bread, brake it, prayed over it, and passed it to the disciples, saying:

“This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. . . . This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19–20).

After introducing the sacrament, the Savior said to His disciples, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7).

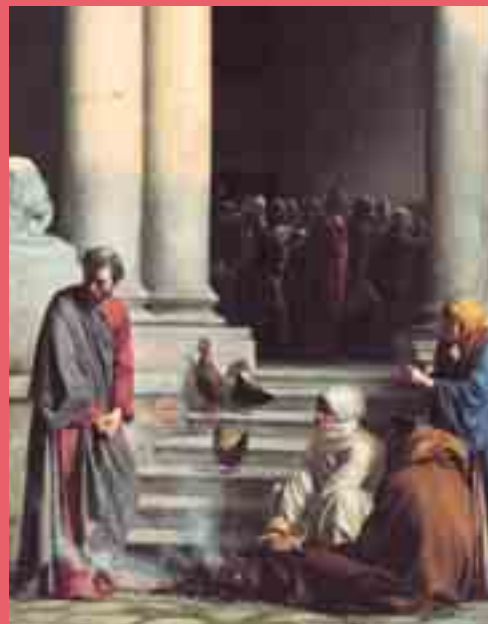
The Savior prayed to the Father for the Apostles and all believers:

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:
 “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:1–3).

The betrayal

After Jesus had finished His prayer to His Father, He left the upper room with the disciples and entered the Garden of Gethsemane to seek solitude and to pray:
 “O my Father, if it be possible, let this



The crowd shouted, *“Crucify him. Crucify him. Away with him. Crucify him” (see Luke 23:21). And they took Him, the Master—He whom Peter denied three times—and led Him forth.*

cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39).

Of His suffering in the garden, the Savior Himself has said:

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:18–19).

“Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent” (D&C 19:16).

As the guards and Judas approached Him, the Lord said, “Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me” (Matt. 26:46).

Then Judas kissed Him on the cheek. Jesus asked, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Matt. 26:50).

"Whom seek ye?" (John 18:4).

"They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth."

The Savior said, "I am he" (John 18:5).

The guards then led Jesus away to the Jewish rulers and then to Caiaphas, the high priest (see Matt. 26:57).

The Crucifixion

"I adjure thee by the living God," said Caiaphas, "that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63).

"I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

Jesus was then taken before Pilate, who asked, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33).

Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews" (John 18:36).

Pilate said to the crowd:

"I find in him no fault at all.

"But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" (John 18:38–39).

The crowd shouted, "Not this man, but Barabbas" (John 18:40).

Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe (see Mark 15:15–17).

Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

The crowd shouted, "Crucify him. Crucify him. Away with him. Crucify him" (see Luke 23:21).

And they took Him, the Master—He whom Peter denied three times—and led Him forth. He carried His own cross. He began the long journey to the hill, past the crowds that lined the way, past the weeping women, past the murderous mob that had cried for His crucifixion and through the gates of the city, out to the hill called Golgotha—the "place of a skull" (see John 19:17). And there they crucified Him.

To the penitent thief hanging beside

Him, Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

The last mortal words of Jesus:

"Woman, behold thy son!" (John 19:26).

And then turning to John, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:27).

And then, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

"It is finished" (John 19:30).

The Resurrection

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning," women went to the sepulchre with spices they had prepared, and "found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre" (Luke 24:1–2).

The voice of an angel asked:

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:5–6). This announcement proclaimed the most glorious event since the dawn of creation.

Mary heard a voice ask: "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

She said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

She heard someone say, "Mary."

Then she knew Him and replied, "Master."

"Touch me not," He said, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (see John 20:15–17).

Later Jesus appeared to the Apostles in the upper room where He had spent the evening with them prior to His death. They were frightened. Then they heard the voice of the Master:

"Peace be unto you. . . .

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:36, 38–39).

Later, on the seashore at Galilee, while the Savior and the disciples were eating fish together, Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my lambs."



The last mortal words of Jesus: "Woman, behold thy son!" And then, turning to John, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26–27). And then, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). "It is finished" (John 19:30).

After His resurrection He tarried on the earth for some 40 days, that His disciples might more fully comprehend His risen and glorified being and be instructed in matters of the kingdom of God. Now He was ready to leave. The Apostles knew He was the Savior. His disciples would no longer associate Him with only the tomb. They would testify of Him as glorified.



“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”
 “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

“Feed my sheep.”

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

“Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

And the Savior replied yet again, “Feed my sheep” (see John 21:15–17).

Three times Peter had openly denied the Lord. Now, three times Jesus drew from him the assurance of his love and loyalty.

The time had come for Jesus to ascend to His Father’s throne. Before His death He had declared to His Father, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4).

After His resurrection He tarried on the earth for some 40 days, that His disciples might more fully comprehend His risen and glorified being and be instructed in matters of the kingdom of God.

Now He was ready to leave. The Apostles knew He was the Savior. His disciples would no longer associate Him with only the tomb. They would testify of Him as glorified.

Mount of Olives

As the place for His ascension Jesus chose the Mount of Olives, which He knew well; for nearby, on the slope of the mount at Bethany, He had found rest and affection with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Also near was the Garden of

Gethsemane where He had prayed and agonized alone. He chose the Mount of Olives to ascend from, and upon its summit His feet will rest when He comes again—not as a man of sorrows, but as a glorious and triumphant king.

There on the Mount of Olives the Savior instructed the Apostles and all who believe:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:19–20).

I testify by the power of the Holy Ghost that this same Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, crucified for the sins of the world “to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

“That through him all might be saved” (see D&C 76:41–42). “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom” (Isa. 40:11).

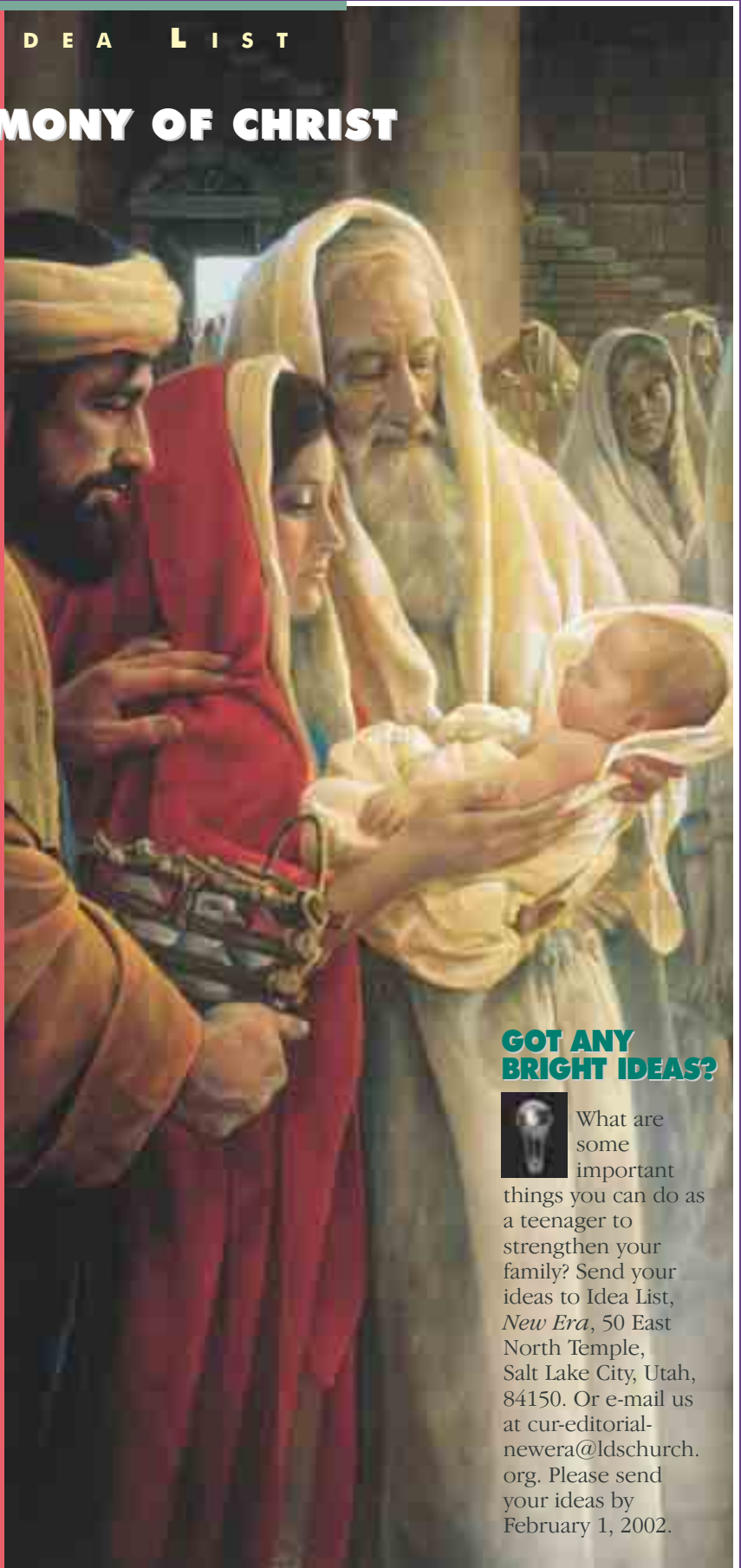
He is our Redeemer, our Lord, our King. His kingdom is again established on the earth, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This church, by divine direction, is preparing the world for His Second Coming—for He will come again. **NE**

Adapted from an April 1982 general conference address.

BUILDING A TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

A testimony of Jesus Christ is a priceless blessing. What better time than Christmas to learn more about the Savior and grow closer to Him? If you really want to have faith in and know Christ, try these suggestions on building your personal testimony:

- Pray for a testimony of the Savior and the strength to be like Him.
- One of the best ways to know Christ is to try to be like Him. Look for opportunities to serve this Christmas.
- Share your testimony. Like our bodies, our spirits need exercise, so don't let your faith lie dormant.
- Believe and do. Faith does not start as perfect knowledge but grows as we learn and obey. If your actions are consistent with your belief in Christ, your testimony will continue to grow (see Alma 32:26–43).
- Live your life so that you will be worthy of receiving promptings from the Holy Spirit, and it will testify of Christ (see John 7:17 and D&C 8:1–3).
- If there are sins you need to repent of and forsake, don't delay. Have faith in Christ's Atonement.
- Follow the words of the prophets, both living and ancient. They teach of Christ and show us how to be like Him.
- Try to focus more on the birth and life of the Savior in your Christmas celebration than on parties or shopping for presents.
- Read 2 Nephi 25:23–26, or another scripture about Christ, and write your thoughts and feelings about the Savior in your journal.
- Read the Christmas story to a younger brother or sister, and teach them about the Savior (see Luke 2).
- Read "The Living Christ: The testimony of the Apostles" (*New Era*, Apr. 2000, 20–21).
- Learn all of the words to the hymn "I Believe in Christ," (*Hymns*, no. 134).
- A testimony never stands still. It is either growing or diminishing. Be sure to keep your testimony alive by serving others, praying, staying worthy, and by sharing it. **NE**



GOT ANY BRIGHT IDEAS?



What are some important things you can do as a teenager to strengthen your family? Send your ideas to Idea List, *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84150. Or e-mail us at cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org. Please send your ideas by February 1, 2002.

Q & A

“My younger brother tags along with me everywhere I go. I know we should get along, but he often says and does things that embarrass me when we’re together. How can we resolve this problem?”

NEW ERA

It isn't uncommon for a younger brother to look up to an older brother. Sometimes this admiration can be so strong it might be like having a second shadow. He may want to go everywhere you go and do everything you do. He may say or do things that embarrass you.

The bottom line is he probably just wants your attention. Although this may be annoying, it's also an opportunity. If your brother admires you enough to tag along everywhere you go, you might be able to have a great influence over him as his role model. And, with time and effort, you could become good friends.

One of the first things you should do is to pray about the situation. Ask Heavenly Father to help you work on your relationship with your brother.

When you can, include your brother in your activities. But try to find time you can spend with just him. If you can give him your focused attention for a while, he might understand more when you want to spend time alone or with your other friends. You also might get to know him better and enjoy his friendship.

Use this opportunity to be a role model for your younger brother.

Ask Heavenly Father to help you work on your relationship with your brother.

When you can, include your brother in your activities, and try to find time you can spend with just him.

Talk to him about how you feel, and be ready to listen to what he has to say.

Treat him the way you would like to be treated.

Pray for patience.

READERS

I think the first thing you need to do is talk to your brother. Tell him, in a loving way, how you feel when he says and does things that embarrass you. I also recommend that you pray for help to resolve the problem.

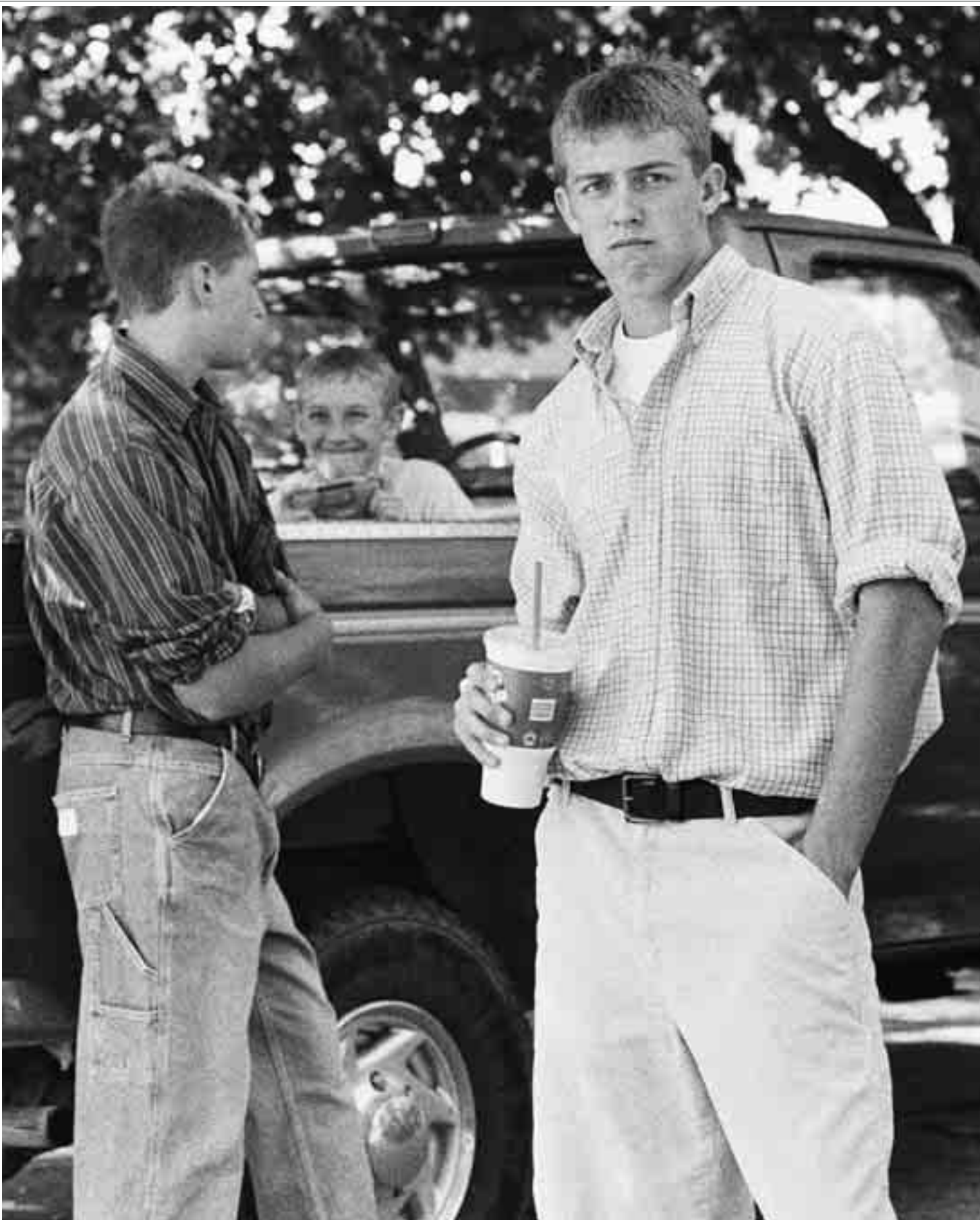
Joangela Castro, 18
New York, New York



When I was younger, my older brother would take me out with him. I loved it because it showed his love for me and gave me someone to look up to. When I was older, I would take my little brother with me. Some of the best times I remember are when I was with my brothers. Looking back, I wish I had spent more time with them.

Elder Eric Andrew Smith, 19
Illinois Chicago North Mission





You should also talk to him about how you feel. Be conscious of his feelings and don't forget to treat him the way you would like to be treated. Explain to him that you enjoy spending time with him, but sometimes you need your space. When you talk to him, be ready to listen.

What you may need more than anything is patience. It may not be what you want to hear, but sometimes it just takes time for little brothers to grow out of their tagalong phase.

"Patience with family members and others who are close to us is vital for us to have happy homes," Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve said. "However, we often seem more willing to be courteous and polite with strangers than with those in our own family circles" (*Ensign*, May 1987, 32).

Although your relationship with your friends might seem like the most important thing to you right now, it's important to keep an eternal perspective. One of our goals is to spend eternity with our families. That includes your brother. As you grow older, your circle of friends might change. But your brother will be your brother forever. **NE**

Answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and where you are from. Please include a snapshot of yourself that is 1 1/2 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm) or larger.

Q&A, New Era
50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

QUESTION

I will soon turn 12 and receive the priesthood. I know this means I will have more responsibilities even though I'm not sure yet what those responsibilities are. What should I do to prepare?

Please respond by February 1, 2002.



When we realize that parents and family members can be more than blood relations and are in very deed friends, then we will have a glimpse of how our Heavenly Father wants us to live, not only as brothers and sisters but as very close friends" (*Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, 51).

—Elder
Marvin J. Ashton
(1915–1994)

Discuss your concerns with your brother. Let him know your feelings. Explain that you love him, and then take the opportunity to lead him by example. Through this your love and friendship will grow.



Nelson Pettey, 19
Breakwater, Geelong, Australia

You should pray to Heavenly Father for help. I'm sure your brother is following you because he looks up to you. You just have to think he must follow you for a reason, and he doesn't mean to embarrass you.



Leah McCormick, 16
Lakeville, Massachusetts

Maybe you could set some time aside each week for just the two of you. Your relationship will grow, and he may not seem so embarrassing to you anymore.

Melissa Johnson, 19
Sandy, Utah

All I have to do is show respect and love towards my brother, and everything works out great. When my brother isn't around, my friends always tell me they like the relationship I have with my brother and they wish they could be like us.



Robert Warner, 15
Princeton, California



YOU
ARE
UNIQUE

AND YOU ARE NOT LOST IN THE CROWD.
YOU ARE KNOWN AND LOVED BY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.
(SEE D&C 76:24.)

The TRUTH about CHRISTMAS

Even in the dim light of morning it gleamed beautifully. But who . . . ? How had it gotten there?

by Elder
Rex D. Pinegar
Emeritus Member of the
Seventy

We were old enough to know the truth about Christmas—it was just a different truth than we had expected.

It was soon to be Christmas. My twin brother and I had reached the age when we knew the “truth” about Christmas. Our family’s humble circumstances had always provided little help for Santa Claus. Max and I had decided between us that we would ease Mother’s concern about it and so confided in her our knowledge. She merely replied, “Well, is that so?”

Christmas Eve came. The family decorated the tree, made candy and popcorn balls, and placed our homemade presents beneath the tree. Dad sent us boys downstairs to bed, indicating that we were to stay there until he called us in the morning. Still laughing and giggling from the fun and excitement, Max and I followed our older brother, Lynn, down the stairs. With some effort on our part and some added encouragement from our father, we finally quieted down. Sleep came at last.

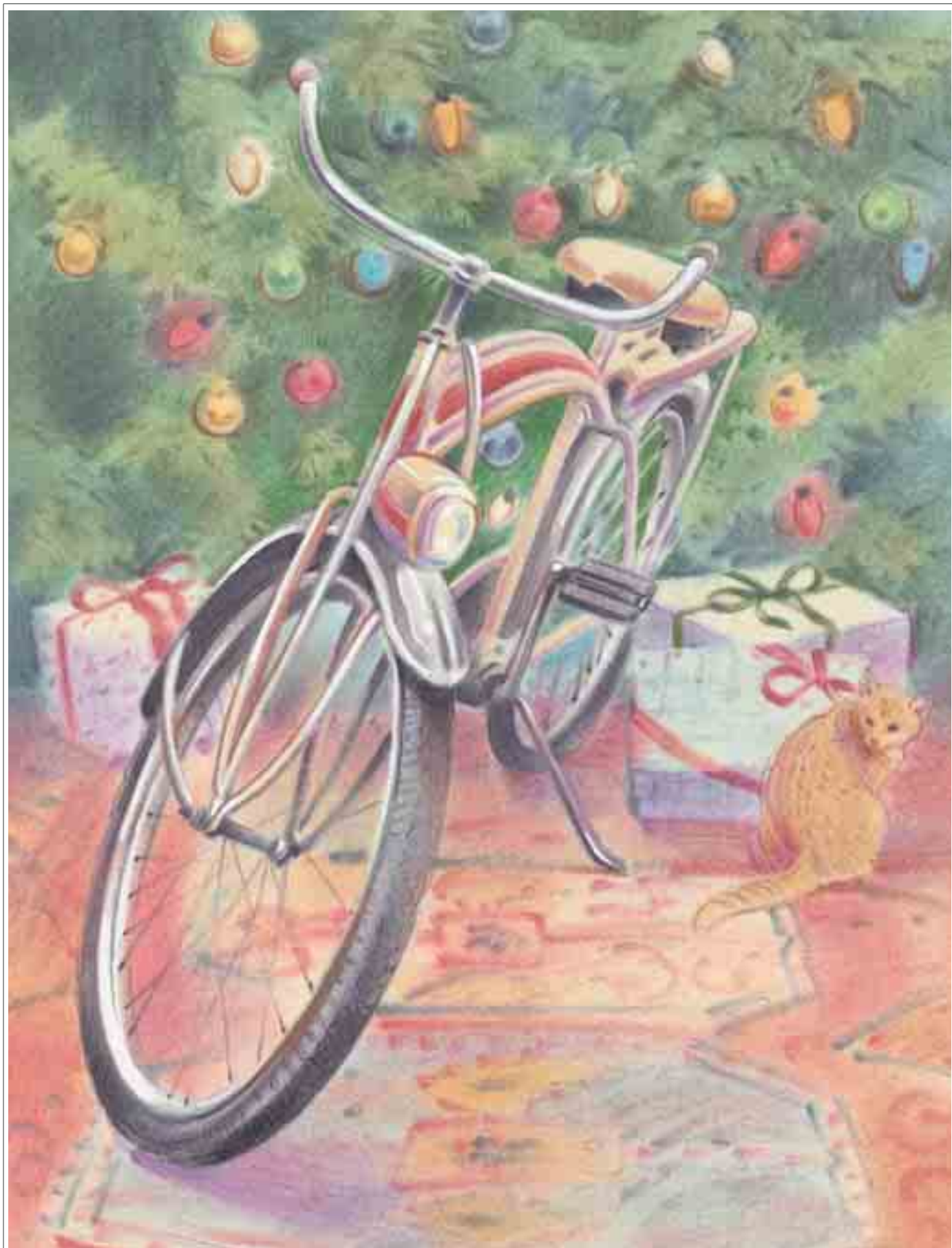
It seemed I hadn’t been asleep long when Max awakened me with the news that it was 7:15 A.M.—time to hurry up to

the living room. Our excitement and noisy efforts hurrying up the stairs awakened our father. As we reached the kitchen door we heard his somewhat irritated voice saying it was only 25 minutes before 3:00 A.M. (we had read the clock backwards) and we were to get right back into bed and wait as we had been told earlier!

We turned back toward the stairs. It was then that we saw it! Even in the very dim light it was beautiful! We sat down in the dark of the stairwell and described to each other a most unexpected surprise—a Hiawatha Streamer bicycle! The fact that there was just one, that there were 20 inches of snow outside and no place to ride, or that we couldn’t read which of the children it was for somehow didn’t matter.

It seemed that we sat there on the stairs for hours, counting each tick of the clock and anxiously awaiting the call of our father. Finally we heard Dad’s heavy footsteps as he walked from the bedroom toward the stairs. He hardly needed to beckon us to come.

There it was—“TO THE TWINS FROM SANTA”—the most beautiful bicycle we had ever seen. It was cream-colored, decorated with a bright red stripe and shiny chrome fenders, and completely outfitted with headlight, tool compartment, fender rack, reflector, and spring seat. We could hardly believe it



was ours! Soon my brothers and I were clearing a pathway in the snow and were riding the sleek new Streamer. Cold hands and toes were ignored. What a wonderful time we had!

In my excitement and almost total preoccupation with our wonderful Christmas gift, I had failed to notice that there were few other gifts beneath the tree for other members of the family. Christmas stockings contained an orange in the toe, a few nuts, and some hard candy. Hand-wrapped pieces of honey candy and homemade fudge completed Santa's treat.

That evening as we went to bed, Max and I talked about the day's event—the bicycle. We planned how we would use the bike. We would get a paper route. We would have transportation to work during the summer, and we would be able to ride to school during the winter. It could be put to so many uses! Then our wonderment returned. Where had the bicycle come from? We knew Mom and Dad couldn't afford to buy it. We were also aware of the wartime shortages. Who had made this prized gift possible?

It wasn't until several years later that we learned the beautiful, heartwarming truth. The sacrifice and concern of a loving mother, brother, and sister had made possible that unforgettable Christmas. Our brother had worked extra hours at a creamery after school. Our sister had done housework for a neighbor. Our mother had saved money from her early-morning work at the cannery during the harvest months. They had each worked extra hours and had sacrificed their time, their earnings, and their own Christmas gifts to provide a special Christmas for the young twins.

The happiness of that Christmas was surpassed only by the discovery of their secret and their love and sacrifice for us. Here was the true spirit of Christmas—an older brother and sister lending unselfish support to parents, desiring to give anonymously that which they'd never had themselves, seeking no credit or praise for their act, expecting no reciprocation. This example of the love of

children for parents and brothers I shall always cherish and value as a priceless gift.

The bike is gone, long ago worn out by two robust boys. Its shininess faded through constant use and enjoyment. The years, however, have only increased the glow of true Christlike love between family members. This act of love, and others like it, created ties that have brought our family members to the aid and support of one another many times and under every circumstance.

How valuable are the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ taught to us in our homes. They strengthen us, bring us everlasting joy and happiness, and, if lived, bind us together in an eternal family relationship. **NE**

Originally printed in the December 1990 New Era.

I t wasn't until several years later that we learned the heartwarming truth about a loving family's sacrifice.





531 PAGES TIL *Christmas*

Each Christmas I give myself a very special gift.

About eight years ago I set a goal to finish reading the Book of Mormon before the end of the year. It had been a couple of years since I had started it, and I read a lot during November and December to complete my goal. Perhaps it was the holiday season, or perhaps just my marathon reading toward the end, but I found that Joseph Smith's words were true when he said "a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" ("Introduction," Book of Mormon). Because of the way I felt, I set a new goal to read the Book of Mormon before Christmas the next year.

The first year I read all the Book of Mormon, I wrote the date and described my feelings on a note, which I put on the title page. The next year, when I read the Book of Mormon from Christmas to Christmas, I attached

t's a present that lasts all year long and always brings me closer to my Savior.

by Vicki H. Budge

another note.

Now I read the Book of Mormon every year. Each time I finish, I immediately read the first verse of 1 Nephi so I've already started my reading for the next year.

President Ezra Taft Benson, 13th president of the Church, promised many blessings if we will read the Book of Mormon again and again.

"I bless you with increased understanding of the Book of Mormon. I promise you that from this moment forward, if we will daily sup from its pages and abide by its precepts, God will pour out upon each child of Zion and the Church a blessing hitherto unknown" (*Ensign*, May 1986, 78).

I love to finish the Book of Mormon each year just before Christmas. It has become my favorite tradition because it helps me feel closer to the Savior. My increased understanding of the book helps me with the difficulties of this life. I know I have received the blessings, even miracles, that President Benson promised. **NE**

Tom Holdman had so many things to say, but his words just wouldn't come out. The more he tried, the more he stuttered, so Tom began to dream of becoming a children's book illustrator. He couldn't have known at the time how his disability would bless his life.

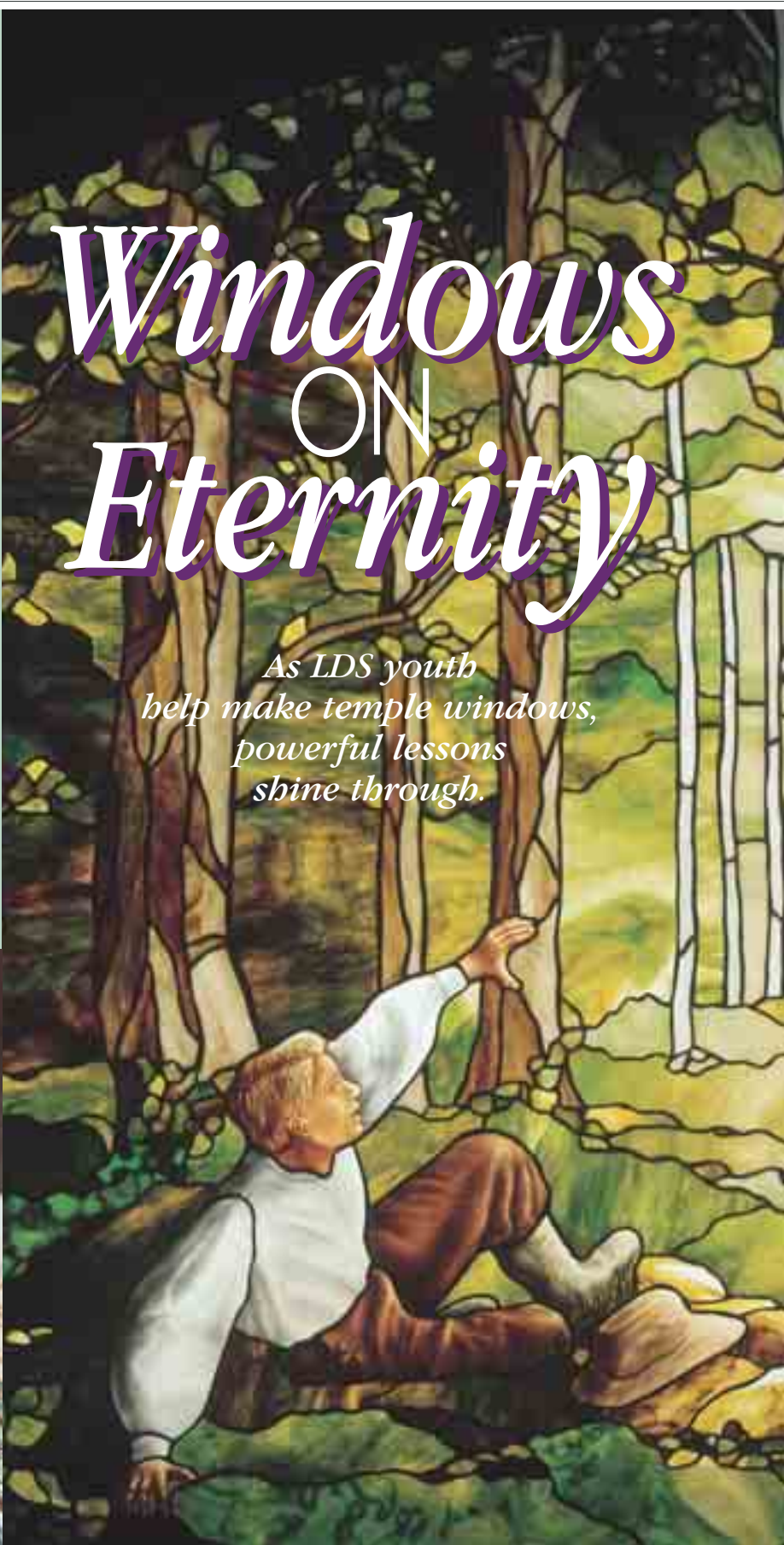
"My stuttering actually helped me," he recalls, "because it kept me humble enough to spend hours developing my artistic talent." Tom drew on everything: books, notebooks, math and English papers.

Tom also drew on his faith. "When I was 16, I wanted to find out for myself if the Church was true. I read the Book of Mormon, then prayed, but received no answer. So I tried again. Still, no answer. On the third day, I felt the Spirit come upon me, and all of a sudden the scriptures came alive and I knew the gospel of Jesus Christ was real."

So as Tom neared 19, he put his faith in the Lord. He was interviewed by his bishop and received a mission call. "I was so frightened," he says, "but when I was

Windows ON Eternity

*As LDS youth
help make temple windows,
powerful lessons
shine through.*





“ *was overwhelmed about doing this window for the Lord’s temple right there on the land where the First Vision actually happened,” says Tom. “I wanted to portray that wonderful light the Prophet Joseph felt in the Sacred Grove.”*

by Jane H. Forsgren



A favorite Mutual activity for teens in the Hillcrest Second Ward of American Fork, Utah, was helping artist Tom Holdman prepare the stained glass windows meant for the temples in Palmyra, New York, and Winter Quarters, Nebraska.

set apart, I was given the gift of tongues. It was amazing. Whenever I gave a gospel discussion, I spoke fluently, but as soon as the closing prayer was over, I stammered again.”

Tom admits he sometimes hated stuttering and wondered why he had such a problem. One time, assigned to speak at a convert baptism in his Texas Dallas Mission, Tom stood before the congregation with confidence, believing the Lord would help him. But he could not utter one word fluently. That evening he prayed, “Why did you abandon me?” The next day at fast meeting, Tom felt prompted to stand. Without a single pause, he bore a powerful witness of the Savior and of the truthfulness of the gospel.

Two weeks later, a sister in the ward told Tom her inactive brother had attended both the baptism and fast meeting. “If I ever doubted God lives, I will never doubt it again, because I saw Him help that young man to speak,” he told his sister.

Tom’s strong spirit and example led

his mission president to ask him to extend his mission. Anxious to return home, Tom prayed about it. “As I was praying, I felt the Spirit say to me, ‘If you stay, you will be blessed.’ When I wondered how, a vision of doing stained glass work came into my mind.” Tom extended his mission.

Weak things made strong

The words given to the prophet Ether in the Book of Mormon had great meaning for Tom: “I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . 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).

Putting his faith and trust in Heavenly Father, Tom returned to Orem and knocked on doors, soliciting orders for stained glass windows. His first big break came when the Ashton Family Foundation made it possible for Tom to make the Orem children’s library windows.

Soon after, Bengt Erlandsson, interior designer for the Palmyra New York



Temple, asked Tom for a sketch of the First Vision. Again, Tom turned to the Lord.

“I was overwhelmed about doing this window for the Lord’s temple right there on the land where the First Vision actually happened,” says Tom. “I went to the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple for inspiration, and while praying, my mind was flooded with a vision of all 108 windows. I wanted to portray that wonderful light the Prophet Joseph felt in the Sacred Grove.”

Tom sketched the artwork and remembers going to the Church Office Building thinking, What am I doing? I’m just a young man with all these ideas for windows they didn’t even ask for. I must be crazy. But he felt the Spirit prompting him.

Miraculously, Tom’s sketches were approved. With tears in their eyes, Tom and his wife, Gayle, knelt and thanked the Lord for allowing them such a privilege.

With less than four months to complete the 17,000-piece project, Tom

worked feverishly, involving youth from his area. “I hired 16- to 19-year-olds who had an open mind and would ask for God’s help,” he says.

On April 6, 2000, Tom and Gayle entered the celestial room for the Palmyra temple dedication. “Everyone was telling me how beautiful the windows were, but the Spirit whispering, ‘I am pleased with the work,’ was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life,” he says.

People are more important than windows

Tom’s next assignment was the Winter Quarters stained glass windows in Omaha, Nebraska. “How can I get this project done on time and strengthen others along the way?” he inquired of the Lord. The answer came very simply: people are more important than windows; involve as many members as possible. Soon Tom had youth groups and leaders carefully copper-foiling the precious glass pieces. They listened to some of Tom’s experiences as they worked.

Like when he painted the boy prophet. “I tried for a week to capture the emotion Joseph felt in the Sacred Grove: awe, yet peace and amazement. I just didn’t have it right. So I got on my knees and pleaded for help. The very next day, Paul Smith, a University of Utah institute teacher, came to my door. He had been impressed to bring me a copy of the death mask and some information about the Prophet Joseph.”

Tom explained to the youth that, where possible, he used crystal in the Winter Quarters Temple because regular glass is full of impurities; so they, too, must enter the house of God pure and undefiled.

He explained how the Palmyra temple windows represent a person’s journey through life. Entering the front doors, which depict the tree of knowledge of good and evil, one can look down a hallway through windows overlooking the world, or turn toward the First Vision window. “You see,” said Tom, “you must make a choice in life to follow the world, or to obtain a testimony of our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Restoration of the gospel.”



Following full-scale drawings done by Brother Holdman, teens place each piece of glass as in a jigsaw puzzle. The edges of each piece must be coated with copper foil, a tedious but important job. Then the pieces are joined to make the window.



Best of all, while working on the windows, the teens get to hear Brother Holdman tell about the symbolism in the windows and how he gained the inspiration to create such works of art. And they are excited to know that their work will go into beautifying houses of the Lord.

The youth loved the service project. And they learned that the Lord does indeed make weak things become strong to those who humble themselves and seek to do His will. Buffy Snell, an adviser in the Hillcrest Second Ward, American Fork Utah Hillcrest Stake, put their thoughts into these words:

The Window Maker

Jagged glass has meaning to an artist with a vision

He forms his art for temple light with symbols and precision.

As he taught us of his calling from our Father up above,

For this humble man before me, I felt awe and I felt love.

The words he used, they filled me full, though stuttered, slurred, and broken;

It was as if, it seemed to me, God's own mouth had spoken.

Through fractured tongue and fractured glass, my heart was made contrite,

*By lighting hidden beauty, the Master gives us sight. **NE***





Mary's

My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46–47).

by Shannon Edwards

To learn my role, I went from script to scripture. That’s when it all really came together for me.

When I was younger I spent a lot of time participating in community playhouse productions. One Christmas we started working on a play called *Child of Bethlehem*, and I was honored to play the part of Mary.

A lot of hard work and determination went into my part and into the play. I always tried to put myself in the shoes of the person I portrayed. But this time the lines I had been practicing weren’t forming a character, and it was drawing closer to opening night. I decided to pray about it. I asked for the ability to feel how Mary felt and to understand her thoughts and feelings so I could portray her to the best of my ability. I soon came to the conclusion that I needed to read and study the whole story. I studied it over and over. Soon my character developed, and the rehearsals began to come together beautifully.

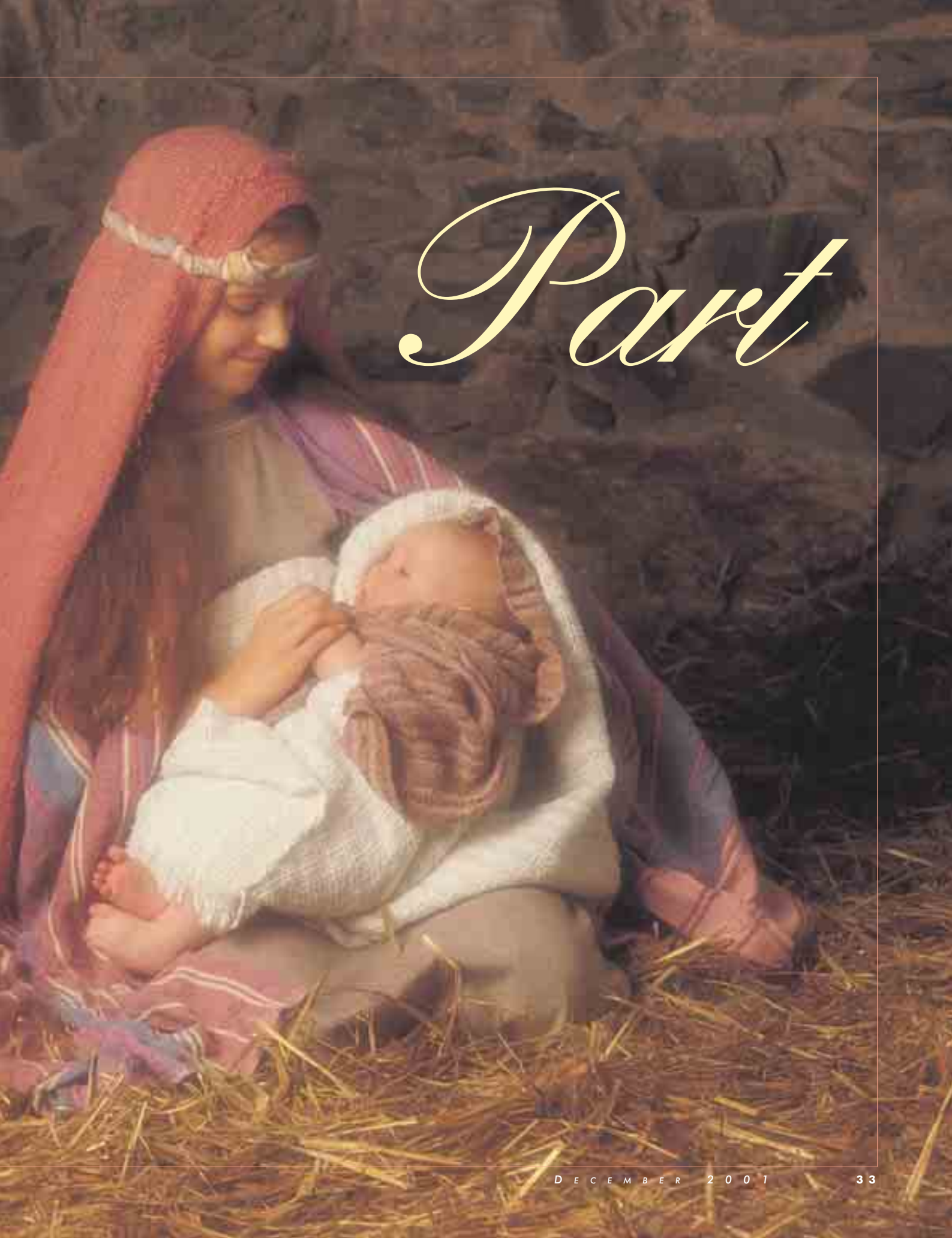
Along with everyone else, I was flustered when opening night came. But I was determined to be a wonderful Mary. I asked Heavenly Father to help me feel the Spirit and share it with the audience.

At my cue I walked onto the stage, and it seemed that I was no longer performing. I never once thought about my next line. The words just seemed to flow from my heart and my mind.

Tears filled my eyes, for I knew Mary had been chosen to bring the Son of God into the world. My heart swelled with joy and peace. I knew what Mary meant when she said, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46–47).

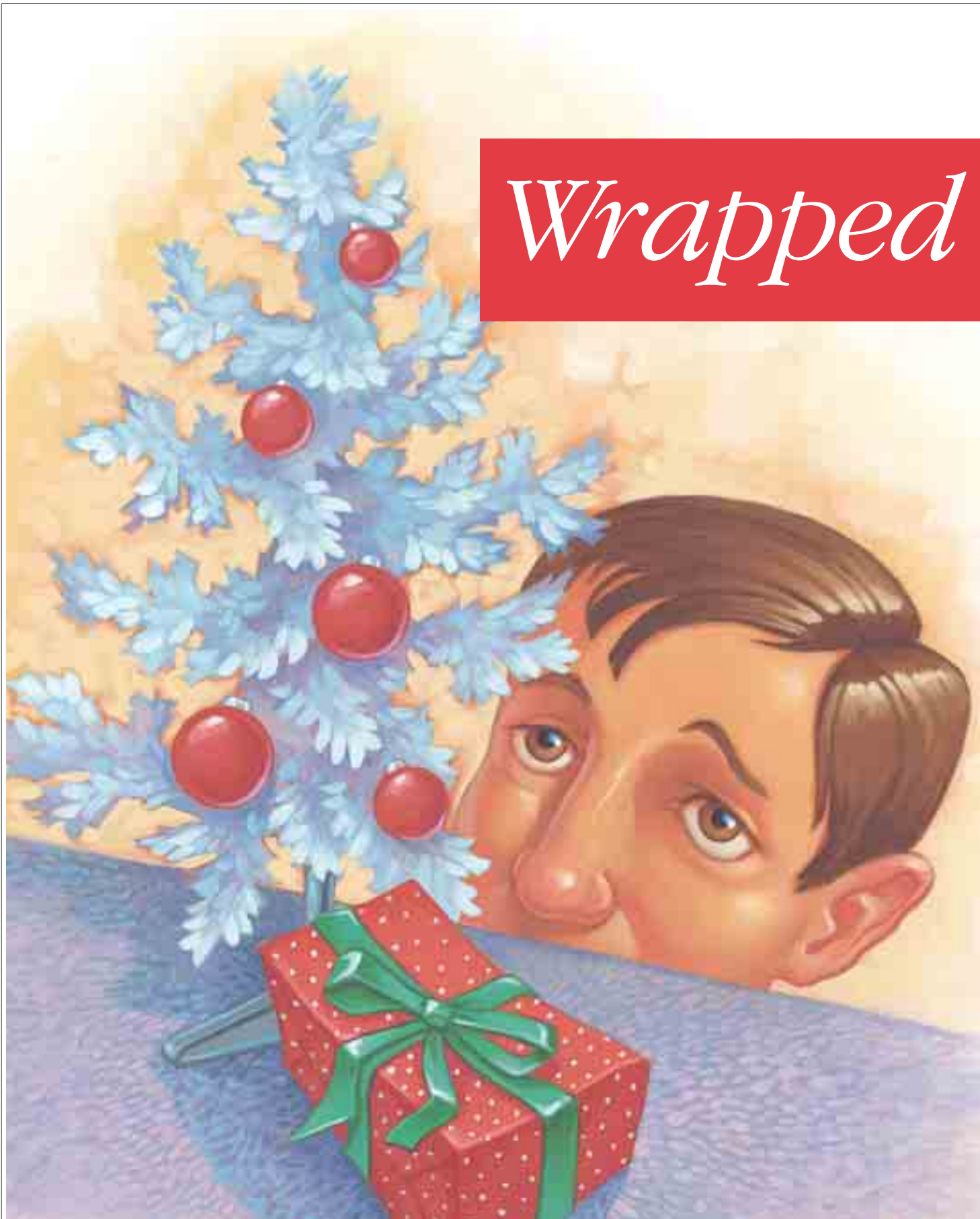
My spirit rejoiced, knowing that a young, imperfect woman could experience such a wonderful gift from her Heavenly Father. How awestruck Mary must have been. “For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (Luke 1:48).

What a wonderful gift Jesus was for Mary and what a wonderful gift from Heavenly Father to all of us. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). **NE**



Part

Wrapped



UP IN MYSELF

*No Christmas package!
No Christmas dinner! Is
this the thanks I get for
my missionary service?*

It was just a few days before Christmas in Western Australia, and all the missionaries were excited about the scheduled mission Christmas party. But no one could have been as excited as I was. It had been two weeks since I had received any mail from home, so I was sure I would receive my Christmas package at the mission party.

In our mission, all mail went to the mission office and was forwarded from there. A short mail strike had just ended, so the office staff had decided to hold everyone's mail and bring it to the party as early Christmas presents. Anyone who knows how much letters and packages mean to a missionary will appreciate the intent behind this plan.

There were 108 missionaries in our mission, but only 107 got mail that day. It was difficult watching everyone with their Christmas packages, cards, and letters, but I tried to appear as though I was having a good time. My parents had told me in an earlier letter that a package was on its way. So I kept telling myself that it must have been delayed by the mail strike.

The day after the party was the last mail delivery day before Christmas. Once again I was disappointed when no

mail arrived from home. I began to focus on Christmas day and the dinner my companion and I had been invited to enjoy at the home of some Church members. I knew this family from my first area of service and always looked forward to the quality and quantity of the food they typically prepared for the missionaries.

On Christmas Eve, we received a call from the zone leaders, who informed us that the mission president had decided no one was to leave their area on Christmas Day. They instructed us to cancel all plans to do so.

I was devastated. It just did not seem fair that all of these things should make my Christmas so miserable. I kept thinking, Here I am dedicating my life to the work of the Lord and this is the "thanks" I get.

Since we had no telephone in our apartment, my companion and I had to impose on our landlady to phone our regrets to the family. Sensing our disappointment at having to cancel our plans, she invited us to join her for Christmas dinner. We gladly accepted the invitation.

Upon returning to our apartment, I lay staring at our borrowed 12-inch aluminum Christmas tree. It sure didn't look like any of the trees we had back home. This isn't what Christmas is all about, I kept thinking until I fell asleep.

I awoke Christmas morning to find a Christmas present under our little tree. It was addressed to me from my companion. Overwhelmed by shame, I pretended I didn't see the gift. I

*I awoke
Christmas
morning to find
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little tree. It was
addressed to me
from my
companion.*

by Todd F. Cope

suggested that we get dressed and go do some contacting at the city park. As we rode our bikes to the center of town, we did not see a single person. There were no children to race us on our bicycles and no cars to contend with at the intersections. The normally bustling park was completely deserted. With little reason to stay in town, we headed back to our apartment. Along the way, we stopped at the only shop open for business. My companion began visiting with the shopkeeper, so I tried to discreetly select a gift.

This was not easy since the store catered mainly to convenience shopping. I did manage to make my purchase, and we returned home.

I made up an excuse to keep my companion occupied while I placed the box of chocolate-covered hazelnuts under the tree. Unfortunately, he saw me and suggested that I open my gift from him.

I will never forget the embarrassment I felt as I unwrapped the present. Inside the homemade wrapping paper I found several little items, including a mechanical pencil and some erasers.

There was little monetary value to the gifts, but the value of the lesson I learned can hardly be measured. At that moment, I recognized that I had been right the previous evening. This isn't what Christmas is all about. It's not about packages, presents, and decorations. Christmas is about thinking of others and giving of oneself.

I had become so wrapped up in self-pity that I had completely forgotten the true meaning of this special day.

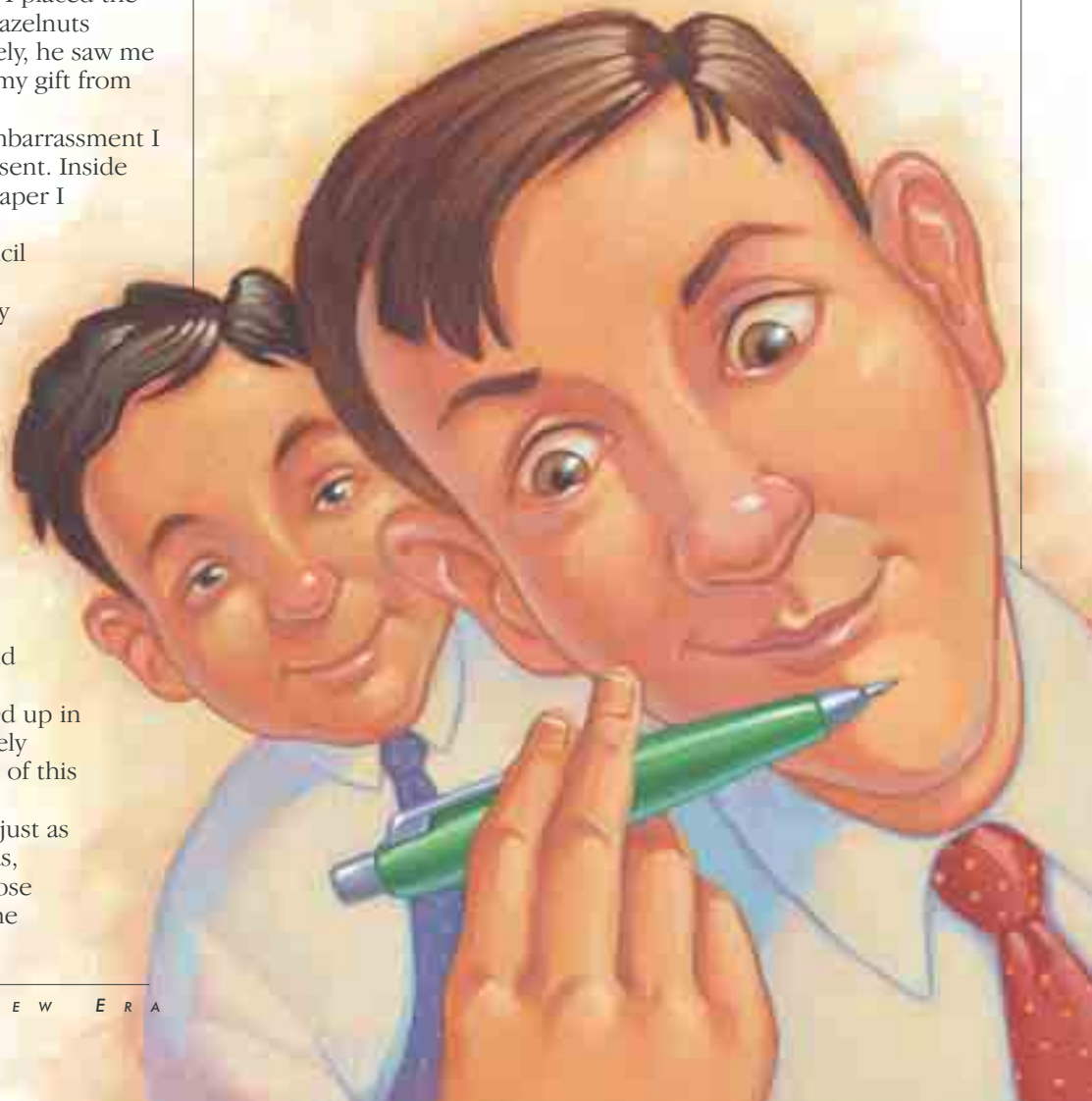
My companion, though, just as far away from home as I was, had remembered the purpose of Christmas. He went to the effort of buying, wrapping,

and putting the gift under the tree without my even knowing. He quietly gave me the joy I seemed unable to find on my own. My sad attempt to make up for my thoughtlessness was just that, a sad attempt.

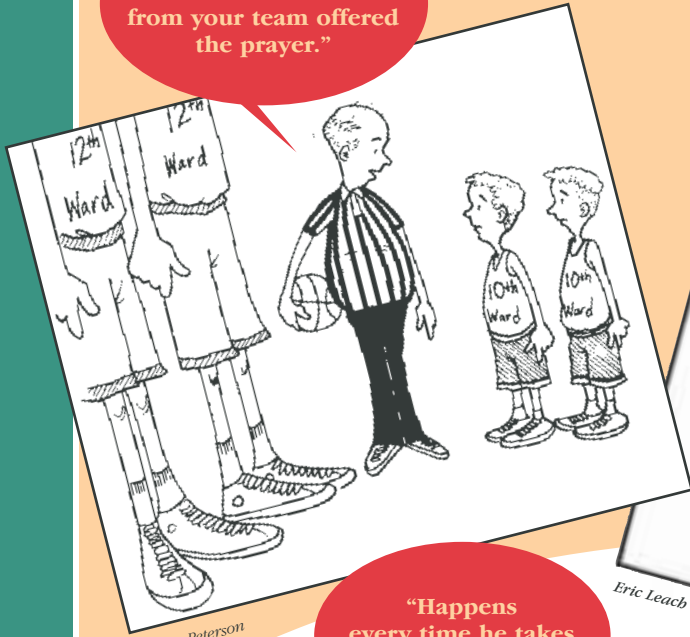
I have come to look upon that Christmas experience as one of my favorites. My missionary companion gave me one of the greatest gifts anyone could receive—an understanding of the true meaning of Christmas.

I still have the pencil given to me those many years ago. Each time I use it, I am reminded of the real gift he gave me that morning. **NE**

His gift to me had cost very little money. But the lesson I learned can hardly be measured.



"I think it would be better if someone from your team offered the prayer."



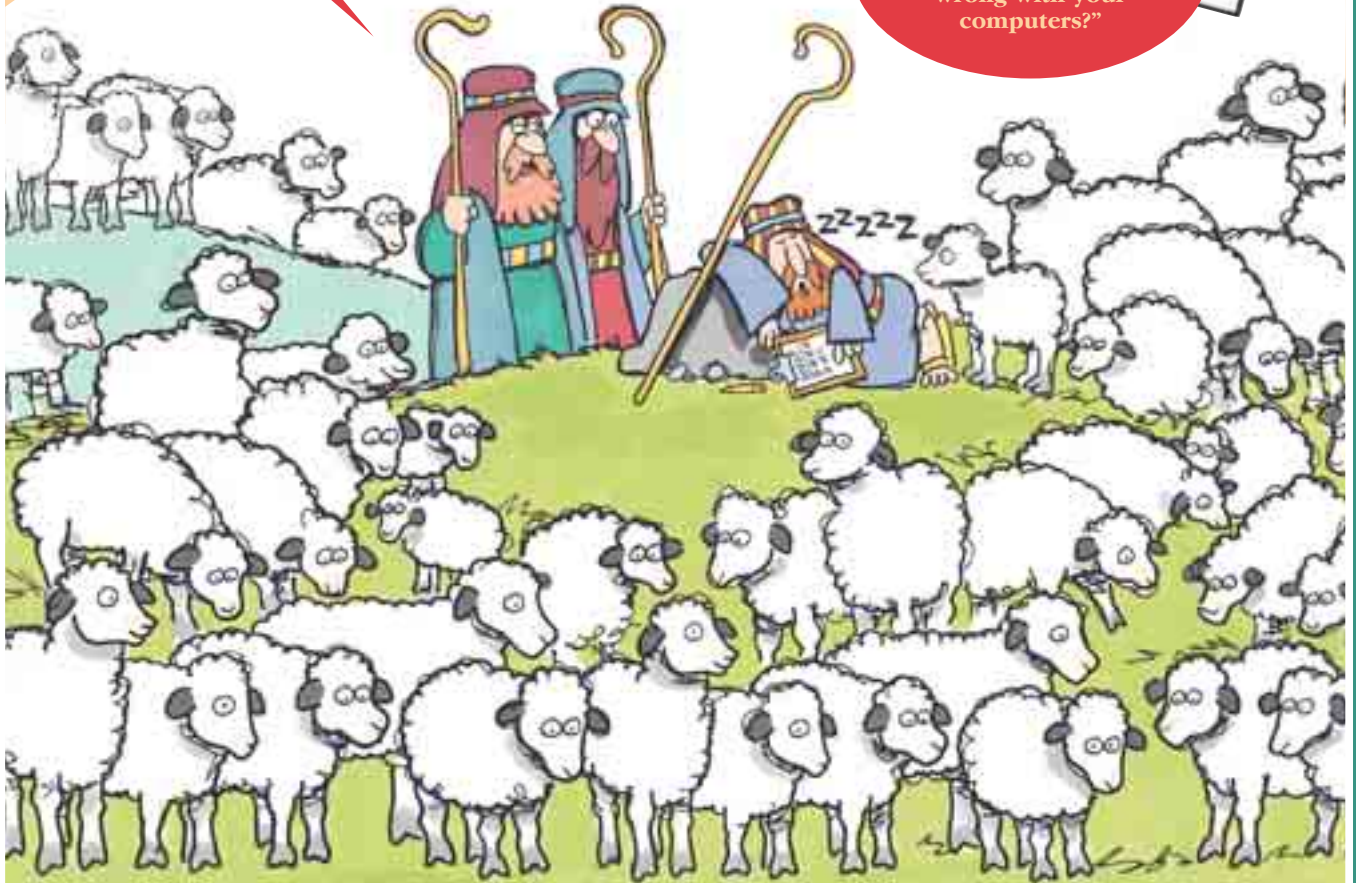
Robert Peterson

"Happens every time he takes inventory."

Eric Leach



"I've checked *Claus*, *Nicholas*, and *Kringle*. Are you sure there's nothing wrong with your computers?"



Val Chadwick Bagley

TEST YOUR CHRISTMAS I.Q.

You probably already know what city Christ was born in, what the wise men's gifts were, and what the angels announced to the shepherds on the night of His birth. But how carefully have you paid attention to other references to Christ's birth in the scriptures? Take this Christmas quiz to find out.

- 1** Who was a major Nephite prophet at the time of Christ's birth?
 - a) Helaman
 - b) Nephi, the son of Helaman
 - c) Nephi, the son of Nephi, who was the son of Helaman
 - d) Samuel

- 2** Before Christ's birth, who had a revelation that he would not die before he had seen Christ?
 - a) Simeon
 - b) Zacharias
 - c) John the Baptist
 - d) Paul the Apostle

- 3** Which section of the Doctrine and Covenants was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith on December 25, 1832?
 - a) Section 4
 - b) Section 76
 - c) Section 87
 - d) Section 136

- 4** "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Name the prophet who made this prophecy before Christ's birth.
 - a) Nephi
 - b) Isaiah
 - c) Jeremiah
 - d) Abinadi

- 5** What does the name Immanuel mean?
 - a) Destruction is imminent
 - b) The Lord is salvation
 - c) God heareth
 - d) God with us

[Answers: 1c (see 3 Ne.1); 2a (see Luke 2:25-26); 3c; 4b (see Isa. 7:14); 5d (see Bible Dictionary)]



JOSEPH SMITH'S LEGACY

It has been 196 years since the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was born December 23, 1805 in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont. And, nearly 200 years after his birth, his legacy of accomplishment, sacrifice, and faith still lives.

Nathan Taylor and Tyler Juergens of the Wheatstone Ward in Houston, Texas, celebrated the life of the Prophet and managed to win first place in their school's history fair as well. Their project, "The Martyrdom that Influenced the World: Joseph Smith," was a learning experience for them.

"People asked us questions, and we are happy that we could answer them. . . . This project was a great missionary experience for us both and taught us that there are so many opportunities to share the gospel."

HOLIDAY HAPPINESS

Christmas will soon be here, and you're probably thinking about what gifts to give. You could celebrate the Savior's birth by sharing the gospel with someone you care about. Why not set a goal to give the gift of your testimony to a friend? Prayerfully consider someone you know, write your testimony in the front of a Book of Mormon, and give it to a nonmember or less-active friend.





GIFT OF GRATITUDE

Since the first Christmas, “the spirit of giving gifts has been present in the mind of each Christian as he or she commemorates the Christmas season. Our Heavenly Father gave to us His Son, Jesus Christ. That precious Son gave to us His life, the Atonement, and victory over the grave.

“What will you and I give for Christmas this year? Let us in our lives give to our Lord and Savior the gift of gratitude by living His teachings and following in His footsteps. It was said of Him that He ‘went about doing good.’ As we do likewise, the Christmas spirit will be ours” (*Ensign*, Dec. 1998, 5).

—President Thomas S. Monson

First Counselor in the First Presidency

GIFTS YOU CAN GIVE FOR FREE!

- ✿ Your time. Spend it with a friend or family member. If you focus your attention on another person, they’ll feel great and so will you.
- ✿ Your talents. Whatever your talents might be, be willing to use them in behalf of others. You could participate in Christmas programs, or just enjoy bringing happiness to individuals through service.
- ✿ Your love. Apologize to someone you’ve hurt, or help someone in need. Only you know who in your life needs some extra love.

‘TIS THE SEASON

“This is a season for giving and a time for gratitude. We remember with appreciation the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which is celebrated this same month of December, two days before Christmas.

“How great indeed is our debt to him. . . . It was he who brought us a true knowledge of God, the Eternal Father, and His Risen Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“We stand in reverence before him. He is the great prophet of this dispensation. He stands at the head of this great and mighty work which is spreading across the earth. He is our prophet, our revelator, our seer, our friend. Let us not forget him. Let not his memory be forgotten in the celebration of Christmas. God be thanked for the Prophet Joseph” (*Ensign*, Dec. 1997, 2).

—President Gordon B. Hinckley

THE CHILD, THE BOY, THE MAN

FEW PEOPLE KNOW

There was once a young man in Palestine—a strong, vibrant, intelligent youth—whose destiny it was, in the prime of His life, to die on a Roman cross, crucified for the sins of the world.

We know Him as the Son of God, the only perfect person who ever lived. And we marvel at the miracles He wrought, the truths that fell from His lips, and the power and wisdom that He manifest in the days of His ministry.

But what of His maturing years? Was He like other Jewish lads, subject to pain and sorrow and disease and to all the ills of the flesh? Have you ever wondered:

—Where and under what circumstances was Jesus born?

—What did He do as a young child, as a Jewish boy, as a maturing man?

—Was He like all the other young men of Galilee and Judea and Perea, or did He live some kind of a sheltered and hallowed life?

—Who were His friends and what kind of an association did they have with each other?

I can tell you a great many things about Jesus and His life that are not generally known. They are things that are not found in the scriptures, but they do grow out of certain verities that are found in the canon of holy writ. By applying these principles to the social and cultural circumstances in Palestine, we can come up with a reasonably clear picture of what is involved.

Before we turn our attention to what the mortal Lord was like, let us note—rather carefully and thoughtfully—two



by Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–1985)

What of the Savior's early life? What kind of home did He live in? What did He eat? Where did He go to school? A study of the scriptures and of Jewish life at that time can tell us much.

things written by Paul: Jesus, he said, “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philip. 2:7–8).

Now, let your mind go back to Palestine in the days of that evil wretch Herod. Then it was that Caesar Augustus took a census to use in imposing taxes. Herod, to humor his Jewish subjects, let them assemble in their homelands, there to be counted along with their kindred.

Hence Joseph and Mary, both of the house of David, traveled the 80 long miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the City of David. Mary was heavy with child. Their travel, along with that of their friends and family, was slow. They probably used donkeys to carry their food and bedding, and they camped at the regular caravanserais used by all the travelers of the day.

These caravanserais were square or rectangular campgrounds in which there was a courtyard for their animals, and, on a raised platform surrounding the courtyard, a series of rooms with doors opening toward the center. Each of these rooms was called a *Katalyma*, and in them the weary travelers made their beds on rugs or bedding placed on the dirt floor. Their beasts of burden were left in the courtyard. Always there would be a nearby spring to supply water, and when the caravanserai was near a city or village, as in the case of Bethlehem, some enterprising person, for a few pence,



Painting Christ in the Temple by Heinrich Hofmann

would sell provender (dry food) for the animals and a few vegetables for human food. Meals were prepared over an open fire, and a spirit of hospitality, helpfulness, and camaraderie always prevailed among the overnight campers.

On this night of nights the Galileans with whom Joseph and Mary traveled arrived late. All of the *Katalymas* were



He lived in what we would call a peasant home. It could have had a dirt floor.

There were brothers and sisters. Their food was the rough, plain fare of the poor, and their clothes were of homespun wool and were like those of all the young Jews in the area.

filled. There is no English translation for this word. It is found twice only in the New Testament. The nearest thing to it is a hostel of the sort found in Europe. In the New Testament passage it is translated as *guest chamber*. In this case the account says there was no room for them in the *inn*, or, better, as the Joseph Smith Translation has it, in the *inns*. The *Katalymas* were filled and so Joseph and Mary bedded down among the beasts in the courtyard—in the stable as it were. There, among the animals, among the yelping dogs and lowing cattle, among the braying asses and bleating sheep, the Son of God was born. Mary's friends and

kinswomen served as midwives as the Son of the Highest drew His first breath and began His mortal life.

When Jesus was eight days old, either in a house in Bethlehem or in the temple in Jerusalem, He was circumcised and named. When He was 41 or more days old, He was presented in the temple and the sacrifice was offered for Mary. Because she and Joseph were too poor to afford a lamb, they were permitted to offer two young turtledoves or pigeons.

Later, probably when the young child was two years old, the wise men from the East came bearing gifts; then came the sojourn in Egypt, and a return to Bethlehem and to Nazareth.

Growing up

We do not know all that Jesus did or said as He grew up, but we do know what life was like in the Jewish homes in Bethlehem and Nazareth. He lived in what we would call a peasant home. It could have had a dirt floor. There were brothers and sisters. They ate at the same table, slept together on rough mattresses, perhaps several of them in the same room. Their food was the rough, plain fare of the poor, and their clothes were of homespun wool and were like those of all the young Jews in the area.

Jesus learned to crawl, to walk, and to run. He cut His first tooth, learned to talk, climbed trees, and played games. He rode on donkeys and camels, milked goats and cows, plowed fields, planted seeds, pulled weeds, and harvested crops. He learned to read and to write; He went to school in the synagogue, memorized the Shema (the Jewish confession of faith), and was taught to pray and observe the Sabbath. He roamed the hills of Galilee, listened to the cooing doves, saw the holes of the foxes, watched the birds of the air, gazed on the lilies of the fields, and guided the sheep beside still waters. Joseph taught Him to saw boards, drive nails, carry timber, and build houses.

When He was 12 years of age, He went with His family to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, where He confounded the priests and rabbis in the temple. By this time He knew God was His Father and that His was to be a life like none other on earth.

Of His developing years, with

The crown of thorns caused rivulets of blood to flow down His face, and pain surged through His hands and feet when the crucifiers' nails tore His flesh as was the case with any mortal. He was subject to the same pains and ills that afflict us. He is our pattern and our friend, our fellow sufferer and our fellow laborer. The cause of truth was uppermost in His mind as it should be in ours.



Painting The Crucifixion by Carl Heinrich Bloch

particular reference to learning divine truth, the scripture says:

“Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come.

“And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him.

“And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh” (JST, Matt. 3:24–26).

As a mortal

Even during the days of His ministry, His brothers and sisters still considered Him to be as other men. He was hungry, thirsty, and tired, as occasion warranted. He ate figs, and fish, and barley bread. He went to banquets, slept in the homes of friends and under the friendly stars of heaven. He was cold during the snows and storms of winter and hot when the summer sun burned the grass in the fields.

He winced and suffered in pain as the sharp pieces of bone and the lead weights in the Roman scourge cut His flesh. The crown of thorns caused rivulets of blood to flow down His face, and the same pangs of pain surged through His hands and feet when the crucifiers’ nails tore His flesh as was the case with any mortal.

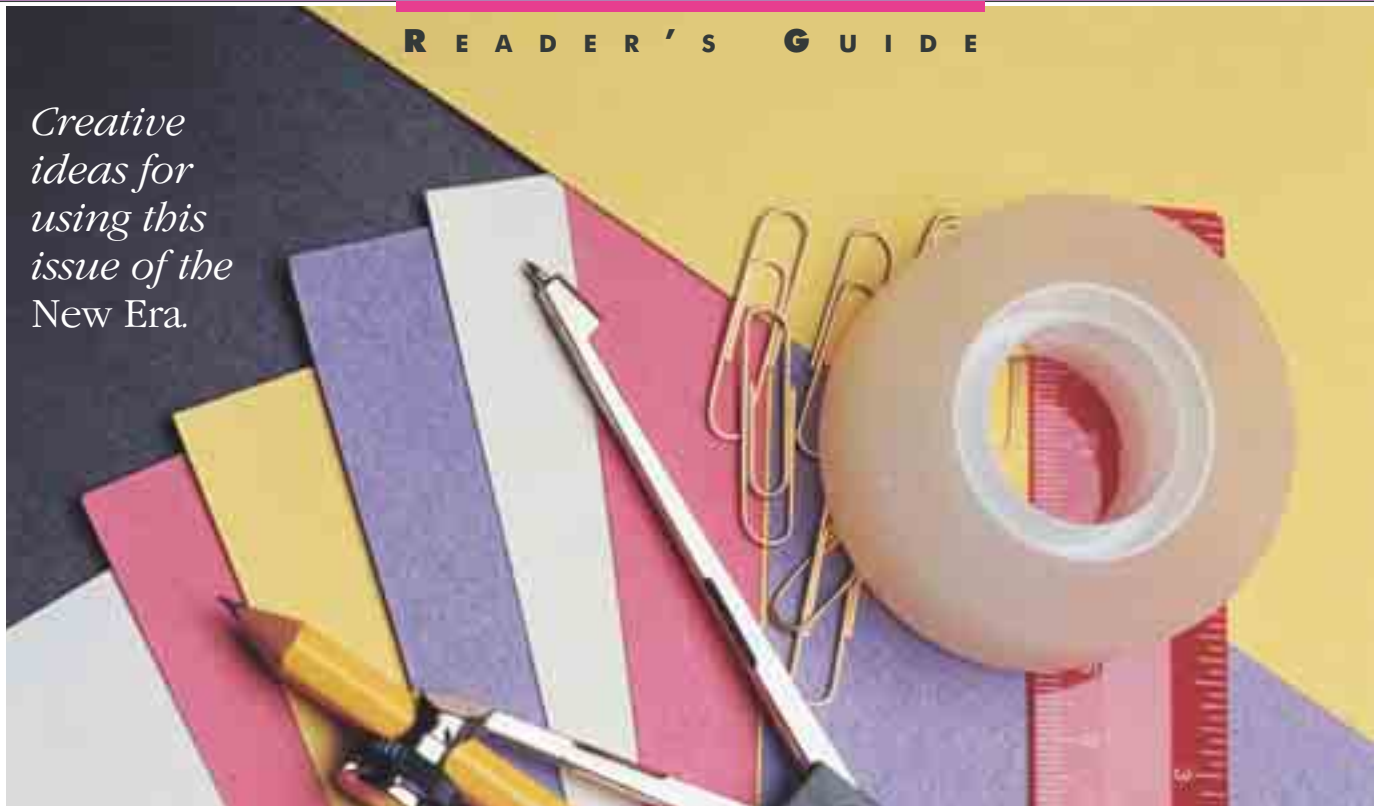
He is our pattern and our friend, our fellow sufferer and our fellow laborer. He was born as we are born; He grew up as we grow up; He was subject to the same ills and pains that afflict us. He was tired and hungry and thirsty, even as we are. Jesus had to overcome the world and work out His salvation the same as we do. He was called to labor as a missionary even as we are. The cause of truth and righteousness was uppermost in His mind as it should be in ours.

We are called to follow Him, “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

Jesus said: “Come unto me, . . . learn of me” (Matt. 11:28–29). If we learn of Him and live as He lived, we will be privileged to go where He is and live in His house forever. What greater reward could we possibly receive? **NE**

Originally printed in the December 1980 New Era.

Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.



Personal Improvement

□ Elder David B. Haight's article on page 12 discusses the life of the Savior. Read the portion about the sacrament and look up the scriptures that are listed. Choose one scripture to commit to memory and ponder it while you take the sacrament this month.

□ "The Truth about Christmas" by Elder Rex. D. Pinegar on page 22 tells the story of unselfish family members who made sacrifices. Think of one nice thing your parents and each of your siblings has done for you. Write a brief thank-you note to each member of your family and place it in his or her Christmas stocking as a special Christmas surprise.

Young Men and Young Women Mutual Activity

□ Adapt the family tradition told in "Doorstep Nativity" on page 11 to be used as a youth activity. As a class, identify people in your ward (perhaps those who are elderly or living alone) who could use some extra Christmas cheer.

□ Q&A discusses the importance of getting along with your siblings. Invite class or quorum members to bring Primary-aged siblings (or other Primary-aged ward members if they don't have younger siblings) along for a night of Christmas cookie baking or caroling. Give each youth who participates a copy of Elder Marvin J. Ashton's quote on page 19.

Family Home Evening

□ Christmas was a much simpler holiday during Joseph Smith's lifetime (see "Christmas with Joseph Smith," page 8). As a family, decide on one way you can simplify your family's celebration so that you can focus on enjoying time together. Or, add an old-time tradition (perhaps something from your own family history) to your holiday celebrations.

Leadership Tip

□ This issue of the *New Era* has a special emphasis on the life, ministry, and resurrection of the Savior. As a class or quorum presidency, read an article together and identify ways you can follow His example to better relationships in your class or quorum. Set a specific goal to emulate at least one Christlike quality in your leadership responsibilities.

Seminary Devotional

□ Briefly summarize "Wrapped Up in Myself" on page 34 for your class. Ask several class members to share an experience in which they were the recipient of someone else's thoughtfulness. Read Matthew 25:40 together. Give each class member a pencil (perhaps tied with a bit of Christmas ribbon) to remind them of the giving spirit which should prevail during this season.

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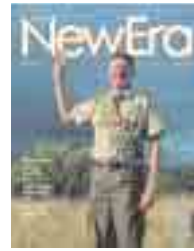
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(f) fiction

(p) poetry

(s) song

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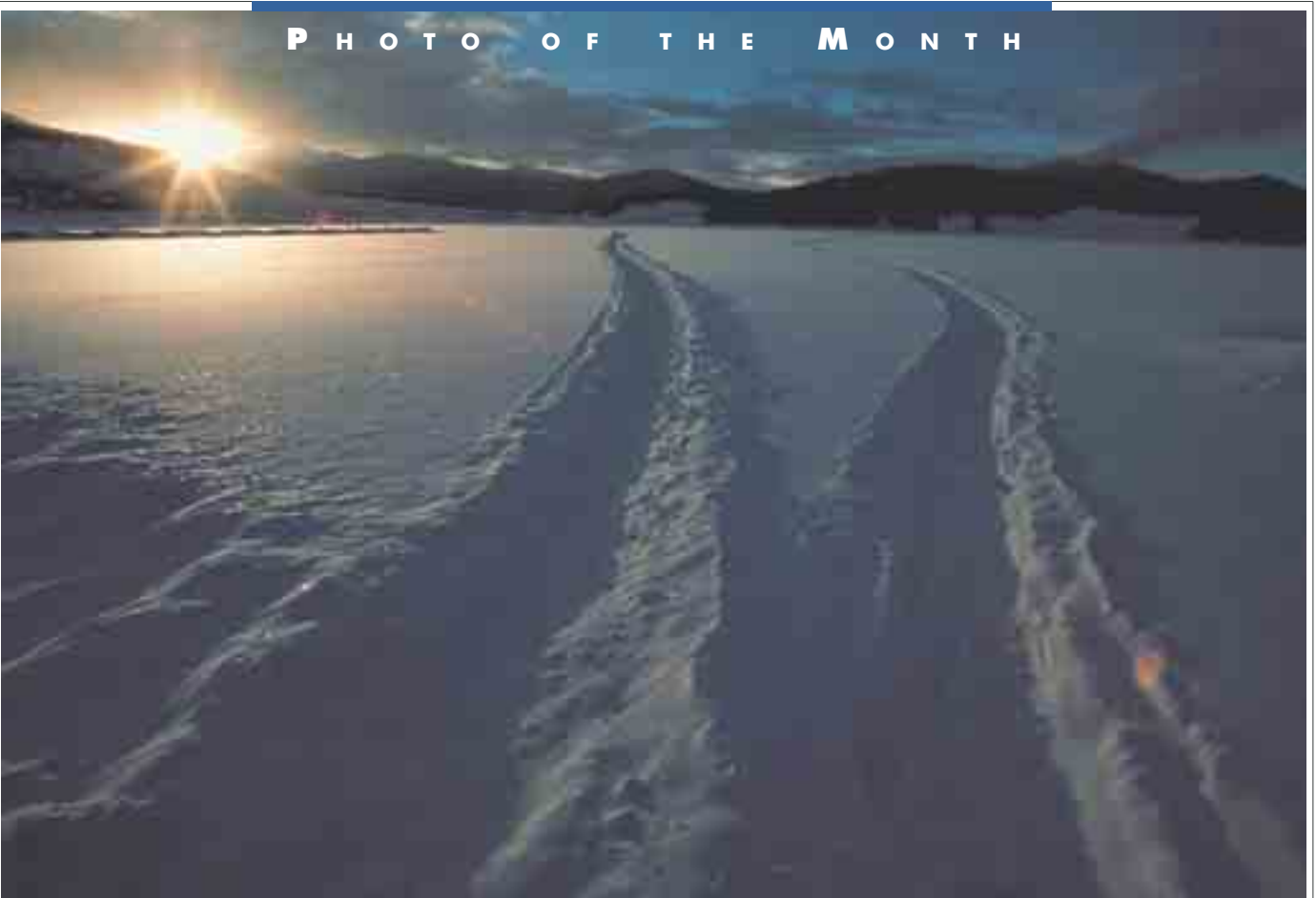
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SNOW FAME

by Lisa Neal

Snowflakes are floating.
Wind bullies them, pushes them around.
Still they seek the ground.
Dancing, swarming, down to earth.
Like children leaving school on its last day.
Excitement is in them.
Snowflakes find the ground,
Each positioning itself carefully,
Hoping the storm will end,
So no other snowflakes will cover them.
Then sunshine will exhibit each snowflake's beauty,
Show them to be the most sparkling and pure.
Snowflakes are always surprised when the sun,
Which makes them glitter,
Melts them.

by Niel Hayes



*“Everyone
was telling
me how
beautiful the
windows
were, but the
Spirit
whispering,
'I am
pleased with
the work,'
was one of
the most
thrilling
experiences
of my life.”*

*See
“Windows on
Eternity,”
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