



THE
New Era

DECEMBER 2009

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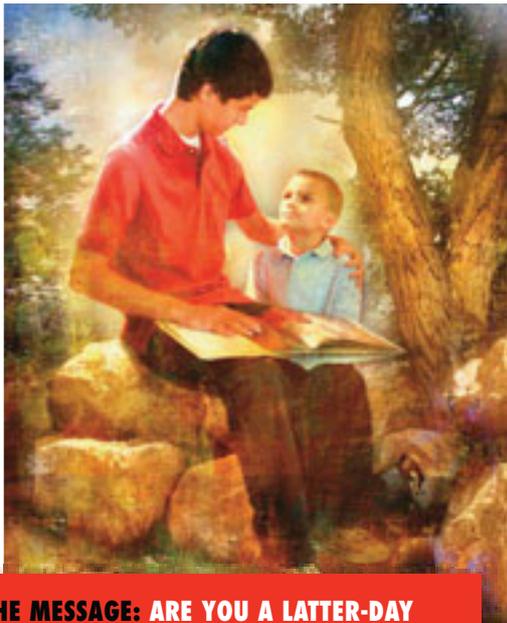
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What's Online



Want to hear what the Young Women general president had to say at a fireside? Go to [broadcast.lds.org](#) and find the video of Sister Elaine S. Dalton's speech at BYU.

Looking to improve your radio listening?

Listen to the Mormon Channel, the Church's 24-hour-a-day audio station featuring gospel-oriented programs, music, interviews, and much more. You can get there from [broadcast.lds.org](#).



Did you know there's a Church magazine in 51 languages?



For Church members who speak languages other than English, the Church publishes the *Liahona*, available in 51 languages! Starting in January 2010, it will feature a new design and editorial approach to better reach members worldwide. Since some pages of the *Liahona* are also used in the *New Era*, you may also notice a different look in the *New Era*, too. Check out the *Liahona* (which also has an English version) at [liahona.lds.org](#). To subscribe, go to [ldscatalog.com](#).

What's on the New Era Web page? Want to feel good about Christmas? Read the Mormonad on page 15, then go to [NewEra.Lds.org](#), find the Mormonad gallery, and look up past Mormonads about Christmas and Christ. While you're there, listen to or download the song from page 9, and see video greetings from a seminary class in India.

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ARE YOU A LATTER-DAY SAINT?

BY ELDER QUENTIN L. COOK
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



What does it mean to be a Saint? In the Lord's Church, the members are Latter-day Saints, and they attempt to emulate the Savior, follow His teachings, and receive saving ordinances in order to live in the celestial kingdom with God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ.

A number of years ago I was in Atlanta, Georgia, as an attorney representing a man who was buying a business. After several days of negotiations we reached an agreement and signed the closing documents. That evening one of the sellers invited us to a dinner to celebrate the closing. When I arrived, he offered me an alcoholic drink, which I declined. He then said, "Are you a Saint?" I didn't fully understand what he meant, and he repeated, "Are you a Latter-day Saint?" I responded, "Yes, I am," and he said he had been observing my personal habits during our negotiations and had concluded that I was either LDS or had a stomach problem. We both chuckled. He then informed me that he had only known one member of the Church on a personal basis, David B. Haight (later a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles). They were both executives in Chicago with a large retail chain following World War II. He told me of the significant influence Elder Haight had been in his life and that he held him in the highest regard.

As I flew back home to San Francisco, I thought about what had occurred, especially in two respects: I was surprised at how it

felt to be asked if I was a Saint, and I was impressed with the positive influence one outstanding example—Elder Haight—had on this good man.

What Is a Saint?

What does it mean to be a Saint? In the Lord's Church, the members are Latter-day Saints, and they attempt to emulate the Savior, follow His teachings, and receive saving ordinances in order to live in the celestial kingdom with God the Father and our Savior Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 9:18). The Savior said, "This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21).

It is not easy to be a Latter-day Saint. It was not meant to be easy. The ultimate goal of living in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is a privilege almost beyond comprehension.

Among the greatest trials the Church has ever faced were the Martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and then ultimately the expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo. When they were making their way across the plains



under very adverse circumstances, William Clayton penned the great hymn “Come, Come, Ye Saints.” It was a hymn that stirred

their souls and helped them remember their sacred mission. Who among us does not become emotional as we feel their sacrifice, courage, and commitment when we sing: “And should we die before our journey’s through, / Happy day! All is well!” (*Hymns*, no. 30).

This hymn gave them comfort, solace, and hope in a time of great difficulty with almost insurmountable obstacles. It buoyed them up and highlighted the fact that this mortal life is a journey between premortal life and eternal life to come—the great plan of happiness. Brother Clayton’s inspiring hymn emphasizes sacrifices and what it really means to be a Saint. Our pioneer members met the challenges of their day to be Saints.

The word *saint* in Greek denotes “set apart, separate, [and] holy”

(in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 3:1249). If we are to be Saints in our day, we need to separate ourselves from evil conduct and destructive pursuits that are prevalent in the world.

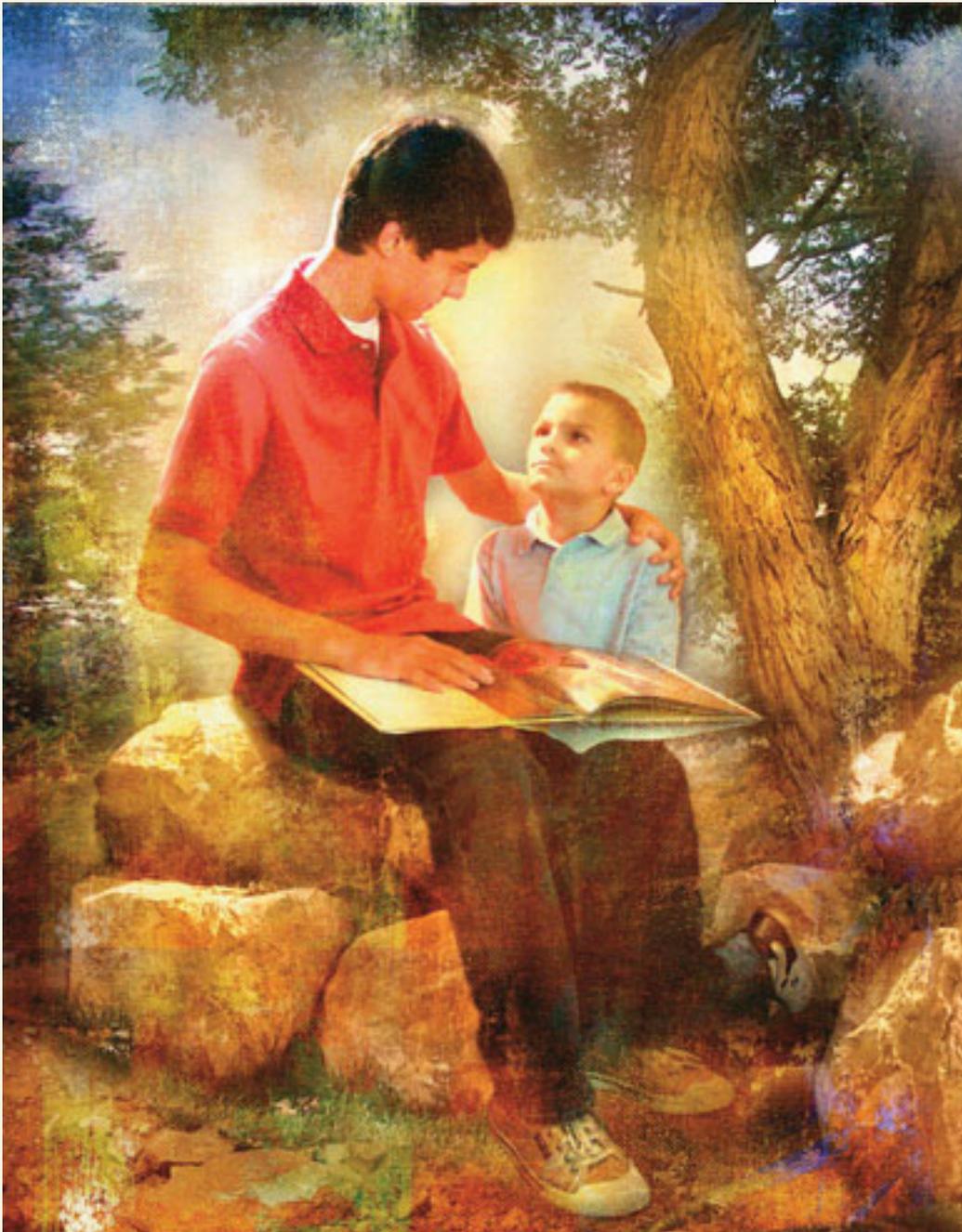


ILLUSTRATION BY CARY HENRIE

We should minister to others and follow the Savior’s admonition to love God and our fellowmen.

Being a Saint Today

We are bombarded with visual images of violence and immorality. Inappropriate music and pornography are increasingly tolerated. The use of drugs and alcohol is rampant. There is less emphasis on honesty and character. Individual rights are demanded, but duties, responsibilities, and obligations are neglected. There has been a coarsening of dialogue and increased exposure to that which is base and vulgar. The adversary has been relentless in his efforts to undermine the plan of happiness. If we separate ourselves from this worldly conduct, we will have the Spirit in our lives and experience the joy of being worthy Latter-day Saints.

As Saints, we also need to avoid the worship of worldly gods. President Hinckley expressed the desire that “everyone might have some of the good things of life” but has cautioned, “It is the obsession with riches that cankers and destroys” (“Thou Shalt Not Covet,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 4–5).

In the recent past President Kimball counseled that even homes, boats, credentials, titles, and other similar pursuits can be worshiped as idols when they entice us away from love and service to God (see *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 40–41).

The prophet Moroni, speaking of our day, warned about the love of money and substance and suggested that we would love them more than we “love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (Mormon 8:37).

If we are to be worthy Saints, we should minister to others and follow the Savior’s admonition to love God and our fellowmen.

Separation from the evils of the world needs to be accompanied by holiness. A Saint loves the Savior and follows Him in holiness and devotion. Evidence of this kind of holiness and devotion is exemplified by consecration and sacrifice. Sacrifice is the crowning test of the gospel. It means consecrating time, talents, energy, and earthly possessions to further the work of God. In Doctrine and Covenants 97, verse 8, it concludes, “All . . . who . . . are

willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”

Saints who respond to the Savior’s message will not be led astray by distracting and destructive pursuits and will be prepared to make appropriate sacrifices. The importance of sacrifice to those who want to be Saints is exemplified by the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, which is at the center of the gospel (see Alma 34:8–16).

Three Questions

Coming back to the original question that my acquaintance in Atlanta asked, “Are you a Saint?” may I suggest we ask ourselves these three questions.

First, is the way we live consistent with what we believe, and would our friends recognize, as Elder Haight’s friend did, that we have separated ourselves from worldly evils?

Second, are worldly pleasures, profits, and similar pursuits distracting us from following, worshiping, and serving the Savior in our daily lives?

Third, in order to serve God and be holy, are we making sacrifices consistent with our covenants?

What a wonderful blessing it is to be a Latter-day Saint. I love the words in the last lines of the hymn “O Saints of Zion”:

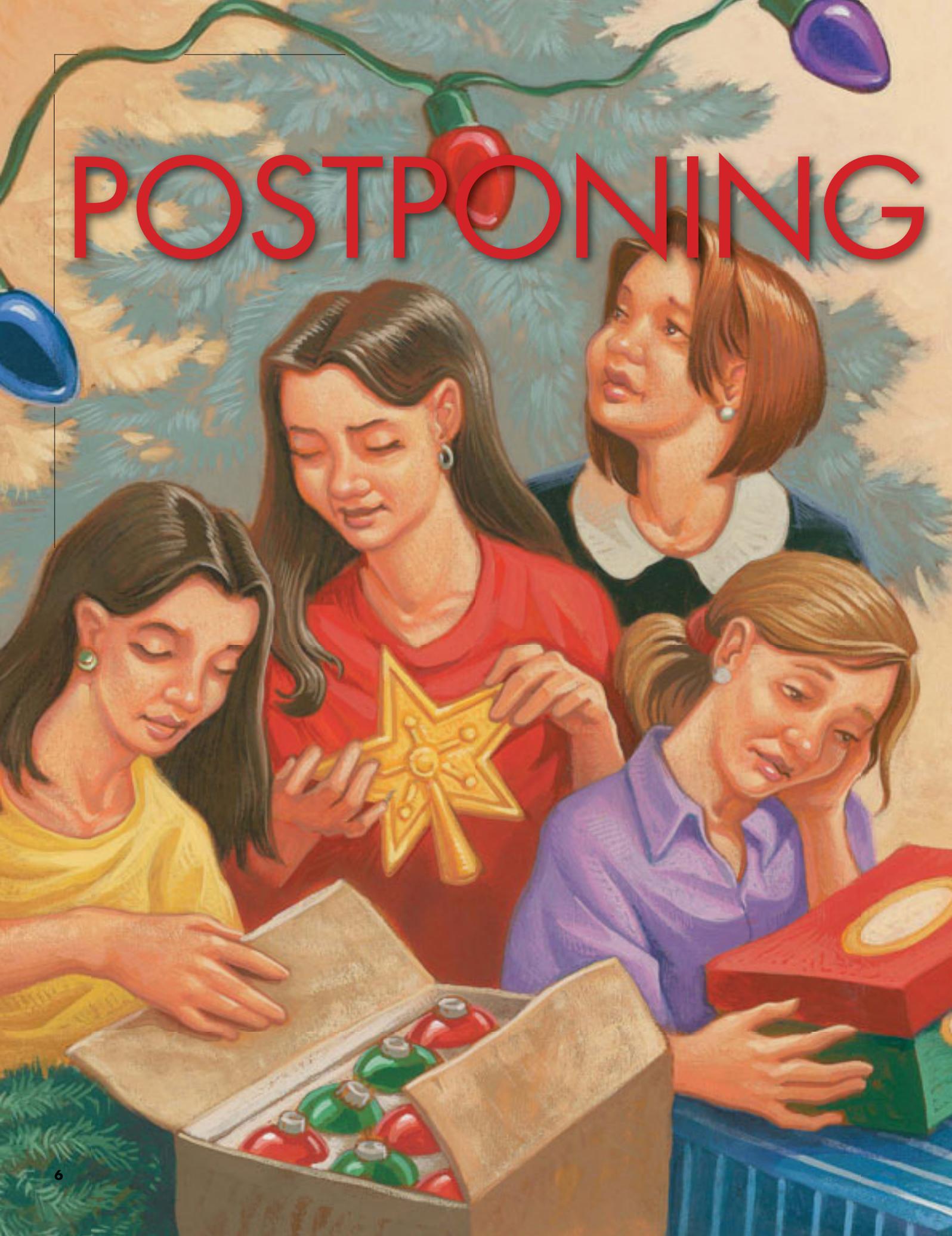
*O Saints of Zion, tread the paths
Your faithful fathers trod.
Lift up your hearts in gratitude
And serve the living God! (Hymns, no. 39).*

I testify that avoiding evil and destructive pursuits and sacrificing in order to serve will qualify us to experience the joy of being committed Latter-day Saints and, as the scriptures promise, bring “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). **NE**

From an October 2003 general conference address.

The Savior said, “This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do” (3 Nephi 27:21).

POSTPONING





CHRISTMAS

BY ARIELLE A. SLOAN

How could our parents even consider leaving us behind to go on vacation during Christmastime?

Once again on December 24, my family and I will find ourselves in our little New England home. The snow will cascade outside like sifted powdered sugar. Our woodstove will glow brilliant orange with the light of burning firewood. Mom will stir dark peppermint fudge in the kitchen. Dad will study his tattered copy of the New Testament in the dining room. And my siblings will lock themselves in their bedrooms, wrapping newly purchased gifts for the family. The house will smell like fresh pine and sugar cookies, and Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" will play softly in the living room.

This is the Christmas I cherish today. Unfortunately, however, I did not always appreciate this annual tradition. It was not until the year I turned 16—the year my parents postponed Christmas—that I understood what this holiday was really about.

I remember sitting at the dining room table in the heat of summer, eating a Spanish casserole dinner with my family. My mom cleared her throat during a lull in the conversation and called my name.

"Your grandmother," she said, "is taking a tour of the Holy Land, and she invited us to come with her. Your father and I have saved up enough money to go."

"For heaven's sake, you guys," I replied

hastily. "You don't need my permission to go on vacation. When is it?"

I remember my parents looking at each other for a second. While my mom bit her lip, my dad coughed and said in a quiet tone, "December."

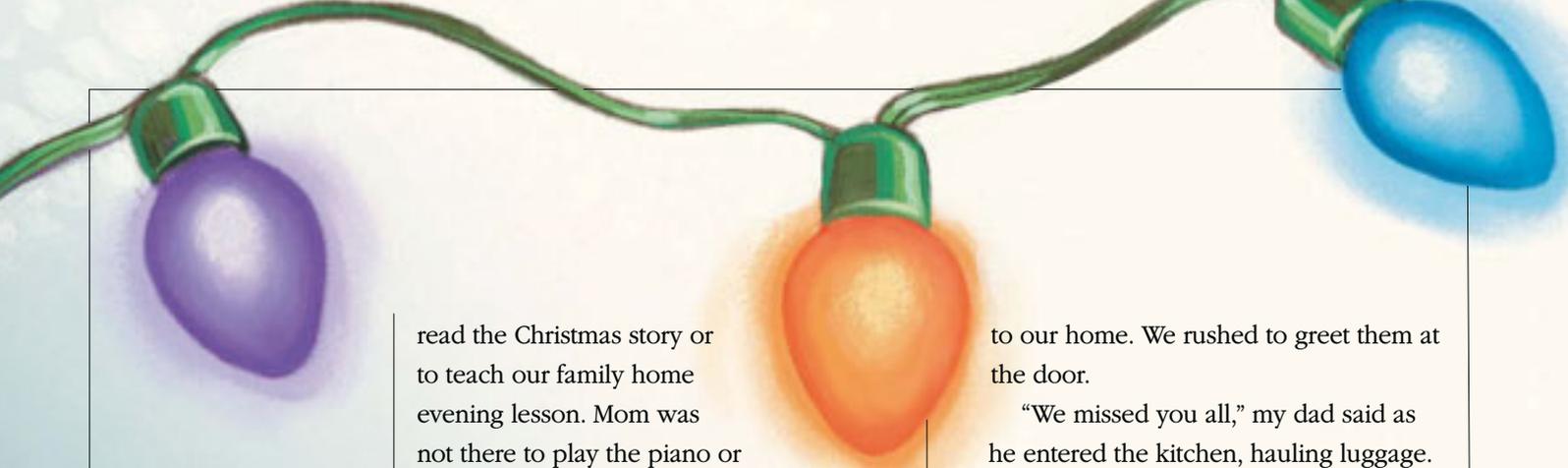
After a long pause, my mom said, "It's a . . . Christmastime tour. We'll be gone until December 28. Do you think you kids would . . . mind . . . if we postponed our family Christmas until then?"

I tried to maintain my composure, but inside I felt sick. "Well, sure," I said. "I mean, I'm not going to stop you from going to the Holy Land. We'll be fine."

My mom smiled, my dad started eating his mashed potatoes, and our conversation went back to normal. However, as I tried to concentrate on my carrots, thoughts about Christmas kept racing through my mind. What would Christmas be like without my parents? I thought. I knew I wouldn't be able to stop them from leaving, but I began to wish I could.

As the holidays loomed nearer, I found myself dwelling on Christmases past. To my great astonishment, I had much difficulty remembering any of my former gifts. I remembered family home evening Christmas carols. I remembered trying to untangle endless strands of Christmas lights with my mom. I remembered helping my dad tie our Christmas tree to the car roof with one too many Boy Scout knots. As I looked back, the realization that my parents would not be here to repeat these traditions depressed me greatly.

I spent December 23rd in New York City with my three sisters, and when my brother came on the 24th, we tried to hold a few Christmas traditions without my parents. However, it was obvious that something about the whole experience felt wrong. Dad was not there to



remember three days after Christmas, when Mom and Dad walked in the door, their presence instantly lifted our spirits and brought back the much-needed feeling of Christmas to our home.

read the Christmas story or to teach our family home evening lesson. Mom was not there to play the piano or lead our Christmas carols. Our December 25th was quiet without their laughter and love filling the home. I felt as though my whole Christmas vacation had been ruined. Without my parents, Christmas simply did not feel like Christmas.

On December 28th, however, a small miracle occurred. When Mom and Dad walked in the door at 9:00 a.m., their presence instantly lifted our spirits and brought back the much-needed feeling of Christmas

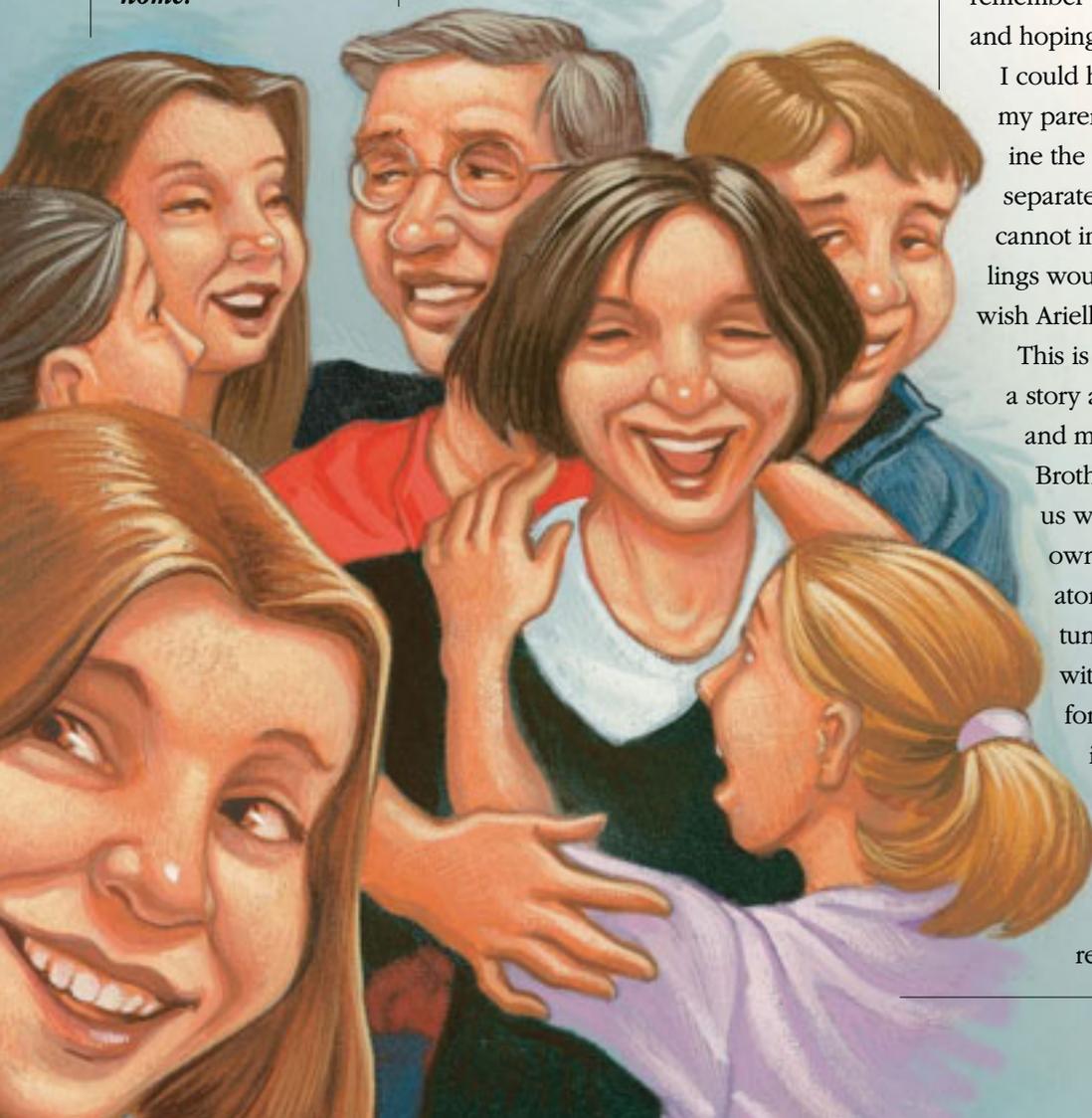
to our home. We rushed to greet them at the door.

“We missed you all,” my dad said as he entered the kitchen, hauling luggage. “Everywhere we went, we said to each other, ‘We wish the kids were here to see this.’ Christmas just wasn’t the same without you.”

Hugs and kisses were exchanged. Stories and pictures were shared. The presence of my parents in that home brought our family inexplicable joy. I don’t remember what gifts I received that year. I don’t remember what we ate for breakfast that day or where we shopped at after-Christmas sales. I only remember spending time with my family and hoping that Christmas would never end.

I could hardly stand being separated from my parents on Christmas. I cannot imagine the heartbreak I would feel if I were separated from my family for eternity. I cannot imagine how my parents and siblings would feel in the next life saying, “We wish Arielle were here to see this.”

This is why Christmas is far more than a story about heavenly signs, wise men, and mangers. It is the story of our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, whose love for us was so great that He sacrificed His own life for our eternal welfare. His atoning sacrifice gave us the opportunity to live with our families and with Heavenly Father forever. I look forward to the day when my family and I can reunite for eternity, just as we did on that morning in December. How grateful I am today for the Savior whose atoning sacrifice makes that reunion possible. **NE**



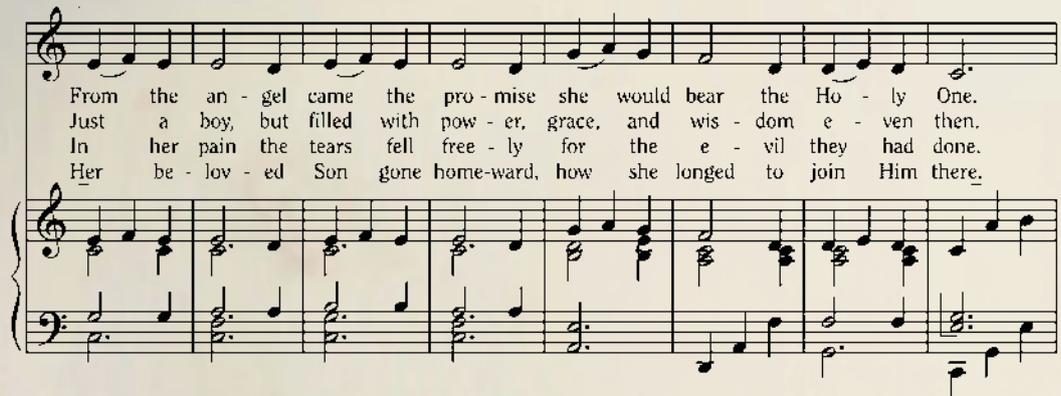
Mary, Sweet and Tender Maiden

Words by Don H. Staheli
Music by Jim Kasen

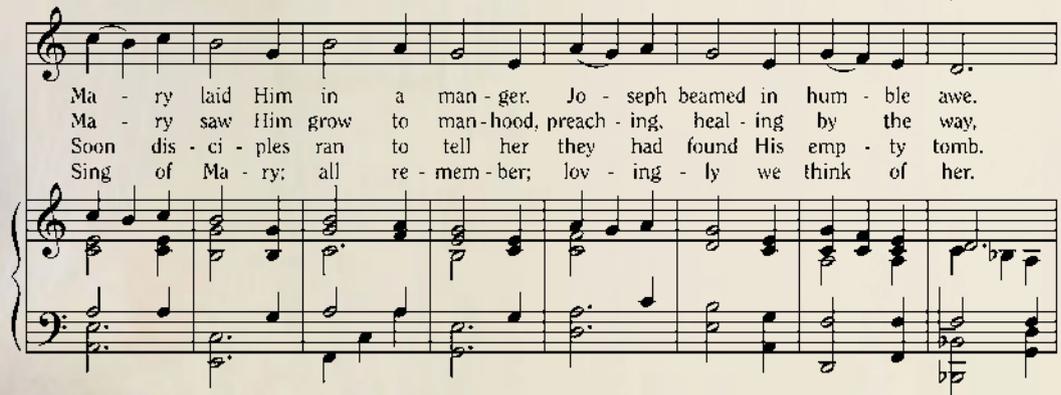
Tenderly ♩ = 92-100



Ma - ry, sweet and ten - der maid - en, learned she was to have a Son.
Ma - ry found Him in the tem - ple as He taught the learn - ed men,
Ma - ry wept when on the cross they raised her first be - got - ten Son.
In a qui - et, up - per cham - ber, Ma - ry knelt and of - fered prayer.



From the an - gel came the pro - mise she would bear the Ho - ly One.
Just a boy, but filled with pow - er, grace, and wis - dom e - ven then.
In her pain the tears fell free - ly for the e - vil they had done.
Her be - lov - ed Son gone home - ward, how she longed to join Him there.



Ma - ry laid Him in a man - ger. Jo - seph beamed in hum - ble awe.
Ma - ry saw Him grow to man - hood, preach - ing, heal - ing by the way,
Soon dis - ci - ples ran to tell her they had found His emp - ty tomb.
Sing of Ma - ry; all re - mem - ber; lov - ing - ly we think of her.



An - gels sang His ho - ly ad - vent. Wise men sought Him from a - far.
Bring - ing forth His ho - ly king - dom - dawn - ing of a glo - rious day.
Joy - ous hope of re - sur - rec - tion now re - placed her aw - ful gloom.
Hum - ble Ma - ry, bless - ed vir - gin, God's a - noint - ed ves - sel pure.

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Do We Know How Much **HE WENT THROUGH?**

BY ELDER YOSHIHIKO KIKUCHI
Of the Seventy



To discuss His Crucifixion is so deep and profound. It is so sacred. It is so meaningful. This is such a solemn matter that it requires a sublime and holy spirit to feel His redemptive act for each one of us.

President Brigham Young asked the human family this question: “Can all the wisdom of the world devise means by which we can be redeemed, and return to the presence of our Father and Elder Brother, and dwell with holy angels and celestial beings? No, it is beyond the power and wisdom of the inhabitants of the earth . . . to prepare or create a sacrifice that will pay this divine debt. But God provided it, and his Son has paid it” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 59).

In order to answer this weighty question, I would like to discuss how much our Savior really went through. We need to comprehend how much our Lord, Jesus Christ, went through spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally.

The Suffering in the Garden

Christ took 11 of His Apostles to the Garden of Gethsemane. All 11 felt inexpressible depression as they crossed the Kedron Valley and entered into the garden.

The Lord told eight of the apostles, “Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder” (Matthew 23:36) and told them, “Pray that ye enter not

into temptation” (Matthew 26:41).

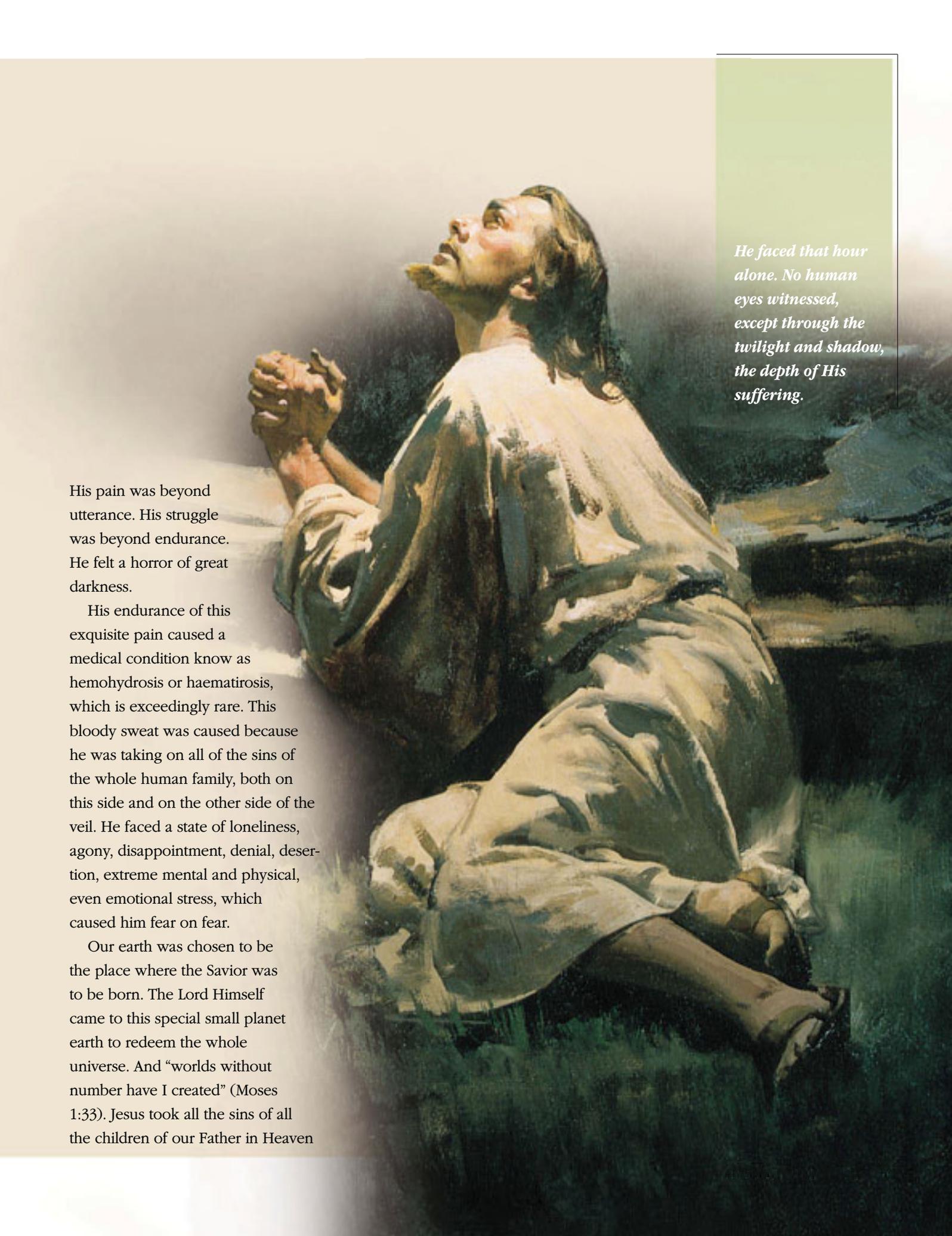
Then the Lord took Peter, James, and John, the leading Brethren, farther into the garden and began to be enveloped by deep sorrow. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38).

He went farther, a stone’s cast distance, and fell on His face and prayed: “Abba, Father, all things [are] possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36).

He faced that hour alone. No human eyes witnessed, except through the twilight and shadow, the depth of His suffering. It was uncomprehended by the finite mind.

Elder James E. Talmage writes: “He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from ever pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing” (*Jesus the Christ*, 613).

His suffering was beyond our imagination. His grief was beyond our comprehension.



He faced that hour alone. No human eyes witnessed, except through the twilight and shadow, the depth of His suffering.

His pain was beyond utterance. His struggle was beyond endurance. He felt a horror of great darkness.

His endurance of this exquisite pain caused a medical condition known as hemohydrosis or haematirosis, which is exceedingly rare. This bloody sweat was caused because he was taking on all of the sins of the whole human family, both on this side and on the other side of the veil. He faced a state of loneliness, agony, disappointment, denial, desertion, extreme mental and physical, even emotional stress, which caused him fear on fear.

Our earth was chosen to be the place where the Savior was to be born. The Lord Himself came to this special small planet earth to redeem the whole universe. And "worlds without number have I created" (Moses 1:33). Jesus took all the sins of all the children of our Father in Heaven

Imagine, in the center of the universe, our loving and kind Heavenly Father must have wiped His holy tears. Imagine the great gratitude of the Father for His Son's willingness to give himself for all of the Father's children.

upon himself. That is why it was beyond our imagination and understanding.

Can We Imagine?

Can you see His face upon the ground? Can you hear his voice wailing? Can you see His fingernails scratching the bark of the olive tree because it is so painful? Can you hear His murmurous and broken agonizing voice? His utterance of atoning cries pierces our souls. Do we feel His deep everlasting atoning love that He has for us? Are we ever grateful for His redeeming blood? Do we express our deep humility of reverence to His redeeming love? Do we show our humble adoration for His mercy? Are our souls penetrated by His eternal grace?

For almost four hours, He went through the agonized failings of His heart. His fearful amazement and also horror of darkness brought Him almost down to the grave.

I myself cannot even scarcely talk about His painful suffering and offering without shame and sorrow. So I cannot speak lightly of the price He paid for us. To discuss His Crucifixion is so deep and profound. I am confused at His mercy. It is so sacred. It is so meaningful. This is such a solemn matter that it requires a sublime and holy spirit to feel His redemptive act for each one of us.

Eighteen centuries later, the Savior, in describing His agony to the Prophet Joseph, remembered the pain as though it had been experienced yesterday:

“How sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent. . . .

“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 19:15–19).

A Ransom for Each of Us

His atoning blood ransoms us whole. His blood and His eternal offering at the sacred altar in the garden and on the cross purifies and sanctifies our souls. His pure love now ransoms all.

His compassionate act will purify us under only one condition. That is we must *love* Him. We must *serve* Him. We must *offer* our absolute commitment to Him. We must follow Him obediently with all of our might, mind, and strength.

His redeeming power will have an effect upon us when we partake of His sacred emblems—the foundation of the living waters. Let us partake of the sacrament of everlasting love from Him daily (see 1 Nephi 11:25) Let us sing the “song of redeeming love” before the Lord everyday (see Alma 26:13).

Imagine, in the center of the universe, our loving and kind Heavenly Father must have wiped His holy tears. Imagine the great gratitude of the Father for His Son's willingness to give himself for all of the Father's children. The Father could have sent multitudes of the hosts of heaven to rescue His Son from that awful situation. But our Father must have closed His eyes in those final moments in order that you and I and other sons and daughters could have hope.

Betrayed and Judged

Judas betrayed Him. The chief priests could not find any fault from the Lord; however, the whole council falsely witnessed against Him to put Him to death. The Lord kept His peace. They spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands.

Pilate, after extensive questions to our Lord, said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). And when Pilate found that He was from Galilee, he sent the Lord to Herod.

There also the chief priests vehemently accused the Lord. In this trial, Herod with his men mocked and arrayed the Lord in a gorgeous robe. He sent the Lord back to Pilate.

Again Pilate could not find sound reasons to keep the Lord, but the people cried more loudly, "Let Him be crucified" (Matthew 27:22). The soldiers treated Him roughly. Scourging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution. The usual instrument was a short or long whip composed of several single or braided leather thongs in which small diamond-shaped pieces of iron, or shattered sheep bone, were tied at intervals.

For scourging, the Savior was stripped of his upper clothing. It is presumed his hands were tied to an upright post and the back, buttocks, and legs were flogged. Usually the whipping was performed by two soldiers, or one alternating positions. This scourging was so severe that sometimes the victim came to a stage of collapse or death.

According to the Jewish law, lashes were limited to 39–40, but we do not know how many our Lord had. Remember He not only endured scourging by leather thongs but had a crown of thorns on His head. A wooden staff as a scepter was placed in his right hand. The soldiers spat on our Lord and

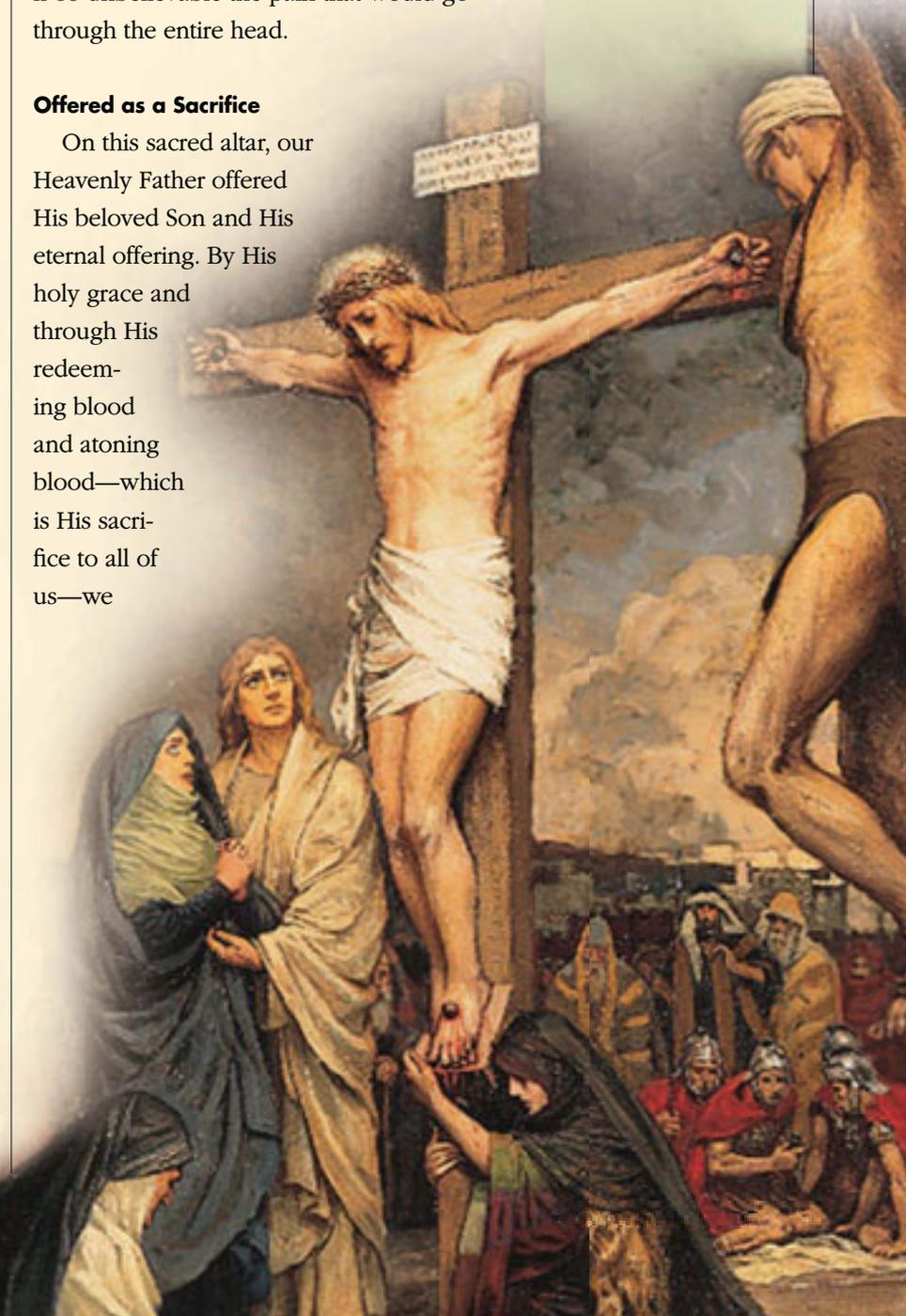
Savior and struck Him on the head with the wooden staff.

The head is covered by many subtle, small blood tissues and a nervous system. Wearing that thorny crown with plaited thorns would cause blood to stream down from those tissues all over the face. Not only that though, the head would feel as though the brain were caught by a burning fire. It is so unbelievable the pain that would go through the entire head.

Offered as a Sacrifice

On this sacred altar, our Heavenly Father offered His beloved Son and His eternal offering. By His holy grace and through His redeeming blood and atoning blood—which is His sacrifice to all of us—we

His compassionate act will purify us under only one condition. We must follow Him obediently with all of our might, mind, and strength.



***His Atonement
brought to the uni-
verse the new birth:
it is called holy
Resurrection.***

may return to His presence once again.

The Lord said: "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world." (John 18:37)

I humbly bow my head and reverently and meekly search my soul to feel His redeeming love every moment. His sweat that He shed in the agony of His pain on the cross on Calvary was for me. There are no words to express my love to Him. He has suffered death for you and me. I want to print in my soul His Holy face and words of love and record permanently in my ears His eternal whisperings of the words "redeeming love." Then I wish I shall never forget them as long as I live.

These were hours of horror, yet the Lord expressed His infinite love towards those that treated Him in such cruel ways.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Will We Understand?

Oh, will we ever understand why and how He did it for us?

Glory to God. His eternal voice comes back to my ears thousands of times until I really understand His sacred at-one-ment: to become one with Him. By His grace and mercy,

we receive the honor to become one with the Father through the sacred Mediator. His holy redeeming act allowed us to be with the Holy Father once again. His Atonement brought to the universe the new birth; it is called holy Resurrection.

Heavenly Father loves us so much. He wanted all of us together to be glorified before His presence. Because of His love, Heavenly Father offered His Eternal and Infinite Love, who is His Only Begotten Son. Why? Because Father loves us, His children, so much.

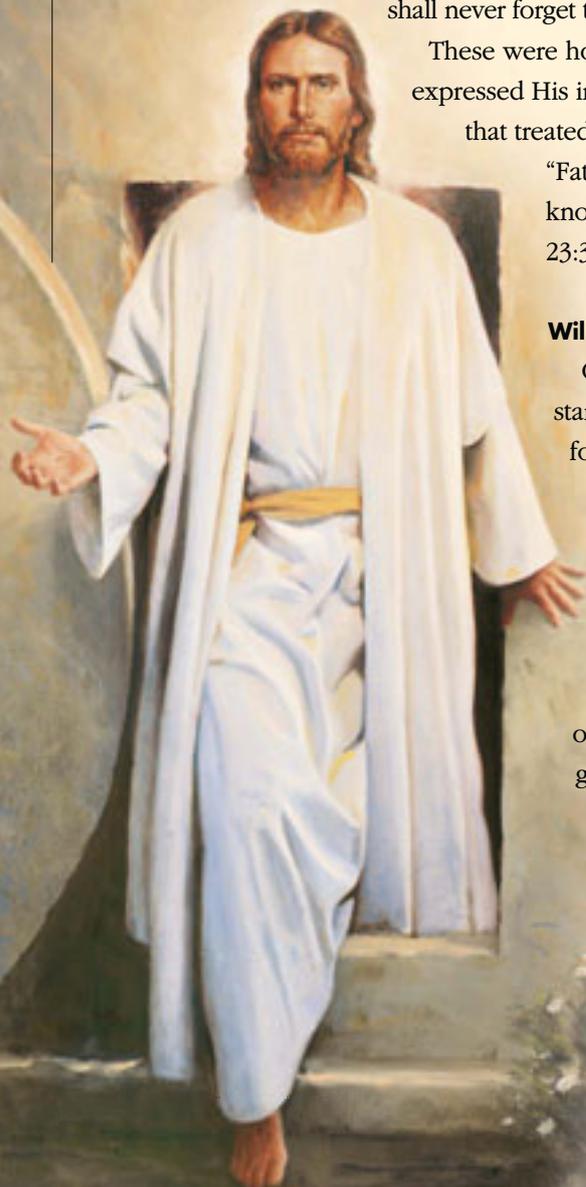
Joseph Smith testified: "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the apostles and prophets, concerning Jesus Christ that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*History of the Church*, 3:30).

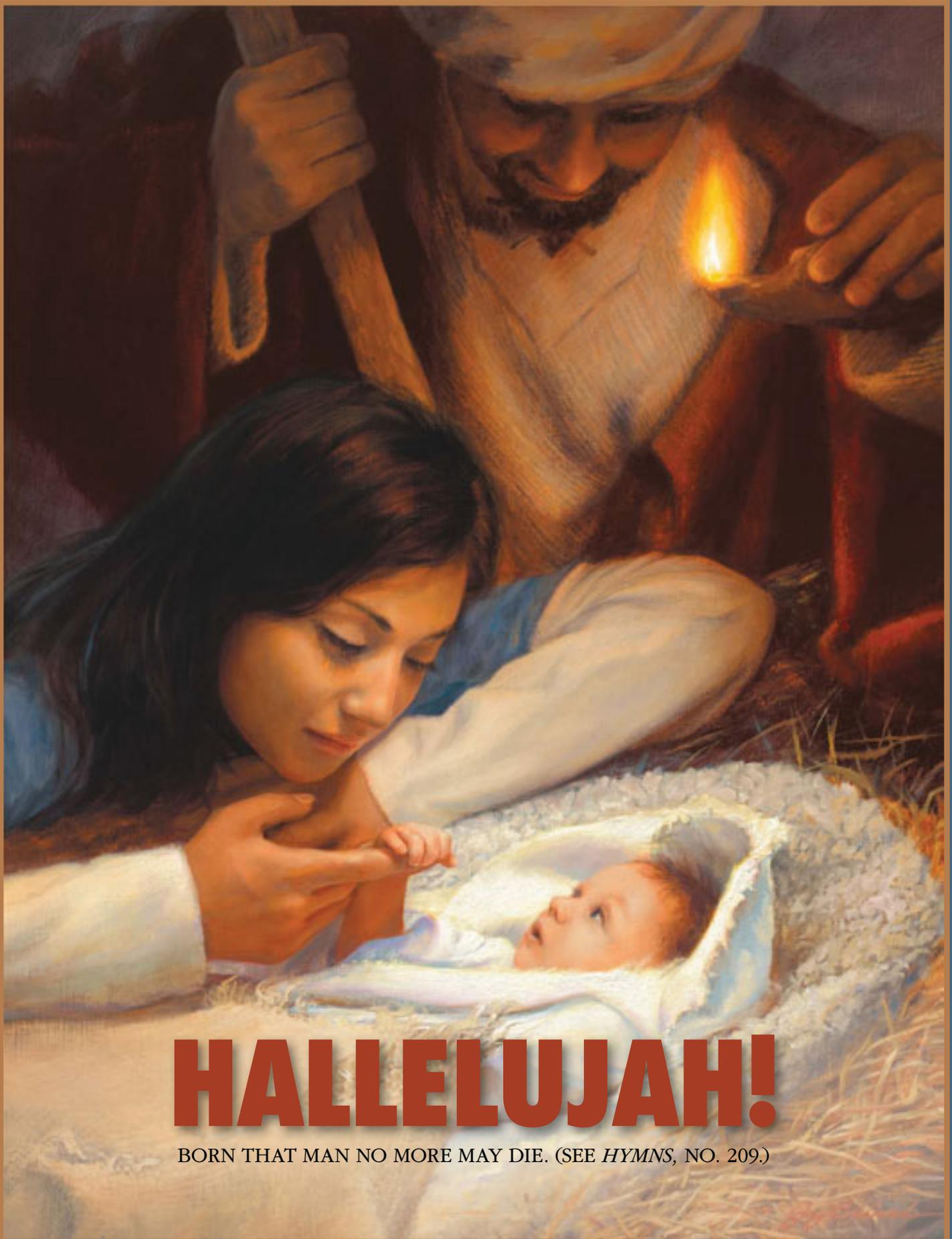
I feel Joseph's feeling as he listened to John Taylor sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief" in Carthage jail:

*In prison I saw him next, condemned
To meet a traitor's doom at morn.
The tide of lying tongues I stemmed,
And honored him 'mid shame and scorn.
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,
He asked if I for him would die.
The flesh was weak; my blood ran chill,
But my free spirit cried, "I will!"
(Hymns, no. 29)*

I reverently want to say to the Lord and offer my small token of my love to Him. The Lord knows my flesh is weak, but my soul and my spirit cry, "I will and I will." **NE**

From a devotional address delivered at LDS Business College on October 14, 1998.





HALLELUJAH!

BORN THAT MAN NO MORE MAY DIE. (SEE *HYMNS*, NO. 209.)

“My parents aren’t members of the Church. How can I share the gospel with them without offending them?”

Remember the commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12). While respecting their wishes, try to bring the gospel into your home. For example, you could ask your parents to help you with Personal Progress or Duty to God so they will see what good programs the Church has. You could invite Church friends to your home and talk to them about the gospel. This could help your parents ask about your beliefs. Most important, tell your parents how grateful you are for them and for the gospel.

When you feel the time is right, prayerfully invite your parents—without pressuring them—to pray with you, to attend church or a Church activity, or to have family home evening, for instance. If they don’t want to, respect that. If they aren’t ready for the gospel now, they could be in the future. Pray and hope for that day.

Always look for the good in your parents. Loving them will keep the door of opportunity open. Try to live the gospel as well as you can. Your parents might become more interested as they see your good example and how the gospel blesses you.

Use *Liahona* Posters



Before I was baptized in 2006, I had been participating in another church that my family belonged to. Initially I was afraid to talk about the Church to my family because I feared rejection. But when I began to place the Posters from the *Liahona* in a few places in our house, family members began to ask, “What is this picture about? What does it mean?” These questions made it easier to talk about what the Church offers to families. Through this means, my youngest sister was baptized, and now, while I’m on my mission, my father and mother write me saying how they love going to church.

Elder Almeida, 20, Brazil São Paulo East Mission

Live the Gospel

Let your parents know by the way you live how important the Church is to you and the wonderful difference it has made in your life. To help you do that, you should follow the counsel of the General Authorities, including living the gospel. Be consistent with your own prayers, scripture reading, attending church, keeping the commandments, living the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, working to achieve goals, and following the Holy Ghost. You can also pray and fast for your parents and ask for the Spirit to guide you. In addition, I believe that you should express your love for them.

Andrew B., 14, Nevada, USA

Difficult but Not Impossible



I would pray and ask God that, when I talk to my parents, He would put the correct words in my mouth so that I won't offend them. I would also ask for His Spirit so they can feel my sincerity and my love. I would share a scripture from the Bible that supports the Book of Mormon. I would share my experiences and feelings too. I would say that the gospel, the love of God, and prayer bring us closer to the spiritual peace we all want to have. The work of the Lord is difficult but not impossible. Trust in the Spirit.

Jonathan E., 19, Veracruz, Mexico

Explain How You Feel



If you're scared of sharing the gospel, start by telling them how you feel when you pray and read the scriptures. Explain that you have a testimony, and explain why you like the gospel. Once you put it in perspective, they can understand and won't be offended.

Madison N., 14, Illinois, USA

Speak with Love

My father is not a member, and this has sometimes been difficult, but there are a few things I have learned. First, when I talk to him with love and not condescendingly, it is difficult for him to reject what I am saying. My dad can feel that love, although we don't always agree. Second, the gospel is simple. It is not ours to sugarcoat or change. State simple truths. Finally, remember we are called to be witnesses of Christ.

Paige I., 19, Utah, USA

A Change of Heart

You can set a positive example to your parents by following Church standards and keeping all the commandments, especially the Word of Wisdom, and by showing love and obedience through your actions. This may turn their attention toward your behavior and help them come into the Lord's Church. I strongly believe that through your personal prayers, you can ask Heavenly Father to change their hearts.

Sharmila S., 18, Karnataka, India

Be an Example



Paul taught us in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in

word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Showing a good example opens the gate for the conversion of your parents. It will create the right climate and opportunity to bear testimony of the gospel. Having faith, not fearing, and being an example could help change their minds and bless their lives and yours.

Elder Tonumaipea, 20, Philippines
Cauayan Mission

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

NEXT QUESTION

"I have a hard time motivating myself to read the scriptures. How can I find the motivation?"

Send your answer by January 15, 2010, to:

New Era, Q&A 1/10

**50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024,
USA**

Or e-mail: newera@ldschurch.org

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

Please include the following information and permission in your e-mail or letter:

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

WARD (OR BRANCH)

STAKE (OR DISTRICT)

I grant permission to print response and photo:

SIGNATURE

PARENT'S SIGNATURE (IF YOU ARE UNDER 18)



IN THE LORD'S WAY AND TIME

"Our actions must be directed by the Lord. It is His work, not ours, and it must be done in His way and on His timing, not ours. Otherwise, our efforts may be fated to frustration and failure.

"All of us have family members or friends who need the gospel but are not now interested. To be effective, our efforts with them must be directed by the Lord so that we act in the way and at the time when they will be most receptive."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sharing the Gospel," Ensign, Nov. 2001, 8.

A Gift of Love



She didn't like it when we sang. So why were we standing at her door on Christmas Eve ready to share a gift of music?

BY CHASTMIER OKORO

After the collapse of my father's catering business, my family faced a serious financial situation. I remember my mother coming home with tears in her eyes, not wanting to tell us what was wrong even after I asked her what the problem was. Soon we had to move into a small one-room apartment because that was what we could afford.

Before then, the Christmas season had always been a time of intense cooking, new clothes, parties, visits to interesting places, and gifts to be shared and received. My mum had a knack for being, as we called her, "Mother Christmas." She loved to give, and each Christmas she would enthusiastically and lovingly share with those around her. As we got older, thinking of others more than we thought of ourselves became a trait that we also tried to develop.

But that year we did not know what to do. Mum became concerned because it would be our first Christmas outside of our own home. She worried because there was nothing she could think of to share with others. However, we encouraged her because we knew that we could, in our own small way, do something to spread the spirit of Christmas.

Still, we were barely getting by, and we were also struggling to keep the peace in our new surroundings. Our landlady was not a Christian, and she was upset with us because we would wake up early to have family prayer and sing hymns. Our singing would awaken her because our room adjoined her room. Often she complained, so we tried to sing softly and not disturb her. When she saw

that we weren't going to stop having our morning family prayers, her complaints gradually ceased.

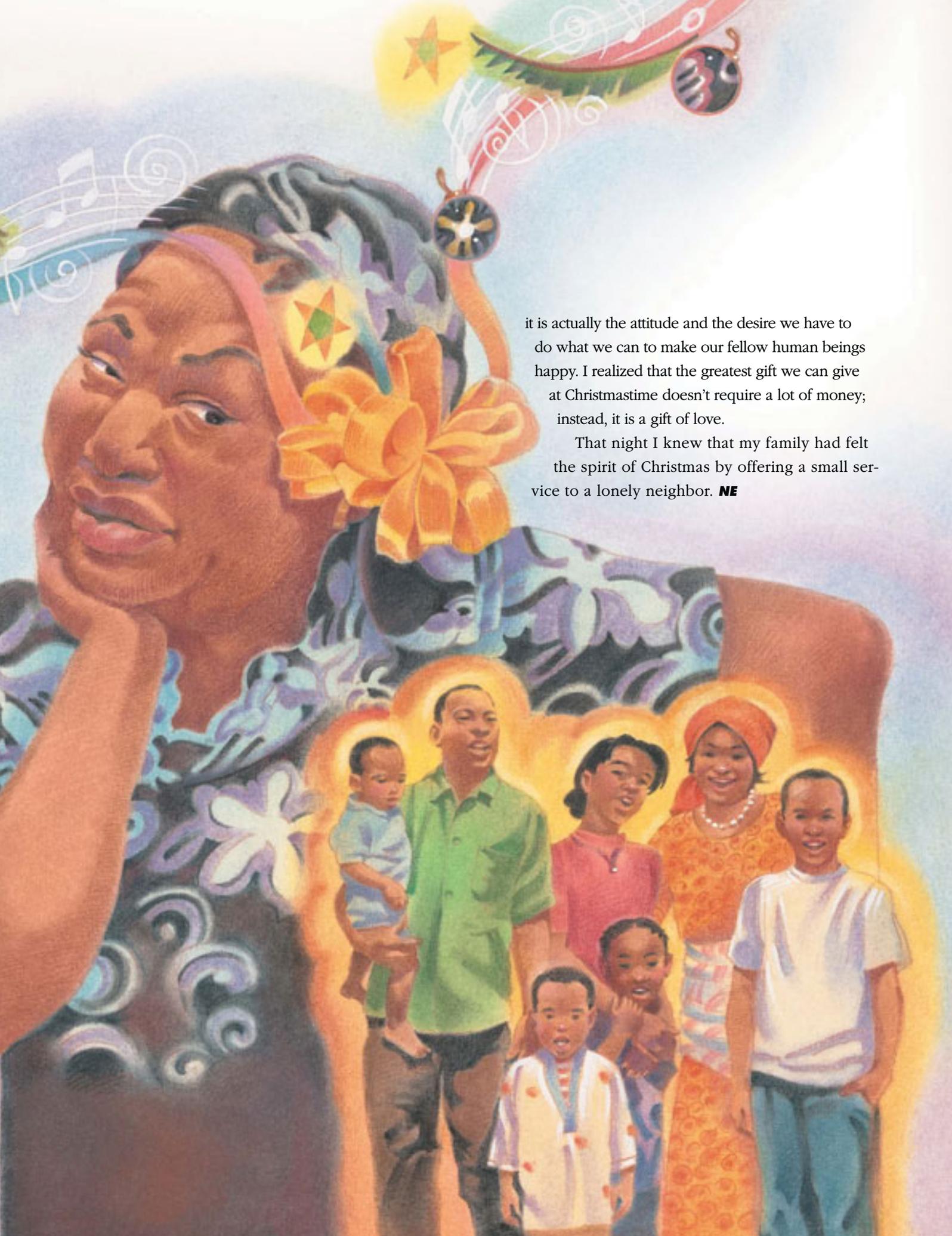
Then a thought occurred to my dad. He felt that we should sing Christmas carols to our landlady as our Christmas gift to her. Everyone was thrilled with the idea—except for me. I strongly objected, reminding my family of the complaints she had made over our family prayers. I suggested that we sing for someone who would appreciate it and not for her.

But my dad insisted, explaining that it would be an avenue for us to show her that we were her friends despite belonging to different religions. I had no choice but to join my family in choosing and practicing carols to sing for her.

On Christmas Eve we stood at her door and knocked. She did not open the door, and I was about to get angry and remind my dad of our wasted effort. But as I looked around, I saw that all the members of my family were smiling—they were happy about what we were doing. I felt a desire within me to experience that same feeling.

Eventually the landlady opened her door, and for a moment she did not know what to do. My dad quietly told her that we would love to sing for her and that, if it was all right, we would love to come inside her apartment. She stepped aside, and we went in. We sang all the Christmas songs we could remember—both the ones we had rehearsed and ones we had not. Soon there was a wonderful feeling in the room. Although we knew that she might not understand the meaning of the words, she smiled as we sang. She also told us that she had been feeling lonely and seeing us together made her long for her own family. Before leaving, we wished her a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. She thanked us, and we went back to our room.

As I was trying to fall asleep that night, I pondered on what had happened. It occurred to me that a real Christmas gift is not necessarily store bought or even homemade;



it is actually the attitude and the desire we have to do what we can to make our fellow human beings happy. I realized that the greatest gift we can give at Christmastime doesn't require a lot of money; instead, it is a gift of love.

That night I knew that my family had felt the spirit of Christmas by offering a small service to a lonely neighbor. **NE**

Why Me?

Adversity taught me not to worry about this question—or about anything that doesn't really matter.

BY ELIZABETH QUIGLEY

Why me? Why now? I had just gotten back from competing in a major horse show held in California and was at the height of my hunter-jumper equestrian riding abilities. I was busy with school, piano lessons, and Beehives. I was doing everything I had been taught to do, and I thought that my life was about as perfect as life can ever get. Then it changed.

The Trial

I was now in a hospital bed, too sick to even open my eyes. I had been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. My illness came just four years after my mom died from a similar cancer. I was on heavy chemotherapy to get rid of the cancer, and the doctors were saying that I would have to undergo chemotherapy for two and a half years to make sure that all the cancer was gone. I couldn't understand why me and why now.

I soon learned that being diagnosed with cancer was not the only challenge I would face. One of the drugs used to treat leukemia is a steroid given at extremely high doses. It is very effective at killing the leukemia cells, but there is a small risk that it can result in avascular necrosis (a condition in which bones die near the joints), particularly in teenage girls. My doctors thought that, at 12 years old, I was too young for that to happen. However, within one month of my starting chemotherapy, the steroids ended up destroying most of my major joints and parts of my spine. I was living in constant pain. Four months after

I was diagnosed with leukemia, I had my first hip surgery to begin trying to repair the damage done by the steroids and to lessen the pain. The surgery did not go as well as I had hoped, and my orthopedic surgeon told me that I would probably never ride a horse again. All of a sudden, the future I had planned was gone.

I was a good student, and I really enjoyed school. Now I couldn't go to school or even out in public because the chemotherapy had destroyed my immune system. Instead, I stayed home with my stepmother. At this point I thought things were pretty bad, but they got worse.

Six months after my hip surgery, I had to have another hip surgery because the first one hadn't worked. I was in a wheelchair because it hurt too much to walk. I was absolutely sure that I wasn't going to ride horses again, and now I was worried if I would even be able to walk again. Living life sick, in constant pain, and confined to a wheelchair didn't sound like a lot of fun to me.

The Prayers

I was praying to my Heavenly Father, and I know many other people were praying for me also. Through all of my trials, I prayed that I would be healed, that my joints would recover, and that I wouldn't have to go through the rest of chemotherapy. I felt that my prayers weren't being answered because I still had to go to Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City every week for more chemotherapy. I still hurt. And I was still stuck in a wheelchair. At one point, I



started to think that my parents were crazy for believing in a God who wouldn't even listen to a poor little sick girl.

Years before, I had gone through a similar trial of my faith when I prayed for my mom to get better. She was on oxygen all the time and was too weak to even walk around the house. I prayed and hoped and prayed some more that she would miraculously be healed. However, she wasn't. After she died, I learned that we can pray for what we want all that we want to, but we need to pray for the right things—praying that the Lord's will be done—to have our prayers answered.

Remembering this lesson, I changed my prayers from "Please heal me" to "Heavenly Father, I would really like to be done with these trials, but I will accept Thy will." As soon as I changed my prayers, I found that I was able to handle the chemotherapy more easily, and I had a better attitude. That was just the beginning of the blessings and the answers to my prayers and questions.

My dad and grandfather gave me many priesthood blessings.

Whenever I had to go in for surgery, I would ask for a blessing. The blessings

helped me and my family feel calm about the procedure.

One time I had a high fever, and we had to go to the hospital. I received a blessing from my dad and a neighbor before we left. By the time we pulled up at the emergency room door, my fever was gone, and I didn't have to stay the night in the hospital. I know that priesthood power is a gift from a loving Heavenly Father.

The Lessons

One moment that will always stand out in my mind was the day I came home from the hospital after I was diagnosed with leukemia. The young women and Relief Society sisters had moved my stuff from the basement into a room on the main floor so I would be closer to my parents and wouldn't have to use the stairs. They had cleaned and decorated the room to make a great place for me to live while I was sick. My family was the recipient of many other service projects. In the beginning, it was hard for me to accept service. When people would do service for me, it would make me feel like I couldn't do anything for myself. However, I soon learned that it was OK to ask for help. When I started





Elizabeth played the oboe in the general Young Women meeting in March of this year

(which can be viewed at www.generalconference.lds.org).

feeling better, I began looking for opportunities to serve other people more. Now I try to serve as much as I can. I get a good feeling when I serve other people. I have come to realize that by letting other people serve me, I allow them the same good feelings.

I have learned to think more about the future and my choices because I was so close to death. At school, I heard girls complaining about how they were having a “bad hair day.” As I was sitting there in my hot pink wheelchair with a wig on my head, I would think, “Well at least you *have* hair!” Girls would also complain about their feet hurting from walking around in high heels. I would think to myself, “At least you *can* walk.” Now I try to focus more on the big picture instead of the small things I used to worry about.

Over the past few years I have learned many other things through the blessings of having leukemia and



GUIDED THROUGH THE STORMS OF LIFE

“Sometimes the Lord allows us to have trials to shape us into productive servants.

... His all-seeing eye

is over us and ever watching us as our Eternal Heavenly Parent. When trials come, as surely they will to all of us during mortality, let us not sink into the abyss of self-pity but remember who is at the helm, that He is there to guide us through all the storms of life.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Be Not Afraid,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 5.

the complications from chemotherapy. I have become closer to my Heavenly Father. My testimony has grown. And I have learned what is truly important. I have learned to appreciate all of the small things that people do for me. I am now in remission, in less pain, and gradually getting back some of the use of my joints. As I continue to heal, the blessings and learning experiences keep coming.

So why me? Why now? I don’t ask those questions anymore because I grew spiritually during my trials. I have discovered who I really am because the Lord loved me enough to let me experience adversity and the blessings that can come with it. **NE**

Note: Elizabeth is in remission and recently passed her third anniversary of being off chemotherapy. Her joints are healing, and she is no longer in a wheelchair. While there is still a risk for a relapse, Elizabeth doesn’t think about it. Instead, as a freshman in college, she is focused on studying for tests and practicing the oboe and English horn.



The Wise Men are a prominent part of a traditional nativity scene, but what do we really know about them?

BY WENDY KENNEY

Have you ever looked closely at a nativity display and wondered about the three elaborately dressed men delivering gifts to the infant Jesus? We know, of course, that they represent the three Wise Men, but just who were they? Why were they visiting Jesus, and why were they bringing Him such unusual gifts?

The scriptural account of the Savior's birth actually reveals little about the Wise Men (see Matthew 2). But because their visit was so significant, scholars throughout the centuries have attempted to discover information about their background and purpose in visiting the Christ child. Though some details have emerged through scholarly investigation, much of what the Christian world has

traditionally believed about the Wise Men may be based more on myth and speculation than on history.

This is what we know:

How Many Wise Men?

Tradition holds that there were three men who visited the Christ child, a belief that comes from the fact that there were three gifts given: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Presumably, each man brought one gift. Some scholars, however, believe there could have been many more Wise Men, perhaps as many as 12.¹ The Bible Dictionary indicates that since the Wise Men were essentially witnesses of the Savior's birth, there would have been at least two or three (see Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28).²

The belief that the Wise Men were kings comes from passages in the Old Testament that foretell of kings visiting the Lord. Isaiah 49:7 says, "Kings shall see and arise," and Isaiah 60:10 records, "Their kings shall



We THREE KINGS

minister unto thee.” (See also Psalm 72:10.)

Scholars have found other records that refer to the Wise Men as kings. The 13th-century writings of Marco Polo contain a report from the town of Saba in Persia about three kings who took gold, frankincense, and myrrh with them on a journey to visit a newborn prophet. According to Marco Polo’s record, the men were named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, the names usually associated with the Wise Men today.³

Origin of the Term *Wise Men*

The term *Wise Men*, as used in the King James Version of the Bible, is translated from the Greek word *magoi*. *Magoi*, usually rendered as *magi* in English, is actually Persian in origin and refers to priests in Persia’s ancient religion. Given this use of the word *magi*, some scholars think the Wise Men were likely priests in a Persian

religious sect. However, Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated in his *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*: “To suppose they were members of the apostate religious cult of the *Magi* of ancient Media and Persia is probably false. Rather, it would appear they were true prophets, righteous persons like Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds, to whom Deity revealed that the promised Messiah had been born among men.”⁴

Of the Orient?

Were the Wise Men from the Orient, as the Christmas carol “We Three Kings of Orient Are” claims?⁵ The author of the song likely used the term *Orient* to replace the common word *east* used in Matthew’s account. Anything east of Palestine was somewhat exotically referred to as the Orient. Matthew’s use of the generic locality “the east” could simply indicate that no one knew for sure



where the Wise Men came from.⁶

Some scholars cite Psalm 72:10 as evidence that the men were from regions in present-day Spain, Ethiopia, and Saudi Arabia: “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.” Others believe the Wise Men were from Persia (modern-day Iran) and may have been Jewish, since there were many people of Jewish descent living in that region at the time.⁷

When Did the Wise Men Visit Jesus?

Artistic renderings of the Nativity typically depict the Wise Men worshipping a *newborn*, as if their visit

occurred shortly after the Savior’s birth. The scriptures, however, reveal that the Wise Men were not present at Jesus’s birth in the stable or anytime during His infancy. The Wise Men actually visited the *child* Jesus with His mother, Mary. “When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and . . . presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).

The Wise Men’s Gifts

Why did the Wise Men bring Jesus such rare gifts? Most scholars agree that the gifts were symbolic. The gold

symbolized Jesus's kingship, frankincense His divinity, and myrrh His suffering and death, since myrrh was a substance used to perfume dead bodies before burial.⁸

Warned of God

When Herod directed the Wise Men to Bethlehem, he told them, "When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also" (Matthew 2:8). However, according to Matthew's account, the Wise Men were "warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod," so, after visiting the Christ child, the Wise Men bypassed Herod and "departed into their own country another way" (Matthew 2:12). Herod was furious, not only because the Wise Men had ignored his order but also because there was apparently now a child residing in Bethlehem who would one day rule the nation.

On the Lord's Errand

The Bible Dictionary effectively summarizes our beliefs about the Wise Men: "They were righteous men sent on an errand to witness the presence of the Son of God on the earth. . . . It seems likely that they were representatives of a branch of the Lord's people somewhere

from east of Palestine, who had come, led by the Spirit, to behold the Son of God, and who returned to their people to bear witness that the King Immanuel had indeed been born in the flesh."⁹ **NE**

NOTES

1. See John A. Tvedtnes, "What Do We Know about the Wise Men?" *Insights: An Ancient Window* (newsletter of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS]), Dec. 1998.
2. See Bible Dictionary, "Magi," 728.
3. See John A. Tvedtnes, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25–26.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966–73), 1:103.
5. John Henry Hopkins Jr., "We Three Kings of Orient Are" (1857).
6. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (1977), 168.
7. See John A. Tvedtnes, *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25.
8. See John A. Tvedtnes, *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25.
9. Bible Dictionary, "Magi," 727–28.



GIFTS OF THE HEART

"When we find him, will we be prepared as were the wise men of old to provide gifts from our many treasures? They presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These are not the gifts Jesus asks of us. From the treasure of our hearts Jesus asks that we give of

ourselves: 'Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind' (D&C 64:34)."

President Thomas S. Monson, "The Search for Jesus," *Ensign*, Dec. 1990, 5.

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

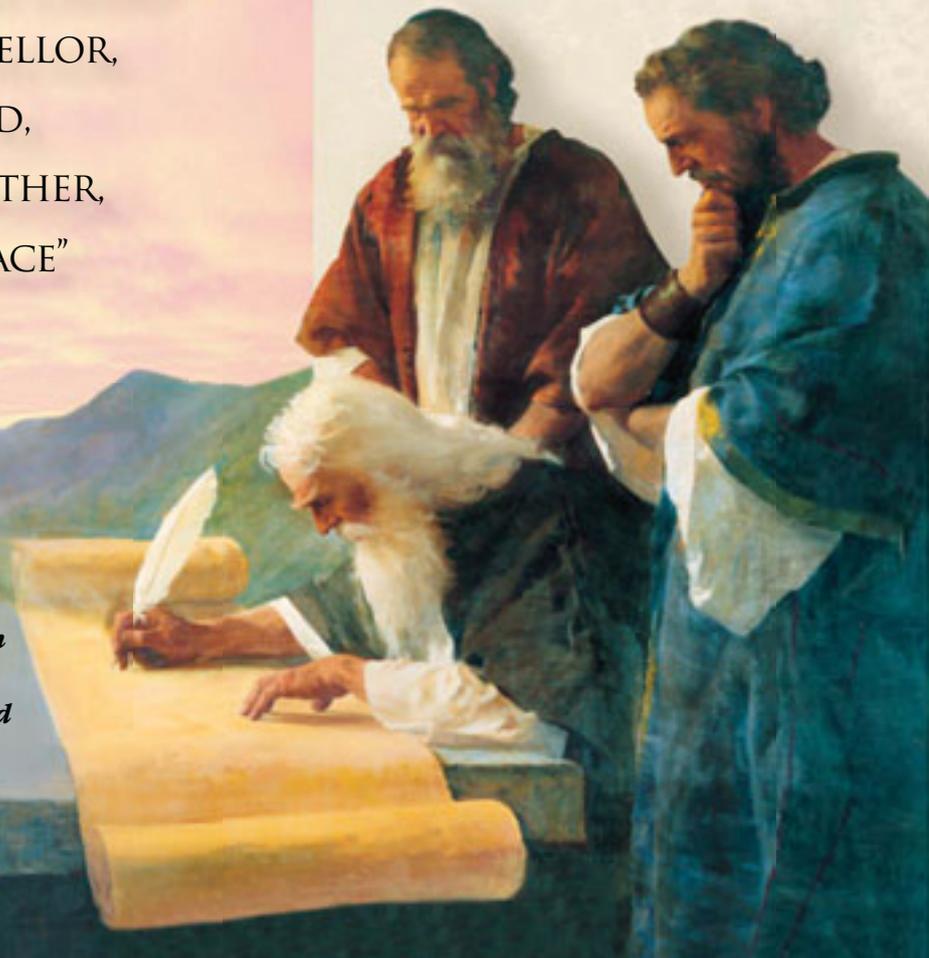
“FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN,
UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN:
AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL
BE UPON HIS SHOULDER:
AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR,
THE MIGHTY GOD,
THE EVERLASTING FATHER,
THE PRINCE OF PEACE”
(ISAIAH 9:6).

*The ancient prophet Isaiah
foretold the coming
of the Messiah and revealed
much about His roles.*

Several centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah recorded the things revealed to him regarding the circumstances of Christ's coming. One such prophecy, found in Isaiah 9:6, gives us in just a few words a wealth of knowledge about the Savior and the roles He plays in our lives and in Heavenly Father's plan. Here are some explanations of the ideas expressed in this verse.

A Child Is Born, a Son Is Given

The Savior was revealed to Adam, the first man, as the Only Begotten Son of God (see Moses 5:7, 9; 6:52, 57, 59, 62). Since then all the holy prophets have testified of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh to redeem His people (see Acts 10:43; Jacob 4:4).





What Does Christ's birth signify?

The angel who announced the Savior's birth to the shepherds declared "good tidings of **great joy**, which shall be **to all people**" (Luke 2:10).

When Nephi saw a vision of the virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus, he was moved to affirm "the **love of God**, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22).

The Savior Himself declared that "God so **loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

Government upon His Shoulder

In ancient Israel, the priests and kings were clothed with a robe and wore the insignia of their office on the shoulder (see Isaiah 22:21–22). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came "as one having authority" (Matthew 7:29). And He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords during the Millennium, when "he reigns whose right it is to reign" (D&C 58:22; see also Articles of Faith 1:10).

Wonderful Counsellor

The word *wonderful* comes from the Hebrew word for "miracle," suggesting both the Messiah's miraculous birth and the miracles He would perform during His life. The word *counsellor* has to do with the commandments and teachings the Messiah would bring to guide us back to Heavenly Father. As the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob said, "[The Lord] counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works" (Jacob 4:10).

The Mighty God

"Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the greatest [figure] of time and eternity. Believe that his matchless life reached back before the world was formed. Believe that he was the Creator of the earth on which we live. Believe that he was Jehovah of the Old Testament, that he was the Messiah of the New Testament, that he died and was resurrected, . . . and that he lives, the living Son of the living God, our Savior and our Redeemer."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Be Not Faithless," *Tambuli*, Apr. 1990, 4; *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 2.

The Everlasting Father

"Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called 'the Father,' and even 'the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth' (see . . . Mosiah 16:15). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called 'The Everlasting Father' (Isa. 9:6; compare 2 Ne. 19:6). . . . Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth . . . ; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth."

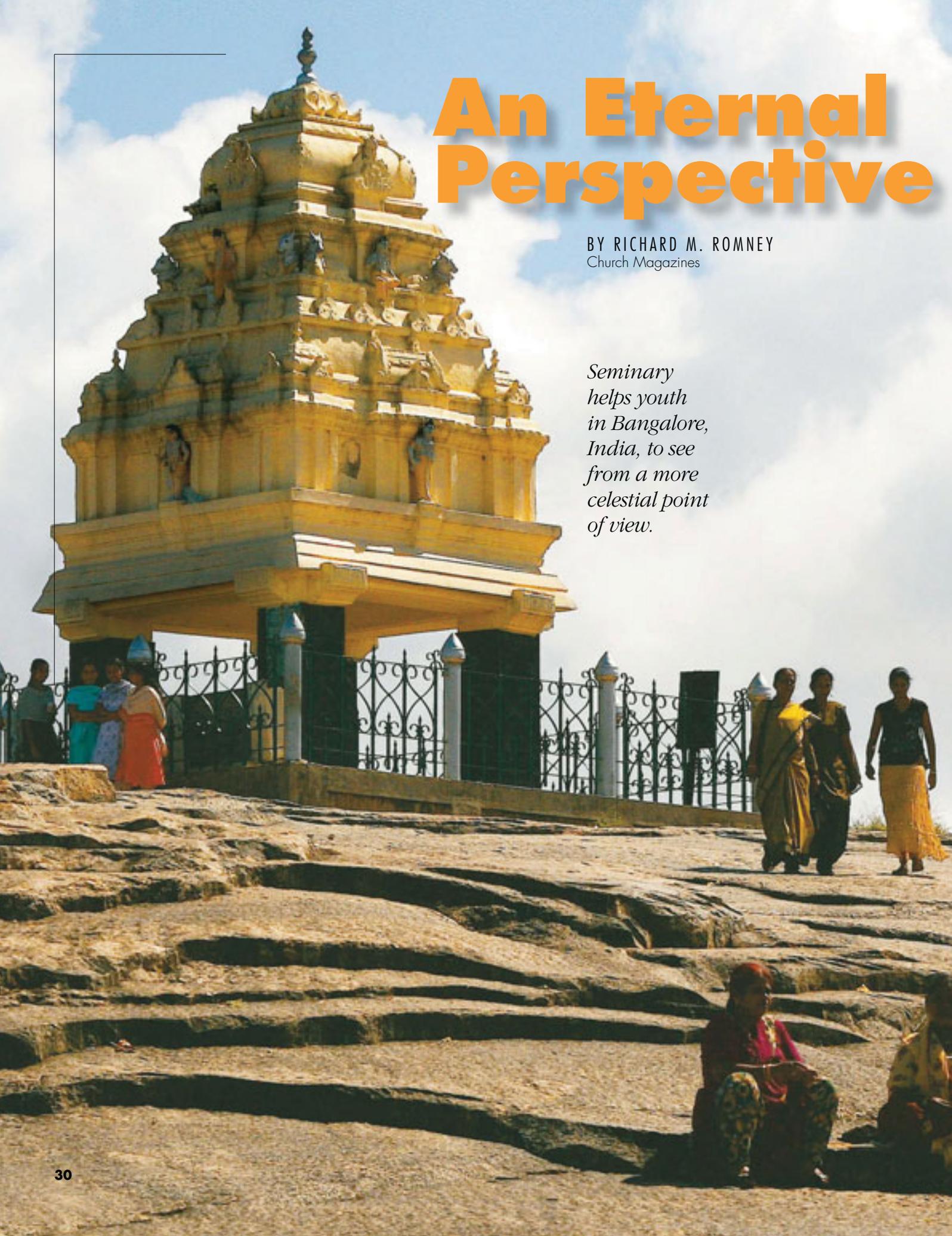
"The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 13; from *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, 934–42.

The Prince of Peace

"Perhaps we stray from the path which leads to peace and find it necessary to pause, to ponder, and to reflect on the teachings of the Prince of Peace and determine to incorporate them in our thoughts and actions and to live a higher law, walk a more elevated road, and be a better disciple of Christ."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Peace," *Liahona and Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 3.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).



An Eternal Perspective

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

*Seminary
helps youth
in Bangalore,
India, to see
from a more
celestial point
of view.*



Many of the seminary students arrive at the chapel as passengers in three-wheeled, bright yellow auto-rickshaws that look more like a bicycle than a car. Most of the young women wear brightly colored saris, the traditional dress for women in India. But once the lesson starts, seminary in the Bangalore Second Branch is much like seminary anywhere—the teacher and the students sharing insights gained by studying the scriptures. And sometimes the discussion continues even when the formal lesson is through.

Familiar with the scriptures



“What are some of your favorite scriptures?” asks the teacher, Deepak Raj David Michael, a returned missionary. The students, still seated in their desks even though the hymn has been sung and the closing prayer has been said, offer plenty of answers.



“In 3 Nephi 12:16, it says that by setting a good example for others, we glorify our Father

in Heaven,” says Alisha Palikot, 16.

“I like John 14:15 because I love God, and I love to keep His commandments,” says Kevin Stephen, 15.

Angel Abishakam, 16, recites 1 Nephi 3:7. “Nephi’s example helps me to obey,” she says.

“Anyone else?” Brother Deepak asks, and Catherine Gracy Mary, 14, turns to John 3:16. “It says Heavenly Father loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us, and I love Jesus Christ for being willing to do that for us,” she says.

Clinton Daniel Michael, 15, the last to be called upon, says he likes Doctrine & Covenants 4:5 because it talks about having an eye single to the glory of God. “That helps me with spiritual goals, educational goals, and all my goals,” he says. “It helps me to have an eternal perspective.”

And gaining an eternal perspective is what the gospel is all about, whether it’s in India or anywhere else in the world.

What can you do?

To help students gain that perspective, Brother Deepak asks what they can do to take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ.

“One way to do that is through service,” Kevin says. He talks about the day the branch’s Aaronic Priesthood and elders quorum cleaned up the neighborhood around the



A geological monument in Lalbagh Garden is dedicated to the rock it stands on. Seminary students in Bangalore are dedicated to scripture study, which helps them stand strong.





Whether searching the scriptures during class (above) or visiting with the teacher afterward (far right), seminary students like Deepa and Suganya (below) are creating spiritual roots as deep as those of the trees in Lalbagh.

chapel. “People who live around the building saw us and were happy that we were doing something good,” he says. “Some of them worked with us and got to know us, and we all felt like friends.”

The students have moved outside the meetinghouse now, and as they speak they look out at the neighborhood they cleaned. The Church building is located on a side street near a major thoroughfare, and sounds of traffic are ever present. Tall trees shade the grounds, creating an oasis of peace. Some younger children are playing soccer on a concrete sports area behind the parking lot.

Kevin continues talking about service. He says another way the Aaronic Priesthood quorums help others is by preparing, blessing, and distributing the sacrament each week. “Helping with the sacrament is a service to all the branch members,” he says. “It gives them the opportunity to draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and to feel the Holy Ghost.”

Wise choices

Clinton says the Church teaches him correct principles he can apply in his everyday life. “For example, there are times when people outside the Church offer me coffee or

tea, and I tell them it is something I can’t drink,” he says. Clinton believes the gospel also teaches us to control our emotions: “President Gordon B. Hinckley said once that anger is a sin. I want to be free from anger so that it doesn’t control me.” Clinton is preparing to be a full-time missionary: “One of the most important things I’ve learned is that I can start right now.”

“Jolly happy”

Pooja Prabhakar, 18, says she has received many blessings because of the gospel. “I have been brought into the light of truth, and I am happy that I can prepare myself to go back and live with my Heavenly Father.”



She says that becoming a member of the Church has changed her life in many ways: “I begin each day with scripture study. I dress modestly. I use good language. I used to have a habit of making fun of others, but because of the Church I learned that I shouldn’t be



NEmore

To view a video greeting from this seminary class, as well as a photo gallery, go to newera.lds.org.

doing that, so I stopped.”

She says she was 14 years old when she first attended Young Women. “I loved it,” she says. “I was very much reserved, but as I went on, I became jolly happy. I learned how to be a good daughter to my parents, a loving sister to my siblings, and a peacemaker at home. It’s been jolly nice, especially when I received my Personal Progress medallion.”

Pleasant memories

Now as she transitions into Relief Society, she has many pleasant memories—of singing songs at a residence for the elderly “to show our love;” of gaining a testimony that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that President Thomas S. Monson is a living prophet; and of “learning more about the gospel every time I come to church.”

She tells of an experience she and her friends had one day on their way to school. “We saw an older woman who was trying to find her way to the chemist [pharmacy] to get a prescription filled, so we stopped and helped her.” They not only walked with her to her destination, but they went inside and made sure she was able to get what she needed.

“I’m glad to know God would let us help her,” Pooja says.



Powerful perspective

That’s the kind of perspective every seminary student should have, and the kind of insight teens in the Bangalore Second Branch are gaining as they attend seminary, prayerfully study and apply the scriptures in their lives, and discuss the feelings and experiences they have as they learn and live the gospel.

The students disperse now. Some get back into auto-rickshaws. Others join their families to walk or ride home. But it’s guaranteed they’ll be back soon. After all, in this place they share a perspective that brings them joy, a vision based on the gospel of Jesus Christ. It not only allows them to see clearly; it also permits them to glimpse into eternity. **NE**





Gifts from the Heart

The most memorable Christmas gifts are the ones that are given and received with love.

Our Heavenly Father gave us the greatest gift of all when He sent His Son to earth. During the Christmas season we remember our Father's great gift to us—the Savior—by happily giving and gratefully receiving gifts of our own. Many presents are brightly wrapped and ribboned, others are simple yet sincere, and some are just meant to exchange deep feelings.

Looking back, we often find that gifts from the heart are what we remember and love the most. Here are some of the best Christmas gifts that these young people have received.

Warm Memories

The greatest Christmas present I ever received came early one Christmas morning. At some point during the night the furnace in our house had gone out, and there was no heat for us on that snowy morning. We huddled in blankets close to the Christmas tree and opened presents. While it wasn't physically the warmest Christmas ever, it was one of the most memorable, as we spent time together trying to keep each other warm and enjoying each other's company.

—Kasen Christensen

The Gift of Music

The best gift I have ever received was my own hymnbook, because music is a huge part of my life. Music lifts me up when I am down.

—Cody Gunnell

A Special Delivery

Although some of the most exciting Christmas gifts come in a physical form, the best gift I ever received came through an act of service. My family has the tradition of delivering food boxes to the needy during the holiday season. Most of the encounters that my family has had are valuable experiences, but one in particular will remain with me.

Carrying a food box and gifts, my family approached a small, run-down apartment and knocked on the door. We were greeted by a lady who spoke only Spanish. Immediately after she opened the door, my family began singing "Silent Night." Not long into the song, she broke into tears out of gratefulness. All she could say was "Gracias, gracias" repeatedly as she embraced us.

Although her language and background were entirely different from ours, we immediately felt a connection. She was grateful for our offer of help, and I understood what it meant to truly be thankful for even the simplest necessities. I walked out of the apartment with a whole new outlook, realizing that we owe the Lord our gratitude for even our most basic needs.

—Rhett Wilkinson



Simple Gratitude

One Christmas Eve, I stayed up late into the night finishing a short story for my father. The story was about a young girl who wanted to be an angel in her community's Christmas nativity. I named the girl Cosette after my father's sister, who had passed away earlier in the year.

The next morning I got to watch the soft expression on my father's face and see the tears shine in his eyes as he read what I had written. I can still remember the feeling when he finished and looked up at me. His quiet and simple "thank you" was the best gift I received that Christmas morning. It helped me see how our Heavenly Father and our Savior must feel when we gratefully receive the blessings They send us every day.

—*Julia Woodbury*

An Example of Service

When my brother, Keb, was a teenager, he regularly helped the elderly in our neighborhood. At Christmastime he made three-dimensional Christmas tree cakes, the kind that take forever to decorate because each branch has to be frosted separately. His present to me came when he asked me to help him secretly deliver the gifts to our neighbors. We carefully placed each gift so it would be found, and then we ran. Boy, did we run! And we were never caught. His example of service is something I can never repay or replace.

—*Anita Brady Bergman*

NEmore

Share your favorite Christmas experience at newera.lds.org.



JOSEPH SMITH'S PROPHETIC MISSION

The Prophet Joseph Smith knew and fulfilled his mission.

When he was 14 years old, Joseph Smith's life changed forever when he prayed in a grove of trees and was visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ. After the First Vision, Joseph Smith grew into his role as the Prophet of this latter-day dispensation and learned what it means to be a prophet. Here are some of Joseph Smith's teachings on his prophetic mission.*

THE PROPHET LOVED PEOPLE AND TAUGHT THEM THE TRUTH

"It is my meditation all the day, and more than my meat and drink, to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind."

"You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also taste the spirit of eternal life. I know that it is good; and when I tell you of these things which were given me by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you are bound to receive them as sweet, and rejoice more and more."

"The Saints need not think that because I am familiar with them and am playful and cheerful, that I am ignorant of what is going on. Iniquity of any kind cannot be sustained in the Church, and it will not fare well where I am; for I am determined while I do lead the Church, to lead it right."

"If I reprove a man, and he hates me, he is a fool; for I love all men, especially these my brethren and sisters."

DESPITE CHALLENGES, THE PROPHET FULFILLED HIS MISSION

"I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught."

"If I had not actually got into this work and been called of God, I would back out. But I cannot back out: I have no doubt of the truth."

"I speak boldly and faithfully and with authority. . . . I know what I say; I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield; and what can man do if God is my friend?"

"You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. I don't blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I would not have believed it myself."



* From *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 520–25.

“I have had prayers answered. Those answers were most clear when what I wanted was silenced by an overpowering need to know what God wanted.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Matter of the Heart,” *New Era*, Nov. 2003, 13.



I LOVE TO SEE THE TEMPLE

I have been inspired by the temple all my life,” says Caitlen Christensen, 16, of the Rockledge Ward in the Cocoa Florida Stake. “When I was younger the Salt Lake Temple was being updated. I was upset because I was unable to see it up close. All I wanted was to touch it. We asked a missionary there and got permission to get close enough to touch it. I had no idea why this was so important to me then; now I know. I know that Christ dwells in the temples and the action of me touching it gave me the feeling that I was touching Christ himself, like the woman who knew she would be healed if she just touched His robe.

“This picture I took was a big testimony builder for me. Every time I look at it, it reminds me of my purpose in life and that Christ knows and loves me. It also reminds me of my goal of an eternal marriage in the temple.”

MOTHERS OF THE PROPHETS QUIZ

The stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon were brave and good because they followed their mothers’ teachings. We may not know the names of the stripling warriors’ mothers, but we do know the names of a few other righteous mothers in the scriptures. See if you can match these good mothers to their prophet sons.

A: Sariah	1: John the Baptist
B: Lucy Mack	2: Jacob
C: Rachel	3: Joseph (son of Jacob)
D: Elisabeth	4: Joseph Smith
E: Sarah	5: Samuel
F: Rebekah	6: Isaac
G: Jochebed	7: Nephi
H: Hannah	8: Moses

BY SHANNA BUTLER

Answers:
 C-3 (see Genesis 30:22-24)
 D-1 (see Luke 1:57-60)
 E-6 (see Genesis 21:2-3)
 F-2 (see Genesis 25:21-26)
 G-8 (see Numbers 26:59)
 H-5 (1 Samuel 1:20)
 A-7 (see 1 Nephi 2:5)
 B-4 (see JS—H 1:4)

BYU RE:WRITING CONTEST 2010

It’s time to prepare your entry for the BYU English Department writing contest for high school students 9th–12th grades (ages 14–18). Cash prizes will be awarded in the categories of fiction, poetry, personal essay, and critical essay. You can submit one entry per category.

Submit your entries between January 1, 2010 and January 31, 2010 to BYU English Department, 4198 JFSB, Provo, UT 84602-6701. You can get all the rules and a cover sheet at the department Web site, english.byu.edu. Look for undergraduate writing contests. If you have questions, call 801-422-4939.



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

2 Nephi 4:28–30 Every time I read these verses I feel like jumping up and shouting praises to the Lord. I get easily discouraged and frustrated with myself, and it is a joy to know that my Heavenly Father forgives and extends His hand to pull me back up into the path of righteousness.
Belinda Z., 15, Wisconsin, USA

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Send it to newera@ldschurch.org



AFTER THE FLOOD

Earlier this year widespread flooding hit Washington state. “West Ellensburg was hit especially hard and about 200 residents, including my family, were evacuated the first night as up to four feet of water went into our homes,” says Krista Lindsay, a Laurel in the Ellensburg First Ward. “My family stayed with our bishop for a couple of nights since we had lost electricity and heat in our house. The next couple of days, after the flood had receded, were a whirlwind of cleaning up. The American Red Cross had contacted local churches to help with the flood relief. The Church recruited 445 volunteers who donned yellow shirts and invaded West Ellensburg with squeegees and lots of compassion. They cleaned up our yard and helped put our basement back together again. In other homes, they dragged out soggy carpet, moved furniture, and cleaned debris from yards. The flood damage was cleaned up and life does go on, but the helping people in yellow shirts remain a happy memory for all the victims.”



THE CHURCH IN USA — IDAHO

In 1855, Brigham Young asked 26 members to settle among the Native Americans on the Salmon River; they established Fort Lemhi in June 1855. Five years later more LDS settlers came to the Franklin area. They dug canals in the winter snows to be ready for summer irrigation. Church members taught agriculture, preached the gospel, and shared supplies with the Native Americans. A prominent chief, Shoshone Chief Washakie, was baptized during the early colonization efforts.

When Idaho was given statehood in 1890, Latter-day Saints comprised about one-fifth of the state’s population. Three Church Presidents have been natives of Idaho: Presidents Harold B. Lee, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter.

Here are a few facts about the Church in Idaho today:

Membership	406,764
Missions	2
Temples	4
Wards & Branches	1,063
Family History Centers	64



BY THE NUMBERS

3,500,000

Number of patriarchal blessings preserved in the Church History Library. If placed end to end, they would reach from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Kansas City, Kansas.



SERVING BREAKFAST

THE REAL CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

“Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit. . . . 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. To catch the real meaning of the ‘spirit of Christmas,’ we need only drop the last syllable, and it becomes the ‘Spirit of Christ.’”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Best Christmas Ever,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2008, 5.

I was a newly arrived full-time missionary in Connecticut, and my companion and I were serving in a small ward during the first round of holidays I spent on my mission. I hadn’t yet learned the dietary value of becoming friends with a few of the members, and my first Thanksgiving resulted in no invitation and no dinner. Our mission president took pity on us, and we ended up being the only missionaries to spend Thanksgiving at the mission home. We were grateful but a little embarrassed.

We started putting ourselves out there early for the coming Christmas. Our shameful solicitations landed three full meals at three different homes. Pancakes for breakfast, Lithuanian food for lunch, and a Jamaican feast for dinner. Our stomachs were bursting. I was still an inexperienced missionary and thought that was what Christmas on a mission was all about.

During the next year, however, the Lord was able to teach me how to keep the spirit of Christmas. We served among a humble group of people living in nearly abandoned milling towns scattered along small rivers. And we loved serving among these people immensely.

We decided to share our Christmas with an investigator, Alice, and her family. Alice supported her three teenage boys, a daughter, and a granddaughter all with her income working at a fast food place. Needless to say, her budget was tight. So instead of focusing on ourselves at Christmas, we decided to serve someone else.

BY JACOB S. FULLMER

My first Christmas on my mission was all about me, but the Lord taught me how to serve in time for the second Christmas season.

My companion at the time, Elder Werner, felt there were basically two things that would bring joy into the world: the gospel and good food. When we showed up on Christmas morning to cook a simple breakfast, we were hailed like Old Saint Nick himself. Her extended family was there, and everyone was laughing, joking around, and wanting to help us cook. Since our families were allowed to call on Christmas, Alice and my mom were able to talk on the phone together. Watching her speak with my family was far more of a gift than the three meals I participated in the year before. It connected someone I was serving to my family and helped my family share my mission with me. The morning was filled with a feeling of familiarity that was almost tangible. I knew I was where I was supposed to be.

During that morning, I came to appreciate the true spirit of Christmas. And it has everything to do with the example of our Savior and the teachings of the gospel. The excitement wasn’t about us as missionaries; it wasn’t even about our gesture of making breakfast. That morning was about sons and daughters of God simply sharing with one another. I wasn’t given a feast of food, but my soul was full of joy.

Christmas is a time of giving and receiving. While it is always fun to be on the receiving side, I learned that the teaching “it is better to give than to receive” (see Acts 20:35) may be an over-rung bell, but it will never fail to sound true. **NE**



This year *A Brand New Year* is coming to you from around the world. Teens from every continent are talking about their testimonies and how to be strong in their own way. A DVD of the program will be sent to your ward and branch for the youth to watch together. Or go online to abrandnewyear.lds.org and watch on your own whenever you like.

Film crews interviewed teens talking about the values in *For the Strength of Youth*. Teens from around the world were told that this was their chance to talk to you, face to face. They took this opportunity very seriously. For many of them, they are the only ones in their school who are LDS. They are often the only LDS members in their groups of friends. They have strong testimonies and have taken this chance to talk to the world about what they believe.

Meet Ernesto from Mexico. Ernesto and his brother joined the Church. Even though they are the only two members in their family, they have taken the things they have learned and strengthened and honored their family.

Listen to Elle from England. When asked how she feels about education, Elle talks about how important getting a good education is to her. She also feels that learning a trade, learning about raising a family, and especially learning about spiritual things is important throughout your life.

One voice and many voices. Two songs were written for this program, and you can hear voices joining together from all over the world—700 teens in Toronto, or a group on the roof of a building in Hong Kong, or

“We are excited for the youth of the Church to be able to see each other on this DVD and be strengthened by each others’ testimonies. Those who watch will see courageous youth everywhere choosing to live the standards and making a difference in the world.”

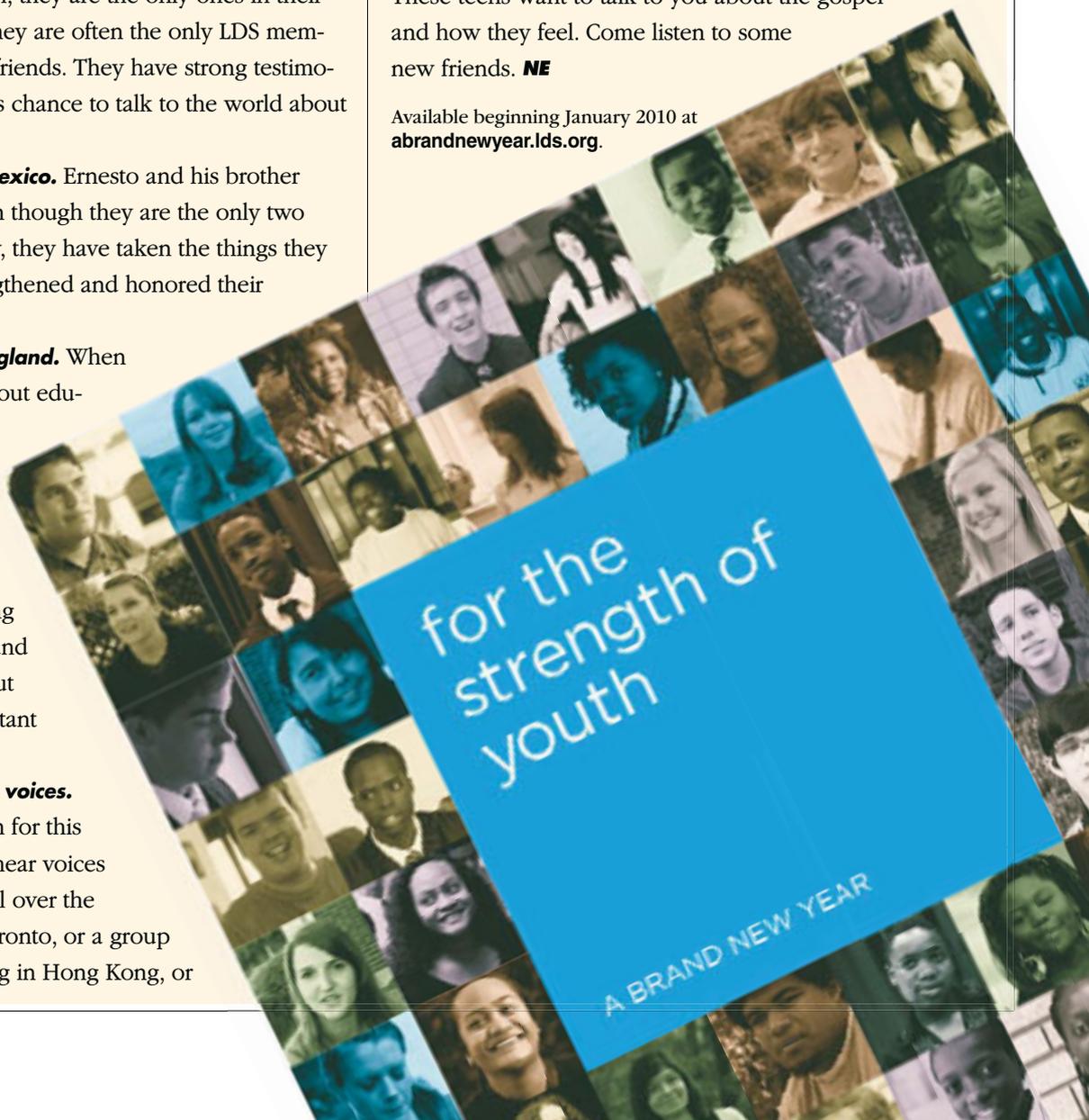
Sister Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president

300 singing at the This Is the Place monument. And you can hear the strength of a single voice singing out strong—from the islands of the Pacific to the tip of Africa, from the desert to the ocean. In addition to new songs, these teens also sing familiar Church hymns.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will introduce the program. Then Brother David L. Beck and Sister Elaine S. Dalton, Young Men and Young Women general presidents, will talk to you.

Be sure to watch. You’ll love what you see and hear. These teens want to talk to you about the gospel and how they feel. Come listen to some new friends. **NE**

Available beginning January 2010 at abrandnewyear.lds.org.



Multiplying Their Talents

BY RYANNE ROBERTS

Just like in the parable of the talents, my classmates used their talents to help me.

I recently had an experience that changed my idea of service.

It started when a professor of mine gave everyone in the class a one dollar bill. Our assignment was to find someone who really needed help and find a way to serve them using just the dollar we were given.

I did not think much about the assignment. In fact, I gave my dollar to a little boy so he could get a snack while he waited for his parents.

The day the assignment was due, a girl got up to talk about her experience. She said that everyone in the class got together to do their service project because if they combined their dollars they would have more to help someone.

I felt completely out of place because I had no idea what they were talking about.

The girl walked over and put a cardboard box on my desk and then she said, “Ryanne, this class loves you for your strength. We each started out with just a dollar, but we were able to put our dollars together and collect some from other people to give to you to help



you pay for your arthritis medicine.”

Each member of the class took turns going up to the front and telling me why they loved me. Then they took the money they had raised and placed it in the box.

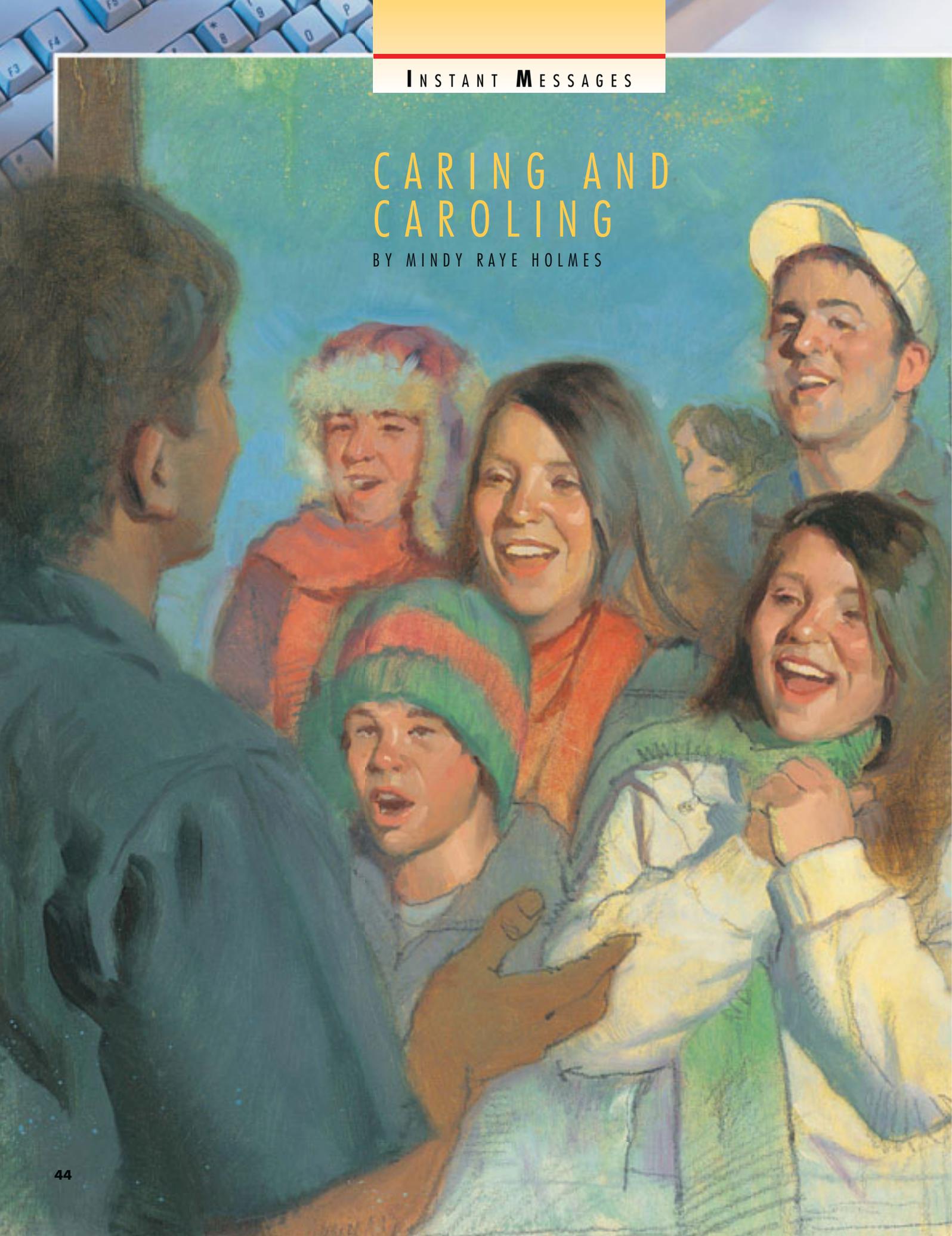
There were only 10 people in my class, but all together they had raised a few hundred dollars because they cared about me. I was so touched. And I was so impressed and grateful for the thought they had put into the assignment and the caring they showed to me. I was very appreciative of the money because it would help me get medicines that I needed.

The point my professor was trying to make was that everyone is blessed with gifts and talents. It is up to each of us to come up with ways to share our gifts and talents to serve those around us (see Matthew 25:14–30). I learned how wonderful, sincere, and thoughtful service can be.

In my case, my classmates were able to find a way to use their dollars to impact my life. It was more than just the money; it was friendship. **NE**

CARING AND CAROLING

BY MINDY RAYE HOLMES



My missionary companion and I were eating a quick dinner at a member's house one Sunday evening in December when we heard a knock on the door. There were the youth from the branch singing. We were serving in the Joliet Illinois Second (Spanish) Branch. It was nice to see the youth serving and to hear them singing familiar Christmas carols.

Later that evening we were visiting with one of our investigator families when we heard a knock on the door. To our surprise, there stood the same group of youth singing Christmas carols for our investigators.

I was impressed that they would think not only to visit people they knew from the branch, but also to visit the people the missionaries were teaching. I thought it was a wonderful way for the youth to get involved in missionary work.

Our investigators were impressed for a very different reason, however. After the youth left, they told us how amazed they were that a group of teenagers would give up their Sunday evening to bring others some Christmas cheer. They commented on how many youth today seem selfish and would not do such a thing but that the youth in our Church were different. They wanted their children to be like these young men and women.

Soon after Christmas this wonderful family decided to be baptized, and I know one of the influences on their decision to join the Church was the members' testimonies and examples. They could also see the light in the members' faces. I know they saw it that night when those youth gave of their time to spread the spirit of Christmas. **NE**

THE UNKNOWN GIFT

BY MISTY VANLUE



A few years ago, I had a very good friend at school. She was two grades above me, so we didn't have any classes together. We always talked with each other during breaks between classes because it was the only time we saw each other. She had some rough times at home and would often come to me upset. I tried to be helpful and give her advice, but I never thought I did any good because she was always sad again the next day.

Then, the day before Christmas break, it was my turn to be sad. I had been so busy with school that I had forgotten the fast approaching holiday break. My friend asked what was wrong, and I told her I hadn't done anything for anyone. And now it was too late to even get Christmas presents or make cards. She just laughed. At first I thought she was making fun of me. Then she told me that throughout the year, I had been helping her. She said that before she met me, it was hard to handle her parents' divorce. But her life had been brighter since knowing me. She had even written me a poem about the ways I had helped her and given

her strength. She handed me her final copy.

Just then, the bell rang and we had to go back to our classes. When I reached the classroom, I quietly read the poem. It was so kind and heartfelt that it almost made me cry.

After Christmas break, I looked all over for my friend but couldn't find her. I found out she had moved away during the break. I was so sad that day because I couldn't thank her for showing me how I had made a difference in someone else's life.

It's been nine years since I received that poem. I can still remember its final lines:

*And when others have fallen
to the storm,
She is the one that is still
standing tall,
Not ready to give up or fall.*

Many Christmas gifts are only physical things, and sometimes lack a lot of meaning. Of all the gifts I have received over the years, that tiny piece of paper sets the standard. It was one of the best of all. It was a gift from the heart. **NE**

Name: Rebecca Jensen

Age: 18

Location: Elkhart, Texas

Favorite Scripture:

Ether 12:27

At a glance:

Named Outstanding Performer in the University Interscholastic League Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest and made the Texas State High School Band; earned state recognition with her math team; raced in state-level track and cross-country; plans to attend Brigham Young University and major in flute performance.

This flautist doesn't flout the importance of hard work and dedication. With recognition in math, track, cross country, and academics, as well as flute, Rebecca Jensen has made the most of her time and her talents.

Why did you decide to play the flute? It is something I enjoy and something I can keep doing for the rest of my life. I also like playing for other people.

You also teach flute lessons. How has teaching blessed your life? Teaching helps me learn. I like teaching other people and seeing them progress. I'm happy whenever one of my students is excited about playing and really learns something I've taught. I'm sure Heavenly Father feels the same way—He's happy to see us do well because He wants us to be happy.

You've had success in a variety of activities. How do you do it? I'm an ordinary person who just works really hard. I've had a lot of failures among the successes, but I've learned that as you develop your talents, you can accomplish many things.

What have you learned from struggles? My sophomore and junior years, right before the state track meet, I got injured. I had to sit on the sidelines and watch everyone else run in the race I was supposed to be in. That only made me want to work harder and be better.

What activity has taught you the most? Long-distance running. I had to endure through the races and sometimes run when I was injured. I think my work ethic defines me, and running is where I developed it, because sometimes I had to keep going even when I wanted to stop.

How do you manage your time? I decided that I wasn't going to do any of my extracurricular activities on Sunday. I made it my day to rest. Also, even though it was hard, I still made it a priority to do my scripture study at night. I knew that Heavenly Father would bless me if

I was reading my scriptures every day.

How have you shared and strengthened your testimony?

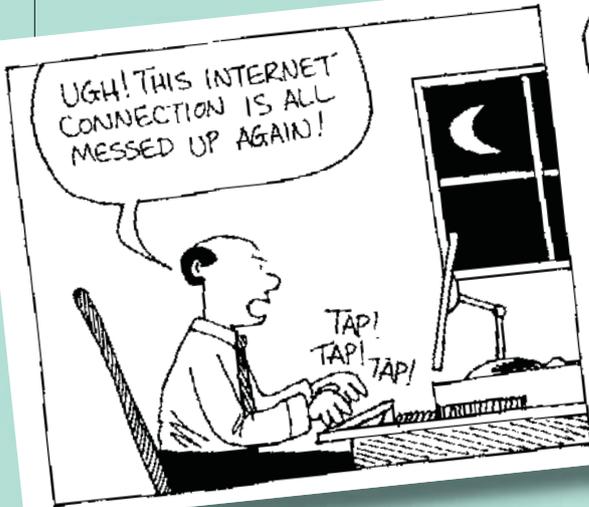
I go to a school with very few members, so I'm known as the Mormon girl. I take that as a compliment. A lot of people would see me praying before competitions. And at lunchtime, I'd pray before eating. Gradually I noticed others around me started praying too.

I've learned that you have to be strong in your beliefs, especially when you're around people who don't believe. You have to have your own testimony and be firm about it. I've found mine by feeling the Spirit, studying the scriptures, and praying. **NE**

—As told to Julia Woodbury

FLUTING FANCY





RYAN STOKER



STEVE WELLER

“... and a new bike, and some goodies from home, and my girlfriend to wait...”



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

NEmore

See a different Extra Smile online every week at newera.lds.org.

CHRISTIAN COURAGE

Thank you for putting the article "That Is Christian Courage" in the July 2009 *New Era*. I appreciated the way Elder Hales showed how Jesus acted in certain situations. I especially liked this part: "When He was confronted by King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which is sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34)."

I also liked the article "I Changed My Life in Just 30 Minutes a Day." I believe it will help me with my habit of reading the scriptures daily.

Aaron P.

GIRLS' CAMP

When we went to girls' camp this year I realized something that I hadn't noticed before—the gospel had united the young women in my ward. It was so nice to come back from a long, adventurous day into a cabin filled with hugs and the sweet, pure voices of girls singing hymns before we all went to bed. We really do love each other, and that has made all the difference. It makes us want to invite other girls to Church activities, to study our scriptures more, and to be more optimistic. I am so grateful for the gospel, and how it has united my friends and me.

Alana P., Washington

I know that by listening intently to a lesson I've already heard before, the Spirit can speak a new message to my heart.

FAVORITE SONG

The story "Through the Storm" in the August 2009 *New Era* really helped me. I liked this story because it shows that our prayers are answered and singing songs can bring peace to our hearts. My favorite Primary song is "A Child's Prayer." I always sing that song when I am scared at night or I just need some spiritual help. It reminds me that Heavenly Father really does listen to our prayers and will help us when we need it.

Amber T., North Carolina

MORMONADS

Thank you for inserting the Mormonads into the *New Era*. After I read the magazine, I usually cut out the Mormonads and put them on my bedroom door. This reminds me to keep my standards high and to set an example for my friends at school.

Eilidh W., Canada

ONE SUNDAY

The story "One Sunday Was the Difference" (Aug. 2009) helped show me how I can receive inspiration and guidance from the Spirit in a new way. Now I know that by listening intently to a lesson I've already heard before, the Spirit can speak a new message to my heart.

David C., Texas

ON A DARE

I enjoyed the article "On a Dare" (Aug. 2009). It showed me that people may be kidding about the Church but that it is your chance to get them involved. They may think it is a joke at first, but later in their lives they will thank you.

Wyatt H., Utah

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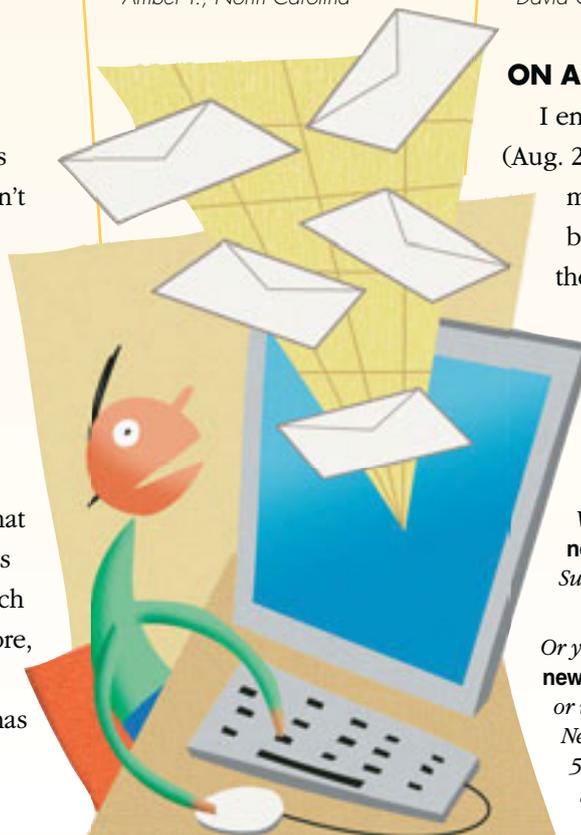


ILLUSTRATION BY MARK SHAVER



QUIET AS STARLIGHT

BY SHARON PRICE ANDERSON

Quiet as starlight,
sweeter than
sugarplums,
warm as Christmas
memories,
welcome as a candle
in the window
guiding me home,
soft as lamb's wool,
still as peace,
the Spirit speaks.



A BRAND NEW YEAR 2010

Celebrate the coming new year with LDS teens from next door and from around the world. A new DVD and Web site have captured interviews with your peers with their comments about their lives and their faith in the gospel to welcome in the new year. Listen to Church leaders, including the Young Women and Young Men general presidents, talk to you. Some great new songs will highlight the presentation. The DVD will be sent to your ward or branch for youth to watch together. Or you can go online individually to see it for yourself.

For more about A Brand New Year 2010, go to page 42.

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