



*Members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles share some of their favorite memories during this season of joy.*

**W**hat makes Christmas memorable for you? Gifts, music, and wonderful dinners? What about a simple drawing? Or delivering gift baskets? Here are a few delightful Christmas experiences from prophets and apostles.

## A TIME OF GIVING AS A BOY



“Christmas time had come. We were preparing for the oven a gigantic turkey and anticipating the savory feast that awaited. A neighborhood pal of mine asked a startling question: ‘What does turkey taste like?’

“I responded, ‘Oh, about like chicken tastes.’

“Again a question: ‘What does chicken taste like?’

“It was then that I realized that my friend had never eaten chicken or turkey. I asked what his family was going to have for Christmas dinner. There was no prompt response—just a downcast

They’re good to eat—just like chicken.’

“He took the box, climbed the fence, and headed for home, a Christmas dinner safely assured. Tears came easily to me as I closed the door to the empty rabbit hutch. But I was not sad. A warmth, a feeling of indescribable joy, filled my heart. It was a memorable Christmas.

“Heavenly Father is ever mindful of those who need, who seek, who trust, who pray, and who listen when He speaks. ‘For 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). God’s gift becomes our blessing. May every heart open wide and welcome him—Christmas day and always.”<sup>1</sup>

*President Thomas S. Monson*



## GIFTS RECEIVED AS A YOUNG MAN



“Like many of you, I find that some of the warmest and most vivid memories of Christmas come from my childhood. Although I grew up in modest circumstances, my parents wanted Christmas to be a time of joy and wonder for their children. They went to great lengths to make Christmas a special time for our family.

“We children made gifts for each other. One year, I remember drawing a picture as a Christmas gift for my sister. It could not have been a work of art, but she treated it like a treasure. How I love her for that! Another year my brother, who is 12 years older than I, gave me a precious gift. He had found a wood stick in the park near our home and carved from it a small toy knife. It was simple, not fancy at all, but oh, how I cherished that gift because it came from him!

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glance and the comment, ‘I dunno. There’s nothing in the house.’

“I pondered a solution. There was none. I had no turkeys, no chickens, no money. Then I remembered I did have two pet rabbits. Immediately I took my friend by the hand and rushed to the rabbit hutch, placed the rabbits in a box, and handed the box to him with the comment, ‘Here, take these two rabbits.



“Isn’t one of the joys of Christmas seeing the excited faces of little children as they take in their hands a wrapped gift that is just for them?”

“This Christmas season and always, I pray that we will see the marvelous gift of the birth of the Son of God through the blessed eyes of a child. I pray that in addition to giving good gifts, we will strive to become good and grateful receivers. As we do so, the spirit of this season will enlarge our hearts and expand our joy beyond measure.”<sup>2</sup>

*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

## CHRISTMAS MUSIC



“Music has always been an important part of our family activities, especially at Christmastime. One night preceding each Christmas, our extended family—brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins (and our parents before they passed away)—crowd into our living room for the children to stage their annual

I STOOD ... HOLDING THE BASKET AND WONDERING.



Christmas pageant. We read the scriptural accounts of the Lord’s birth from the second chapter of Luke and from the Book of Mormon. Then we sing carols, accompanied by pianists and other instrumentalists. Of course, we sing the whimsical ditties about Santa and many more. We get warmed up on those numbers. Then we sing our favorites about the Savior. By the time we sing our closing song, “Silent Night,” we truly feel the real spirit of Christmas.

“Just as the Savior’s mother pondered sacred things in her heart, so some of our deepest feelings of reverence and gratitude are unspoken and unsung. Some are felt only deeply within. They are so sacred that speaking openly of them would seem in some way to desecrate them. I’m sure we all feel that way when we sing and ponder the birth, the mission, and the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

*President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

## CHRISTMAS AS A DEACON



“As a 12-year-old deacon, I was pleased to accompany the bishop to deliver Christmas baskets to the

widows of our ward in Vernal, Utah. The backseat of his car was filled with baskets of grapefruit and oranges. This was during World War II, when grapefruit and oranges were scarce, so they were quite a treat. He waited in the car while I took a basket to each door and said, ‘The bishop asked me to give you this Christmas basket from the ward.’

“When we had delivered all the baskets but one, the bishop drove me home. There he handed me the last basket and said, ‘This is for your mother.’ Before I could reply, he drove away. [Dallin H. Oaks was 7 when his father passed away in June 1940.]

“I stood in front of our house, snowflakes falling on my face, holding the basket and wondering. We had been delivering baskets to widows,





but I had never thought of my mother as a widow. I had never heard her refer to herself as a widow. I wondered why anyone would think my mother was a widow.

“That Christmas experience was formative in my understanding of the eternal family and in my appreciation for the faith of my mother. She always taught us that we had a father and she had a husband and that we would always be a family because of their temple marriage. . . .

“I am grateful for temple marriage and for the assurance that we can be together as an eternal family.”<sup>4</sup>

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

## THE FIRST CHRISTMAS AWAY FROM HOME



“For 19 years I had enjoyed Christmas surrounded by family and friends.

“Then, as the Yule season approached in 1960, I found myself half a world away from all that. I had been in England less than three months when, on the first of December, my first junior companion and I were sent to open missionary work in the conservative city of Guildford, an area that had never had Latter-day Saint missionaries.

. . . We were young, inexperienced, and a bit overwhelmed, but we were not fainthearted.

“We knocked on doors in the morning, we knocked on doors at midday, we knocked on doors in the afternoon, and we knocked on doors at night. . . . And we got in almost none of them.

“So it went until Christmas Eve, when people were even less inclined to hear a couple of missionaries. That evening, weary but devoted, we retired to our one-room rental and had a Christmas devotional. We sang a Christmas hymn and then offered an invocation. We read from the scriptures and listened to a tape recording titled *The True Story of Christmas*. Then we sang another hymn of the season, said a closing prayer, and went to bed.

“On Christmas morning we kept our morning study schedule and opened the two or three packages that had caught up with us following our transfer. Then we went out to knock on doors. . . . We didn’t get in any of them.

“For such an uneventful Christmas—clearly the least festive of

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any I ever had before or since—it says something that those special days in December of 1960 remain in my heart as one of the sweetest Christmases I have ever had. I think that is because for the first time in my life, I found myself understanding Christmas rather than just enjoying it. I think for the first time in any truly significant way, I was getting the message of Christ’s birth and life—His message and His mission and His sacrifice for others.”<sup>5</sup>

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



### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Christmas Gifts, Christmas Blessings,” *New Era*, Dec. 1986, 2.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Good and Grateful Receiver,” 2012 Christmas Devotional, lds.org/broadcasts.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Christmas Thoughts of Home and Prague,” *Christmas Treasures: Stories and Reminiscences from General Authorities* (1994), 32–33.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “Christmas Memory,” *Church News*, Dec. 11, 2010; see lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/more-christmas-memories-from-the-brethren.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Christmas within You,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2012, 10–12.