

TREASURED LETTERS

One of the best Christmas gifts I have ever given was for my in-laws. A few months before Christmas, I contacted each of their grandchildren, most of whom were teenagers or young adults. I asked them to write down favorite memories of Grandma and Grandpa and suggested they do a page for each grandparent.

It was a good thing I started making this gift early, because some of the letters were long in coming. As I received each one, I copied it onto some festive Christmas stationery, rolled it like a scroll, and tied it with red ribbon. I then found a small treasure chest to put them in and added some fun jewelry

“treasure” I bought at a thrift store.

On Christmas Day, the grandparents came to our house for the usual family party. When I gave them their present, I asked them to open it that night at their home. I knew they might be feeling lonely later on, and I knew that’s when their gift would be most appreciated.

The next day they called to say how wonderful their evening had been as they read each cherished letter. Through tears, they expressed how thankful and happy

they were to have these “treasures” to read again and again. It was a special Christmas memory for all of us.

Jane Hogan, Utah, USA

SERVICE TO SENIORS

As I hugged an elderly friend goodbye, she said, “Thanks for coming. You’re the only one in the ward who cares about me.” I hid my shock and responded, “No. That’s not true,” followed by the oft-used excuse, “Everyone is just so busy.” Our lives are busy, but are we busy doing the most important things? To be truly happy, we must include opportunities to serve others, especially those who are lonely and homebound. They have much to offer, but we often forget or overlook them. How can we help? There is ample opportunity—even with our busy schedules.



FAMILY HOME EVENING HELPS



Helping Children Find Joy in the Gospel

Each month, our family chooses a “joy” in our lives to focus on in family home evening. For instance, we have taught about the joys of preparation, kindness, and missionary work. One April, to coincide with general conference, we decided to teach about the joy of revelation.

I was wondering how I would teach this when I received some simple inspiration. Why not just talk about the joy I have experienced as

I have received personal revelation? My husband and I gathered items that represented personal revelation we have received and put the items in a bag. During our lesson, each child took a turn taking something from the bag. My husband and I would then briefly share what the item represented and how we felt when we received direction from heaven. For example, I put in my engagement ring and told the children how I felt when I knew marrying their father was the right

thing to do. I also put in a Book of Mormon and I told of when I prayed to receive the Lord’s guidance to know if it was true.

Our children loved the surprise of pulling something out of the bag, but it was also a powerful opportunity for my husband and me to share experiences from our own lives. It has been lovely to share the joys of the gospel with our four young children in a family home evening setting.

Rachel Harrison, New Zealand



- **Get acquainted.** Make treats or take a basket of fruit. Food often provides opportunities to visit with others and to show that you’re thinking of them.
- **Visit ward members.** Ask your bishop or Relief Society president who needs a visit in your ward. Beyond those we home or visit teach, we might also reach out to others who need an extra boost.
- **Visit a nearby nursing or retirement home.** When a child is in music lessons or sports practices, you might use “waiting time” to visit a nearby nursing home. Look for opportunities in your schedule to pay a visit.
- **Volunteer.** Call a nursing or retirement home and inquire about their volunteer opportunities. Our oldest son and I used to distribute newspapers one morning a week at a local nursing home. It was a great way to meet the residents and teach my son about responsibility and the blessings of service.
- **Share your talents.** If you’re musically inclined, share a song or play an instrument to brighten someone’s day. Quilting, baking, or scrapbooking—whatever your talents, you can share them. Who knows? Your newfound friends might share their talents too.
- **Schedule service.** Once a week is best to develop a friendship, but once a month is better than nothing. Once you’ve established a friendship, you can make your visits more meaningful by adding a few thoughtful touches.

- **Share a meal.** I prepare an extra dinner plate to take to a neighborhood friend. She is thrilled with the food, and it really doesn’t make extra work for me.
- **Ask about them.** What was their childhood like? How did they meet their spouse? What was their career? Their education? Hobbies? They’ll enjoy telling you about themselves, and you and your children will learn some interesting history.
- **Share pictures and scrapbooks.** Bring your pictures or scrapbooks and ask to look at theirs. Sharing

pictures and stories is one of the best ways to truly get to know someone.

- **Share the holidays.** If your elderly friends don’t have family nearby, invite them to share the holidays with you. Even if they do have holiday plans, they’ll still appreciate your company on the days in between. Our family has benefited so much from serving our “adopted grandparents.” You can never have too many friends who love you and your children.

Camille Checketts, Utah, USA