

Alone and Grateful at Christmas

For me while growing up, Christmas was the greatest time of year—not simply because of the gifts but also because Christmas was a time to share with those who mattered most in my life, my family.

Family means everything to me, and through the years, Christmas traditions were always a wonderful arrangement of family fun that still carries many cherished memories for me.

But this past Christmas was different. I had a new job that required me to be out of town on Christmas. Up to this point in my life, I had missed only two Christmases with my family—both while on my mission. Before I even left on my business trip, I was already heartsick and homesick. All Christmas Day I thought, “What a waste!” No work

could possibly be worth this!

I decided to watch a movie on TV in my hotel room. In the movie, one of the characters expressed how important it is to give thanks. It wasn’t a major part of the movie, nor was it a particularly moving scene, but nothing could have touched me more.

In that moment I realized that I had never gotten on my knees on Christmas Day to thank Heavenly Father for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. In all the years I celebrated Christmas, I had really focused only on my family, presents, and games. Despite my parents’ and grandparents’ best efforts to teach me, I never truly appreciated just how important the Savior was to Christmas. As a family, we read the story of His birth in the scriptures, but

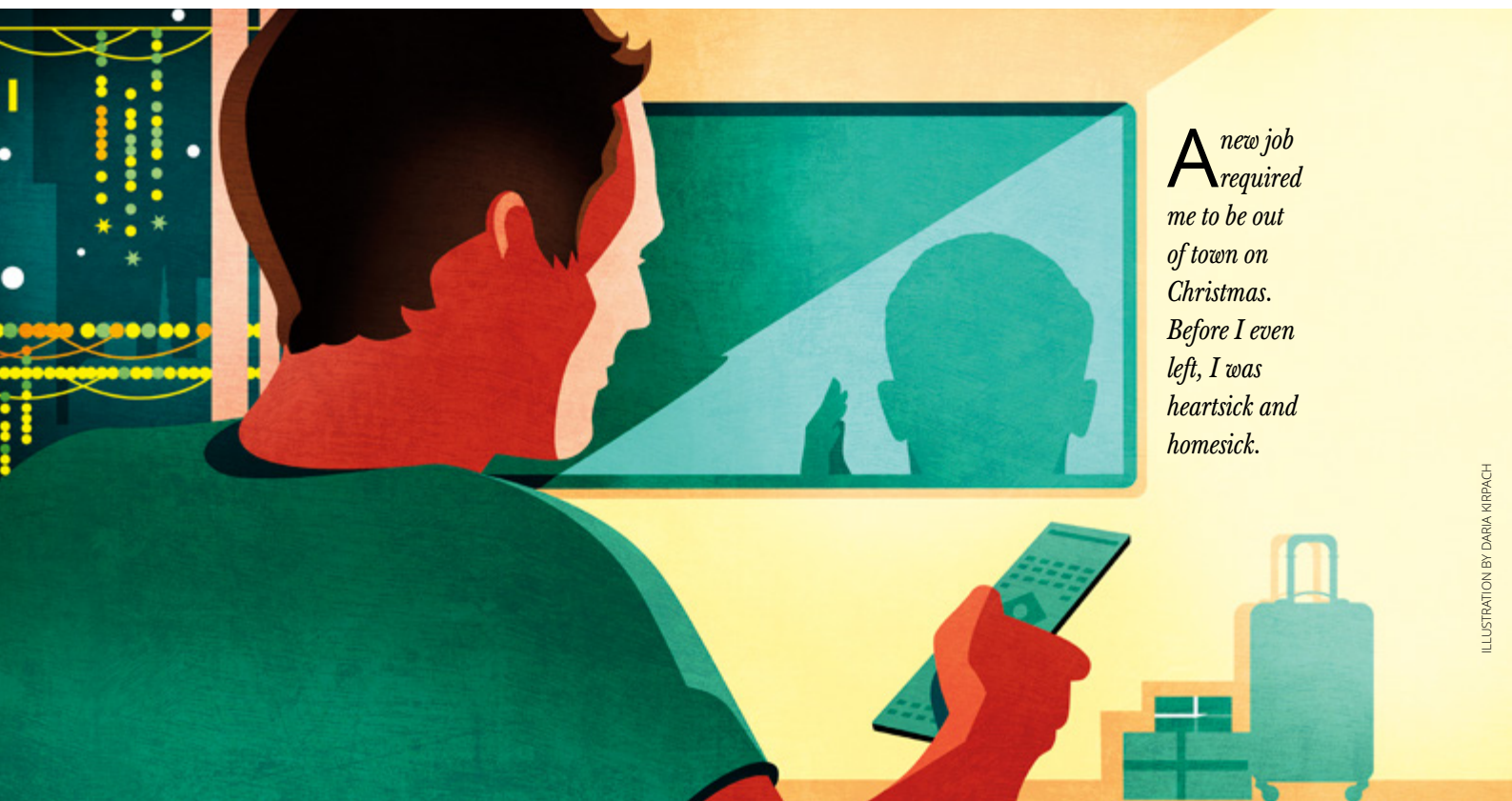
I had never given much thought to the significance of His birth on Christmas.

Tears filled my eyes as I prayed to my Heavenly Father. I thanked Him for the sacrifice He made to have His Only Begotten Son come to earth and for His Son’s wonderful life of sacrifice and kindness.

The fact that I was alone and away from my family on Christmas still made me sad, but it allowed Heavenly Father to teach me a lesson I might never have learned while surrounded by my family: the Savior is the reason I could have a family at all!

I’m grateful that being alone at Christmas brought me just a little better understanding of Heavenly Father’s loving and infinite gift of His Son. ■

Tyler Collins, Montana, USA



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