

STRAW FOR THE MANGER

By Jacob F. Frandsen

(Based on a true story)

Every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God
(Moroni 7:13).

Michael gazed at the tiny, soft bed of straw. "I am glad that baby Jesus will have a soft, warm bed for Christmas Eve," he thought.

For the past week Michael had carefully tucked little pieces of straw into this tiny manger, one piece at a time. Michael thought that it just might be the best Christmas he ever had because now he was old enough to understand what Christmas was all about.

A week ago Mom had given a family home evening lesson about the true meaning of Christmas. She said that Jesus Christ was the greatest gift Heavenly Father gave to

the world. Then she presented each child in the family with a small, empty manger and a tiny figure of the baby Jesus.

"For the next week you will each have a chance to give a present back to Heavenly Father," Mom said.

"How can we do that?" Michael asked.

"Your gift to Heavenly Father will be to serve others," she said. "Each time you do a good deed or help another person, you may add a piece of straw to your manger. The more kindness you show to others, the softer the manger will be on Christmas Eve."

"I hope I can get more straw



in my manger than anybody else!" Michael thought.

The next day Michael started working to collect straw.

"Mom, can I help you sweep the floor?" Michael asked, when he saw her cleaning the kitchen.

"I'll help you find your teddy bear," he told his little brother



"Joy . . . springs out of selflessness and service."⁴

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895-1985)



when he cried for his lost toy.

"I want to shovel some snow too," he said when his dad went outside to shovel the driveway.

Within a few days Michael's little manger looked very different. It was stuffed full of straw! But Michael noticed a change in himself too. He started to

enjoy doing kind things for others because he knew it was what Heavenly Father wanted him to do. Sometimes he even forgot to add a piece of straw to the manger when he helped.

Michael decided that doing nice things made him feel good inside. On Christmas Eve, as he stood by the soft lights of the

Christmas tree, Michael gently laid his tiny baby Jesus in the manger, which was now overflowing with straw.

Michael knew he had done the best he could to show his love for Heavenly Father and Jesus. This was the best Christmas ever. ♦