

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • DECEMBER 2003

Liahona

The background of the cover is a painting. It depicts the Virgin Mary in profile, looking down at the infant Jesus. Mary is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark blue or black garment. Her face is pale with soft, warm tones. The infant Jesus is lying in her arms, wearing a greenish-blue robe. The background of the painting consists of large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of brown, tan, and gold, creating a sense of depth and texture. The overall style is reminiscent of early 20th-century religious art, possibly influenced by Cubism or Expressionism.

**The Divinity of
Jesus Christ, p. 12**

**Gifts from the
Heart, p. 26**

**What Is Christmas?
p. F4**

Liahona



ON THE COVER

Front: *Mother and Child*,
by J. Kirk Richards. Back:
Photograph by Christina
Smith.



THE FRIEND COVER

Painting by Simon Dewey,
courtesy of Altus Fine Art,
American Fork, Utah.

FEATURES

- 1 First Presidency Christmas Message
- 2 First Presidency Message: The Gifts of Christmas
President Thomas S. Monson
- 12 Gospel Classics: The Divinity of Jesus Christ
Elder Orson F. Whitney
- 18 Not Room Enough to Receive It
- 25 Visiting Teaching Message: Prepare by Living Providently and Paying
Tithes and Offerings
- 29 Parables of Jesus: "I Am the True Vine" *Elder Anthony R. Temple*
- 32 Kirtland Restored
- 40 Latter-day Saint Voices
Christmas with a Minister *Blaine K. Gebring*
"Read Your Patriarchal Blessing!" *Célia Augusto de Souza*
The Trucker's Gift *Norma J. Broadhead*
- 48 Using the December 2003 *Liahona*

ESPECIALLY FOR YOUTH

- 6 Homemade Christmas *Elder Gene R. Cook*
- 10 Ten Things I Love about You *Lois Zurligen Jorgensen*
- 24 No Comparison *Emma Withers*
- 26 Questions and Answers: What Can I Give My Family for Christmas That
Would Be More Meaningful Than Something Bought at the Store?
- 44 A Gift for All Seasons *Elder Darwin B. Christenson*
- 47 Did You Know?

THE FRIEND

- 2 Light of the World: A Christmas Message from
the First Presidency to the Children
of the World
- 4 Sharing Time: What Is Christmas?
Vicki F. Matsumori
- 6 A Bed for Nils *Diane L. Mangum*
- 8 Sharing Time Advent Calendar:
What Is Christmas?
- 10 New Testament Stories:
Paul Finishes His Mission
- 15 Special Witness: Being
a Witness for God
Elder Henry B. Eyring
- 16 Temple Cards



SEE "KIRTLAND
RESTORED," P. 32

SEE "A BED FOR
NILS," P. 6

December 2003 Vol. 27 No. 12
LIAHONA 23992
Official international magazine of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley,
Thomas S. Monson, James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry,
David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson,
Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin,
Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland,
Henry B. Eyring

Editor: Dennis B. Neuenschwander

Advisers: E. Ray Bateman, Monte J. Brough,
Jay E. Jensen, Stephen A. West

Managing Director: David Frischknecht

Planning and Editorial Director: Victor D. Cave

Graphics Director: Allan R. Loyborg

Magazines Editorial Director: Richard M. Romney

Managing Editor: Marvin K. Gardner

Editorial Staff: Collette Nebeker Aune, Susan Barrett, Ryan
Carr, Linda Stahle Cooper, LaRene Porter Gaunt, Shanna
Ghaznavi, Jennifer L. Greenwood, Lisa Ann Jackson, Carrie
Kasten, Melvin Leavitt, Sally J. Odekirk, Adam C. Olson,
Judith M. Paller, Rebecca M. Taylor, Roger Terry, Janet
Thomas, Paul VanDenBerghe, Julie Wardell, Kimberly
Webb, Monica Weeks

Managing Art Director: M. M. Kawasaki

Art Directors: J. Scott Knudsen, Scott Van Kampen

Production Manager: Jane Ann Peters

Design and Production Staff: Kelli Allen-Pratt, Fay P.
Andrus, C. Kimball Bott, Howard G. Brown, Thomas S.
Child, Reginald J. Christensen, Brent Christison, Kerry Lynn C.
Herrin, Kathleen Howard, Denise Kirby, Tadd R. Peterson,
Randall J. Pixton, Mark W. Robison, Brad Teare, Kari A.
Todd, Claudia E. Warner

Marketing Manager: Larry Hiller

Printing Director: Craig K. Sedgwick

Distribution Director: Kris T Christensen

For subscriptions and prices outside the United States and
Canada, contact your local Church distribution center or
ward or branch leader.

Send manuscripts and queries to *Liahona*, Room 2420,
50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-
3220, USA; or e-mail: cur-liahona-imag@ldschurch.org

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning "compass"
or "director") is published in Albanian, Armenian (East),
Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Croatian,
Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish,
French, German, Haitian, Hungarian, Icelandic,
Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian,
Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian,
Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian,
Samoan, Sinhala, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog,
Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, and
Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

© 2003 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America.

For Readers in the United States and Canada:

December 2003 Vol. 27 No. 12. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480)
English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 East North
Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription
price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$16.00 plus applicable
taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah, and
at additional mailing offices. Sixty days' notice required for
change of address. Include address label from a recent issue;
old and new address must be included. Send USA and
Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at
address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971.
Credit card orders (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) may
be taken by phone. (Canada Poste Information: Publication
Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Salt Lake
Distribution Center, Church Magazines, PO Box 26368,
Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368.



First Presidency Christmas Message

At this sacred season, we reaffirm the reality
of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, the
Son of God. We testify that He was the
only perfect man ever to walk the earth. He "went
about doing good" (Acts 10:38) and
beckons to all, "Come, follow me"
(Luke 18:22).

It is His holy influence that stirs
mankind to acts of mercy and kind-
ness. He who has "borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah
53:4) inspires each of us to reach out with love
to the poor, the lonely, and the downtrodden.

May this Christmas season remind us that the
Prince of Peace, who stilled the tempest on the
Sea of Galilee, has the power to calm the storms
in our personal lives. May His peace fill our hearts
and homes throughout the coming year as we
strive to walk in His ways. ■



ABOVE: CHRIST STILLING THE STORM, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT; ABOVE RIGHT: DETAIL FROM THE BIRTH OF JESUS, BY CARL
HEINRICH BLOCH, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC MUSEUM AT FREDERIKSBORG IN HILLERÖD, DENMARK

THE GIFTS OF Christmas



BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON
First Counselor in the First Presidency

Jesus invites us to give of ourselves: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.” Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable.

From 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon we read, “Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.”¹

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, the promised Messiah—even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

His Beckoning Invitation

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick. He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

What was the reaction to His message of mercy, His words of wisdom, His lessons of life? There were a precious few who appreciated Him. They bathed His feet. They learned His word. They followed His example.

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of beautiful Galilee, He said, “Follow me.”² To Philip of old came the call, “Follow me.”³ To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, “Follow me.”⁴ And to you and to me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, “Follow me.”

As we follow in His steps today, we too will have an opportunity to bless the lives of others. Jesus invites us to give of ourselves: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind.”⁵

Our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved. “Go, gladden the lonely, the dreary; Go, comfort the weeping, the weary; Go, scatter kind deeds on your way; Oh, make the world brighter today!”⁶

A wise Christian once urged, “May we not spend Christmas, but keep it.”⁷ When we keep the spirit of Christmas, we keep the spirit of Christ, for the Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit.

My Christmas Treasury of Books

At this time of the year my family knows that I will read again my Christmas treasury of books and ponder the wondrous words of



the authors. First will be the Gospel of Luke—even the Christmas story. This will be followed by *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens and, finally, *The Mansion* by Henry Van Dyke.

I always must wipe my eyes when reading these inspired writings. They touch my inner soul, as they will yours.

Wrote Dickens, “I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round— . . . as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the

long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.”⁸

In his classic *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens’s now converted character, Ebenezer Scrooge, declares at last: “I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The

Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.”⁹

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—He who was burdened with “sorrows, and acquainted with grief”¹⁰—speaks to every troubled heart and bestows the gift of peace: “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.”¹¹

True Giving

He sends forth His word through the many thousands of missionaries serving far and wide proclaiming His gospel of good tidings and salutation of peace. Vexing questions, such as “Where did I come from? What is the purpose of my being? Where do I go after death?” are answered by His special servants. Frustration flees, doubt disappears, and uncertainty wanes when truth is taught in boldness, yet in a spirit of humility by those who have been called to serve the Prince of Peace—even the Lord Jesus Christ.

His gift is bestowed individually: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.”¹²

May I share several more examples of true giving learned by me from the experiences of the three most recent Presidents of the Church, with whom I have had the privilege to serve as a counselor.

First, from President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994): He described an assignment he had received from the President of the Church following World War II. President Benson was to leave his wife and family and go to the devastated members of the Church in Germany and other nations. Through the God-inspired welfare program, he literally fed the hungry, comforted the weeping, and lifted closer to heaven all with whom he met. Years later, at a

dedication service at Zwickau, Germany, an elderly member, with moist eyes, said to me, “Please tell President Benson that we love him. He saved our lives: mine, my wife’s, my children’s, and many, many others’. He was as an angel sent by God to literally restore to us hope and confidence in the future. Tell him we love him.”

Second, from President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95): On one occasion President Hunter dealt with a particularly

tragic and difficult situation. At length he said, “I have always liked to lift people, rather than put them down, to show them the way of the Lord, that they might follow Him.” Subsequently, the gift of forgiveness, the gift of compassion, the gift of encouragement were freely given to the distressed couple by this saintly leader.

Third, from President Gordon B. Hinckley: President Hinckley is a much-traveled prophet and President. His presence, his example, his testimony have been shared throughout the world. About five years ago he returned from a visit

to the southeast area of the United States, where he spoke to tens of thousands. The morning after his return home, President Hinckley said he felt a bit weary. In the next breath, he commented, “I’ve learned of the terrible suffering endured by the people of Central America because of the rampaging floods which engulfed homes, fields, and many persons. I feel a need to visit the stricken area, and so I, along with Elder L. Tom Perry and Bishop H. David Burton, will leave by plane in two days in order to do so.” We reviewed with the President information concerning the supplies already sent and received at distribution points, plus those which were en route by air and by ship.

President Hinckley returned from his three-day trip rejoicing in a welfare program which works. He met with



President Ezra Taft Benson (left) exemplified true giving when he left his wife and family and went to the devastated members of the Church in Germany and other nations following World War II.

Right: About five years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley gave encouragement and assurances of assistance during a visit to flood-stricken Central America.

the members. He met with the missionaries. He complimented throngs who were at work cleaning up the debris which once was homes.

President Hinckley gave them encouragement and assurances of additional assistance, but more than this, he gave to them himself. We express thanks to our Heavenly Father for such a prophet.

In my lifelong association with President Hinckley, I know that he is a wise and prudent steward regarding the sacred funds of the Church. He abhors waste and extravagance. However, never have I seen President Hinckley turn away the needy, the hungry, the downtrodden, or the oppressed. Helping is our divine duty. The food, the shelter, the assistance rendered are freely given so that suffering may be alleviated, hearts cheered, and lives saved.

There is no better time than now, this very Christmas season, for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus the Christ. It is the time to love the Lord our God with all our heart—and our neighbors as ourselves. It is well to remember that he who gives money gives much, he who gives time gives more, but he who gives of himself gives all. Let this be a description of our Christmas gifts. ■

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 1:13.
2. Matthew 4:19.
3. John 1:43.
4. Matthew 9:9.
5. D&C 64:34.
6. "Make the World Brighter," *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (1909), no. 197.
7. Senate, Peter Marshall, 80th

- Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (19 Dec. 1947), 93, pt. 9:11673.
8. *A Christmas Carol in Works of Charles Dickens, Complete and Unabridged* (1982), 535.
9. *Works of Charles Dickens*, 581.
10. Isaiah 53:3.
11. John 14:27.
12. Revelation 3:20.



Right: President Howard W. Hunter freely gave to a distressed couple in a particularly tragic and difficult situation the gift of forgiveness, the gift of compassion.



IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After you prayerfully prepare, share this message using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. A few examples follow:

1. Ask family members to tell of instances when they have given of themselves at Christmastime. Read together the "His Beckoning Invitation" section. Encourage family members to follow the example of the Savior in their giving this year.
2. Give a gift of yourself to each family you teach. Then invite family members to read about the examples of giving in the "True Giving" section. Read the final paragraph of the message aloud, and bear testimony of gifts of Himself the Savior has given to you.



Homemade Christmas

BY ELDER GENE R. COOK

Of the Seventy

Setting some guidelines made our Christmas gifts mean much more for the giver and the receiver.

During the four and one-half years my family lived in South America, we experienced Christmases that were very different from any Christmas we had celebrated in the United States.

Christmases there were simple compared to what we usually experienced. Because of the economic situations of many people, the commercial aspect of the holiday was downplayed.

We returned home to the United States from our South America assignment right at Christmastime. Going into the stores, we saw hundreds of items for sale—games, watches, stereos, televisions, snowmobiles, talking dolls, model airplanes, video recorders, microwave ovens, and so forth. This sudden shift of emphasis was difficult to adjust to.

The question was obvious: “What is Christmas?” In dividing up the word *Christmas*, we get *Christ* and *mas*. In Spanish the word

mas means “more.” It seemed to us that to some people Christmas meant *mas y mas y mas* (“more and more and more”). The “Christ” part of it and the *real* gift of giving seemed to have been forgotten.

What the true spirit of Christmas is all about—commemorating Jesus’ birth and enjoying the spirit of giving, loving, and caring for one another—seemed to be drowned out, at least for us, in the hustle and bustle. We felt great pressure to buy gifts for others, perhaps more out of obligation than in the true spirit of giving.

Family Guidelines for Giving

We asked ourselves how we could put the true spirit of giving into Christmas (and birthdays) more than we normally did. We decided to use the following guidelines:

1. Few, if any, gifts may be purchased.
2. Most gifts must be made using your own hands or given from your own time.
3. Few, if any, parts for the gifts may be purchased. You must improvise.
4. You must give of your own time, talents, and self, immersing yourself in the needs of the receiver.

This has been a great experience for our family. We have found that in following such



How could we put the true spirit of giving back into Christmas? Finding the answer has been a great experience for our family.



The following teachings from the Lord indicate that there really is a true spirit of giving and that the greatest gifts, the gifts of most value, are gifts of time, means, or talent. The greatest gift is a giving of self.

SERVICE

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd *giveth his life* for the sheep" (John 10:11; emphasis added).

LOVE

"For God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son" (John 3:16; emphasis added).

RIGHTEOUS GIFTS

"Go ye also into the vineyard, and *whatsoever is right I will give you*" (Matthew 20:4; emphasis added).

GIVING

"Freely ye have received, *freely give*" (Matthew 10:8; emphasis added).

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is *more blessed to give* than to receive" (Acts 20:35; emphasis added).

"For unto whomsoever *much is given*, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48; emphasis added).

GIVING CHEERFULLY, NOT GRUDGINGLY

"Let him give; *not grudgingly, or of necessity*: for God loveth a *cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7; emphasis added).

"If a man . . . *giveth a gift* . . . [and] doeth it *grudgingly*; . . . it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift" (Moroni 7:8; emphasis added).

rules we think more deeply about, even pray about, the person to determine what his or her real needs and wants are. Working on a meaningful gift many months before birthdays or Christmas helps us internalize the spirit of giving. This method has also helped us realize that we can be more self-sufficient than we thought.

I remember helping my eight-year-old son make a gift for his mother. He had determined to make a key holder from a piece of board. Following the guidelines of not purchasing anything, we found an old piece of wood. It took about three times longer than normal to sand it down, as it was not a quality piece of wood.

When it came time to paint it, we realized we didn't have a paintbrush. So we took some pieces of straw and bamboo from an old basket and made our own. I wondered whether it really would look that nice when finished, but to our surprise, the bamboo and straw together worked as well as any paintbrush I had ever used.

I wanted to buy the hooks needed to hold the keys, but my son reminded me that we couldn't do that. We ended up using some headless nails that we patiently shaped with great love and dedication. They were shaped into hooks as beautiful as any that we could have purchased at a store. When it was all finished, it was a gift from our hearts to Mom.

Gift Certificates to Neighbors

There are other kinds of gifts that we give to neighbors and friends. We call them family gift certificates. On a piece of paper, we draw up a certificate that lists the person's name and indicates a service to be given. Some of the certificates show the following:

- One free shoveling of snow from a driveway
- One free lawn-mowing job
- One free garage cleaning
- One free car wash
- One free piano recital from one of our children
- Two free loaves of bread (not from Mom, but from the children)
- Free baby-sitting

- Two hours of repair work for a widow
- One free fireside to teach the gospel

Again, these personal kinds of gifts carry extra meaning.

Gift Certificates to Family Members

We give these same kinds of gift certificates to family members, including the following:

- Make your bed seven times (exchanged among the children)
- Do the dishes three times at any time you want to redeem the certificate
- One hour at the piano with Dad singing
- One mountain trip
- Clean the garage for you
- Six one-hour periods alone with Mom or Dad
- Six one-hour times of peace and harmony (offered to Dad and Mom)
- Twelve letters, one per month, for a year (offered to a distant mother)

If you try to give according to the Spirit of the Lord and the scriptures (see sidebar), you will find yourself giving more of yourself, thinking more of the receiver, expressing love from your soul, praying to the Lord for help in giving a gift that would be acceptable, and feeling a tremendous sense of self-fulfillment in having given in that manner.

As we practice the true spirit of giving, we will grow closer to the Lord. May we emulate more fully the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who taught us the true spirit of giving and loving. May we focus on Christmas and giving—not on more and more things, but on the spirit of Christ. ■

Adapted from "A Christmas Made at Home," Ensign, Dec. 1984, 56–59.

As we practice
the true
spirit of
giving, we will
grow closer to
the Lord.





10 THINGS

I Love about You

BY LOIS ZURLIGEN JORGENSEN

Eric's heartfelt Christmas gift meant a lot to our family.

When my oldest son, Eric, was a senior in high school, he wanted to give his family gifts for Christmas. He had little income, so he decided on a gift of the heart.

For each family member Eric made a list of the 10 things he would miss most about him or her while he was at college and on his mission. His lists were rolled up like scrolls and tied with ribbon.

At Christmas we opened our gifts with great enthusiasm and curiosity. My list included things like "Watching her try to use the computer" and "Her hugs." It must have taken him a long time to think of 10 things for each of us. I cried, his brothers laughed, and his only sister cherished her list. It still hangs on the door of her room today, three years later.

Now as Eric serves a mission in Guatemala, we wanted to send him something different for his last Christmas before returning home. Each of us wrote our

own version of the present he gave us three years ago. We titled them "Ten Things I Have Missed Most about Eric While He's Been on His Mission."

For some of us it was easy. Eric's brothers had a hard time but finally finished. It was a great project for family home evening, and we all laughed and cried as we thought of our 10 things. What a great family tradition we've started and hope to continue as our other children leave for college and missions.

I will never forget this gift from a busy son who thought to make a gift that would make a difference. We are grateful we were able to receive this from him. ■

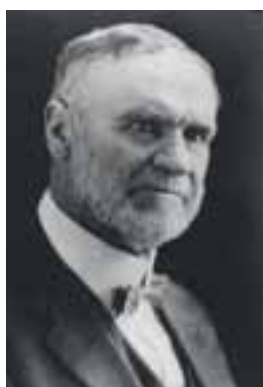
Lois Zurligen Jorgensen is a member of the Asbland Second Ward, Medford Oregon Stake.



ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD HULL



THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST



Orson F. Whitney was born on 1 July 1855 in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was ordained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on 9 April 1906 by President Joseph F. Smith. Elder Whitney died on 16 May 1931 in Salt Lake City at age 75. This is an excerpt from an address delivered at the Sunday evening session of the MIA Jubilee Conference held on 7 June 1925.

**BY ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY
(1855–1931)**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

At a time when the divine character and mission of the world's Redeemer are being questioned, even by many professing Christians, it is a cause for congratulation and rejoicing that there is still found "faith on the earth" [Luke 18:8]—faith in Jesus Christ as the very Son of God, as the virgin-born Savior of mankind, as the anointed and foreordained messenger of Him who "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).

Among those who hold fast to this conviction are the Latter-day Saints. . . . And tonight we unfurl our banner, emblazoned with the slogan of the young men and young women of Zion: "*We stand for an individual testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ.*"

How Testimony Comes

Such testimony can come but in one way—God's way, not man's. Books cannot give it. Schools cannot bestow it. No human power can impart it. It comes, if it comes at all, as a gift of God, by direct and immediate revelation from on high.

Said Jesus to His chief Apostle: "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then said

Jesus: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:15–17).

Such was the basis of Peter's testimony, and such is the basis of every real testimony of like character. They all rest upon the same foundation.

Testimony means evidence, and it may consist of divers things, fruits of the gospel's varied gifts. Dreams, visions, prophecies, tongues and their interpretation, healings, and other manifestations of the divine Spirit are all included in the category.

The Surest Evidence

But the greatest and most convincing of all testimonies is the soul's illumination under the kindling and enlightening power of the Holy Ghost—the Comforter, promised by the Savior to His disciples, to abide with them after He had departed, to bring things past to their remembrance and show them things to come, making manifest the things of God, past, present, and future.

God's Greatest Gift

By that Spirit and by that alone can men know God and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent—to know [Them], and to act consistently with that knowledge, is to lay hold upon eternal life. No greater thing can come to



He arose and walked to where the Apostles were kneeling—fast asleep! He shook them gently, awoke them, and in a tone of tender reproach, asked them if they could not watch with Him one hour.

men while in the flesh than the knowledge of how to secure that greatest of all heavenly gifts.

To know God, man must know himself, must know whence he came, why he is here, what is expected of him by the One who sent him here, where he is going when he leaves this mortal life, and what awaits him in the great hereafter. The Holy Spirit is the fountain from which flows this knowledge, the most precious that men can possess. By means of it comes the testimony that Jesus Christ was and is divine. . . .

Testimony of the Ages

“I know that my redeemer liveth” [Job 19:25]—the burden of righteous Job’s exultant cry, welling up from the depths of his sorely tried, suffering, yet patient soul—is echoed from 10,000 hearts, yea, 10,000 times 10,000 of the faithful and the just, whose heaven-inspired testimonies have come ringing down the ages, from the days of Adam to the days of Joseph Smith. The holy scriptures are replete with testimonies of Christ’s divinity, attested by miracles and wonders manifold.

A Life and Death Divine

But even if Christ had wrought no miracle—even if He had not walked upon the water, healed the sick, cast out devils, given sight to the blind, caused the lame to walk, or done anything else that men deem supernatural, was there not that about Him which bore unimpeachable testimony to His divinity?

What could be more divine than the life of One who “went about doing good” [Acts 10:38], teaching men to forgive their enemies, to pray for those who persecuted them, and to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them? And did He not set the example of godlike magnanimity by craving, while upon the cross in the agonies of death, heaven’s pardon upon His guilty murderers? “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” [Luke 23:34].



Here was One who could lay down His life for His enemies, as well as His friends. No mere man could do that.

What could be more divine than that? Who but a God could offer such a prayer at such a time? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” [John 15:13]. But here was One who could lay down His life for His enemies, as well as His friends. No mere man could do that. It took a God to die for all men—foes as well as friends—and that act alone stamps divinity upon the character and mission of Jesus Christ.

The Men Who Knew

The Twelve Apostles were His special witnesses. As such they had to know beyond all question that He was what

He claimed to be. It was a new thing that was required of them. They were to vouch for His Resurrection—and there had been no resurrection upon this planet until Christ came forth from the grave. He was “the firstfruits of them that slept” [1 Corinthians 15:20]. Those Apostles had to know, not merely believe. They could not go into the world and say: “We believe Jesus has risen from the dead—such is our opinion, our conviction.” What impression would that have made upon a sin-hardened generation? No; mere belief would not suffice in their case. They

must know, and they did know, for they had seen and heard Him, had even been permitted to touch Him, that they might be convinced that He was indeed the resurrection and the life. It was their right to possess this knowledge, owing to the unique character of their mission. But the world at large was required to believe what the Apostles testified concerning Him. . . .

Belief and Knowledge

Sign-seeking is an abomination, indicating an adulterous disposition. It is blessed to believe without seeing, since by the exercise of faith comes spiritual development, one of the great objects of man’s earthly existence; while

knowledge, by swallowing up faith, prevents its exercise, thus hindering that development. “Knowledge is power”; and all things are to be known in due season. But premature knowledge—knowing at the wrong time—is fatal both to progress and to happiness.

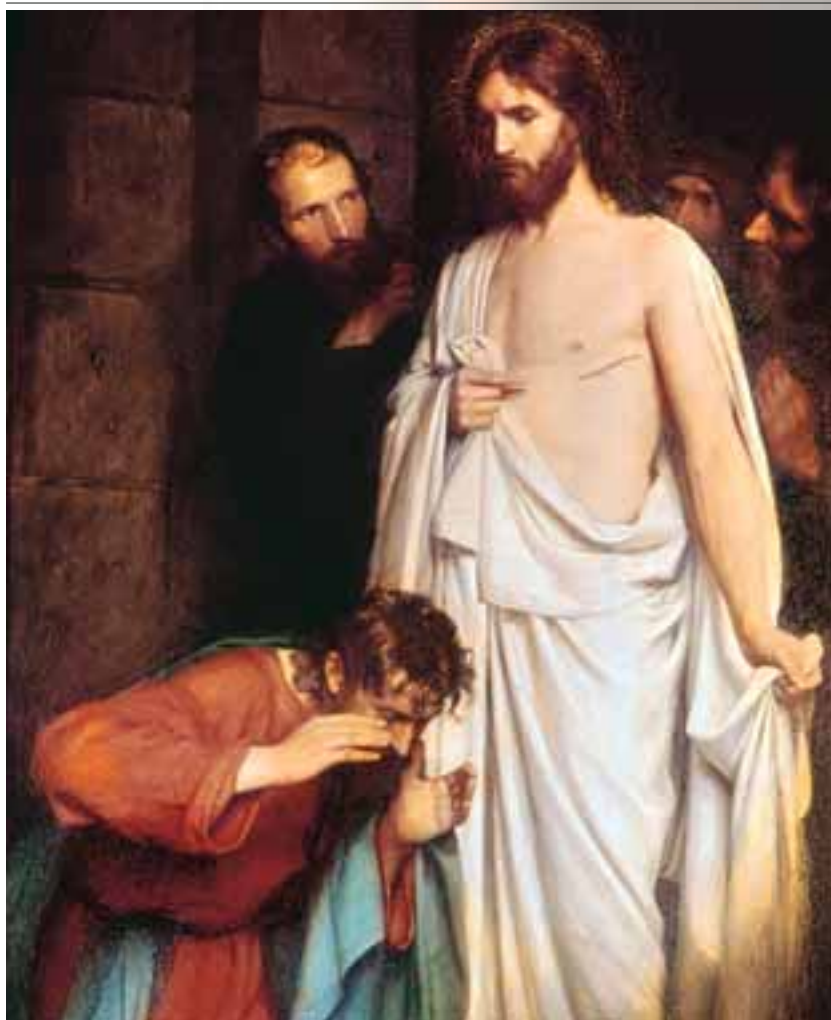
The case of the Apostles was exceptional. They stood in a peculiar position. It was better for them to know—nay, absolutely essential—in order to give the requisite force and power to their tremendous testimony.

Power from On High

And yet, even in their case, something more than the seeing of the eye, than the hearing of the ear, than the touch of the senses, was necessary to enable them to know and to testify of Christ’s divinity. Peter knew, before the Resurrection, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God—knew it by divine revelation; and his brethren of the Twelve were entitled to the same knowledge, by the same means of imparting it.

That something besides His appearing to them in a resurrected state was necessary to qualify them for their work is shown by the fact that after that appearing, and after He had commissioned them to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” [Mark 16:15], they were commanded by Him to tarry at Jerusalem until they were “endued with power from on high” [Luke 24:49]. They obeyed, and the power came upon them—“a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. . . . Cloven tongues like as of fire . . . sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2–4).

That same power the Apostles gave to



others, even to all who had faith in Jesus Christ, who had repented of their sins, and had been cleansed by baptism at the hands of those having divine authority to so officiate; to the end that they might receive the Holy Ghost and by continued obedience win life everlasting.

Latter-day Testimony

So much for the days of old. Now as to modern times. Joseph Smith, to whom the Father and the Son revealed Themselves in the early decades of the 19th century, and through whom the everlasting gospel, with all its ancient gifts and blessings, was restored at the opening of this last and greatest of the gospel dispensations; Joseph Smith, who with Sidney Rigdon saw the Son of God sitting on the right hand of God and gazed upon the glories of eternity; Joseph Smith, who with Oliver Cowdery beheld Jehovah, even Jesus

The Twelve Apostles were His special witnesses. As such they had to know beyond all question that He was what He claimed to be. They must know, and they did know, for they had seen and heard Him, had even been permitted to touch Him, that they might be convinced that He was indeed the resurrection and the life.

Christ, standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit in the Kirtland Temple; Joseph, the martyred prophet, who gave his life to lay the foundations of this work—he left upon record more than one mighty testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. And tens of thousands of faithful Saints have rejoiced and are rejoicing in those testimonies, confirmed to them by the all-convincing power of the Holy Ghost.

In the Mission Field

May I add my mite to the mass of evidence upon this all-important theme? Fifty years ago, or something less, I was a young missionary in the state of Pennsylvania. I had been praying for a testimony of the truth but beyond that had not displayed much zeal in missionary labor. My companion, a veteran in the cause, chided me for my lack of diligence in this direction. “You ought to be studying the books of the Church,” said he; “you were sent out to preach the gospel, not to write for the newspapers”—for that was what I was doing at the time.

I knew he was right, but I still kept on, fascinated by the discovery that I could wield a pen and preferring that to any other occupation except the [theater], my early ambition, which I had laid upon the altar when, as a youth of 21, I accepted a call to the mission field.

In Gethsemane

One night I dreamed—if dream it may be called—that I was in the Garden of Gethsemane, a witness of the Savior’s agony. I saw Him as plainly as I see this congregation. I stood behind a tree in the foreground, where I could see without being seen. Jesus, with Peter, James, and John, came through a little wicket gate at my right. Leaving the three Apostles there, after telling them to kneel and pray, He passed over to the other side, where He also knelt and prayed. It was the same prayer with which we are all familiar: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” ([see] Matthew 26:36–44; Mark 14:32–41; Luke 22:42).

As He prayed the tears streamed down His face, which was toward me. I was so moved at the sight that I wept

also, out of pure sympathy with His great sorrow. My whole heart went out to Him. I loved Him with all my soul and longed to be with Him as I longed for nothing else.

Presently He arose and walked to where the Apostles were kneeling—fast asleep! He shook them gently, awoke them, and in a tone of tender reproach, untinctured by the least suggestion of anger or scolding, asked them if they could not watch with Him one hour. There He was, with the weight of the world’s sin upon His shoulders, with the pangs of every man, woman, and child shooting through His sensitive soul—and they could not watch with Him one poor hour!

Returning to His place, He prayed again and then went back and found them again sleeping. Again He awoke them, admonished them, and returned and prayed as before. Three times this happened, until I was perfectly familiar with His appearance—face, form, and movements. He was of noble stature and of majestic mien—not at all the weak, effeminate being that some painters have portrayed—a very God among men, yet as meek and lowly as a little child.

All at once the circumstance seemed to change, the scene remaining just the same. Instead of before, it was after the Crucifixion, and the Savior, with those three Apostles, now stood together in a group at my left. They were about to depart and ascend into heaven. I could endure it no longer. I ran out from behind the tree, fell at His feet, clasped Him around the knees, and begged Him to take me with Him.

I shall never forget the kind and gentle manner in which He stooped and raised me up and embraced me. It was so vivid, so real, that I felt the very warmth of His bosom against which I rested. Then He said: “No, my son; these have finished their work, and they may go with me, but you must stay and finish yours.” Still I clung to Him. Gazing up into His face—for He was taller than I—I besought Him most earnestly: “Well, promise me that I will come to You at the last.” He smiled sweetly and tenderly and replied: “That will depend entirely upon yourself.” I awoke with a sob in my throat, and it was morning.



The Moral of the Tale

“That’s from God,” said my companion (Elder A. M. Musser), when I had related it to him. “I don’t need to be told that,” was my reply. I saw the moral clearly. I had never thought that I would be an Apostle or hold any other office in the Church; and it did not occur to me even then. Yet I knew that those sleeping Apostles meant me. I was asleep at my post—as any man is, or any woman, who, having been divinely appointed to do one thing, does another.

President Young’s Counsel

But from that hour all was changed—I was a different man. I did not give up writing, for President Brigham Young [1801–77], having noticed some of my contributions in the home papers, wrote advising me to cultivate what he called my “gift for writing” so that I might use it in future years “for the establishment of truth and righteousness upon the earth.” This was his last word of counsel to me. He died the same year, while I was still in the mission field, though laboring then in the

state of Ohio. I continued to write, but it was for the Church and kingdom of God. I held that first and foremost; all else was secondary.

The Speaker’s Testimony

Then came the divine illumination, which is greater than all dreams, visions, and other manifestations combined. By the light of God’s candle—the gift of the Holy Ghost—I saw what till then I had never seen, I learned what till then I had never known, I loved the Lord as I had never loved Him before. My soul was satisfied, my joy was full, for I had a testimony of the truth, and it has remained with me to this day.

I know that my Redeemer liveth. Not even Job knew it better. I have evidence that I cannot doubt; and this is why I am found among those who tonight unfurl the slogan for which we stand, possessing and proclaiming an individual testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. ■

Published in Improvement Era, Jan. 1926, 219–27; punctuation, capitalization, and spelling modernized.

The greatest and most convincing of all testimonies is the soul’s illumination under the kindling and enlightening power of the Holy Ghost—the Comforter, promised by the Savior to His disciples, to abide with them after He had departed.

NOT ROOM ENOUGH TO

Receive It



Members share insights and blessings they have received from paying tithing.

Each year we have the opportunity to attend tithing settlement and privately review with our bishop or branch president our payment of tithing. At this time we can begin again with a resolve to pay an honest tithe.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,” commanded the Lord, “. . . and prove me now herewith, . . . if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). What spiritual and temporal blessings come pouring into our lives through heavenly windows thrown wide open when we pay tithing? Church members from around the world share their testimonies and experiences.

Guided to Return

Almost four years ago, I went to live with my father, a faithful member of the Church for 20 years. I had not been attending church at all and knew little about the gospel.

Gradually I began going to church. Then one Sunday at stake conference, I heard Elder Adelson de Paula Parrella, an Area Authority Seventy, give a talk about tithing. Although I didn’t understand much about this law, Elder Parrella spoke with such confidence, faith, and spirit that I decided to pay tithing from that day forward.

When I began to pay tithing and offerings, something marvelous began to happen in my life. The Spirit began to fill my heart, and like the prodigal son, I was guided to return to the true gospel path. The Lord even blessed me so greatly that I was able to serve as a missionary in the Brazil Fortaleza Mission.

I know that when we are faithful in paying our tithing

The Lord has promised that when we pay our tithing, He will “open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing.”

and a generous fast offering, the Lord can bless us temporally and spiritually.

Rafael Barcellos Machado, Parque Pinheiro Ward, Santa Maria Brazil Stake

Trusting Him

Two months after I was baptized, I told the sister missionaries that I had not yet paid any tithing. I was out of work and didn’t have enough money to last the month. The sisters read the Lord’s promise to open the windows of heaven, and I felt the Holy Ghost testify to me, “Trust in the Lord.”

I felt so happy the next day when I paid tithing on the small amount I had. During the next week, I found a job. I am so happy to know that if we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will do miracles for us.

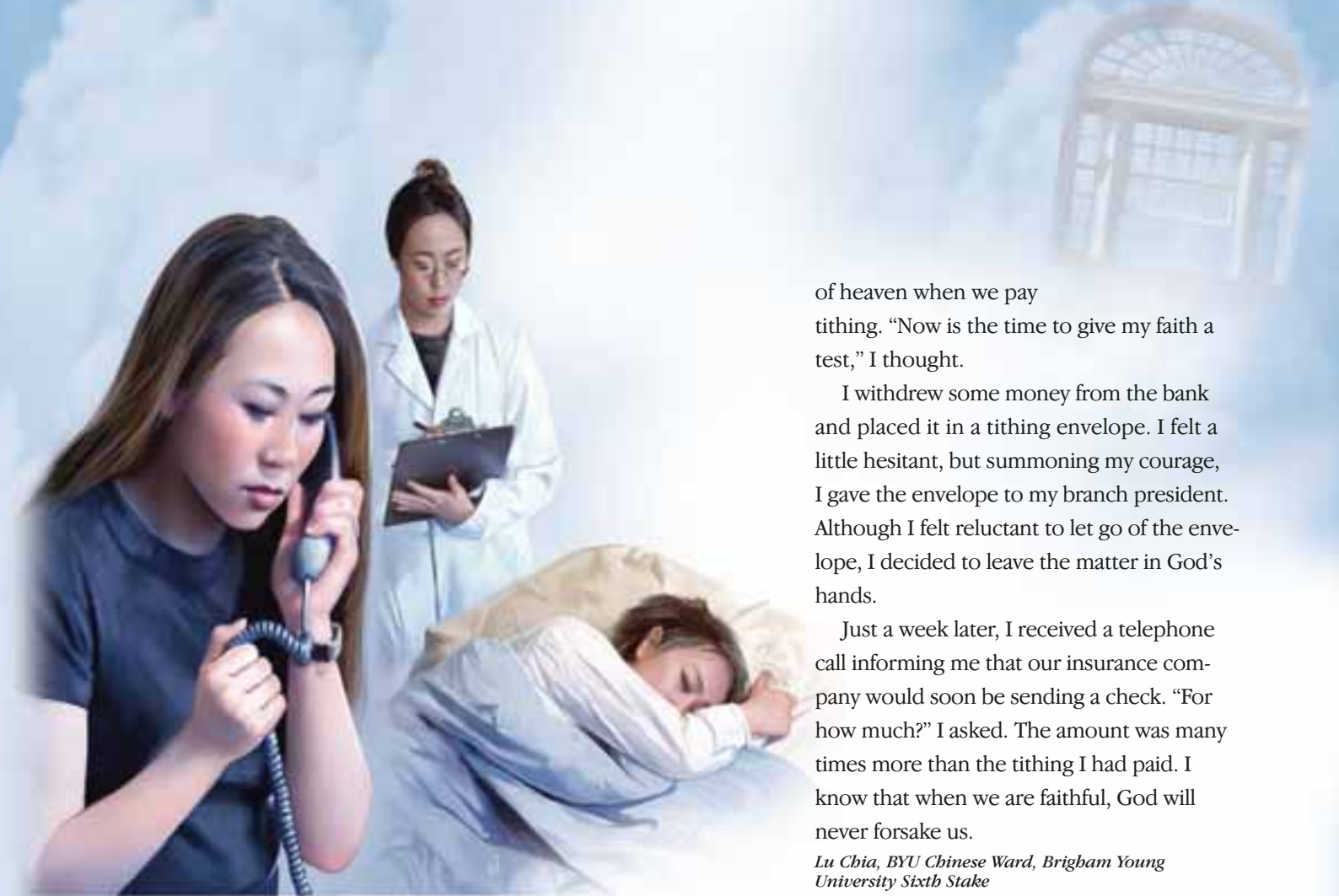
Ivanka Ivanova, Sofia Tsentralen Branch, Sofia Bulgaria District

More Than We Deserve

As the only Church member in my family, I had to overcome many obstacles to serve a full-time mission. One of these was financial, and I spent countless hours looking for jobs so I could earn enough money for my mission. Finally I found a job watching over someone’s home. Although I made only a small amount, I managed to pay tithing. Then I found another job teaching English to three children. It more than doubled my salary, and I could keep both jobs. What a blessing! After working for some months—always paying my tithing—I finally received my call to serve in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission.

Sometimes I think of the Lord as a master and myself as one of His servants. If I am a lazy servant who does nothing but sleep, eat, and entertain myself, will He be able to reward me? No. But if I labor diligently, will our Master withhold His blessings from me? No. He will reward me more than I deserve. And if we are obedient to the law of tithing, how generous will our blessings be then? He has said that there will not be enough room to receive them (see Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10). This is the Lord’s wonderful promise to all who pay tithing.

Eng Bun Huoch, Ta Kbmau Branch, Phnom Penh Cambodia South District



My mother had to be admitted to the hospital. I was sorely worried about her and also about how we would pay for her care. The following Sunday I remembered I hadn't yet paid my tithing that month.

Putting Faith to the Test

When I joined the Church in Taiwan as a teenager, paying tithing was not difficult because I had little income. After I graduated and began working, it became a little harder. There were always so many things to buy and so little money to buy them with. But each year at tithing settlement, I could honestly tell the branch president that I had paid a full tithe.

Then last year my mother had to be admitted to the hospital intensive care unit. I was sorely worried about my mother and also about how we would pay for her care. The following Sunday I remembered I hadn't yet paid my tithing that month. Thinking I would need all my money to pay the hospital, I decided to put off paying my tithing until the next week. As Sunday approached once again, a small voice reminded me that the Lord has promised to open the windows

of heaven when we pay tithing. "Now is the time to give my faith a test," I thought.

I withdrew some money from the bank and placed it in a tithing envelope. I felt a little hesitant, but summoning my courage, I gave the envelope to my branch president. Although I felt reluctant to let go of the envelope, I decided to leave the matter in God's hands.

Just a week later, I received a telephone call informing me that our insurance company would soon be sending a check. "For how much?" I asked. The amount was many times more than the tithing I had paid. I know that when we are faithful, God will never forsake us.

Lu Chia, BYU Chinese Ward, Brigham Young University Sixth Stake

Blessed with Peace

When I was baptized in 2001, I began paying tithing every month. Then just eight months later, my husband passed away. I became a widow with two small children at home and one son on a mission. Although my financial problems were serious, I never stopped paying tithing. I have been blessed with more and more work, which has enabled me to earn more money. But even more important, because I pay my tithing I always feel at peace with the Lord.

Today my small house seems big and comfortable. I feel calm with my two little children. I will never stop paying tithing because I know the Lord has blessed me not only with physical and spiritual health but also with wisdom and peace.

Josefa Margarida dos Santos Fontes, Rio Grande da Serra Ward, Ribeirão Pires Brazil Stake

We Couldn't Afford Not to Pay It

After my wife, Jean, and I were baptized on 27 October 1957, we did not start paying tithing right away as we should have. I thought we had too many debts and too little money. I should have known that we could not afford not to pay it.

When a year passed, we were expecting our third child. We had just purchased a new house and also had several more debts. About this time, my wife said, "We need to pay our tithing." I did not know how we could because we had no money left after our expenses, but I said, "We will do it." And we did.

We had already moved into our new house, but the loan had not yet closed because the street and the driveway were not finished. It soon began to rain and rain and rain some more. As a result, the work on the street and driveway was delayed. The loan did not close, so we had no house payments.

By the time the work was finally completed, the mortgage company had lost the loan papers and seemed in no hurry to find them. When the papers were finally found, we had lived in our house for six or seven months without making a single payment. We were able to get ahead on some of our other payments during this time.

Things have not always been financially easy for us, but we have never stopped paying our tithing. We call this experience a blessing from heaven.

Henry Hardnock, Midland Second Ward, Odessa Texas Stake

Happiness and Well-Being

When I was 20 years old and investigating the Church in Ulan-Ude, Russia, my brother

and I sang in a music competition. I prayed that our music would touch the judges' hearts. My prayer was answered when two of the judges were touched in such a way that they cried during our performance. And I was thrilled when we won second place and received a cash prize.

After my brother and I had divided the prize money, I remembered what I had learned about tithing—that the Lord's 10 percent should be paid to the branch president. My family was having financial problems, and they argued that I shouldn't pay 10 percent to God.

When my brother and I won a cash prize in a music competition, I knew I should pay tithing on my share. My family was having financial problems, and they argued that I shouldn't pay 10 percent to God.



After a lady gave me a bag of apples, our neighbor's young son asked me, "Could I have just one?" When the Lord had given so much to me and mine, would I also share with others?

But one of the branch members showed me how to put my money in a tithing envelope. And I felt happy when I gave my first tithing to the branch president, believing that Heavenly Father would not let my family die for lack of money to buy food.

That evening, a friend of my mother's came to our home. She wanted to help us and gave us more money than I had paid. That experience helped me very much. I was baptized six weeks later and am now serving a full-time mission.

I know that our happiness and well-being are influenced by how honest we are in paying our tithing. And my family now has the same opinion too!

Sister Marita Ivanova, Russia Samara Mission

Sharing the Blessings

Once when our children were young, I decided to test the Lord's promise by paying our tithe, even though I didn't know where we would get money to buy food. I didn't mention our plight to anyone.

To my surprise, my parents soon came to visit, bringing with them enough meat, potatoes, and bread to last us a very long time. But this wasn't all. Our oldest daughter had a work-study assignment at school. Her assigned workplace was a sandwich shop, and at the end of the week, she received permission to bring home sandwiches for the whole family!

"Now we just lack some fruit," I thought to myself. And that afternoon, returning from biking, I saw a lady putting apples into a bag. "Would you like to have these?" she asked. Surprised, I said that I would like them very much indeed.

Just then our neighbor's young son came by. When he saw the delicious apples, he asked, "Could I have just one?" I held the bag out to him, and he chose one. Thanking me, he hurried away, his eyes shining with happiness.

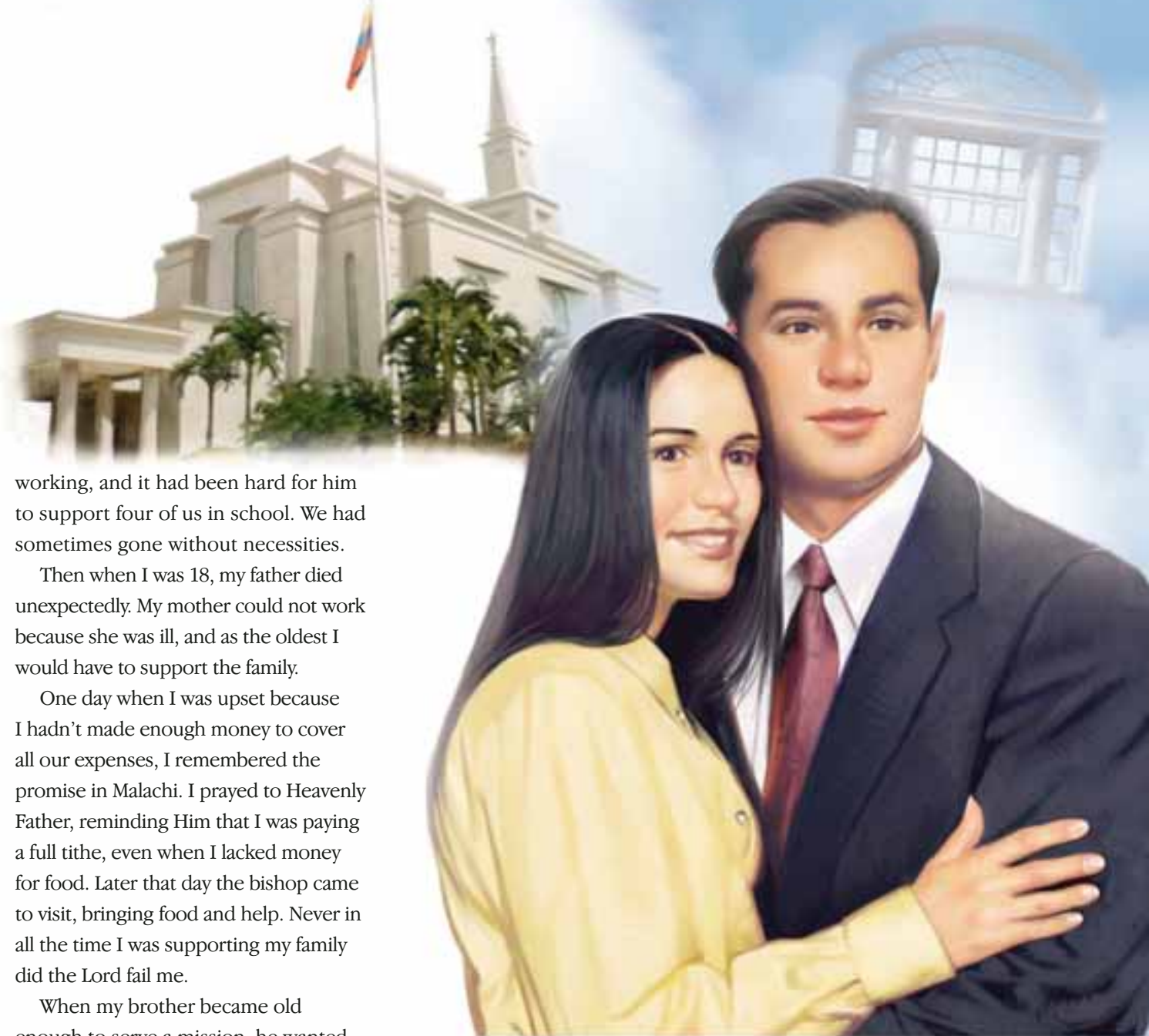
I thought afterward that the Lord must have wanted to test me too. When He had given so much to me and mine, would I also share with others? I did—and have tried to do so ever since.

Jytte Christiansen, Fredericia Ward, Aarhus Denmark Stake

Tithing First

After graduating from high school, I got a good job as a secretary at the university and was able to help Papa support the family. He had been the only one in the family





working, and it had been hard for him to support four of us in school. We had sometimes gone without necessities.

Then when I was 18, my father died unexpectedly. My mother could not work because she was ill, and as the oldest I would have to support the family.

One day when I was upset because I hadn't made enough money to cover all our expenses, I remembered the promise in Malachi. I prayed to Heavenly Father, reminding Him that I was paying a full tithe, even when I lacked money for food. Later that day the bishop came to visit, bringing food and help. Never in all the time I was supporting my family did the Lord fail me.

When my brother became old enough to serve a mission, he wanted to stay home and work to help pay for household expenses. But we felt he should go, so he quit his job and left for a mission. The following month, my salary was raised. The whole time he was on his mission, my family never lacked for anything. I received a scholarship and was able to study to become a commercial engineer. During this time our shoes lasted longer, our clothes didn't wear out as quickly, and we didn't get sick as often.

After supporting my family for six years, I married a wonderful man in the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple. Our goal was always to pay

tithing, and we always did. Every month we took our tithing out first. We didn't have everything, but we didn't suffer either.

Two years after we married, my husband died in a traffic accident. Now once again I support my own family. But I have a good job, and I know that if I continue to live the law of tithing, my young son and I will have what we need. With all my heart I know that the Lord will never forsake me and that He will continue to pour out blessings—not only temporal but also spiritual. ■

Karina Vanegas Barcia, Monay Branch, Cuenca Ecuador Stake

I supported my family for six years, then married a wonderful man in the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple. Our goal was always to pay tithing first. We didn't have everything, but we didn't suffer either.

NO COMPARISON

BY EMMA WITHERS

*No earthly pleasure
can compare
to the peace
and joy of
the temple.*

Recently, on a family holiday at a game park north of our home in South Africa, my family decided we would spend a few nights in Johannesburg and visit the temple.

The hotel in Johannesburg was incredible. I mean, it was the kind of hotel you see in the movies. My bedroom suite was bigger than the kitchen and family room at home combined, the tiles in the bathroom were heated, and the television came out of a box when we pressed a button. The staff was there to take care of our every whim.

I was impressed. This, I thought, was how my life was meant to be: swanning around, acting like royalty. In fact, I was so caught up in the luxury of the hotel that I forgot why we were there in the first place.

The only opportunity my brother, sister, and I would have to attend the temple to do

The beauty of the temple and the feelings I had when I was doing baptisms were worth any sacrifice.

baptisms for the dead was Saturday morning. But instead of thinking about the temple, all I was thinking about was how nice it would be to sleep late on Saturday, spend the day in this beautiful hotel, and then leave for home.

Still, we decided to go to the temple. As I walked through the temple doors and saw and felt the holiness and beauty of that place, my perspective changed, and I realized what was really important. The hotel may have been beautiful, but it couldn't compare to the temple. The feelings I had as I did baptisms for the dead brought such peace and joy to me, greater than any worldly pleasure.

I am so grateful for this lesson. It is easy to become caught up in the things of the world. These things are attractive, but the pleasure they bring doesn't last. Now I more clearly understand that real joy and peace can be found only through obeying and honoring Heavenly Father's commandments. ■

Emma Withers is a member of the Cambridge University Second Ward, Cambridge Massachusetts Stake.



Prepare by Living Providently and Paying Tithes and Offerings

Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

What Is Provident Living, and How Can It Bless Our Lives?

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “‘Provident living’ . . . implies the husbanding of our resources, the wise planning of financial matters, full provision for personal health, and adequate preparation for education and career development, giving appropriate attention to home production and storage as well as the development of emotional resiliency. . . .

“Let’s do these things because they are right, because they are satisfying, and because we are obedient to the counsels of the Lord. . . . It is true that difficult times will come—for the Lord has foretold them. . . . But if we live wisely and providently, we will be as safe as in the palm of His hand” (“Welfare Services: The Gospel in Action,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 78).

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “We have been counseled again and again concerning self-reliance, concerning debt, concerning thrift. . . .

“ . . . Let us have some food set

aside that would sustain us for a time in case of need. But let us not panic nor go to extremes. Let us be prudent in every respect. And, above all . . . let us move forward with faith in the Living God and His Beloved Son” (“The Times in Which We Live,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2002, 84–85).

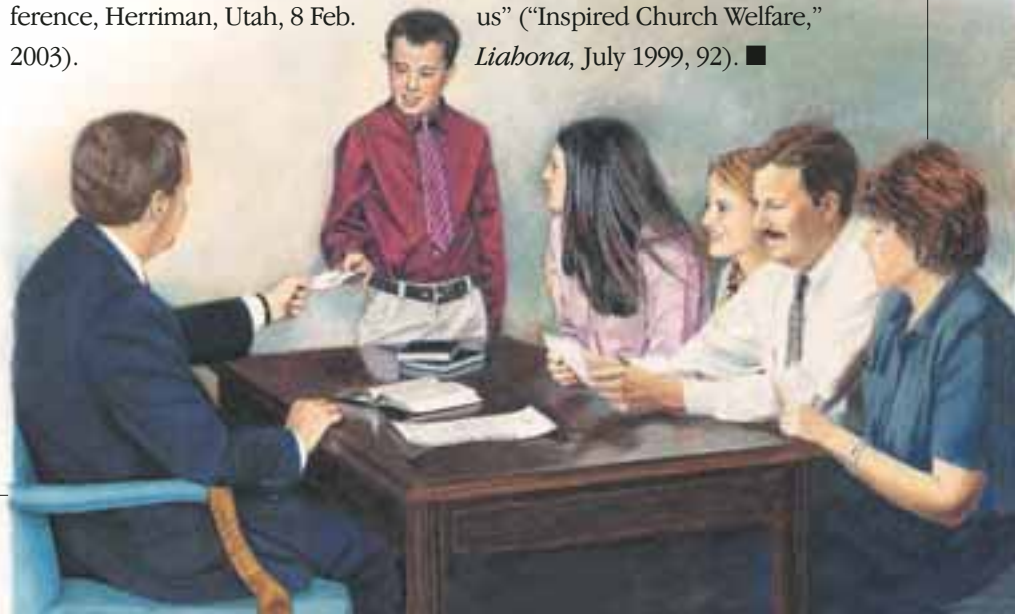
Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president: “The advertising industry is very effective in changing our wants into needs. The temptations are often overwhelming to acquire more than we can afford. The regular payment of tithing should help teach us wise financial management. Tithing payment does not release us from the necessity of living within our means. Family happiness is not determined by things. It does come from husbands and wives working together, communicating, and solving problems” (women’s conference, Herriman, Utah, 8 Feb. 2003).

How Do Tithes and Offerings Help Us Prepare Spiritually and Temporally?

Malachi 3:10: “Prove me now herewith, . . . if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing.”

President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), First Counselor in the First Presidency: “Tithing is . . . a commandment with a promise. If we obey this commandment, we are promised that we will ‘prosper in the land.’ This prosperity consists of more than material goods—it may include enjoying good health and vigor of mind. It includes family solidarity and spiritual increase” (“Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 81).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Contributing a generous fast offering blesses the givers richly and allows them to become partners with the Lord and the bishop in helping relieve suffering and fostering self-reliance. . . . Perhaps we should evaluate our offerings and decide if we are as generous with the Lord as He is with us” (“Inspired Church Welfare,” *Liabona*, July 1999, 92). ■



Questions & Answers

What can I give my family for Christmas that would be more meaningful than something bought at the store?

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

L I A H O N A

Imagine this. You've just received a present. It's big. It's fancy. It's expensive. The card with it says, "Merry Christmas. I didn't put any thought into this gift. I didn't put any effort into it. I had the money, so it wasn't really a sacrifice. Enjoy."

Of course, you'll probably never get a card like that. But you might get a gift like that—something impressive but without real meaning.

How can you make sure the gift you're giving will mean something to the person receiving it? Whatever the gift, what will make a difference is how much thought you put into the gift, how much of yourself you put into it, or what kind of sacrifice it represents.

For example, a heartfelt poem that you worked on for days or offering a night of free baby-sitting so your parents can spend time together would probably mean more to someone than a gift that took only five minutes to buy, no matter how much it cost.

Christ gave us the ultimate gift—the Atonement. We can give others gifts that testify of Christ and His gift.

Giving of yourself, as Christ did, means giving of your time, talents, and love.

Just because a gift is expensive doesn't guarantee it will mean something to the person you give it to.

Think about your gift. What would the person really like, need, or want?

Service can be a meaningful gift. Offer to help with chores or other tasks.

The American writer-philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only [true] gift is a portion of thyself" (*The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* [1929], 286).

Christ taught us how to give gifts. It seems like every time you turn the page in the scriptures, there's another story about the Savior doing things for others or giving of Himself. He gave His time—answering questions. He gave His talents—teaching the people and comforting the sick. He gave His love—serving selflessly. We too can give of ourselves by offering our time, talents, service, and love.

Christ also gave us the greatest gift of all: the possibility of eternal life through His Atonement (see D&C 14:7). We can't atone for others, but the gifts we give could teach others about Christ's gift. Here are some suggestions, many of them offered by our readers. Also, see "Homemade Christmas" on page 6 of this issue.

★ Give a picture of Jesus, along with a scripture verse and your feelings about the Savior.



- ★ Give “service coupons” offering your help with chores or other tasks.
- ★ Do something to let family members know you love them.
- ★ Forgive someone, or ask for someone’s forgiveness.
- ★ Write an encouraging letter.
- ★ Give someone a Book of Mormon.
- ★ Spend your time with someone doing what he or she likes to do.
- ★ Paint a picture; write a poem; compose a song.

Really thinking about what to give and then giving of yourself often takes more time than just running to the store. So plan ahead. You’ll find that the extra effort will be worth it, and you will be repaid with happiness and the warmth of the Spirit.

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) taught, “The Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit, that makes our hearts glow in brotherly love and friendship and prompts us to kind deeds of service” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953], 551).

READERS



Some of the most important gifts don’t come from the store. Some gifts you can give that possess a magic beyond store-bought things

are kindness, love, and charity. We pick the name of a family member, then fill little bags with encouraging notes or some service we can do and maybe a piece of candy.

*Briana Deaver, 14, Rocklin Fourth Ward,
Rocklin California Stake*

We have many valuable gifts, but the important gift to give is a copy of the Book of Mormon and a testimony of the truthfulness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As we greet each other with grateful hearts and sincere souls, it is like we behold the loving face of our Savior.

Phyllishena Faamoe Savelio, 19, Lalovi Ward,
Upolu Samoa West Stake



I decided it would be meaningful to make something for my younger brother this Christmas. The answer came to me through the Church magazines. Almost every article

includes a sidebar with a quote and picture. Backed with cardboard and wrapping paper, they make great bookmarks. I also covered a box with quotes to keep them in.

Jenny Maynes, 16, Geneva Ward,
Naperville Illinois Stake

The gifts I'm planning to give are gifts that I made myself, maybe a poem or a homemade card telling them how much I love them. For me, it's not the cost that counts—it's the thought.

Carol T. Vallo, 21, Calasiao Second Branch,
Calasiao Philippines District



Just like the Savior does, we can present our neighbor with an inestimable gift—our love. Material things deteriorate with time, but the joy of knowing that someone

cares about you has no price nor end.

Luiz Henrique Keng Quieroz Jr., 17,
Cariacica Ward, Vitória Brazil Stake



For a few moments, may we set aside the catalogs of Christmas, with their gifts of exotic description. Let's even turn from the flowers for Mother, the special tie for Father, the cute doll, the train that whistles, the long-awaited bicycle—even the 'Star Trek' books and videos—and direct our thoughts to those God-given gifts that endure, [including] the gift of love."

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Gifts," Ensign, May 1993, 60.



Last Christmas I received a call from my friend. He bore his testimony of the gospel and our Savior. I was so touched that I still remember that. At that instant,

I saw that jewelry, clothes, or toys are not the best presents, but the best gift is a testimony that Christ was born among us, that He conquered the chains of death, and that He lives today.

Jephsey Lorena T. Cardenas, 23, Jardim Roberto Ward,
São Paulo Brazil Parque Pinheiros Stake

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Youth readers: Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, address, ward and stake (or branch and district). Please include a photograph of yourself that is 1 1/2 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm) or larger.

Questions and Answers 1/04

**Room 2420, 50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA
cur-liahona-imag@ldschurch.org**

Please respond by 15 January 2004.

QUESTION

"I'm not attractive. Please don't tell me I am. Why did Heavenly Father give me this face and body? Didn't He know how much it would hurt?" ■



“I Am the True Vine”

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

BY ELDER ANTHONY R. TEMPLE

Area Authority Seventy
North America Northeast Area

Early in our marriage, my wife and I planted a garden. We knew little about gardening, but we thought the back corner of our yard looked fertile. And indeed it was. In one area we planted banana squash. The squash vines grew almost without any effort on our part until they stretched some 40 to 50 feet (10 to 15 m) along the top of a long fence. The squash were enormous. It was an incredible result for novices.

In the scriptures we often read about vineyards and grapevines. But growing grapes is not as easy as growing squash. It takes the right climate and skilled cultivation to maintain a fruitful vineyard.

Grapes were an important part of early Hebrew culture, and the tablelands and hills in the Holy Land provided an ideal place for grapevine cultivation. The land was groomed,

the vines were planted along the hillsides, and the vineyards were carefully fenced to keep out unwanted animals or people. The vines were cultivated and pruned so that they would yield as much fruit as possible.

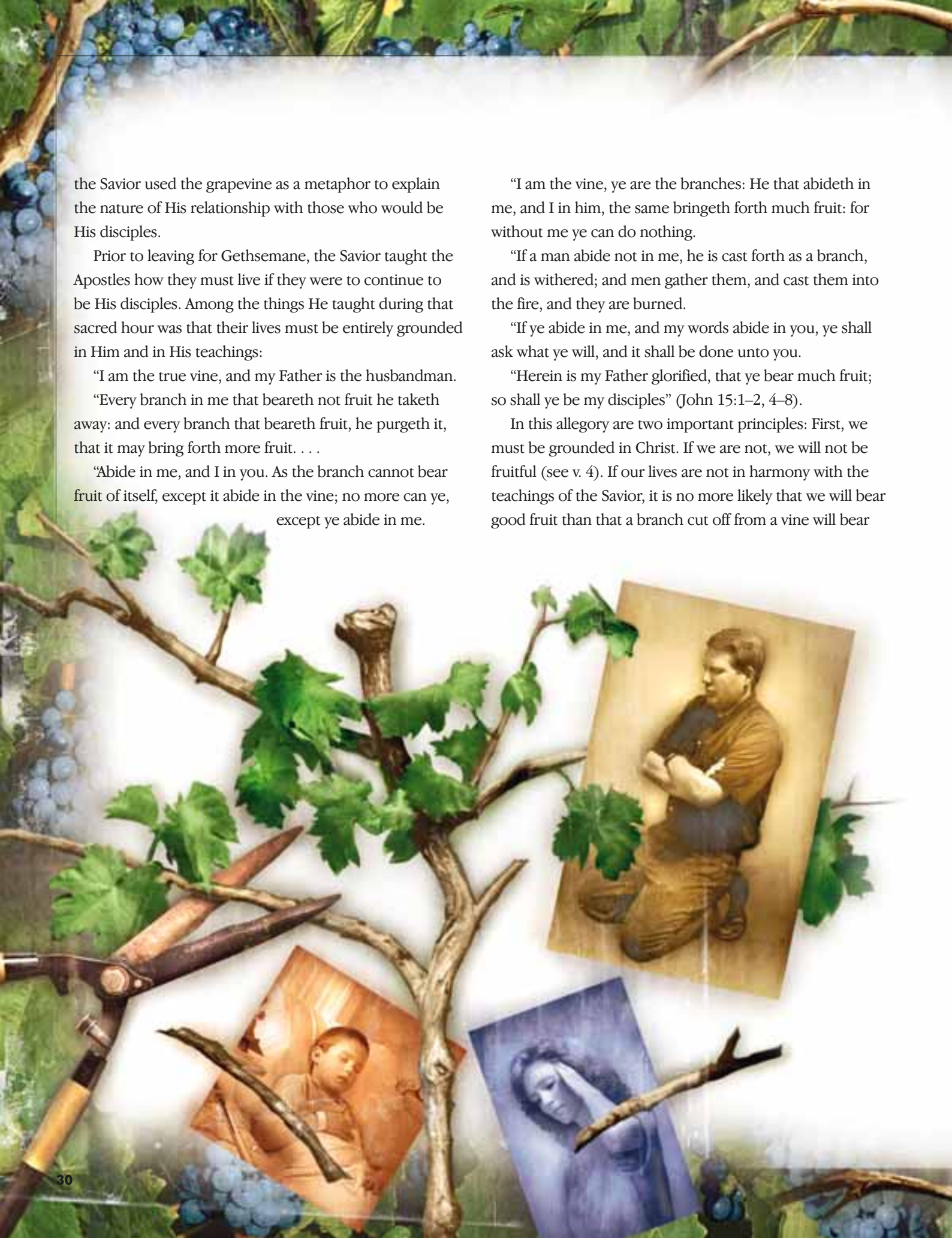
Pruning is probably the most important part of growing grapes. Branches not producing fruit are cut off. When a vine's main branch reaches a certain size, it is cut back by taking off the tip to force the development of side shoots. Such pruning and shaping halt the growth at the tip of the branch and send nourishment into the new branches. Then, as these side branches develop, each produces as much fruit as the single vine had produced. The sturdy center stalk of the vine, rooted deep in the soil, provides the nourishment to all of these long, fruit-bearing spurs.

Symbolism of the Vineyard and the Vine

Vineyards have often been used symbolically in the scriptures. In the book of John,



We must derive our spiritual nourishment from Jesus Christ. He is the source of all truth and of all goodness.



the Savior used the grapevine as a metaphor to explain the nature of His relationship with those who would be His disciples.

Prior to leaving for Gethsemane, the Savior taught the Apostles how they must live if they were to continue to be His disciples. Among the things He taught during that sacred hour was that their lives must be entirely grounded in Him and in His teachings:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . .

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.


“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:1–2, 4–8).

In this allegory are two important principles: First, we must be grounded in Christ. If we are not, we will not be fruitful (see v. 4). If our lives are not in harmony with the teachings of the Savior, it is no more likely that we will bear good fruit than that a branch cut off from a vine will bear



fruit. Second, even when we are living righteously, we still need the Gardener, who knows us so completely and sees beyond what we see, so that He can purge, or prune and purify, us (see v. 2). While at times this pruning may seem hard to bear, it is only through this process that we will become more fruitful.

Our pruning comes in a variety of ways. We may develop an illness or physical limitation. We may find that our expectations are not fulfilled. We may find sorrow in relationships or experience personal loss. Yet what initially might seem to be a sad event can help us grow if it causes us to rely more on the Lord and to rethink our priorities. Such difficult experiences can make us more fruitful, or more like the Savior—our true vine.

An Experience with Pruning

Throughout my life I have had ample need for pruning. For example, a few years ago I expected to receive a company promotion. I felt I had the experience, skills, and longevity required, and I hoped the choice was obvious.

At that time there was a new top manager in our company who had different priorities and goals than I did. Among other things, he expected all senior managers to work weekends in addition to weekdays. I was a stake president then and knew that to best serve the members of my stake, I needed to spend a certain amount of time fulfilling my Church responsibilities.

When the hoped-for promotion never occurred, I had to struggle to keep myself from feeling bitter. What a disappointment! I determined just to keep going, to try to do things as well as I could, and to maintain a positive demeanor. Yet my sense of self-worth had been challenged. My abilities had been called into question. Other Church leaders I knew seemed to capably manage both demanding Church callings and time-consuming employment.

Our pruning comes in a variety of ways. We may develop an illness or physical limitation. We may find sorrow in relationships or experience personal loss. Yet what initially might seem to be a sad event can help us grow if it causes us to rely more on the Lord and to rethink our priorities.

In a weak moment, I even wondered whether I had made the right choice to devote so much time to the Church. Then I decided I needed to focus on what was truly important. I began to look not only at my capabilities but also at my limitations. I could see that the time I was spending in Church service was necessary and that I probably wouldn't have been able to manage both the employment position I had sought and my Church calling.

I think the Lord was telling me I had to choose and would have to keep choosing. To have chosen to devote extra time to my employment so I could get the promotion would have disengaged me from the Lord's work. As I look back, I can see what

a blessing it was for me to devote so much of my time to the Church. The ensuing years were some of the most rewarding of my life. I felt closer to the Lord. My testimony was strengthened. My relationship with fellow Saints in the area was a great blessing, and I am sure I became more fruitful than I would have been otherwise.

Firmly Rooted to Christ

We can expect that we will be pruned throughout our lives. How wonderful it is to know that an all-wise Father is watching over our development and that He is nurturing us through His careful husbandry.

We must derive our spiritual nourishment from Jesus Christ. He is the source of all truth and of all goodness. Without Him we can do nothing (see John 15:5). When we focus on Christ and His gospel, we are filled with His light. Then the fruits of the Spirit are made manifest in us, and the blessings come (see John 15:7; Galatians 5:22–23). If we seek to achieve our full potential, let us daily think of Christ and emulate His example until we become firmly rooted to Him, the True Vine. ■



Kirtland Restored

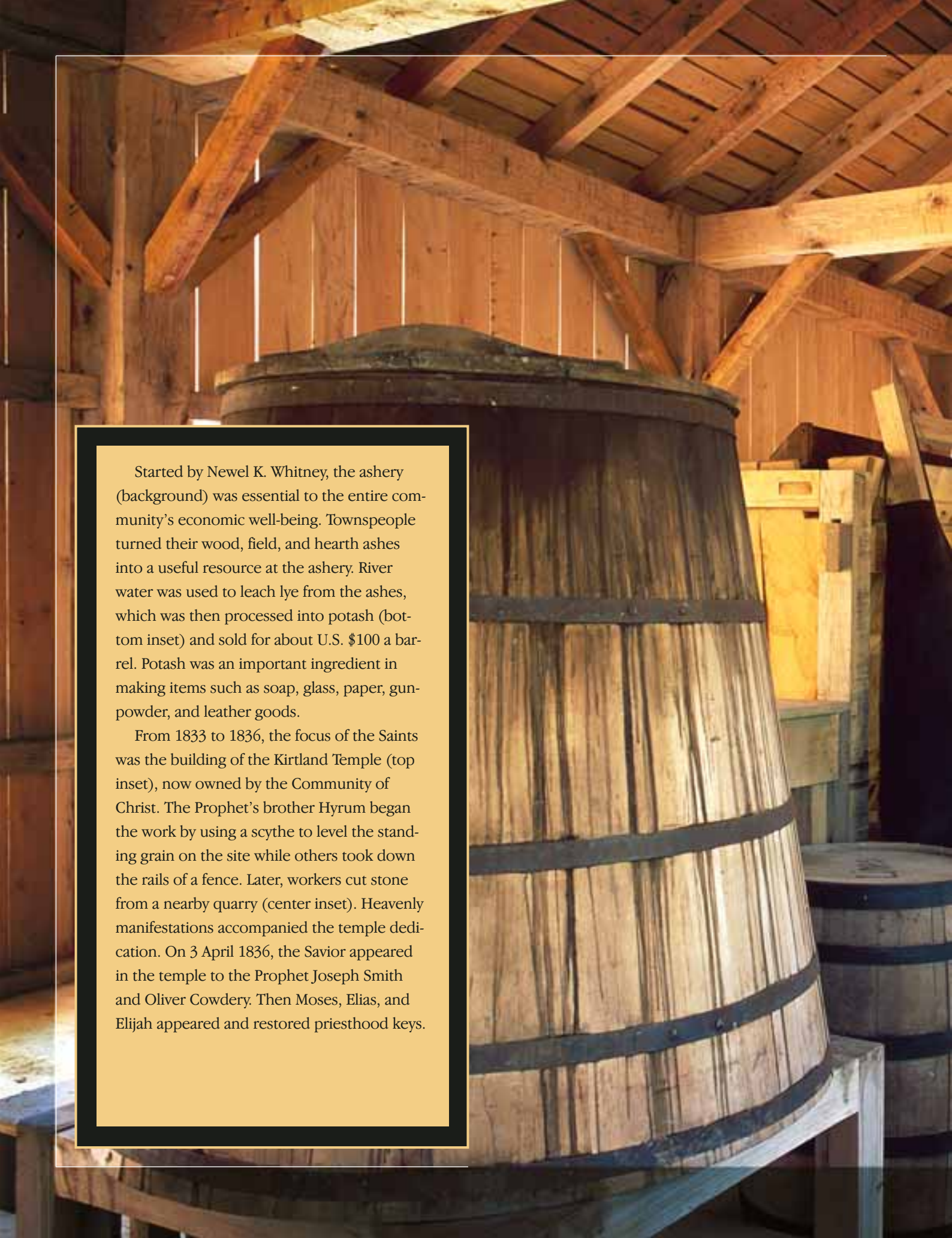
Newly restored historic sites help us envision how the Church flourished and suffered here between 1831 and 1838.

Once again an ashery stands on Stoney Brook, just as it did when early Latter-day Saints settled in Kirtland. The ashery (background) is one of several buildings rebuilt by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as part of the restoration of historic Kirtland, Ohio. The Prophet Joseph Smith (right) moved the newly organized Church from New York to Ohio in 1831.

The small home (far right) of early converts Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney had a summer kitchen on the back, a single bedroom on the main floor where Sister Whitney's aunt frequently stayed, and an open half-story upstairs where Newel, Elizabeth Ann, and their children slept.

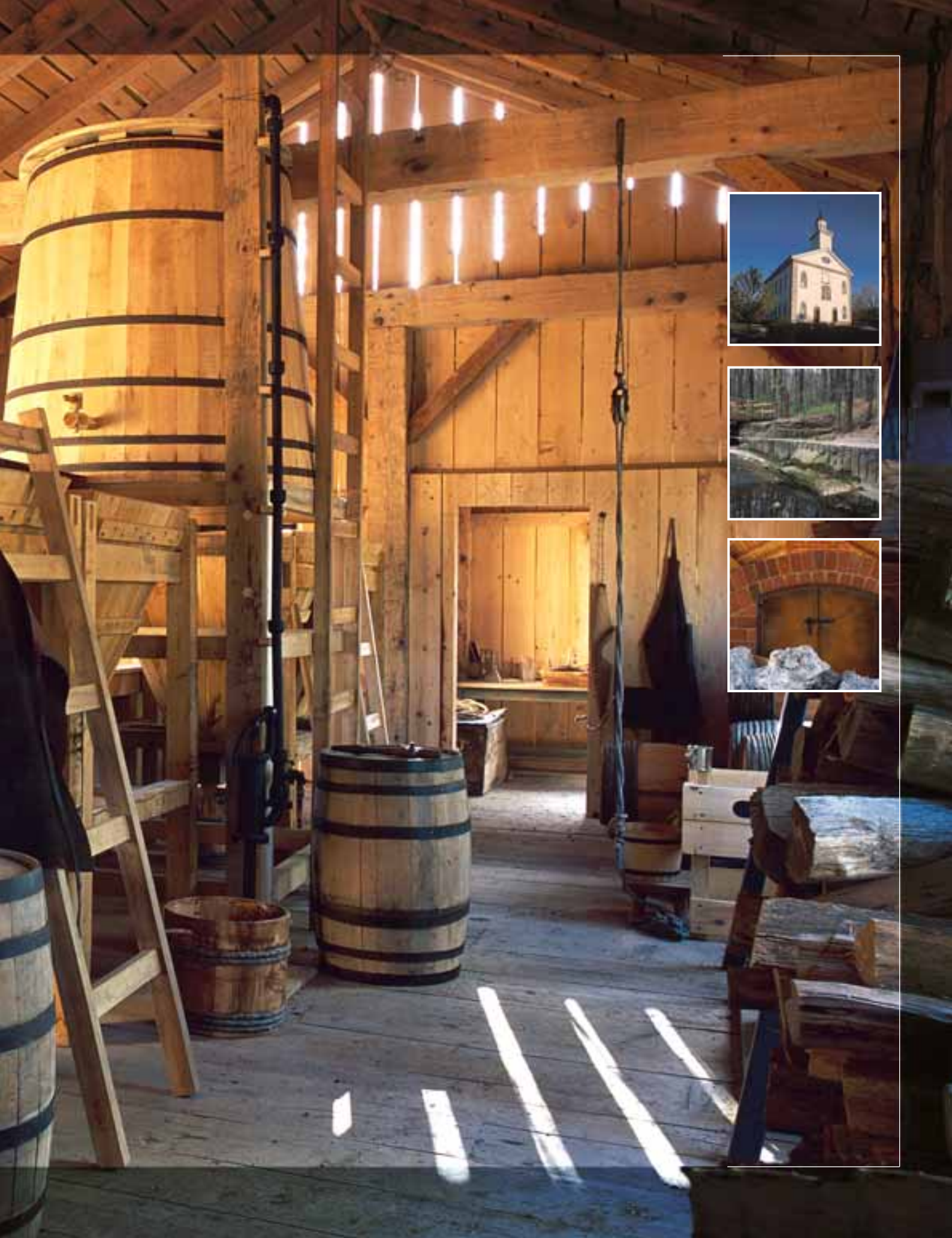
PHOTOGRAPHY BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; JOSEPH SMITH, BY ALVIN GITTINS



A large, cylindrical wooden barrel, constructed from vertical staves and bound by several dark metal hoops, stands prominently in the foreground. It is situated within a rustic wooden building, likely an ashery, with a ceiling of exposed wooden beams and rafters. In the background, another similar barrel is visible, and the walls are made of vertical wooden planks. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the textures of the wood and metal.

Started by Newel K. Whitney, the ashery (background) was essential to the entire community's economic well-being. Townspeople turned their wood, field, and hearth ashes into a useful resource at the ashery. River water was used to leach lye from the ashes, which was then processed into potash (bottom inset) and sold for about U.S. \$100 a barrel. Potash was an important ingredient in making items such as soap, glass, paper, gunpowder, and leather goods.

From 1833 to 1836, the focus of the Saints was the building of the Kirtland Temple (top inset), now owned by the Community of Christ. The Prophet's brother Hyrum began the work by using a scythe to level the standing grain on the site while others took down the rails of a fence. Later, workers cut stone from a nearby quarry (center inset). Heavenly manifestations accompanied the temple dedication. On 3 April 1836, the Savior appeared in the temple to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Then Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared and restored priesthood keys.






The above map shows historic Kirtland as it has been restored. The sawmill (background) was built by Latter-day Saints on Newel K. Whitney's property but was a Church mill rather than a private operation. It provided the cash-poor Church a means of building the temple in the style dictated by the revelations. It also provided jobs for the many Latter-day Saints arriving in Kirtland. A waterwheel (top inset) powered the saw and lathe. Lumber from this mill was used for the temple and other buildings. The original sawmill burned down in the early 1850s.

The schoolhouse (center and bottom insets) was a center of activity. Schoolchildren played ball, a game called mumblety-peg, and marbles in the school yard. School supplies included a spelling book, a reader, an arithmetic book, and a slate. Students carved their own pencils from soapstone. On Sundays, the Saints often met in the schoolhouse for Church meetings.

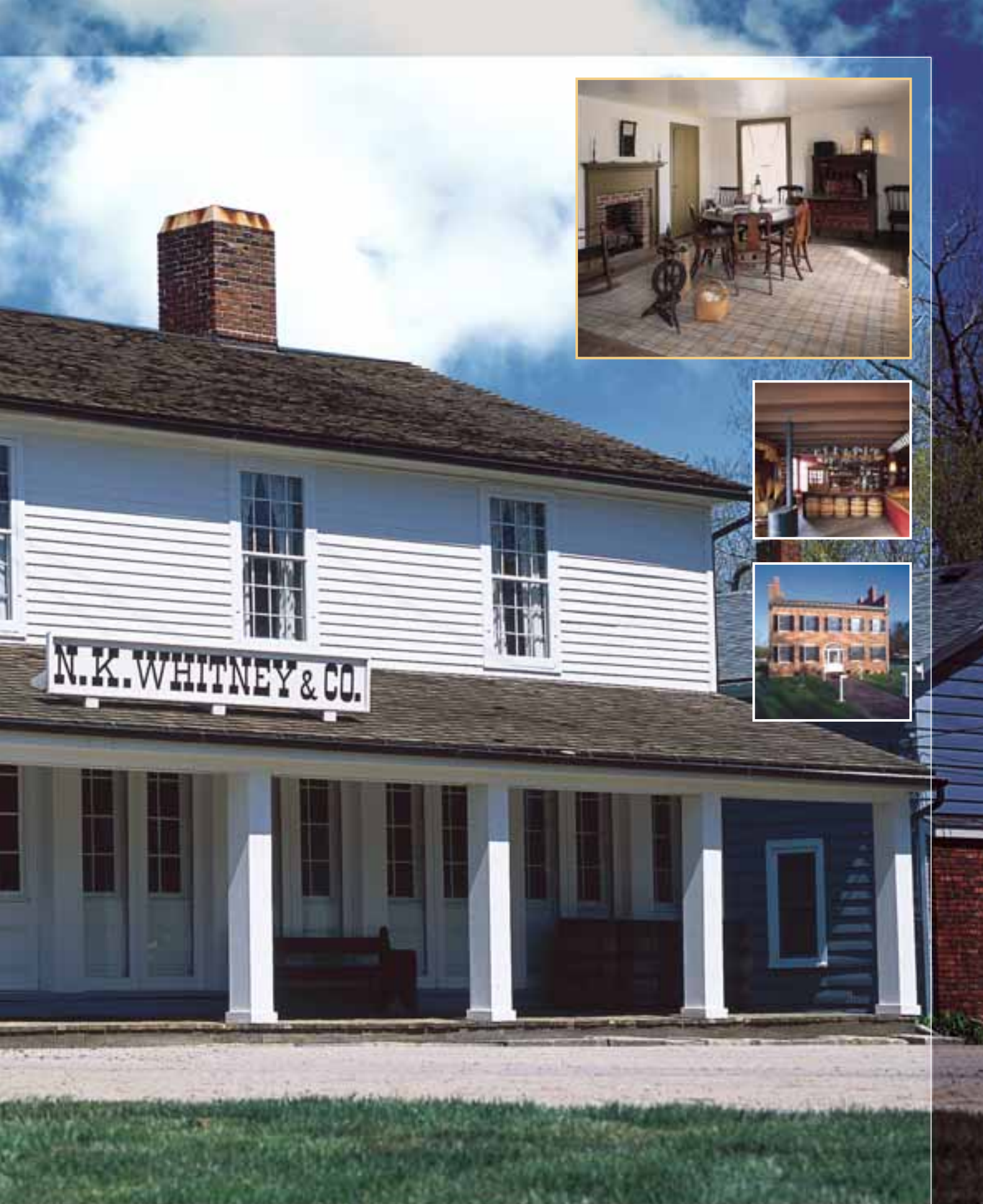






Newel K. Whitney, with his general store (background and middle inset) and ashery, was well established by February 1831 when the Prophet Joseph and Emma Smith arrived. The Whitneys generously made their resources available to the Church. While living in the store (top inset), the Prophet received many important revelations now recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. And it was in an upper room of the store that the School of the Prophets met. Truly, in Kirtland the Lord helped the Prophet lay the foundation for the Church.

John Johnson operated an inn (bottom inset) near the Whitney store. Although they eventually left the Church, the Johnsons were early converts who had a significant impact for good. ■



Christmas with a Minister

By Blaine K. Gehring

It was 1967, and I was serving as a missionary in Hildesheim, Germany. Christmas was fast approaching, and I was excited because Christmas Eve was a Sunday, and a wonderful meeting and other appropriate and special celebrations were planned.

Two weeks before Christmas,

however, I received a transfer to Rendsburg. My companion, Elder Fadel, and I would be new there, and I wondered what the members would be like and how we would celebrate Christmas.

We soon came to know that the Rendsburg Branch had few members and little was being planned for Christmas Eve other than a special sacrament meeting. Our landlady, a Church member, invited us to join her for dinner on Christmas Day. I thought that would be the extent of my Christmas. But things soon changed.

The preceding missionaries had left us a tracting book including the names of several people who said they would like the missionaries to call back. Because people were so busy, finding new contacts at Christmastime was not very successful, so we thought these names might be a good place to start. We began visiting people on the

My companion and I sat with Reverend Lübbert and asked him about his ministry. We then talked about our ministry.



list. When we visited the home of Frau Lübbert, we were greeted by a wonderful, cheery lady. She invited us in, and we learned that she was the widow of a Lutheran minister, who had passed away earlier that year. Her son was also a minister. He would be home for Christmas, and it would be just the two of them sharing their first Christmas without their husband and father. Then, with a sparkle in her eyes, she asked if we would join them for Christmas Eve. Having no other plans, we consented.

Christmas Eve arrived, and we had a lovely sacrament meeting in which we talked about the Savior and listened to the Christmas story. As my companion and I helped administer the sacrament, we pondered on the life the Savior had given for us.

After the meeting we were to meet the Lübberts at the Lutheran church. As we walked through the park, the snow was just beginning to fall, and we stopped to watch children and parents skating on a frozen pond. We saw Christmas lights here and there and heard church bells announcing the Christmas Eve service.

The Lübberts were waiting for us at their church. We enjoyed a wonderful spirit as we listened to the minister and as we sang Christmas carols in a church older than some of the carols. Singing “Silent Night” in its original language made the occasion even more special.

After the service, we got into Reverend Lübbert’s car and drove to

their home. Frau Lübbert had prepared a goose for dinner, and as she put the finishing touches on the meal, my companion and I sat with Reverend Lübbert and asked him about his ministry. He talked of how he was active in a movement trying to bring Christian churches together. Many shared that dream, but others were antagonistic and fought the movement.

We then talked about our ministry. We told him of the Book of Mormon and how the Church had been restored. We told him of living prophets, and we talked about Jesus Christ and bore witness of Him as our Savior. No animosity existed among us. There was no belittling of one another’s beliefs. As I think upon it now, the words of 2 Nephi 25:26 come to mind. We literally “talk[ed] of Christ, we rejoice[d] in Christ” on that Christmas Eve. He was the center of our attention. He was the purpose of our being together.

As we bowed our heads for a prayer on the food, Reverend Lübbert asked a blessing on his fellow servants in Christ, that we would be led to those who sought Jesus. The meal was wonderful—roasted goose with all the trimmings and special German desserts.

German tradition is for parents to retire to a separate room where the tree has been newly decorated and to light the candles on the tree. The children are then allowed to enter and see the tree and their presents. So Frau

Lübbert retired to the living room and closed the large sliding doors. In a moment she opened the doors and invited her “sons” to come in.

As we entered the room, where the only light was the soft light coming from the candles on the Christmas tree, Frau Lübbert handed my companion and me our gifts: some candies and a souvenir book about Rendsburg. She then gave her son his presents, and they paused a moment to remember their husband and father. We then opened the Bible to Luke and read the Christmas story. The Spirit touched each of us and witnessed again of the divine message in those verses. As we sang Christmas carols, the words bore testimony to each of us of the love we shared for Jesus Christ, His life, His teachings, and the most precious of gifts—His atoning sacrifice.

I don’t believe my feet touched the ground that night as we made our way to the bus stop. Santa Claus hadn’t come. I hadn’t been rushing around buying presents. I hadn’t attended any concerts or seen the traditional Christmas movies. My family was far away, and my packages from home were delayed because of the transfer. But I was the happiest I had ever been on Christmas Eve. For the first time in my life, Christmas had been totally focused on Christ. And the only gift I had given was my witness of Him. ■

Blaine K. Gebring is a member of the East Mill Creek Fourth Ward, Salt Lake East Mill Creek Stake.



“Read Your Patriarchal Blessing!”

By Célia Augusto de Souza

In our home we have a Christmas tradition of decorating the house by the end of October or the beginning of November so that the spirit of Christmas comes sooner and remains longer. But in 1993 it certainly didn’t work this way.

In October I discovered I was pregnant. I already had two children—a four-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son—and we were experiencing a very difficult financial situation. “How will we support another baby?” I wondered. When the beginning-of-pregnancy nausea started, I found myself arguing with the Lord, complaining, murmuring, and failing to

pray. I didn’t decorate the house as in other years. I didn’t want to remember the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. For me there wouldn’t be Christmas that year.

Every year my mother holds a special banquet on 25 December to bring the family together. But that year as I sat down at the table with everyone else, I couldn’t eat. Everything made me sick. I was so sad and filled with such bitterness that I hardly participated in the family conversations, and I soon returned home.

Some hours later my brother ran to my house to tell me my father was feeling sick. I hurried to my parents’ house and saw that my dad could hardly breathe; he had a tingling in his arm and a horrible pain in his chest. It was a heart attack! I urged my brother to take my father to the emergency room.

I went back home and asked my husband to pray that my father would

I hurried to my parents’ house and saw that my dad could hardly breathe; he had a tingling in his arm and a horrible pain in his chest. It was a heart attack!

not die. He told me I was the one who should pray. But I had not prayed for many, many days and felt Heavenly Father would not hear my prayer. Wisely, my husband told me it was time for me to ask His forgiveness.

I knelt, weeping bitterly. My father was dying on his way to the hospital, and I implored our Father in Heaven not to let him die that Christmas. In desperation I implored the Lord for forgiveness, and a voice whispered in my ear, “Read your patriarchal blessing!” How could I think about my patriarchal blessing at a time like this? But the prompting continued, strongly urging me to read the blessing.

I stood up, found a copy of my patriarchal blessing, and began to read it. And then something amazing happened. I realized that several times the blessing mentioned that I am a beloved daughter of Heavenly Father and of my earthly parents and that if I honor my parents on earth, He will prolong their lives, they will have the opportunity to see my children grow, and they will rejoice with me in our posterity.

As I read, an understanding came to me. My father hadn’t yet seen my unborn child, neither had he seen this child grow. He wouldn’t die at that moment, I realized. My blessing was my answer that day. I knelt once

again, this time thanking our Father in Heaven for the very special child—my son Guilherme—I was carrying.

Sometimes we are so blind, so selfish! And Heavenly Father, in His kindness and love, allows us to learn and grow from our trials. I thank Him for each day He allows me to live with my family—with my three dear children, my husband, and my parents. I know that God lives, that Jesus Christ lives, and that They love me and have great patience with me. ■

Célia Augusto de Souza is a member of the Vila Sônia Ward, São Paulo Brazil Stake.

The Trucker's Gift

By Norma J. Broadhead

I don't have to work on Christmas this year," my husband, Ken, said. He was a truck driver, and for many years the children and I had partial Christmases and some late Christmases because of his work. But now all the children were married, and we had encouraged them to spend this Christmas at their own homes as we had done when we had a young family.

It took only a minute for me to think of a father who would have to work on Christmas, so I told Ken, "Remember how it was when you couldn't be with us for Christmas? I'll be all right if you work and let some father who has small children stay home with his family for Christmas."

"Are you sure? You'll be all alone."
"I'll be fine."

Ken told the dispatcher he would work Christmas so a young father could be at home. Another truck driver standing nearby overheard the conversation. "If you're going to do that," he said, "I will too. I don't have any children at home."

So it was arranged. Then another driver heard about it and volunteered to work on Christmas also. So three veteran truck drivers worked for three days in some of the worst weather our area had seen, and three fathers of young children were able to stay home with their families.

As for me, I watched the snow fall and knew that although Ken didn't have to be out in that cold weather, he had made the choice to be. And I

thought of our 10 children and of the Christmases we had had together—especially the ones when we didn't have their daddy with us.

So for three days, I read, sewed, watched Christmas programs on television, ate my solitary meals, looked at the unwrapped gifts, and spent a peaceful and happy Christmas—grateful for my husband and his gift of Christmas to someone else. ■

Norma J. Broadhead is a member of the Millcreek Fifth Ward, Salt Lake Millcreek Stake.

Ken and two other veteran truck drivers worked for three days in some of the worst weather our area had seen so that three fathers of young children could stay home with their families for Christmas.



A GIFT *for All* SEASONS

BY ELDER DARWIN B. CHRISTENSON
Of the Seventy



You don't have to wait until Christmas to give the gifts of friendship, love, and service.

My brother, sister, and I grew up in the rural town of Blackfoot, Idaho. My family didn't have a lot of money, but that didn't stop us from being excited about Christmas. We would wake up early in the morning, sneak into my mom and dad's room, and ask them if we could get up. They'd say with tired voices, "No. It's only three o'clock in the morning. Go back to bed."

So we'd climb back into our beds and wait and wait and think, "Boy, it's got to be later now." Then we'd get up again and ask my parents, "Mom, Dad, can we get up now?"

They'd say, "No, it's only 10 minutes after 3:00. Go back to bed." It seemed like so long before we'd finally get up to celebrate Christmas.

In those early years, we began to understand the importance of the Savior by celebrating Christmas. By developing a relationship with Him, we were able to make good choices and receive many wonderful gifts in our lives.

The Gift of Good Friends

True friendship has been one of those gifts. I had several good friends while growing up. The gospel bound us together, and special leaders helped us choose the right. We had a wonderful Sunday School teacher named Eva Manwaring who knew how to handle a group of ruffian boys. I don't think there were too many sisters who would have put up with us, but she did. Her husband

took care of us in Scouts, helping us get our Eagle ranks. I am grateful for good friends and leaders who helped me make good choices, especially the choice to serve a mission.

The Gift of Brazil

When I first arrived in Brazil as a missionary, I immediately loved the beautiful, green country and the open, loving, humble people.

The work was often difficult. Representatives of another church would tell the youth to throw rocks at us. We were put in jail. It was hard for people to join the Church, because their neighbors would ostracize them. That was in the late 1950s when the Church didn't have even one stake in Brazil.

Now there are almost 200 stakes. It has been a spiritual blessing to see the miraculous growth of the Church in Brazil as I've returned with my family as a mission president and member of an Area Presidency.

After my first mission was over, I sailed for home on a boat. I stood on the deck and cried as I saw Brazil disappear over the horizon. I'm always excited to return, but it hasn't gotten easier to say good-bye.

The Gift of Love

When I got back from my mission, I met a beautiful lady named Sandra Joeline Lyon at stake conference. We both attended Idaho State University in Pocatello but lived in Blackfoot. The best part about commuting was that Sandra and I carpooled in the same group. I could tell she was one of God's precious daughters, and I knew she was the right one for me to marry. One day I sat next to her in the car and said, "You know, you really



By developing a relationship with the Savior, we were able to make good choices and receive many wonderful gifts in our lives.

Being married
for eternity is
the greatest
gift my wife and I
could have given
each other.

ought to write your missionary a 'Dear John' letter because you know you're going to marry me anyway." It wasn't quite that simple, but after a couple of years we were married.

We got engaged in December, which makes Christmas especially meaningful. Being married for eternity is the greatest gift we could have given each other. My wife is a wonderful blessing as she provides gifts of love to me, our children, their spouses, and our grandchildren. Her love does much to keep our family united.

The Gift of Priesthood Power

After a few years of marriage, Sandra and I had our third child, a little boy named Stephen who was born just three days before Christmas. When he was born, he could not inflate his lungs. He had a valiant little spirit about him. He fought for life, but the doctors said it wasn't likely he would live. Our bishop invited the ward to join their prayers with ours for our son.

The greatest gift that special Christmas Eve was being able to give him a blessing. After the blessing, I felt prompted to go to Sandra's hospital room and tell her Stephen was going to be just fine and that she shouldn't worry. On Christmas morning, the doctors told us Stephen was going to be OK. They had no idea what had happened. It was a miracle. I'm so grateful for the power of the priesthood. We consider Stephen's survival to be one of our family's greatest Christmas gifts.

The Great Gift

The great gift we receive at Christmas is a remembrance of the Savior's birth. He is our gift from the Father. Living close to the Savior while growing up helps us to make good decisions. You don't want to disappoint Him. Forming a testimony while you are young will help you to always appreciate His miraculous sacrifice.

It's critical to live close to the Savior and know that He is always there and that He always loves you. Following His example and His teachings brings wonderful feelings at Christmas and marvelous blessings in eternity. I testify that the Savior lives. Merry Christmas, beloved brothers and sisters. ■



Did You Know?

The Living Christ

Reading or memorizing “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles” is one way you can come closer to the Savior this Christmas. You will find it in the *Liabona* (see Apr. 2000, 2–3) or at the back of your new *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet.

The young women of the White-water Ward, Jonesboro Georgia Stake, set a goal to memorize “The Living Christ.” The girls felt the Spirit as they learned more about the Savior, and they were able to recite the Apostles’



declaration as a surprise for the other girls at their stake Young Women camp testimony meeting.

They testified, with the Apostles, “that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world. . . . He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son” (*Liabona*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).



Leadership Tip

Giving of yourself is the true spirit of Christmas. Our perfect leader, Jesus Christ, gave His life, allowing us to qualify for God’s greatest gift—eternal life (see D&C 14:7).

This Christmas when you read the story of the Savior’s birth, also read some of the stories from His earthly ministry. His example of selfless giving can guide you as you seek for ways to serve.



GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

“Of all the pronouncements in sacred or profane literature, the announcement of the angel to the

shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night was highly significant:

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).”

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Pattern of Love,” *Liabona*, Dec. 1999, 3.



It Happened in December

Following are a few significant events that happened in Church history during the month of December:

23 December 1805: Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont.

5 December 1847: The First Presidency was reorganized in Kanesville, Iowa, with Brigham Young as Church

President and Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as counselors.

9 December 1895: The first stake in Mexico was created in Colonia Juárez.

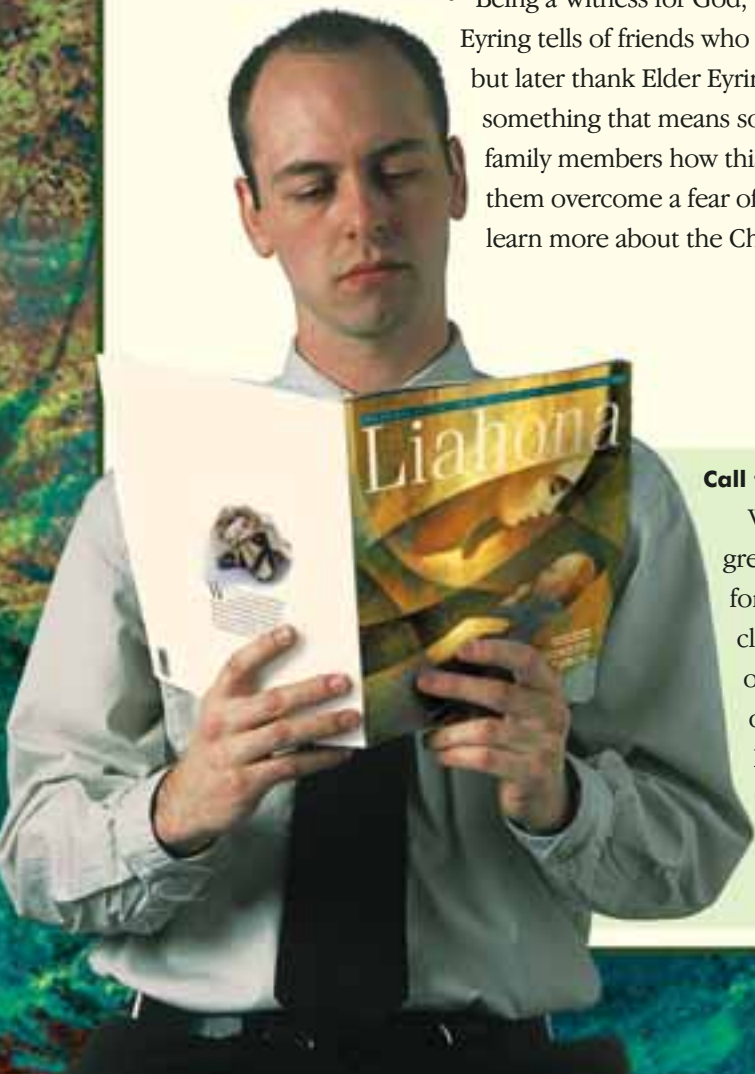
9 December 1978: The Church’s first full-time missionaries to Ghana arrived and baptized 89 people.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DETAIL FROM CHRIST AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN; AN ANGEL APPEARS TO THE SHEPHERDS, BY BRUCE MARTIN; PHOTOGRAPH BY DON L. SEARLE; ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL MANN; JOSEPH SMITH, BY ALVIN GITTINS; THE HEALING OF THE LAME IN THE TEMPLE, BY JAMES J. TISSOT

Using the December 2003 *Liahona*

Family Home Evening Ideas

- “The Divinity of Jesus Christ,” p. 12: Elder Orson F. Whitney understood that the sleeping Apostles in his dream represented his own performance as a young missionary. Ask family members to consider ways they can be sure not to be “asleep at [their] post.”
- “Ten Things I Love about You,” p. 10: Read about the gift Eric gave his family for Christmas; then discuss other gifts that family members might give.
- “Not Room Enough to Receive It,” p. 18: Select one or two of these stories to share. Bear your testimony about the law of tithing. Ask family members to tell about blessings they have received from obeying this law.
- “Being a Witness for God,” p. F15: Elder Henry B. Eyring tells of friends who reject the missionaries but later thank Elder Eyring for offering them something that means so much to him. Ask family members how this story might help them overcome a fear of inviting friends to learn more about the Church.



Topics in This Issue

F=*The Friend*

Adversity.....	29
Apostles.....	12, F10
Atonement	12
Blessings	18, 25
Christmas	1, 2, 6, 10, 26, 40, 44, F2, F4, F8
Church history	32, 47
Conversion.....	F6
Covenants	F15
Example	2
Family home evening.....	48
Family relations.....	6, 10, 26
Friendship	44
Healing.....	40, 44
Jesus Christ	1, 2, 12, 29, 44, 47, F2, F4
Joseph Smith.....	32
Leadership	47, 48
Love.....	6, 10, 40, 44
Missionary work	12, 40, 44, F10, F15
New Testament	29, F10
Patriarchal blessings.....	40
Peace	1
Pioneers	F6
Priorities	29
Prophets	2
Sacrifice.....	40, F6
Self-reliance	25
Service.....	6, 40
Teaching	48
Temples and temple work	24, F16
Testimony.....	12, 26
Tithing.....	18, 25

Call for Christmas Experiences

What are you giving for Christmas this year? If you have a great Christmas experience to share, we would like to receive it for Christmas! Did you serve anonymously? How did you come closer to the Savior? Please share your experience with readers of the *Liahona*. Send it to cur-liahona-imag@ldschurch.org or to Christmas Experiences, *Liahona*, Room 2420, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA.

FOR CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • DECEMBER 2003

the Friend



Light of the World



**A Christmas Message from the First Presidency
to the Children of the World**

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2). So spoke the Wise Men long ago when they followed the heavenly light which led them to the Savior of mankind.

Jesus Christ, born in humble surroundings, crucified, and resurrected, is our source of light to guide us in the paths we should follow. As we look to Him, following His light and doing what He would want us to do, we will find peace and happiness.

We testify that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and our Friend. He is the Light of the World. He lives, and because He lives, we shall live eternally (see John 14:19).

With love,
The First Presidency





HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, BY SIMON DEWEY, COURTESY OF ALTUS FINE ART, AMERICAN FORK, UTAH

What Is Christmas?

BY VICKI F. MATSUMORI

“And are willing to . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).



What is Christmas? President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said that Christmas is children, remembering, giving, and prophecy fulfilled (see “What Is Christmas?” *Liabona*, Dec. 1998, 2–6).

Christmas is children. It is joy, excitement, and hope.

Christmas is remembering. It is a time to remember and show the love Jesus asked us to have for everyone.

Christmas is giving. Sometimes we give things. Other times we give service. President Monson said we “give to our Lord and Savior the gift of gratitude by living His teachings” (*Liabona*, Dec. 1998, 6).

Christmas is prophecy fulfilled. The angel declared, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

When Jesus Christ was born, a new star appeared. But not everyone understood what it meant. The Wise Men from the East knew what the star meant. They came to worship Jesus. We can be like the Wise Men. We can learn about Jesus Christ and follow Him.

What is Christmas? It is when we celebrate the gift our Heavenly Father gave to each of us: the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ. We can give thanks for this gift by showing through our example that we will always follow Him.

Advent Calendar

Remove pages 8–9, and mount them on lightweight cardboard. Cut out the numbered stars on page 5. Each day in December, read the scripture listed on the star for that date. Answer the question or do the activity. Then glue the star in the scene. Place the scene where it will remind you to follow Jesus’ example.

Sharing Time Ideas

1. *On pieces of paper, write phrases from the song “The Church of Jesus Christ” (see 2003 Outline for Sharing Time and the Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation). Have children stand around the perimeter of the room, holding the papers. Discuss some of the principles the song teaches—for example, belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means knowing that the Church was restored by Joseph Smith. Sing a song or hymn about the Restoration. Repeat the process for the other phrases. Ask the other children to stand by one of the papers that represents something they feel strongly about. Sing “The Church of Jesus Christ,” and have the children turn to face each phrase as it is sung. Ask them to sing as if they were bearing their testimonies.*

2. *Help the children see how being a missionary now can help spread the gospel. Choose a child to be a member missionary, and ask him or her to contact as many people in Primary as possible in half a minute. He or she approaches another child or adult, who stands. The member missionary shakes the other person’s hand and says, “Hello, my name is _____, and I’m a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” How many people did the member missionary contact? Repeat the activity with this difference: as soon as someone has shaken hands, that person becomes a member missionary and begins shaking hands with others. Now how many people were contacted? Explain that by living gospel principles, we are member missionaries. Read Matthew 7:24–27; Mark 12:41–44; Luke 10:25–27; John 5:39. List some ways of becoming good member missionaries. Divide into groups, and have each group role play something they can do now to be good missionaries. Sing songs or hymns about missionary work. ●*

1

Luke 1:26-33

Who told Mary that she would have a baby?

10

Matthew 2:7-10

Where did Herod send the Wise Men?

16

Matthew 5:43-44

Jesus Christ taught that we should love our enemies. In your personal prayers, ask a blessing for someone who has been unkind to you.

2

Matthew 1:18-21

Why did Mary and Joseph name the baby "Jesus"?

21

Mark 10:13-14

Jesus Christ showed that children are very important to Him. Show your love for a brother, sister, or parent by reading a story to him or her.

3

Luke 2:3-6

Why did Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem before Jesus was born?

4

Luke 2:7

Why did Mary lay baby Jesus in a manger?

11

Matthew 2:11

How did the Wise Men show that they knew the young child was the Savior?

22

Matthew 22:37-39

Jesus Christ taught us to love our neighbors. Work with your family to do something nice for a neighbor.

5

Luke 2:8-11

To whom did the angel announce the Savior's birth?

17

Matthew 6:3-4

Jesus Christ taught that we should help other people. Perform a secret act of service for a member of your family.

12

Matthew 2:13-15

Why did Joseph take Mary and Jesus to Egypt?

23

John 13:34

Jesus Christ told us that we should love one another. Show your love to your parents by helping without being asked.

24

Isaiah 9:6

The celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is a time for joy. Write in your journal the feelings you have for Him.

6

Luke 2:12

What was used for a cradle for baby Jesus?

7

Luke 2:13-14

Who joined the angel in praising God?

13

Matthew 5:6

Jesus Christ taught that we will be blessed for seeking righteousness. Spend at least 10 minutes reading scriptures or scripture stories.

18

Matthew 7:7-8

Jesus Christ taught us that our prayers will be answered. Volunteer to say the family prayer.

19

Matthew 7:12

Jesus Christ taught us to treat others as we would like to be treated. Write a letter to someone who is far away, such as a missionary or grandparent.

8

Luke 2:15-17

Where did the shepherds go after the angels left?

14

Matthew 5:9

Jesus Christ taught that we should be peacemakers. Be a peacemaker in your family by not arguing with others.

15

Matthew 5:16

Jesus Christ taught that we should be good examples to others. Set an example by choosing the right.

20

Luke 17:12-19

Jesus Christ praised the leper who thanked Him. Write a note or draw a picture to thank your Primary teacher for what he or she has taught you.

9

Matthew 2:1-2

How did the Wise Men know that Jesus had been born?

A Bed for Nils

BY DIANE L. MANGUM

Based on a true story

“Every one that hath forsaken houses, . . . or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matthew 19:29).

Nils heard creaking, cracking, and then a great big crash! Everyone in the house jumped up to find the two missionaries buried in a pile of blankets and boards that had been Nils’s bed. His bed had been too small for these two grown men who were in Sweden preaching the gospel.

They had come just after supper and had stayed so late that Mama had insisted they stay the night. She had let them sleep in Nils’s bed while he slept on the floor.

Dismayed, Nils looked at his broken bed. Mama whispered, “Don’t worry. Papa will make you a new one.”

But Papa didn’t seem to have time. He worked all day and talked to the missionaries in the evenings. He said that the Book of Mormon explained everything he hadn’t understood in the Bible.

Soon Mama, Papa, Peter, Botilla, and Bengt were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nils and his baby sister would have to wait for their eighth birthdays. Even though they were happy, everyone else in town seemed angry—especially Grandmother and Grandfather. Nils’s family decided to go to America where they could be with other Church members.

“You will like America, Nils,” Mama said, “and when we get there, we will get you a new bed.”

The ship to America was crowded with other Swedish and Danish members of the Church. Nils slept on top of two giant water barrels. He was afraid that when the ship rocked back and forth he would roll off! He could hardly wait to see land and sleep in a bed that held still.

But Nils’s first bed in America *didn’t* hold still. After leaving the ship, they got on a train. Nils fell asleep

listening to the clacking of the wheels. When they got off the train at a place called Council Bluffs, they loaded their belongings in wagons pulled by oxen. Nils had thought the ship was crowded, but this was worse!

“No room for mattresses or pillows,” shouted the man in charge. “Pack only your clothes and blankets!”

“No pillow, no mattress, and no bed,” Nils sighed.

His family shared a wagon with a widow and a newly married couple. Every night Nils and his family slept on the ground, and day after dusty day they walked until they made it to Salt Lake City. Once there, they shared a house with another family.

The family’s first home of their own in the valley was a little room dug from a hillside, with a dirt floor. They slept in blankets that could be rolled up during the day. They longed for a more permanent home.

Finally Papa found them some land for a place of their own. Once again, they packed everything into their wagon and rode to Huntsville, Utah. The valley there was green and full of tall grass, and the hillsides were covered with trees. Their second home was a rough cabin with a leaky willow-branch roof and corn-husk mattresses on the floor.

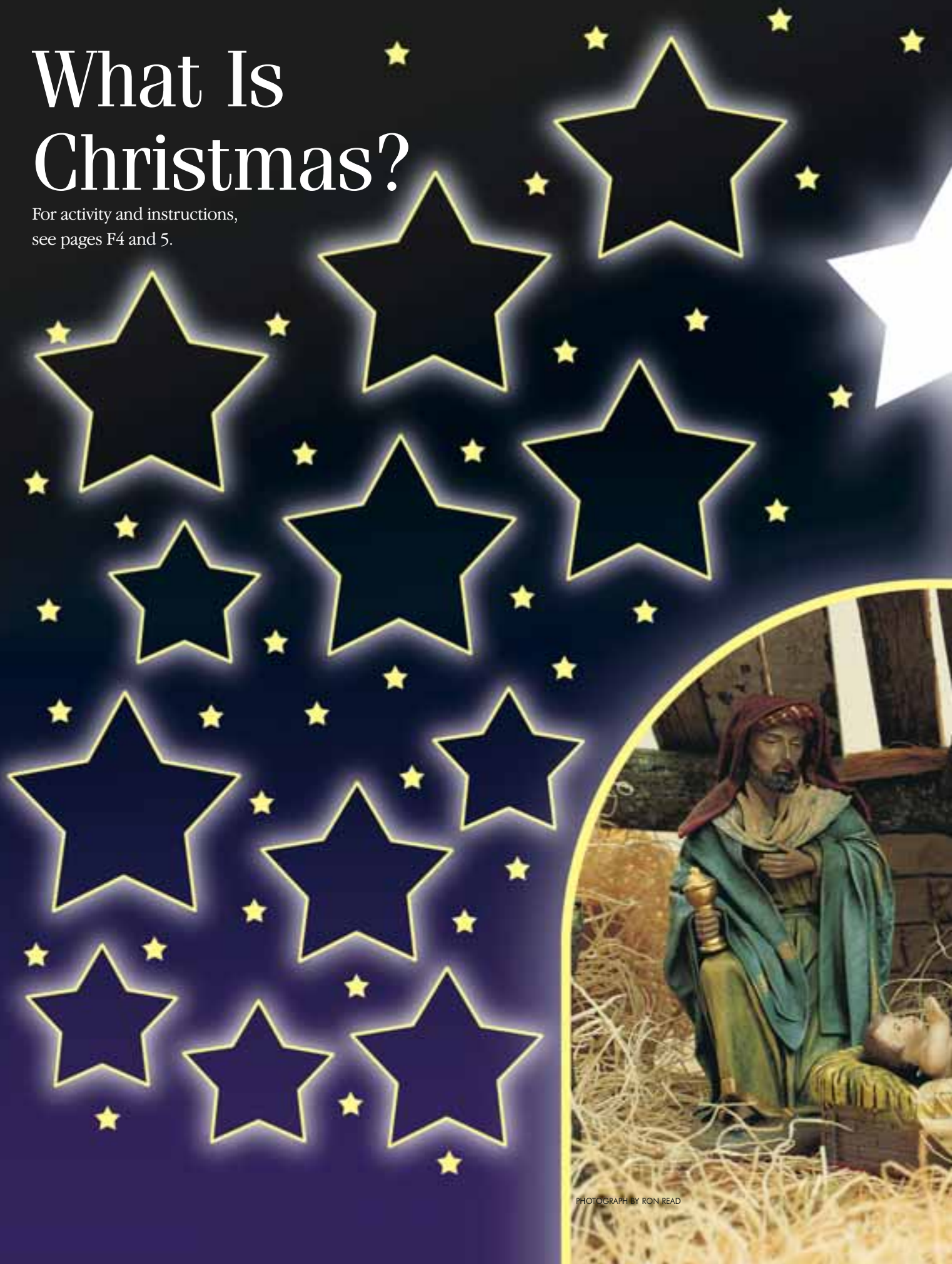
Finally, on Christmas Day, they moved into a real log home with a wood floor, pine shingles on the roof, and real beds! Four and a half years after leaving Sweden, Nils snuggled under his quilt in his own new bed. It creaked a little when he moved, reminding him of the night his old bed broke. How much had changed! Nils smiled. Maybe someday he would grow up to be a missionary in Sweden too. But if he did, he would watch out for little beds! ●

Years later, Nils P. Lofgren did return to Sweden as a missionary.



What Is Christmas?

For activity and instructions,
see pages F4 and 5.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RON READ

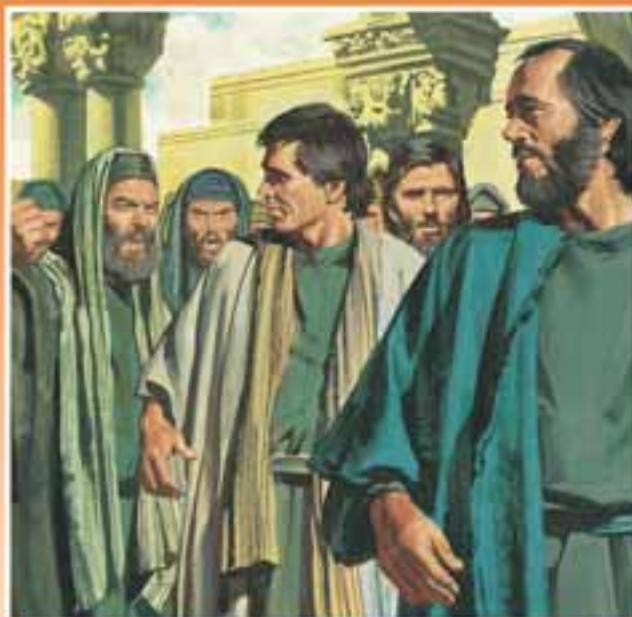


PAUL FINISHES HIS MISSION



Roman soldiers took Paul away from the Jewish people but let him talk to them first. He told them that he was a missionary teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. He had seen a light from heaven and had heard the Savior's voice.

Acts 21:31–40; 22:1–21



ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL MANN

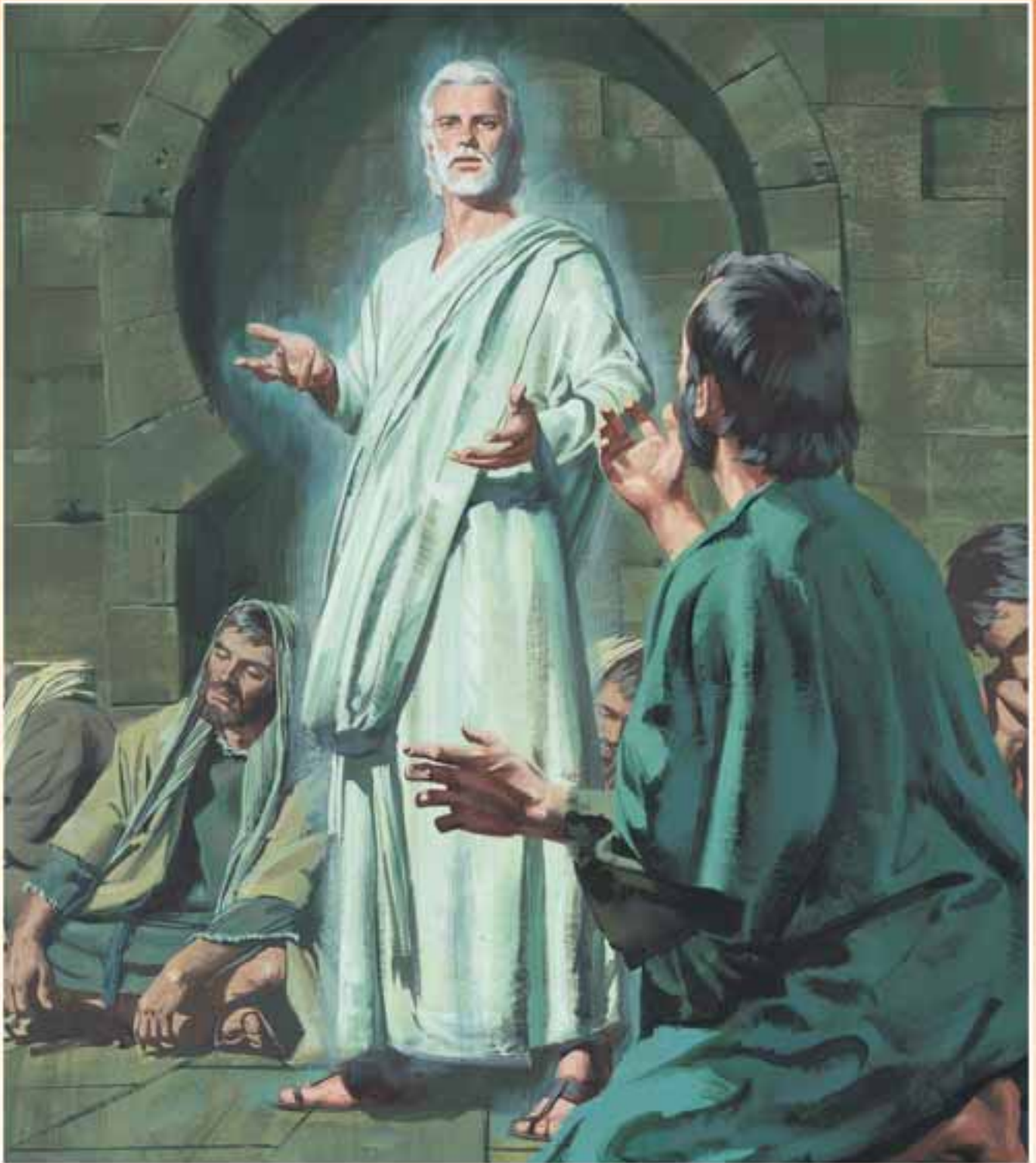
When Paul went to the temple in Jerusalem, he took with him some people who were not Jews. This made the Jewish people angry. They took him out of the temple and beat him.

Acts 21:26–32



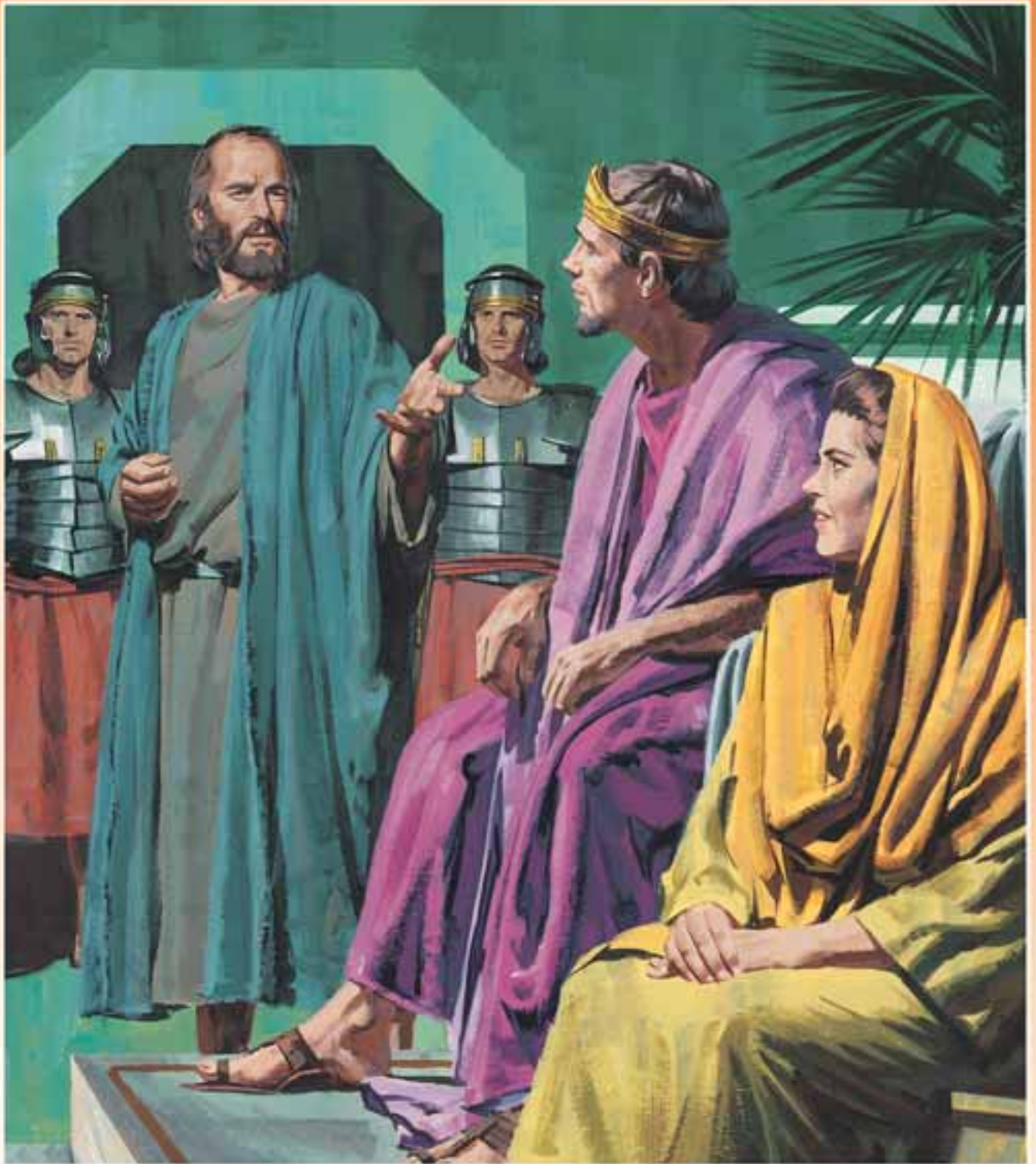
The people did not believe him. They shouted at him and wanted to kill him. The soldiers put Paul in prison for the night.

Acts 22:22–30; 23:1–10



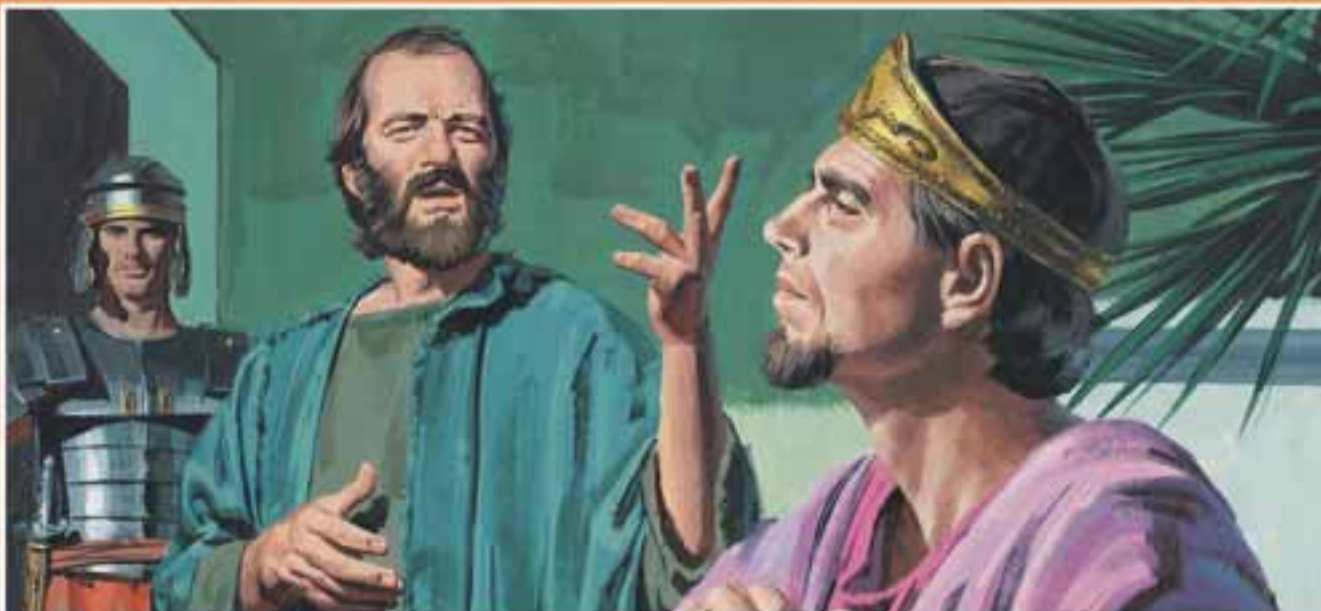
That night, the Savior visited Paul and told him not to be afraid. Jesus said that Paul would go to Rome and teach the gospel there.

Acts 23:11



Some of the people wanted the Romans to kill Paul, so the Romans sent him to their king, Agrippa. When King Agrippa asked what Paul had done, Paul said that he had been a Pharisee and had hated the people who believed in Jesus. He had even put them into prison. Then he had seen a light from heaven and heard the Savior's voice. Now he believed in Jesus.

Acts 23:12–35; 25:13–23; 26:1–15



Paul told King Agrippa that the gospel was true, that Jesus was resurrected, and that He had told Paul to teach His gospel. Because he obeyed Jesus Christ and taught about Him, many of the people hated Paul.

Acts 26:16–26



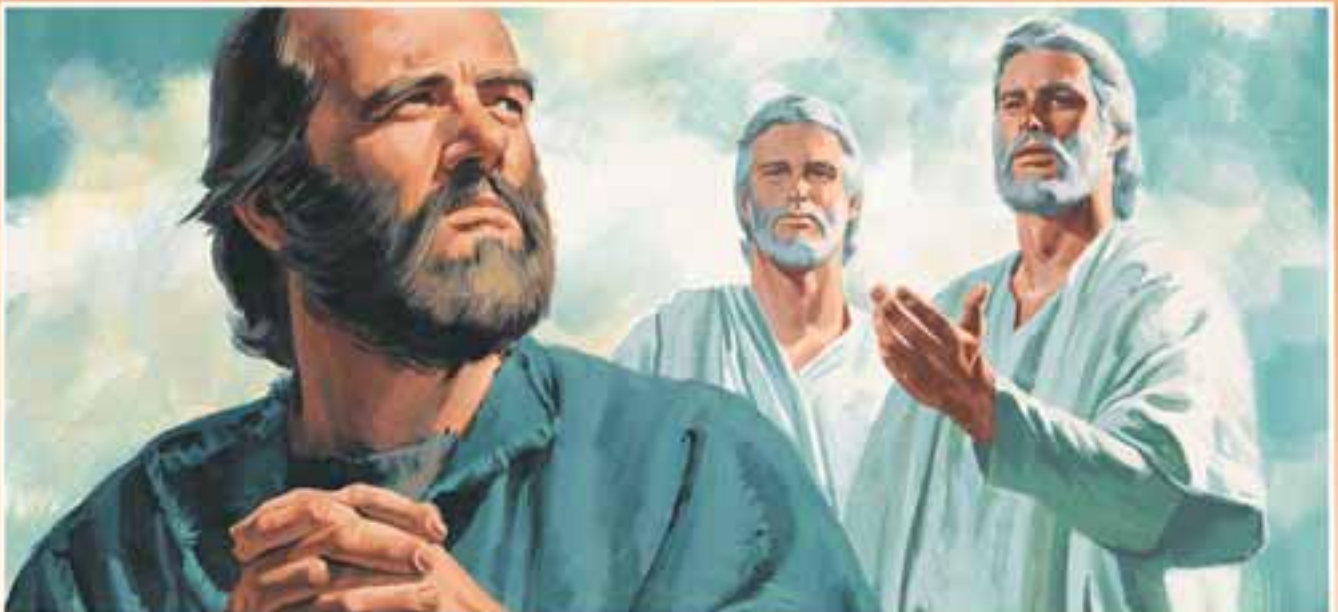
King Agrippa said that he almost believed in Jesus because of what Paul said. The king did not think Paul should be killed. He sent Paul to Rome.

Acts 26:27–32; 27:1–2



Paul was in prison in Rome for two years. Many people came to see him and be taught the gospel. He wrote letters to the Saints in other lands. Many of these letters are called epistles in the New Testament.

Acts 28:16-31



Paul knew that he would be killed, but he was not afraid. He had obeyed God's commandments; he had taught the gospel; he had finished his mission. He knew that Heavenly Father loved him and that after he died, he would live with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Being a Witness for God

BY ELDER HENRY B. EYRING
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Every member has made the covenant in the waters of baptism to be a witness for God. Every member has made a covenant to do works of kindness as the Savior would do.

The power of that covenant to love and to witness should transform [change for the better] what members do across the world.

Thousands of times every day members of the Church are watched by people curious to know something about our lives. Because we are under covenant to be a witness, we will try to tell them how the gospel has brought us happiness. What they think of what we say may depend largely on how much they sense we care for them.

I can make two promises to those who offer the gospel to others. The first is that even those who reject it will someday thank us. More than once I have asked missionaries



to visit friends far from where I lived, learned that the missionaries had been rejected, and then received a letter from my friend with words like this: "I was honored that you would offer to me something that I knew meant so much to you." My second

promise is that as you offer the gospel to others it will go down more deeply into your own heart. It becomes the well of water springing up into eternal life for us as we offer it to others.

Each of us who has made covenants with God faces challenges unique to us. But each of us shares some common assurances [promises]. Our Heavenly Father knows us and our circumstances and even what faces us in the future. His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, has suffered and paid for our sins and those of all the people we will ever meet. ●

From an October 1996 general conference address.

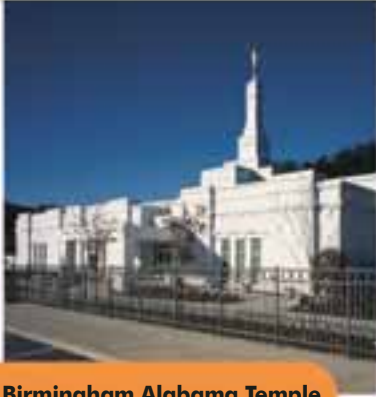


Did you know that when Elder Henry B. Eyring was growing up, his branch held Church meetings in a hotel? Later the meetings were held in his house. He and his brothers were the only members of the Church in their schools. During this time, he learned about standing as a witness for God. He teaches us about being a witness.



Temple Cards

In 2003 each issue of *The Friend* contained Temple Cards. Remove the Temple Cards from the magazine, glue them to heavy paper, and cut them out. Collect the cards to remind you of the importance of temples.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDAL CROW

Birmingham Alabama Temple

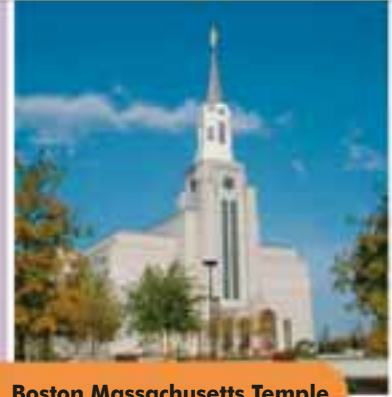
Dedicated on 3 September 2000
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID NIN

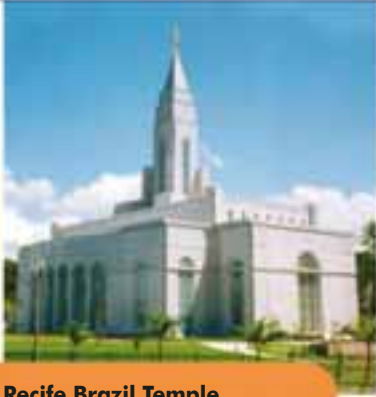
Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple

Dedicated on 17 September 2000
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



Boston Massachusetts Temple

Dedicated on 1 October 2000
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



Recife Brazil Temple

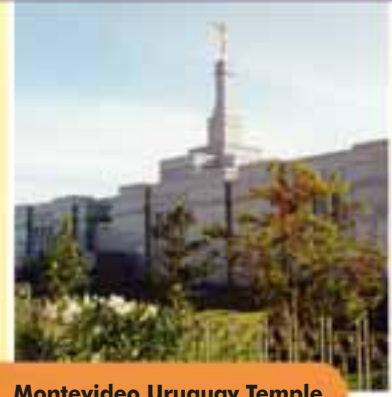
Dedicated on 15 December 2000
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCO ANDRAS

Porto Alegre Brazil Temple

Dedicated on 17 December 2000
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



Montevideo Uruguay Temple

Dedicated on 18 March 2001
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



PHOTOGRAPH BY MADINE LARSON

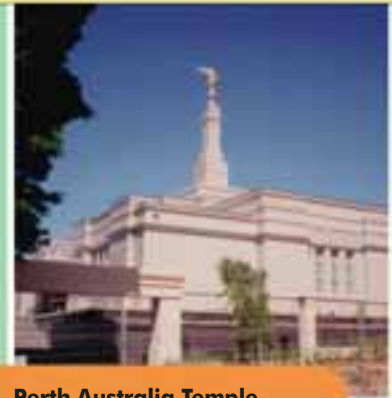
Winter Quarters Nebraska Temple

Dedicated on 22 April 2001
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



Guadalajara México Temple

Dedicated on 29 April 2001
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



Perth Australia Temple

Dedicated on 20 May 2001
by President Gordon B. Hinckley



Building the Kirtland Temple, by Walter Rane

In late 1832 and early 1833 the Lord told the Saints to “establish . . . a house of God” (D&C 88:119). In June 1833, the Lord said: “It is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it” (D&C 95:11).



W*ith the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment, a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, the promised Messiah—even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” See President Thomas S. Monson, “The Gifts of Christmas,” p. 2.*