

Liahona



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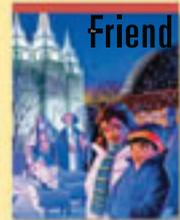
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THE FRIEND COVER
Illustration by
Jim Madsen.



See if you can find
the Norwegian CTR
ring hidden in this
issue. Choose the
right page!



Comment

The Fruits of My Labors

I was so pleased to see a group of young men and young women in front of the Roman Forum on page 32 of the September 2008 *Liahona*. I served a mission in Italy in 1971. While proselytizing in Rome, my companion and I taught two wonderful children, Alberto and Massimo De Feo, who were later baptized. Imagine my delight to see in that article Denise De Feo and to learn that she is the daughter of Massimo, who is now president of the Rome Italy Stake. I also learned that Alberto is a branch president in Canada. I am grateful to the Lord for the experiences

of my mission and for being able to see the fruits of His gospel.

Oscar Blanc, Argentina

Joy to My Soul

During times of sadness, I often turn to the *Liahona* to read the messages from the prophet and the apostles. Their words bring comfort and joy to my soul. Thank you for this magazine! It helps me feel the love of my Heavenly Father and my Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Maria Elsy Waltero Orjuela, Colombia

Please send your feedback or suggestions to liahona@ldschurch.org. Letters that are printed may be edited for length or clarity.



Home for Christmas

BY PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING
 First Counselor in the First Presidency

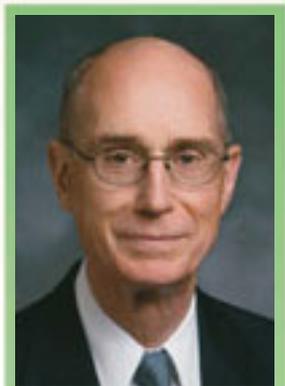
There was a song I heard first when I was a little boy—a song about Christmas and home. Those were days of war when many people were away from their homes and family—a dark time for those who feared that they might not be reunited with loved ones in this life. I remember my feelings for home and family when I walked by one house on the way to school at Christmastime and saw a little flag with a gold star on it hung in the window. It was the home of a girl I knew in school. Her brother, not much older than I, had been killed in the war. I knew his parents and felt some of what they did. On the way home after school, I would feel grateful anticipation for the glad welcome I knew awaited me.

When I turned on the radio in our living room during the Christmas season, I would hear words and music that still echo in my

mind. A few lines of that song touched my heart with a yearning to be with family. I was living with my parents and my brothers in a happy home, so I knew somehow that the yearning I felt was for more than to be in a house or in the family life I then enjoyed. It was about some future place and life, even better than I knew or had yet imagined.

The line of the song that I remember best is “I’ll be home for Christmas / If only in my dreams.”¹ The house in which I decorated Christmas trees with my mother and father in those happy days of my childhood still stands, largely unchanged. A few years ago I went back and knocked on the door. Strangers answered. They allowed me to step into the rooms where the radio had been and where our family had gathered around the Christmas tree.

I realized then that the desire of my heart was not about being in a house. It was about being with my family, and it was a desire to



Because of the Savior, you may have an assurance that you can go home not only at Christmastime but also to live forever with a family whom you love and who love each other.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE BUNDESON; THE NATIVITY, © GENAIDEGALERIE, DRESDEN, GERMANY/A.K.G. BERLIN/SUPERSTOCK; PHOTOGRAPH OF HOLLY BY LANA LEISHMAN



feel enveloped in the love and the Light of Christ, even more than our little family had felt in the home of my childhood.

Longing for Eternal Love

What all of us long for in our hearts, at Christmastime and always, is to feel bound together in love with the sweet assurance that it can last forever. This is the promise of eternal life, which God has called His greatest gift to His children (see D&C 14:7). That is made possible by the gifts to us of His Beloved Son: the Savior's birth, Atonement, and Resurrection. It is through the Savior's life and mission that we have the assurance that we can be together in love and live forever in families.

The feeling of longing for home is born into us. That wonderful dream cannot become real without great faith—enough for the Holy Ghost to lead us to repentance, baptism, and the making and keeping of sacred covenants with God. This faith requires enduring bravely the trials of mortal life. Then, in the next life, we can be welcomed by our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son to that home of our dreams.

Even in this life we can have an assurance of the coming of that day and feel some of the joys we will know when at last we arrive home. The celebration of the Savior's birth at Christmas gives us special opportunities to experience those joys in this life.

Finding the Promised Joy

Many of us have lost loved ones to death. We may be surrounded by individuals who seek to destroy our faith in the gospel and the Lord's promises of eternal life. Some of us are troubled with illness and with poverty. Others may have contention in the family or no family at all. Yet we can invite the Light of Christ to shine on us and let us see and feel some of the promised joys that lie before us.

For instance, as we gather in that heavenly home, we will be surrounded by those who have been forgiven of all sin and who have forgiven each other. We can taste some of that joy now, especially as we remember and celebrate the Savior's gifts to us. He came into the world to be the Lamb of God, to pay the price of all of the sins of His Father's children in mortality so that all might be forgiven. In the Christmas season we feel a greater desire to remember and ponder the Savior's words. He warned us that we cannot be forgiven unless we forgive others (see Matthew 6:14–15). That is often hard to do, so you will need to pray for help. This help to forgive will come most often when you are allowed to see that you have given as much or more hurt than you have received.

When you act on that answer to your prayer for strength to forgive, you will feel a burden lifted from your shoulders. Carrying a grudge is a heavy burden. As you forgive, you will feel the joy of being forgiven. At this Christmastime you can give and receive the gift of forgiveness. The feeling of happiness that will come will be a glimpse of what we can feel at home together in the eternal home for which we yearn.

Feeling the Joy of Giving

There is another glimpse of that joyful future home that we can see more easily at Christmastime. It is the feeling of giving with a generous heart. This can come as we feel the

needs of others more than our own and when we sense how generous God has been to us.

It helps to see the kindness of others at Christmastime. How many times have you gone to leave a gift on a doorstep, hoping not to be noticed, only to find more than one unmarked gift already there? Have you felt, as I have, the impression to help someone only to find that what you were inspired to give was exactly what someone needed at that very moment? That is a wonderful assurance that God knows all of our needs and counts on us to fill the needs of others around us.

God sends those messages to us with more confidence at Christmastime, knowing that we will respond because our hearts are more sensitive to the Savior's example and to the words of His servants. At Christmastime, we are more likely to have read recently and been touched by the words of King Benjamin. He taught his people, and he teaches us, that the overwhelming gift of forgiveness that we receive should make us feel an overflowing generosity toward others:

“And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.

“And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.

“And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.

“I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world” (Mosiah 4:20–23).

You have already felt the joy of giving alms and receiving them. That joy in this life is a glimpse of what we will feel in the life to come if we are generous here out of faith in God. The Savior is our great exemplar. At the Christmas season we contemplate anew who He is and what generosity He extended to us by coming into the world to be our Savior.

As the Son of God, born to Mary, He had the power to resist all temptation to sin. He lived a perfect life so that He could be the infinite sacrifice, the unblemished Lamb promised from the foundation of the world (see Revelation 13:8). He suffered the agony of the guilt of our sins and all the sins of the children of Heavenly Father that we might be forgiven and go home clean.

He gave us that gift at a price we cannot fathom. It was a gift He did not need for Himself; He was without the need for forgiveness. The joy and gratitude we feel for His gift now will be magnified and will last forever as we honor and worship Him in our heavenly home.

The Christmas season gives us encouragement to remember Him and His infinite generosity. Remembering

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We remember at Christmastime not only the light that announced the birth of Christ into the world but also the light that comes from Him. Many witnesses have confirmed that light.



His generosity will help us feel and respond to the inspiration that there is someone who needs our help, and it will let us see the hand of God reaching to us when He sends someone to succor us, as He so often does. There is joy in giving and in receiving the generosity that God inspires, especially at Christmas.

Blessed with His Light

There is another glimpse of heaven that becomes easier to see at Christmastime. It is of light. Heavenly Father used light to announce the birth of His Son, our Savior (see Matthew 2; 3 Nephi 1). A new star was visible in both the Eastern and the Western Hemispheres. It led the Wise Men to the child in Bethlehem. Even wicked King Herod recognized the sign; he feared it because he was wicked. The Wise Men rejoiced because of the birth of the Christ, who is the Light and the Life of the World. Three days of light without darkness was the sign God gave to the descendants of Lehi, heralding the birth of His Son.

We remember at Christmastime not only the light that announced the birth of Christ into the world but also the light that comes

from Him. Many witnesses have confirmed that light. Paul testified that he saw it on the road to Damascus:

“I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

“And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul,

why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

“And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 26:13–15).

The boy Joseph Smith testified that he saw a marvelous light in a grove of trees in Palmyra, New York, at the beginning of the Restoration:

“Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

Such light will be visible in our heavenly home. It will bring us joy then. Yet even in this life you have been blessed with a part of that wonderful experience, through the Light of Christ. Every person born into the

world receives that light as a gift (see Moroni 7:16). Think of the times you have had an experience that makes you a witness that the Light of Christ is real and precious. You will recognize from this wonderfully assuring scripture that you have been guided by that light:

“And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

“That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

“And . . . I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you” (D&C 50:23–25).

In a world that is being darkened by evil images and dishonest messages, you have been blessed to recognize more easily the flashes of light and truth. You have learned for yourself that light grows brighter as you receive it gladly. It will become brighter and brighter until the perfect day when we will be in the presence of the Source of the light.

That light is easier to discern at Christmastime, when we are more likely to pray to know what God would have us do and more likely to read in the scriptures and so more apt to be on the Lord’s errand. When we forgive and feel forgiveness, when we are lifting the hands that hang down (see D&C 81:5), we are being lifted ourselves as we move toward the Source of the light.

You remember that the Book of Mormon describes a glorious time when the Savior’s faithful disciples reflected His light for others to see (see 3 Nephi 19:24–25). We use lights to celebrate the Christmas season. Our worship of the Savior and our service for Him brings light into our lives and into the lives of those around us.

We can with confidence set a goal to make this Christmas brighter than the last and each year that follows brighter still. The trials of mortality may increase in intensity, yet for us, darkness need not increase if we focus our eyes more singly on the light that streams down on us as we follow the Master. He will lead us and help us along the path that leads upward to the home for which we yearn.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

As you prepare to teach from this message, be sure to seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost to help you tailor your approach to the needs of those you teach. You might consider ideas such as these:

1. When you read the material under the heading “Longing for Eternal Love,” do you feel within yourself the longing for your eternal home? Discuss together what you are doing to prepare to return to that home.
2. Does the material under “Finding the Promised Joy” help you see how you can find joy in this life? Discuss what we can do to find joy now, day to day.
3. Under the heading “Feeling the Joy of Giving,” we learn of the Savior’s unmatched gifts that can allow us to have eternal life. Discuss what we could give to help others receive this gift as well.
4. How does President Eyring’s message help us see what we may do to be more open to the light offered by the Savior and to share it with our families and others?

There have been times, often at Christmas, when we have felt parts of what we will experience when we at last come home to the Father who loves us and answers our prayers and to the Savior who has lighted our lives and lifted us up.

I testify that because of Him, you may have an assurance that you can go home not only at Christmastime but also to live forever with a family whom you love and who love each other. ■

NOTE

1. James “Kim” Gannon, “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” (1943).



UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

“FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN,
UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN: AND
THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON
HIS SHOULDER: AND HIS NAME
SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL,
COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD,
THE EVERLASTING FATHER,
THE PRINCE OF PEACE”
(ISAIAH 9:6).

*The ancient prophet
Isaiah foretold the coming
of the Messiah and revealed
much about His roles.*

Several centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah recorded the things revealed to him regarding the circumstances of Christ's coming. One such prophecy, found in Isaiah 9:6, gives us in just a few words a wealth of knowledge about the Savior and the roles He plays in our lives and in Heavenly Father's plan. Here are some explanations of the ideas expressed in this verse.

A Child Is Born, a Son Is Given

The Savior was revealed to Adam, the first man, as the Only Begotten Son of God (see Moses 5:7, 9; 6:52, 57, 59, 62). Since then all the holy prophets have testified of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh to redeem His people (see Acts 10:43; Jacob 4:4).





What does Christ's birth signify?

The angel who announced the Savior's birth to the shepherds declared "good tidings of **great joy**, which shall be **to all people**" (Luke 2:10).

When Nephi saw a vision of the virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus, he was moved to affirm "the **love of God**, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22).

The Savior Himself declared that "God so **loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

Government upon His Shoulder

In ancient Israel, the priests and kings were clothed with a robe and wore the insignia of their office on the shoulder (see Isaiah 22:21–22). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came "as one having authority" (Matthew 7:29). And He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords during the Millennium, when "he reigns whose right it is to reign" (D&C 58:22; see also Articles of Faith 1:10).

Wonderful Counsellor

The word *wonderful* comes from the Hebrew word for "miracle," suggesting both the Messiah's miraculous birth and the miracles He would perform during His life. The word *counsellor* has to do with the commandments and teachings the Messiah would bring to guide us back to Heavenly Father. As the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob said, "[The Lord] counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works" (Jacob 4:10).

The Mighty God

"Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the greatest [figure] of time and eternity. Believe that his matchless life reached back before the world was formed. Believe that he was the Creator of the earth on which we live. Believe that he was Jehovah of the Old Testament, that he was the Messiah of the New Testament, that he died and was resurrected, . . . and that he lives, the living Son of the living God, our Savior and our Redeemer."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Be Not Faithless," *Tambuli*, Apr. 1990, 4; *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 2.

The Everlasting Father

"Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called 'the Father,' and even 'the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth' (see . . . Mosiah 16:15). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called 'The Everlasting Father' (Isa. 9:6; compare 2 Ne. 19:6). . . . Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth . . . ; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth."

"The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 13; from *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, 934–42.

The Prince of Peace

"Perhaps we stray from the path which leads to peace and find it necessary to pause, to ponder, and to reflect on the teachings of the Prince of Peace and determine to incorporate them in our thoughts and actions and to live a higher law, walk a more elevated road, and be a better disciple of Christ."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Peace," *Liahona and Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 3.

"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" (John 14:27). ■



A Gift of Love

She didn't like it when we sang. So why were we standing at her door on Christmas Eve ready to share a gift of music?

BY CHASTMIER OKORO

After the collapse of my father's catering business, my family faced a serious financial situation. I remember my mother coming home with tears in her eyes, not wanting to tell us what was wrong even after I asked her what the problem was. Soon we had to move into a small one-room apartment because that was what we could afford.

Before then, the Christmas season had always been a time of intense cooking, new clothes, parties, visits to interesting places, and gifts to be shared and received. My mum had a knack for being, as we called her, "Mother Christmas." She loved to give, and each Christmas she would enthusiastically and lovingly share with those around her. As we got older, thinking of others more than we thought of ourselves became a trait that we also tried to develop.

But that year we did not know what to do. Mum became concerned because it would be our first Christmas outside of our own home. She worried because there was nothing she could think of to share with others. However, we encouraged her because we knew that we could, in our own small way, do something to spread the spirit of Christmas.

Still, we were barely getting by, and we were also struggling to keep the peace in our new surroundings. Our landlady was not a Christian, and she was upset with us because we would wake up early to have family prayer and sing hymns. Our singing would awaken her because our room adjoined her room. Often she complained, so

we tried to sing softly and not disturb her. When she saw that we weren't going to stop having our morning family prayers, her complaints gradually ceased.

Then a thought occurred to my dad. He felt that we should sing Christmas carols to our landlady as our Christmas gift to her. Everyone was thrilled with the idea—except for me. I strongly objected, reminding my family of the complaints she had made over our family prayers. I suggested that we sing for someone who would appreciate it and not for her.

But my dad insisted, explaining that it would be an avenue for us to show her that we were her friends despite belonging to different religions. I had no choice but to join my family in choosing and practicing carols to sing for her.

On Christmas Eve we stood at her door and knocked. She did not open the door, and I was about to get angry and remind my dad of our wasted effort. But as I looked around, I saw that all the members of my family were smiling—they were happy about what we were doing. I felt a desire within me to experience that same feeling.

Eventually the landlady opened her door, and for a moment she did not know what to do. My dad quietly told her that we would love to sing for her and that, if it was all right, we would love to come inside her apartment. She stepped aside, and we went in. We sang all the Christmas songs we could remember—both the ones we had rehearsed and ones we had not. Soon there was a wonderful feeling in the room. Although we knew that she might not understand the meaning of the words, she smiled as we sang. She also told us that she had been feeling lonely and seeing us together made her long for her own family. Before leaving, we wished her a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. She thanked us, and we went back to our room.

ILLUSTRATION BY DILLEEN MARSH



As I was trying to fall asleep that night, I pondered on what had happened. It occurred to me that a real Christmas gift is not necessarily store bought or even homemade; it is actually the attitude and the desire we have to do what we can to make our fellow human beings happy. I realized that the greatest gift we can give at Christmastime doesn't require a lot of money; instead, it is a gift of love.

That night I knew that my family had felt the spirit of Christmas by offering a small service to a lonely neighbor. ■



The Wise Men are a prominent part of a traditional nativity scene, but what do we really know about them?

BY WENDY KENNEY

Have you ever looked closely at a nativity display and wondered about the three elaborately dressed men delivering gifts to the infant Jesus? We know, of course, that they represent the three Wise Men, but just who were they? Why were they visiting Jesus, and why were they bringing Him such unusual gifts?

The scriptural account of the Savior's birth actually reveals little about the Wise Men (see Matthew 2). But because their visit was so significant, scholars throughout the centuries have attempted to discover information about their background and purpose in visiting the Christ child. Though some details have emerged through scholarly investigation, much of what the Christian world has traditionally believed about the Wise Men may be based more on myth and speculation than on history.

This is what we know:

How Many Wise Men?

Tradition holds that there were three men who visited the Christ child, a belief that comes from the fact that there were three gifts given: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Presumably, each man brought one gift. Some scholars, however, believe there could have been many more Wise Men, perhaps as many as 12.¹ The Bible Dictionary indicates that since the Wise Men were essentially witnesses of the Savior's birth, there would have been at least two or three (see Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; D&C 6:28).²

The belief that the Wise Men were kings comes from passages in the Old Testament that foretell of kings visiting the Lord. Isaiah 49:7 says, "Kings shall see and arise," and Isaiah 60:10 records, "Their kings shall minister unto thee." (See also Psalm 72:10.)

Scholars have found other records that refer to the Wise Men as kings. The 13th-century writings of Marco Polo contain a report from the town of Saba in

“WE THREE KINGS”



Persia about three kings who took gold, frankincense, and myrrh with them on a journey to visit a newborn prophet. According to Marco Polo's record, the men were named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, the names usually associated with the Wise Men today.³

Origin of the Term *Wise Men*

The term *Wise Men*, as used in the King James Version of the Bible, is translated from the Greek word *magoi*. *Magoi*, usually rendered as *magi* in English, is actually Persian in origin and refers to priests in Persia's ancient religion. Given this use of the word *magi*, some scholars think the Wise Men were likely priests in a Persian religious sect. However, Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated in his

Doctrinal New Testament Commentary: “To suppose they were members of the apostate religious cult of the *Magi* of ancient Media and Persia is probably false. Rather, it would appear they were true prophets, righteous persons like Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds, to whom Deity revealed that the promised Messiah had been born among men.”⁴

Of the Orient?

Were the Wise Men from the Orient, as the Christmas carol “We Three Kings of Orient Are” claims?⁵ The author of the song likely used the term *Orient* to replace the common word *east* used in Matthew's account. Anything east of Palestine was somewhat exotically referred to as the Orient. Matthew's use of the generic locality “the east” could simply indicate that no one knew for sure where the Wise Men came from.⁶

Some scholars cite Psalm 72:10 as evidence that the men were from regions in present-day Spain, Ethiopia, and Saudi



Arabia: “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.” Others believe the Wise Men were from Persia (modern-day Iran) and may have been Jewish, since there were many people of Jewish descent living in that region at the time.⁷

When Did the Wise Men Visit Jesus?

Artistic renderings of the Nativity typically depict the Wise Men worshipping a *newborn*, as if their visit occurred shortly after the Savior’s birth. The scriptures, however, reveal that the Wise Men were not present at Jesus’s birth in the stable or anytime during His infancy.

The Wise Men actually visited the *child* Jesus with His mother, Mary. “When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and . . . presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).

The Wise Men’s Gifts

Why did the Wise Men bring Jesus such rare gifts? Most scholars agree that the gifts were symbolic. The gold symbolized Jesus’s kingship, frankincense His divinity, and myrrh His suffering and death, since myrrh was a substance used to perfume dead bodies before burial.⁸

Warned of God

When Herod directed the Wise Men to Bethlehem, he told them, “When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also” (Matthew 2:8). However, according to Matthew’s account, the Wise Men were “warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod,” so, after visiting the Christ child, the Wise Men bypassed Herod and “departed into their own country another way” (Matthew 2:12). Herod was furious, not only because the Wise Men had ignored his order but also because there was apparently now a child residing in Bethlehem who would one day rule the nation.

On the Lord’s Errand

The Bible Dictionary effectively summarizes our beliefs about the Wise Men: “They were righteous men sent on an errand to witness the presence of the Son of God on the earth. . . . It seems likely that they were representatives of a branch of the Lord’s people somewhere from east of Palestine, who had come, led by the Spirit, to behold the Son of God, and who returned

to their people to bear witness that the King Immanuel had indeed been born in the flesh.”⁹ ■

NOTES

1. See John A. Tvedtnes, “What Do We Know about the Wise Men?” *Insights: An Ancient Window* (newsletter of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS]), Dec. 1998.
2. See Bible Dictionary, “Magi,” 728.
3. See John A. Tvedtnes, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25–26.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (1966–73), 1:103.
5. John Henry Hopkins Jr., “We Three Kings of Orient Are” (1857).
6. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (1977), 168.
7. See John A. Tvedtnes, *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25.
8. See John A. Tvedtnes, *Ensign*, Oct. 1981, 25.
9. Bible Dictionary, “Magi,” 727–28.



GIFTS OF THE HEART

“When we find him, will we be prepared as were the wise men of old to provide gifts from our many treasures? They presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These are not the gifts Jesus asks of us. From the treasure of our hearts Jesus asks that we give of

ourselves: ‘Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind’ (D&C 64:34).”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Search for Jesus,” *Tambuli*, June 1991, 5–6; *Ensign*, Dec. 1990, 5.

With Love from

My Sisters



"We are fine," I assured my visiting teachers. Still, their service that Christmas made all the difference.

BY MARINA PETROVA

The closer Christmas got, the heavier my heart became. In November, neither my husband nor I had regular work. I paid for rent, electricity, and the telephone out of my decreased earnings, and my husband paid the car payment from his diminished wages. The remaining money was barely enough to get us by. December brought more work and a return to normal, but we wouldn't be paid until January.

Under these circumstances, even a holiday dinner was out of the question.

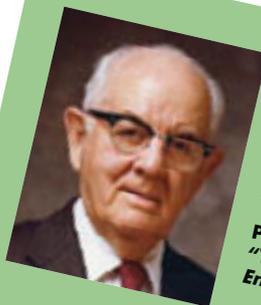
"Everything will be all right," I told myself. That summer my husband had picked a lot of raspberries, and we had made jam. We would have pancakes and jam and would make our own gifts. But when our three daughters (ages 6, 8, and 14) began happily decorating with garlands they had made, all the while talking about what their parents might give them for Christmas, I was sick at heart.

One evening my visiting teachers came by for an unexpected visit. I have no brothers and sisters of my own, so the Relief Society sisters in my

branch—particularly my visiting teachers—have truly become my sisters. That night they shared an interesting lesson, then began to visit about the upcoming holiday. I assured them that everything was fine but said that it would be a rather "poor" Christmas for us. They assured me that they would be praying for our family.

One day when my husband came to pick me up from work, he said that everyone at home was impatiently awaiting my arrival. A sister from our branch had dropped off some boxes. When we opened them, they contained all the delicacies of the season: fruit, cookies, candy, other groceries, decorations, and lovingly wrapped gifts. My eyes filled with tears of gratitude. And that wasn't the end. The family of one of my visiting teachers surprised us on Christmas morning with a box of gifts.

In the end our "poor" Christmas was a particularly joyful one. Our home was filled with not only the spirit of Christmas but also the warmth and love of my visiting teachers and other members of our branch. I came to understand that the Lord truly does meet our needs most often through other people—particularly those He has assigned and inspired to watch over and care for us. ■



"God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom."

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985),
"The Abundant Life," Tambuli, June 1979, 3;
Ensign, July 1978, 2.

ILLUSTRATION BY GREGG THORKEISON



BY ELDER NEIL L. ANDERSEN
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The calling of a stake president is a sacred and spiritual experience. Under the direction of the First Presidency, General Authorities and Area Seventies are charged with this responsibility. During the 16 years I have served as a General Authority, I have extended calls in many cultures and continents—from North America to South America, from Europe to Asia.

In each experience, I have treasured two teachings I received in my first few weeks as a General Authority. From President Thomas S. Monson: “When you are on the Lord’s errand, you are entitled to the Lord’s help.” From President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “You will have experiences in your ministry when you put a question to the Lord through the veil

The Spiritual Gifts



I have met hundreds of stake presidents. They are men of accomplishment and integrity. They are full of faith, with an uncompromising desire to please the Lord.

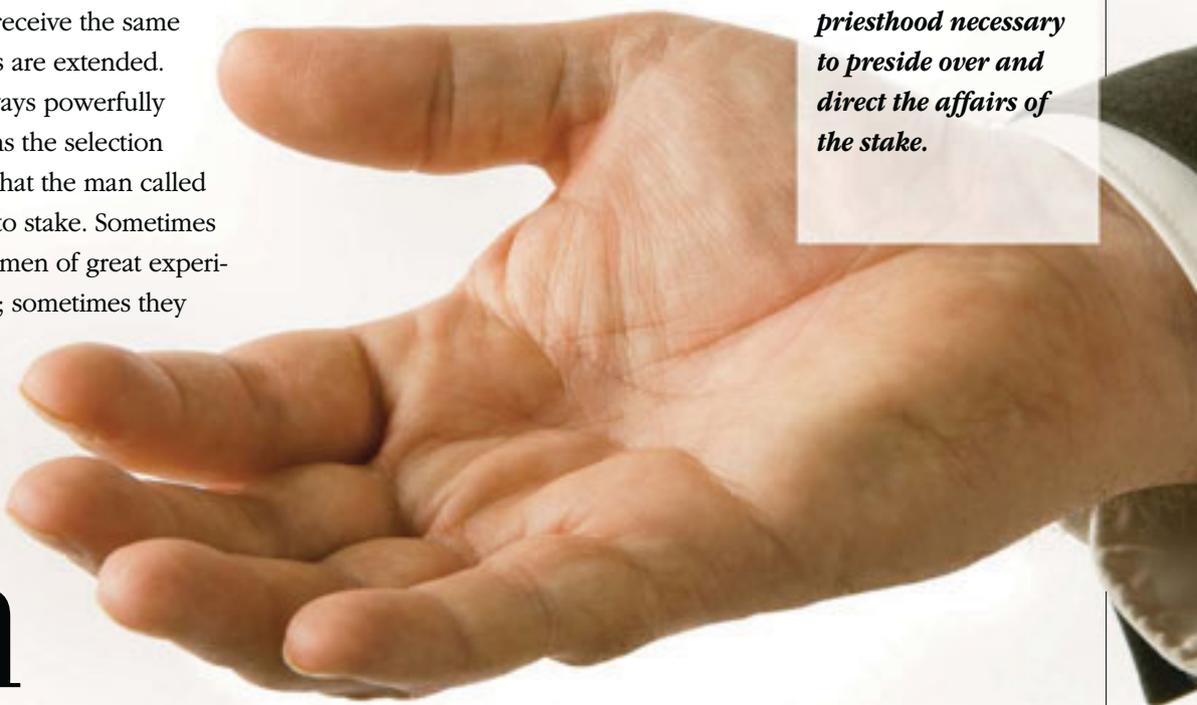


and receive an immediate response.” In every case these two promises have been realized.

The experience of calling a stake president is always the same, and it is always different. It is the *same* in that the two General Authorities or Area Seventies who are sent feel an overwhelming dependence upon the Lord, and each must receive the same inspiration before callings are extended. The Spirit of the Lord always powerfully accompanies and confirms the selection process. It is *different* in that the man called varies greatly from stake to stake. Sometimes new stake presidents are men of great experience and years of service; sometimes they are younger and full of faith; their occupations follow no pattern.

positions. As we met with a Gospel Doctrine teacher at 10:00 p.m., the Lord powerfully confirmed this was His selection. Only after extending the call did we learn that he had been at his home, awaiting our phone call. Several months earlier, before any announcement of a change in the stake presidency,

We who are sent place our hands on the head of the new stake president and bestow upon him the keys of the priesthood necessary to preside over and direct the affairs of the stake.



Given the Stake President

The Bestowal of the Keys

While a stake president is normally found among the current leadership of the stake, there are exceptions. On one occasion we interviewed brethren into the late evening, unable to feel the confirming Spirit among the outstanding men we were meeting. Finally, after exhausting the prepared list of those to interview, we turned to respected men not currently serving in leadership

he and his wife were awakened in the night knowing that the calling would come to him.

Those who serve as stake presidents do not seek the office they hold. All are humbled and some are overwhelmed when they are called. As I called a stake president in Europe who had been a member of the Church only about 10 years, he gasped, “Oh no, no, not me. I cannot do it.” Fortunately, his wonderful wife, who was at his side, put her arms

around him and said, “Honey, you can do it. I know you can.” She was right, and he served very well.

In the Philippines, a man who had seen the Church grow quickly with very young leadership, responded when called, “Oh no, not me. I am too old.” When it was pointed out that some members of the Twelve were three decades older than he, he accepted and served very well.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16), said the Savior. We neither seek nor refuse the calls that come to us.

Sometime, either before, during, or after the call, the Lord confirms to the man being called that his call is of God. One young stake president reported his confirmation this way:

“When I was interviewed, I was 32 years old and had served about four years as bishop. One of those conducting the interviews asked two poignant questions: (1) How did you gain your testimony? and (2) Would you share with us your testimony of the Savior? I shared my experience as a teenager, shortly after my mother passed away, when I learned for myself the truthfulness of the restored gospel, specifically with regard to the Book of Mormon.

“As I shared my testimony of the Savior, I received a witness that I would be called as the next stake president. I drove home and told my wife about my experience. When I told her that I thought I could be called as the next stake president, she responded, ‘You’re good, but you’re not that good.’ The phone rang two hours later, and I was invited to return with my wife, and the call was extended.”

Following the sustaining vote in a general session of stake conference, we who are sent place our hands on the head of the new stake president and bestow upon him the keys of the priesthood necessary to preside over and direct the affairs of the stake. These keys to preside over the stake come by delegation from the President of the Church and the other 14 Apostles who hold all the keys upon the earth. Within these keys are spiritual authority and power.

The Lord has always given keys to His chosen Apostles. Unto Peter He declared, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou

shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). Some of these keys are then shared with local leaders. In Zarahemla, Alma “ordained priests and elders, by laying on his hands according to the order of God, to preside and watch over the church” (Alma 6:1).

Outward Manifestation of the Keys

Interestingly, there was a time when obtaining a temple recommend required the signature of the President of the Church. Now this authority is held in the keys delegated to the stake president. With his counselors, he also recommends bishops to the First Presidency and ordains them once they are approved; he approves those to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood; he recommends and sets apart full-time missionaries; and he serves as a judge in Israel in helping those with serious sins to gain full forgiveness. He guides the workings and decisions of the stake’s bishops and branch presidents.

In these capacities, the Lord pours out revelation upon His stake presidents. A stake president living in the southern United States shared the following experience with me:

“In October 2007, a sister came to visit with me to obtain her temple recommend. During the interview, I asked her if her husband was going to visit with me for his recommend after she finished her interview. She told me that her husband had not been to the temple in over 20 years and that they had never been sealed in the temple in their 40 years of marriage. I felt a strong prompting to visit with this brother immediately. So strong was the prompting that I left my office, found him on the other side of the building, and brought him back to my office for an interview. After an interview, during which time we were joined by his bishop, he was given a temple recommend. This was a very emotional experience for all of us, especially his wife. I received an invitation later that week to attend their sealing in the temple.

“In early 2008, about four months after this couple was sealed, this brother got up in the morning to go to work and collapsed and died in their home. I am forever grateful that I listened to the promptings of the Spirit and encouraged this brother to do what he so needed to do in his life.”



The stake president approves those to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, interviews members for temple recommends, and serves as a judge in Israel.

Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Promises

The Lord has declared that a stake is to be “for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm” (D&C 115:6). A stake president is the Lord’s shepherd who must help ensure that the spirit of safety and spiritual security are felt within the fellowship of the Church. He must carefully assure that the doctrine taught is true and pure. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) once said:

“The duties of a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood might be applied to the president of the stake. He ‘is to watch over the [entire stake], and be with and strengthen [the members],



“And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

“And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty’ (D&C 20:53–55).”¹

His work includes inspiration in how to strengthen families, fortify the rising generation, invite more of Heavenly Father’s children into the cleansing waters of



A stake president is the Lord's shepherd who must help ensure that the spirit of safety and spiritual security are felt within the fellowship of the Church.

baptism, reach out to those who have drifted from the Church, and bring the ordinances of the temple to living members and to those who have come before us.

In all of these important responsibilities, the Lord blesses the stake president with an enhancement of spiritual gifts. In the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord speaks of the many spiritual gifts and declares:

“For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

“To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:11–12).

The Lord then adds, “Unto such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church . . . are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts . . . that there may be

a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:27, 29).

At times these gifts are associated with spiritual promises the Lord will fulfill. A former stake president from Brazil shared with me this experience:

“A faithful single mother with four teenage children was struggling economically. I asked her, ‘Sister, are your children attending seminary regularly?’ She replied, ‘I have many challenges and live far away from the chapel. It is dangerous.’ At that moment, I felt a strong prompting to counsel and promise her. I said, ‘If you don’t have the money, you need to walk the kilometers with them. Go with them; sit in class with them. If you will do that, you will save your children, and all will marry in the temple.’ I was startled by what I had said but could not deny the powerful inspiration.

“She accepted the counsel and for many years walked with her children to seminary. Her promise has now been fulfilled. All are

married in the temple, and her son is serving as bishop in his ward.”

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts given a stake president is a deeper and expanding love for the people he has been called to serve. When I was called as a stake president, I found myself awed by the powerful sense of concern and love I felt for those of the stake. Even for those involved in serious sin, I felt a great sense of empathy and desire to help. These feelings of love are always combined with the desire to help members become truly converted to the Savior and His restored gospel. I had served many years as a counselor, but when I had the keys of presidency, the feelings were more potent and motivating. I felt that perhaps I was receiving in part the gift of charity spoken of by Mormon when he admonished, “Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48).

These feelings bring a stake president to reach out, and miracles follow. A stake president from South America recounted an example of how this love moved him to seek after one who was lost:

“I had a strong impression that I needed to try to find a brother who had served many years before as my missionary companion. He was married and less active in the Church. His membership record was in a small unit 150 kilometers [93 miles] from the stake center. I traveled there and spoke with the branch president, who told me that my former missionary companion was living far out in the country. The president gave me directions to the small village. After a while the asphalt road turned into a dirt road. After many more kilometers, I realized I was lost. I stopped the car and was about to give up. It was a very hot day, and the car had no air conditioner. The dust from the road was difficult for my wife and children. I knelt on the road and asked for help from the Lord.

“Some hours later, we arrived in the small village and found my missionary companion. I invited him to come back. He became active in the Church and served in many leadership positions. His son served an honorable mission,

and today my friend and former companion is a counselor in the bishopric.”

There is power in the office. The Lord stands with His stake presidents. This is from a stake president in Ecuador: “I observed a man in the stake who often appeared unhappy. One day I received a strong impression that I needed to visit this man. I drove immediately to his home. He told me that he was very sad because for many years he hadn’t exchanged a single word with his father. He explained that his father was a hard man and had cut off their relationship. I asked him if he would like to fix the situation. After driving to his father’s house, I stopped the car in front. I knocked on the door and heard a voice ask, ‘Who is it?’ I recognized the voice of his father and answered, ‘Your stake president, Brother.’ He opened the door and saw me standing side by side with his son. Without a single word, they embraced each other and began to cry. The situation was fixed.”

In the world there are more than 2,800 stake presidents. In many ways, they are ordinary people—like you and me. They are working on their salvation just as we are working on ours. Yet they have received an extraordinary calling. Hands have been placed on their heads, and they have received priesthood keys.

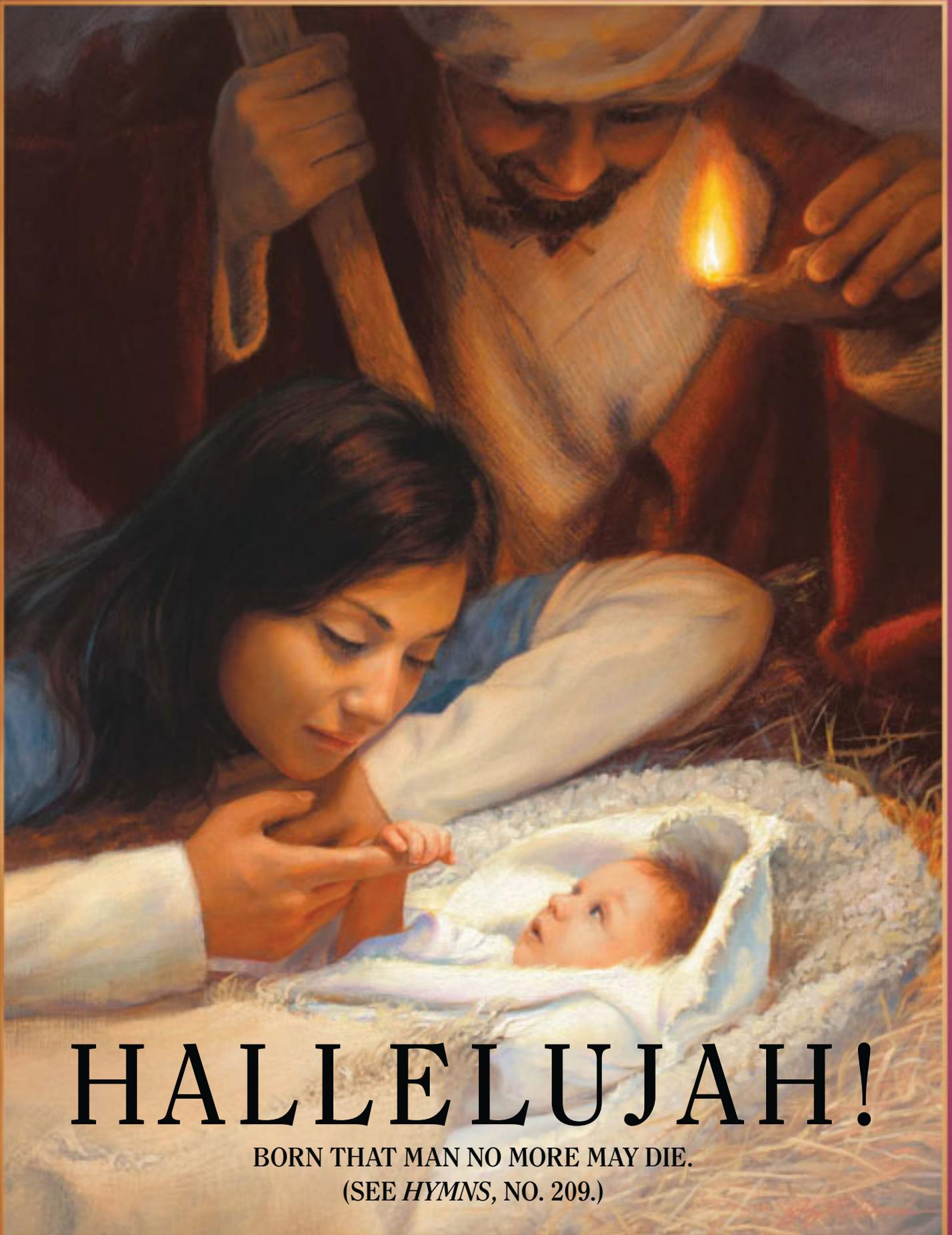
I have met hundreds of stake presidents. They are men of accomplishment and integrity in their personal and professional lives. They are full of faith, with an uncompromising desire to please the Lord.

I have stayed in their homes, knelt with them in prayer, and heard their sincere supplications to Heavenly Father. I have felt the power of the Lord upon them. The Lord loves them and bestows upon them spiritual gifts.

Let each of us pray for our stake president. Let us stand by his side and help him. Let us listen to him and trust him. “And Israel shall be saved . . . ; and by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all” (D&C 35:25). ■

NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Stake President,” *Liahona*, July 2000, 61; *Ensign*, May 2000, 51.



HALLELUJAH!

BORN THAT MAN NO MORE MAY DIE.
(SEE *HYMNS*, NO. 209.)

Nurture through Compassionate Service



Teach these scriptures and quotations or, if needed, another principle that will bless the sisters you visit. Bear testimony of the doctrine. Invite those you visit to share what they have felt and learned.

How Can I Develop and Increase in Compassion?

Moroni 7:48: “Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency: “Disciples of Christ throughout all ages of the world have been distinguished by their compassion. . . . In the end, the number of prayers we say may contribute to our happiness, but the number of prayers we answer may be of even greater importance. Let us open our eyes

and see the heavy hearts, notice the loneliness and despair; let us feel the silent prayers of others around us, and let us be an instrument in the hands of the Lord to answer those prayers” (“Happiness, Your Heritage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 119, 120).

Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “We need to rescue ‘all that is finest down deep inside of [us]’ so that as daughters of God we can do our part to build the kingdom of God. We will have help to do this. As Joseph declared, ‘If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates.’

“Let us bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, comfort those who stand in need of comfort, and thus keep the covenants we have made [see Mosiah 18:8–10]” (“Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 116).

How Can I Nurture through Compassionate Service?

D&C 81:5: “Succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The Good Shepherd said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ (John 21:15.) So a woman feeds her loved ones, providing succor and

sustenance just as the Savior would do. Her divine gift is to nurture, to help the young, to care for the poor, to lift the brokenhearted.

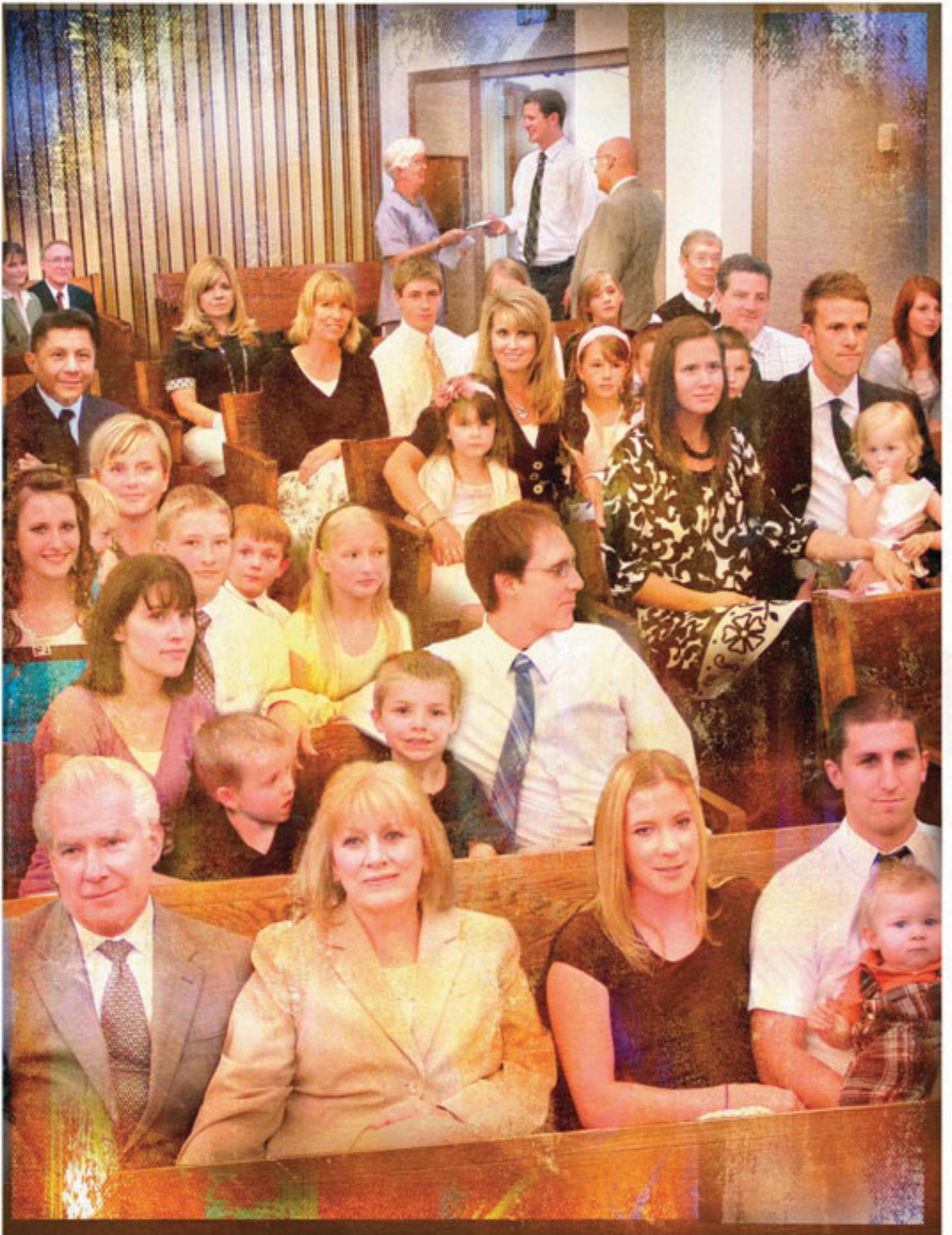
“The Lord said, ‘My work and my glory [is] to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.’ (Moses 1:39.) So His devoted daughter-disciple may truly say, ‘My work and my glory is to help my loved ones reach that heavenly goal.’

“To help another human being reach one’s celestial potential is part of the divine mission of woman. As mother, teacher, or nurturing saint, she molds living clay to the shape of her hopes. In partnership with God, her divine mission is to help spirits live and souls be lifted. This is the measure of her creation. It is ennobling, edifying, and exalting” (“Woman—Of Infinite Worth,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 22).

Silvia H. Allred, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “The Lord has blessed women with divine attributes of love, compassion, kindness, and charity. Through our monthly visits as visiting teachers, we have the power to bless each sister as we extend our arms of love and kindness and give the gifts of compassion and charity. . . . It is my prayer that we will pledge an increased commitment to extend our arms of love and compassion to bless, help, and strengthen each other as we go about doing our visiting teaching with a willing and joyful heart” (“Feed My Sheep,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 113, 115). ■



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW REIER; BACKGROUND © ARTBEATS



Worship through REVERENCE

BY ELDER ROBERT C. OAKS

Served as a Member of the Seventy
from 2000 to 2009

The counsel of President David O. McKay (1873–1970) puts the topic of reverence in clear perspective: “Reverence is profound respect mingled with love.”¹ This perspective is further enriched by the words of a song from the *Children’s Songbook*:

*Rev’rence is more than just quietly sitting:
It’s thinking of Father above,
A feeling I get when I think of his blessings.
I’m rev’rent, for rev’rence is love.*²

The core words most often found in scriptures associated with reverence are *respect*, *love*, and *honor*. Using these standards, we can see that reverence reflects activity of the heart, not just inactivity of the mouth.

Reverence is an integral part of worship. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has instructed:

“Worship often includes actions, but true worship always involves a particular attitude of mind.

“The attitude of worship evokes the deepest feelings of allegiance, adoration, and awe. Worship combines love and reverence in a state of devotion that draws our spirits closer to God.”³

Certainly the prime purpose for entering a place of worship is to be drawn closer to God.

As we study the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and gain an appreciation of the remarkable impact—both mortal and eternal—of His Atonement on our lives, we naturally experience the emotional responses of respect, love, and honor. Gospel obedience and Christian service then flow as appropriate expressions of these emotions. But without reverence, the expressions of respect, love, and honor are incomplete.

As we develop reverence for Jesus Christ, we are better able to pattern our lives after His perfect example. There are many facets to such reverence: faith that He lives, trust in His promised blessings, and obedience to gospel standards. But one of the most important facets is the feeling of our heart—the



Reverence includes much more than the absence of noise. Heartfelt reverence includes listening, thinking on the things of God, and feeling respect, love, and honor toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity. We who respect, love, and honor the Lord will never take His name in vain and will be uncomfortable with demeaning or trivializing jokes about Him. Rather, we praise and revere



(see verses 14, 15, 21, 22, 34). Truly, the wages of reverence are great!

Much of what we say in the Church about reverence usually focuses on being quiet in places of worship, with special emphasis on children being quiet. Certainly, quiet is a key part of reverence, but the full, rich meaning of the concept of reverence includes much more than the absence of noise and commotion. Quiet does not necessarily equal reverence.

A *n important facet of reverence is the feeling of our heart—the respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity.*

our Heavenly Father and Him whom we worship as our Lord and our Savior.

The Lord gives clear direction regarding His expectation for reverence in Leviticus 19:30, where He states, “Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” The respect we show for His temples and chapels is a reflection of the reverence for Him we feel in our hearts. Our degree of respect, love, and honor for the Lord is directly reflected in our reverence, as shown by our attitudes as well as by our decorum.

Blessings of Reverence

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided an interesting insight into reverence in his prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836. Joseph prayed that the repentant might return and “be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house” (D&C 109:21). The Prophet’s prayer highlights what these blessings of reverence might be: words of wisdom, a fulness of the Holy Ghost, favor in the sight of the Lord, the power of God, and forgiveness

Our chapels are first and foremost houses of worship where we should be able to sit quietly during prelude music and meditate on the beauty of the restored gospel, prepare our hearts and minds for the sacrament, and ponder the majesty of our Heavenly Father and the splendor of the Savior’s Atonement. Where better to consider such sacred and weighty matters? These manifestations of our worship will naturally be accompanied by an attitude of reverence.

Such worship opportunities are fundamental to the strengthening of our faith and can provide a conduit whereby the spirit of testimony and revelation can flow into our souls. This reality was dramatically demonstrated to me one Sabbath day as I sat during the prelude music for sacrament meeting. My wife and I had been seeking spiritual instruction on a particular question in our lives. Thankfully, the answer came through the particular prelude hymn selected. In response to the sweet melody, the Spirit clearly indicated the appropriate course for us. Unfortunately, before the hymn had ended, someone sitting near me leaned over and started talking to me, and

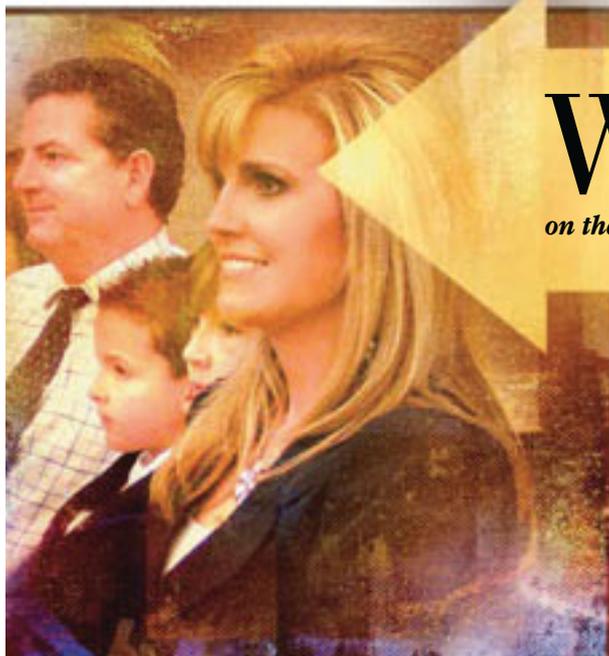
the Spirit immediately left. A treasure of sweet revelation was cut short by a lack of reverence.

From this experience I gained a special appreciation for the sanctity of a quiet prelude moment. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, highlighted this truth when he stated, “Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit.”⁴

Measures of Reverence

The measures of reverence are not complicated. Rather than letting our minds wander to the mundane things of the world, we should school our thoughts in places and times of reverence to think on the things of God: the majesty of the Atonement, eternal families, the Restoration of the gospel in its fulness. These measures of reverence would include schooling our behavior to reflect the attitudes of respect, love, and honor. They would include dressing modestly in our nicest clothes, avoiding the ultra-casual fashions of the day, and avoiding loud talking and disruptive behavior in the Church building. And when in the chapel, we should seek to take “quiet” down another level, especially during the administration of the sacrament.

A desire for reverent behavior would prompt us to plan ahead if we anticipate the need to leave the meeting for any reason and to sit in the rear near an exit so we can leave quietly. Leaving in the middle of a service, especially during a talk or other presentation, is distracting to the speaker and to those sitting near you. Out of respect



We should school our thoughts in places and times of reverence to think on the things of God.

for others as well as for the Lord, we should avoid such untimely movements.

Often we equate the reverence of a congregation with the behavior of the children present. True, young children can provide a special challenge to reverence. But the

first rule with respect to children is to bring them! They can be taught, they can be taken out, and they can be brought back into the meeting. And in the teaching it is better to minimize the number of training tools that are brought to church, such as toys and food. Latter-day Saint congregations are generally blessed with large numbers of children and youth, and we should be thankful for this. They are the future of the Church.

Heartfelt reverence is an important part of our worship of our Heavenly Father and of the Lord. In all of the activities and thoughts of our lives each day, may we avoid that which reflects a lack of reverence toward Them. In all of our worship activities, may we seek to expand and enrich our feelings of respect, love, and honor toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. These feelings are tokens of a true Christian character. ■

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 86.
2. “Reverence Is Love,” *Children’s Songbook*, 31.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (1988), 125.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.

Why Me?

BY ELIZABETH QUIGLEY

Why me? Why now? I had just gotten back from competing in a major horse show held in California and was at the height of my hunter-jumper equestrian riding abilities. I was busy with school, piano lessons, and Beehives. I was doing everything I had been taught to do, and I thought that my life was about as perfect as life can ever get. Then it changed.

The Trial

I was now in a hospital bed, too sick to even open my eyes. I had been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. My illness came just four years after my mom died from a similar cancer. I was on heavy chemotherapy to get rid of the cancer, and the doctors were saying that I would have to undergo chemotherapy for two and a half years to make sure that all the cancer was gone. I couldn't understand why me and why now.

I soon learned that being diagnosed with cancer was not the only challenge I would face. One of the drugs used to treat leukemia is a steroid given at extremely high doses. It is very effective at killing the leukemia cells, but there is a small risk that it can result in avascular necrosis (a condition in which bones die near the joints), particularly in teenage girls. My doctors thought that, at 12 years old, I was too young for that to happen. However, within one month of my starting chemotherapy, the steroids ended up destroying most of my major joints and parts of my spine. I was living in constant pain. Four months after I

was diagnosed with leukemia, I had my first hip surgery to begin trying to repair the damage done by the steroids and to lessen the pain. The surgery did not go as well as I had hoped, and my orthopedic surgeon told me that I would probably never ride a horse again. All of a sudden, the future I had planned was gone.

I was a good student, and I really enjoyed school. Now I couldn't go to school or even out in public because the chemotherapy had destroyed my immune system. Instead, I stayed home with my stepmother. At this point I thought things were pretty bad, but they got worse.

Six months after my hip surgery, I had to have another hip surgery because the first one hadn't worked. I was in a wheelchair because it hurt too much to walk. I was absolutely sure that I wasn't going to ride horses again, and now I was worried if I would even be able to walk again. Living life sick, in constant pain, and confined to a wheelchair didn't sound like a lot of fun to me.

The Prayers

I was praying to my Heavenly Father, and I know many other people were praying for me also. Through all of my trials, I prayed that I would be healed, that my joints would recover, and that I wouldn't have to go through the rest of chemotherapy. I felt that my prayers weren't being answered because I still had to go to Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City every week for more chemotherapy. I still hurt. And I was still stuck in a wheelchair. At one point, I

A young woman with long, wavy brown hair and a headband is shown from the waist up. She is wearing a blue dress with a white and green floral pattern. Her arms are crossed, and she has a serious, contemplative expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

**Adversity
taught me not
to worry about
this question—
or about
anything that
doesn't really
matter.**

started to think that my parents were crazy for believing in a God who wouldn't even listen to a poor little sick girl.

Years before, I had gone through a similar trial of my faith when I prayed for my mom to get better. She was on oxygen all the time and was too weak to even walk around the house. I prayed and hoped and prayed some more that she would miraculously be healed. However, she wasn't. After she died, I learned that we can pray for what we want all that we want to, but we need to pray for the right things—praying that the Lord's will be done—to have our prayers answered.

Remembering this lesson, I changed my prayers from "Please heal me" to "Heavenly Father, I would really like to be done with these trials, but I will accept Thy will." As soon as I changed my prayers, I found that I was able to handle the chemotherapy more easily, and I had a better attitude. That was just the beginning of the blessings and the answers to my prayers and questions.

My dad and grandfather gave me many priesthood blessings.

Whenever I had to go in for surgery, I would ask for a blessing. The blessings

helped me and my family feel calm about the procedure. One time I had a high fever, and we had to go to the hospital. I received a blessing from my dad and a neighbor before we left. By the time we pulled up at the emergency room door, my fever was gone, and I didn't have to stay the night in the hospital. I know that priesthood power is a gift from a loving Heavenly Father.

The Lessons

One moment that will always stand out in my mind was the day I came home from the hospital after I was diagnosed with leukemia. The young women and Relief Society sisters had moved my stuff from the basement into a room on the main floor so I would be closer to my parents and wouldn't have to use the stairs. They had cleaned and decorated the room to make a great place for me to live while I was sick. My family was the recipient of many other service projects. In the beginning, it was hard for me to accept service. When people would do service for me, it would make me feel like I couldn't do anything for myself. However, I soon learned that it was OK to ask for help. When I started





Elizabeth played the oboe in the general Young Women meeting in March of this year

(which can be viewed at www.generalconference.lds.org).

feeling better, I began looking for opportunities to serve other people more. Now I try to serve as much as I can. I get a good feeling when I serve other people. I have come to realize that by letting other people serve me, I allow them the same good feelings.

I have learned to think more about the future and my choices because I was so close to death. At school, I heard girls complaining about how they were having a “bad hair day.” As I was sitting there in my hot pink wheelchair with a wig on my head, I would think, “Well at least you *have* hair!” Girls would also complain about their feet hurting from walking around in high heels. I would think to myself, “At least you *can* walk.” Now I try to focus more on the big picture instead of the small things I used to worry about.

Over the past few years I have learned many other things through the blessings of having leukemia and



GUIDED THROUGH THE STORMS OF LIFE

“Sometimes the Lord allows us to have trials to shape us into productive servants.

... His all-seeing eye is over us and ever watching us as our Eternal Heavenly Parent. When trials come, as surely they will to all of us during mortality, let us not sink into the abyss of self-pity but remember who is at the helm, that He is there to guide us through all the storms of life.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Be Not Afraid,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 5.

the complications from chemotherapy. I have become closer to my Heavenly Father. My testimony has grown. And I have learned what is truly important. I have learned to appreciate all of the small things that people do for me. I am now in remission, in less pain, and gradually getting back some of the use of my joints. As I continue to heal, the blessings and learning experiences keep coming.

So why me? Why now? I don’t ask those questions anymore because I grew spiritually during my trials. I have discovered who I really am because the Lord loved me enough to let me experience adversity and the blessings that can come with it. ■

Note: Elizabeth is in remission and recently passed her third anniversary of being off chemotherapy. Her joints are healing, and she is no longer in a wheelchair. While there is still a risk for a relapse, Elizabeth doesn’t think about it. Instead, as a freshman in college, she is focused on studying for tests and practicing the oboe and English horn.

“My parents aren’t members of the Church. How can I share the gospel with them without offending them?”

Remember the commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12). While respecting their wishes, try to bring the gospel into your home. For example, you could ask your parents to help you with Personal Progress or Duty to God so they will see what good programs the Church has. You could invite Church friends to your home and talk to them about the gospel. This could help your parents ask about your beliefs. Most important, tell your parents how grateful you are for them and for the gospel.

When you feel the time is right, prayerfully invite your parents—without pressuring them—to pray with you, to attend church or a Church activity, or to have family home evening, for instance. If they don’t want to, respect that. If they aren’t ready for the gospel now, they could be in the future. Pray and hope for that day.

Always look for the good in your parents. Loving them will keep the door of opportunity open. Try to live the gospel as well as you can. Your parents might become more interested as they see your good example and how the gospel blesses you.

Use *Liahona* Posters



Before I was baptized in 2006, I had been participating in another church that my family belonged to. Initially I was afraid to talk about the Church to my family because I feared rejection. But when I began to place the Posters from the *Liahona* in a few places in our house, family members began to ask, “What is this picture about? What does it mean?” These questions made it easier to talk about what the Church offers to families. Through this means, my youngest sister was baptized, and now, while I’m on my mission, my father and mother write me saying how they love going to church.

Elder Almeida, 20, Brazil São Paulo East Mission

Live the Gospel

Let your parents know by the way you live how important the Church is to you and the wonderful difference it has made in your life. To help you do that, you should follow the counsel of the General Authorities, including living the gospel. Be consistent with your own prayers, scripture reading, attending church, keeping the commandments, living the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, working to achieve goals, and following the Holy Ghost. You can also pray and fast for your parents and ask for the Spirit to guide you. In addition, I believe that you should express your love for them.

Andrew B., 14, Nevada, USA

Difficult but Not Impossible



I would pray and ask God that, when I talk to my parents, He would put the correct words in my mouth so that I won't offend them. I would also ask for His Spirit so they can feel my sincerity and my love. I would share a scripture from the Bible that supports the Book of Mormon. I would share my experiences and feelings too. I would say that the gospel, the love of God, and prayer bring us closer to the spiritual peace we all want to have. The work of the Lord is difficult but not impossible. Trust in the Spirit.

Jonathan E., 19, Veracruz, Mexico

Explain How You Feel



If you're scared of sharing the gospel, start by telling them how you feel when you pray and read the scriptures. Explain that you have a testimony, and explain why you like the gospel. Once you put it in perspective, they can understand and won't be offended.

Madison N., 14, Illinois, USA

Speak with Love

My father is not a member, and this has sometimes been difficult, but there are a few things I have learned. First, when I talk to him with love and not condescendingly, it is difficult for him to reject what I am saying. My dad can feel that love, although we don't always agree. Second, the gospel is simple. It is not ours to sugar-coat or change. State simple truths. Finally, remember we are called to be witnesses of Christ.

Paige I., 19, Utah, USA

A Change of Heart

You can set a positive example to your parents by following Church standards and keeping all the commandments, especially the Word of Wisdom, and by showing love and obedience through your actions. This may turn their attention toward your behavior and help them come into the Lord's Church. I strongly believe that through your personal prayers, you can ask Heavenly Father to change their hearts.

Sharmila S., 18, Karnataka, India

Be an Example



Paul taught us in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Showing a good example opens the gate for the conversion of your parents. It will create the right climate and opportunity to bear testimony of the gospel. Having faith, not fearing, and being an example could help change their minds and bless their lives and yours.

Elder Tonumaiepa, 20, Philippines Cauayan Mission

NEXT QUESTION

"I have a hard time motivating myself to read the scriptures. How can I find the motivation?"

Send your answer by January 15, 2010, to:

**Liahona, Questions & Answers
1/10**

**50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024,
USA**

Or e-mail: liahona@ldschurch.org

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

Please include the following information and permission in your e-mail or letter:

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

WARD (OR BRANCH)

STAKE (OR DISTRICT)

I grant permission to print response and photo:

SIGNATURE

PARENT'S SIGNATURE (IF YOU ARE UNDER 18)



IN THE LORD'S WAY AND TIME

"Our actions must be directed by the Lord. It is His work, not ours, and it must be done in His way and on His timing, not ours. Otherwise, our efforts may be fated to frustration and failure.

"All of us have family members or friends who need the gospel but are not now interested. To be effective, our efforts with them must be directed by the Lord so that we act in the way and at the time when they will be most receptive."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sharing the Gospel," Liahona, Jan. 2002, 8; Ensign, Nov. 2001, 8.



No one needs to sail alone in today's troubled employment waters. In addition to local Church leaders, specialists like these at the Mexico City Employment Resource Center can provide valuable guidance.



The Blessing of Work

BY BISHOP H. DAVID BURTON
Presiding Bishop

Those who have spent time on or around the ocean know how changeable it is. Waves, tides, currents, and winds are constantly shifting and interacting. Successful sailors and fishers learn to ride the waves and tides and to use the winds and currents in order to safely go where they need to go.

The world is also changeable, and the rate of change seems to be accelerating. Part of the great ebb and flow of our variable world occurs in the changing employment market. Fortunately, just as sailors use acquired skills, charts, and other aids to navigate successfully, there are resources and learnable skills that can help us navigate changing employment conditions. Those who are skilled not only at working but at finding work can best navigate these changing times.

A Commandment and a Blessing

Today, many have forgotten the value of work. Some falsely believe that the highest goal in life is to achieve a condition in which one no longer needs to work. President David O. McKay (1873–1970) was fond of saying, “Let us realize that the privilege to work is a gift, that power to work is a blessing, that love of work is success.”¹

Work is not a matter of economic need alone; it is a spiritual necessity. Our Father in

Heaven works to bring about our salvation and exaltation (see Moses 1:39). And, beginning with Adam, He has commanded us to work. Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam was instructed to “dress [till] it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). After the Fall, Adam was told, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). As with any other commandment, there is joy in its keeping. To work—honestly and productively—brings contentment and a sense of self-worth. Having done all we can to be self-reliant, to provide for our own needs and those of our family, we can turn to the Lord in confidence to ask for what we might yet lack.

Gifts, Talents, Interests

Heavenly Father has given us all talents and gifts that can help us provide for ourselves and our families. Learning to recognize our talents and gifts—and interests—is an important first step in career preparation. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, learned from his father, Henry Eyring, to choose a career that complemented his interests.

Because of his love for science, Professor Henry Eyring encouraged his sons to major in physics as preparation for a career in science. While President Eyring was studying physics at the University of Utah, he had an exchange with his father that changed his career direction. He asked his father for help



Work is not a matter of economic need alone; it is a spiritual necessity. In these stormy economic times, surely the commandment to work is among the commandments the Lord is prepared to help us keep.

with a complex mathematical problem. “My father was at a blackboard we kept in the basement,” President Eyring recalls. “Suddenly he stopped. ‘Hal,’ he said, ‘we were working this same kind of problem a week ago. You don’t seem to understand it any better now than you did then. Haven’t you been working on it?’”

A little chagrined, President Eyring admitted he had not. President Eyring recalls his father’s response: “When I told him no, my father paused. It was really a very tender and poignant moment, because I knew how much he loved me and how much he wanted me to be a scientist. Then he said, ‘Hal, I think you’d better get out of physics. You ought to find something that you love so much that when you don’t have to think about anything, that’s what you think about.’”²

Training and Education

When we have examined our own interests and abilities and when we have taken counsel from those who know and love us—especially the Lord—we need to seek both education and experience in our chosen career field. Education and training are among the most worthwhile investments anyone can make.

Learn to love learning. Just as it is important to continue making deposits to a savings account, it is important to continue educating yourself in your chosen profession

or career so that your skills will always be marketable. Just as a sailor keeps an eye on the horizon for changing weather, keeping up-to-date in your career will help you spot changing conditions in your field and make necessary course corrections.

Giving and Accepting Help

None of us is alone on the ocean; we are part of a great fleet. And just as a naval fleet has numerous support vessels, the Church has bishops and branch presidents, Relief Society presidents, quorum presidents, employment specialists, and others who stand ready to help us get underway. Such help often includes directing us to resources and training that fit our specific situations—such as writing a résumé, conducting an effective job search, and learning to present ourselves well in interviews.

Long before the term *networking* came into use, sailors exchanged information about such things as dangerous shoals, new routes, and sources of supply. A sailor about to enter unfamiliar waters would talk to everyone who might have useful information and experience to share. In today’s employment environment, establishing and maintaining contact with those who have useful information or experience is equally vital. Local ward or branch leaders and extended family are good starting points.

Teaching Children to Work

One of parents’ most important responsibilities is to teach their children to work. Even young children can begin to experience the benefits of working when they are involved in household chores and in service to others. Wise parents will work alongside their children, will provide frequent praise, and will make sure no task is overwhelming.

When President Thomas S. Monson was young, his parents taught him the principle of work by their examples. His father, a printer, worked long and hard practically every day of his life. When he was home, he did not stop working in order to take a well-deserved rest. He continued to work by providing service to family and neighbors





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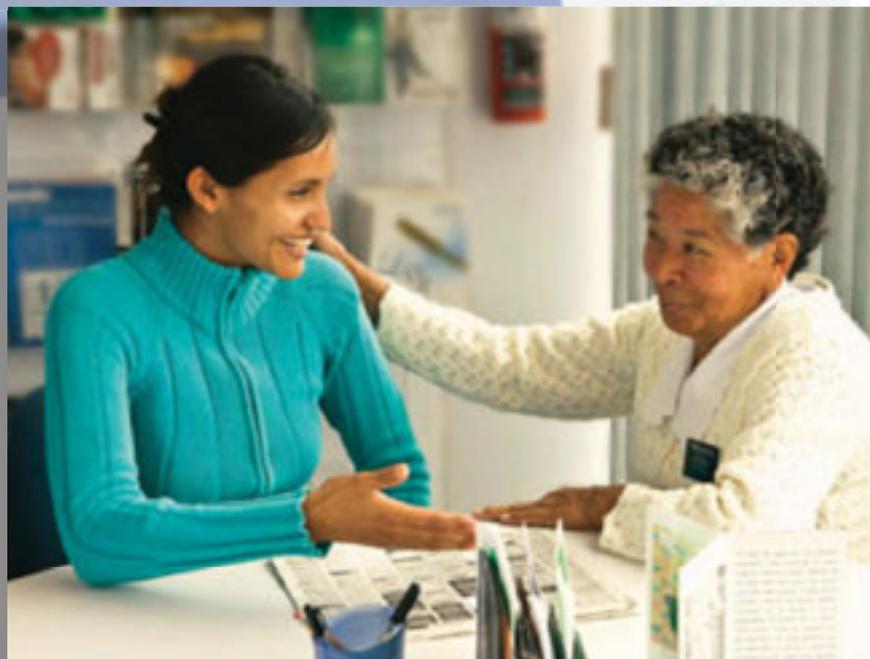
alike.³ His mother was always working to provide some needed service to a family member or friend. President Monson's parents often asked him to accompany them or to do some service for them, allowing him to learn firsthand about working to serve others.

President Monson learned from his father how to work in business and began his first part-time job when he was 14, working in the printing shop that his father managed. President Monson relates that after age 14, there have not been many days in his life—other than Sundays—when he didn't work. "When you learn to work while you're young, the habit stays with you," he says.⁴

Blessings of Persistence

In matters of employment, as with most everything else we are called upon to do in life, it is vital that we move forward. When we do our best, seeking both human and divine guidance and trusting in our loving Heavenly Father, He will bless the outcome.

As a young man, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First



Presidency, wanted a different work experience than that of a laundry delivery boy for his family. He did not overly enjoy the cart, the heavy bike, or the work; nevertheless, he worked hard to help his family.

He relates the following regarding a blessing that came from that challenging work experience:

"Many years later, when I was about to be drafted into the military, I decided to

Like sailors about to enter unfamiliar waters, those who are entering the job market are wise to take counsel from those who have been there before them.

CHURCH EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

- Talk to your **ward or branch employment specialist**, who can refer you to job openings, train you in job search techniques, give you career guidance, or recommend some community resources.
- The Church has **Employment Resource Service Centers** around the world. To find if one is near you, talk to your priesthood leaders or visit www.providentliving.org.
- Visit www.providentliving.org for **job search tips and training** on skills such as interviewing, résumé writing, and networking (only in English).

volunteer instead and join the Air Force to become a pilot. I loved flying and thought being a pilot would be my thing.

“To be accepted for the program I had to pass a number of tests, including a strict physical exam. The doctors were slightly concerned by the results and did some additional medical tests. Then they announced, ‘You have scars on your lung which are an indication of a lung disease in your early teenage years, but obviously you are fine now.’ The doctors wondered what kind of treatment I had gone through to heal the disease. Until the day of that examination I had never known that I had any kind of lung disease. Then it became clear to me that my regular exercise in fresh air as a laundry boy had been a key factor in my healing from this illness. Without the extra effort of pedaling that heavy bicycle day in and day out, pulling the laundry cart up and down the streets of our town, I might never have become a jet fighter pilot and later a 747 airline captain. . . .

“If I had only known back then what I learned many years later—if I had only been able to *see the end from the beginning*—I would have had a better appreciation of these experiences, and it would have made my job so much easier.”⁵

Setting Sail

In these stormy economic times, when the tide of opportunity seems to be ebbing, when the winds and currents seem to oppose our progress, it is vital to remember that the Lord gives no commandments unto the children of men “save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). Surely the commandment to work to sustain self and family is among the commandments the Lord is prepared to help us keep.

For some, the challenge may seem daunting, as Nephi’s challenge surely was when he gazed upon an ocean that stretched beyond the horizon. A young man of the desert was to become a shipbuilder and a sailor. That is a career change. Nephi sought instruction and went to work (see 1 Nephi 17:8–11). Even so today, the Lord will bless us as we continue to sacrifice and serve in the kingdom and as we embark with faith, knowing that we do not sail alone. ■

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, *Pathways to Happiness* (1957), 381.
2. See Gerald N. Lund, “Elder Henry B. Eyring: Molded by ‘Defining Influences,’” *Liahona*, Apr. 1996, 28; *Ensign*, Sept. 1995, 10, 12.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, “Hallmarks of a Happy Home,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2001, 7; *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 6.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Oct. 1981, 7.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “See the End from the Beginning,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 43.

When Saw We Thee Sick?

From 2003 to 2005 I served as Young Women president in the Gutiérrez Zamora Ward, in Veracruz, Mexico. Each Christmas the young women and their leaders baked treats to take to the older members of our ward.

As Christmas 2005 approached, we practiced singing Christmas carols and donned red hats and scarves. In the winter our village receives a steady drizzle of rain and a lot of cold wind from the north. But that did not prevent about a dozen of our young men and young women from going out with our load of pineapple pies.

When we arrived at the homes of our elderly brothers and sisters, we sang with great joy. We left each home feeling pleased because, even if for only a moment, we had brought happiness with our carols and pies.

The last sister we visited had been less active for many years. Though none of the youth had met Juanita, my husband and I had known her for a long time. She was now bedridden, terminally ill, and very poor. A few days prior, the elders quorum had visited her home to make some repairs.

When we arrived at her home, I called out her name. No one answered, so I kept calling. Soon I heard a soft voice say, “Come on in, Sister Araceli.” We entered and sang with joy and enthusiasm, even though her condition saddened us. Not long before, Juanita had been full of life. Now when she sat up, the youth couldn’t restrain their tears. She

was deeply moved and thanked us for visiting her and helping her feel, through our carols, that our Heavenly Father remembered her and loved her.

After we left her humble

dwelling, the youth expressed gratitude for having been able to sing for her. They didn’t care that they ended up wet and cold; their hearts were filled with joy for having shared a small portion of the happiness they felt. It was then that I understood

Not long before, Juanita had been full of life. Now when she sat up, the youth couldn’t restrain their tears.



more fully the verses that read:

“I was sick, and ye visited me. . . .

“ . . . When saw we thee sick . . . and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:36, 39–40).

I was saddened when Juanita passed away a few days later, but I know without a doubt that Heavenly Father loves His children. I also know that if we follow the Spirit, we can be instruments in His hands in blessing each other. ■

Araceli López Reséndiz, Veracruz, Mexico

Dressed in Love

It was December, the season when people’s feelings are tender as they remember the birth of Jesus Christ and what He did for us through His infinite Atonement.

When I arrived home from work, my three children and my beautiful wife shared with me a decision they had made about Christmas: “There won’t be any need to buy presents this year,” they declared.

Surprised, I asked, “And what brought about this decision?” After all, my children would be sacrificing something they

had looked forward to all year.

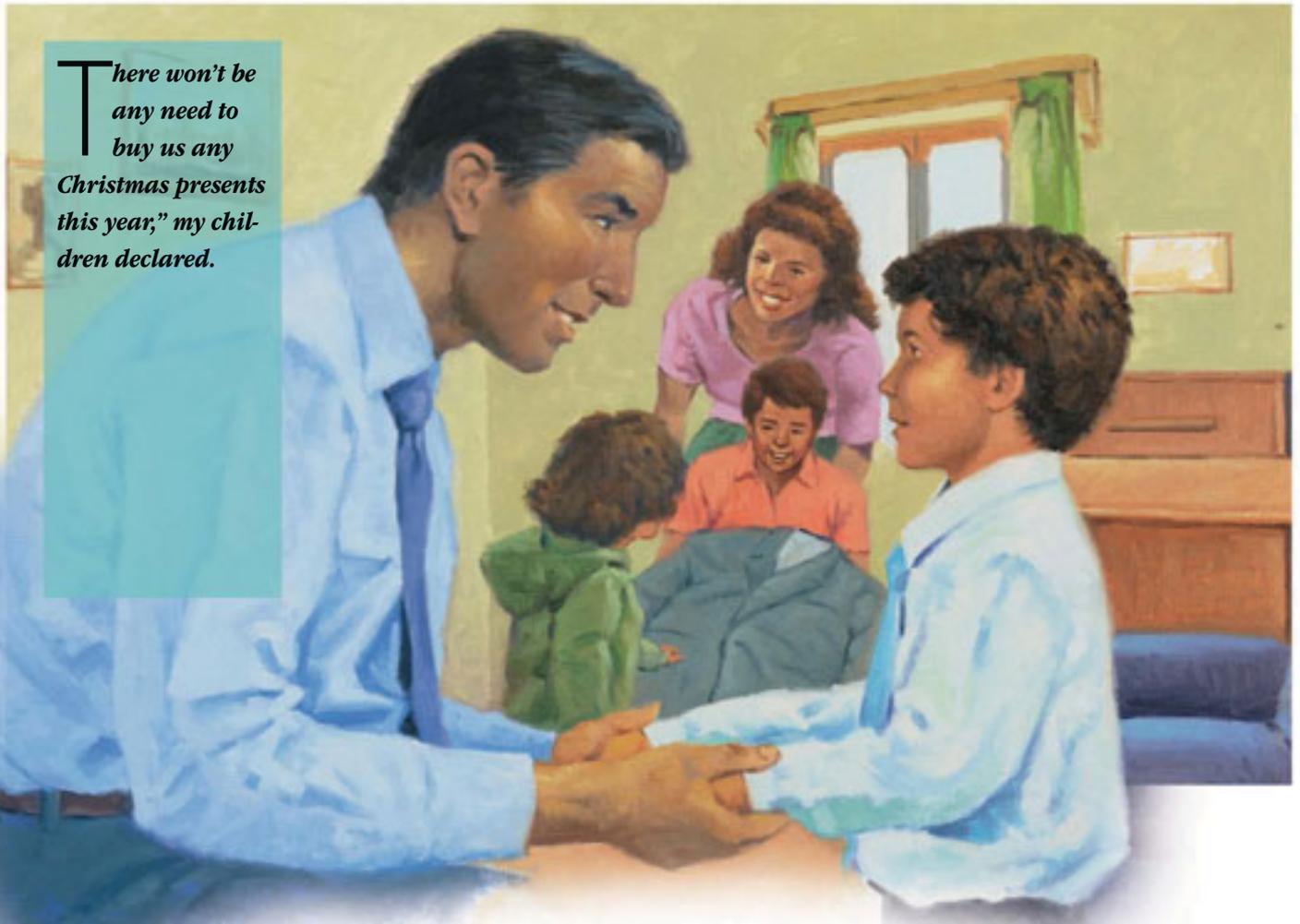
They immediately went and retrieved my two old, frayed suits. “Daddy,” they said, “with the money we were going to use for Christmas presents, we want you to replace these old suits with a new one. We would like to see you go to work in a new suit!”

I realized that this was the true spirit of Christmas. When we sacrifice something for someone else, we come to understand the meaning of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Later, when I put on the new suit I received for Christmas, I felt that I was dressed in love. ■

Walter Ciro Calderón R., Bogotá, Colombia

There won't be any need to buy us any Christmas presents this year," my children declared.



Teaching My Teacher

One autumn many years ago I was a new graduate student at Columbia University in New York City. In a large classroom full of students, our professor was discussing modern imitations of ancient texts. As he cited a list of forgeries, I was startled to hear him add the Book of Mormon to his list.

Instantly I knew I could not leave the classroom without doing something. I could not disappoint my ancestors, whose testimonies of the Book of Mormon had led them to sacrifice everything.

After class I approached the professor, who held the Charles Anthon chair at Columbia. More than 100 years before, Martin Harris had come to visit Professor Anthon at Columbia. Martin carried a paper with engravings copied from the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

I remembered my father sharing with me a letter his father wrote about Martin Harris. My grandfather told of seeing Martin shortly before Brother Harris died. When grandfather asked him about the Book of Mormon, Martin raised himself up from his bed and bore a strong testimony. He did see an angel, he did hear his voice, and he did view the plates of gold.

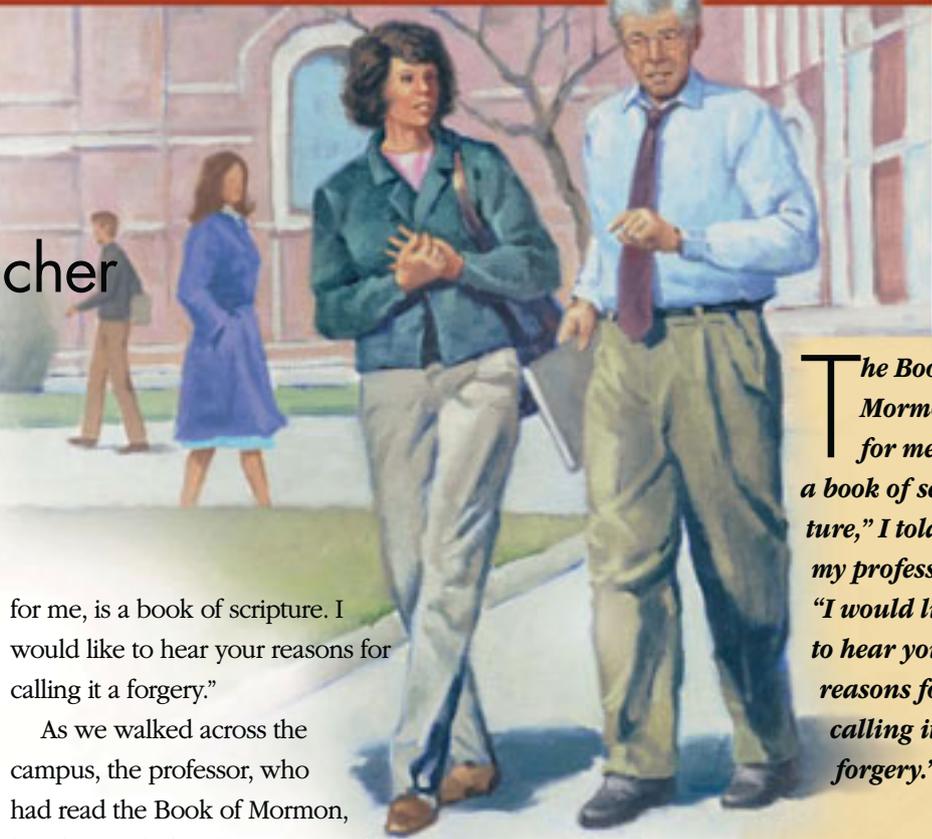
"My name is Diana, and I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I said shakily to my professor. "The Book of Mormon,

for me, is a book of scripture. I would like to hear your reasons for calling it a forgery."

As we walked across the campus, the professor, who had read the Book of Mormon, listed several objections to its authenticity. I hurriedly wrote them down, and when he had finished, I asked him, "May I write what I learn from sources on the subject in response to these objections?" He agreed.

I walked back to the dorm, closed the door of my room, knelt in prayer, and began weeping. I felt weak and inadequate. Fortunately, that evening we had a Church activity. Following a discussion that lifted my spirit, I asked for help from the full-time missionaries, who had attended. They shared some sources of information that covered most of the points raised by my professor. Then I searched the vast library of Columbia. In my paper I addressed the professor's questions and offered my testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Then I gave it to him.

I waited several weeks for his response. Finally I asked him if he had read it.



The Book of Mormon, for me, is a book of scripture," I told my professor. "I would like to hear your reasons for calling it a forgery."

"Yes, and I gave it to my wife to read.

She told me, 'Whatever you do, don't destroy that student's faith.'" He then turned and walked away.

As Christmas drew near, I was strongly impressed to give him a copy of the Book of Mormon. I found a copy, added my testimony, and thanked him for reading my paper. I then wrapped the book in Christmas paper and gave it to him. Shortly afterward, I received a handwritten note from him in which he expressed gratitude for receiving a copy of "this remarkable book."

When I read his words, my eyes filled with tears. The Spirit whispered that this professor would no longer hold up the Book of Mormon to ridicule. I was grateful the Spirit had softened hearts and helped me know how to teach my teacher. ■

Diana Summerhays Graham, Utah, USA

The Greater Gift

One morning as I finished reading from and pondering the Book of Mormon, I realized that I would again finish it by the end of the year. This realization brought back the memory of my brother, whom I cared for in my home during his final weeks with terminal cancer in 2005.

Oliver was determined to fulfill a promise to himself to follow the counsel of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) and read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year.¹

But by that fall, Oliver still had many pages to go. Eventually he became so

weak that he could no longer read to himself.

Determined to keep his commitment, Oliver asked me if I would read the Book of Mormon to him. I was much further along in my own reading, but I was glad to begin where he had left off.

By reading to Oliver every day, I was able to help him reach his goal to finish the book by year's end, just days before he died. By that time he could hardly speak audibly, but his mind was clear and active. With much effort, he often expressed his appreciation to me for the gift I had given him, saying he could now die in peace because he had fulfilled his promise.

I had read the Book of Mormon many times before, but I had never felt its spirit so powerfully or understood its precepts so clearly as I did during those waning months of my brother's life. Truly, Oliver had given me the greater gift. ■

Lois N. Pope, Utah, USA

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Liahona and Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.

Why Do I Need to Be Here?

A week before Christmas in 2007 two of my children were diagnosed with strep throat and ear infections. Jacob, age 5, whined all the way to the pharmacy for his medicine, and Beth, 19 months, was especially clingy.

When we arrived, we were greeted by a long line at the prescription counter. While Jacob tugged at my leg and complained about his ear, Beth wiggled out of my arms. I thought she would stay beside me, but as soon as she was free, she ran straight to an elderly gentleman sitting on a bench near the line.

The man was looking at the floor, his face resting in his hands. I called after Beth, not wanting to leave the line, but she approached the man anyway and bent down to look up

Determined to keep his commitment,

Oliver asked me if I would read the Book of Mormon to him.



called after Beth, but she approached the man anyway and bent down to look up at his face as she grinned and giggled.

at his face as she grinned and giggled.

I then sent Jacob to get her. He grabbed her hand and tried to pull her away from the man, but she refused to come. Then she started pushing on the man's forehead in order to get him to raise his head. As I grew agitated, Beth took off her untied shoes and shoved them into the man's lap. He sat up and smiled.

"Beth!" I called.

"It's all right," the man said in a tired voice. "I'll tie her shoes for her."

I grew a little nervous as he began putting Beth's shoes on her. When he finished, he wrapped his arms around her and kissed her on the head. He was slow to let her go, so I quickly left the line to rescue my daughter from this stranger.

As I approached, I noticed that he had tears in his eyes. Concerned, I sat down next to him.

"I have to tell you something," he said, staring straight ahead. "Not more than a month ago my wife died, and about an hour ago I found out that I have terminal cancer. I came here to get medicine, and I have been contemplating my life and thinking that I might move along the inevitable. I didn't think I could bear going through Christmas and the pains of cancer without my sweet wife."

He said he had been praying, asking God, "If I need to be here for

something,
You better
speak now,
or I'm
going
home to
end

things."
Before he
had even said "amen," Beth began pestering him and calling him "Grandpa."

"Now I know why I need to be here longer," he said. "I need to stick around for my grandkids. They need me."

I threw my arms around him and could not help but weep. I then got

our medicine.
Beth, who had seemed so ill only moments earlier, kissed the man on the cheek and bounded away with Jacob and me, waving and saying, "Bye-bye, Grandpa."

I didn't ask his name, but I will never forget that even a young girl who pesters an old man can be an answer to prayer. ■

Megan Robinson, Utah, USA



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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY
WELDEN C. ANDERSEN



Coming in 2010.

FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS

These teaching suggestions are provided to give you some ideas. You can tailor them to your family.

“We Three Kings,” p. 12: “Most people will learn better and remember longer when you present ideas by using pictures, maps, word grouping, or other visuals.”¹ Consider displaying the pictures from this article or other items as you teach from this article. Role playing is a way to use individuals as visuals.² Consider role-playing the visit of the Wise Men to the Christ child as you learn with your family.

“Worship through Reverence,” p. 26: Family members are more likely to understand and apply doctrines when they are given opportunities to teach those doctrines to others.³ Consider having family members teach each other the principles from



the article. Several days before family home evening, divide the article into three sections and invite three family members to share during family home evening what they learned from their sections.

“The Blessing of Work,” p. 36: Stories can awaken learners’ interest and are often an effective way to teach.⁴ To illustrate the doctrine of work taught by Bishop H. David Burton, consider sharing from the article the experiences of Presidents Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf. You could conclude your lesson by inviting family members to share a story about work that has blessed their lives.

NOTES

1. *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 182.
2. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 178.
3. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 161.
4. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 93, 179–82.

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FATHER’S RESPONSIBILITY

“Take seriously your responsibility to teach the gospel to your family through regular family home evening, family prayer, devotional and scripture-reading time, and other teaching moments. Give special emphasis to preparation for missionary service and temple marriage. . . . Next to your own salvation, brethren, there is nothing so important to you as the salvation of your wife and children.”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), “Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 49.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID STOKER

the Friend



A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM
THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
TO THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

The Reason for the Wonder

.....

The Christmas season is one of the most wonderful times of the year. However, it is not the gifts, the trees, the decorations, or the food that make this a season full of wonder.

It is when we remember the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, that the Christmas season becomes truly special.

As we strive to remember our Savior, our desire to live like Him will grow. It is no coincidence that Christmas is the time of the year when people are the most loving, the most giving, the most kind, and the most grateful.

As we try to follow Christ's example this season and do our best to live as He did, let us find ways to lift up those around us. Let us celebrate our Savior's birth by being followers of Christ in word and deed.

We testify that as we do so, the desire to follow Him that grows within us at Christmas will continue to develop throughout the upcoming year. ●

President Thomas S. Monson

President Henry B. Eyring

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf



THE NATIVITY, BY NATHAN PINNOCK



Primary Manners

BY JAN PINBOROUGH

Based on a true story

“Be still and know that I am God” (DeC 101:16).

Natanael held Mom’s hand tightly as they walked into the Primary room. Today was Natanael’s second week in the Sunbeam class. His stomach felt fluttery, and with each step, he walked a little more slowly.

Last week, Primary had been kind of confusing. During singing time, Mia kept standing up and turning around in circles. Natanael was tired of sitting, so he stood up too. But then his teacher asked him to sit back down. During sharing time, some of the older children talked and laughed. Sometimes it was too noisy to hear what Sister Miranda, the Primary president, was saying. When his friend Cara started crying, it made Natanael feel like crying too.

As he got closer to the front row, Natanael didn’t want to let go of Mom’s hand. He was worried that Primary would be confusing this week too. Then he saw his teacher.

“Hi, Natanael,” Sister Tejada said. “I’m glad to see you.” Sister Tejada patted the seat next to her.

Natanael liked his teacher’s friendly smile. He let go of Mom’s hand and sat down by Sister Tejada.

“I’ll be back to pick you up after class,” Mom said. “Remember to be reverent.”

Natanael wasn’t sure he knew how.

After the opening prayer, Sister Miranda stood up. “Today we have a special visitor,” she said.

Suddenly, a puppet appeared from behind a table

next to Sister Miranda. The puppet wiggled, waved his arms, and said, “Is it time to go yet? I need a drink!”

Some of the children giggled.

“This is Arlo’s first time in Primary,” Sister Miranda said, “and he doesn’t know how to be reverent. But before he can be reverent, he needs to learn good Primary manners.”

Natanael was surprised. At dinner Mom sometimes reminded him to put his napkin on his lap. That was good manners. And Dad always asked everyone to thank Mom for the nice meal before they started clearing off the table. That was good manners too. But what were Primary manners?

Arlo leaned backward over the front of the table. “Hey, everybody looks funny upside down!” he said.

“Good manners are rules that show we respect other people,” Sister Miranda explained. “Arlo doesn’t know the rules for good Primary manners. Do you think we could teach him?” she asked.

Sister Miranda went to the chalkboard and drew an arm. “What should Arlo do with his arms?” she asked.

“Fold them!” Mia called out.

“That’s right,” Sister Miranda said.

Arlo sat up. He folded his arms and raised them over his head. “Oh, you mean like this?” he asked.

Natanael knew that wasn’t right.

Sister Miranda asked if everyone in Primary could show Arlo how to fold his arms.

Natanael quickly folded his arms. Arlo folded his arms too.

On the chalkboard, next to the drawing of the arm, Sister Miranda wrote, “Fold our arms.”

As Sister Miranda drew more pictures, the children taught Arlo the rules for good Primary manners. Natanael was glad that he knew most of them already.

Now Arlo wasn’t wiggling or waving his arms or calling out. His legs were still, and his arms were folded. The children were listening quietly too. Primary didn’t seem noisy and confusing anymore. Natanael felt calm and happy. It wouldn’t be too hard to be reverent in Primary. He already knew how. ●



Fold our arms.

Walk quietly.



Raise our hands for
a turn to talk.



Use a quiet voice.

Listen to
our teacher.



THIS IS GOD'S HOUSE

What are some ways you can show respect for Heavenly Father's house?

1. Walk quietly in the halls. Run only in the gym during special activities not held on Sunday.
2. Speak quietly.
3. Take good care of the hymnbooks. Put them away neatly after using them.
4. Throw away any trash you see.
5. Be careful not to put your feet on benches or chairs.
6. When asked, help put away chairs after meetings.



"When we meet to learn the doctrines of the gospel, it should be in a spirit of reverence."
President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Reverence Invites Revelation," Ensign, Nov. 1991, 21.

The children of the Kahului Ward in the Kahului Hawaii Stake worked hard to help take care of Heavenly Father's house. For a service activity, they cleaned the chairs they use every week in Primary.

The children in senior Primary scrubbed the chairs with water and baking soda, while the junior Primary children dried the chairs. Even the youngest children worked with enthusiasm and happy faces. Afterward, everyone felt good about keeping Heavenly Father's house clean.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE KAHULUI HAWAII STAKE



MY FAMILY IS BLESSED WHEN WE REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST

“I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

Even though we celebrate in different ways, Christmas gives us the opportunity to remember the birth of Jesus Christ.

Christmas around the World

BY CHAD E. PHARES and SHARA BRAITHWAITE
Church Magazines

Children around the world celebrate Christmas in different ways. This calendar describes some of them. Cut out the pictures on page F16. Place this calendar on a wall in your home. Beginning on December 1, find the picture that is described by the words for the day. Then paste the picture on the square for that day.

In Japan, children love to eat Christmas cake with strawberries and whipped cream.

In Finland, families visit cemeteries on Christmas Eve and place candles on the graves of loved ones.

In India, people put small clay lamps on the roofs of their homes to show that Jesus is the Light of the World.

In Ireland, families place candles in the windows of their homes to show that they would have welcomed Mary and Joseph.

German children leave their shoes or boots by

In Australia, many people

Families in Argentina light diamond-shaped lanterns

In Venezuela, children

the fireplace or outside their front doors. The next morning, the shoes are filled with candy.

In the United States, people decorate evergreen trees with small lights, tinsel, and ornaments.

On December 13 in Sweden, a young girl wears a white dress with a red sash and serves bread and biscuits.

Children in Spain are given toys, sweets, or small instruments as they go from house to house reciting verses or singing carols.

Tongan families get up early to make and deliver breakfast to their neighbors. Children are excited to deliver these breakfasts and see what the neighbors bring.

in Australia, many people go to the beach and sing Christmas carols.

Families in the Philippines decorate with *parols*, which are star shapes made out of bamboo and tissue paper and lit with tiny lights.

In Holland, families celebrate on Christmas Eve by drinking hot chocolate and eating *banketletter*, a cake that looks like the first letter of the family's last name.

One week before Christmas, Italian children dress as shepherds and go from door to door singing songs and reciting poems.

In Paraguay, people decorate their homes with *coco* flowers.

diamond-shaped paper balloons called *globos* on Christmas Eve and release them into the night sky.

In Liberia, families eat dinner outside, sitting in a circle. A traditional Liberian Christmas dinner includes biscuits, rice, and beef.

In Norway, children eat rice pudding. The child who finds the hidden nut wins a candy pig or a piece of chocolate.

Children in England receive a paper-covered tube, called a Christmas cracker, at Christmas dinner. The tube cracks loudly when pulled apart. A paper hat, poem, or small toy is inside.

In Lebanon, chickpeas, wheat, beans, and lentils are planted two weeks before Christmas. The sprouts are used to surround the nativity scene in the home.

roller-skate in the streets early on Christmas morning.

In Bulgaria, everybody at the table stands at the same time when dinner is over.

Mexican families cut designs in paper bags to make lanterns, or *farolitos*. Candles are placed inside the *farolitos*, which line the sidewalks, windows, and rooftops.

In New Zealand, many cities have celebrations in parks. People listen to well-known singers sing Christmas carols.

In Ghana, families stay up all evening playing games. Just before midnight, the family counts down the seconds until Christmas day.

A Temple Square Christmas

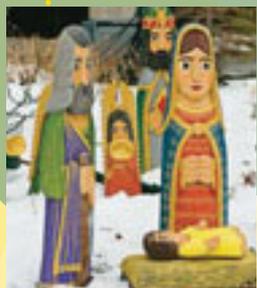
Many people love to visit Temple Square at Christmastime. Liza, age 11, and Hiram, age 10, are cousins from Kaysville, Utah, who came to see the beautiful lights and sights on Temple Square.

It can be hard to decide what to look at first. Everywhere trees are covered with tiny twinkling lights in pink, yellow,

blue, and green. Above it all, the Salt Lake Temple glows in brilliant white, with the gold statue of Moroni shining at the top.

Liza and Hiram enjoyed looking at some child-sized nativity sets made especially for children who came to the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

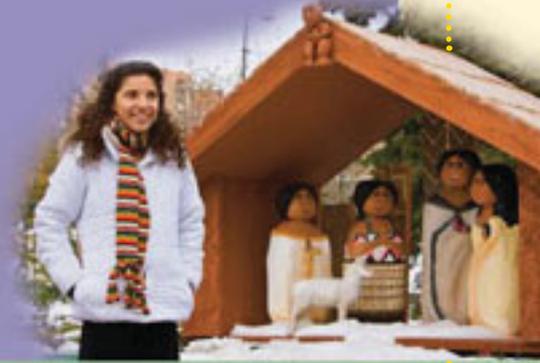
Artists from several countries created the sets to welcome children from all over





the world and help them think about the Savior. Those sets are still displayed at Christmastime on Temple Square. There are sets from Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and Poland. If you look closely, you can see some unusual gifts for the baby Jesus! ●

Above: Liza and Hiram stop to look at the life-sized nativity scene near the Tabernacle and listen to the Christmas story over a loudspeaker.



Above: In front of the temple is an all-white nativity set. A pool reflects both the temple and Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. It's a breathtaking sight.

TRIVIA

- About a million people visit Temple Square at Christmastime.
- There are dozens of lighted trees on Temple Square. Just one tree has 75,000 individual lights. How many lights would you guess there are all over Temple Square? LED lightbulbs are now being used to help save electricity.
- Workers start putting up Christmas lights on August 1 and finish taking them down by March 31.
- Children helped make the luminarias (right) on the Church Office Building plaza. Christmas messages are written on some of them in different languages.
- Today the lights are turned on by computer. But years ago children helped plug in the lights on the night when the lights were turned on for the season. Once when one little girl plugged in her string of lights and all of Temple Square lit up at the same time, she thought she had lit all the lights herself!



I Will Remember Jesus Christ

“I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

BY CHERYL ESPLIN



When Jesus lived on the earth, He went about doing good—teaching His gospel and healing the sick.

Jesus had no sin, but He suffered and died for the sins of all mankind. After three days He was resurrected. Jesus brought about the Atonement through His suffering, death, and Resurrection.

Each Sunday at church when you take the sacrament, you should remember Jesus Christ's Atonement, as well as the promises you make to Heavenly Father when you are baptized. The sacrament is a time to think about how much Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father love you. It is a time to repent and think about what you can do to become more like Them.

As you sing the sacrament hymn, listen to the words. Listen carefully to the sacrament prayers. Think about what you learn and what you feel.

Activity

Remove page F12 from the magazine, and mount it on heavier paper. Fold the sacrament booklet on the dotted lines. When you sing the sacrament hymn at church, listen for what the words say about Jesus Christ. When you get home each week, write one thing in your booklet that you learned about Jesus from the hymn.



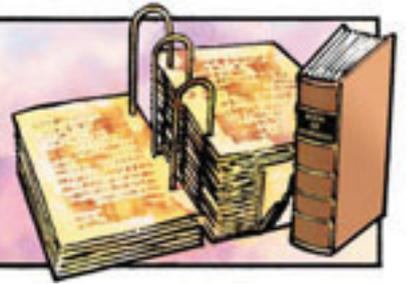
Sharing Time Ideas

1. I remember Jesus when I partake of the sacrament. Tell the story of the Last Supper from Matthew 26:17–30. Read together Luke 22:19, and have the children repeat the words “This do in remembrance of me.” Explain that partaking of the sacrament gives us an opportunity to remember the Savior and His Atonement. Show sacrament trays. Explain that the bread reminds us of Jesus's body and the water reminds us of His blood. Write on the board: “What can you do to remember Jesus as you partake of the sacrament?” Write responses on the board. (Examples: read a scripture about Jesus, listen to the sacrament prayers, think about Jesus's Atonement.) Encourage the children to try one of the suggestions the next time they attend sacrament meeting.

2. Remembering Jesus helps me choose the right. Beforehand, wrap Gospel Art Picture Kit 240 (Jesus the Christ) to look like a Christmas gift. Tell the children that inside is something that represents the greatest gift. Have the children ask yes or no questions to guess what it is. Let the child who guesses correctly unwrap the gift. Post the picture of Jesus on the board. Beforehand, place the following wordstrips in random order around the room: “Jesus was baptized,” “Jesus served others,” “Jesus prayed to the Father,” “Jesus went about doing good,” “Jesus loves us,” “Jesus learned to work,” and “Jesus honored His mother.” Divide the board into two columns. At the top of one column, write “Remembering Jesus.” At the top of the second, write “Helps me choose the right.” Give each class a scripture reference or picture that tells about part of Jesus's life. Examples: Matthew 3:13–17—Jesus was baptized; John 13:4–15—Jesus served others; 3 Nephi 17:15—Jesus prayed to the Father; John 15:12—Jesus loved us; Gospel Art Picture Kit 206 (Childhood of Jesus Christ)—Jesus learned to work; 242 (Jesus and His Mother)—Jesus honored His mother. Ask the children to read the scripture or study the picture and find the wordstrip that describes it. When each class chooses correctly, place the wordstrip in the first column. Help the children think of a similar choice they can make, such as “I will be baptized.” Write it in the second column across from the matching wordstrip. ●

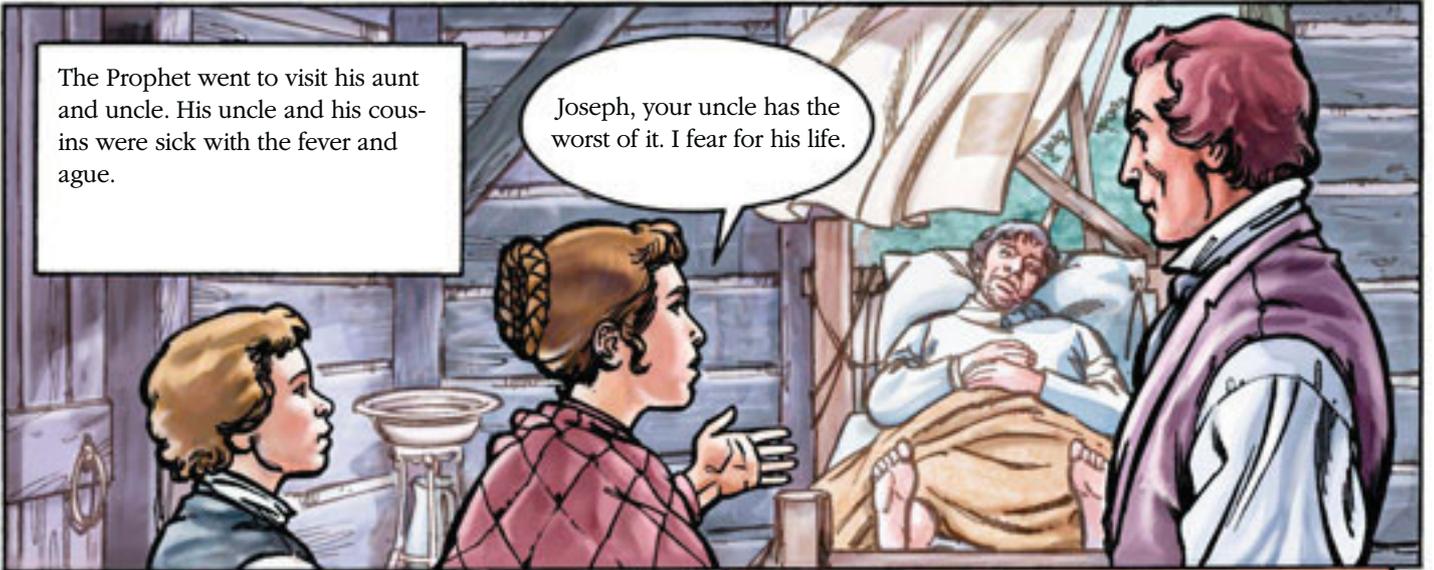


FROM THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH
A True Example of Christ



The Prophet went to visit his aunt and uncle. His uncle and his cousins were sick with the fever and ague.

Joseph, your uncle has the worst of it. I fear for his life.

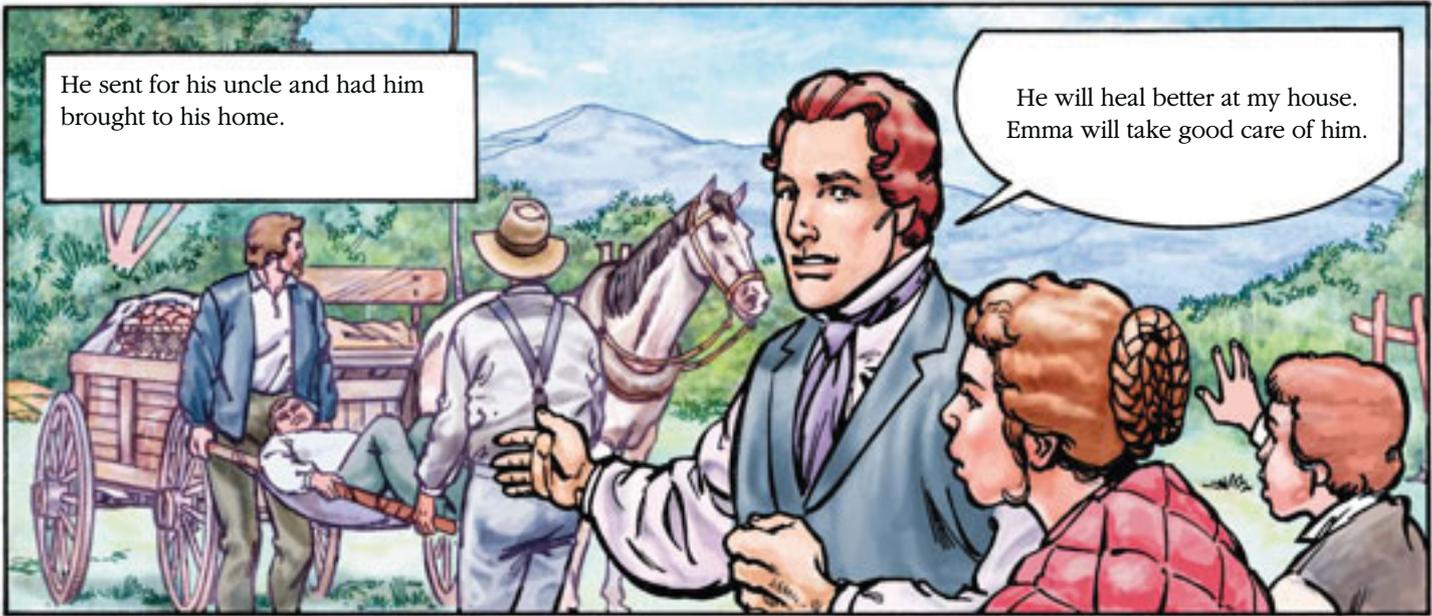


Here, Uncle, have my shoes.

But, Joseph, what will you wear?

Joseph rode home without his shoes.





He sent for his uncle and had him brought to his home.

He will heal better at my house. Emma will take good care of him.



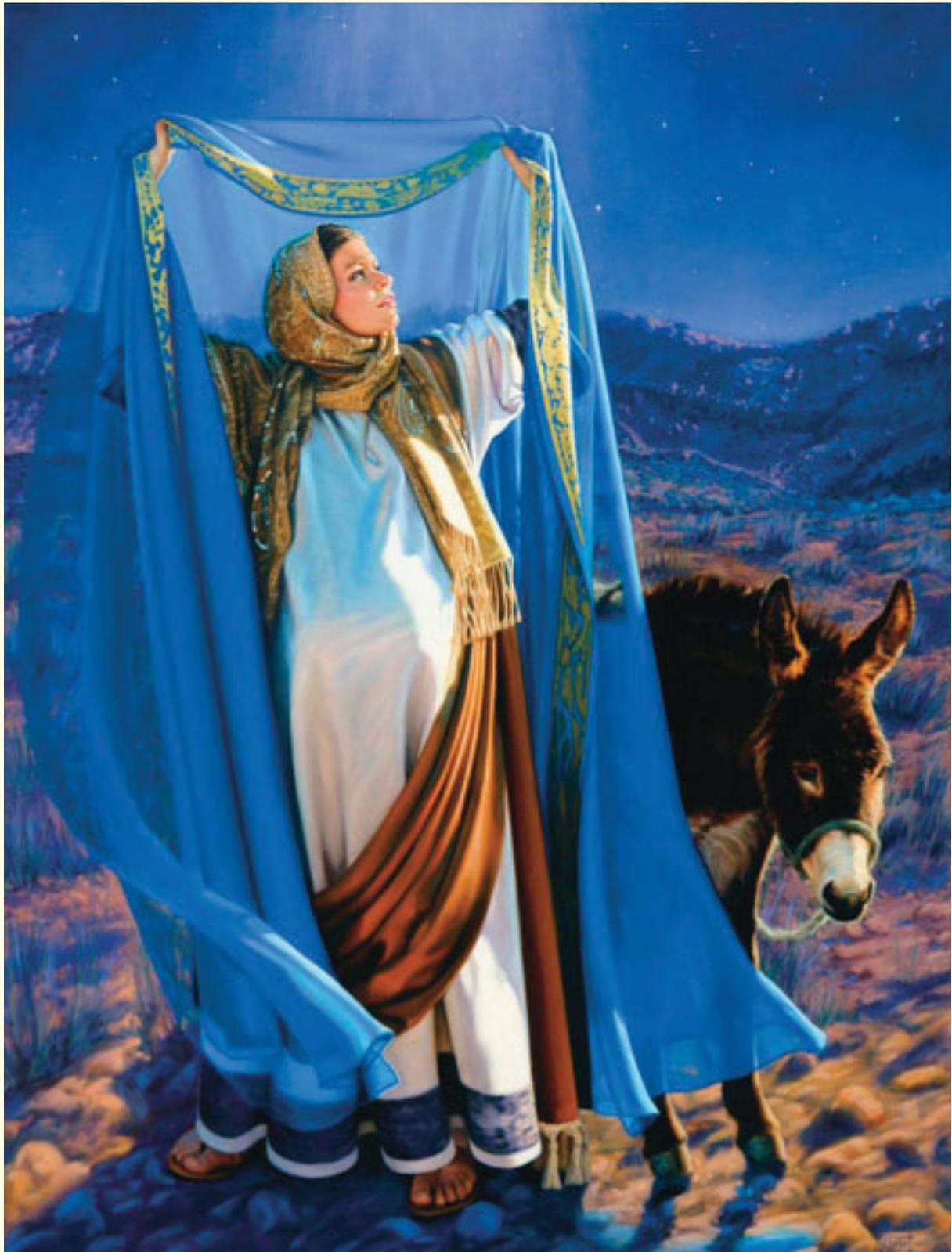
He also sent many supplies to help the rest of the family recover.

Thank you, Joseph. Thank you.



The Prophet's genuine love for others saved his uncle's life and eased his aunt's burdens.





Mary Kept These Things and Pondered Them in Her Heart, by Lonni Clarke

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:30–32).



“What all of us long for in our hearts, at Christmastime and always, is to feel bound together in love with the sweet assurance that it can last forever,” writes President Henry B. Eyring. “This is the promise of eternal life, which God has called His greatest gift to His children (see D&C 14:7). That is made possible by the gifts to us of His Beloved Son: the Savior’s birth, Atonement, and Resurrection.” See “Home for Christmas,” page 2.