

# Liahona



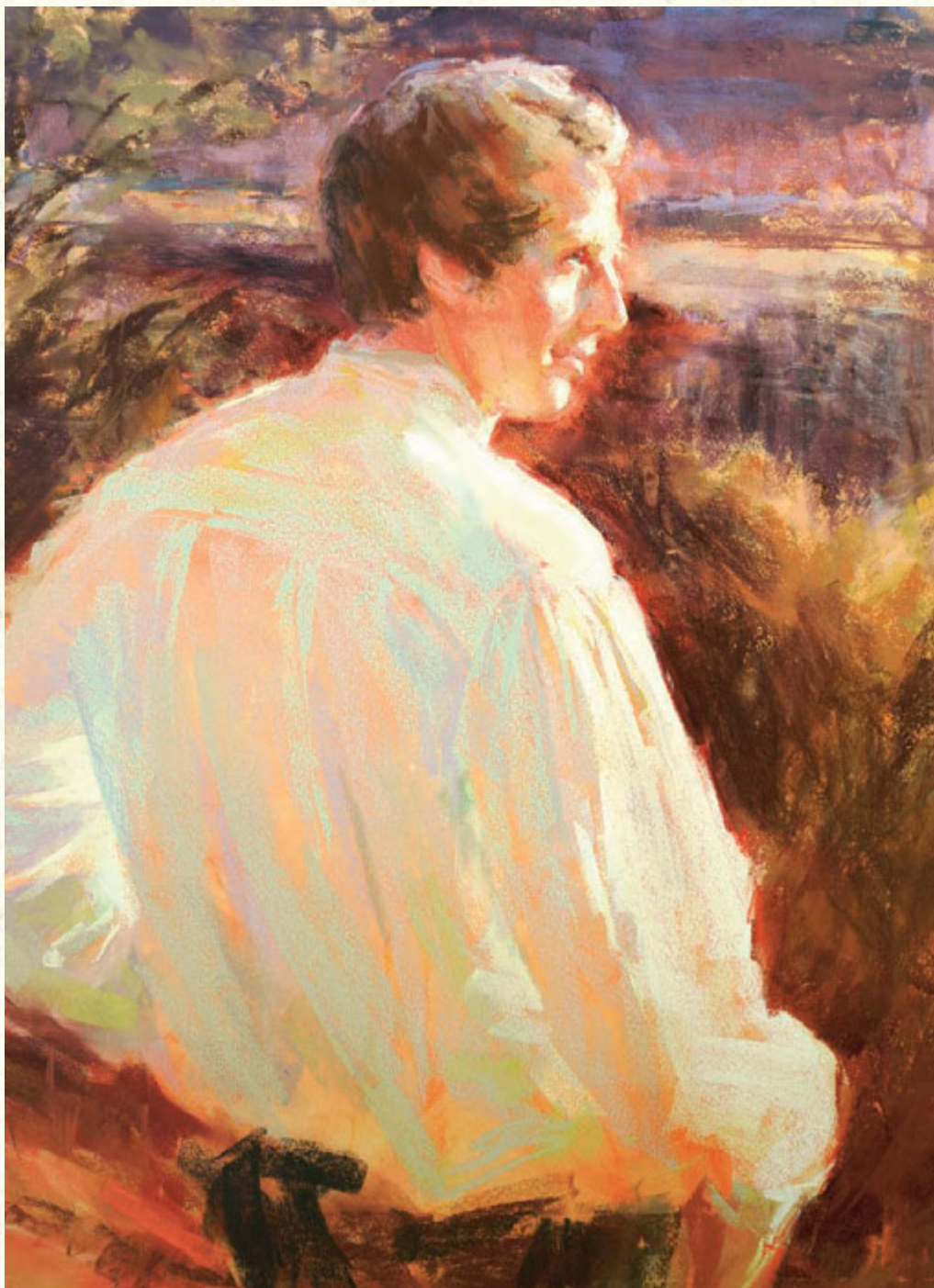
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MAY NOT BE COPIED

*Looking Westward, by Julie Rogers*

*After the Martyrdom of Joseph Smith, President John Taylor (1808–87) wrote: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, . . . has brought*

*forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, . . . gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, [and] founded a great city. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord’s anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood” (D&C 135:3).*





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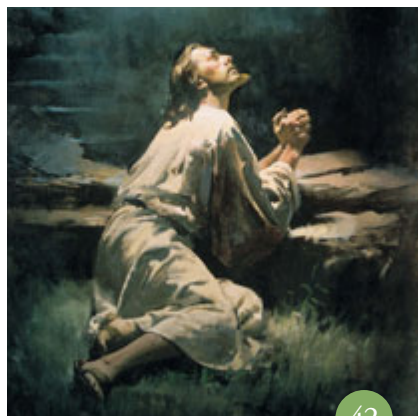
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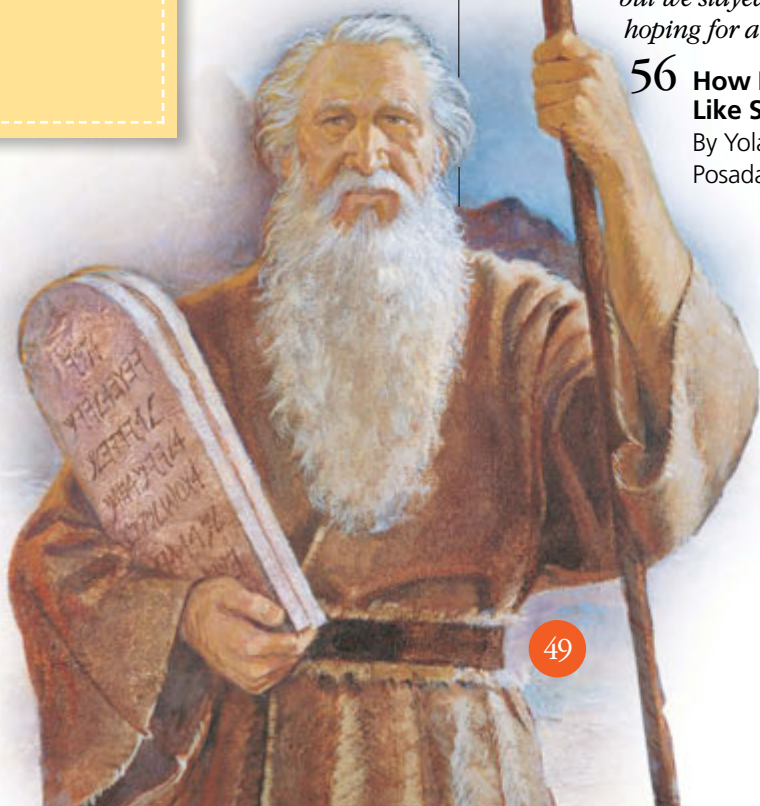
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### FOR ADULTS



Elder Spencer J. Condie shares seven lessons we can learn from the life of Handel, the composer of *Messiah* (see page 20). **To hear the Tabernacle Choir** perform

part of *Messiah*, visit [www.liahona.lds.org](http://www.liahona.lds.org).

### FOR YOUNG ADULTS



A young man in South Africa composed a cantata, which was performed by other young adults in his stake last December (see page 23). He says, "The whole point was to share our testimonies of the Savior

through the music and the words of the cantata." **To see a video of portions of the cantata**, go to [www.liahona.lds.org](http://www.liahona.lds.org).

### FOR CHILDREN

On pages 72–73, try to find five acts of service hidden on Temple Square. Then go to [www.liahona.lds.org](http://www.liahona.lds.org) to **play a similar game online**.



### IN YOUR LANGUAGE

The *Liahona* and other Church materials are available in **many languages** at [www.languages.lds.org](http://www.languages.lds.org).

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**By President  
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**  
Second Counselor in  
the First Presidency



# CAN WE SEE THE Christ?

One night a grandfather was reading a story to his four-year-old granddaughter when she looked up and said, “Grandpa, look at the stars!” The older man smiled kindly and said, “We’re indoors, honey. There are no stars here.” But the child insisted, “You have stars in your room! Look!”

The grandfather looked up and, to his surprise, noticed that the ceiling was peppered with a metallic glitter. It was invisible most of the time, but when the light struck the glitter a certain way, it did indeed look like a field of stars. It took the eyes of a child to see them, but there they were. And from that moment on, when the grandfather walked into this room and looked up, he could see what he had not been able to see before.

We are entering another wonderful Christmas season filled with music and lights, parties and presents. But of all people, we as members of the church that bears the Savior’s name need to look beyond the façade of the season and see the sublime truth and beauty of this time of year.

I wonder how many in Bethlehem knew that right there, close to them, the Savior had been born? The Son of God, the long-awaited and promised Messiah—He was in their midst!

Do you remember what the angel told the shepherds? “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And they said to themselves, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and

see this thing which is come to pass” (Luke 2:11, 15).

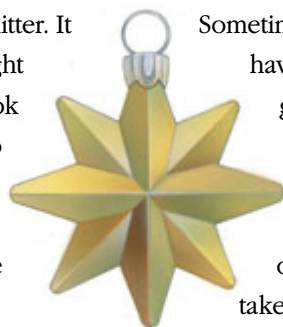
Like the shepherds of old, we need to say in our hearts, “Let us see this thing which is come to pass.” We need to desire it in our hearts. Let us see the Holy One of Israel in the manger, in the temple, on the mount, and on the cross. Like the shepherds, let us glorify and praise God for these tidings of great joy!

Sometimes the most difficult things to see are those that have been right in front of us all along. Like the grandfather who failed to see the stars on the ceiling, we sometimes cannot see that which is in plain sight.

We who have heard the glorious message of the coming of the Son of God, we who have taken upon us His name and have covenanted to walk in His path as His disciples—we must not fail to open our hearts and minds and truly see Him.

The Christmas season is wonderful in many ways. It is a season of charitable acts of kindness and brotherly love. It is a season of being more reflective about our own lives and about the many blessings that are ours. It is a season of forgiving and being forgiven. It is a season to enjoy the music and lights, parties and presents. But the glitter of the season should never dim our sight and prevent us from truly seeing the Prince of Peace in His majesty.

Let us all make this year’s Christmas season a time of rejoicing and celebration, a time when we acknowledge the miracle that our Almighty God sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the world! ■







## IDEAS FOR TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

1. "Attention activities can be used to create interest and to help learners focus their attention on the subject of the lesson. . . . Pictures are valuable tools for strengthening the main idea of a lesson and helping learners remain attentive" (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 160, 176). As you begin sharing this message, consider using an attention activity such as showing a picture or sharing a scripture and asking the family to think about how it applies to the message.

2. "One of your most important goals should be to help others apply gospel principles in everyday situations. . . . Help learners discover the blessings that come when we live the gospel" (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 159). After sharing this message, consider inviting family members to share experiences they have had as they have focused on the Savior during the Christmas season.



## YOUTH

### Missionary Christmas

By Loran Cook

During my second Christmas as a full-time missionary, my companion and I were visiting a recently baptized member and her family. After a great Christmas dinner, we shared with them a Christmas message.

We asked the family to draw pictures of things that reminded them of the season, such as stars, presents, nativities, and Christmas trees. We then read some scriptures, including 2 Nephi 19:6: "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, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." We sang "Once in Royal David's City" (*Hymns*, no. 205), watched a movie about the Nativity, and bore testimony of Jesus Christ.

It was a Christmas in simple circumstances, away from our families and the usual Christmas celebrations, but as we bore testimony of the Savior, I felt a deeper love and appreciation for Him and His birth than I had known before. I realized it would be my last Christmas in full-time missionary service to my Heavenly Father, but I understood that His Spirit could testify to me of His Son wherever I was.



## CHILDREN

### Looking to See the Savior

President Uchtdorf said that at Christmastime we should look for things that remind us of the Savior's life. Look up the scripture references below. Find the picture that matches each scripture, and write the reference below the picture.



Matthew 2:1-2



Luke 2:46



Luke 8:49-55



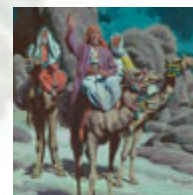
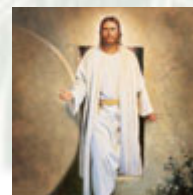
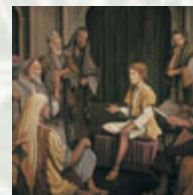
Matthew 15:32-38



Luke 23:33-34, 44-46



John 20:11-20







Faith • Family • Relief

# Our Responsibility to Participate in Temple and Family History Work

*Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.*

Over the centuries many people have died without knowledge of the gospel. Some of those people are your near and distant relatives. They are waiting for you to do the necessary research to link your families together and perform saving ordinances on their behalf.

Most of the temples of the world are not busy enough. The Lord has promised that your hearts would be turned to the fathers so that the earth would not be utterly wasted at His coming (see D&C 2:2–3).

There are personal blessings you receive as a result of participation in temple and family history work. One of these is the joy that you feel as you serve your ancestors. Another is that you are able to qualify for a temple recommend, which signifies your worthiness before the Lord. Those who are not worthy today of the privilege of having a recommend should be working with a bishop or branch president to qualify as soon as possible. Please don't be without this vital qualification. I testify that the Atonement is real and that sins can be forgiven upon proper repentance.

As we participate in temple and family history work, we are certain to have the Spirit to comfort us in our challenges and to guide us in important decisions. Temple and family history work is part of our work of providing relief, or service, to our own ancestors.

**Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president.**

## From the Scriptures

Malachi 4:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:29;

1 Peter 3:18–19; D&C 110:13–16; 128:24

For more information, go to [www.reliefsociety.lds.org](http://www.reliefsociety.lds.org).

## What Can I Do?

1. How can I help my sisters search out their ancestors and perform temple ordinances for them? Consider the circumstances of each sister as you ponder how to meet her needs. You might consider that family history work can often strengthen new, returning, and less-active members.
2. When has temple and family history work comforted me in my challenges or guided me in important decisions?

## From Our History

“The Prophet Joseph Smith said, ‘The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead’ (*History of the Church*, 6:313). From the beginning, Relief Society sisters have supported this great work. In Nauvoo in 1842, Sarah M. Kimball’s desire to help the temple construction workers prompted a group of sisters to organize themselves so that they could serve more effectively. As they began to meet, the Prophet . . . organized the first Relief Society after the pattern of the priesthood. From that time on, the Relief Society sisters helped further the work on the Nauvoo Temple. . . .

“In 1855, eight years after the Saints first arrived in Utah, the Endowment House was established. Eliza R. Snow, who had been one of the original members of the first Relief Society and had preserved the records of that organization, was called by President Brigham Young in 1866 to be the general Relief Society president. She and other sisters were faithful workers in the Endowment House. Then, as the St. George, Logan, and Manti Temples were completed, these sisters traveled to each temple so they could do work for the dead there.”<sup>1</sup>

### NOTE

1. Mary Ellen Smoot, “Family History: A Work of Love,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 15.





# Small & Simple Things

*"By small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6).*

## IN THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS

### A Christmas Memory

By President Thomas S. Monson

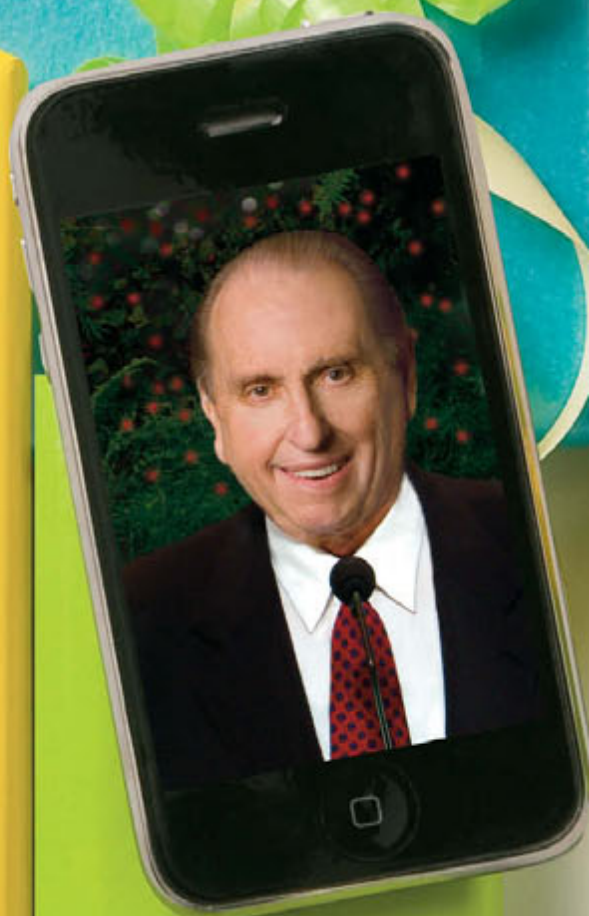
**A**t home in a hidden-away corner, I have a small black walking stick with an imitation silver handle. It once belonged to a distant relative. Why do I keep it for a period now spanning more than 70 years? There is a special reason. As a small boy I participated in a Christmas pageant in our ward. I was privileged to be one of the three Wise Men. With a bandanna about my head, Mother's piano bench cover

draped over my shoulder, and the black cane in my hand, I spoke my assigned lines: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). I vividly remember the feelings of my heart as the three of us "Wise Men" looked upward and saw a star, journeyed across the stage, found Mary with the young child Jesus, then fell down and worshipped Him and opened our treasures and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I especially liked the fact that we did not return to the evil Herod to betray the baby Jesus but obeyed God and departed another way.

The years have flown by, but the Christmas cane continues to occupy a special place in my home; and in my heart is a commitment to Christ.

*From "Treasured Gifts," Liahona, Dec. 2006, 3–4; Ensign, Dec. 2006, 5–6.*



#### ON THE CALENDAR

**D**ecember 5, 2010, is the date of the First Presidency Christmas Devotional. It features messages from the First Presidency and music from the Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square. Check with your local priesthood leader or at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org) for information about broadcast times and locations. It can also be viewed online at [www.broadcast.lds.org](http://www.broadcast.lds.org).





# The Power of Family Home Evening

**M**y husband, Luiz Antonio, and I have a great testimony of the power of family home evening and its ability to make our families stronger in the gospel. It hasn't always been easy to make the attempt, but over time it has made all the difference for us and our four children.

One of the most special moments that took place at family home evening was when our son, Renan, was preparing to be baptized. Our two older daughters, Cynthia and Lilian, offered to teach the lessons for the month preceding his eighth birthday. My husband and I loved watching them teach the meaning and purpose of baptism—the same lessons we had taught them as they prepared for baptism. Four years later Renan followed the examples of his older sisters and taught lessons about baptism to his younger sister, Ellen.

Family home evening continued to bless us and our children through the challenges of their teenage years. It helped them maintain their testimonies and stay faithful in the gospel. Today our son is a returned missionary, and our daughters have married in the temple and have children of their own.

Our testimony is that family home evening is one of the best programs of the Church. We know that following prophetic direction to consistently hold family home evening has brought great blessings to our lives, and we know it can bring blessings to any who are willing to follow that direction. We acknowledge that it requires a lot of work and planning, but for us the blessings of eternity will be worth every minute of those efforts.

Walkiria Santana Cairo, Brazil



## THE CHRISTMAS STORY

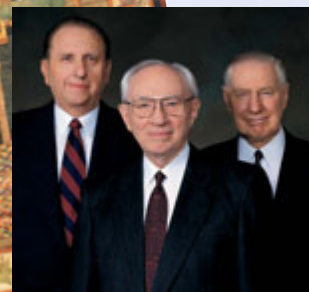
**M**any people are familiar with the Nativity story as told in Luke 1–2. But there are many other places in the scriptures that talk about the miraculous birth of the Savior Jesus Christ. Consider including these verses in your personal scripture study this month:

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT	BOOK OF MORMON	DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS	PEARL OF GREAT PRICE
Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7	Matthew 1–2	1 Nephi 10:4–6; 11:13–21	D&C 76:41	Moses 5:57
Micah 5:2	John 1:1–14	Alma 7:9–13	D&C 93:1–4	
		Helaman 14:1–9		
		3 Nephi 1		



## TIME FOR FAMILY HOME EVENING

For members of the Church, Monday night is synonymous with family home evening. But how did it all start? This time line tells the story.



1909

The Granite Utah Stake develops a formal family home evening program.

1915

President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency call on parents in the Church to gather their children once each week for a "Home Evening."

1935

President David O. McKay reminds parents that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home."<sup>1</sup>

1965

The first official family home evening manual is released; revised versions are released annually until 1984.

1970

The First Presidency designates Monday evening as the time for family home evening.

1985

The *Family Home Evening Resource Book* is introduced with broader source material and application.

1999

The First Presidency publishes a letter reminding members not to plan ward or stake activities on Monday nights or—where practical—not to have community activities on Monday nights.

## NOTE

1. David O. McKay, quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.

## FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS FOR THOSE WHO ARE SINGLE OR WITHOUT CHILDREN

- Study the scriptures, Relief Society or priesthood manuals, or articles from Church magazines.
- Work on your family history.
- Invite members of your ward or branch to share family home evening with you.
- Write letters to family members who live far away or to missionaries serving from your ward or branch.
- Serve others. Consider taking a meal to someone in need, visiting residents in a nursing home, or volunteering for a community project.





# UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE

By Dianne W. Stoddard

As the mother of four small children, I didn't seem to have a spare moment. During one of my busy and hectic days, our bishop called and asked if he could meet with my husband and me. To my surprise he called me to be Relief Society president.

I told the bishop I would have to pray about it. I just didn't know how I would be able to fulfill such a time-intensive calling at that time in my life. Feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty filled my mind, and I cried off and on for two days.

One of my visiting teachers, who had no idea what turmoil I was experiencing, called and made an appointment to see me. During her visit she shared a story about Emma Somerville McConkie, who had served as a Relief Society president during the early days of the Church in Utah. A woman in Sister McConkie's ward had several children, including a new baby. Because the woman's family was poor, Sister McConkie went daily to the home, taking food and helping the mother care for the child.

"One day [Sister McConkie] returned home especially tired and weary. She slept in her chair. She dreamed she was bathing a baby

which she discovered was the Christ Child. She thought, *Oh, what a great honor to thus serve the very Christ*. As she held the baby in her lap, she was all but overcome. . . . Unspeakable joy filled her whole being. . . . Her joy was so great it awakened her. As she awoke, these words were spoken to her, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"<sup>1</sup>

The story filled my heart and soul with comfort and peace. I knew that the Lord was aware of my circumstances, that He wanted me to serve the sisters in the ward, and that He would bless me so that I would be able to fulfill all of my responsibilities. I accepted the calling.

I am still amazed that I was able to fulfill my calling while tending to the needs and wants of my family, and I am grateful for a visiting teacher who was inspired to share a timely message. Since then I have never hesitated to accept a call. I have a testimony that when we serve our Heavenly Father, He blesses us with the time, energy, and ability we need to fulfill our callings. ■

## NOTE

1. Bruce R. McConkie, "Charity Which Never Faileth," *Relief Society Magazine*, Mar. 1970, 169; emphasis added.



## SERVING WISELY

It takes wisdom to balance leadership callings with the demands of family, work, and other responsibilities. Here are six suggestions:

1. **Focus on people not programs.** Focus council, presidency, and leadership meetings on people's needs.
2. **Be innovative.** Use creativity and the guidance of the Spirit within the framework of Church policies and principles.
3. **Delegate responsibility, and allow others to grow.** A leader should counsel, advise, and motivate but not do the work of others.
4. **Eliminate guilt.** Realize that we must do all things "in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27), giving greater attention to different priorities at different times.
5. **Do the best you can.** Understand your capabilities, pace yourself, and prioritize your resources to help others while protecting your health.
6. **Be mindful of the needs of new members.** Give them opportunities to learn the gospel, get to know other members, and give meaningful service.

From Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "O Be Wise," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 18–20.



# Helping Children Exercise Their AGENCY

*Just as Heavenly Father taught Adam and Eve about agency, we need to help our children understand and exercise theirs.*

**By Marcos Fernando dos Santos**

**W**hen Heavenly Father formed Adam and Eve, they were innocent. They didn't know a lot about life and its consequences. But Heavenly Father walked with them and taught them, and He was patient with them as they learned about their existence here.

As parents we also have the privilege to be with our little ones and teach them. However, I think that sometimes we may forget that our children are also the spirit children of our Heavenly Father. We have a responsibility to help them learn their first lessons, and it is our mission to guide them toward the Savior Jesus Christ.

If we follow the example of Heavenly Father in the Garden of Eden, we will take upon ourselves the responsibility of nurturing our children and instructing them about the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we do so, we need to teach them about the consequences of their actions. This is not an easy task, since we ourselves

are still learning, and we sometimes fail to do our Heavenly Father's will. And sometimes we want to step in and rescue our children even when they would benefit by learning from their mistakes.

Heavenly Father patiently taught Adam and Eve about agency from the beginning. He gave them commandments, consequences, and the ability to exercise their agency, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; nevertheless, *thou mayest choose for thyself*, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Moses 3:16–17; emphasis added).

We may wonder how to encourage our children to follow the commandments without forcing them to do so. There are several things we can do that can help. We can teach our children the gospel, especially from the scriptures, then live in accordance with

those principles. We can teach them by word and example to rely on our Heavenly Father and share with them the blessings that come through living the gospel. We can teach them that because of our weaknesses, we as parents need His love, mercy, and patience as much as our children do.

Sometimes, when our little ones misbehave, we may begin to lose hope, but our Father in Heaven will never lose hope in us. We must learn to see our children as our Heavenly Father sees us: as His sons and daughters with the potential to become like Him through the power and grace of His Son. We do not have the power to save our children, but we can be good examples

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL PARKER





and exercise faith in their behalf.

We are not here to force anyone to do Heavenly Father's will. Of course, the amount of freedom and responsibility we give our children will

depend on their age and abilities. As we help our children exercise their agency appropriately, it will be easier to teach them and love them, no matter what they do.

Our Heavenly Father knew that Adam and Eve would be tempted and would eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He had already prepared a way for them to come back through His Son. He sent an angel to teach them about the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, the principles of repentance, and how they could call upon God in the name of the Son and gain a remission of their sins through the mercy and love of Heavenly Father (see Moses 5).

As we express love for our children and teach them that even if they go astray, we will stand firm, hoping and praying for them that they will find joy through faith in Jesus Christ and true repentance. As we keep these principles in mind,

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING



"I have heard a few parents state that they don't want to impose the gospel on their children but

want them to make up their own minds about what they will believe and follow. They think that in this way they are allowing children to exercise their agency. What they forget is that the intelligent use of agency requires knowledge of the truth, of things as they really are (see D&C 93:24). Without that, young people can hardly be expected to understand and evaluate the alternatives that come before them."

**Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Moral Discipline," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 107.**

we will be blessed to be filled more abundantly with the pure love of Christ and will have greater success as parents (see D&C 121:41–46). ■





# JESUS CHRIST

## IS THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

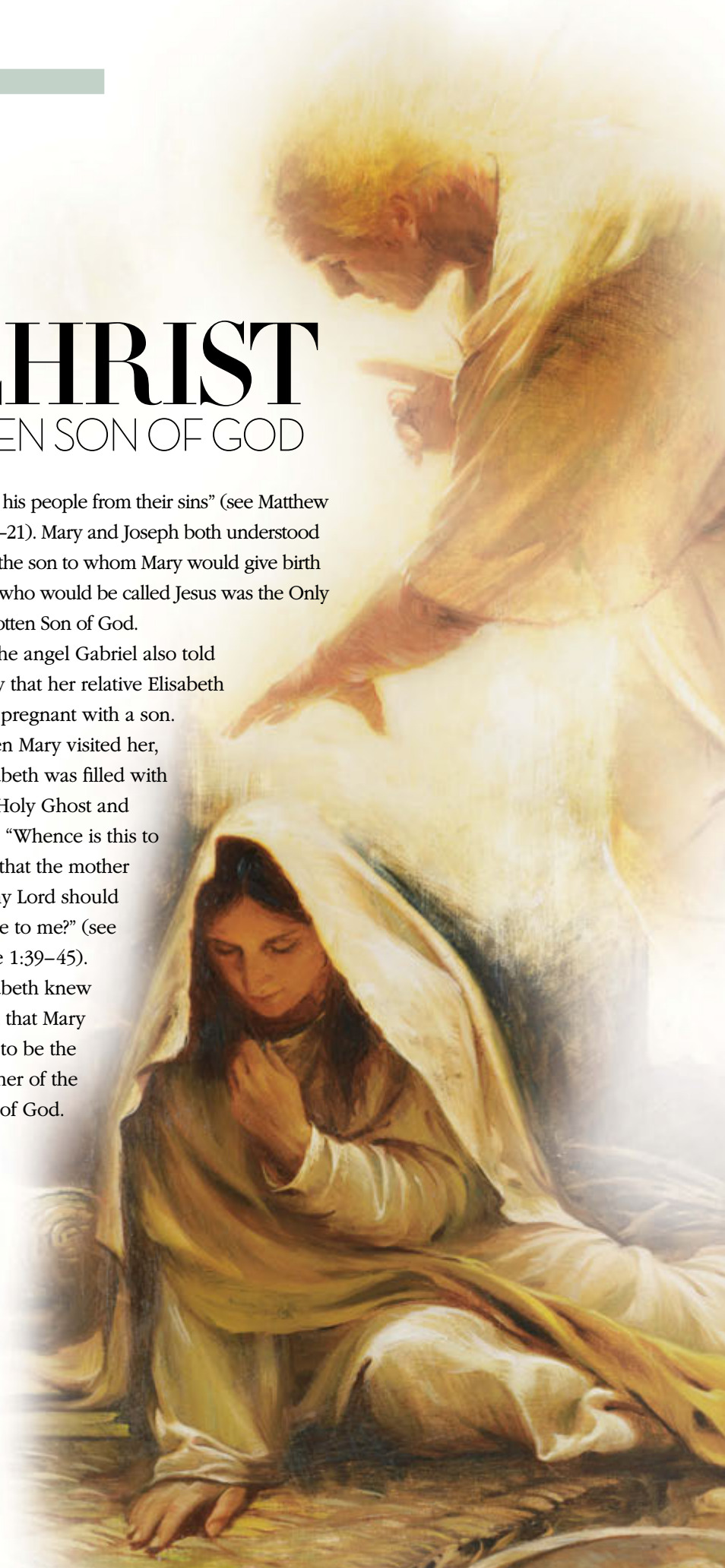
**J**esus was the only person to be born of a mortal mother, Mary, and an immortal father, God the Father. That is why Jesus is called the Only Begotten Son of God. From His Father, He inherited divine powers (see John 10:17–18). From His mother, He inherited mortality and became subject to hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, and death.

The mortal life of Jesus Christ began when He was born in Bethlehem. Luke gave this account: “The angel Gabriel was sent from God . . . to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph. . . . And the angel said unto her, . . . 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. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:26–27, 30–32, 35; see also 1 Nephi 11:16–21; Alma 7:10).

Matthew recorded that an angel also appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “[Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall

save his people from their sins” (see Matthew 1:20–21). Mary and Joseph both understood that the son to whom Mary would give birth and who would be called Jesus was the Only Begotten Son of God.

The angel Gabriel also told Mary that her relative Elisabeth was pregnant with a son. When Mary visited her, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and said, “Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (see Luke 1:39–45). Elisabeth knew then that Mary was to be the mother of the Son of God.



**Others also received a witness from the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Following are some of their testimonies.**

1. Some of the Savior's disciples were in a ship when they saw Jesus Christ walking on the water. They "came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).



2. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15, 16).



3. Before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He asked Lazarus's sister Martha if she believed He was "the resurrection, and the life." She answered, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John 11:25, 27).



4. Adam and Eve offered sacrifices as "a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:7).



5. God taught Adam that he must "be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ" (Moses 6:52).

*The Apostle John taught, "The Word [Jesus Christ] was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14; see also D&C 93:11).*



6. In the Americas, five years before the Savior's birth, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied, "The Son of God cometh to redeem all those who shall believe on his name" (Helaman 14:2). ■

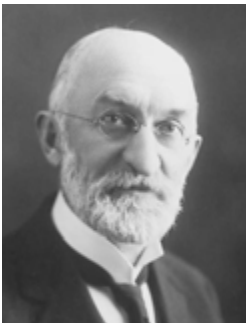
**For more information, see *Gospel Principles* (2009), 52–53; *True to the Faith* (2004), 87–89; and Richard C. Edgley, "The Condescension of God," *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 16–21.**



# THE STORY

## THAT IS EVER NEW

*No one ever lived upon the earth who exerted the same influence upon the destinies of the world as did our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.*



*Heber J. Grant, seventh President of the Church, was born on November 22, 1856. He was ordained an Apostle on October 16, 1882, at age 25, and on November 23, 1918, he was sustained as President of the Church. The following article is an excerpt from "Story of Old," Improvement Era, Dec. 1940, 713, 765.*

### By President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945)

**T**he story of Jesus the Christ is a story of old that ever remains new. The oftener I read of His life and labors the greater is the joy, the peace, the happiness, the satisfaction that fills my soul. There is ever a new charm comes to me in contemplating His words and the plan of life and salvation which He taught to men during His life upon the earth.

We all know that no one ever lived upon the earth who exerted the same influence upon the destinies of the world as did our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; and yet He was born in obscurity, cradled in a manger. He chose for His Apostles poor, unlettered fishermen. [More than] 1,900 years have passed and gone since His Crucifixion, and yet all over the

world, in spite of all strife and chaos, there is still burning in the hearts of millions of people a testimony of the divinity of the work that He accomplished. . . .

It is a source of unbounded joy to me and fills my heart beyond my power of expression to contemplate the fact that God our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ have visited the earth and again revealed the gospel to man; and it fills me with thanksgiving and gratitude, far beyond my power to tell, that He has blessed me with a knowledge of the divinity of the work in which we are engaged. My constant and earnest prayer to Him has always been that my mind should never become darkened, that I should never depart from the path of rectitude, but that as I grew in years I would increase in understanding, that the light and inspiration of the Spirit of God might burn in my heart and enlighten my understanding and keep me firm and faithful in serving my Heavenly Father.

And I want to say to the Latter-day Saints that it behooves us, having received a testimony of the divinity of the work in which we are engaged, so to order our lives from day to day that glory shall be brought to the work of



*Glory shall be brought to the work of God by the good deeds that we perform.*

God by the good deeds that we perform, so letting our light shine that men, seeing our good deeds, shall glorify God. No people upon the face of the earth have ever been blessed as have been the Latter-day Saints; no people have ever had the manifestations of the kindness and mercy and long-suffering of God that have been bestowed upon us, and I say we, above all men and women upon the earth, should live godlike and upright lives. ■

*Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized.*



# Lullaby for Timothy

By Katherine Clement Poulsen

*My heart ached for my struggling baby until I remembered the gifts brought by another Child 2,000 years ago.*

I remember the terrifying words of my labor nurse: “I think he has some anomalies.” At the same time, the population in the delivery room escalated to allow for the resuscitation of my severely compromised newborn.

I had lived similar scenes many times before, but from the other side, as a nurse. I was supposed to be the one reviving the newborn. Now I was the mom reaching through an incubator door to touch the hand of my son, while a transport team waited to take him to another hospital.

The next morning I received a telephone call from the newborn intensive care unit (NICU), where my husband, Andrew, sat surrounded by doctors, as they explained the surgery Timothy would immediately require to remove giant abdominal tumors.

I clung to the hope that surgery would cure our child and that he would lead a normal, happy life. I envisioned him as a chubby toddler with a cute scar, a reminder of the short-lived scare he gave his parents.

Three weeks later in that same

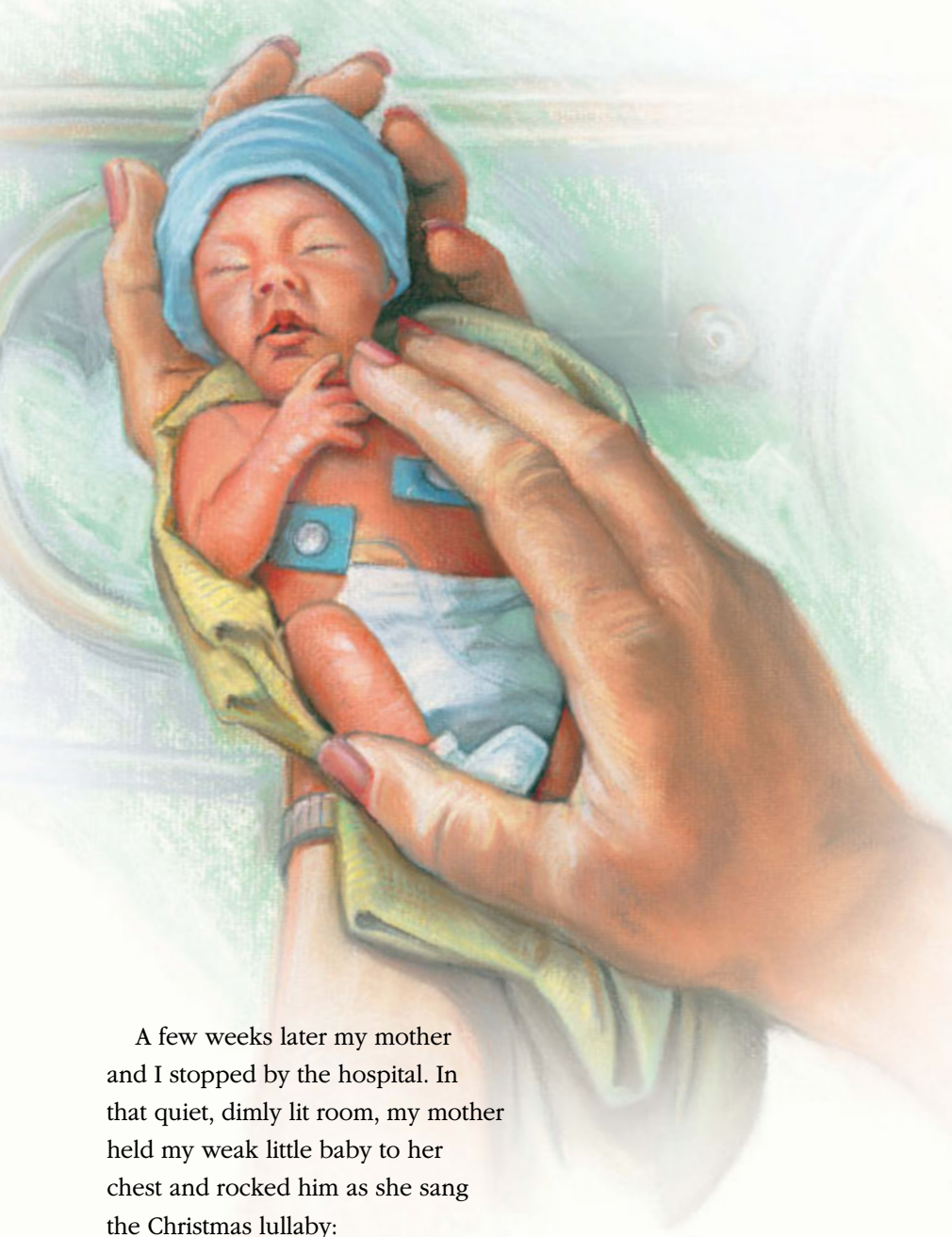
hospital conference room, a neurologist attempted to explain the brain malformation that would leave our child with significant cognitive delay, speech difficulty, and eventually seizures.

A few days after that, in the same room, the neonatologist said, “I can’t conceive that Timothy will go home without a feeding tube.” Our baby was an emaciated three pounds (1.4 kg) less than at birth, anemic, and virtually unresponsive to stimulation. When offered a bottle, his suck was weak at best, and he choked on its contents.

Expectations for our baby seemed reduced to nothing. My world was crashing down on me. I questioned the Lord’s promise that He will never allow a trial that is beyond one’s capacity to bear. I felt this burden was crushing me physically, mentally, and spiritually. During long daily hours at the hospital, I longed to be with my two older children and to resume our peaceful life. When I was at home, I obsessed over the welfare of my baby and, honestly, what I thought were our newly destroyed lives.

At my lowest point I pleaded with the Lord, letting Him know all the wonderful ways I would serve Him if He would just take Timothy back, let me mourn his loss, and allow me to get on with my life. Anything else was clearly more than I could handle.

While all of this was going on, my own personal miracle was beginning. Many members of our ward, along with several family members and friends, were fasting and praying for our family. One Sunday morning when I woke up, I had a strong impression that something great was going to happen that day as a result of all the fasting and prayers. I was hoping, of course, that Timothy would suddenly become alert and miraculously begin to feed. When I arrived in the NICU, Timothy was as nonresponsive as ever, and he still had no interest in bottle-feeding. Naturally, I was disappointed, but as I held him, an intense feeling came over me that he was going to be OK. I didn’t know what “OK” meant, but I had no doubt the Lord was in charge and was aware of our family.



A few weeks later my mother and I stopped by the hospital. In that quiet, dimly lit room, my mother held my weak little baby to her chest and rocked him as she sang the Christmas lullaby:

*Oh, hush thee, my baby; a story  
I'll tell,  
How little Lord Jesus on earth came  
to dwell;  
How in a far country, 'way over  
the sea,  
Was born a wee baby, my dear one,  
like thee.  
Lullaby baby, lullaby dear.  
Sleep, little baby; have nothing  
to fear.  
Lullaby baby, lullaby dear.  
Jesus will care for his little one  
here.<sup>1</sup>*

I knew peace would come through my Savior, who came to this earth to bring peace and eternal happiness for each of us. Surely He would care for this dear little one and lift those of us who were chosen to care for him.

A few weeks later Timothy was transferred to the special-care nursery where I currently work. There he miraculously learned how to eat. And I again experienced an incredible feeling that he would be OK. And although he has improved in so many

ways, I still don't know exactly what that means. But I have had such a comforting presence with me since that time. And whenever I find something that I probably should worry about, that feeling washes over me, and the message is the same: "Don't worry. Everything is going to be OK. Just enjoy him."

This Christmas season my thoughts turn to the beautiful gifts the Savior has given us. In so many ways He allows us to have peace here on earth. One of the most wonderful gifts of peace is the opportunity to prayerfully do all we can and then give *our* sorrows to *Him*.

By putting our trust in the Lord, we can give our worries to Him, and He in turn will lift us, giving special gifts to sustain us—often through other people. For me these gifts came in the form of babysitters for my two older children, meals from ward members, wonderful nurses and doctors, and loving support from family and friends. The most powerful gift, however, has been the peace granted by Heavenly Father as His Son has carried my sorrows and worries. Because of Him, I am free to love and enjoy baby Timothy and to celebrate all of the people and blessings that have been placed in my path because of his special life. ■

**NOTE**

1. "Oh, Hush Thee, My Baby," *Children's Songbook*, 48.





By Elder  
Spencer J. Condie

Served as a  
member of the Seventy  
from 1989 to 2010



# HANDEL AND THE GIFT OF MESSIAH

*At the end of our divinely ordained days,  
may we be able to acknowledge, with Handel,  
that God has visited us.*

George Frideric Handel seemed to have been born a musician. As a young lad in Germany, he became proficient on both the violin and the organ. After composing his first opera in Germany, he moved to Italy, the operatic center of the world, to try his hand at musical composition in the Italian style. There he achieved some success in composing operas and chamber music.

In 1711, at age 26, Handel decided to move to England, where his operas and oratorios initially gained acceptance. By the late 1730s, however, British audiences had become less enthusiastic about operas sung in German or Italian; instead, they favored comedic performances such as *The Beggar's Opera*. Thus, for several years Handel struggled to keep the wolves—his creditors—away from the door.



In 1737, after pushing himself to his physical limits by composing four operas within 12 months, the 52-year-old composer suffered a stroke, leaving his right arm temporarily paralyzed. A doctor told Handel's faithful secretary: "We may save the man—but the musician is

lost forever. It seems to me that his brain has been permanently injured."<sup>1</sup>

The composer defied the diagnosis. Over time his body responded to treatment in the thermal springs at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen, Germany), and he recovered his physical strength. After testing his ability to play the organ at a nearby cathedral, he jubilantly proclaimed, "I have come back from Hades."<sup>2</sup>

When he returned to London and resumed composing operas, his work was not well received, and creditors began to hound him again. In the depths of despondency, he



*A poet and previous collaborator left Handel a manuscript that quoted liberally from the scriptures, particularly the words of Isaiah, foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ and describing His ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.*



began to wonder, “Why did God permit my resurrection, only to allow my fellow-men to bury me again?”<sup>3</sup> In April 1741 Handel held what he assumed would be a farewell concert. His creativity was spent. A biographer wrote: “There was nothing to begin or to finish. Handel was faced with emptiness.”<sup>4</sup>

Late one August afternoon that same year, Handel returned from a long and tiring walk to find that a poet and previous collaborator,

Charles Jennens, had left him a manuscript. This libretto quoted liberally from the scriptures, particularly the words of Isaiah, foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ and describing His ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. The work was to be an oratorio. Given his previous failures, Handel was apprehensive as he began to read through the text.

“Comfort Ye,” the first words of the manuscript, seemed to leap from the page. They dissipated dark clouds that had been pressing upon Handel for so long. His depression waned and his emotions warmed from interest to excitement as he continued to read of angelic proclamations of the Savior’s birth and of Isaiah’s prophecies of the Messiah, who would come to earth to be born as other mortal infants. A familiar melody Handel had composed earlier flooded into his mind as he read “For unto Us a Child Is Born.” The notes distilled upon his mind faster than he could put pencil to paper as he captured the image of the loving Good Shepherd in the aria titled “He Shall Feed His Flock.” Then came the overpowering exultation reflected in the “Hallelujah Chorus,” followed by the soft, supernal testimony of “I Know That My Redeemer Liveth.” The work came to its majestic conclusion with “Worthy Is the Lamb.”

After all the music he had composed throughout his lifetime, Handel would eventually be known worldwide for this singular work, *Messiah*, largely composed in just three weeks during the late summer of 1741. Upon completing his composition, he humbly acknowledged, “God has visited me.”<sup>5</sup> Those who feel the touch of the Holy Spirit as they experience the overpowering testimony of Handel’s *Messiah* would agree.

# “IF I WERE THERE”

*Words and music written by a young man from South Africa encourage each of us to think deeply about the Savior, not only at Christmas but always.*

The tune begins as gently as a whisper, a melody that fills your soul as quickly as it fills your ears. It becomes even more memorable when the choir begins singing:

*If I were there to see this man arrive,  
this man, a carpenter called Jesus,  
When I would see thousands flock  
to Him, would I not follow them  
and hear Him?*

*When I would see Him, with one  
glance would I know Him  
instantly?*

*Would I know that He is the Christ?*

Look at the choir, and you can see that all the members are singing from their hearts. Look at the accompanists carefully constructing each chord and the sound technicians balancing the entire performance into well-blended harmony. Look and see the young adults of the Pretoria South Africa Stake, themselves a blend of backgrounds and experiences, joining their voices together in praise of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And at the center of it all is a 20-year-old conductor who penned every word, composed every note, coordinated each rehearsal and performance, and created what ended up as a Christmas present for his friends, for Church members, for the community, and even for his Savior and his Father in Heaven.

Michael McLeod, who will soon be serving a full-time mission, didn't expect his celebration to grow into such an event—performances at four chapels, each one filled to capacity with hundreds

of thrilled audience members. He was simply responding to an assignment given to the young single adults (YSA) of his stake to prepare a cantata, a program of music and words to help people worship the Savior. In fact, the program was originally scheduled for June or July 2009 but after several delays was moved to December.

“When the stake YSA representatives told me what they'd been asked to do, I instantly said, ‘Why don't we use original music instead of borrowing other people's music?’” Michael remembers. The YSA representatives agreed. And they also knew just the right person to put it all together—Michael McLeod.

Michael is a University of Pretoria student, majoring in English and mathematics education. “What I really want to be is a teacher,” he says. But Michael has always been interested in music. In fact, he studied it seriously until he was 17.

“Music became my hobby,” he explains, “and I still love it. I love the way music is able to touch people's hearts. I love to conduct and to feel the energy that comes from a choir, especially when it's a gospel song. I love to watch the

congregation as the music draws them in and to feel the Spirit as they feel the Spirit. I think I'll be involved with music my whole life because it means so much to me.”

But most of all, Michael loves to share his testimony of the Savior, and doing that with music at Christmastime became a perfect opportunity. “The whole point was to share our testimonies of the Savior through the music and the words of the cantata,” he says. “We wanted powerful music and at the same time to have powerful testimonies, so we used the testimonies from the scriptures of people who knew the Savior: Mary, Joseph, Anna, Simeon, Peter, James, John the Beloved, Mary Magdalene, and those Christ healed and taught. We tried to convey what they knew, and it's powerful. We also used the Savior's own testimony. It came together wonderfully.”



TO SEE A VIDEO OF PORTIONS OF THE CANTATA, GO TO [WWW.LIAHONA.LDS.ORG](http://WWW.LIAHONA.LDS.ORG).



*Each of us, like Handel, is engaged in a creative spiritual enterprise in this life. I pray that we may be sensitive to inspiration from on high, that we may be inspired in such a way that the fruits of our labors are inspiring to others.*



To the sponsors of the first performance of the oratorio, Handel stipulated that profits from this and all future performances of *Messiah* “be donated to prisoners, orphans, and the sick. I have myself been a very sick man, and am now cured,” he said. “I was a prisoner, and have been set free.”<sup>6</sup>

Following the first London performance of *Messiah*, a patron congratulated Handel on the excellent “entertainment.”

“My lord, I should be sorry if I only entertained them,” Handel humbly replied. “I wish to make them better.”<sup>7</sup>

He had finally been relieved of his restless quest for fame, fortune, and public praise—but only after composing his crowning work for an audience that included those not of this earth. The things that mattered most were no longer at the mercy of the things that mattered least. Handel, the restless composer, was now at rest.

### Lessons from Handel's Life

What lessons may we learn from the life of George Frideric Handel and the composition of a piece of music that has become a spiritual landmark?

1. **We must develop confidence in our abilities and learn to live with criticism of our work.** In the words of poet Rudyard Kipling: “Trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too.”<sup>8</sup>
2. **Quantity is no substitute for quality and variety.** Handel's earlier operas have largely been forgotten. Their predictable, formulaic templates simply failed to inspire; each opera sounded much like the others he had composed.
3. **When we act on inspiration, we are doing the work of heaven.** We cannot force the Spirit, but when inspiration and revelation come, we must listen and act upon the promptings. The Lord has promised that “the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things” (D&C 33:16).



**4. We must acknowledge our source of inspiration and revelation.**

We are only instruments in the work we do that blesses others. We must realize, as Handel did when he deflected the honor given upon his achievement, that “God has visited [us].”

**5. We must never underestimate the power of the word.** There is a power in the word of God that far surpasses the narratives of this world’s most gifted writers (see Alma 31:5).

**6. Real spiritual meaning in a work is conveyed by the witness of the Holy Ghost.** “When [an individual speaks or sings] by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

**7. Power is in God and His works, not in our words.** Speaking of the professors of religion of the day, the Savior told Joseph Smith, “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, . . . having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19). Handel had composed other oratorios and operas with biblical texts, but the form of his

music did not match the power of the scriptures—Isaiah’s powerful prophecies of the Savior’s birth and ministry or the fulfillment of those prophecies as found in Revelation and the Gospels of Luke and John. In Handel’s *Messiah*, we find both the form of godliness *and* the power thereof. In *Messiah*, lips *and* hearts are drawn nearer to heaven.

Each of us, like George Frideric Handel, is engaged in a creative spiritual enterprise in this life. Both the physical fostering of mortal life and the righteous living of our days on earth are spiritual achievements. I pray that we may be sensitive to inspiration from on high, that we may be inspired in such a way that the fruits of our labors are inspiring to others. As we seek to rescue others, may we not be bound by time-tested templates and self-imposed perceptions that restrict our spiritual creativity and lock out revelation.

In her epic poem, *Aurora Leigh*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressed the eloquent thought:

*Earth’s crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.<sup>9</sup>*

May each of us unlatch our shoes and cram our labors with the essence of heaven, and may none of us be found plucking blackberries when a much grander, loftier work needs to be done.

And at the end of our divinely ordained days, may we be able to acknowledge, with Handel, that God has visited us in our labors. ■

**NOTES**

1. In Stefan Zweig, *The Tide of Fortune: Twelve Historical Miniatures* (1940), 104.
2. In *The Tide of Fortune*, 107.
3. In *The Tide of Fortune*, 108.
4. In *The Tide of Fortune*, 110.
5. In *The Tide of Fortune*, 121.
6. In *The Tide of Fortune*, 122.
7. In Donald Burrows, *Handel: Messiah* (1991), 28; see also “A Tribute to Handel,” *Improvement Era*, May 1929, 574.
8. Rudyard Kipling, “If—,” in *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, sel. Hazel Felleman (1936), 65.
9. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 619.





**By Elder  
Neil L. Andersen**

Of the Quorum of  
the Twelve Apostles

# A Gift Worthy of Added Care

*With all the blessings our modern age has given to us,  
let us not give up the things that promote the workings  
of the Holy Ghost.*

**I**t has been more than 50 years, but I vividly remember Christmas morning 1959. With childish anticipation, I hoped desperately for a new bicycle. My older brother and sister and I shared the same bicycle, a 24-inch (61 cm) antique we had each used to learn to ride. It had long been less than stylish, and I had appealed to my parents for a new bicycle. Looking back, I am a little embarrassed that I did not have more sensitivity to the cost of such a present to a family with limited income.

Christmas morning came, and I leaped up the stairs from our basement bedroom. Running into the living room, I looked in vain for a bicycle. My heart dropped as I noticed a small present under my stocking, and I tried to control my disappointment.

As we sat as a family in the living room, my father asked me to get a knife from the adjoining kitchen so we could open a box holding a present for my brother. I walked into the small kitchen and fumbled for the light switch to find my way. As the light illuminated the room, my excitement soared. Right before me stood a beautiful black 26-inch (66 cm) bicycle! For many years I rode that bicycle, took care of it, watched over it, and befriended it—a gift long appreciated and treasured.

## **A Greater Gift**

Just three months before that Christmas, I had been given another gift far more important and consequential than a bicycle. I had been baptized and given the gift of the Holy Ghost. In those early years and perhaps too often in the many years since then, I was like the Lamanites the Savior described as being “baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20).

Jesus stressed the incalculable value of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). And to ease the difficulty of His announcement to His disciples that He would shortly leave them, the Savior promised this heavenly gift: “I will send him [the Comforter] unto you” (John 16:7).

This is a gift of enormous power. From the scriptures we learn what this gift will bring to those who eagerly receive it: “The Holy Ghost . . . beareth record of the Father and of the Son” (D&C 20:27; see also 1 Corinthians 12:3; 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 42:17). The Holy Ghost teaches us all things and brings all things to our remembrance (see John 14:26). He guides us to truth





and shows us things to come (see John 16:13). He enlightens our mind and fills our soul with joy (see D&C 11:13). By His power we may know the truth of all things (see Moroni 10:5). He will unfold the mysteries of God unto us (see 1 Nephi 10:19).

He shows us what we should do (see 1 Nephi 4:6; D&C 8:2). He inspires those we teach (see 2 Nephi 33:1). More important, the remission

**As disciples of Christ, we must make the gift of the Holy Ghost a conscious, daily, prayerful part of our lives.**

of sins comes through the Atonement “by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost” (D&C 19:31; see also 2 Nephi 31:17), allowing us finally to be sanctified by this gift and to stand spotless before Christ at the last day (see 3 Nephi 27:20).

This gift of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost is available only to those who have been baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Ghost can influence at times all seekers of truth, but the *gift* of the Holy Ghost is reserved in its fulness for those who have taken upon themselves the covenants of the restored gospel.<sup>2</sup> This gift is real. It is a supernal blessing to members of the Church.

The Holy Ghost is not a gift reserved only for the few—the patriarch, the devoted visiting teacher, the inspired friend—but is promised to

all of us if we diligently seek our way back to our heavenly home. President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) emphasized the need every Saint has for the Holy Ghost: “Let us labor to obtain the Holy Spirit. . . . This is the Spirit that we must have to carry out the purposes of God on the earth. We need that more than any other gift. . . . We should pray to the Lord until we get the Comforter. This is what is promised to us when we are baptized. It is the spirit of light, of truth, and of revelation, and can be with all of us at the same time.”<sup>3</sup>

### The Need for Personal Inspiration

We live in a time when transportation, communication, and access to information all tower in comparison to the past. But moral issues such as honesty, chastity, Sabbath observance, family responsibility, and even the sanctity of life—issues long held in unison by the world and by Latter-day Saints—now find themselves interpreted in every way and open to debate (see D&C 1:16).

As the developments of technology and communication ever press the modern world upon us, being in the world but not of the world requires that we make constant choices and decisions (see John 17:14). Spiritual discernment is paramount. As disciples of Christ, we must make the gift of the Holy Ghost a conscious, daily, prayerful part of our lives. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said, “No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration.”<sup>4</sup>

How can we use this heavenly gift as a vital compass for our daily actions? We must believe that even in our weaknesses, the still, small voice we feel comes from our Father. We must pray and ask and seek and then not be afraid when



answers come into our heart and mind. Believe they are divine. They are.

In February 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. President Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Saints. The Prophet said: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful and sure to keep the Spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach [them what] to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to *keep their hearts open to conviction* so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it.”<sup>5</sup>

Believing that revelation will come to you as well as to others is keeping your heart open to conviction.

### Workings of the Holy Ghost

Examples of how the Holy Ghost works daily in the lives of members of the Church are numerous and inspirational. Most are quiet and personal, seen only as dramatic when we look back at the changes they brought. Think of your own experiences as you read a sampling of experiences that have been shared with me.

- A woman had been thinking about some of the job options she might pursue as her children returned to

school. As she sat in sacrament meeting, the stake president stood to bear his testimony. He read a scripture: “Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you” (Alma 39:14). That verse sank deep into her heart that Sabbath day as a spiritual confirmation of the things she should pursue during the coming year.

- An eight-year-old child was baptized and then confirmed a member of the Church, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost at the hands of his father and grandfather. As the boy happily stood to share his testimony, he unexpectedly felt such emotion that he could scarcely speak. A brother recounting that experience said, “I felt the feelings of the Spirit so strongly at that time.”
- A missionary and his companion knocked on the door of an investigator to whom they had given a Book of Mormon. As the elderly woman answered the door, the missionary felt a powerful feeling flood over him. The woman welcomed the missionaries and explained that she had read and believed what they had taught her. The young missionary was so affected by the feeling he felt that he prayed, “Dear Father, please let me never forget the feeling I have felt today.”
- A young college student far from home had begun to feel terribly alone. She pleaded in her prayers that she might receive help in her crisis. One morning in class, she felt an extraordinary feeling of comfort. A thought came into her mind: “You are never alone.” Her prayers were answered, and her feeling of homesickness was gone.
- A faithful father was en route to help a son who had made some wrong choices and now would suffer the consequences of his choices. In the long silent hours it took him to reach his son, the father prayed as he anguished over his son’s mistakes. Then came into this father’s mind clearly and distinctly this thought: “He is My son also.”
- A 16-year-old Laurel sat in a Sunday School class listening to a teacher. It was Easter time, and the teacher



had prepared a lesson on the Atonement. Speaking about the suffering the Savior had endured, he talked about what it meant to bleed at every pore, to be scourged, and to suffer on the cross. The young woman had never thought about the Atonement in such detail. There came into her mind a mental image. More than 25 years later, she spoke emotionally about the experience: “On that day the Holy Ghost testified to me that Jesus is the Christ.”

### The Importance of Obedience

We live in an age when the most corrosive elements of evil surround us. Communication technology, which brings many wonderful things into our lives, also invades our communities—and even our homes if we are not careful—with that which can quickly numb us to the gift of the Holy Ghost. We must be vigilant as to what we allow to influence our spirits.

If you want greater clarity in understanding and believing the still, small voice, there is no better medicine than greater obedience. Jesus said unto His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, suggested a simple solution for selecting the right voice to follow: “Listen to and follow the voice of the Spirit. This is an ancient solution, even eternal, and may not be popular in a society that is always looking for something new. It requires patience in a world that demands instant gratification. This solution is quiet, peaceful, and subtle in a world enamored of that which is loud, incessant, fast paced, garish, and crude. This solution requires you to be contemplative. . . . This solution requires us to walk by faith in a world governed by sight.”<sup>6</sup>

### Quiet Time for Reflection

I have thought at times how different my children’s lives are from my own growing up on a small family farm



in southern Idaho in the 1950s and 1960s. Long days building a fence with my father, silent hours of moving irrigation pipe in potato fields, a home with one television that received only three channels, no computer, no MP3s, no mobile phones, few trips beyond nearby towns, few distractions, and much time with family—these were the building blocks of many of my generation.

In today’s world we must provide quiet, reflective times for our children and teach them how to listen to the still, small voice. With all the blessings our modern age has given to us, let us not give up the things that promote the workings of the Holy Ghost: time alone to pray, ponder, meditate, and read the scriptures; and time with family undisturbed by noise, distractions, and too many activities.

### Responding to Promptings

By following the feelings that come to us, we learn to trust that they do come from our Father. We “grow up” (D&C 109:15) in learning to discern this voice.

President Thomas S. Monson has counseled us to never postpone a prompting. “We watch. We wait. We listen for that still, small voice,” he said in general conference. “When it speaks, wise men and women obey. We do not postpone following promptings of the Spirit.”

President Monson then shared an experience about a friend named Stan, whose illness had left him partially paralyzed. Despite the finest medical care and the prayers of family and friends, Stan remained confined to a bed and began to despair.

“Late one afternoon I was swimming at the Deseret Gym, gazing at the ceiling while backstroking width after width,” President Monson recalled. “Silently, but ever so clearly, there came to my mind the thought: ‘Here you swim almost effortlessly, while your friend Stan languishes in his hospital bed, unable to move.’ I felt the prompting: ‘Get to the hospital and give him a blessing.’

“I ceased my swimming, dressed, and hurried to Stan’s room at the hospital. His bed was empty. A nurse said he was in his wheelchair at the swimming pool, preparing for therapy. I hurried to the area, and there was Stan, all alone, at the edge of the deeper portion of the pool. We greeted one another and returned to his room, where a priesthood blessing was provided.”

Stan eventually regained strength and movement in his legs and learned to walk again. President Monson continued: “To some [Stan] reveals the dark thoughts of depression which engulfed him that afternoon as he sat in his wheelchair at the edge of the pool, sentenced, it seemed, to a life of despair. He tells how he pondered the alternative. It would be so easy to propel the hated wheelchair into the silent water of the deep pool. Life would then be over. But at that precise moment he saw me, his friend. That day Stan learned literally that we do not walk alone. I, too, learned a lesson that day: Never, never, never postpone following a prompting.”<sup>7</sup>

The Lord, in speaking of His Second Coming, emphasized that the gift of the Holy Ghost must be powerfully active among His Saints: “For they

that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day” (D&C 45:57).

We live in a wonderful day of opportunity, learning, and prosperity. But with these wonders come also the degrading deceits of the adversary, trying to push their way into the fabric of our

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lives, even attempting to burrow into the safe refuge of our homes. If we will receive the Holy Ghost as our guide and be wise in knowing, guarding, and building upon this gift, we will not be deceived. And as evil increases in the world, there will be a compensating power of the gift of the Holy Ghost for the righteous.

As we give greater care to this divine gift, we “shall abide the day” and again live with our Heavenly Father. ■

#### NOTES

1. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 49.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Always Have His Spirit,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 59–61.
3. *Teachings: Wilford Woodruff*, 41, 51.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 23.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 98; emphasis added.
6. James E. Faust, “Voice of the Spirit,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, June 2006, 6.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 68, 70.



# Christmas

## OF THE SEVENTY

*Members of the Seventy share how they celebrate the season and remember the Savior's birth.*



**H**ow can we celebrate Christmas so it is meaningful to each member of the family? How can we keep the Savior at the center of Christmas? What traditions can help us remember Him and His birth?

Members of the Seventy from various countries and cultures share ways they have answered these questions for themselves and their loved ones. Here they share some meaningful Christmas memories, testimonies, and traditions. (Their native countries are listed in parentheses.)



**Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis (Brazil):**

Christmas is a very special opportunity for my family and me to talk about some sacred things that we don't address in perhaps the same formal and specific way during other times of the year. It is an opportunity to show love to others and gratitude for things that have happened in our lives.



**Elder David S. Baxter (Scotland):** When our children were young, we would go carol singing on Christmas Eve, delivering gifts of Yule logs to less-active families in our ward.



**Elder Gérald Caussé (France):** In our family we have decided that Christmas is not just about having fun together, but it is also about focusing on Christ and serving others. About 10 years ago we formed a choir of family members. We went to hospitals and retirement homes and sang Christmas songs. At first it was a small group. We had babies in our arms and in strollers. But now these babies have grown up, and they are seasoned choristers. We have a 44-person choir sharing not only traditional French carols but also Church hymns, and we find great

We would light candles on Christmas Eve, read the Christmas story, have a special family meal, and then enjoy Christmas together.

# Traditions



success. After singing, the children go and distribute to the sick or elderly little presents we have prepared as a family. We try to have time with each person, talking about the true meaning of Christmas and also listening to him or her. Everyone always has a lot to share.

Our visits are special occasions to remember what we know about being a Christian and bearing the name of Christ. Christmas is a good reminder of how we need to behave during the whole year.



**Elder Eduardo Gavarret (Uruguay):**

Christmas is a special time in our lives. We are always filled with a warm feeling during that time. When the month of December arrives, we find that Christmas is a time of peace and being together with family. We have the tradition of writing letters to our friends, but we especially enjoy writing letters to the Savior and putting them on the Christmas tree as a gift we want to give Him.



**Elder Carlos A. Godoy (Brazil):** As a family we write our testimonies in copies of the Book of Mormon and send them to friends and relatives as Christmas gifts. Because it's Christmas, gifts are always welcome. And it's a nice way to share the gospel and to remember that Christ is the most important part of the day.



**Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. (South Africa):** On Christmas Eve we enjoy a sit-down dinner, after which we read Luke's account of the Savior's birth. On Christmas morning, dressed in our Sunday best, we attend a short Christmas meeting. At this meeting we also have a number of nonmembers and less-active members attend. Later we visit with friends and other family members at family gatherings and there strengthen our family ties in the true spirit of Christmas.





**Elder Donald L. Hallstrom (USA):** On Christmas Eve in years past we would gather to have a sweet and memorable period of testimony bearing. Each family member was given opportunity to express his or her feelings about the Savior and about our Father in Heaven. Those deep feelings of love would then turn us to one another, and expressions of love for family members would be most heartfelt. My father would then express his vision for the family and give powerful encouragement to each family member to remain true to the faith. Then in unity we would kneel together in a closing family prayer.



**Elder Paul V. Johnson (USA):** One of our traditions is that every year we attend a sing-in of Handel's *Messiah* as a family. We love that. We each have a score of the music, and it gives us a chance to sing the beautiful words, put to music by Handel, and recall the Savior's ministry.



**Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi (Japan):** Starting about 30 days before Christmas, my wife and I try to read the words of the prophets from the scriptures regarding the Savior's birth. If you read each day until December 25, you feel the Christmas spirit gradually build up, story by story, scripture by scripture. That's what we try to do in our family.

I always remember Nephi's reply to the angel's question about the meaning of the tree in his father's dream. Nephi said, "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22). To me, Christmas is about the love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.



**Elder Erich W. Kopischke (Germany):** During this season, the whole house changes visibly. Boughs of fir trees are decorated, candle arches are placed in the windows, and strings of lights are hung. The children put Christmas decorations in their rooms, cookies and gingerbread are baked, and an aroma permeates the entire house—the scent of fir trees and cinnamon.



Christmas Eve is a favorite time for us to invite family and friends to our home. We light candles and start a fire in the fireplace. We have prepared special songbooks containing Christmas carols we like to sing. I bring out my accordion, and every person chooses a carol that we sing together. There is a special spirit that everyone enjoys.

Then we open presents. The little children go first. Everyone watches and shares the excitement as each present is unwrapped. After all the presents have been opened, the children quickly disappear with their treasures. The adults stay and chat. It's really like a special family home evening.

Sometimes we invite people over for Christmas Eve who might otherwise be lonely. These Christmases are particularly nice.



**Elder Michael John U. Teh (Philippines):** Christmas for me means Christ and my family. It is an opportunity to recommit myself to do better in my relationship with our Heavenly Father and the Savior and in how I am as a husband and a father. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend

sacrament meeting throughout the year because it is a time for me to renew those covenants and remember Christmas. It can be like Christmas every week, a time when I recommit myself to remember the Savior.



**Elder José A. Teixeira (Portugal):** The best way for our family to maintain and keep the spirit of Christmas, not only during the season but also throughout the year, is by reading the scriptures. As we read the scriptures as a family, we remind ourselves of the Savior and the true spirit of Christmas.

Christmas to my family and me really means Jesus Christ. It's a time of giving, a time of receiving, a time of reconnecting with our families, and a time to extend greater amounts of love to those around us.



**Elder Francisco J. Viñas (Spain):** I want to share with you an experience we had during my service as mission president in 1989. While we served in the Argentina Salta Mission, a





few days before Christmas, we received instruction from the Missionary Department that the missionaries had to stay in their apartments until further notice because of the invasion of Panama by the United States.

On the morning of December 24th, we loaded the mission cars and divided the mission into two parts: the assistants went to the north part of the mission, and my eight-year-old son and I went to the south of the mission. The purpose was to visit each companionship in their apartment, deliver food, and share a Christmas message with them. This was a great experience for my son and me. Being in each apartment and sharing with the missionaries was a wonderful experience for both of us—one we always cherish as a great Christmas memory.

My wife and two daughters stayed in the mission home, and my son and I returned in the early morning of December 25th. That was the first time that we were not together as a family for Christmas Eve, but it was for us the most memorable of Christmases.



**Elder Jorge F. Zeballos (Chile):** When you have a testimony of Jesus Christ—that He lives, that He is our Savior, our Redeemer—the best way to manifest your love for Him is by being obedient to His commandments. So to me, the best way to remember Him, not only during the Christmas season but every day, is by being obedient to everything He has asked us to do.



**Elder Claudio D. Zivic (Argentina):** Christmas for me and for our family means celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It means gathering as a family on Christmas Eve to have a home evening where everyone participates in presenting, reading, and singing of the special events of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. This has always been the most important celebration in our home, and we try to keep the spirit of the season by living the gospel each day. ■

# THE GIFT

By Joan M. Olenycz

One of my favorite Christmas carols is “For unto Us a Child Is Born” from Handel’s *Messiah*. It is a reminder of what Christmas is all about. I often wonder what Mary felt when she was told by the angel Gabriel, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28).

Mary was troubled by this, and the angel continued:

“Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

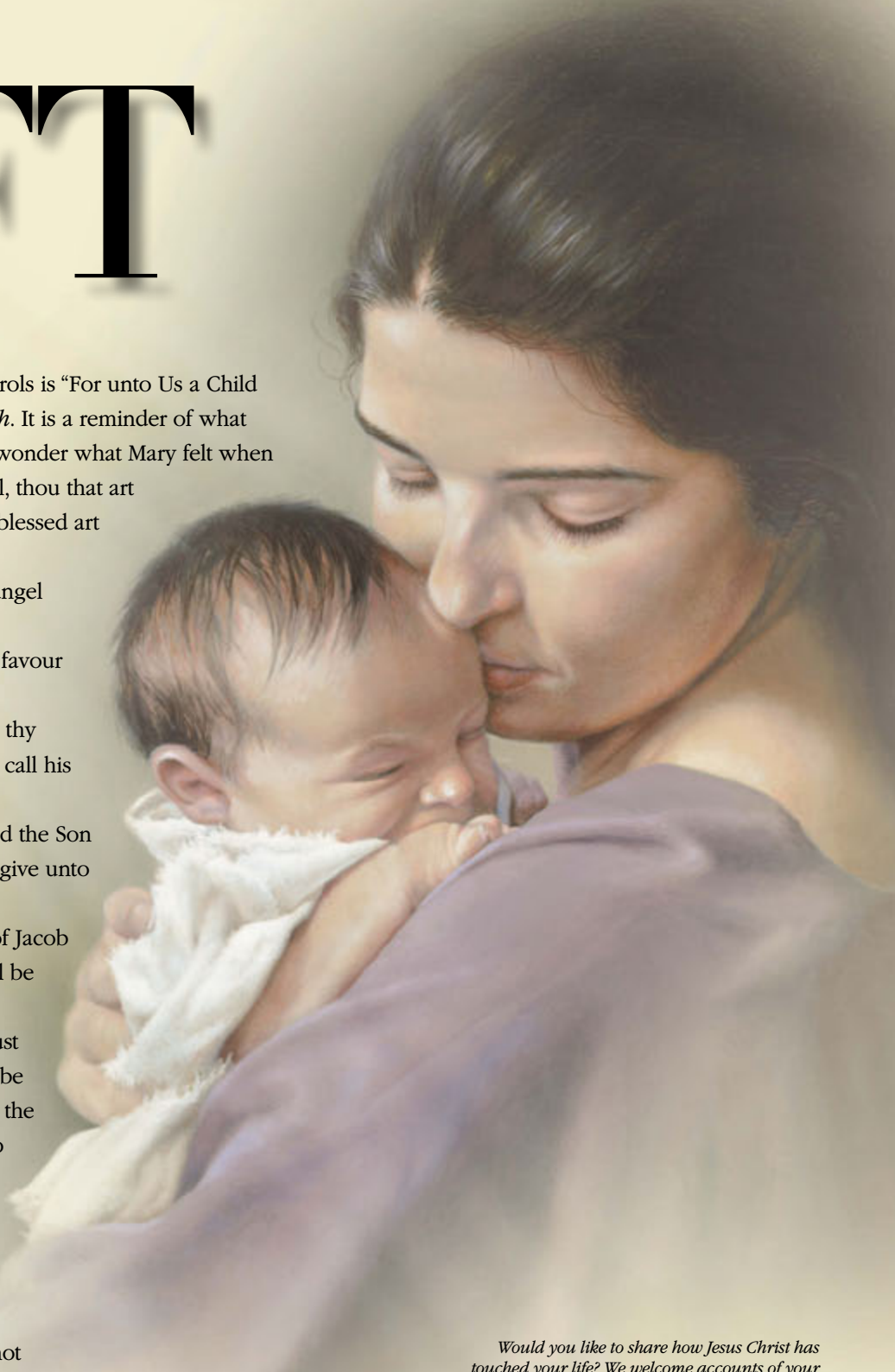
“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:30–33).

What a wondrous experience this must have been! Mary’s promised son was to be Heavenly Father’s Only Begotten Son in the flesh. She had been chosen to bring into the world the greatest gift of all: our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father gave this gift to all of us, young or old, rich or poor. We did not have to search the shops for it. It did not cost us a single penny. It did not come wrapped in shiny wrapping paper. The most treasured gift of all was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. It was sent to all of us with love from our Heavenly Father. ■



*Would you like to share how Jesus Christ has touched your life? We welcome accounts of your gospel experiences as well as insights relating to the Savior’s ministry and mission. Possible topics might include the Atonement, grace, healing, hope, or repentance. Please limit submissions to 500 words, label them “We Talk of Christ,” and e-mail them to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org).*



## YOU WERE THE ANGELS

**M**y heart jumped as I read the poster: “Handel’s *Messiah* performed by the Swansea Orchestra and Welsh Choir.”

I had been on my mission in Swansea, Wales, for six months and felt the longing that often comes to new missionaries during the Christmas

season. We had many family traditions during the holidays, but my favorite was going to hear Handel’s *Messiah*. My mother had played the organ for many such performances. I would sit, listen, and feel the music.

With permission from the mission president, I purchased tickets for the missionaries in our area. The night of the performance, our group bundled up against the cold and

walked to the concert hall. I silently prayed that we would all feel the sacredness of the inspiring music.

When we arrived, I realized that we were late and that the performance had already started. We weren’t going to be allowed inside until intermission!

As I listened to the music through the doors, I could not hold back the tears.

An usher must have noticed my desperation and decided to let us in. He told us to stand in the back until the intermission so that we didn’t interrupt the singing. He slowly opened the doors, and we all quietly stepped inside.

Walking into the hall was like walking into heaven. The feeling of

peace and joy overwhelmed me. It wasn’t long, however, before we noticed people turning their heads, pointing and staring at us. All of us had entered quietly and didn’t know what we had done to bring attention to ourselves. As soon as the intermission began, we found our seats.

When the oratorio resumed, the music filled my soul. I wept during the “Hallelujah Chorus” and when the soprano sang “I Know That My Redeemer Liveth.” The missionaries beside me also felt the power of the music and grabbed their handkerchiefs. The experience was something we would always remember. But it wasn’t until the performance had ended that the truly memorable moment came.

As we were leaving the building, people were still whispering and pointing, but no one said anything until we

**W**alking into the concert hall was like walking into heaven. It wasn’t long, however, before we noticed people turning their heads, pointing and staring at us.



# I DEFENDED THE PROPHET JOSEPH

were outside. A man then approached us, saying, “It was you! It was you!”

We all waited for an explanation.

“During the first part of the performance, we felt a change in the room—a strong feeling that Christ was there,” the man said. “So we turned to see what had caused the change. When we looked to the back of the auditorium, we saw seven figures glowing as if they were angels. When you came into the room, you brought the Holy Ghost. You were there to represent Christ; you were the angels.”

As he spoke, I looked down at my missionary name tag and read the bold lettering under my name: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” How humbled I was at that moment to be a representative of the Messiah and to have silently testified of Him that night before thousands of people. ■  
Heidi Windish Fernandez, Oregon, USA

In 1978 I had a memorable dream in which two people appeared to me. As I spoke with them in this dream, I felt an amazing sense of joy. The happy feeling persisted even after I woke up the next morning.

That very day two Latter-day Saint missionaries knocked on the door of our home and asked if they could share a message. Remembering my dream, I agreed and invited them in. My husband was reluctant, but he consented when I told him that I couldn’t bear to let them go away without talking to them.

Among other things, the missionaries taught me about prophets that day. I was familiar with the prophets of the Bible, such as Abraham and Moses, but the missionaries also taught me about a modern-day prophet, Joseph Smith. At the end of our lesson, the elders asked if they could return for more discussions. I said yes.

After additional discussions the missionaries invited me to be baptized. I liked what I had learned, but before being baptized, I wanted to gain a testimony of Joseph Smith. Of all the things the missionaries had taught me, his story was the most difficult for me to accept. But I knew that if I was sincere in seeking such a testimony, Heavenly Father would confirm the truth to me.

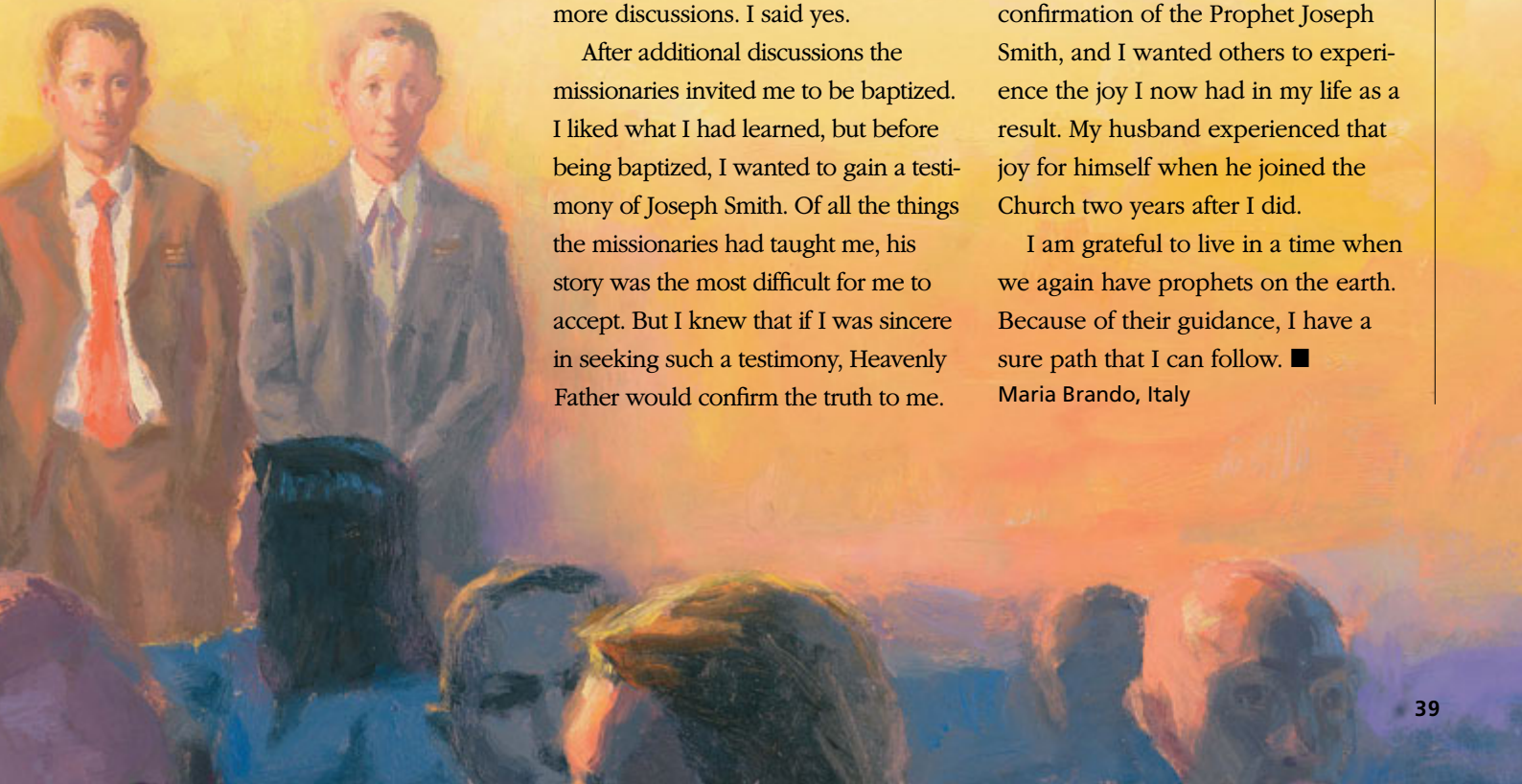
I went to see a member of the clergy in the church I had been raised in. I told him what the missionaries had taught me and expressed a great desire to meet with them again. Before I could say anything else though, he told me that Joseph Smith was crazy, that he was a visionary.

Suddenly, I heard a voice tell me, “Joseph Smith is a true prophet.” My heart started beating strongly within me, and even though I had not yet been baptized into the Church, I found myself defending the Prophet of the Restoration.

The feeling of confirmation grew even stronger as I left the clergyman’s office. I had received my answer and knew in which church I should raise my sons.

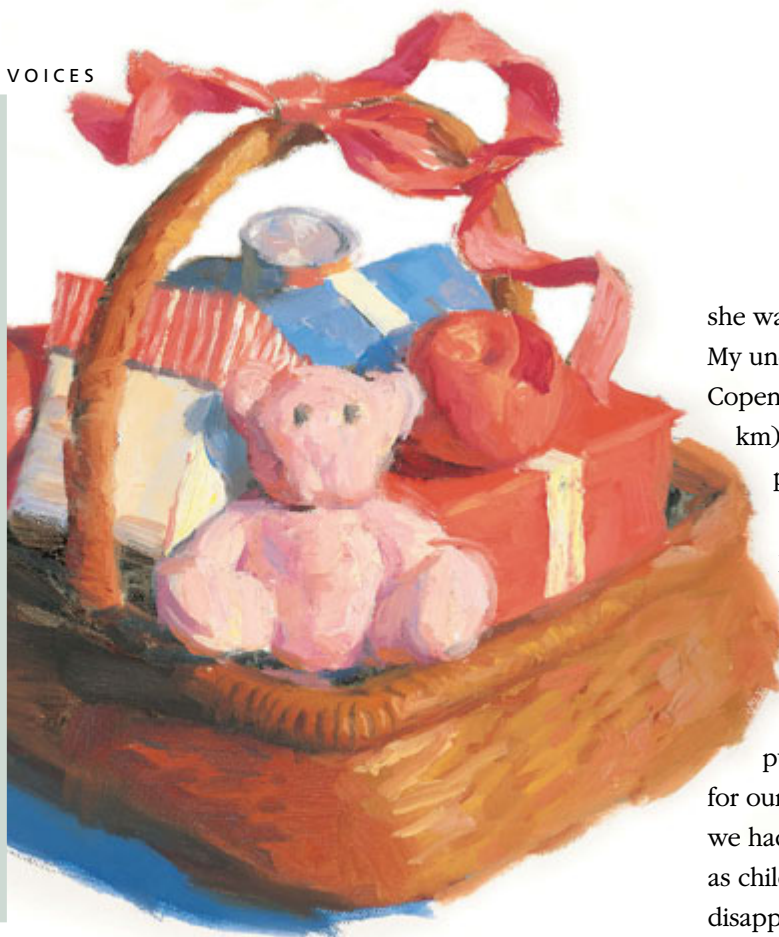
I was baptized a short time later, and I felt a great desire to share what I had found. I had received a spiritual confirmation of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and I wanted others to experience the joy I now had in my life as a result. My husband experienced that joy for himself when he joined the Church two years after I did.

I am grateful to live in a time when we again have prophets on the earth. Because of their guidance, I have a sure path that I can follow. ■  
Maria Brando, Italy





**O**n our porch we found a large basket containing food and other necessities as well as some toys. We were sure it had been delivered to the wrong house.



she was not back to her usual self. My uncle came to our home from Copenhagen, about 40 miles (65 km) away, to help with holiday preparations. He was generous in doing what he could, providing a Christmas tree and some food for our family's celebration. He also bought a few presents for my sister and me. We, in turn, had purchased a few modest gifts for our mother and uncle. We knew we had much to be grateful for, but as children we were still feeling a bit disappointed with how this Christmas was turning out.

On Christmas Eve, our doorbell rang. I looked out the window but couldn't see anyone. I concluded that it must be a prank, but my sister told me to open the door anyway. On our porch we found a large basket containing food and other necessities as well as some toys. We were sure it had been delivered to the wrong house. We went to the neighbors' house to ask if the basket should have gone to their home, but they were gone. Then we noticed that all of the gifts were labeled with our names. There were even items for my uncle. Someone had thought about *us*.

The anonymous generosity shown my family that year made what had been a dark and sad Christmas the best Christmas of my life. The kindness and love we felt from others continue to touch me today. ■  
Morten Sønderskov, Denmark

## MY BEST CHRISTMAS

**O**ne December when I was a child, my mother became very ill. The medication she was taking made her extremely tired, and she slept about 18 hours a day.

Since my mother was single, my older sister and I tried to keep the household running as best we could, but we were young and inexperienced, and we weren't very successful. Several days into our mother's illness, we were looking for something to eat. As we searched through the kitchen, the doorbell rang.

A sister from our ward was on the porch, meal in hand. She hadn't known of our need, but there she was with dinner. She asked us how long our mother had been ill and

how we had been coping for so long on our own. We assured her that we were managing as best we could, but we were grateful for her kindness in sharing a meal with us.

When she left our home, this sister called the Relief Society president and informed her of our family's situation. The next day and for many days thereafter, members of the ward brought meals to our home. We were so grateful! What we didn't eat right away we froze, and because of our ward's kindness, our family had more than enough to eat for the next three months. But the kindness others showed didn't stop there.

Christmas was approaching, and Mom was slowly getting better, but

## WHO WILL BE THE PRESENT?

**I**n 1982, the second Christmas after we were married, Cleto and I decided to establish family traditions. Because we were the first members of the Church in our families, our former Christmas celebrations—though they brought us happy memories—lacked genuine compassion and service. Moreover, our first baby, eight-month-old Diego, was reason enough to improve ourselves in this way.

We were quite busy with university studies, household chores, Church callings, and our crash course in first-time parenthood, but we still devoted ourselves to preparing for a special occasion. We used each family home evening in December to make decorations and to come to a better understanding of the symbols and colors we saw everywhere. We also planned

on preparing a simple dinner, and we thought up useful and inexpensive gifts. As we undertook a scripture study program, we realized that the true change in our manner of celebrating Christ's birth would involve choosing a gift for the Savior.

We wondered, "What do you give someone who has heaven and earth at His disposal?" The scriptures provide the answer, declaring that anything we do "unto one of the least of these" (Matthew 25:40) we do unto Him. Because Christmas is a season of friendship and a time of love, we wanted to invite a member of the Church to experience the warmth and sweet spirit we felt in our home.

We looked hard to find someone who needed some cheering up and whom helping could be our Christmas present to the Savior.

Each time we invited a ward or stake brother or sister to our home, we were happy to discover that the person was already involved in other activities. But Christmas Eve soon arrived, and we still had not found someone with whom to share our Christmas.

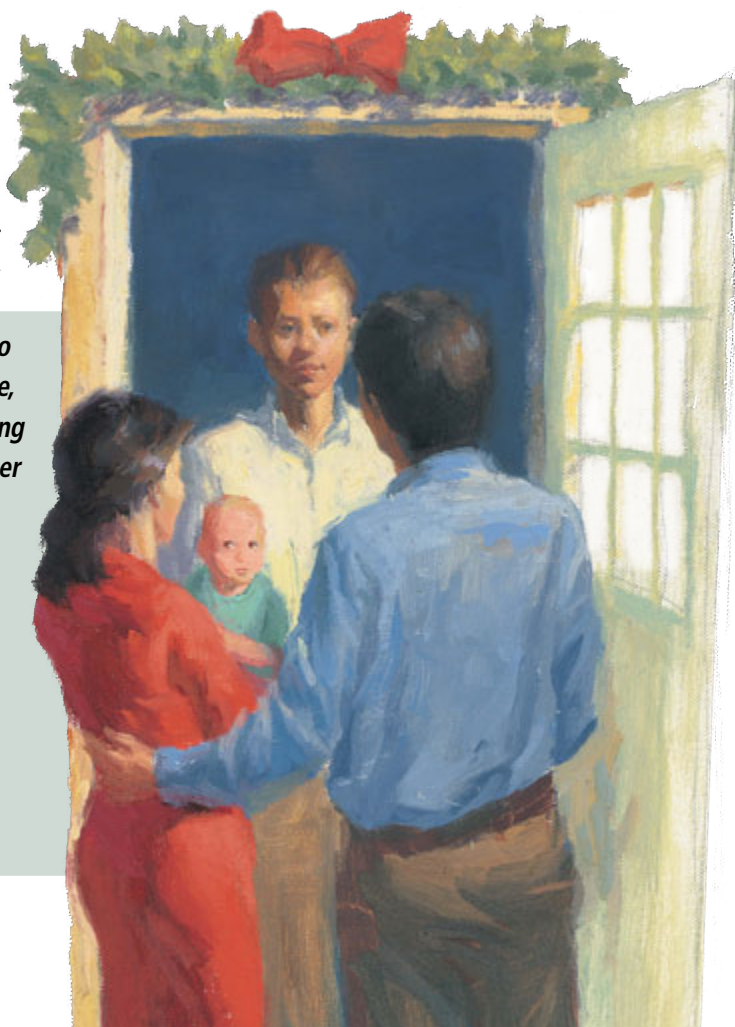
Resigned to our failure, we were getting ready for dinner when the doorbell rang. When I opened the door, I was elated to find a friend we had not seen for some time. Avelar had recently gone through the disappointment of an upsetting separation. He was sad and alone and had felt a strong desire to be with us.

We received Avelar with love, and he told us that he had found the environment he needed to be consoled in the midst of his trials. We told him of our preparations to serve and help someone in need so that he could recognize the Lord knew him and loved him.

For all of us, it was wonderful to realize that the Savior had sent us someone we could not find: our friend Avelar. We realized the overriding importance of relationships among Heavenly Father's sons and daughters. For that reason, on subsequent Christmases we and our three children always remember that the purpose of the season is to strengthen bonds of unity, love, and friendship. ■

Ana Márcia Agra de Oliveira,  
Pernambuco, Brazil

**R**esigned to our failure, we were getting ready for dinner when the doorbell rang.





By Elder  
Tad R. Callister  
Of the Seventy



# FEAR NOT

*From Mary and Joseph we learn that  
we need not fear; for every problem,  
there is a solution.*

**M**ary and Joseph learned early in life that for every problem God has a solution. To Mary, the angel said: “Fear not. . . . For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:30, 37).

Sometimes young adults are confronted with a problem that seems like Mount Everest. They believe it is just too high and too tough to climb. Because they see no solution, they become discouraged—perhaps even negative and pessimistic—about their futures. But, like Mary and Joseph, you can learn that however unsolvable the problems of life may seem, God *always* has a solution.

When Mary learned of her divine calling to bear the Son of God, undoubtedly a flood of issues and concerns raced through her mind. After all, she was betrothed to Joseph—what would he think? The angel from heaven then counseled, “Fear not” (Luke 1:30). When Joseph learned of Mary’s pregnancy, he saw

no satisfactory solution other than to break the engagement. But again the angel counseled, “Fear not” (Matthew 1:20). It was the same heavenly direction that had previously been given to Zacharias (see Luke 1:13) and that would later be given to the shepherds: “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10).

There is much fear in the world today—of getting married, having children, making commitments, standing for the right, confronting peer pressure. There are fears of economic conditions and natural disasters. But the Lord’s counsel for us today is similar to that given to Mary and Joseph: “Be of good cheer, and *do not fear*, for I the Lord am with you” (D&C 68:6; emphasis added).

The angel’s counsel for Mary and Joseph to “fear not” was more than customized instruction for their individual problems. It was a universal salutation for all people because

Mary and Joseph would play a unique role in the Savior’s ministry, which ministry would make it possible to eliminate *all* fears of *all* people of *all* ages.

Because of the Savior’s birth, life, and Atonement, there are no unsolvable problems. There are temporary tragedies and difficulties, of course, but they need not be permanent or unconquerable. Can you imagine anyone having a problem God cannot solve? He always has a solution that will advance our eternal progress. That is both the reason for and essence of the Atonement. That is why Mormon said, “Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:41).

There is no question about the Atonement’s capacity to provide solutions for our problems. The scriptures are abundantly clear on this point. The real issues are these: Will we embrace those solutions? Will we choose the world’s answer or God’s answer? Will we repent or rationalize, seek God’s grace to overcome our weaknesses or “go it alone,” acknowledge God’s love in times of tragedy or spurn Him at every downturn in life?

The Atonement is the vehicle to solve life’s major problems. With the Atonement, God puts us in the driver’s seat of our divine destiny, provided we follow His will. Mary was a sterling



To Mary, the angel said: "Fear not. . . . For with God nothing shall be impossible."

example of this obedience. To the angel she said, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). There was no rationalization, no delay, no grumbling—simply a humble submission to God's will. Joseph was of the same obedient mold. Even though the powers of reason may have indicated that Mary might have been unfaithful, he "did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife" (Matthew 1:24).

Mary and Joseph learned one of the most powerful lessons of life: if you believe in the Atonement and do God's will, you need not fear because there will *always*

be a solution to your problems.

The critics in the world have never learned this lesson. Admittedly, they are often bright and observant. They see the multitude and complexity of problems confronting us, but they frequently throw up their hands in despair because they see no solution. This is because they do not understand the Atonement. They can see the towering problem before them, but their vision is stunted. It is as though a wall blocks their view of the horizon; all they can see is the problem. As a result, they become skeptical and cynical and pessimistic. Their perspective is illustrated in diagram 1.

On the other hand, there are many others who are spiritually analytical without being critical. They too are bright and observant. They too see the complex and difficult problems of life, but they have a completely different vision. There is no wall blocking their sight. Rather, they have a telescopic lens to help them see not only the problems but beyond as well. In other words, they also see the solutions offered by the Atonement. Their perspective in life is shown in diagram 2.

Consequently, these people have few, if any, fears. They are positive and optimistic and upbeat about life because they absolutely know that for every problem there is a spiritual remedy. The Savior so declared, "Be

DIAGRAM 1: Critics

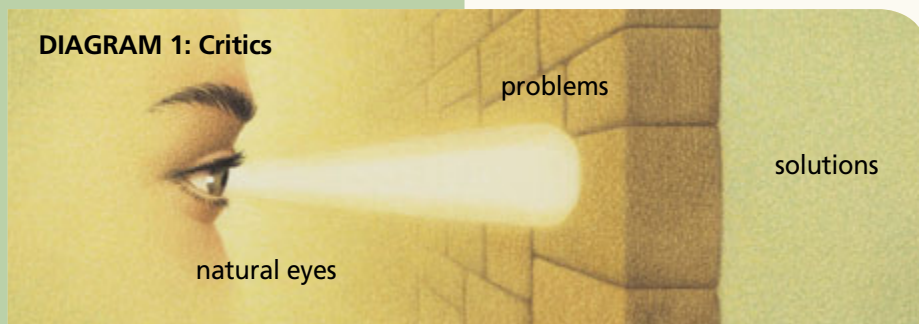
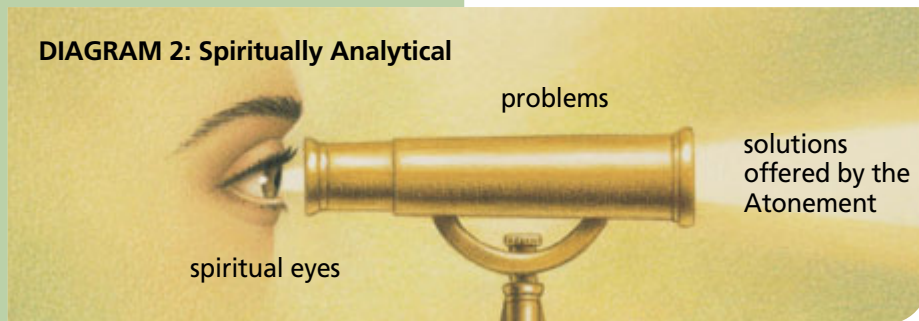


DIAGRAM 2: Spiritually Analytical







*He is the Savior because He really can save us from death and sin and weakness and the ordinary ailments of life.*



of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Accordingly, there is no room for negativism in Christ’s Church. Negativism and cynicism stem from Satan. Cheerfulness and optimism stem from Christ.

All of the problems of the world seem to fall into four principal categories, each of which the Savior descended beneath and overcame, hence His mandate to “be of good cheer.”

- First, **death**. The scriptures declare, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).
- Second, **sin**. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).
- Third, **weakness**. The Savior taught Moroni that His “grace [the

enabling power of the Atonement] is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

- Fourth, **common ailments of life that may be unrelated to sin** (such as sickness, rejection, depression, loss of employment, and so forth). Isaiah prophesied that the Savior would “bind up the brokenhearted,” “comfort all that mourn,” and “give unto them beauty for ashes” (Isaiah 61:1–3; see also Alma 7:9–13).

For every affliction the world throws at us, the Savior has a remedy of superior healing power. No wonder Mary exclaimed, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46–47). He is the Savior because He really can save us from death and sin and weakness and the ordinary ailments of life.

Our Heavenly Father wanted Mary and Joseph to commence the uncertain path of life *without fear*, knowing His Son was there with all His saving powers. He wants us to likewise learn this lesson early in life: “Fear not. . . . For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:30, 37). ■

# Not Enough Time?

*I didn't think  
I had time  
for institute.  
But the Spirit  
prompted me  
to make time.*

**By Hong Ook Son**

In late December 2008 I sat in the celestial room of the Seoul Korea Temple, thinking about the new year ahead. I had been married in this same temple some two months earlier, and lately my days and weeks had seemed packed full with work, my Church calling, and my newly established family. I had been going to institute classes regularly, but now I considered that perhaps I would stop attending.

As I prayed for direction for the new year, I felt a distinct impression to continue attending institute. I also felt prompted to increase my temple attendance. As I left the temple that day, I was filled with a sense of peace and gratitude for the new direction the Lord had given me. I felt strongly that if I would follow the direction I had received, I would be blessed.

Beginning in January I began serving as a temple worker in the Seoul Temple. This required that twice a week I travel about an hour to the temple to fill my shift. In addition, twice a week my wife also made an hour-long trip, one for serving as a temple worker and the other one for attending a Book of Mormon institute class with me.

As I took on these additional commitments, it soon became clear that I would have to cut down my work by several hours each week. Since I work in sales, I am paid according to how many clients I maintain. I realized that by cutting back my work hours, I might also face a substantial cut in pay. However, I remembered the impression I had received, and I knew that everything else would work out if I fully committed myself to following the Lord.

As I attended institute and the temple more regularly, many blessings began to flow into my life. I noticed some marked changes. I felt the Spirit closer and more often, and my testimony of the restored gospel grew. My wife and I received great benefit from serving in the temple and attending our institute class. And unexpectedly, I also received temporal blessings. Somehow, despite my reduced work hours, I was able to meet more clients than ever before. My income didn't decrease; instead, it almost doubled.

I know that these wonderful blessings came from the Lord. I am grateful that He gave me the comfort to know that when we “seek . . . first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, . . . all these things shall be added unto you” (3 Nephi 13:33). ■





# Questions & Answers

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

**S**tudying the scriptures can be hard at first. There are so many concepts to learn, and the people and places seem so foreign. But scripture study will become a rewarding experience if you stick with it.

Try the experiment the prophet Alma described (see Alma 32:27–34). He taught that if you “give place” in your life for the word of God, it will enlarge your soul and enlighten your understanding. It will also motivate you to continue reading the scriptures because, as Alma promised, the word of God will begin to be delicious to you (see Alma 32:28).

Another way to find motivation is to seek out the many blessings that come from studying the scriptures:

- Regular and sincere scripture study will invite the Spirit into your life, answer your questions, help you have clean thoughts, motivate you to serve others, help you pray more effectively, and build your testimony of Jesus Christ and the Restoration.
- The scriptures will teach you how to have faith, how to recognize the Holy Ghost, and how to repent. They will teach you why we need a Savior, why opposition is necessary, why this earth was created, and much more.

As you experience these blessings, you won’t need to force yourself to read—you will look forward to it.

### Scriptures Contain Answers



By reading 2 Nephi 32:3, you can immediately understand why we need to read and study the scriptures. I know that the scriptures contain all the answers to our questions! We should understand that the scriptures are given to help us progress towards perfection, which is such a necessary part of this life. Each day we all have a few minutes to set aside for reading the scriptures.

*Sergij C., age 21, Novosibirsk, Russia*

### A Stronger Testimony



I hadn’t been reading the scriptures until my Young Women president suggested that I work on Personal Progress. It asked me to read the scriptures every day for some

weeks. After doing this, I never stopped reading them. My best advice is that you ought to work on your Personal Progress or Duty to God. Challenge yourself to read the scriptures more and more, and you will see a change within yourself. I tell you this without a doubt—you will see that you have a stronger testimony.

*Paola S., age 16, Cortés, Honduras*

### Pray for Understanding



Even when I have many projects and assignments for school, I set aside those things and start reading the scriptures first. I start with a prayer to invite the Holy Ghost in understand-

ing the word of God. And through the help of seminary manuals, my motivation to read the scriptures has developed and continues to grow.

*Elieser N., age 16, Ilocos Norte, Philippines*

### Armor of God



The key to developing any habit is desire. Make it your desire to read every day. Keep a log of how much you read, and try to read at the same time every day. This helps you

to develop consistency. Reading the scriptures is like putting on the armor of God. You would not go into battle without your armor. Don’t go into a

world of sin without the armor of God. Protect yourself—read the scriptures.

*Andrew G., age 18, Maine, USA*

### Something for Everyone



It helps me to think about what's in the scriptures.

Not only do they contain the gospel, Christ's teachings, and the command-

ments, but they—especially the Book of Mormon—are a big adventure book, full of wars, heroes, good guys, and bad guys. The scriptures have something for everyone.

*Eve W., age 15, Nevada, USA*

### Not Just a Book

Don't think of the scriptures as just a book you have to read for seminary or because you're supposed to. You get to read the word of God. It has adventures, afflictions, wars. The scriptures are a testament of Jesus Christ—that He is our Savior, that He bled and died for us. The prophets prophesied of His divinity. Many died because they would not deny what they knew was true. Their faith was unshakable. We should all strive to become as faithful as they were.

*Kaleb L., age 14, Utah, USA*

### He Wants to Talk to You

Our Heavenly Father has the answer to each question you ask Him; the only thing you have to do is read the scriptures and apply them to your life. Knowing that Heavenly Father wants to speak to you and answer your prayers will help you seek Him daily in the scriptures. As you obey His word, your life will improve,

and you will find refuge and tranquility. You will be happy as you hear His voice.

*Elberth R., age 18, Ixtapaluca, Mexico*

### Form a Reading Habit



Forming a habit can help tremendously. Start off slowly; read maybe a chapter or two each day.

Soon you should have a

habit of reading the scriptures. I usually read a couple chapters each evening and sing a hymn. This routine uplifts me and keeps me optimistic for what the next day will bring. And I have a better understanding of the lessons in seminary. The scriptures are a blessing. Take advantage of them.

*Taylor C., age 15, Washington, USA*

### Counsel for Your Life

The scriptures relate the experiences of people who go through difficulties similar to ours. When beginning your reading of the scriptures, offer a prayer and have faith that you will find counsel for your

life. The scriptures are one of the means by which Heavenly Father communicates with His children. In the scriptures we find the strength to meet all kinds of trials, and I bear my testimony that when we are well instructed, we will succeed in discerning good from evil and will avoid the snares of Satan.

*Anderson F., age 19, São Paulo, Brazil*



### MORE ENJOYABLE

"I am grateful for emphasis on reading the scriptures. I hope that for you this will become something far more enjoyable than a duty; that, rather, it will become a love affair with the word of God. I promise you that as you read, your minds will be enlightened and your spirits will be lifted. At first it may seem tedious, but that will change into a wondrous experience with thoughts and words of things divine."

**President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008),**  
"The Light within You," *Ensign*, May 1995, 99.

## NEXT QUESTION

"In these troubling times, how can I keep a positive attitude about the future?"

Send your answer by January 15, 2011, to:

*Liahona*, Questions & Answers 01/11  
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA  
Or e-mail: [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org)

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

The following information and permission must be included in your e-mail or letter: (1) full name, (2) birth date, (3) ward or branch, (4) stake or district, and (5) your written permission, and, if you are under age 18, your parent's written permission (e-mail is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.



# LOVE'S PURE LIGHT

At Christmastime and always, the Light of Christ helps us find our way  
(see John 8:12).



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE BUNDERSON © 2003

**TO** contribute to Our Space, e-mail your story, photo, or feedback to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org). Please write "Our Space" in the subject line and include your parent's permission (expressed in the e-mail) to share what you are sending us. Submissions may be edited for length or clarity.

## STANDARDS: A BURDEN OR A BLESSING?

**T**hose who say Church standards are restrictions probably know some Church members who carry the standards as a burden, not as an advantage in life. If you want your friends to know that your standards make you free from addictions, then live a happy life and try to show the joy you have through a healthy body, mind, and heart. We teach by example, not by words only. Show them the blessings of standards by the way you use your agency for good things.

Patience O. (right), age 19, France



## MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

**Moses 1:39**

Every time I remember this verse, I remind myself that if I do my part in this world (which is to follow the commandments of the Lord), I will be rewarded with the gifts the Lord has promised me.

Roland D. (above), age 17, Pangasinan, Philippines

## FINDING A FRIEND

**I** have always believed in the power of prayer. When I first moved to Asia, I had to wait for two months to start school until a new semester began. Although I enjoyed spending time with my family, I wanted a good friend with the same beliefs as I have. I eventually met all of my neighbors, and although some were the same age as me, they didn't have the same standards.

When I was able to go to school, I met a lot of kids my age and made some friends. One time some friends and I went out for dinner. After dinner some of my friends left, but the rest still wanted to do something and decided they wanted to go and drink. They invited me, but I told them no. I felt even more lonesome. I went home that night and prayed to find a good friend.

A few weeks later I went out to dinner with some friends again, making it clear I wouldn't drink with them. After dinner all but one other person left to go drinking. We started to talk and found that we had the same standards—standards we kept by personal choice.

I know that Heavenly Father always answers prayers.

Jordan H., age 17, Texas, USA



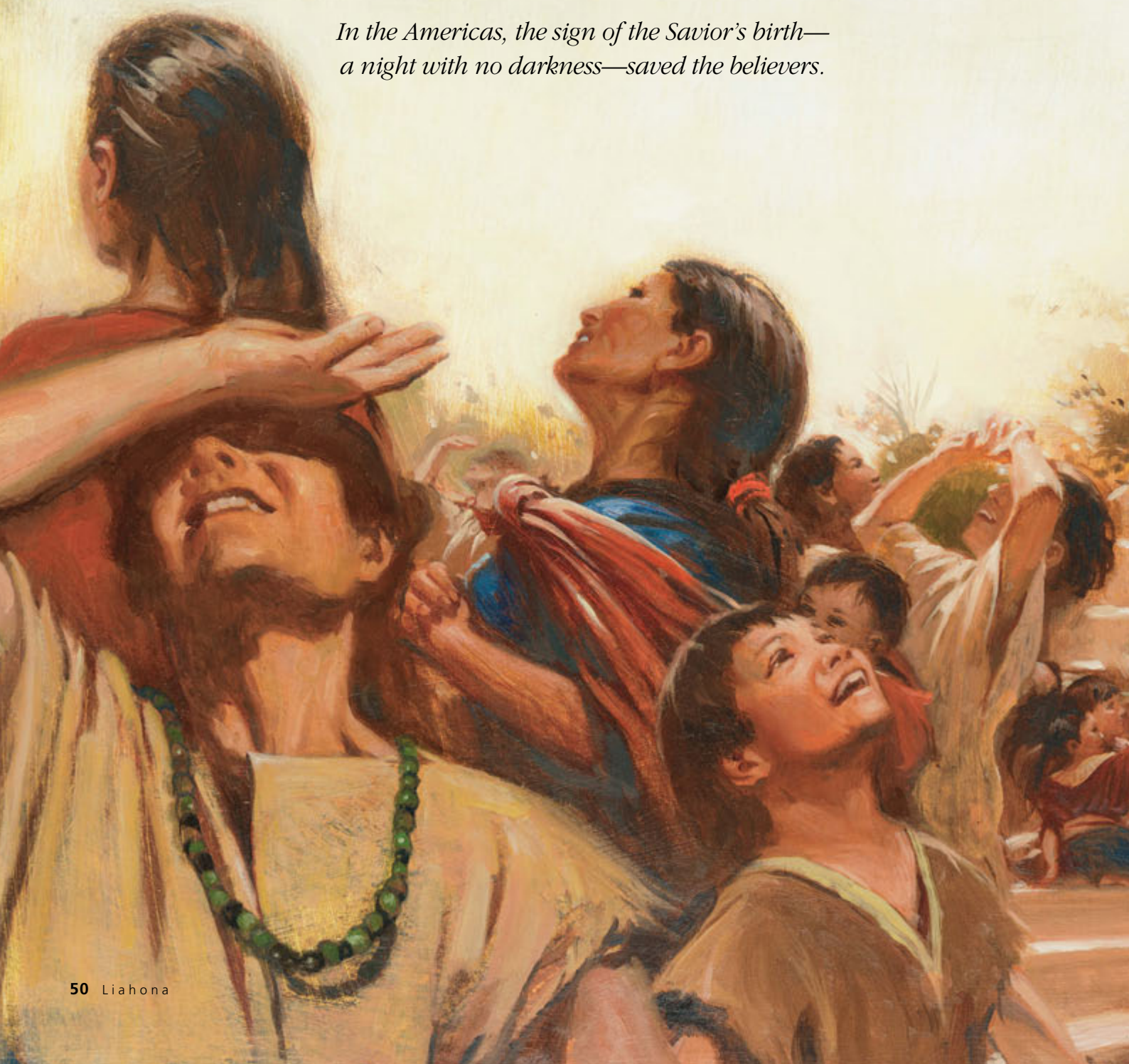


# CHRISTMAS

## IN THE NEW WORLD

By Wendy Kenney

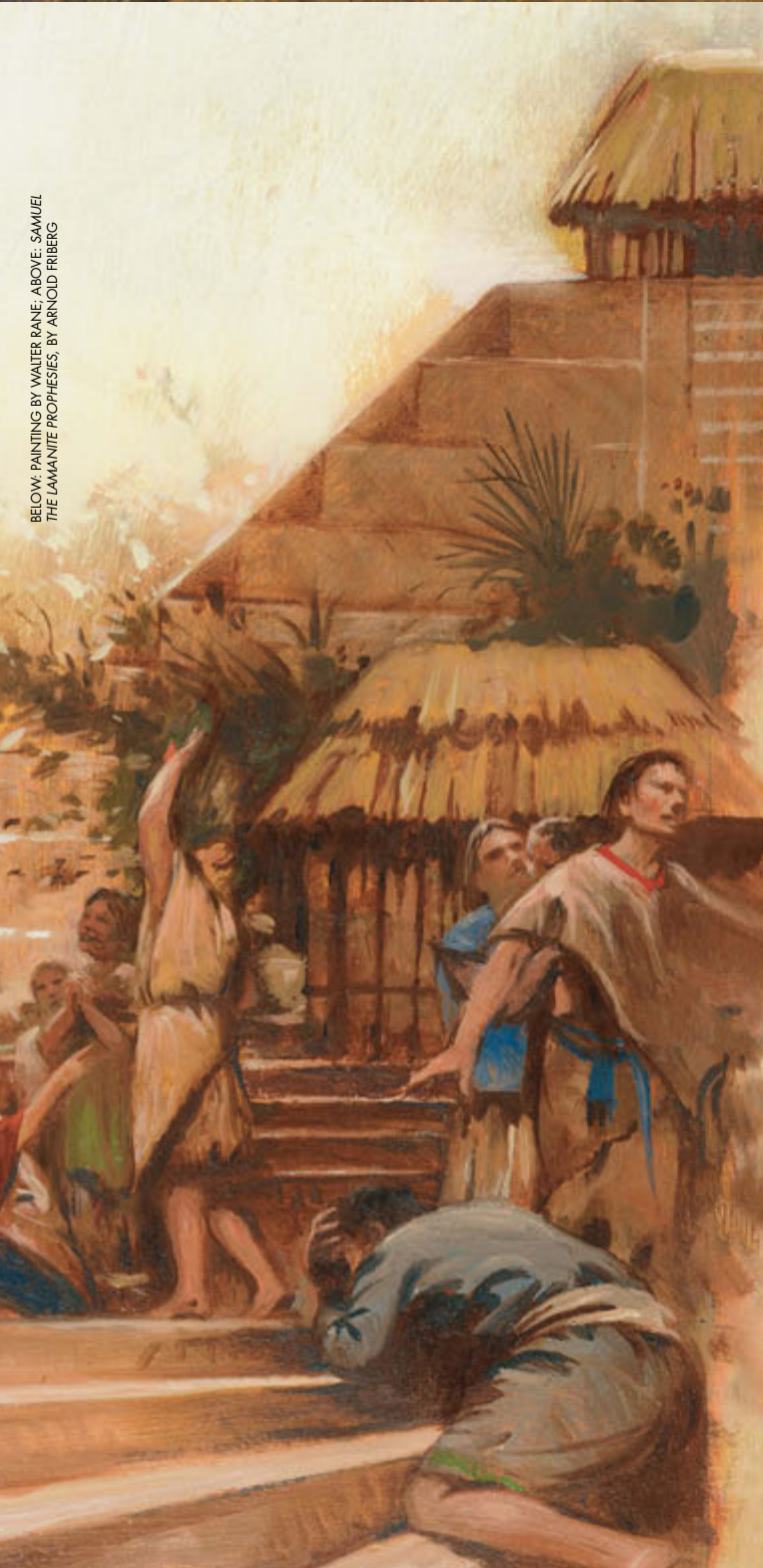
*In the Americas, the sign of the Savior's birth—  
a night with no darkness—saved the believers.*







BELOW: PAINTING BY WALTER RANE; ABOVE: SAMUEL  
THE LAMANITE PROPHECIES, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG



**W**ould you notice if a new star suddenly appeared in the sky one night? Maybe not. But you would certainly notice a night that never got dark—a night that remained as bright as midday even after the sun had set. Now that would be hard to miss, especially if you had been in the crowd when Samuel the Lamanite stood upon a city wall and told of the great signs and wonders that would mark the birth of the Son of God. If you had heard Samuel speak, you surely would have been watching for the signs.

### Samuel's Mission to Zarahemla

Samuel was a Lamanite who was commanded by an angel to go to the land of Zarahemla to call the Nephites to repentance. By this time in the history of the New World as recorded in the Book of Mormon, the Lamanites were actually the more righteous people—hence the need for a Lamanite prophet. No doubt the Lord knew it would take some time for the Nephites to turn from their evil ways and accept Him as the Redeemer of the world, so He sent Samuel five years in advance to prepare the people for His coming.

Besides preaching repentance, Samuel was directed by an angel to teach the people of Zarahemla about the signs of the birth of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Samuel proclaimed that in five years there would be “a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day” (Helaman 14:3). He said this sign would occur “the night before [the Lord] is born” (Helaman 14:4). In addition to prophesying of a night without darkness, Samuel told them to watch for “a new star . . . , such an one as ye never have beheld” (Helaman 14:5).



## Believers Ridiculed

About five years after Samuel's prophecies, the faithful were mocked by their enemies, who said, "The time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain" (3 Nephi 1:6). The unbelievers even conspired to murder the believers if the signs did not appear by a certain date (see 3 Nephi 1:9).

As the five-year mark neared, the faithful began "to be very sorrowful, lest by any means those things which had been spoken might not come to pass" (3 Nephi 1:7). But they continued to "watch steadfastly for that day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night, that they might know that their faith had not been vain" (3 Nephi 1:8).

## Prophecy Fulfilled

The day that had been set aside to put the believers to death grew near. The worries of his people so grieved the prophet Nephi that

he petitioned Heavenly Father "in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith. [And] he cried mightily unto the Lord all that day" (3 Nephi 1:11–12). His pleas were heard, and the Lord spoke to him, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets" (3 Nephi 1:13). That night, "at the going down of the sun there was no darkness" (3 Nephi 1:15), just as Samuel had foretold. Everything Samuel had prophesied came to pass, even the appearance of a new star.

## No Cause for Unbelief

In the Bible there is no record of a night without darkness at the time of Christ's birth and only a brief mention of the new star, seen by the Wise Men who followed it to the Christ



## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

**A**t the birth of Him who once identified Himself as the 'bright and morning star' (Rev. 22:16), a new star appeared in the heavens. (See Matt. 2:2; 3 Ne. 1:21.) Shining brightly over Bethlehem, that star had been placed in orbit far in advance of the foretold event in order that its light could coincide in time and place with His blessed birth.

"At the arrival of Him who is called 'the light of the world' (John 8:12), darkness was banished as a sign of His holy birth. (See 3 Ne. 1:15, 19.)"

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "In This Holy Land," *Tambuli*, Feb. 1991, 11; "Why This Holy Land?" *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 13.





child (see Matthew 2:2, 9–10). In the region of Judea, only a few people witnessed the signs of Christ's birth, such as the shepherds (see Luke 2:8–18). But in the Americas, "all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south" saw the signs and knew that "the Son of God must shortly appear" (3 Nephi 1:17).

Why did so many more people witness the signs of the Savior's birth in the New World? Samuel's words provide some explanation: "The angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, *to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men*" (Helaman 14:28; emphasis added).

### Deliverance at Last


When the sun again rose in the sky after the night without darkness, the people "knew that it was the day that the Lord

should be born, because of the sign which had been given" (3 Nephi 1:19). Imagine the rejoicing! The believers were safe. Their lives had been spared from death at the hands of their unbelieving enemies. Spiritually, they had been spared too, for the Son of God had come into the world to save mankind from their sins through His Atonement.

We don't typically think of Christmas as a celebration of deliverance, as Passover is to the Jews, who celebrate the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. But the day the Savior was born was indeed a day of deliverance for the believers in the New World.

As you celebrate Christmas this year, remember the events that occurred in the Americas as well as those that took place on the other side of the globe in the Savior's birthplace. Though His birth brought spiritual deliverance for all mankind, it quite literally brought deliverance from death for a group of stalwart believers in the New World. And His birth continues to offer deliverance to all who accept Him as their Lord and Savior. ■



An oil painting depicting several hands holding a large, shallow bowl. The bowl is filled with a vibrant, abstract composition of colors, including deep blues, greens, yellows, and reds, suggesting a festive or celebratory meal. The hands are rendered with warm, golden-brown tones, and the overall style is expressive and textured, characteristic of traditional oil painting techniques. The lighting is warm and focused on the bowl, creating a sense of intimacy and shared experience.

*On Christmas day, just before lunch there was a knock on the door. There stood one of our neighbors, holding an enormous bowl covered with a towel.*

# THE BEST PRESENT

*We had no food that Christmas.  
We could only hope for a miracle.*

By Ailson Sales

**W**hen I was 12 years old, my family lived on a farm in Brazil, far from the city. That December my brother and I were harvesting nuts for another farm owner when it suddenly began to rain. For days the rain continued so heavily that we couldn't work.

It was almost Christmas, and our family was running out of food. My mother was worried we wouldn't have a Christmas dinner, so she asked my older brother and me to ask the farm owner for the money we had earned. It wouldn't be much, but it would buy a little food for our family at a time when others were preparing their holiday feasts.

My brother and I walked several miles on a muddy road to get to the farm owner's house. When we arrived, the owner was surprised. "What brings you here on such a rainy day?" he asked. We explained our situation, and he said, "I don't have any cash to pay you with, but I can pay you with a check." We accepted and left quickly so we could make it into town to cash the check and buy the groceries we needed.

By the time we got to town, almost every business had closed for the Christmas holiday. We were exhausted, and our efforts to cash the check were in vain.

When we arrived home without the groceries, my

mother and eight brothers and sisters were very disappointed. All we had was the check, which at the moment was worthless to us. Christmas Eve came without any presents and with little food. We ate a dinner of rice and went to bed.

We arose on Christmas morning to the sound of our neighbors celebrating outside, but we remained inside, hoping for a miracle that would put food on our table. To our surprise, just before lunch there was a knock on the door. There stood one of our neighbors, holding an enormous bowl covered with a towel.

"I came to bring this to you," she said. My mother gratefully accepted the bowl, and when we looked inside, we found it was full of Christmas foods. To us it was a banquet, a true miracle!

That Christmas meal was the best present I ever received because it fed us on such a special day. Although our neighbor was not aware of our circumstances, I know that our Heavenly Father was, and He worked through her to feed us that Christmas. I know that when we have no other way out, the Lord in His infinite mercy and goodness sends great miracles into our lives. And as our family learned that Christmas, we can serve the Lord—as our neighbor did—by bringing miracles into the lives of others. ■



# Like Sweet Milk

*If you accept and apply the Lord's true gospel, it will sweeten your life like sugar sweetens milk.*

By Yolanda Morales Posadas

I grew up as a serious, responsible person who followed the principles that my parents, with their limited religious knowledge, taught me. However, after my father died in 2005, when I was 15, I became someone different. Maybe it was a way of expressing my pain for not having said good-bye to him. I will always regret not giving him a kiss before he went to the hospital.

After his death I started hanging around people who didn't have good values. I was doing things I thought were OK and that everyone was doing, but I now understand they weren't pleasing to the Lord. I was having fun, according to the world's standard of fun, but in reality I wasn't happy. I was empty and missing something, but I didn't know what. I started doing poorly in school. The worst part was that I had no idea how to find happiness in my life. At the time I didn't see how much I was missing out on with my family and my mom, who is the person I love most.

At night I would pray to God. No one had taught me how to pray, but I felt like He was listening. I asked Him to help me be happy and to



***True happiness comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ.***

let me know if my dad was OK. I was so afraid that he was suffering somewhere. My pleas went on for many nights.

The answer finally came. I thought I would receive an answer in a dream, but instead it came in the form of two elders. They came to our house in December 2006. I didn't understand that they were an answer to my prayers, and I didn't want to listen to even one discussion. My mom listened and decided to go to church. She hasn't stopped going since. She was baptized, and a few weeks later my nephews and my sister were baptized. I noticed a huge change in my mom after her baptism, to the

point that she seemed much younger and happier. Her happiness and peace filled our house immensely; the minute someone came in he or she could feel that something was different.

I realized what had happened and decided to go to church. It was a strange experience; I had never been treated so kindly before. The sisters were friendly and treated me so well that I felt very comfortable at church. Little by little I was convinced the Church was true, and I decided to listen to the lessons from the elders.

I was baptized on February 3, 2007, in the Uribe Ward, Veracruz Mexico Stake, by two amazing elders. I will always remember them, and I consider them our angels. My baptism is a day I'll never forget. I was clean from all sin. My mistakes had been erased because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I left my depression behind, and the void I had felt was no longer there. It was replaced by tremendous joy in my soul.

The true gospel has brought my family and me so much happiness. I've found eternal friends. I continue to battle against the world, but now I



have the true gospel and the Spirit that give me joy and peace daily. Now I know the answer to the question I was asking the Lord for so long. If my dad accepted the ordinances we did for him in the temple, I know he's happy and at peace. I believe he accepted the gospel and is waiting for us.

Sometimes I look back and realize how much I've been blessed. I see there is a greater happiness than that offered by the world and its pleasures and distractions. True happiness comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everything that the gospel teaches is for our good.

I once received an e-mail in which a mom explains to her young son that God is like sugar that you add to your milk. You can't see it, but it sweetens everything. In the same way, you can't see the Lord's true gospel, but if you accept it and apply it, it sweetens your life like sugar sweetens milk. ■

DETAIL FROM *CHRIST AT EMMANUS*, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH, USED BY PERMISSION OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC MUSEUM AT FREDERIKSBORG IN HILLERØD, DENMARK; PHOTOGRAPH OF MILK BY ROBERT CASEY



# The Open House

*"All those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians" (Alma 46:15).*

**A**lison listened eagerly as the bishop announced that their ward would be having a Christmas open house this year. "We want it to be a special evening," he said. "It will be a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and neighbors."

Alison loved the Christmas holidays. She liked shopping for presents for her family and friends and singing Christmas carols. And she loved reading the story of Jesus's birth and thinking of Him as a small baby.

The bishop's next words caught her attention. "Because of the open house, we won't be having our traditional ward Christmas party this year."

Alison frowned. "No party?" she whispered to her mother. The ward Christmas party was one of her favorite parts of the season.

Mom put a finger to her lips.

"Some of our friends and neighbors do not understand that we are Christians," the bishop continued. "We want them to know that we believe in Jesus Christ."

Alison thought about that. She remembered when her best friend, Erica, had said that Mormons weren't Christians. She didn't understand what Erica meant, so she had asked her parents about it.

"A lot of people focus on the name 'Mormon' or 'Latter-day Saints,'" Mom had explained. "They forget that our Church is named for Jesus Christ."

The next day at school, Alison had told Erica the first article of faith: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."

But Erica had just shrugged. "Then why don't people call you Christians instead of Mormons?" she asked.

Alison turned her attention back to the bishop.

"The open house will focus on Jesus Christ," he said. "We're asking families to bring nativity sets, and we will have a live reenactment of the Nativity scene."

As the time drew near for the open house, Alison started getting excited. Mom and Dad invited an

elderly neighbor to go to the open house. Alison invited Erica.

The night of the open house, Alison helped Mom wrap both of the family's nativity sets in newspaper. Then Mom and Dad drove her to pick up Erica.

When they got to the church, Alison and Erica looked at nativity sets from Japan, Austria, the Philippines, and many other countries.

Then the girls went outside where the young men and young women were acting out the Nativity. There were live cows, sheep, and even a nanny goat. "Everything but a camel," Alison said.

The bishop asked everyone to gather in the chapel. Alison and Erica sat with the Primary children.



"As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a Christian."

Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy, "Mom, Are We Christians?" *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 94.



The children sang "Picture a Christmas"<sup>1</sup> and "The Nativity Song,"<sup>2</sup> and the ward choir performed parts of *Messiah*.

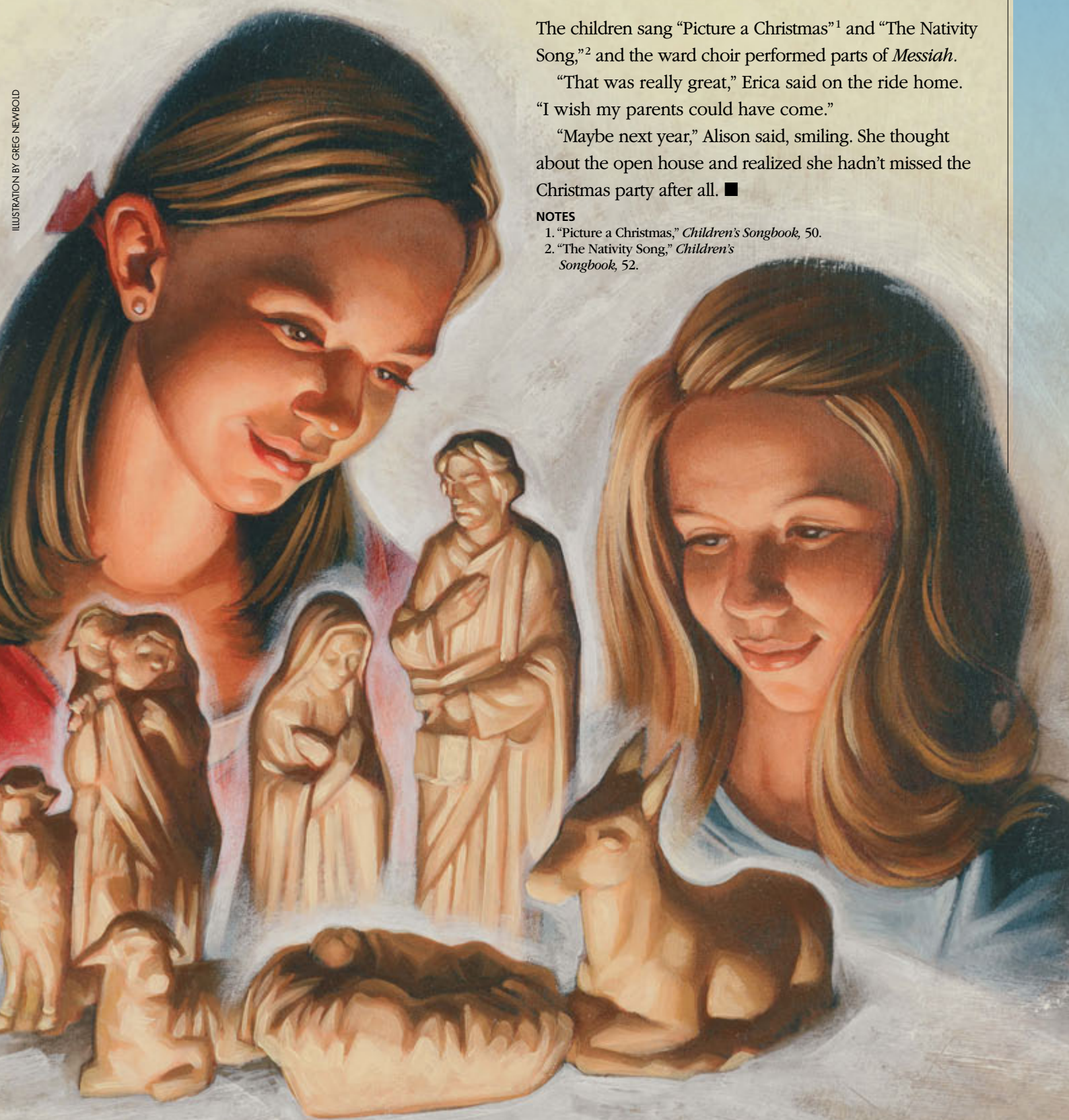
"That was really great," Erica said on the ride home. "I wish my parents could have come."

"Maybe next year," Alison said, smiling. She thought about the open house and realized she hadn't missed the Christmas party after all. ■

#### NOTES

1. "Picture a Christmas," *Children's Songbook*, 50.

2. "The Nativity Song," *Children's Songbook*, 52.





# A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR JESUS



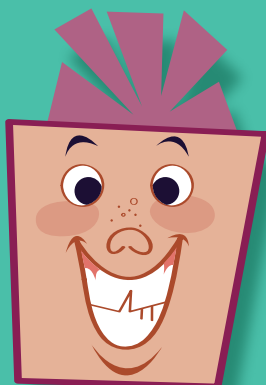
A HELLO TO  
INCLUDE



AN INVITATION  
TO COME



A HAND TO HELP



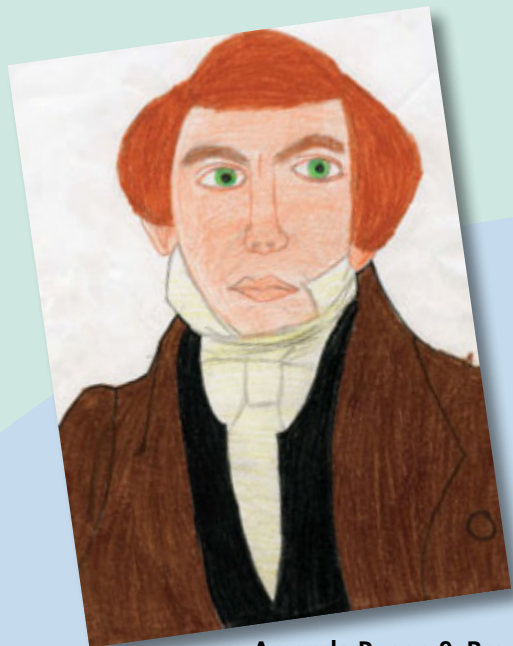
A SMILE TO CHEER



The Wise Men brought valuable gifts to Jesus. They gave Him gold, a costly perfume called frankincense, and an ointment called myrrh. What gift could you give Him as we celebrate His birth this month?

A TESTIMONY  
TO SHARE





Amanda P., age 9, Brazil



Mark K., age 4, Russia

## MY FAMILY



**I**n my family are my mother and father, me, one younger brother, and one younger sister. I love them very much. My favorite thing is when my father takes us out for fun. Every morning my father makes pancakes for me, then takes me to school. I also cook fried eggs for my mother. I am grateful that my father has taught me how to cook. I hope my family can be together forever. I want to study the scriptures, pray every day, and keep the commandments so I can meet that goal.

**Yuan-wei, age 7, Taiwan**



## A LIFEBOAT FOR MY MOTHER

**I** am the oldest of four children. I love to help my mother with the little ones, who are ages 4, 2, and 11 months old. I sing Primary songs to them. The one they like best is "I Am a Child of God."

My mother says that I am her "lifeboat." I am very happy when she tells me

that, because she does everything for my siblings and me. Knowing that I can help makes me feel closer to the Spirit.

Family home evenings at our house are marvelous. They help us feel close to Heavenly Father.

**Victoria M., age 10, Spain**



# I Know That My Redeemer Lives

By Sandra Tanner and  
Cristina Franco

**A**s you read the scriptures, you are becoming like some of the people Lehi saw in his vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8). Lehi saw people hold onto the iron rod and not let go. The people had a testimony of Jesus Christ, and the iron rod helped them come unto Him. The iron rod is the word of God—the scriptures and the words of our prophets. The people who held onto the iron rod learned that Jesus Christ lives. He is our Savior and Redeemer. He came to earth as the prophets said He would, and He will return to the earth again.

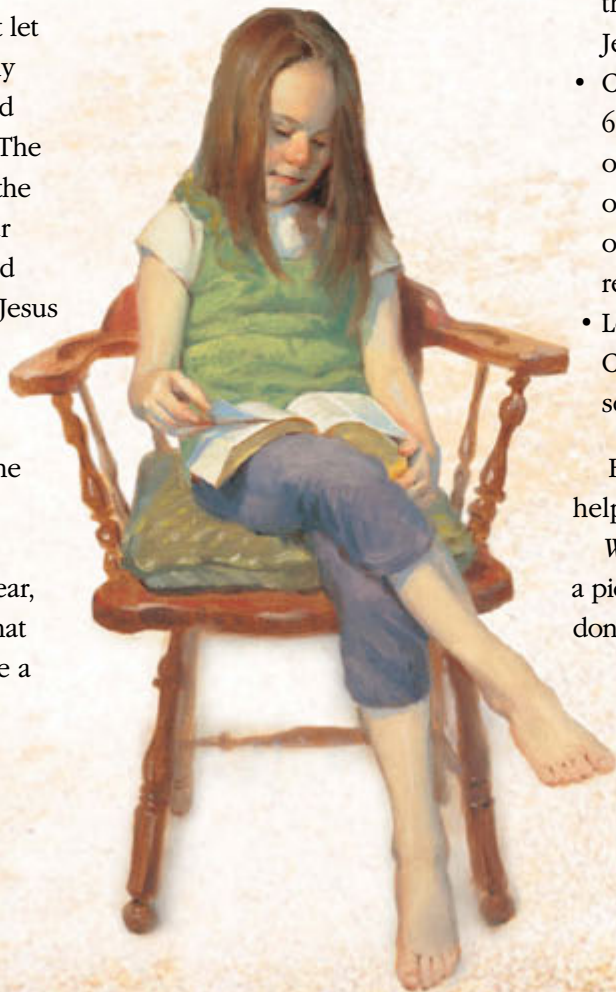
As you continue to do the things you have learned this year, you will be blessed to know that Jesus Christ lives. You will have a testimony of your own.

## December 2010 Scripture Journal

*Read Doctrine and Covenants 76:22.*

*Pray to Heavenly Father to help you know that Jesus Christ lives.*

*Memorize Doctrine and Covenants 76:22.*



*Choose one of these activities or create your own:*

- Help someone else memorize Doctrine and Covenants 76:22.
- Ask your parents or a Primary teacher to show you a scripture they like that teaches about Jesus.
- Cut out the ornaments on page 63 and look up the scriptures on each one. As you place the ornaments on a Christmas tree or around your home, let them remind you of the Savior.
- Learn a new song about Jesus Christ. It could be a Christmas song or hymn.

*How does what you have done help you understand this scripture?*

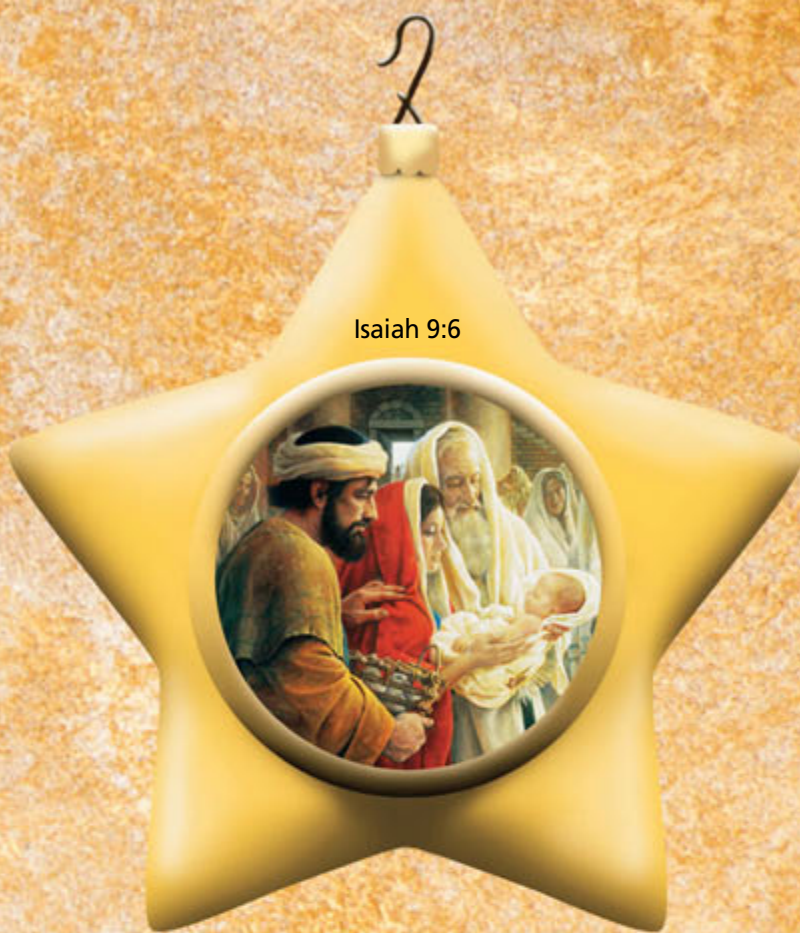
*Write in your journal or draw a picture about what you have done. ■*



Matthew 19:14



Isaiah 9:6



Job 19:25



D&C 76:22





# STRAW FOR THE MANGER

By Jacob F. Frandsen

Based on a true story

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How can we do that?" Michael asked.

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



"I hope I can get more straw in my manger than anybody else!" Michael thought.

The next day Michael started working to collect straw.

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

"I'll help you find your teddy





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

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), "The Abundant Life," *Tambuli*, June 1979, 3; "President Kimball Speaks Out on Service to Others," *New Era*, Mar. 1981, 47.



bear," he told his little brother when he cried for his lost toy.

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

Within a few days Michael's little manger looked very different. It was stuffed full of straw! But Michael noticed a change

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

Michael decided that doing nice things made him feel good inside. On Christmas Eve, as he

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

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





# Jesus Is Born

By Diane L. Mangum

**D**arkness crept softly over the green hillsides near Bethlehem. It was spring, the season when many new lambs were born. Busy shepherds checked on one lamb and then another before settling down for the night.

Bethlehem was busy as well. Many travelers had come to the village because the Roman emperor had decreed that all people must go to the city of their ancestors to be taxed. Two of the travelers—Joseph and his wife, Mary—had to find a place to stay for the night.

At last Joseph and Mary found shelter in a stable, where animals were kept. In that humble stable Mary's baby was born. The baby was the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Mary wrapped her baby in clean swaddling clothes and made a little bed for Him in the soft, clean hay of the **manger**. Joseph knew that this baby was the Son of Heavenly Father. He named the baby Jesus, just as an angel had told him earlier.

The angels of heaven rejoiced! The prophets' promises were fulfilled. Jehovah, now called Jesus, had been born on earth. A new **star** shone in the heavens to announce the good news.

On a hillside an angel appeared to shepherds, and a bright light shone all around. The shepherds had never seen such a thing, and they were very afraid.

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



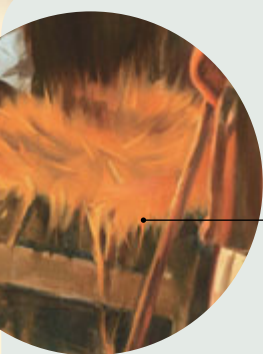
**City of David:** David, the young man who fought Goliath and later became king, was born in Bethlehem. City of David is another name for Bethlehem.



FROM LEFT: DETAIL FROM CHRIST AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN; COURTESY OF G. HARRISON CONROY CO.; PHOTOGRAPH OF BETHLEHEM BY SCOT PROCTOR; MAP BY MOUNTAIN HIGH MAPS © 1993 DIGITAL WISDOM; ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAM LAVORIC; PAINTING OF WISE MEN © 1999 IRI



**Star:** The Wise Men, who lived in the east, far from Bethlehem, saw a new star. They knew it meant the Savior had been born. They traveled to visit young Jesus, who would be King of the Jews. They brought Him precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.



**Manger:** A box or trough made of wood or stone to hold food for animals.

is born this day in the **city of David** a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, there were angels saying to the shepherds, “Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

When the angels left, the amazed shepherds hurried to Bethlehem, where they found the baby Jesus lying in the manger. As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they praised God and told others of all they had seen. ■

*From  
Matthew  
1:20–25;  
2:1–11; and  
Luke 2:1–20.*



# A Special Guest

*“Joseph Smith . . . has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3).*

By Lorraine Richardson

Based on a true story

**W**e'll be having a special guest tonight at family home evening," Dad announced at breakfast.

Daniel looked up in surprise. "Who's coming over?" he asked.

"Someone you know a lot about," Mom said. "A person you'll be excited to meet!"

All day Daniel wondered who was coming to family home evening. Christmas was only a few days away. Maybe the special guest had something to do with Christmas.

Finally, the family gathered in the evening. Dad said, "Tonight Joseph Smith is going to be our special guest. His birthday is on December 23. As a family we're going to role-play the story of Joseph Smith's First Vision."

Everyone collected props and costumes for their assigned roles. Daniel rehearsed his part with Dad while the others practiced with Mom. Soon they were ready.

Little Matthew was excited to play the role of Joseph Smith. Daniel and Elizabeth played Joseph's family. Mom and Dad pretended to be

preachers from different churches.

"Join our church and be saved!"

"No, come with us! We're right!"

"The Bible says this!"

"But that's not what it *means*!"

"Now, how do you think Joseph Smith felt?" Dad asked. "Do you think he might have wondered why the preachers all said different things and who was right?"

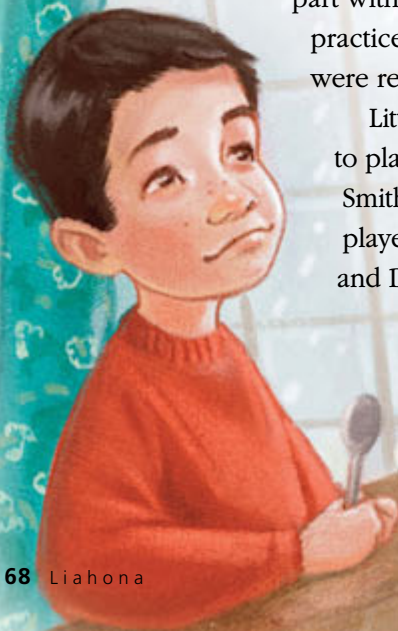
Daniel, Matthew, and Elizabeth all agreed that Joseph must have wondered about that.

Then Dad lit a candle. Daniel felt as if he were right there with Joseph Smith as Dad read from James 1:5 by candlelight, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Then Dad started reading the story of the First Vision.

As Joseph Smith did, Matthew knelt down like he was praying. Suddenly the light of a flashlight shone brightly on him, and Daniel reverently recited the lines Dad had helped him to memorize: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Dad explained how Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith and told him that he should not join any of the churches then on the earth.

"The Lord chose Joseph Smith to be His prophet to restore the true Church of Jesus Christ to the earth," Dad said. "Joseph faithfully carried out that mission."





**W**e come to believe in Jesus Christ through the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Precious Fruits of the First Vision," *Liahona*, Feb. 2009, 5; *Ensign*, Feb. 2009, 7.

A few days later Daniel's neighbor Andy came over to play. Daniel was still thinking about family home evening with Joseph Smith.

He turned to Andy and said, "I know a prophet who lived a long time ago—Joseph Smith. Do you know who he is?" ■



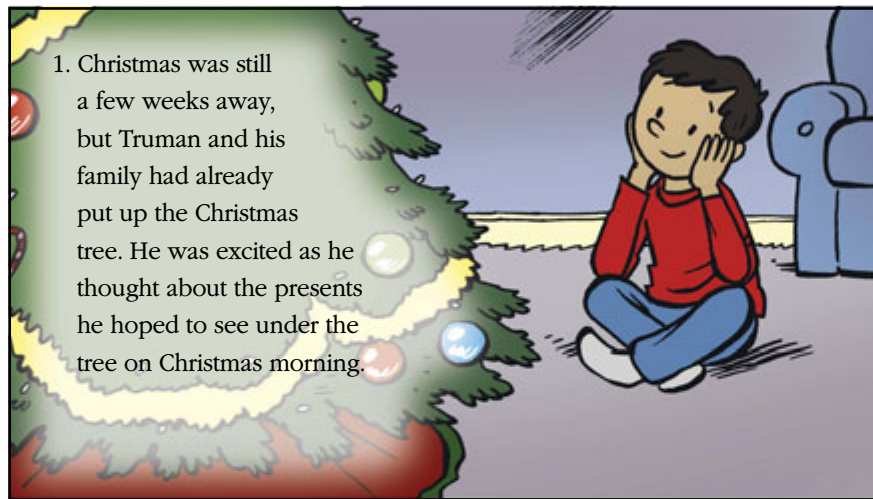
# THE FIRST CHRISTMAS GIFT

By Chad E. Phares

Church Magazines

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

*Based on a true story*



4. As days passed, more presents appeared under the tree, but Truman kept wondering about that first red present with the green bow. Where did it come from?



## HELPS FOR PARENTS

**Y**ou could find a box and place items inside that will help you and your family remember Jesus Christ's birth. Consider including items such as poems, pictures, paper stars, a toy sheep, an angel ornament, or any other item you think will help remind your children of the Lord's birth. Wrap the gift and open it on Christmas.

5. On Christmas morning, Truman raced to wake up his brothers and parents.



7. Truman removed the lid and found a few small items. He pulled them out one at a time—a picture of Jesus Christ, a poem about Jesus's birth, and a star. Truman showed everyone the picture, and Dad read the poem.



6. After arriving at the tree, Truman was excited to see the presents underneath it.



8. Truman was happy to remember Jesus.





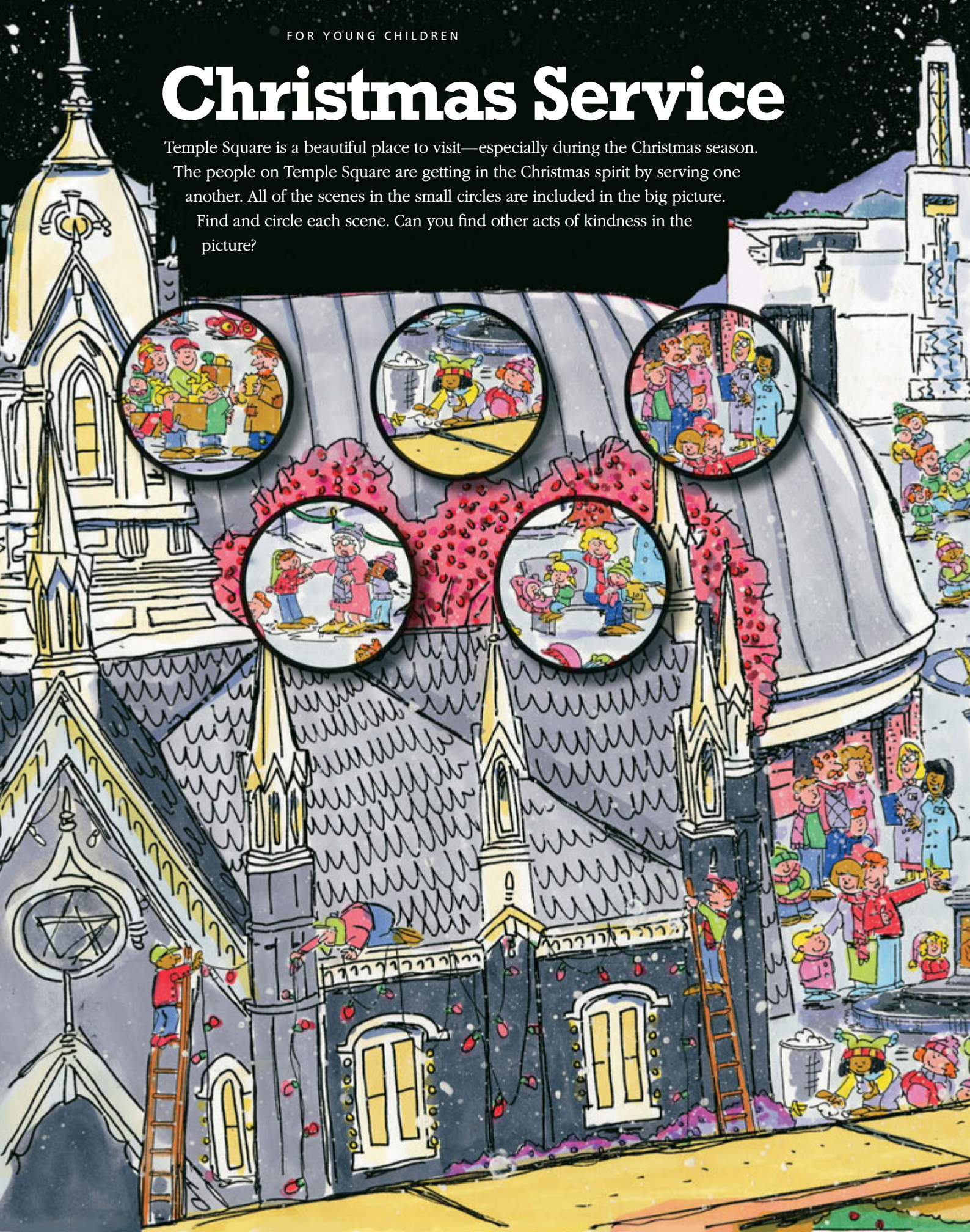
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

# Christmas Service

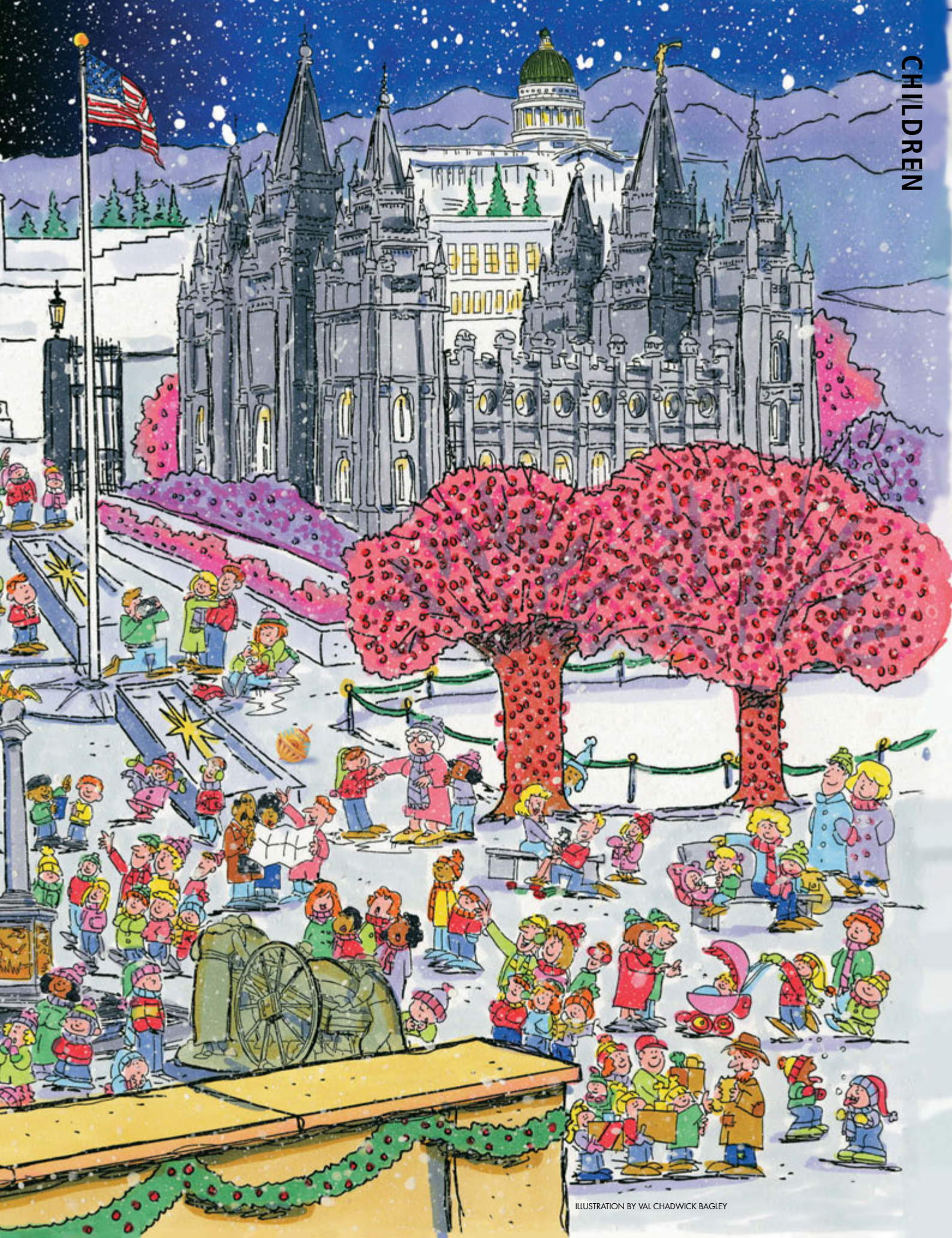
Temple Square is a beautiful place to visit—especially during the Christmas season.

The people on Temple Square are getting in the Christmas spirit by serving one another. All of the scenes in the small circles are included in the big picture.

Find and circle each scene. Can you find other acts of kindness in the picture?









# News of the Church

## Church Members Share the Gospel Online

By Breanna Olaveson

Church Magazines

**M**issionaries across the world have encountered a problem in recent years: after only a visit or two, an investigator who had shown real interest cuts off contact. Researchers have found that most of those investigators have one thing in common: they lose interest after finding negative, inaccurate information about the Church online.

Six years ago 80 percent of search engine results for the term “Mormon” in English were negative or inaccurate. Today the situation has improved. In some countries, Internet search results for “Mormon” are now up to 80 percent positive.

*Members are playing an increasingly vital role online as more and more people investigate the Church via the Web.*

Why the significant change? In addition to official Church Web sites, unofficial Web sites sharing positive information about the Church are spreading across the Web. Individuals are using blogs to share their values, and gospel messages are making appearances on social networking sites.

In short, because of how members are using it, the Internet is also helping bring people *to* the full-time missionaries.

Many Church members have been inspired by the counsel of Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who said, “May I ask that you join the conversation by participating on the Internet to share the gospel and to explain in simple and clear terms the message of the Restoration.”<sup>1</sup>

Here is a look at some of the ways members of the Church are using the Internet to spread the gospel in simple, yet meaningful ways.

### New Mormon.org

Mormon.org, an official Church Web site and a well-established missionary tool, is being redesigned to connect users directly with Church members using personal profiles.

The new Mormon.org will begin appearing in multiple languages in mid-2011, beginning with Spanish and Portuguese. It allows members to create profiles explaining their beliefs and lifestyle. Visitors can view these profile pages and learn more about the Church directly from its members.

“We want visitors to get to know members of the Church and interact with them,” said Ron Wilson, manager of Internet and marketing in the Church’s Missionary Department.

*(For more information on these profiles and other features on the new Mormon.org, see accompanying story.)*

## The More Good Foundation

The More Good Foundation is a nonprofit organization created by Church members that works to give the Church a positive online presence. Though the foundation is not directed or sponsored by the Church, it has played an important part in improving the Church's online presence.

The founders of the More Good Foundation began to study search engines and how they selected results. They learned that Google, a popular Internet search engine, allows one site to occupy only two spaces on a results page. That means that even if LDS.org has hundreds of relevant pages, only two will appear as search results. That left a lot of open space for negative sites, and people seemed to gravitate to sites that were unrelated to the Church as an institution.

"They're looking for their peers' perspectives rather than trusting the organizations," said Jonathan Johnson, president of the More Good Foundation. "If we understand that principle, we will understand why our leaders say we as members can be more effective. We avoid the walls that are created when people see someone in an official capacity."

The More Good Foundation gained rights to over 1,400 URLs and enlisted Church members to create Web sites that discuss gospel principles. They have developed 320 sites in as many as 12 languages. They have also posted over 1,900 videos on YouTube, giving people searching for the Church many more chances to find the truth.

## Blogs

For members who don't have the time or skills to create an entire Web site, blogging offers a convenient alternative. Blogs (short for "weblogs") are simple Web sites that are easy to maintain and usually free.

Hundreds of members of the Church throughout the world are using their blogs to share the gospel with family and friends. It's normal for bloggers to share things that are important to them, so it's a natural place to talk about the gospel.

One young mother who shares her faith online has developed a loyal following. Stephanie Nielson started a blog, [nieniedialogues.blogspot.com](http://nieniedialogues.blogspot.com), where she chronicled her life as a stay-at-home mom. She continued updating her blog after she survived a plane crash in 2008 that left her visibly scarred but spiritually rededicated.

Stephanie shares the gospel on her blog through her posts and includes a large button with a link to LDS.org. She also offers visitors a free copy of her "favorite book"—the Book of Mormon—that she will send "anywhere in the world . . . anywhere!"

## Social Media Web Sites

Millions of people are connecting on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and Church members are sharing the gospel there too.

Information tends to spread quickly and easily on social networks, which makes it an appealing way to share the gospel. At LDS.org, all items in the Gospel Library section feature a "Share" tool, which allows users to easily share links to Church magazines articles, general conference talks, and lesson manuals on various social media sites.

Social network users can also become a fan of the Church's official Facebook pages. The Church has more than 280,000 fans, the Book of Mormon has more than 162,000 fans, and thousands more users have joined other Church-affiliated pages. When a Facebook user joins and participates in a group, his or her friends are notified. Thus, the friends of hundreds of thousands of Facebook users have been exposed to the Church through Facebook.

Church members are also using Twitter, a social networking Web site used to send brief messages



(“tweets”) via the Internet, to share the gospel. Most notably, general conference was Twitter’s top trend during conference weekend in April 2009,<sup>2</sup> meaning general conference was mentioned in more tweets than any other subject.

The Church has also established a presence on YouTube, a popular video posting Web site, which has generated a positive reaction from members and nonmembers alike. Every Mormon Messages video, like all others posted

to YouTube, can be easily posted on a blog or shared via e-mail, Facebook, or Twitter.

The Internet provides a way for Church members to find people in ways unimaginable a generation ago, and as technologies improve, so will Church members’ ability to share the gospel. ■

#### NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Liahona*, June 2008, N1.
2. “Top Twitter trend: LDS General Conference,” Mary Richards, *ksl.com*, April 6, 2009. <http://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=6074101>.

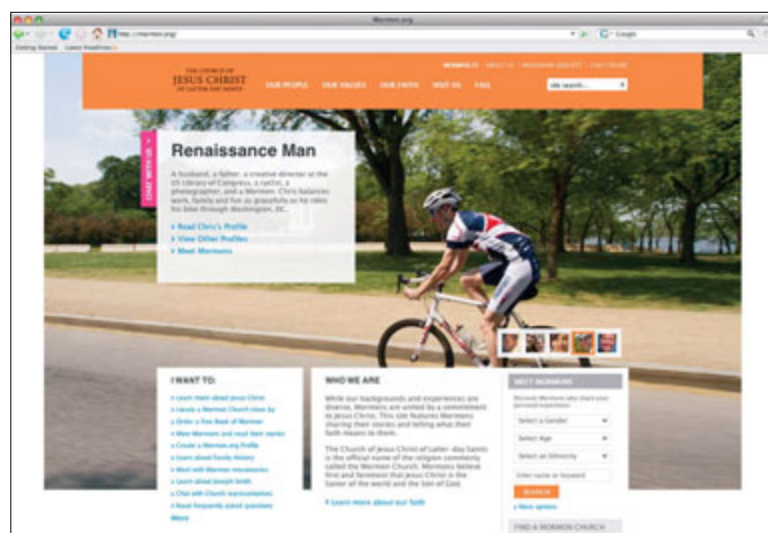
## Mormon.org Redesign Connects Members and Investigators

Since its launch in 2001, Mormon.org has helped people get straightforward, honest answers to their questions about the Church. Those answers came primarily from Church headquarters.

Mormon.org’s most recent update—including a complete redesign—still offers plenty of answers and a way to contact missionaries. But now, thanks to a new online profile feature, many answers come directly from Church members around the world.

Visitors to the new site—which will begin appearing in languages other than English in mid-2011—will be able to sort thousands of member profiles by gender, age, ethnicity, religious background, and other qualifiers to find Church members who are similar to themselves. Once on a profile page, users can read testimonies, ask further questions, and in some cases, connect with Church members on social networking Web sites. This peer-to-peer contact allows investigators to get a non-authoritative viewpoint of the Church.

“When people search the Internet for information, they give more credence to the opinions



**The redesigned Mormon.org will begin appearing in additional languages in mid-2011.**

of their peers than to what an organization says about itself, especially when it comes to organized religion,” said Elder Richard G. Hinckley, Executive Director of the Missionary Department. “That is why member profiles are such a valuable part of the new Mormon.org.”

The new Mormon.org is divided into four major areas, each focused on teaching about a certain aspect of the Church: Our People, Our Values, Our Faith, and Frequently Asked Questions.

## Our People

This section contains the member profiles, allowing investigators to learn more about the gospel by “meeting” those who have gained testimonies of the restored gospel.

“The one thing that helps people get past misconceptions about the Church is if they’ve had the opportunity to know a Mormon,” said Ron Wilson, manager of Internet and marketing for the Missionary Department. “They realize the negative things they might be hearing about the Church don’t line up with the lives their Mormon friends are living.”

## Our Values

The Our Values section teaches what members do as a result of their beliefs. It explains some of the Church’s priorities, including humanitarian aid, families, education, service, and family history. This section will help investigators connect Church doctrine with the way members live their lives.

## Our Faith

The Our Faith section explains fundamental doctrines of the Church. Everything in this section of the site can answer the question, “What do Mormons believe?” This section also provides context for other areas of the site. Visitors to the site can learn about our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, the Restoration of the gospel, Joseph Smith, the plan of salvation, the Book of Mormon, and other topics.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Church members create the content for this section by answering questions on their personal profiles. They answer FAQs in their own words, helping visitors to learn about the Church from its members. ■

## Simplified Organ Music Available Online

An “emergency preparedness kit” for pianists with limited organ experience promises to make sacrament meeting accompaniment a little easier. Two new resources, *Manual-Only Hymns for Organ* and *Transformations*, were produced to help pianists adapt to the organ.

*Manual-Only Hymns for Organ* is a compilation of 38 popular hymns arranged to be played without pedals. *Transformations* contains introductions and endings for the same 38 hymns that can be added to “transform” the hymns into prelude and postlude music. The set is available online and can be downloaded free of charge. Visit [music.lds.org](http://music.lds.org), click on **Learning Materials**, then **Accompanying Others**, then **Manual-Only Hymns for Organists**. Spiral-bound copies of the books are available for purchase at <http://creativeworks.byu.edu/catalog/ViewItem.aspx?item=SM021>.

Unlike simplified hymns available for the piano, the accompaniments include notes in each hand that can be played on separate keyboards or with the organ’s bass coupler button. Though it contains

some instructional material, the book is not intended to be a manual for learning to play the organ. Instead, it is designed to give pianists a place to start if they have no experience with the organ and limited time to learn.

The project, which has been underway since late 2008, was headed by former Tabernacle Choir organist Robert Cundick with assistance from current choir organist Richard Elliott and a team of organists from Brigham Young University and BYU–Idaho. ■

## Cebuano, Tagalog Scriptures Available Online

Cebuano and Tagalog editions of the triple combination, containing the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, are now available online. They can be accessed at [scriptures.lds.org/ceb](http://scriptures.lds.org/ceb) and [scriptures.lds.org/tgl](http://scriptures.lds.org/tgl), respectively.

The sites include footnotes, maps, and photographs, and allow readers to mark the scriptures and perform key word searches. The scriptures site now includes 17 languages, with plans to add Japanese, Indonesian, and Thai in the near future. ■



## TEMPLE NEWS

### Vancouver Temple Dedicated

President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the Church's 131st temple just outside Vancouver, British Columbia, on May 2, 2010. Nearly 40,000 people toured the temple during the public open house, which was held two months after the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. The Vancouver British Columbia Temple will serve members in British Columbia and northern Washington, USA. The Church now has eight planned or operating temples in Canada.

### Gila Valley Arizona Temple Dedicated

President Thomas S. Monson dedicated The Gila Valley Arizona Temple on May 23, 2010, in three sessions. The temple serves members in southeast Arizona and southwest New Mexico. The temple is located in southeast Arizona, not far from the area where President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) grew up. The Gila Valley Temple is the third to open in Arizona, and two more (Gilbert Arizona and Phoenix Arizona) have been announced.

### Cebu City Temple Dedicated

President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the second temple in the Philippines on June 13,

2010. The Cebu City Philippines Temple is located about 350 miles (563 km) from the Manila Philippines Temple. The temple will serve more than 200,000 members in the Visayas and Mindanao areas. More than 45,000 people attended the two-week public open house. On the night prior to the dedication, more than 3,000 youth performed in a cultural event.

### Ground Broken in Brigham City, Utah

The groundbreaking for the Brigham City Utah Temple was held on Saturday, July 31, 2010, at 9:00 a.m. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, presided at the groundbreaking, which was broadcast to stake centers throughout the temple district. The Brigham City Utah Temple was announced in general conference on October 3, 2009. It will be the Church's 14th operating temple in Utah.

### Kyiv Temple Dedicated

The Kyiv Ukraine Temple was dedicated on August 29, 2010, in three sessions broadcast throughout the temple district. A public open house took place from August 7 to 21, with a cultural celebration on August 28. The temple was announced on July 20, 1998. Construction began



PHOTOGRAPH BY WESTON C. COITON

**The Kyiv Ukraine Temple was dedicated on August 29, 2010.** on June 23, 2007. It is the Church's first temple in Eastern Europe and the 11th on the European continent. The Kyiv Temple serves members in 13 countries.

### Laie Temple Rededicated

After extensive renovations, the Laie Hawaii Temple was rededicated in three sessions on November 21, 2010, following a public open house from October 22 to November 13 and a cultural celebration on November 20. The rededication was broadcast within the Laie and Kona temple districts. The temple was the Church's fifth, dedicated in 1919 by President Heber J. Grant and rededicated in 1978 by President Spencer W. Kimball. ■

## COMMENT

### ***Liahona* Changes Things**

I want to thank you for the messages that come in the *Liahona* every month. They are very helpful—they help me make every day better. Whenever I get discouraged and think life is too hard, I read a message from the *Liahona* and everything changes. Thank you for all you do—for me and for many others.

Edgar Celestino, Texas, USA

### **Keeping in Touch Online**

I was baptized in 1990 and have always attended my Church meetings. But recently I was sent to another country as a peacekeeper, and for now I cannot attend any meetings. My way of staying in contact with the Church is to read the magazines online. This has been a great inspiration to me. I feel the Spirit strongly as I read the words of our prophet and other Church leaders. I miss partaking of the sacrament, but I know Heavenly Father understands my circumstances. Thank you for the magazines online.

Olukunbi Orimoloye, Nigeria

*Please send your feedback or suggestions to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org). Submissions may be edited for length or clarity. ■*

### **Call for Articles**

Has your Christmas celebration ever not been as you wanted or not gone as you planned? Maybe you were sick, mourning a loss, in the military, away at school, or separated from family and friends. How did you celebrate the Savior and His birth in those circumstances? Please limit your experience to 500 words, label it “Christmas Celebrations,” and send it to [liahona@ldschurch.org](mailto:liahona@ldschurch.org). ■

## FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS

This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are a few examples.

**“A Gift Worthy of Added Care,”** page 26: Elder Neil L. Andersen shares several examples of how the Holy Ghost guides people. Consider reading some of these examples and then asking family members to share experiences when they felt the Holy Ghost.



For younger children, you could display objects that represent blessings of the Holy Ghost. For example, the Holy Ghost is like a blanket because He comforts us (see John 14:26), a compass because He guides us (see 2 Nephi 32:5), and soap because He can help us know when we have been cleansed through the Atonement (see 2 Nephi 31:17; 3 Nephi 27:20).

**“Christmas Traditions of the Seventy,”** page 32: Read some of the traditions listed in the article, then ask family members what their favorite Christmas traditions are. Are there any new traditions you would like to adopt?

**“A Special Guest,”** page 68: Like the family in the story, you could commemorate the Prophet Joseph Smith’s birthday by learning about the First Vision. You may also want to read from a conference talk about Joseph Smith (see, for example, Tad R. Callister, “Joseph Smith—Prophet of the Restoration,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 35–37).

### **Appreciating the Savior’s Mission**

One of our favorite family home evenings helped us better appreciate the life and mission of the Savior. We asked every family member to find scriptures about the Savior’s hands, eyes, feet, or mouth. Then we each shared those scriptures. For example, the Savior’s hands healed the leper, His feet walked on water, and His eyes wept at the tomb of Lazarus. We also discussed the wounds in Jesus’s body and the perfection of His sacrifice. Our discussion about the life and acts of Jesus Christ invited the Spirit and allowed each family member to bear testimony of our Savior.

David R. Anderson, Utah, USA ■



# CHRISTMAS IN THE VINEYARD

By Larry Hiller  
Church Magazines

In late December a chill mist shrouds the bare vines in the predawn darkness. The vineyard is silent except for one section, which is filled with voices and a bright, crackling bonfire. It is Christmas morning, and elsewhere in this valley, people are still warm in their beds or gathered around Christmas trees watching excited children. But not the small group in the vineyard. They have come to give a gift.

To understand the meaning of the gift, you must know that this vineyard in Madera, California, USA, is part of the Church's welfare production system. Each year it produces about 400,000 pounds (180,000 kg) of raisins. Half of the harvest goes to the shelves of bishops' storehouses. The rest is used for humanitarian response around the world. Wards and branches from eight stakes are assigned certain tasks to complete and rows of vines to care for.

One crucial task is pruning the vines. The tangle of the past season's growth must be cut out, leaving just the few canes that will grow to produce the next harvest. Without this dormant-season pruning, the vineyard becomes overgrown. Too many vines overwhelm the roots' ability to sustain them. Too little fruit is produced, and the harvest is greatly diminished.

Why do this work on Christmas day? Because many of the ward members are fieldworkers by trade, pruning vineyards and orchards for their



*What motivates a group of Latter-day Saints to leave their homes on Christmas for a day of hard work? Their desire to serve Him whose birth we celebrate.*

livelihood. Their work is intensive at this time of year, so this is the only day they have off in several weeks. It's Christmas—and they spend it here in the Church's vineyard. In fact, they have come here 8 of the past 15 Christmases. For these members of the Spanish-speaking Madera Third Ward, it is their gift to El Niño—to the Christ child.

One worker, Miguel Chavez, explains that it's a way of giving something back for all of the blessings they receive from the Lord: "We are giving something to needy families. Our small contribution becomes a great blessing to other people." Another ward member says simply, "This is the best work we can do because this is God's vineyard."

And so, on this particular Christmas day, once these members of the Madera Third Ward finish pruning, wrapping, and tying their assigned vines, they finish parts of two neighboring wards' rows. It is a gift fit for a King. ■



#### WORDS OF CHRIST

Laborers in the Vineyard, by J. Kirk Richards

Jesus Christ taught: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in

him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).





Like the shepherds of old,  
we need to say in our hearts, "Let us  
see this thing which is come to pass,"  
writes President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second  
Counselor in the First Presidency. "We need  
to desire it in our hearts. Let us see the  
Holy One of Israel in the manger, in the  
temple, on the mount, and on the cross.  
Like the shepherds, let us glorify and praise  
God for these tidings of great joy!"  
See "Can We See the Christ?"  
page 4.