

Liahona



How Do We Find Joy and Happiness?

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Source of Joy, page 18

Accepting These
Four Gifts from the Savior,
page 6

Nine Strategies of
Happy People,
page 24

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and Encourage Children
and Youth, page 36

THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Bangkok Thailand





Here are a few facts about the Church in Thailand:


1  Temple under construction in Bangkok

Church members  **22,100**

41  Congregations

Mission  **1** 

74  Languages and dialects spoken in Thailand

Letters in the official name of Bangkok when written in Thai  **168**

1854 First missionary sent to Thailand (known as Siam at that time).

1966 Thailand District organized; President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the country for missionary work; first native convert baptized.

1995 Bangkok Stake created.

2018 President Russell M. Nelson visited Bangkok.

2019 Groundbreaking for the Bangkok Thailand Temple on January 16.





Jesus Christ: The Source of Enduring Joy
Elder David A. Bednar

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How Do We Find Joy and Happiness?

For me and many others, there is sometimes an added wrinkle of complexity when it comes to feeling joyful or happy—even after choosing to live righteously. I've occasionally wondered, "If I'm keeping the commandments, why am I having such a hard time feeling happy?"

Many factors can upend our sense of happiness or well-being, such as loss of employment, the death of a loved one, or interrupted physical and/or mental health. Still, I've come to believe that no matter the valley you're trudging through, better days are ahead! In my article, "The Hunt for Happiness," on page 24, I share gospel perspective alongside scientific research with the goal of pursuing happiness, especially when it feels out of reach.

Elder David A. Bednar's article on page 18, "Jesus Christ: The Source of Enduring Joy," teaches us about true and lasting joy. Full of scriptural and prophetic insights, his article is packed with crucial instruction important to our eternal welfare as well as finding joy during mortality.

"Adam fell that men might be," the scripture says, "and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). After the darkest nights, light always returns in the morning.

David Dickson
 Church Magazines



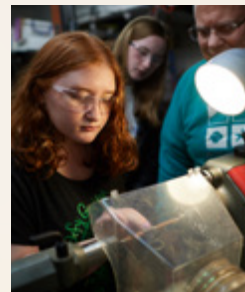
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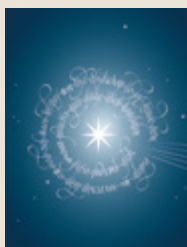
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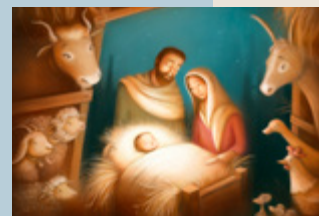
Brothers **progress together** in the priesthood; youth from around the world share **how they celebrate Christmas**; the Lord expects love, **not mockery**; a blind date leads a young man to the gospel; and **how to make the mission decision**.



Children

Friend

Explore the places **where Jesus walked**. Read about members of the Church in Colombia. Celebrate the birth of Jesus, **the Light of the World**.



DECEMBER'S DIGITAL-ONLY ARTICLES



5 Tips to Enjoy Christmas When You're Far from Home

By Alexandra Palmer

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Spiritual Hypoxia and the Importance of Good Friends

By Bella Harvey

A young adult from Australia shares insights on the value of friendship.



Members Share Blessings from Come, Follow Me

By Chakell Wardleigh

Read how studying the New Testament has affected the lives of members this year!

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THE MANY FACES OF HAPPINESS

Here are a few thoughts on what makes for a happy life. On page 24, we explore this topic in-depth, including nine strategies to be happier.

"In African villages, one would ask in greeting, **'HOW ARE WE?'**

This understanding sees that someone else's achievements or happiness is in a very real way our own."

Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa, in 14th Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* (2016).



"WITHOUT GOOD THOUGHTS THERE IS NO PEACE, and without peace there is no happiness."

Mahatma Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: The Voice of Truth* (1968).

"It is not happiness that makes us grateful. It's **gratefulness** that **makes us happy.**"

David Steindl-Rast, Catholic Benedictine monk, "Want to Be Happy? Be Grateful," TEDGlobal 2013 (video), June 2013, ted.com.



"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion; and if you want yourself **to be happy, practice compassion.**"

Dalai Lama, in Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living* (2009).

"Happiness is the purpose and design of existence.

'Men are, that they might have joy' [2 Nephi 2:25]. Virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping the commandments of God lead to a happy life."

President David O. McKay, *Pathways to Happiness* (1964).





By President
Russell M. Nelson

Four Gifts

FROM THE SAVIOR

My beloved brothers and sisters, what a treasured season this is! Let us consider together the blessings that come to us as we focus on the life, mission, doctrine, and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

During this season I invite you to consider your own desires. Do you really want to become more and more like Jesus Christ? Do you really want to live with Heavenly Father and with your family forever and live as He lives? If you do, you will want to accept many gifts offered by the Lord to help you during your mortal probation. Let us focus on *four* of the gifts Jesus Christ gave to all who are willing to *receive* them (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:33).

First, He gave you and me an unlimited capacity *to love*. That includes the capacity to love the unlovable and those who not only do *not* love you but presently persecute and despitefully use you (see Matthew 5:44–45).

With the Savior's help, we can learn to love as He loved. It may require a change of heart—most certainly a softening of our hearts—as we are tutored by the Savior how to *really* take care of each other. My dear brothers and sisters, we can truly minister in the Lord's way as we accept His gift of love.



A **second** gift the Savior offers you is the ability *to forgive*. Through His infinite Atonement, you can forgive those who have hurt you and who may never accept responsibility for their cruelty to you. The Savior will grant you the ability to forgive anyone who has mistreated you in any way.



A **third** gift from the Savior is that of *repentance*. The Lord invites us to change our minds, our knowledge, our spirit, even our breathing. For example, when we repent, we breathe with gratitude to God, who lends us breath from day to day (see Mosiah 2:21). And we desire to use that breath in serving Him and His children. Repentance is a resplendent gift. It is a process never to be feared. It is a gift for us to receive with joy and to use—even embrace—day after day as we seek to become more like our Savior.

A **fourth** gift from our Savior is actually a promise—a promise of *life everlasting*. Everyone will be resurrected and experience *immortality*. But eternal life is so much more than a designation of time. Eternal life is the kind and quality of life that Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son live. When the Father offers us everlasting life, He is saying in essence, “If you choose to follow my Son—if your *desire* is *really* to become more like Him—then in time you may live as we live and preside over worlds and kingdoms as we do.”

These four unique gifts will bring us more and more joy as we accept them. They were made possible because Jehovah condescended to come to earth as the baby Jesus. He was born of an immortal Father and a mortal mother. He was born in Bethlehem under the most humble of circumstances. Jesus Christ is God’s transcendent gift—the gift of the Father to all of His children (see John 3:16).

With our thoughts and feelings so focused on the Savior of the world, what, then, do *we* need to do to receive these gifts offered to us so willingly by Jesus Christ? What is the key to loving as He loves, forgiving as He forgives, repenting to become more like Him, and ultimately living with Him and our Heavenly Father?

The key is to make and keep sacred covenants. *We choose* to live and progress on the Lord’s covenant path and to stay on it. It is not a complicated way. It is *the* way to true joy in this life and eternal life beyond.

My dear brothers and sisters, my deepest desires are for all of Heavenly Father’s children to have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and to heed His teachings. And I desire that we will believe and receive the love the Savior has for each of us. His infinite and perfect love moved Him to atone for you and me. That gift—His Atonement—allows all of His other gifts to become ours. ■

From the 2018 First Presidency Christmas devotional.



WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Words by William C. Dix

Duet or Two-part Choir

English folk song
Arranged by Sally DeFord

Gently ♩ = 90-100 *Women unis. mp*

1. What Child is this ____ who,
2. Why lies He in ____ such

laid to rest, ____ On Ma - ry's lap ____ is sleep - ing? Whom
mean es - tate, ____ Where ox - en now ____ are feed - ing? Good

an - gels greet ____ with an - thems sweet, ____ While shep - herds watch ____ are
Chris - tians, fear, ____ for sin - ners here ____ The si - lent Word ____ is

keep - ing? This, this ____ is Christ the King, ____ Whom
plead - ing. Nails, spear ____ shall pierce Him through, ____ The

Men unis. mf



13

shep - herds guard and an - gels sing; Haste, haste to
cross be borne for me, for you; Hail, hail, the

13

16

bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.
Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of

16

19

Ma - ry.

19

mp





23 *mp*

3. So bring Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh;— Come, pea - sant, king— to

mp

So bring Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh;— Come,

23

27

own— Him; The King of kings— sal - va - tion brings;— Let

pea - sant, king— to own— Him; The King— of kings, Let

27

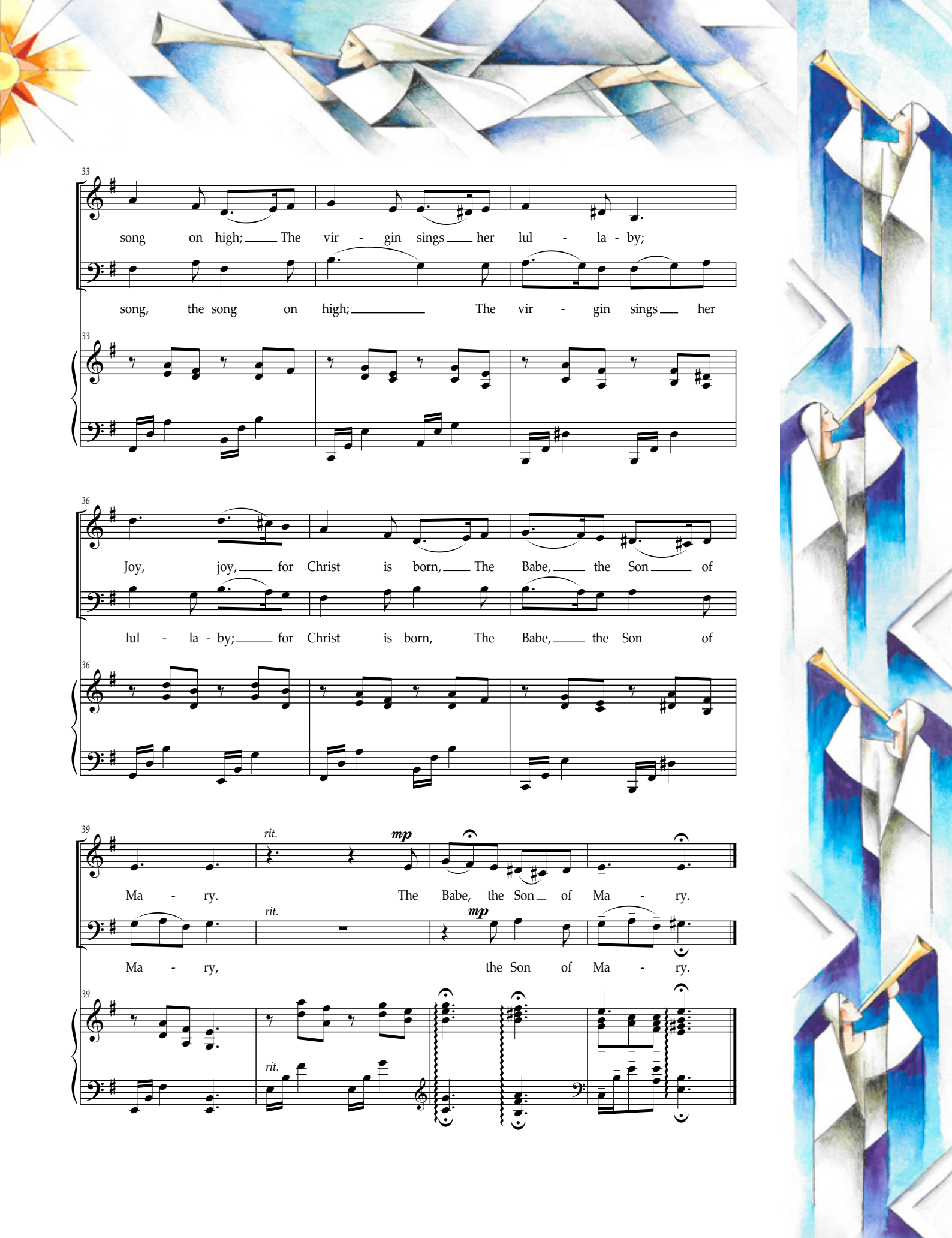
30 *f*

lov - ing hearts— en - throne Him. Raise, raise— the

f

lov - ing hearts en - throne— Him. Raise, raise— the

30 *f*



33

song on high; — The vir - gin sings — her lul - la - by;

song, the song on high; — The vir - gin sings — her

33

36

Joy, joy, — for Christ is born, — The Babe, — the Son — of

lul - la - by; — for Christ is born, The Babe, — the Son of

36

39

rit. *mp*

Ma - ry. The Babe, the Son — of Ma - ry.

rit. *mp*

Ma - ry, the Son of Ma - ry.

39

rit.

Ministering Principles

What the Christmas Story Teaches Us about Ministering

“This is the season beloved of the year. Sing a rhyme; Christmastime soon will be here. Tell the true story of Jesus’ birth, when, as a baby, he came to the earth”
(*“The Nativity Song,”* Children’s Songbook, 52).

Christmastime is a wonderful time when sheep, shepherds, mangers, and stars suddenly take on new meaning. They become important players in the retelling of one of the most important events in human history: the birth of Jesus Christ. Many families display a nativity scene in their homes. Others make a point to read the story of His birth or participate in a pageant. Like all stories of Christ, the story of His birth is filled with lessons we can learn about ministering, about sharing His light to light the world. “The story of Christmas is a story of love,” said President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

“... In the stories of Christ’s birth, we can see and feel who He was and who He is. That lightens our load along the way. And it will lead us to forget ourselves and to lighten the load for others.”¹

“There was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7)

The innkeeper failed to make room for the Savior, but we don’t have to make that mistake! We can make room for the Savior in our hearts by making room for our brothers and sisters at our tables, in our homes, and in our traditions. Many family traditions can be made sweeter and even more memorable by including other people. Daiana and her family have a tradition of



inviting someone to share Christmas with them. Every December, they discuss and decide who they would like to invite.² Maybe your family could start a similar tradition. Perhaps someone you minister to would like to join your family in singing favorite Christmas songs together. You might also make room at your Christmas dinner for someone who might not have family in the area.

What better way to celebrate the Savior than to follow His example of inclusion? Remember that He invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33). Make room and create inclusion.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8)

It seems fitting that shepherds would be among the first to greet the infant Savior. Prophets of old referred to Jesus Christ as the “Shepherd of Israel” (Psalm 80:1) and the “Shepherd over all the earth” (1 Nephi 13:41). And Christ Himself said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep” (John 10:14). Knowing our sheep and keeping watch is a key part of shepherding and ministering as the Savior does.

With the glimmering lights and ornate decorations, there is a lot to look at during Christmastime. But perhaps the greatest beauty of the season can be found when we remember to turn our focus to those we minister to and keep watch over our own flocks. Keeping watch can be noting someone’s favorite treat or asking

about someone's holiday plans. We keep watch when we see and meet others' needs—both the obvious and the not so obvious.

When Cheryl suddenly lost her husband, Mick, she was devastated. As her first Christmas without him drew closer, the loneliness grew. Thankfully, one of her ministering sisters, Shauna, was there. Shauna and her husband, Jim, invited Cheryl on many holiday outings. They noticed Cheryl's worn coat and decided to do something about it. A few days before Christmas, Shauna and Jim brought Cheryl a Christmas present: a beautiful new coat. They were aware of Cheryl's physical needs for a warm coat but also of her emotional needs for comfort and company. They stepped up to fulfill those needs as best they could and set a beautiful example of how we too can keep watch over our flocks.³

“The shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem” (Luke 2:15)

“Let us now go” is an exuberant invitation! The shepherds didn't assume that their friends would be too tired to make the trek. They didn't quietly head to Bethlehem on their own. They joyously turned to each other and said, “Let us now go!”

While we might not be able to invite our friends to come see the infant Savior, we can invite them to feel the spirit of Christmas (or the spirit of Christ) by serving with us. “The way to increase the Christmas spirit is to reach out generously to those around us and give of ourselves,” said Bonnie L. Oscarson, former Young Women General President.⁴ Imagine you're holding a candle. Others can certainly see and benefit from the light from your candle, but imagine the warmth they can feel if you use your candle to light their candle and allow them to hold the light for themselves.

Christ Himself taught that those who follow Him will have the light of life (see John 8:12). Serving as He did is one way we can follow Him and enjoy that promised light. So share the light by inviting others to serve with you! How can you and those you minister to serve together? Together you can prepare your favorite food or surprise someone with a small gift or note. Together you can both feel the light that comes from following Christ's example of service.



“They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child” (Luke 2:17)

It’s easy to imagine the joyous excitement of the shepherds as they shared the amazing news of Christ’s birth with as many people as they could. Heralded by angels, the prophesied Messiah had come! He was here! In fact, sharing the good news of the Savior is a big theme of the Nativity story. The angels sang. The star pointed the way. And the shepherds made it known abroad.

We can add our voices to the Christmas story by sharing the good news and testifying of the Savior. “As you have the privilege to represent the Savior in your ministering efforts, ask yourself, ‘How can I share the light of the gospel with this individual or family?’” taught Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President. “What is the Spirit inspiring me to do?”⁵

Here are a few suggestions for you to consider as you seek to know how you can share your testimony of the Savior and His gospel:

- Find a scripture that captures your feelings about the Savior or expresses why you are grateful to Him. Share it with those you minister to.
- Send a text or a social media message with a Christmas video. There are some amazing ones on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)!
- Tell a friend about a special memory or tradition that reminds you of Christ.

Have faith that the Holy Ghost will bear witness of the truth of your testimony, just as He bore witness to Simeon and Anna that the baby Jesus was the Savior (see Luke 2:26, 38).

“To truly honor [Jesus Christ’s] coming into the world, we must do as He did and reach out in compassion and mercy to our fellowmen,” said Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “This we can do daily, by word and deed. Let this become our Christmas tradition, no matter where we are—to be a little kinder, more forgiving, less judging, more grateful, and more generous in sharing our abundance with those in need.”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Christmas Stories” (First Presidency Christmas devotional, Dec. 6, 2009), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
2. See Daiana Melina Albornoz Díaz, “Sharing Christmas,” *Liahona*, Dec. 2007, 17; *New Era*, Dec. 2007, 8.
3. See Cheryl Boyle, “He Would Have Bought It for You,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 57.
4. Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Christmas Is Christlike Love” (First Presidency Christmas devotional, Dec. 7, 2014), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
5. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 104.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Scatter Your Crumbs” (First Presidency Christmas devotional, Dec. 3, 2017), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.”



Fatu Gamanga

Eastern Province, Sierra Leone



Through the gospel literacy program, Fatu not only learned to read and write, but she also learned about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Before joining the Church, Fatu struggled to support her family. Now she has developed skills of self-reliance and runs her own business making and selling beautiful handmade rugs. She also serves as the Relief Society president in her branch.

CHRISTINA SMITH, PHOTOGRAPHER

Before I joined the Church, I tried to make money selling handmade rugs, but I didn't have money to buy material. I used to tell people, "If you want a rug, go buy your material and bring it to me; then I will make it for you. You can pay me when I'm done."

Now that I'm here in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have learned about self-reliance. The Church has given me more endurance to learn to read, write, speak, and try to do something for myself to be self-reliant. Now I go to the tailor's shop and ask for the leftover scraps they cut from the clothes and leave on the floor. I buy the scraps for a small price and use them to make my rugs. I now sell more than I ever have before.

Since I joined the Church, my life has changed. I have gone from zero to hero! I'm proud of Jesus Christ and I'm proud of His Church. I'm so thankful for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

DISCOVER MORE

See more about Fatu's journey of faith, including additional photos, in the online or Gospel Library version of this article at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/121916](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/121916).

Learn about the practical and spiritual benefits of self-reliance at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/self-reliance](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/self-reliance).



By Elder
David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles



Jesus Christ

The Source of Enduring Joy

Every member of the Lord's restored Church who is striving to remember and honor sacred covenants and keep the commandments can receive the gift of enduring joy.

I recently was in a spiritually powerful testimony meeting and listened intently as a devoted sister declared, "I have great joy because of the Father's plan of salvation." Immediately obvious to me was the fact that this woman was not simply speaking familiar words. The light that shone in her eyes, the spiritually dignified tone of her voice, her bright and peaceful countenance—everything about her affirmed the truthfulness of what she was saying. She was filled with joy. She radiated joy. Indeed, she was becoming more like the Savior and receiving His image in her countenance (see Alma 5:14), a part of which was becoming joyful.

Her expression of faith caused me to remember the lyrics of several familiar hymns:

*With faith, we hold the iron rod
And find in this our joy.¹*

*Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way. . . .
'Tis better far for us to strive
Our useless cares from us to drive;
Do this, and joy your hearts will swell—
All is well! All is well!²*

*Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives:
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"³*

And in this Christmas season, we will sing:

*“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.”⁴*

And

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King! . . .
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.⁵*

Since becoming president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Russell M. Nelson frequently has extended an invitation to the people of the world that includes the promise of joy: “Our message to the world is simple and sincere: we invite all of God’s children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have *enduring joy*, and qualify for eternal life.”⁶

What exactly is this joy about which we sing and teach and which we have the obligation to offer to all humankind? And how is it obtained? Let us now consider together answers to these two important questions.

WHAT IS JOY?

A common dictionary definition of joy is “a *feeling* of great pleasure [or] happiness.”⁷ In comparison, the Guide to the Scriptures describes joy as “a *condition* of great happiness [that results] from righteous living.”⁸ Interestingly, our gospel perspective helps us to understand that joy is more than a fleeting feeling or emotion; rather, it is a spiritual gift and a state of being and becoming. For this reason I described the sister who bore her testimony as filled with and radiating joy.

As a wise and loving father, Lehi taught his sons that the very purpose of mortal life is for all people to have joy:

“But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

“Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:24–25).

Adam and Eve summarized the vital lessons they learned from the Eternal Father and from their own experience. Adam declared: “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life *I shall have joy*, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10; emphasis added).

And Eve said: “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and *the joy of our redemption*, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:11; emphasis added).

The Father’s plan of happiness enables His children to obtain a physical body and gain mortal experience, to choose righteousness in the presence of evil and temptation, and to assist Heavenly Father with His great plan through honorable marriage and parenthood.⁹ Ultimately, at the time of our resurrection, “the spirit and the body [are] to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive *a fulness of joy*” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:17; emphasis added).

HOW IS JOY OBTAINED?

I believe the contrast between righteous joy and worldly fun is instructive and helps us better understand the nature of true joy. Joy comes from exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, worthily receiving and faithfully honoring sacred ordinances and covenants, and striving to become deeply converted to the Savior and His purposes. Fun is the result of “amusement,” “playful [and] often boisterous action or speech,” or pleasurable diversion.¹⁰ A day on the rides at Disneyland is fun. Worthily preparing for and participating in the ordinance of the sacrament is joyful.

Joy primarily is spiritual; fun primarily is temporal. Joy primarily is enduring; fun primarily is temporary. Joy primarily is deep and rich; fun primarily is shallow. Joy primarily is whole and complete; fun primarily is partial. Joy primarily pertains to mortality and eternity; fun pertains only to mortality.



How important it is for us to never confuse or trade the enduring, deep joy of devoted discipleship for temporary and shallow fun.

The Redeemer is the ultimate and only source of enduring and eternal joy. The prophet Jacob testified: “But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, *and their joy shall be full forever*” (2 Nephi 9:18; emphasis added).

THE TRUE SOURCE OF JOY

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, sincere repentance invites us to turn to and depend upon Jesus Christ, the true source of joy. Please consider carefully the response of King Benjamin’s people to his teachings about the Savior’s Atonement:

“And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been

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delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

“And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.

“And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, *and they were filled with joy*, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come” (Mosiah 4:1–3; emphasis added).

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, obedience invites us to follow Jesus Christ, the true source of joy. The Savior declared to His disciples:

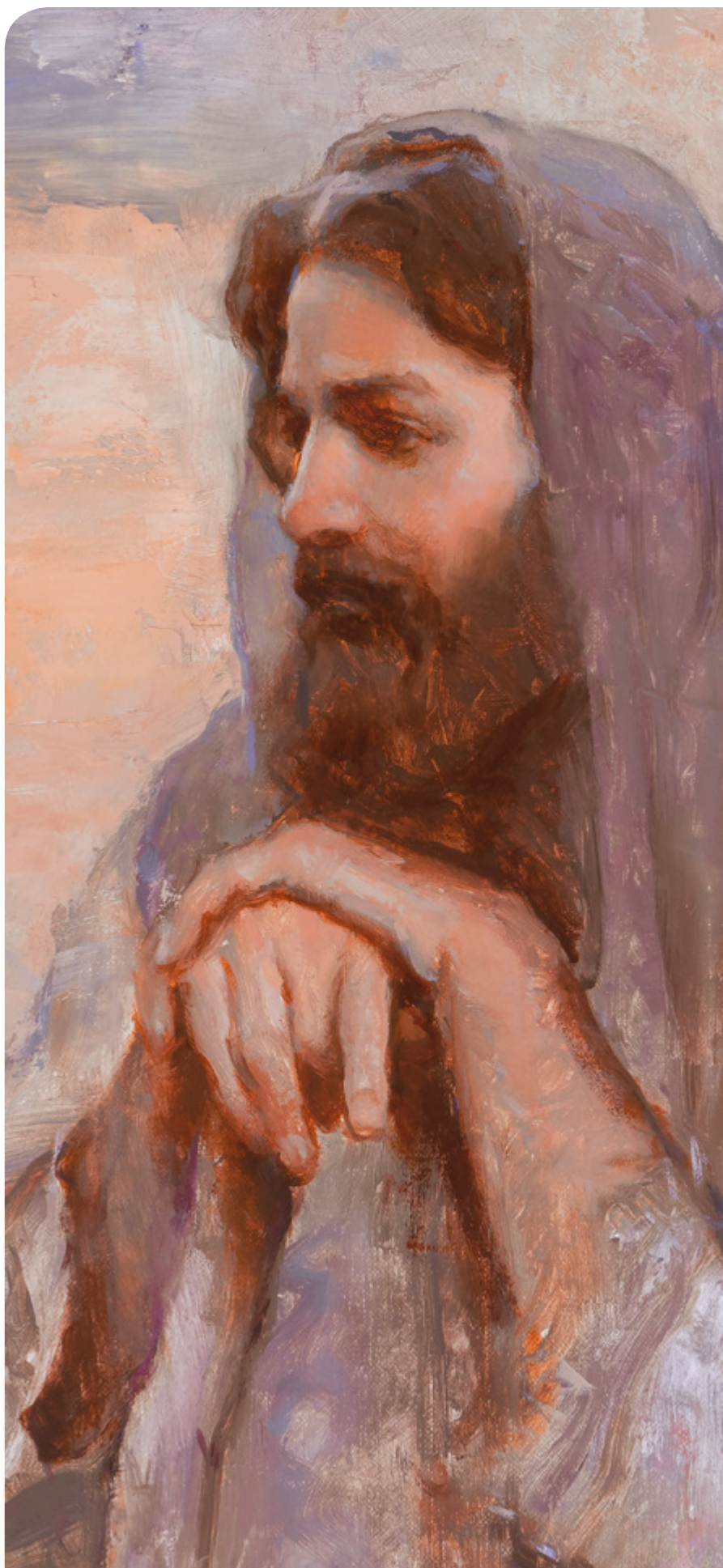
“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that your joy might be full*” (John 15:10–11; emphasis added).

“And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

“He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:27–28).

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, service invites us to emulate the character of Jesus Christ, the true source



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of joy. I recently read a statement by Kevin J Worthen, president of Brigham Young University, about deep joy. He said, “I have come to believe that one measure of our eternal progress is how much joy we derive from service.”¹¹

Alma the Younger told his son Helaman: “I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the *exceeding joy* of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:24; emphasis added).

Recall the rejoicing of Ammon as he recounted his missionary work among the Lamanites:

“Behold, *my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy*, and I will rejoice in my God. . . .

“Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not *great reason to rejoice*? . . .

“ . . . Now *this is my joy*, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever” (Alma 26:11, 13, 37; emphasis added).

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, challenges and afflictions invite us to lift up our eyes (see Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 123:1–2) to Jesus Christ, the true source of joy. The precious perspective provided by the restored gospel allows us to learn lessons that prepare us for eternity through the adversities of mortality. Our suffering and misfortunes can be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38) and consecrated for our gain (see 2 Nephi 2:2), “that [our] performance may be for the welfare of [our] soul” (2 Nephi 32:9). Thus joy endures in times and through experiences that are both good and bad because of our knowledge of the Father’s plan and of the Savior’s Atonement.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, obedience, service, and a gospel perspective about the trials we encounter in mortality all invite us to come unto the source of enduring joy—Jesus Christ. I invite you to identify, study, and prayerfully ponder additional principles that enable us to receive this important spiritual gift of joy.

A JOYFUL PROMISE

Enduring joy is not a blessing reserved for a select few. Rather, every

member of the Lord’s restored Church who is striving to remember and honor sacred covenants and keep the commandments can receive this gift, according to God’s will and timing. In this Christmas season, may each of us strive to appreciate more fully the supernal gift of joy. As we do so, may we begin to see with new eyes and hear with new ears as “Saints and angels sing,” as we “repeat the sounding joy,” and as we “ever worship God.”¹²

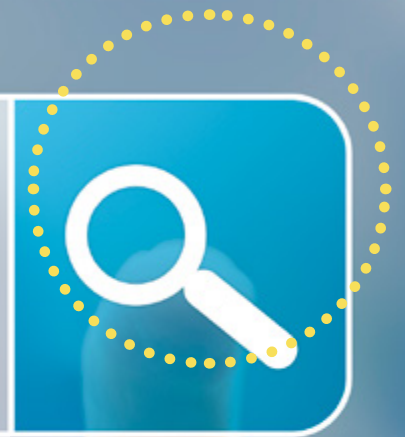
I joyfully declare my sure witness of the living reality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

From a devotional address, “That They Might Have Joy,” delivered at Brigham Young University on December 4, 2018.

NOTES

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2. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
3. “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 136.
4. “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks,” *Hymns*, no. 211.
5. “Joy to the World,” *Hymns*, no. 201.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 118–19; emphasis added.
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8. Guide to the Scriptures, “joy,” scriptures.ChurchOfJesusChrist.org; emphasis added.
9. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
10. *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “fun,” merriam-webster.com.
11. Kevin J Worthen, “Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve” (Brigham Young University commencement address, Aug. 16, 2018), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
12. “Joy to the World.”

The Hunt for **HAPPINESS**



I was living the gospel. Why was happiness still so elusive?

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

It's the middle of the night. My eyes snap open as my restless sleep is cut short. "Oh no," I pray. "Not again."

But the tremors begin almost immediately. In a terrifying burst of trembling that's as baffling and foreign as it is debilitating, my entire body begins to jerk up and down as if in a seizure. My hands and feet burn with heat from an unseen source. My wife jerks awake and holds me tightly, reassuring me with her quiet presence.

Happiness, what I had once considered my default state of being, is nowhere in sight.

If I had one question that dark night—other than to wonder what was going on physically (which I later learned)—it would have been to ask why I was feeling so unhappy when I was striving to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are many potential obstacles to happiness. Wickedness is certainly one of them (see Alma 41:10). Yet even for the faithful, happiness can feel out of reach at times.

We all have moments when we need to hear that happier times are ahead. Maybe you're living through one right now. If so, please allow me to say with all sincerity that brighter days *are* indeed coming your way. I hope you'll be willing to stick with me a bit longer before dismissing such a sweeping statement as foolish or naive.

I truly believe, no matter what you're going through, that greater happiness can be yours to claim.

Please allow me to explain why.

What Is Happiness?

What *is* happiness, anyway? Is it the feeling you get when someone sneaks a favorite treat into your lunch box? Is it a raise at work? Marrying your eternal companion? Feeling cleansed from sin through the power of Jesus Christ's Atonement?

Is it all of the above?

This discussion will look at what the gospel, as well as psychological science, can each teach us about happiness. Beginning on page 18 of this issue, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches us the critical truth that true joy is a life centered in Jesus Christ.

Similarly, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Ultimate happiness, true peace, and anything even remotely close to scriptural joy are found first, foremost, and forever in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lots of other philosophies and systems of belief have been tried. Indeed, it seems safe to say that virtually every other philosophy and system has been tried down through the centuries of history.”¹

If *every* other philosophy has been tried, an exhaustive list would be impossible to include. Even so, let’s consider a few worldly myths regarding how to be happy.

According to the world, lasting happiness is found by:

- Achieving financial prosperity, especially if it’s *more* than those around you.
- Being popular.
- Living a life of ease, leisure, and excitement.
- Traveling extensively and experiencing many of the world’s wonders firsthand.
- Achieving a position of power or authority in your career, community, or any other setting.
- Changing your body to look a certain way.

What do those various strategies have in common? For one thing, they’re all linked to circumstances. But as President Russell M. Nelson taught, “The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”²

Again, what should our focus be on to find that joy? President Nelson taught, “For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!”³

Joy is not an emotion that’s merely nice to have if you can get it. No, President Nelson described joy as “a principle that is key to our spiritual survival.”⁴

So joy and happiness are clearly worth the struggle. And

most of us are willing to work at it. Why, then, do so many—including the righteous—continue to struggle?

For one thing, that very struggle is key to why we’re here in the first place.

Here to Grow

Sometimes we think of happiness as a life without problems or hardships. However, a life without struggle would not allow us the growth we came here to experience.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once taught: “One’s life . . . cannot be both faith-filled and stress-free.

“ . . . How can you and I really expect to glide naively through life, as if to say, ‘Lord, give me experience, but not grief, not sorrow, not pain, not opposition, not betrayal, and certainly not to be forsaken. Keep from me, Lord, all those experiences which made Thee what Thou art! Then let me come and dwell with Thee and fully share Thy joy!’”⁵

Clearly we need struggles in life in order to grow, and being righteous plainly doesn’t spare us suffering. Examine the lives of Joseph Smith, Job, the people of Alma, and especially of our Savior Jesus Christ.⁶

No, righteous living does *not* spare us from all trouble and trials. None are spared. Yet you can also expect God’s help and healing (see Alma 36:3, 27). Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “For you, the righteous, the Healer of our souls, in His time and His way, will heal all your wounds.”⁷

If you are feeling wounded, healing is within reach. Of that you can be certain (see Mosiah 14:4–5).

Happiness and Genetics

One item to consider early on: research has shown that a significant portion of our baseline mood, mental health, and corresponding happiness in terms of day-to-day functioning can be influenced by genetics.

Not everyone has the same body type or hair color. Similarly, not everyone has the same naturally cheerful disposition. But that’s only one piece of the puzzle.

Brigham Young University professor Hank Smith wrote, “What if you happened to get a really bad hand of cards in the DNA game? Does that mean you’re dead in the water—that you’ll never be happy and there’s nothing you can do about it? Absolutely not. . . . If the chemicals in your brain are just not working the way they’re supposed to because

of inherited tendencies (aka depression, anxiety, etc.), there are medications and practices that can get those chemicals to healthy levels.”⁸

Let’s examine some of the intentional strategies—some from the gospel, and others from scientific study—that can increase our opportunities for happiness.

NINE STRATEGIES OF HAPPY PEOPLE



Strategy 1: Live the Gospel

As President Nelson, Elder Holland, Elder Bednar, and others teach, true happiness comes from living the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is also referred to as the “plan of happiness” (see Alma 42:8). The scriptures are full of counsel about righteousness being requisite for true happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:13 and Mosiah 2:41 for two examples among *many*).

It’s simple, it’s powerful, and it’s foundational. Fully embracing and living the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most important step you can take in finding greater joy and happiness in this life and the life to come.

Strategy 2: Spend Your Days “Engaged in a Good Cause” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27)

Inheriting a fortune that allowed you to lounge on the beach forever would almost certainly be detrimental to your happiness—even though worldly logic shouts otherwise. The truth is, we need to stay engaged in meaningful work to be happy.

“Franklin D. Roosevelt had it right: ‘Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort.’”⁹

Meaningful work creates a satisfaction we can’t get any other way.

Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “achieving happiness typically involves a long-sustained effort for something more important in life.”¹⁰ Such meaningful work may extend beyond a sort of job or career. It includes raising kids, serving in the Church, or volunteering your time and talents.

Strategy 3: Choose Gratitude

The power of choosing to live with gratitude is so transformative to everyday thinking that the practice is often referred to as a way to “rewire your brain.”

Let’s be honest—even when life is running smoothly, a piercing eye can still detect something to complain about. The reverse, however, is also true: no matter how hard things become, we can *always* find something to be thankful for.

And that’s where something beautiful happens.

Here’s a simple but powerful experiment: try keeping a gratitude journal. Every day for at least three weeks, write down three things you’re grateful for that happened *that day*. In addition, feel free to add a few general things you’re thankful for such as flowers, family, or food.

Soon you’ll find that you not only notice more easily those things you can add to your list, but you actually start expecting to find them. Living with more gratitude helps you better find joy in your current circumstances, which has a significant and direct effect on your happiness.¹¹

Forbes magazine reports, “Cultivating gratitude doesn’t



cost any money and it certainly doesn’t take much time, but the benefits are enormous.”¹²

What are you thankful for today?



Strategy 4: Spend Time Outside

Spending time outdoors, especially in nature, offers all sorts of benefits, like lowering stress and heart rate, or clearing your thoughts.

Time magazine reported on a study about nature’s ability to revitalize us. According to the study, “People began to feel psychologically restored after just 15 minutes of sitting outside in both the park and forest.”¹³

It’s hard to feel happy if we feel constantly drained and stressed. Try to get outside for a half hour or so most days of the week, more if you can manage it. Why not get out and enjoy it a little more often?

Strategy 5: Limit Screen Time

Too much screen time isn't good for our happiness. The time you spend staring at a TV screen, computer, tablet, or phone adds up and can have negative effects on our mental health, especially when it comes to social media. Best-selling author Jean M. Twenge, who studied this topic extensively, explains: "The more time [people] spend looking at screens, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression."¹⁴

President Nelson has said, "If you are paying more attention to feeds from social media than you are to the whisperings of the Spirit, then you are putting yourself at spiritual risk—as well as the risk of experiencing intense loneliness and depression."¹⁵ So go ahead, give yourself some time away from your screens. You'll thank yourself later.

Strategy 6: Be Present

If you're human, there's a roughly 100 percent chance you've said or done something you wish you hadn't. Most likely, a lot of somethings. What's odd, though, is how often most people choose to relive such moments in their mind.

Latter-day Saint author John Bytheway writes about the problems of dwelling on the past: "Miserable people have a recycle bin full of past mistakes. Every day they rethink their regrets and recycle their remorse. Their language is full of phrases like, 'I should've,' 'I would've,' 'I could've,' 'Why didn't I?' and 'If only.' They never look where they're going because they can't take their eyes off where they've been."¹⁶

He also writes about the complementary problem of dwelling too much on the future: "Miserable people look for some outside event to make them happy. 'As soon as I graduate, I'll be happy.' After they graduate, they say, 'Well, as soon as I get a job, I'll be happy.' After they get a job, they say, 'Okay, as soon as I get married, I'll be happy.' . . . If you're determined to be miserable, then think of life as a waiting room, and happiness as your doctor."¹⁷

We tend to find the greatest happiness and well-being when we live in and focus on what's happening in our lives right now.

In mental health and psychiatry circles, the term "mindfulness" is a shorthand way of describing being fully engaged in the moment.

Mental health experts advise, "Fears and insecurities about the past and the future can make it difficult to fully enjoy the present."¹⁸

Here are a few tips to practice living with mindfulness:

1. Keep a gratitude journal (see strategy 3 above), especially listing several things you are grateful for from that day.
2. Spend time meditating daily. Find a peaceful spot to sit without distractions. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing. If thoughts come, acknowledge them, release them, then return to focusing on your breathing. This may sound odd, but it's great mental practice for focusing on the present.
3. Pay closer attention to mundane tasks you normally do on auto-pilot, like washing the dishes, driving, or even eating. Feel the soapy water over your hands. Observe the trees, people, and buildings as you drive. Savor the taste and texture of each bite.
4. Pray to notice people who need your help that day. Then pay close attention and be prepared to act.
5. Switch up your routines from time to time and truly experience a new route home, the unfamiliar layout of a different grocery store, or a change in your typical evening activities.

Strategy 7: Connect with Others

In terms of happiness and overall health, focusing on meaningful relationships is vital.

Emma Seppälä, PhD, writes that “strong social connection:

- leads to a 50% increased chance of longevity
- strengthens your immune system . . .
- helps you recover from disease faster.”

She continues, “People who feel more connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression.”¹⁹

When it comes to meaningful relationships, a few deep ones are probably better than many shallow ones. We needn’t

overschedule our free time with constant social events, but we desperately need human connection. Even for introverted personality types, there are many ways to deepen connections among your circle of friends and family.

With regard to family, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once taught, “In family relationships *love* is really spelled *t-i-m-e*, time.”²⁰

Since you’ve already carved out extra time by cutting back on screen use (hint, hint), consider replacing some of it with face-to-face interactions. Ministering visits, sports leagues, stamp-collecting clubs . . . or anything that lets you connect with others can help increase your happiness and well-being.



Strategy 8: Take Care of Your Temple

Giving your body quality sleep, proper nutrition, and adequate exercise can yield big happiness gains. Our emotions are centered in our brain, which, like any other organ in your body, benefits greatly from improved health practices.

The steps you take to improve your physical health ultimately includes improving your brain, which is part of your physical body. This can help you think more clearly, focus more readily, and stabilize your emotions.

With health habits, a good rule of thumb is to start slowly and make one change at a time. Start with small things like walking more or improving what you eat, when possible. Small changes add up.

Strategy 9: Look Outward

The previous eight strategies might seem more obvious than this final one, but happiness is often found when you’re not focused on it directly.

Elder Holland has taught: “Happiness is not easy to find running straight for it. It is usually too elusive, too ephemeral, too subtle. If you haven’t learned it already, you will learn in the years ahead that most times happiness comes to us when we least expect it, when we are busy doing something else. Happiness is almost always a by-product of some other endeavor.”²¹

By all means, do everything possible to cultivate strategies and habits for happiness. After doing all we can, though, it’s time to turn outward and let happiness find us as we seek to help others.

Happiness and Mental Illness

When it comes to medical conditions like depression and anxiety, happiness becomes a more complex creature. The late-night tremors I mentioned earlier turned out to be symptoms of anxiety brought on by clinical depression.

In my life, when I've been in the full throes of darkness and uncertainty that is clinical depression, I could no more "choose to feel happy" than choose my height or eye color.

What I can *always* choose, however, is to fight back against the darkness. I can reach up to God. I can use all the tools at my disposal, from faith and prayer to modern medicine.

For me, emerging successfully from depressive episodes over the years always involves a multifaceted approach. I must look to my physical health (exercise, nutrition, sleep), my medical health (medication, vitamins, consultations with doctors), my emotional health (counseling, connecting with others), and my spiritual health (prayer, scripture study, serving in the Church, time in the temple) in balanced measures.

Despite some of the painful lows I've experienced over the years from depression, I am blessed to experience happiness and positivity *most of the time!* I feel deeply for those of you more strongly and more persistently affected by mental illness than I, but even for you, I fully believe that the Prince of Peace will heal all your sorrows (see John 14:27).

Depression tells many lies when it comes to happiness. It asserts that things won't ever improve. One potent antidote to this particular lie—for me, at least—is found in my favorite hymn, "Be Still, My Soul."

*Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as he has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.*²²

Beautiful truths, aren't they? As I look back over my life, I have no doubt that God has blessed, strengthened, and guided me all along the way. Thus, I know He will be there for me in the future, just as I know God will guide you along your path to happier days.

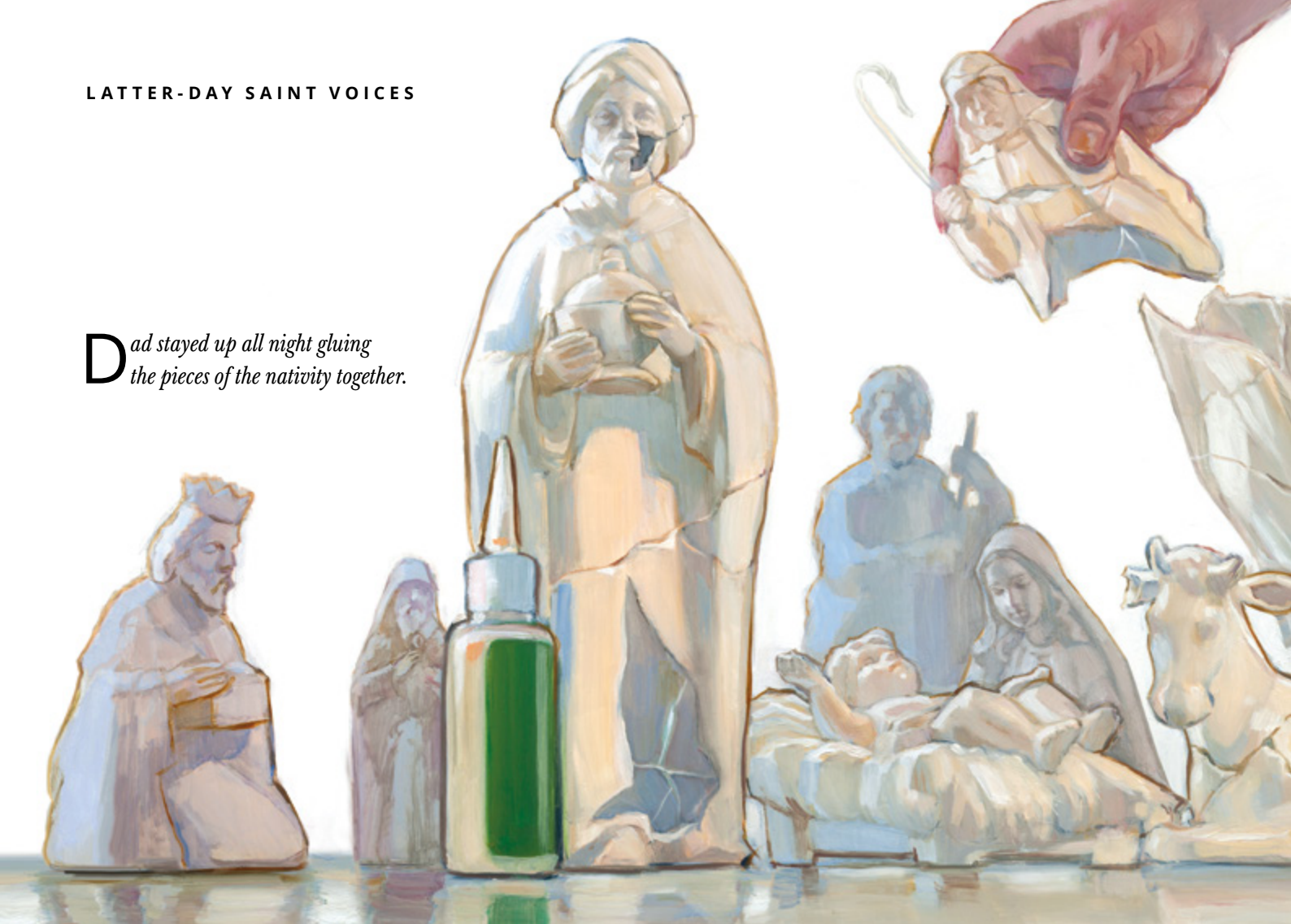
Through Him, your happiness will someday be made complete. ■

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Dad stayed up all night gluing the pieces of the nativity together.



The Broken Nativity

As a child, I couldn't wait for Christmas. When Mom brought out the boxes of decorations, my five brothers and I knew that Christmas had begun. We would always set up the tree as a family. I still remember the handmade ornaments and the many shiny colored glass balls.

One part of the decorating, however, Mom took care of herself. My grandmother had made Mom a beautiful white porcelain nativity. Every year, Mom would set the nativity on the large mantle in the living room. I loved to sit and watch her put each figure in place. Under each figure, she put a tiny white

light from a string of lights. She taped one end of the lights to the mantle to secure them, and then she plugged them into the outlet behind the chair in the corner. When the mantle lit up, it was a beautiful sight!

One night, close to Christmas, my brothers got a little rowdy. The older ones chased my younger brother. In the midst of the chase, he hid behind the chair next to the mantle. When my brothers found him, he rushed to escape, but his foot caught the string of lights underneath the nativity. The small pieces of tape were no match for the pull of his foot. The delicate

nativity shot down from the mantle onto the red brick below, shattering into pieces.

Mom rushed into the living room. When she saw what had happened, she burst into tears and went to her room. She knew it was an accident, but the damage was done.

That night, after we were all in bed, Dad got out the dustpan and the broom and carefully swept up the broken pieces. Then he stayed up all night gluing the pieces together.

The nativity still bears some scars. The cow is missing an ear. One wise man is missing a piece from his face.



The Best Gift I Could Give

When my family and I started attending The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I felt in my heart that my mom had guided us there.

Mom had died unexpectedly on Christmas Day two years before. She was an incredibly faithful and humble follower of Jesus Christ, but she had never learned about the restored gospel. After 11 months of learning about the Church, my husband, Navid, my daughter, Katie, and I were baptized on Christmas Day. What had once been a day of sadness because of my mother's passing would now be a day of happiness for our family because of our new life in the gospel.

Many people attended our baptism. I was shocked to see over 100 people there at 10:00 a.m. on Christmas morning! We couldn't have felt more loved.

Before our baptism, the stake temple and family history consultant helped me prepare my mother's name and the names of several other deceased ancestors to take to the temple for baptism.

Twenty-five days after our baptisms, on January 19, 2018, my mom's birthday, we made our first trip to the

Newport Beach California Temple.

I was nervous and didn't know what to expect, but when I walked into the temple, I felt so much serenity. It was like nowhere else I had ever been. Our group gathered at the baptismal font, where the temple president explained the importance of baptism for the dead and the blessing it holds. I sobbed for joy thinking of how these baptisms would bless our family.

After Navid was baptized for some of the male members of my family, he baptized me on behalf of some of the female family members. The first person I was baptized for was my dear, sweet mother. When I heard the words "who is dead," I wept. Hearing it made her death so real that it hurt. But then I thought, what greater gift could I possibly give my mother on her birthday than the gift of baptism in the temple?

I look forward to many more trips to the temple. I am grateful to know that I can help provide blessings to those who have gone before me through the ordinances of the temple. What a wonderful gift! ■

Diane Davani, California, USA

One shepherd is more glue than porcelain in some places. But, miraculously, the broken figures were mended.

Grandmother offered to make a new nativity, but Mom declined. She said her nativity means even more to her now. It serves as a symbol of the devotion of her loving husband and as a reminder of our loving Savior.

As we each muddle through this life, we may become broken in some way. We may even feel shattered into irreparable pieces. But we have a Savior, and we can become whole through His loving hands. ■

Elizabeth Lloyd Lund, Utah, USA

Would you like to share a gospel experience that has strengthened you? You can submit it at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Alone and Grateful at Christmas

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

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

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

could possibly be worth this!

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

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

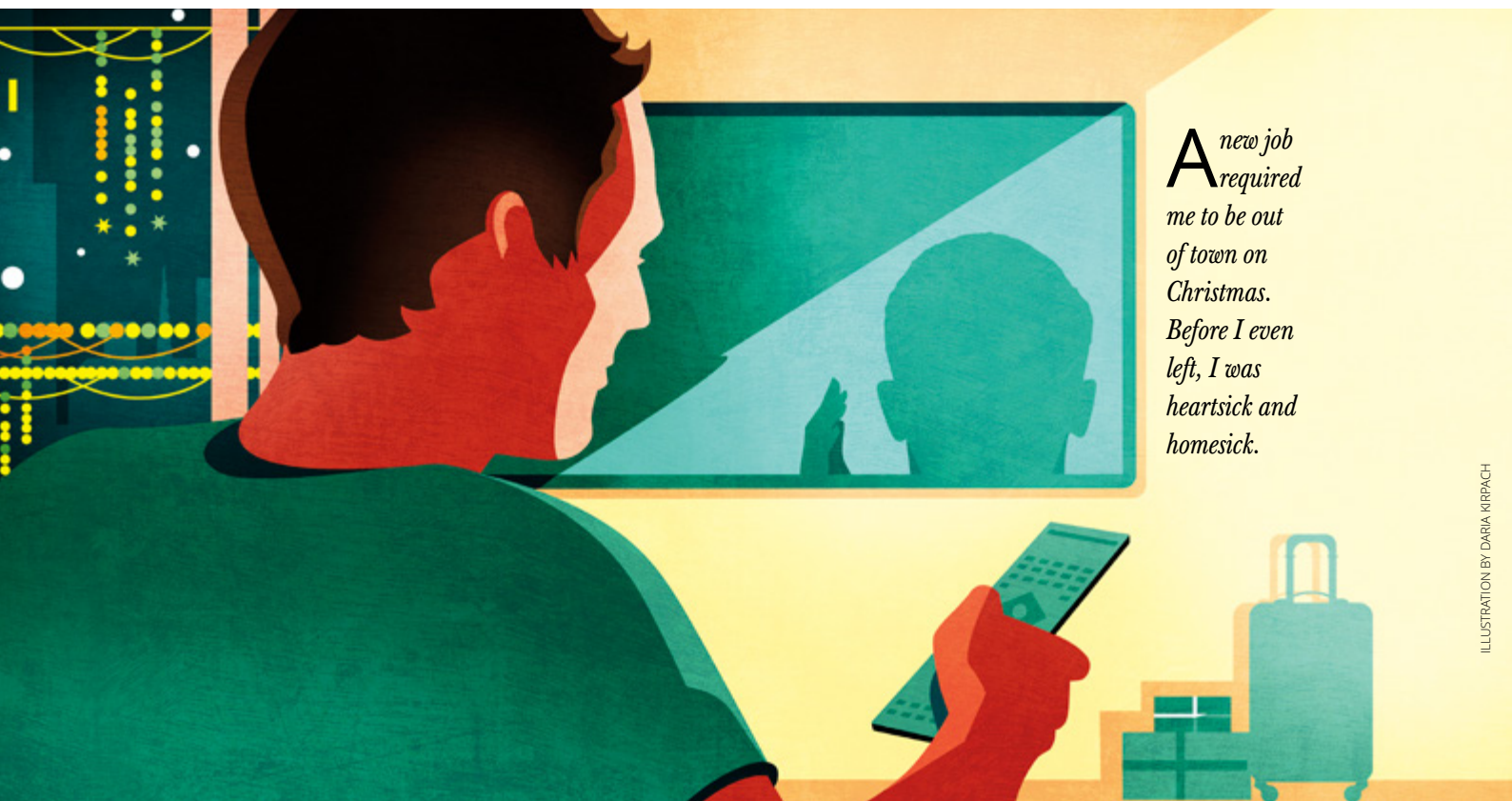
I had never given much thought to the significance of His birth on Christmas.

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

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

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

Tyler Collins, Montana, USA



A new job required me to be out of town on Christmas. Before I even left, I was heartsick and homesick.

Anyone but Him!

When I heard about the Church's "Light the World" Christmas initiative and the worldwide day of service, I thought, "What a nice idea. I'm going to do it."

A couple of days before the worldwide day of service on December 1, a thought popped into my mind of whom I needed to help. Immediately, I thought, "Anyone but him!" This person had hurt me deeply for many years, but the more his name nagged at me, the more I knew that the thought had come from the Spirit.

I told my husband what I was thinking, and he said that serving this man would be good for me. Still, I felt extremely nervous at the thought of helping him. I knew I couldn't do this on my own, so I prayed for strength and for someone to go with me. Eventually, I called the sister missionaries, and they agreed to go with me.

December 1 came, and I was so nervous that I felt shaky while I drove. We prayed together when we got to the apartment. I took a few deep breaths and knocked on the door. The man opened the door, but he didn't seem to recognize me. I asked if he knew who I was. He thought I was just one of the sister missionaries. When I told him who I was, he was surprised but pleased that I had come to see him. An awkward moment arose when I told him that it was a worldwide day of service, and we wanted to help him in any way we could.



I prayed for strength and for someone to go with me. I called the sister missionaries, and they agreed to go with me.

I delegated jobs to the missionaries, and we went to work cleaning his apartment. After a couple of hours, we finished and left.

It wasn't until I was driving home that I realized I was laughing and happy. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks: Heavenly Father had taken away all of my hurt, pain, bitterness, and grief. It was gone! And I was free from all the anguish I had carried for

so many years. Heavenly Father had blessed me with the strength to finally forgive this person. It was marvelous how light my heart felt.

I am so grateful that I followed the prompting to help this man. My loving Heavenly Father knew I needed to have this experience so I could grow and become more of the person He wants me to be. ■

Marsha Lang, Pennsylvania, USA



Ministering to Children and Youth

All adults, no matter their calling, can support the development of children and youth in their ward.

By Brittany Beattie

Priesthood and Family Department

A loving Heavenly Father has given each of us unique talents, gifts, passions, and interests. These talents allow us to minister to those around us as we seek to become “of one heart and one mind” in following Jesus Christ (Moses 7:18). This includes our ministering efforts to children and youth.

Whether you’re a Primary teacher, a youth leader, or a ministering brother or sister, or you simply interact with children and youth at church, you have the capacity to inspire, encourage, uplift, and help children and youth become all that Heavenly Father intends them to be.

Your encouragement and ministering can be part of Church-supported aspects of home-centered efforts, remembering that parents have the sacred, primary role for guiding and supporting their children’s growth. That’s true even if the parents aren’t members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or if they aren’t active in the Church. So, what can that Church support look like, and how can each of us contribute?

These four ideas can help:

1. Get to know the children and youth.

It’s difficult to support others until you know what support they need. Do you know the children and youth around you well enough to know what goals they’re working toward,

what help they may need, or what matters to them? On the flip side, do you also know their strengths and interests so that you can help individuals connect when an opportunity for them to support each other arises?

For example, Jessica Ocampo from Guatemala offered to watch her friend Lisbett’s son David while Lisbett served at Young Women camp. Jessica asked if there was anything she could do to help David during that time, and Lisbett said that David had never learned to ride a bike. Jessica invited her sons to help, and they taught David to ride a bike. They also knew that David was playing on the ward’s basketball team and preparing for a tournament, so they spent the day helping him prepare. David may not have gotten better at basketball in that one day, but, he said, “they showed me they really care.” He also added, “I still have the video on my phone when I learned to ride a bike.”

Other Ideas

- Make sure you have parents’ permission for any interaction with their children outside of a Church class or activity. Avoid one-on-one situations with children and youth. Having one of the child’s parents present as you support their child is ideal. Care should also be taken to promote safety measures.



- Greet children and youth and their parents at church. Learn their names and ask them about their week.
- Ask those you minister to and their families about what they're most excited about, nervous about, or interested in. Know what things they are preparing for. Then talk with them and also pray to know if there's anything you can do to support them.

2. Share your talents and look for connections that could involve others.

You've spent a lifetime developing skills and talents. You've had unique experiences that give you insights and knowledge about a variety of topics. Can you share your talents and wisdom with children or youth to help them in their development plans? Can you help them recognize opportunities that will help them with their desired growth?

For instance, Olalekan Babatunde from Osun, Nigeria, practices law. His stake participated in early testing for Children and Youth. When he heard that it had inspired one young man in his ward to become a lawyer, Olalekan reached

out to him to offer support. Olalekan is helping him learn what to do to prepare for law school.

Maria Vashchenko from Kyiv, Ukraine, noticed the impact of a woman who became aware of her 13-year-old son's music abilities. The woman invited him to play the piano for the cultural celebration before the dedication of the Kyiv Ukraine Temple. He had been strongly considering quitting music at the time, but he agreed to accept her invitation.

"This was a turning point in my son's life," said Maria. "The concert was great! Afterward, we told our son that he could now quit music, but he replied that he would not. He graduated from music school with excellent grades, mastered several more musical instruments, began to write music and songs, and created a music group. When he went on a mission, he organized musical activities, played hymns at sacrament meeting, conducted a missionary choir, and taught investigators to play the guitar and piano. We will always be grateful for the sister who helped our son develop his talents." The influential sister made a difference simply by knowing the young man's skills and inviting him to use them to bless others.

Other Ideas

- Offer to teach children and youth your skills in one of their activities, or have them share their talents with the Relief Society or elders quorum.
- Review your patriarchal blessing to reflect on your talents and gifts of the Spirit that could support others in their development—even gifts that may not be as visible as others, like being a good listener.
- Create a list of individuals' strengths—yours and others'—so you're ready to support others who could benefit from another's knowledge. This may be especially helpful for families, ward councils, and youth class and quorum presidencies to do together.

3. Be interested and give encouragement.

Remember when children or youth have something big coming up; then follow up. Send a note of encouragement. Ask how things went with their plans that week. Be excited for their growth and encourage them to keep going even in disappointments. You don't need to know details to let them know you're supportive.

Once, when I was trying to develop a habit of getting to bed early, a ward member heard me talk one Sunday about my hope to get more sleep that week. He asked me what I was going to do to make it happen. I committed to go to bed by my desired time at least one night that week. "I'll ask you about it next week," he said. I believed he would, so I kept my commitment.

Sure enough, the next week at church he asked if I had met my goal (I had!), and he asked if I would do it again the next week. I knew he would follow up, so I did it. The next week, he encouraged me to meet my goal twice that week. And the next week? He committed me to three nights. He kept encouraging me each week until my plan was a real habit.

Years later, I told that story to another friend at church because I had fallen out of my good habit and knew I needed to start again. "I'll help you be accountable," she said. So each week she followed up with me until I developed a habit of good sleep again. Over the years, family and close friends have helped me with goals to get enough sleep, but the two times it has been most effective were when ward members—with whom I wasn't especially close—helped me set and keep a goal and then followed up with me in an encouraging way.

Other Ideas

- If an individual is sharing their skill during a performance or game, attend and cheer them on.
- Notice growth in others and praise them for their efforts, such as with a Church talk or lesson, an activity they helped plan, a service project they participated in, or a school achievement you heard about. Your words can provide an important motivation for them to keep pursuing their goals on the difficult days.
- If you plan family activities to help your children learn new skills, consider inviting others to join, especially if it relates to their goals.

4. Follow the Holy Ghost

Above all, seek the Holy Ghost. Heavenly Father and the Savior know your strengths and others' needs. They know your capacity to bless the children and youth in your life. Pray to know how you can support and bless those individuals. Then act in faith. The Spirit will guide you in your small and simple efforts to bring about miracles (see Alma 37:6).

The Savior's call to be "of one heart and one mind" (Moses 7:18) invites us—young and old—to be united in our efforts to become like the Savior and follow in His ways. As we minister to children and youth and seek to help them grow, we might find that we grow just as much in return.

Other Ideas

- Live worthy of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.
- Set aside time weekly to ponder how to support the growth of your children or children and youth in your extended family, ward, or community.
- Rely on the Spirit in working on your own personal development. Learn from and keep progressing through failure, seeking the Holy Ghost to help you as you grow. ■

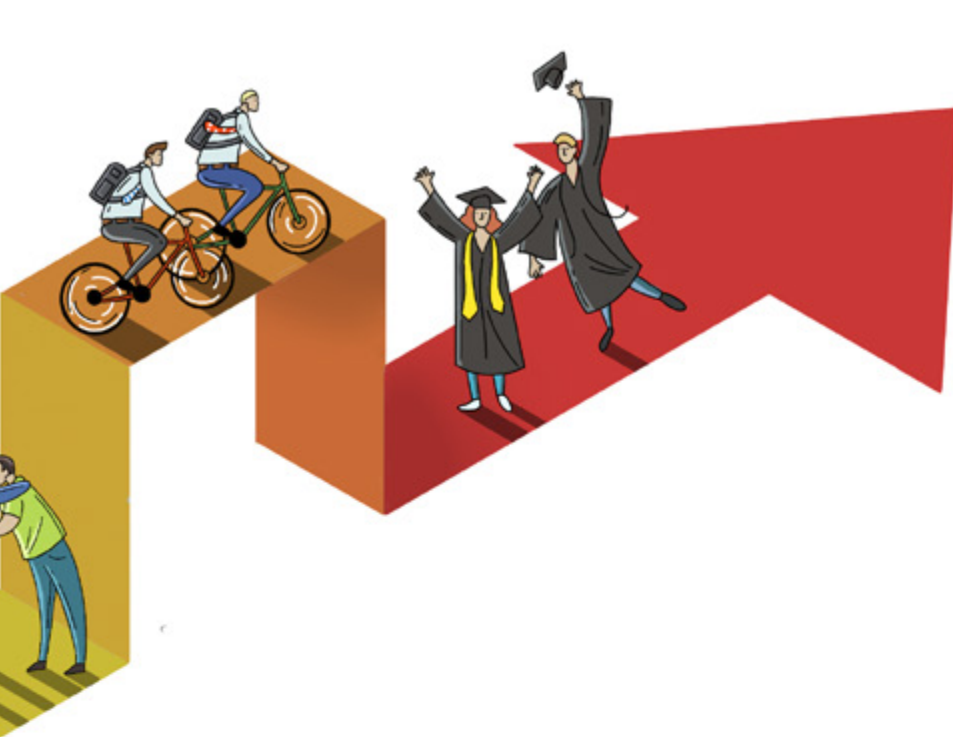
Navigating through Transitions

Starting school. Leaving Primary.
Going to the temple. Getting a new
job. Graduating from high school.
Serving a mission.

These are just some of the milestones your children might encounter in life, and they all require special preparation. Changes can be intimidating, but a few tools can help us navigate them successfully. Here are some tips to help you guide your children through life's transitions.



- **Listen to their feelings** about the transition. Ask them what they are excited about and what they are nervous about. Be encouraging but understanding of their worries. Sometimes a sympathetic ear is all they need to feel at ease with the coming change.
- **Give them as much information as possible** about what they can expect with something new. For example, if your child is going to do temple baptisms for the first time, give them a step-by-step overview of what will happen once they are inside the temple. If you are moving to a new city, find out what you can about their new school, ward, and neighborhood. When you minimize the unknowns, you take away sources of anxiety. Their new knowledge can help them understand the new experience they will have.



- **Create a plan** to handle new situations. Anticipate potential problems and brainstorm ways to deal with them. Help children think of solutions to their “what if” questions: “What if I get on the wrong bus?” “What if I get lonely at camp?” “What if I don’t like my new teacher?” Come up with an emergency backup plan so they feel more comfortable: “If you get stressed out, call me.” “If a class is too hard, we can talk to your teacher.”
- **Empower them** by reminding them of the milestones they have passed before and the tools they have now to help them succeed. Use positive, encouraging language: “You made it through that; you can make it through this!” “You can do hard things.” “You have what you need. You are ready.” “I believe in you.”
- **Reassure them** that things will be OK. Many people have overcome similar struggles; chances are they will too! Remind them that they can pray to their Heavenly Father for help anytime, anywhere, about anything.
- **Create a support system** so your children don’t feel alone in their struggle. If you have experienced something similar, tell them about it. How did you feel? How did you adjust? Try to find someone to be your child’s “transition buddy.” Can they find a friend to stick with in their new Primary class? Is there someone you know who could mentor them through their job or class? Who will their college roommates be?
- **Go at their pace.** Your child might need a nudge forward or even a caution to slow down, but try not to change their natural pace too much. Follow their lead. If they want to jump in feet first, make sure they have everything they need to do so. If they don’t feel ready to move on yet, don’t force them into the deep end. Gently encourage them to venture outside their comfort zone, but take it slow. Adapt for your child’s needs, and seek guidance from the Spirit to know how best to help. ■

FOR TEENS

In the *Liahona*:

- “Will Relief Society Be Boring?” June 2018, 50.
- “My First Day in Elders Quorum,” June 2018, 52.
- “Teens and Temple Covenants,” Oct. 2013, 18.

For other resources, visit youth
.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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- At liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
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Do you have an amazing story to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics? If so, we want to hear from you! You can submit your articles or your feedback at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

You're Not Alone—Trust Me

By the time I became a young adult, I thought I had loneliness all figured out. I had moved a lot growing up, so I had plenty of experience leaving my comfort zone to make friends. And when I married the nicest guy around, I knew I would never feel lonely again, right?

Wrong.

Loneliness in young adulthood is pretty much inevitable, even if it just lasts for a little while. We're inundated by to-dos that keep us running at a frenetic pace. We're taking on new roles: student, spouse, employee, or parent. We're moving away from home and family. We're bombarded with huge—even isolating—decisions. Plus, we're still susceptible to the everyday and not-so-everyday trials of life. All of these things can add up to make loneliness one of the most prevalent feelings among young adults today. Luckily, **there are ways to combat this loneliness**, and that's what this section is all about.

On page 44, Shaila shares how joining the Church ultimately helped her overcome her loneliness. On page 48, Mindy teaches us the way **we can find and value friendship** as Christ did. And in digital-only articles, Bella outlines the effects good friendships can have on us, and I give a couple of tips for those who are lonely while away from loved ones during the Christmas season.

There are ways of overcoming loneliness—whether that's going out and making new friends, making genuine connections every day, or developing a closer relationship with the Savior. When we realize that **Jesus Christ is always with us**, when we see that we are never truly alone, we will have the strength to go outside ourselves, forge healthy relationships, and bless the lives of those around us.

From someone who believes in you,
Alexandra Palmer





PHOTOGRAPH OF WOMAN FROM GETTY IMAGES

YOUNG ADULTS



My Daily Battle against Loneliness

By Shaila Mahabier

For the longest time in my life, I felt as if I was all alone. At first, loneliness was a new feeling for me, because I come from a family of five, so as a kid, I always enjoyed the crowd and noise around me at home. I knew I wasn't alone.

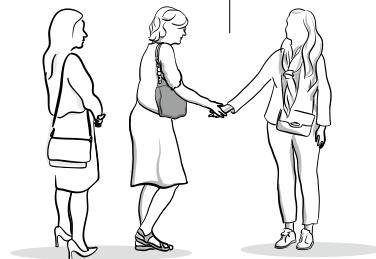
Sadly enough, in my teenage years, my parents split up. After that, I really started to feel alone. I tried to figure out what to do, going out of my comfort zone to make friends at school. I was hoping I could enjoy the familiarity of lots of people at school, like I used to at home. But even though I was surrounded by people, I still felt alone. This feeling lessened a

few years later when I found the Church.

One day the sister missionaries knocked on my door and my mother answered. I remember her telling them, "Well, I am not interested, but my daughter would be. Wait, I will get her."

When I started to talk to them, I could feel the Spirit telling me to listen. After a few months of listening and learning, I knew that this was what I had been looking for. Even though it didn't feel like it to begin with, my decision to be baptized helped me to come not only closer to the Lord and but also closer to ending my ongoing battle against loneliness.

In a lot of ways, joining the Church increased the loneliness I had felt since my parents' divorce. But it also helped me find a way out of my loneliness.



Feeling Lonely as a Convert

When I decided that I wanted to be baptized, my family wasn't really excited about it. Although my mother and one of my brothers attended my baptism, other family members rejected me because we no longer shared the same religion.

In the beginning, this was quite hard, and I felt more alone than ever. But after a while, one of my cousins decided to become a devout Hindu, which was also different from what the rest of our family practiced. He respected my choice to join the Church because he had made a similar one. Because of his example of love towards me, some of my other family members stopped shunning me.

At school, I realized that I didn't really fit in anymore. And at work, people looked at me in an odd way when I told them I had gotten baptized. I did not feel ashamed—my decision wasn't wrong, and I knew that from the bottom of my heart—but my friends didn't understand my lifestyle changes, and most of them decided to stop being friends with me.

Making New Friends

Through all these difficult experiences, I kept praying, and I could feel the comfort I was promised by the Spirit in a priesthood blessing I had received. One day I dared to ask the question, in prayer, "Why do I feel so alone?" And I received an answer or, rather, a promise—that I would make new friends, friends who would understand me.

And I did! I made new friends, some who aren't members of the Church but who still respect and love me. I also made friends in the Church who have become like family to me.

Being an introvert and having to talk to people wasn't the easiest thing for me. Most of the time I let people approach me, but in high school there weren't a lot of people who wanted to talk to me. So I was happy that I remembered this old trick I had learned—I smiled. The more someone smiles, the more approachable that person will become. I realized the more I smiled at people, the more they would start talking to me and the easier it became for me to become friends with them.





Standing with Heavenly Father

A better answer to my prayer was President Thomas S. Monson's (1927–2018) talk "Dare to Stand Alone" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 60–67). Over time, this talk has taught me one very essential thing about loneliness: you never stand alone when you stand with the Lord.

There are still days when it is hard for me to stand with Him. The fear of other people mocking me and my beliefs is hard. There have been people telling me that any religion is nonsense and that I am being led like a dumb sheep. After finding out about my religion, some people have treated me as if I had a terrible infectious disease. All of these experiences made me feel a little insecure and lonely. It is a daily battle, but it's one I win every day, over and over again, with the help and full support of the Lord.

On a daily basis, I try to follow the Spirit. Whenever I listen to the Spirit and talk with people, inspiration from the Spirit enables me to serve others. It gives me an opportunity to remember that I am not alone. Most importantly, listen-

ing to the Spirit always gives me the chance to share my testimony. I have realized that sharing my belief this way helps me to be less scared and more understood by others. Before I realized it, I was not alone—talking to whomever I was talking to at that moment—I was standing with the Spirit. With the Spirit on your side, you can never be alone.

Throughout many years and moments of feeling lonely, the Lord has told me repeatedly that I am His beloved daughter and that He loves me. How can I ever feel alone if I have my Father standing with me? How can I feel alone if He is just one simple prayer away?

In my daily battle against loneliness, I call on my Heavenly Father not just to stand by me but to help me always stand by Him. I know that He has never left me to battle anything alone and has always stood by me, loving me. ■

The author lives in Prague, Czech Republic.

The Savior's Example of Making Friends

By Mindy Selu
Church Magazines

As young adults, we all go through seasons of loneliness—moving away for school, coming home from a mission, going through breakups, being the only Church member in your area, being new in a ward, being single, being married to someone who is away from home a lot, being a new parent, and many more. Some stages of life just don't make it all that easy to make friends.

But that doesn't mean it's impossible. As in all things, the answer lies in following the Savior. Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles remarked, "In friendship, as in every other principle of the gospel, Jesus Christ is our Exemplar."¹ Here are just a few things we can learn from the Savior's example about making friends.

Seek Them Out

Jesus valued friendship. He needed the help and support of others (as we all do!) to fulfill His earthly ministry, but instead of waiting for the right people to show up at His door, He went

out and found them! He went to places He might not normally go (see Luke 5:3–10), He walked around (see Mark 1:16; John 1:36), and He even invited people to come and see where He lived (see John 1:39).

We may not need friends for the same reasons the Savior did, but it's still important for us to surround ourselves with good people. If you're in a new stage of life where you find yourself needing friends, seek them out. Participate in church and other activities, introduce yourself, try new things, host a get-together, minister sincerely (whoever you minister to probably needs a friend too!), and you will find yourself more and more surrounded by potential friends.

Point Out the Good in Others

I love when Jesus met Nathanael and said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47). Whenever I think about this verse, it reminds me that I should look for and make known the good that I see in others.

"Mister" Fred Rogers, who was somewhat of an expert at making friends, also pointed out how looking for the best in others is a Christlike trait. "I

believe that appreciation is a holy thing," he said. "That when we look for what's best in the person we happen to be with at the moment, we're doing what God does. So, in loving and appreciating our neighbor, we're participating in something truly sacred."²

Pray for Friends

Some of the most memorable earthly experiences with the Savior may have been when He prayed for others. The Nephites recorded that "no one [could] conceive of the joy which filled [their] souls at the time [they] heard him pray for [them] unto the Father" (3 Nephi 17:17). Our prayers might not be as touching as His, but we can still take the time to pray for those we care about.

Besides praying for your friends, you can also pray to have friends. As you "counsel with the Lord in all thy doings" (Alma 37:37)—including your concerns about being lonely and needing friends—He will not only "direct [you] for good," He will also direct you to good—good people who can become good friends.

Look to the Savior

Jesus knows how we feel when we feel lonely because He too was "acquainted with grief" and loneliness (Mosiah 14:3). So even if we are the best at being a friend, we will likely still have

We all go through seasons of loneliness, but the Savior's example teaches us a few things about making friends.

seasons or moments of loneliness. But loneliness can also be a reminder to us of the divine mandate to love one another (see John 13:34).

If you're struggling through a season of loneliness right now, look to the Savior's example. Above anyone else, make *Him* your friend. He—and our Heavenly Father—will never leave you lonely. ■

NOTES

1. Ronald A. Rasband, "True Friendship," *New Era*, Oct. 2016, 5.
2. Fred Rogers, commencement address at Marquette University, 2001, marquette.edu/universityhonors/speakers-rogers.shtml.





I love the temple

because it's a place where you can truly feel the Spirit. It's a place of purity where you can really feel the love of Christ.

I had the opportunity to live in the United States for a year. After I got there, for a while I was really lonely. I missed my family and my home, but I struggled with more than just that. I didn't have a lot of friends at school, I was having a hard time with the language and culture, and I had a little trouble with the family I was living with.

Even at church I sometimes felt alone. I felt like going home. I really wanted to see my family again.

But I started to think about Jesus Christ and how He suffered for me. I prayed, and God comforted me. Where I was staying, the temple was so close—just six minutes away. So I decided to go to the temple once a week, and that really was a blessing in my life.

Things began to change. I found some good friends, and God made it possible for me to continue to the end of my time away from home. I know that I felt comfort because of Jesus Christ. He gave me help and strength, and that gave me courage. People sometimes think that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is just about repentance. But Christ is also a source of great comfort. I know I can't possibly understand everything He endured, but He understands me.

Yona C., 17, France

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Progressing **TOGETHER**

By **Eric B. Murdock and Richard M. Romney**
Church Magazines

Many exciting changes have come to the Church thanks to inspiration received by President Russell M. Nelson. Two of these changes have had a direct impact on the Clarkson brothers from California, USA:

1. Young men can now be ordained to a priesthood office in January of the year they turn 12, 14, and 16.
2. Youth are eligible to obtain a limited-use temple recommend beginning in January of the year they turn 12.

For brothers Matthew (15), Andrew (13), and Isaac (11), these changes have brought new opportunities to serve and progress in the gospel of Jesus Christ—not just on their own but *together*.

A Day of Firsts

In January 2019, Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac all experienced a day of firsts.

Andrew says: “Matthew became a priest, I became a teacher, and Isaac became a deacon at the same time. None of us were at the ages where we would have advanced before.”

“On my first day being a priest,” Matthew says, “I broke the bread for the sacrament and blessed it. I was kind of nervous. My hands were shaking a little bit when I said the prayer, but it was really amazing.”

New to the Aaronic Priesthood, Isaac now has the chance to learn from his older brothers. “It was cool because I was with my brothers and some of their friends,” Isaac says. “I felt the Spirit when I passed the sacrament for the first time.”

“I Baptized My Brother!”

Along with receiving the Aaronic Priesthood and passing the sacrament, Isaac also attended the temple to

perform baptisms. His father baptized him first, but then came a surprise:

“I got to baptize my brother!” Matthew says.

“I never expected Matthew to baptize me,” Isaac says. “But he’s a priest now, so he could. It was really a cool experience. I could feel the Holy Ghost.”

Every Morning before Seminary

Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac aren’t the only brothers in the Clarkson family. There are four more: Levi (9), Eli (7), Sam (4), and Titus (2), and a baby on the way.

When President Nelson invited the women of the Church in October 2018 general conference to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the year, Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac, along with their father and younger brothers, decided to offer Mom their support.



The Clarkson brothers have been blessed by serving in their priesthood quorums and reading the Book of Mormon.

"We'll read it with you!" they said. Every morning before seminary, they woke up to read together.

A Life-Changing Challenge

"When we took on this challenge, I thought it was going to take a lot of time," Andrew says. "I worried that I wouldn't have enough time to do everything I wanted to do, like play the guitar or hang out with my friends. But I realized that it just doesn't work like that. The more I was into reading the Book of Mormon, the more time I actually seemed to have. I realized that if I keep up on reading the scriptures as much as possible, my life is balanced. I have more time in the day."

Matthew was going through a hard time when the family started reading every morning. He says, "I wasn't doing well in school. I struggled with my personal scripture study and my relationship with Heavenly Father, and I kept it all to myself. I didn't talk about it with my parents."

However, as Matthew spent more time reading the Book of Mormon, the gospel began to take first priority in his life. He also put more effort into school. He worked hard and got his grades up.

"I also realized how much Heavenly Father and my parents love me and how much they help me. And I have a greater testimony of Jesus Christ. He has helped me overcome bad habits and helped me get my life headed in the right direction. I'm so glad we took President Nelson's challenge as a family. It changed my life."

"Man, That's a Lot!"

Accepting President Nelson's invitation also strengthened Isaac's testimony. "We circled the words *God, Lord, Redeemer, Savior, and Christ* every time we found them," he says. "On the day we finished, I flipped through the Book of Mormon and saw all the words I had circled. I thought, 'Man, that's a lot!' I had never noticed how many there

were. I felt much more spiritual reading the Book of Mormon. I'm glad we did it."

Life Is So Much Better

Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac are amazed that their family finished the Book of Mormon in just two months. "It usually takes us a year," Isaac says. Together, they discovered the blessings of following the prophet's invitation.

"If you do what you're supposed to do," Andrew says, "like building a relationship with Heavenly Father through prayer, scripture study, and staying fully active in the Church, life is so much better."

These three brothers have helped each other progress in the gospel. They follow the prophet, who has called on members "to increase their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, to . . . [make] and [keep] their covenants with God, and to strengthen . . . their families."¹ ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7.





CHRISTMAS

AROUND THE

WORLD



"THE MONTH OF DECEMBER in my family represents unity. We love to live by following the example of Christ, and we always try to remind ourselves of the acts that He did for us and the many blessings that we have received. In our living room we have a picture of the Savior, surrounded by about 20 red hearts.

"When we get ready to open our presents at midnight, I look first at my family and then at the picture of Christ. I am proud to have His image in that room, and I am proud to be able to say to myself that what He wanted so much for my family is happening.

"I am planning on serving a full-time mission. These moments shared at Christmas give me even more desire to share the gospel with other people. With the gospel, Christmas has a whole different feeling. With the gospel, everything about Christmas is centered on Christ and on the family, and that brings me an even greater comfort."

Myrium G., Paris, France

Would you like to share how you celebrate Christmas where you live? Send us a picture and your story, and we might use it next year! Send it to liahona@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

What are some of your favorite Christmas traditions? Bundling up for some outdoor family Christmas caroling? Sledding followed by hot cocoa? Going for a barbecue on the beach?

Despite what some holiday greeting card companies seem to portray, Christmas is celebrated in every climate, culture, and location—often without a hint of snow in sight or the faintest scent of a pine tree.

Here's a look at some ways youth around the world celebrate the Savior's birth.



"We invite the small children to place the baby Jesus in the crib at midnight on the 25th of December. We wish 'Merry Christmas' to each of our family members, cut the cake, talk the whole night, and go to sleep late that day.

"How grateful are we to have Jesus Christ as a part of our lives. Through Him we find everlasting joy."

Ankita K., Bangalore, India

"IN BANGALORE, Christmas is widely celebrated. Everyone celebrates, be they Hindu, Muslim, or Christian. Many people decorate a Christmas tree and hang the star in their house.

"One tradition we follow in our family is to participate in the Light the World calendar provided by the Church. Also, my mom starts preparing cakes for my neighbors, colleagues, friends, and family. On Christmas Eve we invite all our family members to our home. We start our Christmas devotional at home at 10:30 p.m., and we sing hymns, read scriptures, watch some Christmas videos, and talk.

"CHRISTMAS 2018 was my most beautiful Christmas. There was a feeling of togetherness and friendliness, and I got to participate in an event for refugees.

"I made red paper boots and taught those who were invited to the dinner to make them, to place one on each plate. Those invited to the evening brought backpacks filled with personal hygiene items so that they could be handed out on a Sunday.

"We watched a film about Christ with the refugees as part of the evening. It was a good Christmas to remember."

Alexis L., Paris, France





"WE BUILT THIS lemonade stand to use in the summer, but Christmastime is a perfect opportunity to use it to give people cookies and hot chocolate! I feel closer to my Savior when I find creative ways to serve others."

Brooklyn H., Alberta, Canada



"I ENJOY SPENDING TIME with my sisters, especially when we play games together. At Christmastime we have candlelight dinners every night at supper. It feels peaceful. The light of the candles reminds me of our Savior, who is the Light of the World."

Dane H., Alberta, Canada



"MANY PEOPLE CONSIDER the mountains as a place of peace where they commune with nature and discover the beauty of God's creations. But here in Hawaii, we feel and appreciate the power of God in the sea and all the wonders it holds.

"Any time that you spend surrounded by nature and family, it is a bonding experience. You disconnect from the distractions in life and focus on the beauty around you, both in the things you see and in the people you share the experience with.

"What better time than Christmas to feel more connected to this earth and to our families, as we understand they both play a major part in the plan that has been laid out by our Father in Heaven and our Savior Jesus Christ."

Diane A., with photo of Zyus A., Hawaii, USA



"MY FAMILY IS ALWAYS involved in some type of service activity on Christmas. One thing we do is provide food and goodies for those in need. Through serving others, we are able to show God's love. My parents have

taught me the meaning of Christmas by setting a good example and serving others. This experience helped me to understand my role on earth and the true meaning of Christmas."

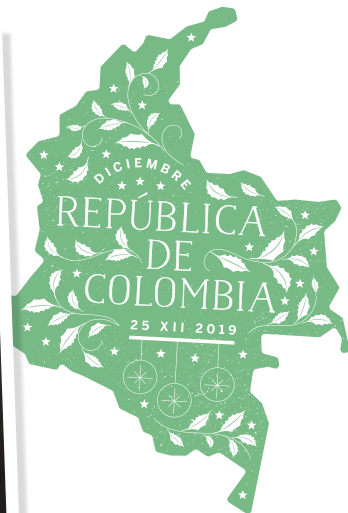
Aaron S., Bangalore, India



"SOMETIMES, SINCE WE'RE A BIG FAMILY, we all get together in this house and the house next door. We have music. We dance. We're always together as a family as much as possible during December, because we're out of school.

"We play. We talk. We laugh. We eat. That's the tradition. When I'm in school, I don't have time to do all of those things with my family. So we try to keep these traditions going. Family is the most important thing. These traditions help us stay together as a family."

Juan C., Barranquilla, Colombia



Many people in Mexico gather as family and friends to break open piñatas as part of their Christmas celebrations.

Note: The following youth from Paradise, California, USA, reflect on the meaning of Christmas after the most destructive wildfire in California's history burned down their community.

"AFTER THE FIRE I realized that the most important things to have are your family and friends. So although we didn't get many gifts, it was so really nice to just be surrounded by family. It was still a happy time for us, even though it wasn't like our normal Christmas."

Rachel W.

"IT WAS GREAT TO SEE everyone kind of get thrown together and depend on each other socially. . . . I learned that material things don't matter as much. Service, family, and time spent together matters a lot more. Life is valuable. Things can always change for the worse, so we need to try to enjoy the positive times while they're around. We're the ones that make those positive times!"

Billy A.

"I GOT TO HELP unload and organize several truckloads of donated toys. Then we opened the doors and let everyone in. It was really fun to watch all the kids. Their eyes would light up. They were so excited! It made me happy to see them so happy and peaceful after living through something so awful."

Audrey V.





YOU DON'T WANT TO BE A MOCK STAR

Mockery is all the rage—
except in the Lord's eyes.

By David A. Edwards
Church Magazines

Can you name some signs of the last days? There are quite a few well-known ones: the Restoration, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, various disasters, the spreading of the gospel, general wickedness. Well, here's one specific sign you may not have thought of: mockery.

Two New Testament writers mention that there will be mockers in the last days (see 2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:18). That is, there will be people who mock and ridicule Jesus Christ, His teachings, and His followers. But as His disciples, we are told to be long-suffering and

patient (see 2 Peter 3:11–15), looking forward to His coming and the fulfilling of His promises, abiding in His mercy and having compassion for others (see Jude 1:22).

Of course, mockery isn't a new thing, but it sure seems to be spreading. And even though you may never mock the things of God, the mocking lifestyle is not one for a disciple of Jesus Christ to emulate.

Mock On? No, Thanks.

To mock means to ridicule, make fun of, or taunt. It sometimes includes unflattering mimicry, like imitating someone and using a funny voice or exaggerated gestures or imagery. We've all seen it. It's everywhere. People love it, it seems.



But the Lord doesn't.

Nowhere in the scriptures is mockery approved of. In fact, it's specifically condemned. For instance, Alma the Younger taught:

"Is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother . . . ?

"Wo unto such an one, for . . . he must repent or he cannot be saved!" (Alma 5:30–31).

Mockery is a symptom of the basic sin of pride. And the basic feeling behind

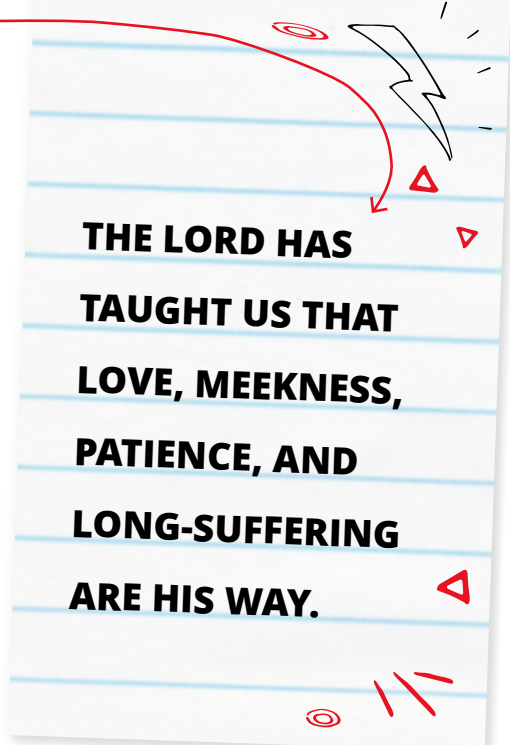
mockery is contempt—looking down on others—that is, looking down on *people*, not just disagreeing with what they say or do.

This is not what the Lord wants. He has said, "Let every man esteem his brother as himself" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:24). We are all of equal worth. Alma asked, "Will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another[?]" (Alma 5:54). That kind of thinking leads to mockery. Mocking people is one way people try to set themselves above others.

What's more, mockers are usually trying to get others to join them. One image from Lehi's dream really shows this. The people in the great and spacious building were "in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers" (1 Nephi 8:27). The finger-pointing draws an us-vs.-them line, saying, "You better be with us, or you'll be shamed and laughed at." Like misery, mockery loves company. That's partly because deep down, the proud are often also incredibly insecure.

Be Meek. Don't Mock.

With all of the mocking going on out there, it can be tempting to join in. It looks like they're having fun, right? Everyone's doing it, especially on the internet and on social media. We may even be tempted to fight fire with fire—to use the world's own weapon against it, to point back at those finger-pointers in the great and spacious building to see how they like a taste of their own mocking medicine.



**THE LORD HAS
TAUGHT US THAT
LOVE, MEEKNESS,
PATIENCE, AND
LONG-SUFFERING
ARE HIS WAY.**

But again, that's not the Lord's way.

"Revile not against those that revile" (Doctrine and Covenants 31:9).

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

That's a much higher standard than the world's standard, which seems to say, "Mock everyone and everything that's different from you in any way."

It can be hard to endure others' mockery and not respond with mockery, because our culture would have us believe that the cleverest, most hurtful mockery wins the contest for people's attention and respect. But that's not so. The Lord has taught us—and shown us—that love, meekness, patience, and long-suffering are His way.

If we're true followers of Jesus Christ, we won't mock our brothers and sisters, because our hearts will be filled with His pure love (see Moroni 7:47–48). ■



By Elder
Joaquin E. Costa
Of the Seventy

A Blind Date

WITH A LATTER-DAY SAINT GIRL

Renée's commitment to live the gospel changed my life.

I didn't grow up as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but through some members I met, I learned that when someone lives a clean, pure life, the Light of Christ shines in them. They become powerful examples.

My first contact with the Church was through a friend I made in college. He was a very good member of the Church who had served a mission. I had grown up in a Catholic family, so he often tried to start conversations with me about religion. But I wasn't really interested. My friend was very clever though, and he tried again to introduce me to the Church—by setting me up on a blind date with a Latter-day Saint girl.

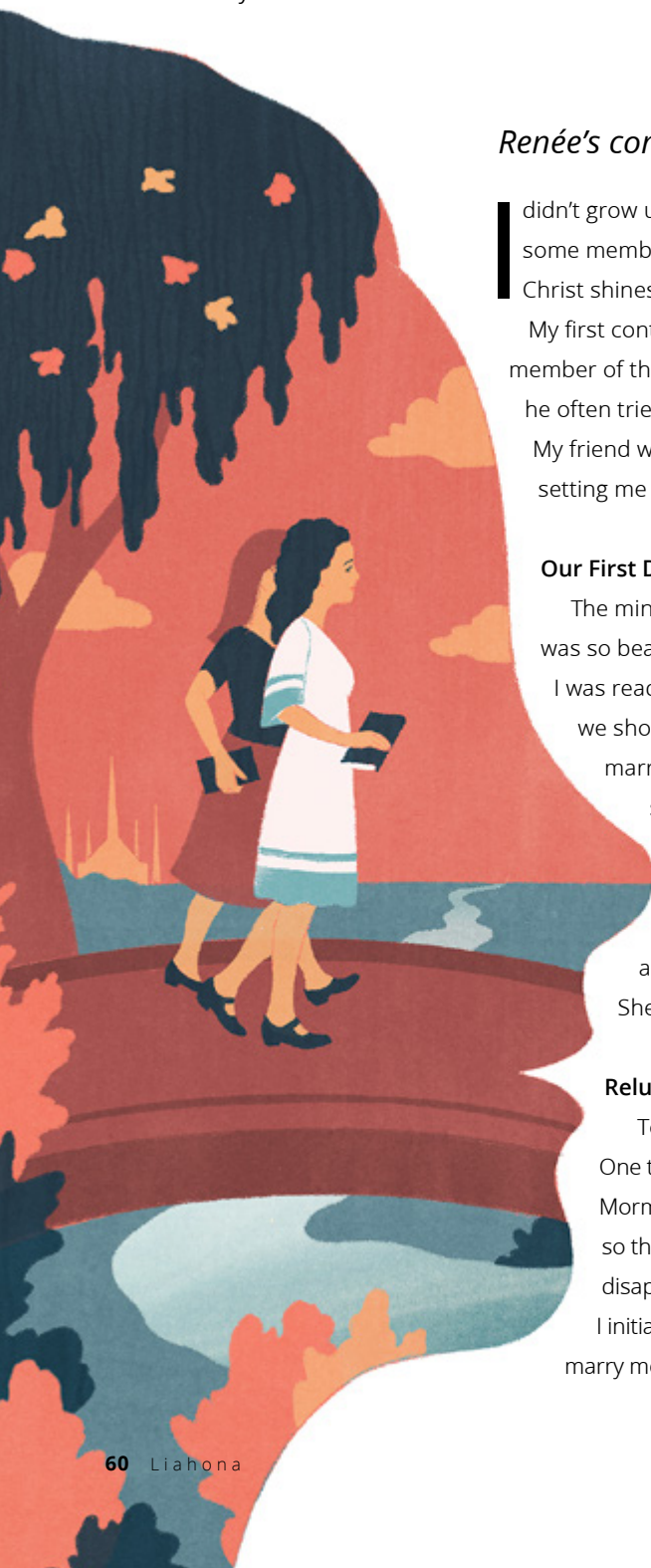
Our First Date

The minute Renée and I went on our first date, I fell in love with her completely. She was so beautiful to me. I could tell there was something special about her. Soon afterward, I was ready to be serious with her and to form a family—but after several dates, she said we shouldn't date anymore because she liked me “too much” and she wanted to get married in the temple. To make things even worse for me, she soon left on a mission. After that, I decided I did *not* like the Latter-day Saints.

When she came back from her mission, our common friend invited me to a party where I could see Renée, and we started spending time together again. I had graduated from college and had a very good job, and I once again felt ready to get married. I thought I was quite a catch, so I proposed. She said no.

Reluctantly Meeting with the Missionaries

To keep the relationship going, I accepted the invitation to listen to the missionaries. One time she came to me and, with tears in her eyes, bore testimony of the Book of Mormon and begged me to read it. She wanted me to gain a testimony of the gospel so that she could fulfill her desire to marry in the temple. I loved her and didn't want to disappoint her, so I said that I would. But even though I agreed to meet the missionaries, I initially met with them only so that I could buy some more time to convince Renée to marry me. I had no intention of joining a new religion.



*Because of Renée's faithfulness,
I was able to develop a personal
testimony of the Book of Mormon
and this Church.*

After a few appointments with the missionaries, I still wasn't interested. I would sit through their lessons, but I didn't really pay attention or try to feel the Spirit. My heart was closed, because I wasn't listening to the missionaries for me; I was listening to them for Renée. Things were going nowhere, and I still couldn't convince Renée that I would be a good husband to her without being baptized. She stayed strong in her beliefs.

Personalizing the Book of Mormon

Then there was a change in the missionaries. A new missionary came to teach me, and he had an idea. He had me open the scriptures to Alma 42, and he asked me if I would read the chapter aloud to them, verse by verse. But instead of just reading it word-for-word, he wanted me to read *my* name into it. I didn't really want to, but he insisted.

So I started with the first verse. "And now, Joaquin . . ." As soon as I read those words, the book started to talk to me. As I put my name in, I felt the power of a personal testimony.

The next part of Alma 42 teaches about the Fall of Adam and Eve, and finally comes the plan of redemption. When I came to verse 29 and read, "And now, Joaquin, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more," I started to cry like a baby. I'd never cried like that before. I knew that the Book of Mormon was true—but I couldn't even finish reading the chapter. When I finally composed myself, I told the missionaries I wanted to get baptized. Renée was so happy. I was baptized, and she finally agreed to marry me. A year later, we were sealed in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple.

I am so grateful for Renée's commitment to live the gospel and marry in the temple. Her faithful dating commitment not only strengthened her relationship to God and the gospel, but invited me to learn about the gospel as well. I know why she was so beautiful to me: because she was so clean, loving, and pure. Because of her faithfulness, I was able to develop a personal testimony of the Book of Mormon and this Church. ■



How do I decide whether to serve a mission?



"We affirm that missionary work is a priesthood duty—and we encourage all young men who are worthy and who are physically able and mentally capable to respond to the call to serve. Many young women also serve, but they are not under the same mandate to serve as are the young men. We assure the young sisters of the Church, however, that they make a valuable contribution as missionaries."

President Thomas S. Monson
(1927–2018), "Welcome to Conference,"
Ensign or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 5.



Be Willing to Sincerely Ask

Missions really aren't for everyone, but what is for everyone is honestly find-

ing out if a mission is for you! Sometimes we don't want to go, so we just don't even ask or we ask without giving the Spirit room to really answer. We must ask in sincerity! If you find your answer through honest seeking, you will have peace and confidence in whatever the Lord tells you to do—to stay or to go.

Ali B., age 22, Utah, USA



Repent

One of the things that helped me decide to serve a mission was to learn about and experience

true repentance. As I studied about the Savior's Atonement and applied what I learned in my life, I felt indescribable peace. As I felt this, I wanted others to feel the same peace.

Elder Berdejo, age 21, Arequipa, Peru

Stay in Touch with the Lord

Heavenly Father can give you your answer through the scriptures, a General Authority's message, or even just from someone else's testimony. So you can get your inspiration from just staying in touch with the Lord.

Samuel H., age 14, Utah, USA



Remember He Will Answer You

Before I came on a mission, I struggled to know whether I should go.

Eventually I decided to ask Heavenly Father, who truly knows everything we go through and knows if we need to serve a mission. Through prayer I received a confirmation that I needed to go. I know that Heavenly Father answers prayers. Go to Him with your questions, and He will answer you according to your faith and His will and timing.

Sister Terpend, age 21, Jamaica Kingston Mission

Look to Your Family and Patriarchal Blessing

My family and my patriarchal blessing helped me decide. My sister is currently serving a mission, and her example and testimony of missionary work has inspired me. My desire to serve also became stronger when I received my patriarchal blessing, which said I would be able to share the gospel with others.

Juliana P., age 16, Nevada, USA

What Do You Think?

"I have some friends who aren't good influences, but we're close and I still want to be friends with them. What should I do?"

Submit your answer and, if desired, a high-resolution photograph by January 15, 2020, at [liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org) (click "Submit an Article or Feedback").

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



What can help me understand the book of Revelation?

Because of modern prophets, we have some helps for understanding the book of Revelation. Joseph Smith gave us some important keys to this book. For instance:

- *Doctrine and Covenants* 77. This revelation is in a question-and-answer format and gives us important insights into the book of Revelation. It explains various elements of chapters 4–11 and emphasizes how they relate to the work of the Lord in the latter days.
- *The Joseph Smith Translation*. There are many verses in the book of Revelation that Joseph Smith helped clarify through the process of his inspired translation of the Bible. You can find these in the study helps at [scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Joseph Smith helped us see that the book of Revelation is not the unknowable mystery some think it to be. And he also taught us that if God has not given an interpretation of a vision, we're not going to be held accountable for knowing it (see *History of the Church*, 5:343). He helped us to see that the main focus of the book is Jesus Christ—the hope we have through Him to overcome the world and return to Heavenly Father.

See also Guide to the Scriptures, "Revelation of John"; and *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: New Testament 2019* chapters on the book of Revelation.

Jesus Christ's Mission to Show God's Love

By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Of the many magnificent purposes served in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, one great aspect of that mission often goes uncelebrated. His followers did not understand it fully at the time, and many in modern Christianity do not grasp it now, but the Savior Himself spoke of it repeatedly and emphatically. It is the grand truth that in all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed, Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

Jesus came to plead with man to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God, yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came.

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.”¹ In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is *God’s* compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.”

I bear personal witness of a personal, living God, who knows our names, hears and answers prayers, and cherishes us eternally as children of His spirit. I testify that amidst the wondrously complex tasks inherent in the universe, He seeks our individual happiness and safety above all other godly concerns.

In the spirit of the holy apostleship, I say as did one who held this office anciently: “Herein [then] is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:10–11)—and to love Him forever. ■

From an October 2003 general conference address.

NOTE

1. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 42.

Elder Holland taught that Jesus showed us the way of the Father by showing love in all He said and did. He has invited us to love God and to love one another.

How can you show love?

You share your lunch with a friend who forgot theirs.



Christ fed the hungry.



Christ healed the sick.



You can visit and comfort someone who is sick or injured.



Christ taught the truth.



You take the opportunity to bear your testimony.



Christ pleads for us to have faith.



You can invite a friend to church.



YOUNG ADULTS

FEELING LONELY?

Whatever season of life you're in, you can overcome loneliness by reaching out and forming genuine connections. Here are some ways to do that.

42



YOUTH

**CELEBRATING
CHRISTMAS AROUND
THE WORLD**

54

COME, FOLLOW ME

**INSIGHTS INTO
THE BOOKS OF JUDE
AND REVELATION**

58, 63

CHILDREN

**7 STORIES AND
ACTIVITIES FOR
CHRISTMAS**

Friend

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

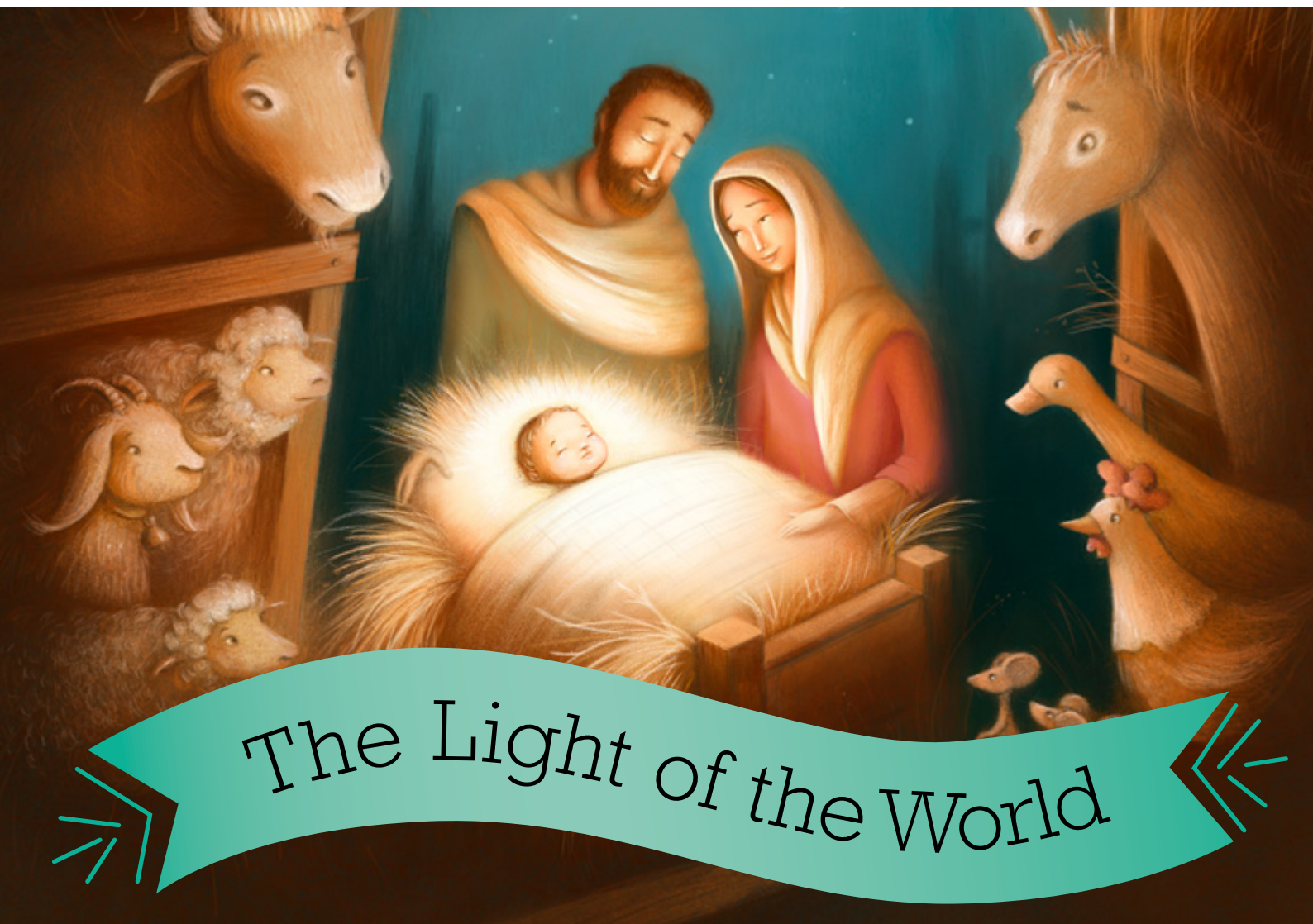


the Friend



Visit
Colombia!

See pages F15–F19



**By President
Henry B. Eyring**
Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

Light is one of the most beautiful symbols of the birth of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was born, He brought light to a darkened world.

Prophets taught that light would be a sign of the Savior's birth. Years before Jesus was born, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied:

"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.

"And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld" (Helaman 14:3, 5).

This star guided the Wise Men to Jesus to worship Him. They gave Him precious gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

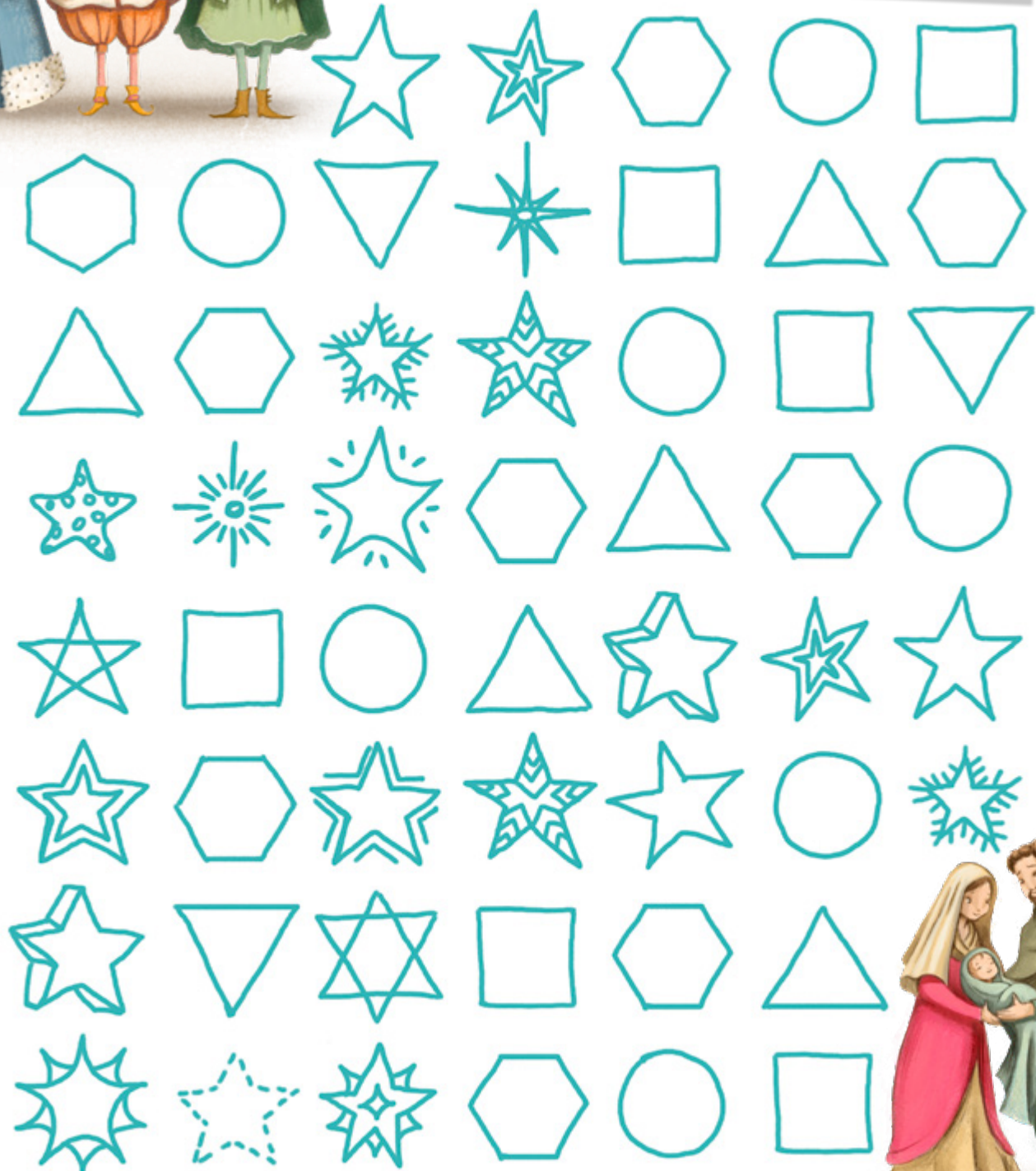
I testify that Jesus is the Living Christ. We can remember Him and try with all our hearts to love as He loves. That is the spirit of Christmas. It is the spirit of true happiness every day. ●

Adapted from the 2011 First Presidency Christmas devotional.



FOLLOW THE STAR

When Jesus was born, the Wise Men followed the star.
Color the stars below to help the Wise Men find Jesus.



In the Footsteps of Jesus

MY name is Mary. I live in Israel with my family. We've had many special experiences walking where Jesus walked long ago.

From an interview by
Amie Jane Leavitt

BETHLEHEM

One special place we went was Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. Mary and Joseph had to travel about 90 miles (144 km) to get there from their home in Nazareth. We visited a church that was built where people think the stable was.

We also saw the fields near Bethlehem. Shepherds still watch over flocks there, just as they did on the night Jesus was born. We could hear the *baaing* of the sheep as we sang "Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains" (*Hymns*, no. 212). I'll always remember how I felt singing that song.





THE SEA OF GALILEE

This is the Sea of Galilee. It's a beautiful lake where Jesus taught thousands of people and did many miracles. I could really feel the Spirit there. It has a peaceful feeling that tells me sacred things happened there.

I love going to places where Jesus walked, like the River Jordan, where Jesus was baptized. When I'm at these spots, I walk around quietly near people who are worshipping Jesus by lighting candles and kneeling in prayer. I always feel in my heart that Heavenly Father and Jesus are happy with people who show their love for Them.

JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is a big city. On the Sunday before He was crucified, Jesus rode there on a donkey (see Matthew 21:1–11). People welcomed Him into the city by waving palm leaves and shouting, "Hosanna!"

Every year on the Sunday before Easter, people follow Jesus's path into Jerusalem. They carry palm leaves and sing songs about Jesus. One year my family joined other Christians on this walk. It was wonderful to feel everyone's love for their Savior.

You don't have to walk where Jesus walked to follow His footsteps. You can follow His example anywhere! ●



You can watch videos about places Jesus walked at

ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

See "Shepherds Learn of the Birth of Christ," "Calming the Tempest," and "Jesus Is Resurrected."

10 Days of Christmas

Help your family get ready for Christmas!
Starting on December 15, do one of
these activities together each day.
Then color the star.

See *Come, Follow Me* family manual
pages 194–197.

Be especially
kind today, like
Jesus would.

Share a favorite
scripture about
Jesus.

Help someone
who is sick or
lonely, like
Jesus would.

Watch the video
“The Nativity.” *

Act out the
Nativity
(see Luke 2).

Share why
you’re thankful
for Jesus.

Sing a
Christmas
song or
hymn.

Draw a picture
of baby Jesus.

Read
something
in the scriptures
Jesus said.

Review
a talk from
the First
Presidency
Christmas
devotional.*

* Find these videos at ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

My Christmas Testimony

With conviction ♩ = 76-84

Words by Larry Hiller
Music by Michael F. Moody

1. It's true. I know what
(2. It's true. I know be -
(3. It's true. I know. The

hap - pened in that vil - lage long a - go — How one bright
cause the ho - ly scrip - tures tell me so — Of an - gels'
Ho - ly Ghost has whis - pered that it's so, That Je - sus,

star - did light the way — To where the new - born Christ child
mu - sic in the air, — Of babe and the mo - ther sweet and
born that ho - ly night, — Has filled the world with truth and

lay — So hum - bly in His bed of hay.
fair, — And shep - herds sent to find them there.
light, — He showed us how to live what's right.

1. 2. G D 3. G D G D7 G
1. 2. It's — I know. Oh, yes! I know!
3. It's —
molto rit.

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This notice must appear on each copy made.

The Red Paper Bird

All Eve could think about was all the fun her friends would have without her.

By Eve Dayton

(Based on a true story)

"I was sick, and ye visited me" (Matthew 25:36).

Eve loved Christmastime. Her class at school had spent the morning coloring cards and listening to fun music.

"Now it's reading time," Mrs. Grunig said. "And if you finish all your reading today and tomorrow, you won't have any homework during the holiday break."

All the kids in Eve's class cheered. But Eve didn't feel much like cheering. She shivered a little as she pulled out her book to read. She felt very cold and her throat hurt. Her eyes felt hot as she stared at the words on the page. By the end of school, Eve's stomach felt sick too.

Finally it was time to walk home with her brother and sister, Tim and Wilma. Usually they had fun on the way home. They would play tag or make a snowman. But today all Eve wanted to do was get home and lie down.

When Eve got home, Mama felt her forehead. "You have a fever," she said. "You need to drink plenty of water and get lots of rest."

Eve climbed into bed and fell asleep right away. The next morning, everyone else in her family was busy getting ready for the day. But Mama said Eve was too sick to go to school.

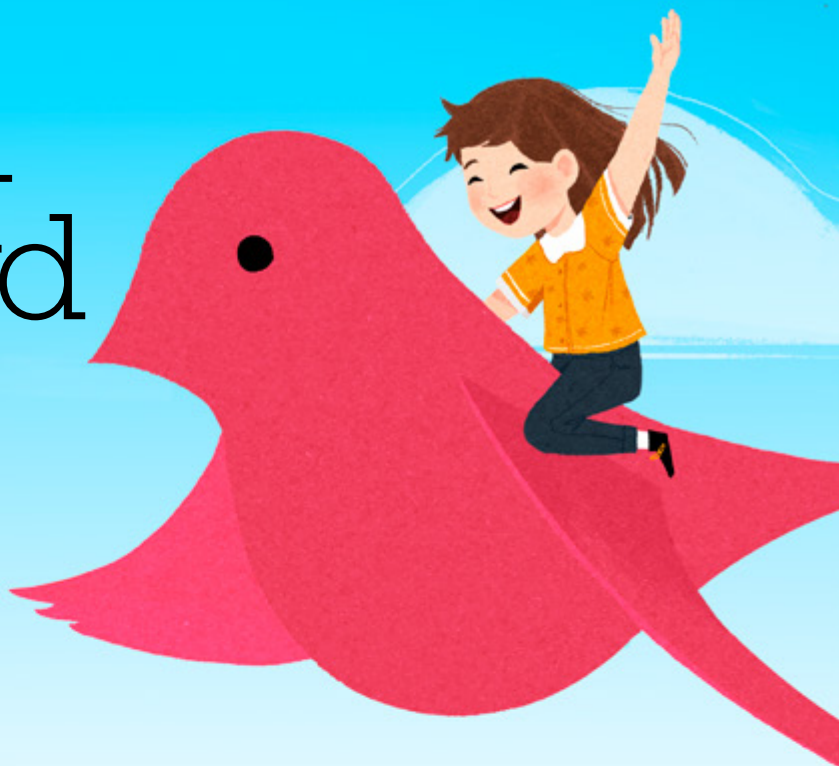
Then Eve remembered something that made her sad. Today was the school Christmas party! They were supposed to finish their art projects and sing songs and have treats. She just *had* to go!

But Mama didn't change her mind.

"I'm sorry you'll miss the party, sweetie," she said. "But your health is more important."

Eve started to cry. Mama tried to help her feel better with yummy soup. But all Eve could think about was all of the fun her friends were having without her.

In the afternoon, Tim





and Wilma got home from school. Their cheeks were red from playing in the snow.

"The school party was lots of fun," Wilma said. "We made red paper birds to hang up at home."

Tim pulled something out of his pocket.

"And look—Mrs. Grunig sent us home with a special present for you. It's so you can make a red paper bird too!"

Eve smiled. "Can you show me how?"

Tim and Wilma showed Eve how to cut on the dotted line and fold it just right. They helped her tie the string in a loop.

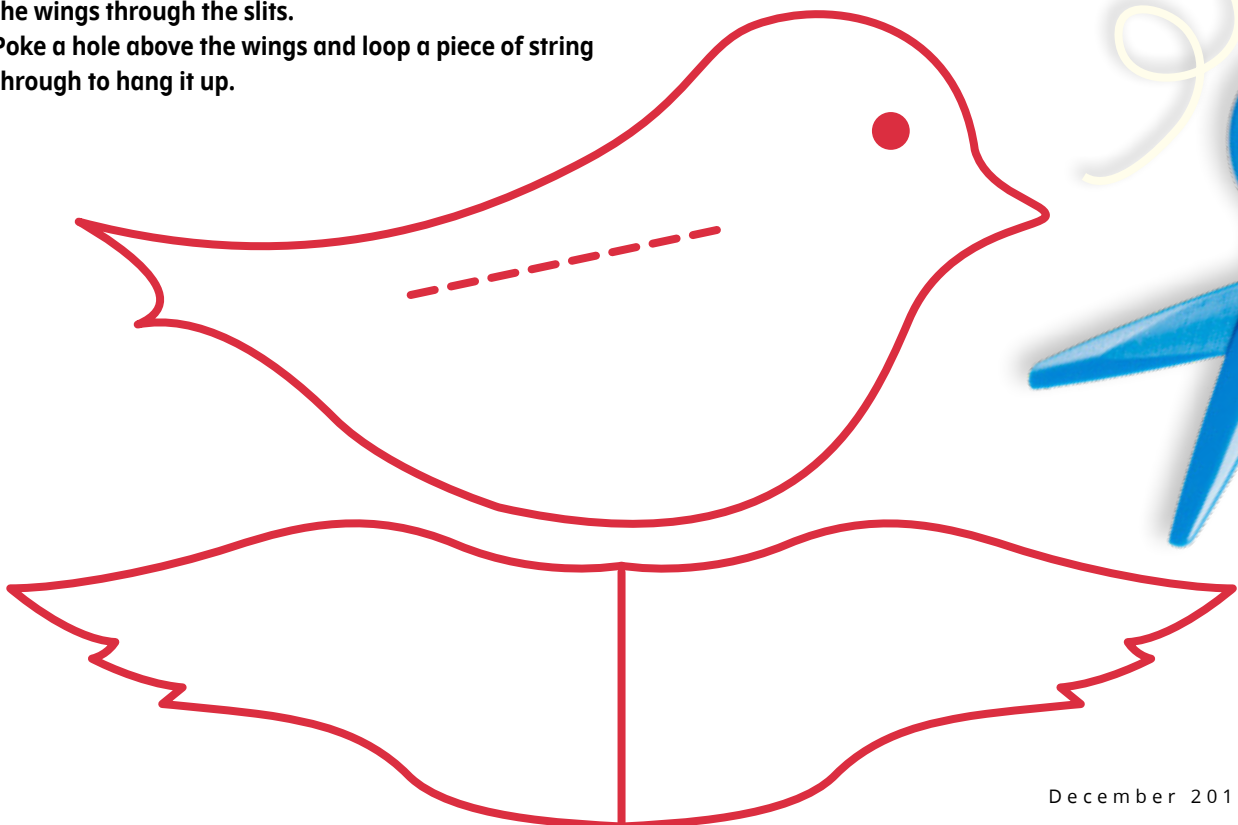
"Mama, look what I made!" Eve said, showing off her new favorite Christmas ornament.

Eve thought of how nice Mrs. Grunig was to remember her when she was sick, and how Tim and Wilma had helped her too. Now whenever Eve looked at her red paper bird, she would feel lots of love. ●

The author lives in Idaho, USA.

Make a Paper Bird!

1. Cut out and glue this page to red paper. Then cut out the bird and wings.
2. Carefully cut a slit on the dotted line on the bird. Slide the wings through the slits.
3. Poke a hole above the wings and loop a piece of string through to hang it up.



Show and Tell



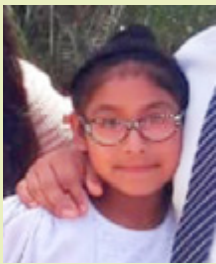
Primary children in **Imbabura, Ecuador**, sang Christmas carols at a nursing home and handed out cookies.



I pray with my sister and try to be a good example for her. We like going on walks to see Heavenly

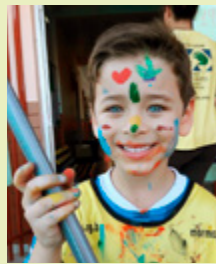
Father's creations.

Vianca and Avril C., ages 8 and 4, Bogotá, Colombia



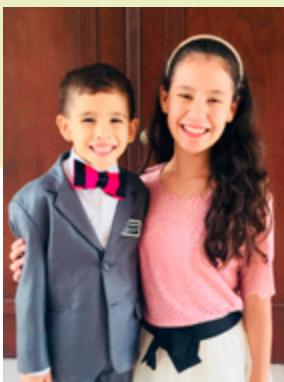
I know that my Heavenly Father loves me.

Stefania R., age 10, Lima, Peru



I participated in a Helping Hands project and helped paint a wall at a school. I like to go to church on Sundays.

Jared R., age 6, Paraná, Brazil



Josue Thomas G., age 6, and Alexandra C., age 13, Durango, Mexico, are cousins and best friends. When they watched general conference, Alexandra said she felt the Spirit when the prophet announced the new temples. Thomas loved the stories the prophet and apostles shared.



Celeste V., age 7, Corrientes, Argentina



**By Elder
Vern P. Stanfill**
Of the Quorum of
the Seventy

Sheep and Their Shepherd

“The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1).

I grew up on a cattle ranch in Montana, USA. We also had about 300 sheep on the ranch. My mother bought them as a way for us to earn money for our missions.

My job was to take care of the lambs that didn’t have a mother taking care of them. When a sheep has more than one baby, sometimes she doesn’t take care of all of the lambs. So those were the lambs I took care of. There were 5 to 10 of these lambs each year.

Every day, I would drive to the pasture in our small blue car, called a Volkswagen Beetle, and honk the horn. Then I opened the car doors. Those lambs would come from wherever they were in the field. They knew

the sound of that old Volkswagen. They would jump in the back of the car, and I would drive them to the barn and feed them.

We are like those little lambs. We live in different places and have different challenges in our lives. But Jesus is reaching out to each of us. We can learn to hear His voice. We can turn to Him for comfort and security. We can feel loved by Him and Heavenly Father.

As I’ve looked toward Jesus as the Shepherd in my life, my life has changed. When we place our lives in the hands of the Savior, we will feel His love and learn to trust Him. ●

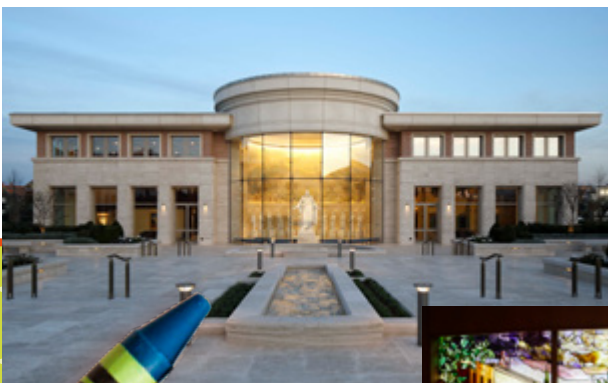
From an interview with Christina Crosland.





ILLUSTRATION BY DILLEN MARSH

Stories of Jesus



1. A dove flying in the sky
2. An injured man crawling on the ground
3. Rocks next to a wall
4. Birds eating seeds
5. A woman holding a child
6. A man sitting next to Jesus



SUS

This coloring page is based on a beautiful stained-glass window in the visitors' center of the Rome Italy Temple. The window is full of stories Jesus taught and many other important parts of His life. Can you find these scenes? What do they teach us about Jesus?

1. A dove in the sky (see Matthew 3:16)

2. A man carried on a donkey (see Luke 10:30–37)

3. A woman talking to a man by a well (see John 8:7)

4. A man looking at birds on the ground (see Matthew 13:1–9)

5. A man holding a lamp and a bottle of oil (see Matthew 25:1–13)

6. A man standing next to a pig (see Luke 15:11–32)

7. A basket full of bread and fish (see Luke 9:13–17)

8. A girl holding her mother's dress (see Mark 5:39–42)

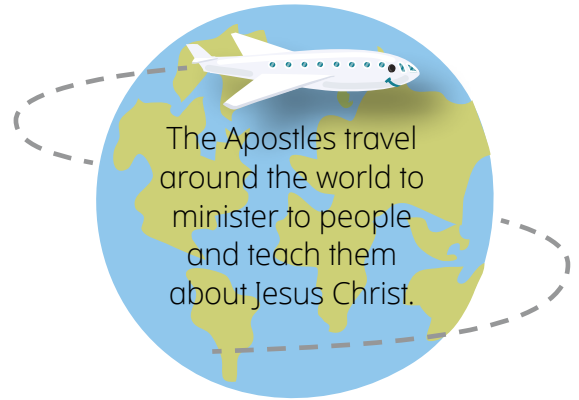
9. A boy looking up at Jesus (see Mark 10:13–16)

10. A rooster (see Luke 22:54–62)

11. A rich man standing on a balcony (see Luke 12:16–21)

12. A boat (see Mark 4:35–41)

Elder Gong Visits Italy



Elder Gerrit W. Gong and Sister Susan Gong traveled to Italy when the Rome Italy Temple was dedicated. It's the first temple to be built in a place where Jesus's Apostles taught in Bible times!

We feel Jesus's love for each child when we meet children everywhere in the world.



These children came with their families to hear President Russell M. Nelson dedicate the new temple. When they are old enough, they can do temple baptisms there!

Elder Gong, the First Presidency, and the other Apostles had their picture taken in the new visitors' center. They stood in front of statues of Jesus Christ and His Apostles.



Find the video "Excerpts from 'The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles'" at ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Elder Soares Visits Colombia



The Apostles travel around the world to minister to people and teach them about Jesus Christ.



Elder Ulisses Soares traveled with President Dallin H. Oaks to help dedicate a new temple in Colombia, in the city of Barranquilla [bar-an-KEE-ya].

Many children came with their parents to see the new temple be dedicated.



President Oaks invited a boy and girl to help seal the cornerstone in place. The temple was finished!



Soon children will be able to go inside to be sealed to their families and do temple baptisms!

Inside the temple after the cornerstone ceremony, Elder Soares gave a talk. Then President Oaks gave a prayer to dedicate the temple to the Lord. Now the temple is the Lord's house.

Whatever you do, keep your eyes on the temple.



Martín's Favorite Toys

By J. Ryan Jensen

Church Magazines

(Based on a true story)

"Give, then, as Jesus gives; there is something all can give" (Children's Songbook, 236).

Martín felt sad when his parents told him the family was moving to a different city in Colombia. He didn't want to leave his friends, his home, and the place he grew up in. Instead of cool mountain air, Martín would now live close to the ocean with hot, humid air all year round. He would trade hot soups for cold drinks, and coats for shorts. Add to that a new school, a new ward, and a new Primary class. It all seemed pretty scary.

One day Mom and Dad asked Martín how he felt about the move.

"I don't like it," Martín said. "I don't want everything to change."

"I know moving can be hard," Dad said. "Lots of things will change, but not *everything*. You'll still have us!"

"That's true," Martín said.

"And you will still have your things," Mom said.

Martín thought about that for a minute. He would still have his clothes, his shoes, and other things he was familiar with at his old house—especially his toys. Martín was glad he could take his favorite toys. He packed them away extra carefully when they moved.

After a while, Martín started to get used to his new home and new city. He was glad the move wasn't as hard or scary as he thought it would be.

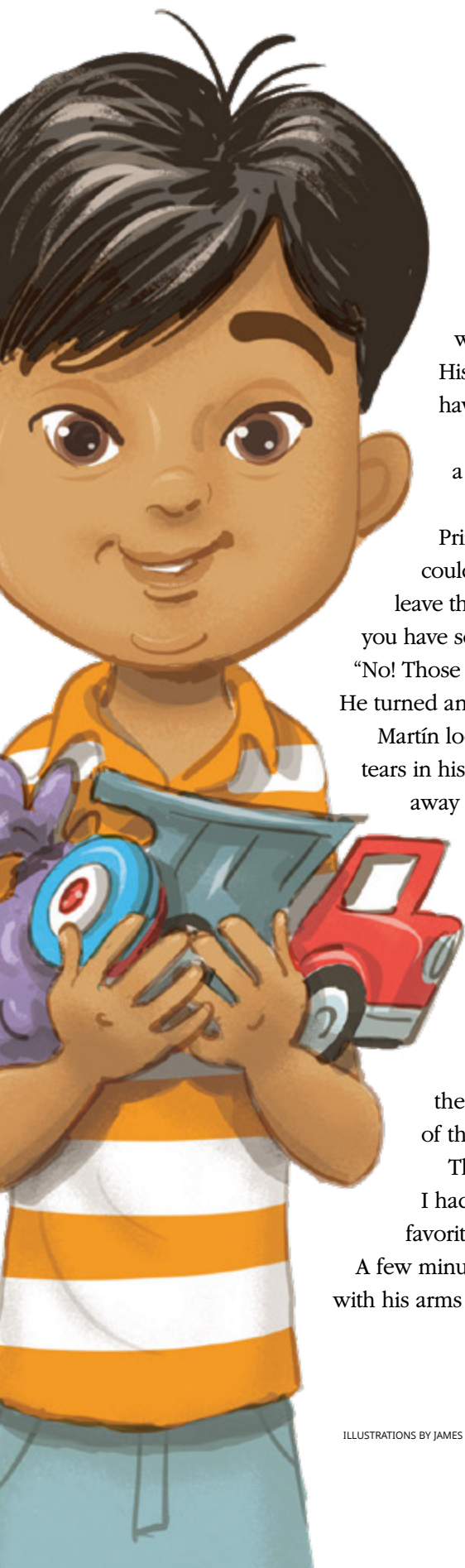
Then one Sunday, when his family went to church,

Martín noticed a lot of people he had never seen before. Primary was full of new kids. He wondered where they came from. He heard people he knew talk about donating food, clothes, and shoes. After church, Martín asked Mom about all the new people.

"They had to leave their country," Mom said. "Many of them left everything behind, so now they don't have anything."

"So that's why everyone





wants to help them?” Martín asked.

“That’s right. Jesus taught us that we should help people who are in need. We can follow His example and share what we have.”

Martín thought that would be a nice thing to do.

Then Mom said, “Many of the Primary kids only have what they could fit in a backpack. They had to leave their toys behind. Do you think you have some toys you could give?”
“No! Those are my toys!” Martín said. He turned and ran to his room.

Martín looked around his room with tears in his eyes. He didn’t want to give away his toys. He’d brought them all the way from his old house!

He went to his toy box and looked inside. He saw his toy truck, his yo-yo, his *trompo* (spinning top), his best bag of marbles, and lots of his other favorite toys. He liked them all. He couldn’t give any of them away!

Then Martín thought, “What if I had to leave my home and my favorite toys behind?”

A few minutes later, he came up to Mom with his arms full of toys—not just any old

toys—but the ones he always played with.

Mom looked surprised. “You don’t have to give away your favorite toys.”

Martín set the toys on the floor. “The other kids had favorite toys too,” he said. “I want them to have mine so they can be a little happier.”

Mom gave Martín a hug. “I’m so proud of you.”

Martín had a warm feeling inside. He knew giving to others is what Jesus would do, and that made him happy. ●



“May we show our love and appreciation for the Savior . . . through our simple, compassionate acts of service to our brothers and sisters at home, at church, and in our communities.”

President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Finding Joy through Loving Service,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 49.

Hello from Colombia!

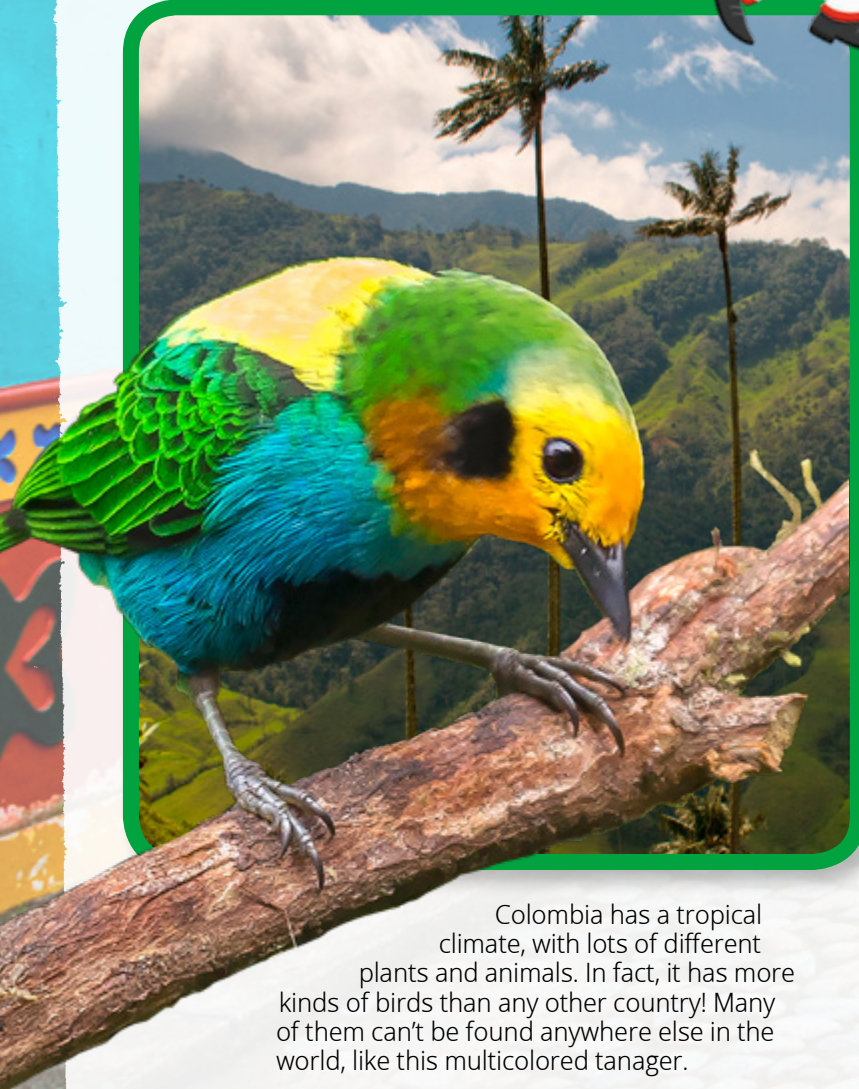


Hi, we're
Margo and
Paolo.

Join us as
we explore
Colombia!



Colombia is in northern South America. This Spanish-speaking country has about 49 million people, with about 200 thousand members of the Church.



Colombia has a tropical climate, with lots of different plants and animals. In fact, it has more kinds of birds than any other country! Many of them can't be found anywhere else in the world, like this multicolored tanager.



This girl is eating an *arepa*, a tasty cornmeal cake. People in Colombia often eat it with cheese and meat.

This month marks one year since the Barranquilla Colombia Temple was dedicated.



Here's a photo of the new temple. Colombia also has another temple, in the capital city of Bogotá.

Meet some friends from Colombia!



"I feel blessed and happy to have the gospel in my life. I know that Jesus Christ lives and loves us and that the Prophet Joseph Smith restored this Church. I appreciate that we have a prophet who guides us."

Camila R., age 10, Valle del Cauca, Colombia



"I know with all my heart that my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live and love us. They gave Joseph Smith revelation to translate the Book of Mormon to make it available to everyone."

Luis V., age 12, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Thanks for visiting Colombia with us. See you next year!



In Colombia, December 7 is *el Día de las Velitas* (the Day of the Little Candles). People light the streets with thousands of candles to begin the Christmas season.



**Are you from Colombia?
Write to us!
We would love to hear from you.**

Jesus Was Born



At Christmastime, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

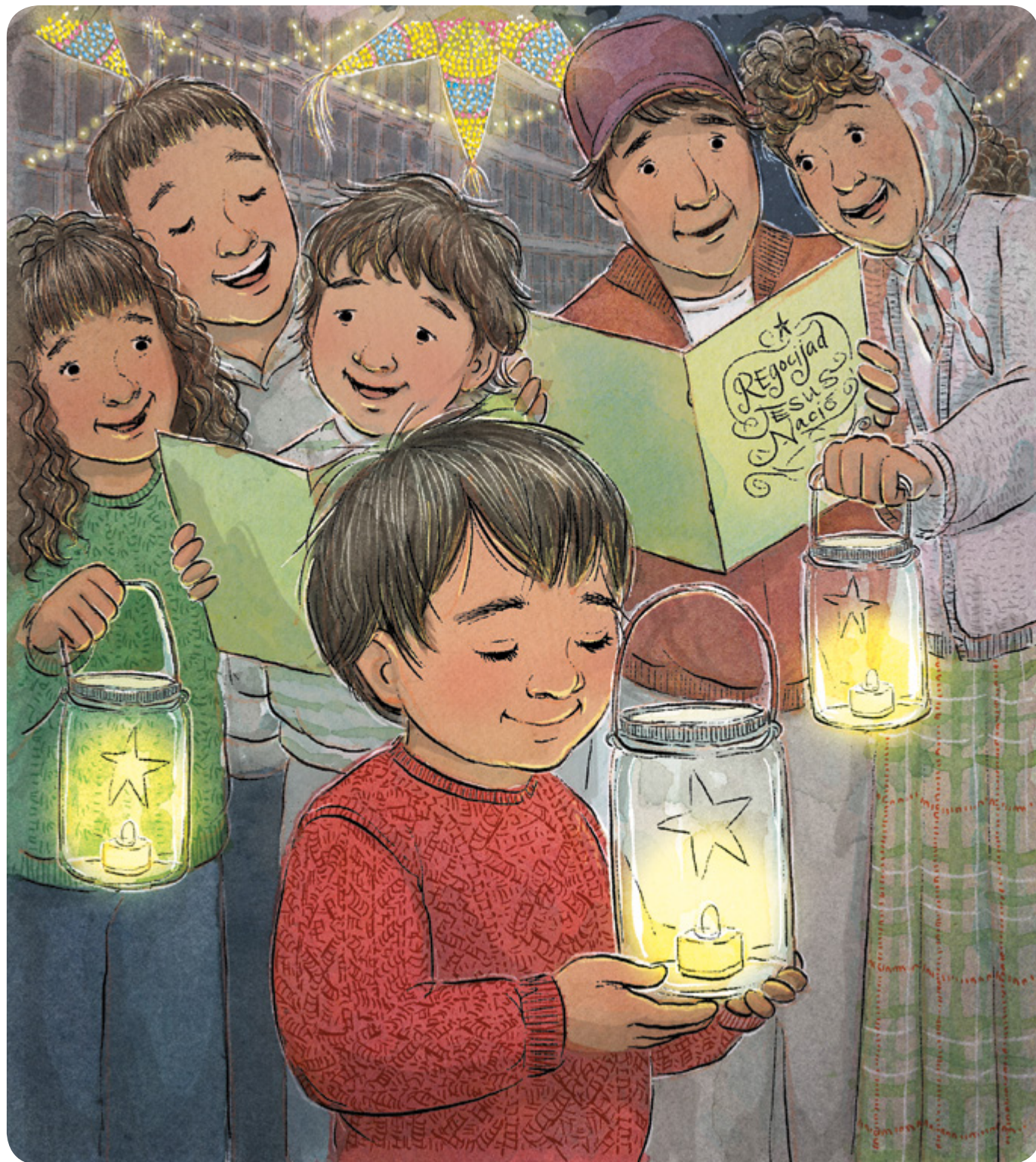
Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His mother was named Mary, and Joseph was her husband.



Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. There, a man named Simeon held baby Jesus. He felt the Holy Ghost tell him that Jesus was the Son of God.

A woman named Anna also saw baby Jesus and knew He was the Savior. She went to tell other people about Him.





I think about Jesus at Christmastime.
He really lives. He loves me! ●

See *Come, Follow Me* family manual, pages 194–197; Primary manual, pages 193–196.

Christmas Is about Jesus



Dear Parents,

This month we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. He is the Light of the World, our Good Shepherd. We hope these pages of the *Friend* will help your family remember Him all month long:

- A message from President Eyring (page F2)
- A story about the baby Jesus (page F20)
- A story about the places Jesus lived (page F4)
- Activities and crafts (pages F3, F6, F9)
- Coloring pages (pages F12 and F23)
- A Christmas song (page F7)

Can your children find all the times the words *Jesus*, *Christ*, or *Christmas* are in the magazine? You could help them write “I love Jesus because . . .” and then draw or write what they love about Him.

We love you!

The *Friend*

How to Send Your Child's Artwork or Experience to the Liahona

Go to liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.” Or email it to liahona@ChurchofJesusChrist.org along with your child's name, age, city of residence, and this permission statement: “I, [insert your name], give permission to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to use my child's submission in the Church magazines, on Church websites, and social media platforms.” We can't wait to hear from you!



Find the Liahona hidden inside!

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