

Liahona



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Need Jesus
Christ,
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page 18

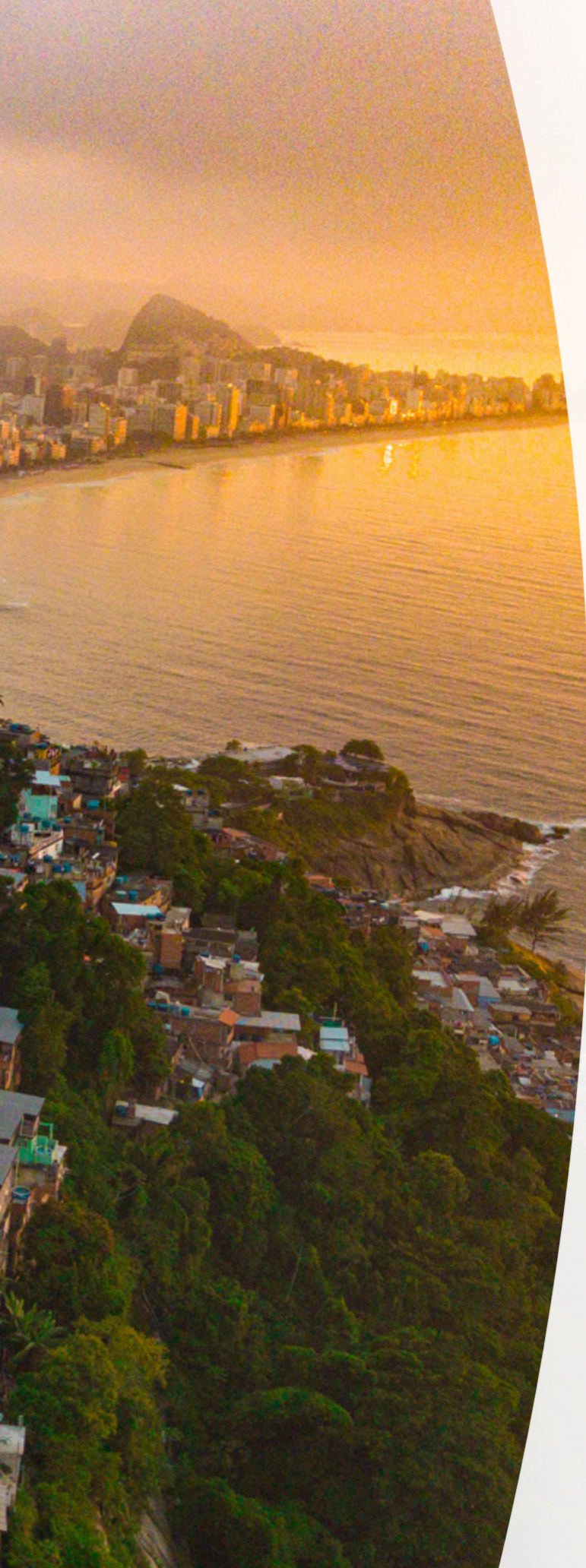
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THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Rio de Janeiro **Brazil**






Rio de Janeiro is just one of many centers of strength for the Church in Brazil. A temple will soon be dedicated in Rio. Here are some facts about the Church in Brazil.

1.4  million members (1 in 151 Brazilians is a Latter-day Saint, or 0.67 percent of the national population)

stakes  273

2,111  congregations

family history centers  355

6  temples

missions  35

1929 First converts within Brazil

1966 First stake created, in São Paulo

1978 São Paulo Brazil Temple, first temple built in South America, is dedicated

2001 Relief Society honored by national government



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The Gospel: An Anchor in a Time of Change

In 2020 we have endured natural disasters and a worldwide pandemic. We have studied the Book of Mormon through *Come, Follow Me* with our brothers and sisters near and far. We have united across the globe in fasting and in faith.

In a changing world, we can anchor our souls to our Savior, Jesus Christ, and His restored gospel. We hope these and other articles in this issue will help you feel the Christmas spirit, the Lord's Spirit:

- Elder D. Todd Christofferson teaches why we need a Savior (see page 12).
- In "Sharing the Savior's Light at Christmas," we suggest some ideas for ministering at Christmastime (see page 8).
- Jakob Jones writes about four gifts we can give the Lord in order to invite the gift of the Holy Ghost into our lives (see page 28).
- Earlier this year, the First Presidency approved the publication of three new Church magazines, starting next month: one for adults, one for youth, and one for children. These magazines will be available in dozens of languages, bringing the gospel to Latter-day Saints around the world. Through these new magazines, we will continue to hear the Lord's voice through His servants and connect with each other as members of a global Church. (Learn more on page 6.)

Merry Christmas from the *Liahona* staff

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Adoration of the Infant Jesus,
by Matthias Stomer,
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Social media can hurt us as we judge others unrighteously or compare ourselves to others.

Learn how we can **make social media a positive influence.**



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Disappointed, then **blessed, at Christmastime**; several youth share the **spiritual gifts** they have received; artificial light can distract

us from the **Light of Christ**; and **Moroni's experiences** teach us life lessons.



Children

Friend

Learn about **gifts** that we can both give and receive.



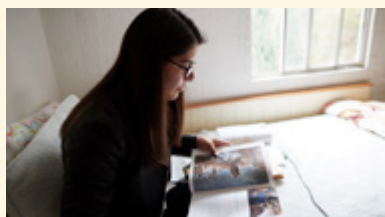
DECEMBER'S DIGITAL-ONLY ARTICLES

**Subtle Blessings of Tithing***By Kimberly Jensen*

Many times the blessings of tithing are small yet powerful.

**Combat Loneliness by Connecting with Christ***By Kylie Parrish*

A young adult shares insight on focusing on the Savior during this sometimes lonely season.

**Struggling to Study *Come, Follow Me* on Your Own? Here Are Some Tips for the New Year***By Annelise Gardiner*

A young adult shares ideas on how to get more out of *Come, Follow Me* when you're studying on your own.

FIND MORE

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- Discover digital-only content.
- Search past issues.
- Submit your stories and feedback.
- Subscribe or give a gift subscription.
- Enhance study with digital tools.
- Share favorite articles and videos.
- Download or print articles.
- Listen to your favorite articles.

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YOU CAN LIGHT THE WORLD

As you celebrate the birth and life of Jesus Christ this month, here are a few ideas to help you reach out to others and share the light that He brings into your life.



SHARE *THE CHRIST CHILD* VIDEO

- Share the video on social media.
- Show it in your home with friends of other faiths.
- Share it with a stranger on the bus.
- Use it in a home evening lesson.

VISIT THE SICK AND SUFFERING

- Put together hygiene kits.
- Spend time with those who are sick.
- Ask how you can help.
- Donate to a charity.

FEED THE HUNGRY

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen.
- Participate in a food drive.
- Bring a meal to someone.
- Invite someone to Christmas dinner.

COMFORT THE LONELY

- Sit by someone who is alone.
- Visit someone who lives alone.
- Invite those who are lonely to your home.
- Make a new friend.



INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH

- Pray to know whom to invite.
- Invite others to the special Christmas service on December 20th.
- Invite in person and through social media.
- Invite friends to Christmas activities. For more ideas on how to invite others, check out “5 Do’s (and 2 Don’ts) When Inviting Friends to Church” in this month’s digital issue.



Looking Forward to Three New Magazines

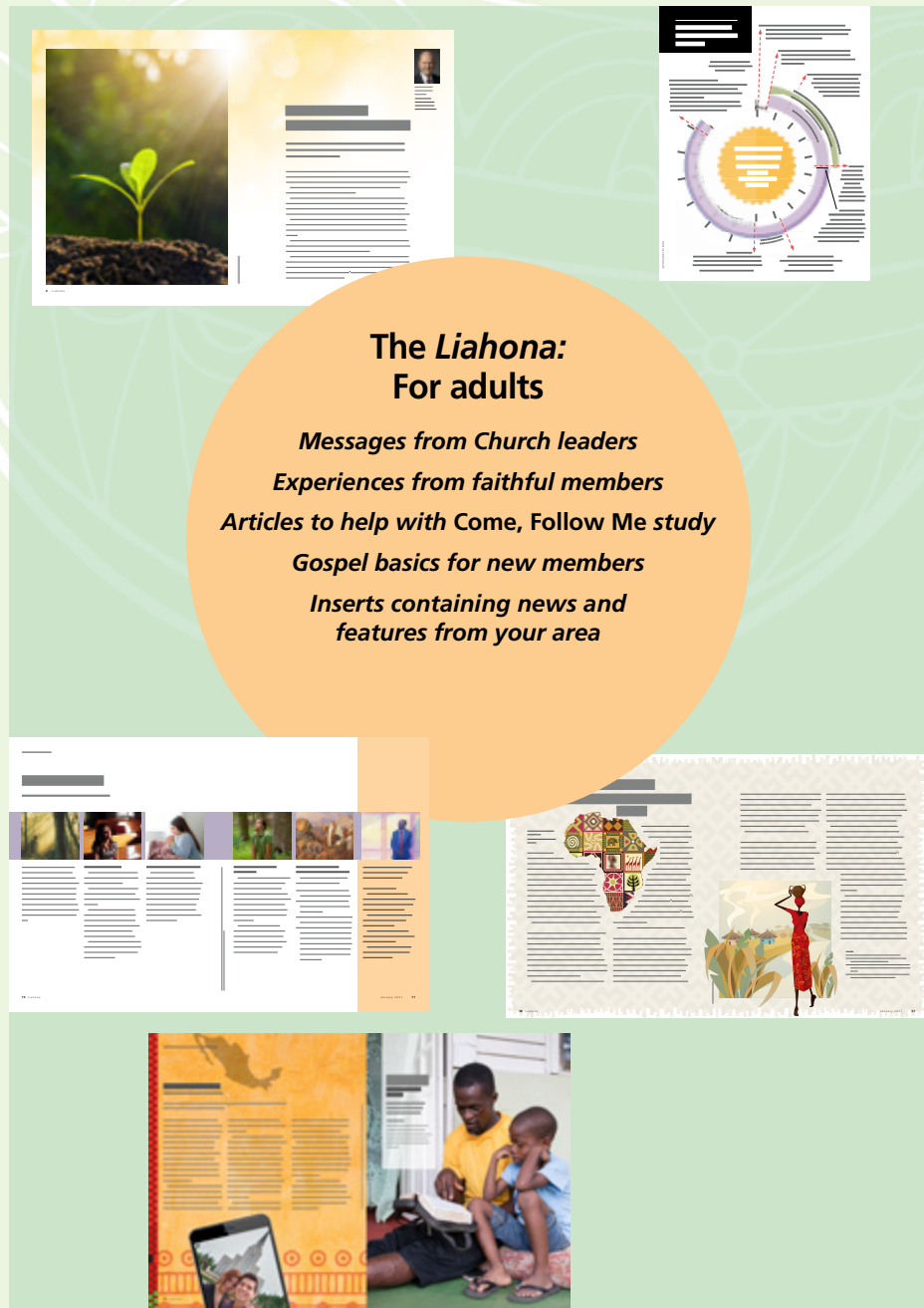
Changes in Church magazines reflect the worldwide growth of the Church.

Like the divine compass it is named after (see Alma 37:38–45), the *Liahona* magazine aims to point its readers toward our Savior, Jesus Christ. Now it is beginning a new chapter as part of exciting changes to Church publications.

Starting next month, the Church will publish three new worldwide magazines: the *Liahona* for adults, *For the Strength of Youth* magazine for youth, and the *Friend* magazine for children. Depending on the language, the magazines will be available every month or every other month.

If you are a current *Liahona* subscriber, your subscription will continue next year for whatever time remains on your subscription. If your family wants to receive the *Friend* or *For the Strength of Youth* magazines, you can subscribe at a local distribution center or at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Wards and branches will be encouraged to provide subscriptions to newly baptized members as well as to children and youth who attend church without their parents. Take a look at these magazine features and consider how they could bless you, your family, and your friends.





See page 50 of this issue to learn more about the new youth magazine.

For the Strength of Youth magazine: For teens

Messages from Church leaders

Home evening object lessons

Answers to questions from youth

Articles about media, standards, friends, and other relevant topics



The Friend: For children

Messages from Church leaders

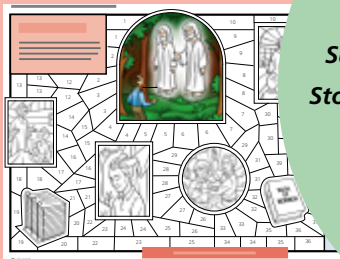
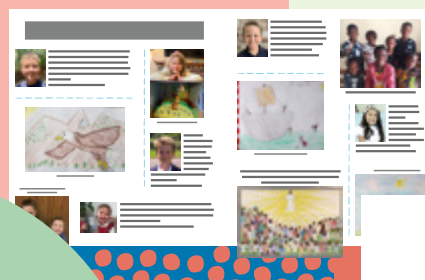
Support for Come, Follow Me lessons

Stories about children around the world

Activities and coloring pages

Children's testimonies and art

Ideas for serving others, following Jesus, and more



You can subscribe to the printed magazines or give a gift subscription at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. You can read the magazines in a digital format in the Gospel Library app or at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Ministering Principles



SHARING THE SAVIOR'S LIGHT AT CHRISTMAS

Consider those you minister to. How can you help them become closer to Christ this Christmas?

While we remember the Savior Jesus Christ all year, Christmas is the season when we celebrate the greatest gift ever given: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). As we minister at Christmas, we too can give gifts that help others draw closer to the Savior. It’s wonderful to think of ourselves as mirroring the gift given by Heavenly Father.

I Still Cherish the Gift

Susan Hardy, California, USA

When I was 11 years old, my Sunday School teacher, Brother Deets, told

our class that if we would memorize the Articles of Faith and explain to him what they meant, he would buy us our own set of scriptures.

Brother and Sister Deets were a young couple, just starting out. I wasn’t sure Brother Deets could afford to buy a gift for anyone. But I decided that if he thought the Articles of Faith were important enough to memorize, I would take the challenge.

After I finished all 13, time went by and I forgot about his promise.

Then, on Christmas Day, I received a package with my name on it. I opened it to find a set of scriptures just for me, with a card encouraging me to read them regularly. That



was in 1972, and to this day I still have those scriptures. They are precious to me.

It wasn't the cost of the gift but the kindness he showed to me and the sacrifice he was willing to make for me that left me with a deep desire to study the word of God. I try to follow Brother Deets's example of ministering by giving meaningful gifts to those around me, hoping that I can bless others' lives as he has blessed mine.

An Invitation to Play a Part

Richard M. Romney, Utah, USA

When those planning our ward Christmas social asked me to visit a certain less-active member and invite him to participate in the program, I have to admit I was nervous. I had met Darren only once before, when he had participated in an earlier ward activity. He had worn a motorcycle

headband across his forehead. His long white hair was tied in a ponytail, he had a full white beard, and his arms were covered with tattoos.

Now, accompanied by a committee member, I was standing on Darren's doorstep, wondering what he might say. He asked us to step inside, and we told him why we were there. He said, "Oh, I'd love to do that!"

He did an amazing job, helping to make the activity meaningful for so many. A short time later, my ministering companion and I were asked to visit Darren regularly. He always seems glad to see us, and we've had some delightful conversations. I'm grateful the inspiration to invite him to participate in the program of a ward activity led to a cherished relationship.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Send us your experiences of ministering or being ministered to. Go to liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click "Submit an Article or Feedback."



Ministering to Others at Christmas

Here are some things you can do to make sure those to whom you minister will know you're thinking of them, particularly at this time of year.

1. **Sometimes a phone call or a text message works wonders.** Striking up a conversation with a simple “Hi, how are you doing?” can make a difference.
2. **Join in their celebrations when appropriate.** Christmas can be a great time to learn about the beliefs we have in common. When you share beliefs and listen to others, you open the door to greater understanding.
3. **Pray for them by name.** Ask Heavenly Father to help you think of ways to bring them closer to His Son.
4. **Simple gifts are often best remembered.** Gifts don't have to be elaborate to be loved. The gift of time, the gift of listening, the sharing of a photo or a memory—these can all be gifts of the heart.
5. **Give the gift of testimony.** Ask them to share their love of the Savior with you, and offer to share your love for Him with them.

Using Light the World to Minister

You can use the Light the World campaign to help you as you minister. Here are some ideas to get you started. (Find more at ComeuntoChrist.org.)

1. **Share the video *The Christ Child*.** You can post it, share a link, or invite others to watch it with you.
2. **Invite others to attend a Christmas service.** Some people want to worship but don't know where to go. Invite them to come worship with you.
3. **Encourage them to give to others.** They can donate to the Church's Humanitarian Services or to local charities. If you live in a city that is hosting one of the Church's Giving Machines, you can take them with you when you go to donate. The machines provide a simple way to send a gift that can bless people all over the world.
4. **Sign up for daily service prompts.** You can help others to sign up too. The prompts may provide opportunities for you to serve together.
5. **Fill their home with peace.** Let them know that missionaries have a special Christmas message they can share, one that will bring hope and love to their hearts.
6. **Introduce them to Light the World.** Show them how to learn more at ComeuntoChrist.org.



Ministering to All As a Congregation

Every congregation's needs are unique. Some benefit from organizing a larger activity. Other congregations may benefit from something small and simple. Those involved in planning and organizing activities prayerfully consider how to meet the needs that exist.

- Members from the three stakes in Paris, France, helped support a Light the World soirée that included a talent show and a fashion show. They prepared items that were given to refugees and people experiencing homelessness. (See “Lighting the World in Paris,” page 32.)
- The Charlotte North Carolina Central Stake held a “Christmas around the World” event for the community, with a social to celebrate Christ through food, international Christmas tradition displays, music, service projects, and a children's nativity.
- Members of the Vero Beach Florida Stake joined in a community reminder of why we celebrate Christmas. Toys were donated to community charities. A Primary children's choir performed, and many churches had booths displaying information.
- The Jacksonville Florida South Stake presented the *Savior of the World* production for the community. Resources, such as the script and music, are available at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/music/savior-of-the-world. ■



CLOSER TO THE SAVIOR

“When we figuratively transport ourselves to the Bethlehem stable, ‘where God in the nighttime hours already rests upon the straw,’ we can recognize better the Savior as a gift from a kind, loving Heavenly Father.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “That I Might Draw All Men unto Me,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 40.





By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

WHY WE NEED Jesus Christ

*Dial down the noise this Christmas season and reflect on
the wonder and the majesty of the Son of God.*

I am grateful that, in addition to Christmas, December brings an occasion to contemplate the life and contributions of the Prophet Joseph Smith, his birthday being on December 23. It is hard to appreciate fully what he achieved as an instrument in the Lord's hands in an environment of constant opposition, persecution, and challenge. In a time to come, we will see the Prophet Joseph honored as the worthy head of this great and last dispensation—the one dispensation destined to succeed even though all previous dispensations have ended in apostasy.

The translation and publication of the Book of Mormon was a signal achievement and one that is foundational to the success of the Lord's cause in this last dispensation. Through the Book of Mormon and by his visions and revelations, Joseph has revealed Jesus Christ for the modern era in His true character as the Only Begotten Son of God and Redeemer of mankind.

Especially at this season we remember the Prophet's personal relationship with the Savior and the "testimony, last of all, which [he gave] of [Christ]: That he lives!" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:22). Joseph's witness of the living Christ brings to my mind the statement of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): "There would be no Christmas if there had not been Easter. The babe Jesus of Bethlehem would be but another baby without the redeeming Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the triumphant fact of the Resurrection."¹

Why Do We Need Jesus Christ?

A while ago, a person who has been a member of the Church for many years asked me, "Why do I need Jesus Christ? I keep the commandments; I'm a good

*Motivated by love, our
Heavenly Father created mercy
by offering His Only Begotten
Son as propitiation for our sin.*

person. Why do I need a Savior?" I must say that this member's failure to understand this most fundamental part of our doctrine, this foundational element of the plan of salvation, took my breath away.

"Well, to start with," I replied, "there is this small matter of death. I assume you don't want your death to be your final status, and without Jesus Christ there would be no resurrection."

I talked about other things, such as the need that even the best people have for the forgiveness and cleansing that is possible only through the Savior's atoning grace.

At another level, however, the question might be, "Can't God do whatever He wants and save us just because He loves us, without the need for a Savior?" Phrased this way, quite a few people in today's world would share that question. They believe

in God and a postmortal existence but assume that because God loves us, it doesn't matter so much what we do or don't do; He just takes care of things.

This philosophy has ancient roots. Nehor, for example, "testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Alma 1:4).

You recognize in Nehor's doctrine echoes of an approach to salvation put forth by

Lucifer, a "son of the morning," surely the most tragic of tragic figures ever (Isaiah 14:12; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–27). As God once explained, Lucifer "is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that [not] one soul shall . . . be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

"But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:1–2).

This was not simply a case of Jesus supporting the Father's plan and Lucifer proposing a slight modification. Lucifer's proposal would have destroyed the plan by eliminating our opportunity to act independently. Lucifer's plan was founded on coercion, making all the other sons and daughters of God—all of us—essentially his puppets. As the Father sums it up:

"Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

"And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto *my* voice" (Moses 4:3–4; emphasis added).

By contrast, doing it the Father's way offers us an essential mortal experience. By "mortal experience," I mean choosing our course, "[tasting] the bitter, that [we might] know to prize the good" (Moses 6:55); learning,

repenting, and growing, becoming beings capable of acting for ourselves rather than simply being “acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:13); and ultimately overcoming evil and demonstrating our desire and ability to live a celestial law.

This requires a knowledge of good and evil on our part, with the capacity and opportunity to choose between the two. And it requires accountability for choices made—otherwise they aren’t really choices. Choice, in turn, requires law, or predictable outcomes. We must be able by a particular action or choice to cause a particular outcome or result—and by the opposite choice create the opposite outcome. If actions don’t have fixed consequences, then one has no control over outcomes, and choice is meaningless.

Law and Justice

Using *justice* as a synonym for *law*, Alma states, “Now the work of justice [that is, the operation of law] [cannot] be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:13). It is His perfect understanding and use of law—or in other words, His justice—that gives God His power. We need the justice of God, a system of fixed and immutable laws that He Himself abides by and employs, so that we can have and exercise agency.² This justice is the foundation of our freedom to act and is our only path to ultimate happiness.

The Lord tells us, “That which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:34). But we have to admit that none of us has always and unfailingly been “governed by law.” And we really cannot look to the law or justice to preserve and perfect us when we have broken the law (see 2 Nephi



2:5). So, being just but also being motivated by love, our Heavenly Father created mercy. He did this by offering His Only Begotten Son as propitiation for our sin, a sinless Being who could, with His Atonement, satisfy justice for us, putting us right with the law so that it is once again supporting and preserving us, not condemning us. Alma explains:

“And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also. . . .

“But there is a law given, and a punishment [or consequence] affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

“But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement” (Alma 42:15, 22–23).

The penitent, of course, are those who take responsibility and accept His mercy by repenting.³ Or, in other words, repenting is what we do to claim the gracious gift of forgiveness that a just Father in Heaven can offer us because His Beloved Son atoned for our sins.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ

Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can recover from bad choices. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the impact upon us of others' sins and mistakes, and every other injustice, is redressed. To be made whole, and to be made holy, we need a Savior. So, the answer to our question is, "No, God cannot act any way He pleases to save a person. He cannot be arbitrary and also be just. And if He is not just, He is not God." Therefore, salvation and exaltation must be accomplished in a way that upholds and conforms to immutable law, to justice. And

thanks be to God, He has upheld justice by providing a Savior.

Let it be noted that in the great premortal council, Lucifer was not volunteering to be our savior. He was not interested in suffering or dying or shedding any of his blood on

our behalf. He was not seeking to become the embodiment of justice but to become a law unto himself.⁴ It is my opinion that in saying to the Father, "Give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1), Lucifer was saying, "Give me the right to rule," intending to exercise that power capriciously. The law would be whatever he said it was at any given moment. In that way, no one could be an independent actor. Lucifer would be supreme, and no one else could advance.

Jesus, on the other hand, understood that both inalterable justice and mercy would be required for His brothers and sisters to

progress. With the Father, He was seeking not to coerce and dominate us but to free and lift us so that we might "be above all" and "have all power" with the Father (Doctrine and Covenants 132:20).

How we ought to rejoice that this Firstborn Son in the spirit was willing to become the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, to suffer incomprehensibly and die ignominiously to redeem us. He perfectly unites justice and mercy. He saves us from—not in, but from—our

The Firstborn Son in the spirit was willing to become the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, to suffer and die to redeem us.



sins (see Helaman 5:10–11; see also Matthew 1:21).

And He also redeems us from the Fall, from spiritual and physical death. He opens the door to immortality and eternal life. It would be impossible to plumb the depths of His love. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . .

". . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5).

Glory to God

As Christmas approaches, I realize that some may have concerns and anxiety about the future. There may be a lot of “noise” in your life, more or less constant engagement online without downtime, without time to be quiet and reflect and think, without time to look inside and discern where you are and where you should be going. You may be influenced by unrealistic expectations, such as “perfection should be immediate” or “uninterrupted happiness and success should be the norm in life.”

I hope you will lay aside these misconceptions, dial down the “noise,” and take some time this Christmas season, at least an hour, if not more—to reflect on “the wonder and the majesty of . . . the Son of God.”⁵ Let it be an hour of reassurance and renewal for you.

On a prior Christmastime, I wrote this message:

“When we talk about the birth of Jesus Christ, we appropriately reflect on what was to follow. His birth was infinitely significant because of the things He would experience and suffer so that He might better succor us—all culminating in His Crucifixion and Resurrection (see Alma 7:11–12). . . .

“[But I also] think it’s appropriate this time of year just to think about that baby in the manger. Don’t be too overwhelmed or occupied with what is to come. . . . Take a quiet, peaceful moment to ponder the beginning of His life—the culmination of heavenly prophecy but the earthly beginning for Him.

“Take time to relax, be at peace, and see this little child in your mind. Do not be too concerned . . . with what [may be] coming in His life or in yours. Instead, take a peaceful



moment to contemplate perhaps the most serene moment in the history of the world—when all of heaven rejoiced with the message ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men’ (Luke 2:14).”⁶ ■

From a devotional address, “A Message at Christmas,” given at Brigham Young University on December 12, 2017.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 330.
2. “Unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions. All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:38–39). God abides and acts by the law of the highest kingdom. Therefore, “He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:41).
3. “Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me” (Mosiah 26:30).
4. Those who follow Satan are pursuing that same goal, but as the Lord declares, “that which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willet to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin [that is, in a state of disobedience to law], cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:35).
5. *Teachings: Gordon B. Hinckley*, 331.
6. D. Todd Christofferson, “Be at Peace,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2015, 30; *Liahona*, Dec. 2015, 36.





By Elder Richard
Neitzel Holzapfel

Area Seventy,
Utah Area

Ministering TO ALL

As part of our efforts to minister in a holier and higher way, Church leaders have begun to talk about member missionary work as ministering to all, “regardless of whether their names appear on your ministering sister or brother list.”¹ This more excellent way is a mindset change—an enhanced approach that can change everything about how and why we minister to others.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: “In whatever ways seem natural and normal to you, share with people why Jesus Christ and His Church are important to you. Invite them to *‘come and see.’* Then encourage them to *come and help.* There are numerous opportunities for people to help in our Church.

“Pray not only for the missionaries to find the elect. Pray daily with all your heart that you will find those who will *come and see, come and help, and come and stay.*”²

Ministering is about becoming more dedicated and

How can Elder Uchtdorf’s call to minister in natural and normal ways change sharing the gospel for you?



IMAGES FROM GETTY IMAGES

converted disciples of Jesus Christ who have the same heart and compassion as the Savior. The Lord has invited us to progress to ministering to others in natural and normal ways out of love. It is not about *doing* ministering. It is about *becoming* a minister like Jesus Christ.

Learning to Minister to the (Assigned) One

We are still learning to become ministering brothers and sisters. A change like this can take time, and we will most likely make mistakes. In my mind, one of those mistakes is to dismiss ministering assignments as merely “fake” or “forced” friendship—in a way not normal or natural. But the Lord gives us specific assignments as ministering brothers and sisters. In this way, He ensures that no one is left out.


When natural disasters strike in the United States, the Red Cross and National Guard organizations mobilize their volunteers and assign them to specific areas to get maximum coverage. Receiving an assignment makes the volunteers’ gift of time and love no less voluntary. No one who has experienced a disaster in his or her life seems to question these assignments. The beneficiaries are grateful that someone has come to help!

Like volunteers with the National Guard or Red Cross, when we become disciples of Jesus Christ through making sacred covenants, we volunteer to be



Ministering to all requires a willing heart and eyes to see those around us—the people the Lord has put in our paths.





mobilized in performing specific assignments to help others.

These assignments provide us opportunities to learn and grow in our abilities to minister, often through our failures. But soon, ministering will become “second nature” to us—just as we have learned to walk, talk, ride a bike, play a musical instrument, or learn a sport.

What Is Ministering to All in “Natural and Normal Ways”?

Our individual ministering assignments prepare us to “minister to all” in normal and natural ways. Ministering to all requires a willing heart and eyes to see those around us—the people the Lord has put in our paths. “Ministering” at that point can be as simple as inviting them—in natural and normal ways—to “come and see” or to “come and help.”

The Savior provided the example. When Jesus appeared to the people at the temple in Bountiful, He told them, “But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel” (3 Nephi 17:4).

Like us, the Savior had somewhere to go. The story continued:

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

“And he said unto them: Behold, *my bowels*

are filled with compassion towards you” (3 Nephi 17:5–6; emphasis added).³

Even though He had planned to go somewhere, the Savior had eyes to see and a heart that feels, so He stopped to minister to the people:

“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy” (3 Nephi 17:7).

Knowing the Savior as we do, for Him to take time to heal the sick before His next appointment was a natural thing. For us, ministering to all in normal and natural ways might include simply inviting someone to do something you’re already planning to do or go with you to an event that you were already planning to attend.

If you’re taking a self-reliance course, invite your neighbor to come along. If you’re going to a ward activity, invite your co-worker to go with you. If you’re already having family scripture study or home evening, invite your friend to join you. That’s what “come and see” means. It doesn’t require us to add a single activity to our busy schedules. And in times when visiting in person isn’t possible, ministering can be done through a text message, email, or phone call.

Trusted to Minister

When President M. Russell Ballard set me apart as the new president of the Provo Utah YSA First Stake, he provided a simple and

specific assignment: “Go visit your leaders and members in their homes and apartments!” That was it; he gave no other training or assignments.

Coordinating our efforts with our bishops, we started on Tuesday, two days after our stake conference. As we ministered in our stake, we made mistakes, missed opportunities, and often thought, “I could have said that better” or “I wish we had asked a better question.”

Brigham Young University President Kevin J Worthen observed that “failing is a critical component of our eternal progress—our quest for perfection. And because of the Atonement we can—if we respond to failures in the right way—be blessed with a new kind of learning that allows our failures to become part of the perfecting process.”⁴

This was our experience as we learned to minister to the leaders and members of the stake and to others we met. As we continued ministering, the Lord began to put more and more people in our path.

On one occasion, one of my counselors, J. B. Haws, and I were walking between apartment complexes when we met a young man in the parking lot. We stopped to say hello and found out that he was moving out of our stake. We talked for a moment and discovered that he was a returned missionary facing questions about his faith. My counselor is a master teacher who connects with people easily. Answering questions like these was natural and normal for J. B. I could see in this young man’s eye a light that may have been

missing for some time reappear as they talked.

It was obvious that J. B. was interested in him and in his questions and concerns. The young man opened himself up because J. B. showed compassion. My counselor’s “bowels were filled” with love, and he had a desire to understand this young man without judging him. J. B. asked if we could visit him once he settled into his new apartment. The young man nodded, mobile numbers were exchanged, and a promise to follow up with him was made.

Before we left, we asked if there was anything we could do to help. He said, “Stopping to say hello was one of the most important things you could have done for me today.” Later that evening, I thought to myself, “If J. B. and I had not been out ministering, we may never have met this young man.”

It seems the Lord knew that we would be ministering that evening, so He placed this young man in our path—trusting we would see him and minister to him.

When we desire to minister to all as we go about our daily lives, the Lord will place people in our paths because He trusts us that we will look up from our mobile phones, take a moment to smile at a stranger, or ask a question from someone we have met in the market or wherever we find ourselves at school, work, or church.





When we desire to minister to all as we go about our daily lives, the Lord will place people in our paths because He trusts us.



The Amazing Results of Ministering

Looking back on the Savior's example in 3 Nephi, I discovered an important principle about ministering. As you will remember:

"It came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.

"And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears" (3 Nephi 17:9–10; emphasis added).

Notice that those ministering brothers and sisters who helped bring those they knew and loved closer to Jesus Christ also found themselves at the Savior's feet, bowing, worshipping, and kissing and bathing His feet with their tears.

As we minister to all, we will see Christ healing emotional, spiritual, and physical wounds. And as we invite others to "come and see" and "come and help" in natural and normal ways, we will find our own wounds being healed too. ■

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 16.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart," 17.
3. See also how Jesus Christ ministered to the widow of Nain in the same manner in Luke 7:11–16.
4. Kevin J. Worthen, "Successfully Failing: Pursuing Our Quest for Perfection" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 6, 2015), 3, speeches.byu.edu.



MOVING CLOSER: Loving as the Savior Did

We can learn a lot from the Savior's example of interacting with others.

By Becky and Bennett Borden

As members of the Church who are gay, we have often turned to the Savior's example for help in understanding how to best navigate relationships with Church members and others. One day we were thinking about how the Savior asked us to “love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). We found it interesting that He didn't say “*because* I have loved you” but rather “*as* I have loved you.” This made us think about *how* the Savior loved people. In what ways did He show love?

We decided to spend some time studying the New Testament, specifically looking for stories about how the Savior interacted with other people during His mortal ministry. As a husband and wife who both experience same-sex attraction, we specifically wanted to better understand how Jesus treated those who seemed to fall outside of society's definition of typical. Here are a few patterns we noticed.

Jesus Met Cultural Differences with Kindness

We live in a time of great social and political divisiveness, much as the Savior did during His life. Some of the issues of His day were long-standing and deeply rooted in history and cultural beliefs.

For example, the Lord purposefully traveled through Samaria, a place Jews avoided because of a feud going back hundreds of years. When Jesus met a woman and asked her to draw water, she seemed to react as a political and religious “other”—highlighting the differences between Him as a Jew and her as a Samaritan. (See John 4.) Jesus, in response, treated this woman as a daughter of God. His reaction of talking with her lovingly and truthfully is a great example for each of us. A common strategy of the adversary is trying to separate us into differing camps, pitched against each other in battle. “But the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

It's easy to apply the lesson in this story to our society today. As we go throughout our daily lives, including Church meetings and activities, we meet people from many different backgrounds. Some might even be labeled by the world as political or cultural enemies. Rather than focusing on what might separate us, we can choose to focus on what we have in common as children of heavenly parents and learn to talk with others lovingly, as the Savior did.

When the Savior visited the people in the Americas after His Resurrection, He taught that “the devil . . . is the father of contention,

and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29). The people listened to Him, and over the next generation, they created a society where “there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3).

Jesus Moved Toward Instead of Away

Jesus actively tried to move closer to others, emotionally and even physically at times, instead of using excuses to distance Himself from those who often were despised and ostracized.

For example, Jesus once met a man with a deformed hand. Because it was the Sabbath, there were strict rules limiting what work should be done that day. Rather than avoid someone who needed help until a more acceptable opportunity came along, Jesus chose “to do well” immediately (Matthew 12:12). He invited the man to reach out his hand. “And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other” (Matthew 12:13).

Similar stories are repeated throughout scripture. Jesus acknowledged with compassion a woman who was considered unclean

(see Luke 8), welcomed and healed a man who heard voices and cut himself (see Mark 5), and healed a man who was misjudged by others (see John 9:1–7). One pattern we see throughout scripture is that when “Jesus put forth his hand” (Matthew 8:3), it was usually to encourage and love others and to provide healing and peace.

Perhaps one invitation from these stories is that we can draw nearer to those who might seem different from us. For example, do we sit next to someone who is visiting church, even if they aren’t dressed the same as everyone else? Do we make room for them to join in a hallway conversation? Do we smile and say hello and ask kind questions in an effort to know them better and help them feel included?

And perhaps more important, how can we develop a closer emotional and spiritual relationship with others, sharing peace and love like the Savior did? We know that we are blessed by God when we make an effort to connect—especially with those who might seem different from us.

Jesus Invited People to Share a Meal

During our New Testament study, we were touched by how often the Savior shared a meal with others. In many cases, He was criticized because of the people He chose to spend time with.

In one example, Jesus called as one of His disciples a man named Matthew, who was a “publican,” or someone who represented the ruling government of the time (see Luke 5:27; Guide to the Scriptures, “Publican”). Publicans were generally hated by the Jewish people. So when Matthew hosted a great feast for Jesus and His disciples, the scribes and Pharisees—those who were supposedly following the commandments of God—complained. “Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” they asked. Jesus answered, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick” (Luke 5:30–31).

This is a powerful example of how the Savior chose not to be swayed by outward appearances or worldly reputations. Rather, He focused on each individual’s needs, worth, and potential. An interesting realization dawned on us as we read about Jesus

EXPLORE MORE

The Church has resources that can help you better understand, from a gospel perspective, sensitive topics like same-sex attraction. Visit **[ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics/gay)**.



sharing meals with Matthew and others. We will never be able to influence someone if we don't have access to them. Unless we take the time to get to know them and love and accept them for where they are in their journey, we will likely have very little impact on their lives.

You may have heard the saying "Love the sinner; hate the sin." Do we spend enough time on the first half of that invitation? Jesus tells us to "love one another" (see John 13:34) and forgive "seventy times seven" (see Matthew 18:22). Instead of spending time trying to identify and hate another person's sin, we can use that energy to nourish relationships with our fellow brothers and sisters.

We like to use the saying "Love the sinner; invite them to dinner!" Because we have *all* sinned "and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), this should give us plenty of opportunities to serve others through lovingly prepared meals, served in a place where the

Spirit of God is present. Let's surround our tables with conversations of sincere kindness, genuine friendship, and intentional efforts to see one another the way Jesus sees us.

Building Zion

This year we've celebrated the bicentennial of the First Vision, when Jesus Christ announced that His gospel would be restored. Next year, we will learn from the examples of early Saints who helped build the Lord's kingdom here on earth in this dispensation. These early Saints had to find a way to work together and be unified, even though they came from different nations, prior religious beliefs, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

We face a parallel opportunity today. We must somehow figure out how to be unified in our faith, despite the cultural and political differences that try to tear us apart. This will only happen if we let the Savior be our guide. He understands our weakness perfectly and can make weak things strong (see Ether 12:27). He understands our pains perfectly and can help us heal (see Alma 7:11–12). He understands our differences perfectly and still promises that we can—as Doctrine and Covenants 49:25 describes—flourish and rejoice in Zion. Together. ■

The authors live in Utah, USA.



Receive the Gift

*Studying the word of God, serving,
repenting, and going to the temple will help
us feel God's love this Christmas.*

By Jakob R. Jones

One November evening I arrived home to discover my children had transformed their bedroom into a Christmas wonderland. Christmas trees, sparkling garland, strings of lights, and paper snowflakes adorned the corners, bed frames, walls, and ceiling. A homemade fireplace complete with logs, lights, and stockings completed the display. That magnificent Christmas scene warmed our home and hearts.

Another of my favorite Christmas scenes was described by the prophet Nephi. Nephi's father, Lehi, shared a dream wherein he saw a beautiful tree whose fruit filled his soul with joy (see 1 Nephi 8:12). Nephi desired that he too might see the tree that his father described. In answer to prayer, Nephi was shown a vision. Nephi's account of that experience is, for me, a beautiful Christmas story. He wrote:

"And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit: I behold thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.

"And he said unto me: What desirest thou?

"And I said unto him: To know the interpretation thereof . . .

". . . And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin. . . .

". . . And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.

". . . And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

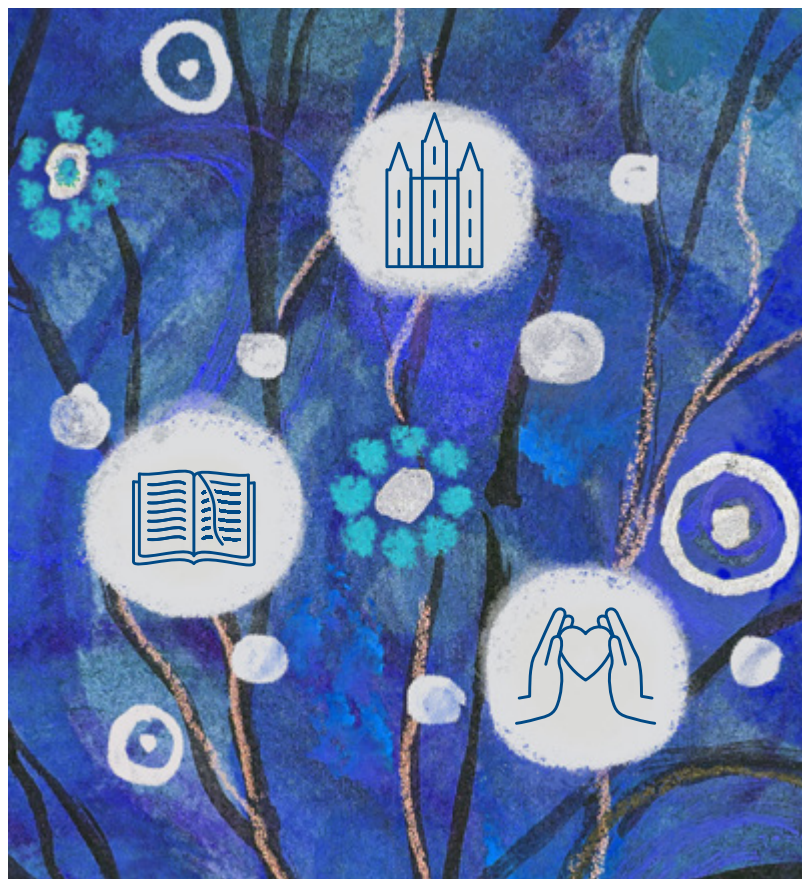
"And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!" (1 Nephi 11:9–11, 13, 18, 20–21).

I think it is significant that when Nephi asked to know the meaning of the tree, he was shown the first Christmas. The Spirit then asked if Nephi understood the meaning of the tree. Nephi gave this inspired response:

"Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things."

The Spirit added, "Yea, and the most joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:22–23).

Through this experience, Nephi learned that the thing most desirable and joyous to our souls is to feel the love of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. That is the real gift of Christmas. However, many of us struggle to feel God's love in our lives—even during this holiday season. Following are four suggestions of things we can do to receive the gift of God's love this Christmas season.



1. Study the Word of God

Begin or renew a regular study of the scriptures and words of living prophets. In Lehi's vision, he saw "a rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:19) leading to the tree. Those who experienced God's love caught hold of the rod, held fast to it, and pressed forward until they partook of the fruit of the tree (see 1 Nephi 8:30). Nephi learned that this rod represents the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25).

We can invite the Lord into our lives by studying His words. Our commitment need not be overwhelming. When friends ask how long they should study the scriptures, I often answer, "Read until you feel the Spirit; then you may feel to keep going." It's not the number of minutes, verses, or chapters we read that matter. More important is the experience we seek to have with the Spirit as we study. The Lord will bless us for every small effort we make.

The *Come, Follow Me* study for December includes the book of Moroni and a special chapter titled "Christmas." What better

opportunity to immerse ourselves in the scriptures than to study the sacrament prayers and words of prophets like Moroni as they bear powerful, personal witness of Jesus Christ?

We can also study the words of living prophets by reading the general conference issues of the *Ensign* or *Liahona* or by listening to their talks in the Gospel Library. Like the iron rod in Lehi's dream, our renewed study of the words of Christ can lead us to experience God's love this Christmas.

2. Serve

Perhaps the most cherished Christmas of my youth was the year our family joined with aunts, uncles, and cousins to donate clothing, food, toys, eyeglasses, and appliances to a local family in need. I'll never forget being part of the large caravan that brought Christmas to their home. That feeling continued long after Christmas passed and the grateful expressions of the mother and her four children remain in my memory. Serving that family allowed God's love to "[shed] itself abroad" (1 Nephi 11:22) in my heart.

Our service to others need not be grand or complicated. While serving as a bishop, I learned that there are many in our wards and communities who, on any given day, feel lonely, anxious, or overwhelmed. A phone call, thoughtful text message, kind note, homemade treat, shared neighborhood walk, or an offer to help with someone's children can be a heaven-sent miracle and answer to prayer.

If we will ask our Heavenly Father, "Is there someone I can help today?" a name or face may come to our mind, and promptings from the Holy Ghost will help us understand

how we can bless that person. As we act on those promptings, we will experience some of God's love for them and for us.

The Church's "Light the World" initiative suggests simple acts of service to help others feel God's love. If the Spirit prompts you to receive the gift of God's love in your life through service this Christmas, Light the World can help you start ([visit ComeuntoChrist.org](http://visitComeuntoChrist.org)).

3. Repent

The third invitation is to receive the Savior's gift of repentance. Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy taught: "Repentance is God's ever-accessible gift that allows and enables us to go from failure to failure without any loss of enthusiasm. Repentance isn't His backup plan in the event we might fail. Repentance *is* His plan, knowing that we will."¹

This life is difficult. As we strive toward our goal of eternal life, we all fall short and need the redeeming power of Christ's Atonement. One of the reasons the Savior willingly chose to experience the penalty of our sins was so He could offer us the gift of repentance. He has already paid the price. What remains is for us to choose whether we will accept His invitation:

"Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved" (3 Nephi 9:22).

I suppose we all carry some burden of sin, great or small, that the Spirit has been prompting us to unload. Our bishops and stake presidents can help. The Savior has a

kind and forgiving disposition, and He imparts similar feelings to His servants. They love us and can help us be healed through the Savior's Atonement. We can each accept the Savior's offer to come unto Him and be made whole this Christmas.

4. Visit the House of the Lord

Some of the moments where I've felt God's love the most have been in His holy temples. There, my sweet wife and I were sealed together for time and eternity. I've gone there seeking guidance for decisions and to find peace during times of stress. In the temple, heaven seems more accessible, and revelation seems to flow more readily.

Regarding the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which include temple ordinances, the Lord has said, "In the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20).

As we participate in temple ordinances, we come to know God, and the peace and power of a godlike life is made manifest in our lives.

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) promised, "As we attend the temple, there can come to us a dimension of spirituality and a feeling of peace which will transcend any other feeling which could come into the human heart."²

If it has been some time since you felt peace, why not let this Christmas season mark the beginning of a renewed commitment to attend the temple as it reopens? If you haven't received your own endowment yet, your bishop can help you prepare. We can also feel God's love as we find and submit names for our ancestors to receive the blessings of the temple.

The Real Gift

The word of God, heartfelt service, repentance, and participation in temple ordinances are all opportunities to receive the real gift of Christmas. The Apostle John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). This Christmas, I pray each of us will be guided by the Spirit to choose those things that will help us experience God's magnificent gift of love through His Son, Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Lynn G. Robbins, "Until Seventy Times Seven," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 22.

2. Thomas S. Monson, "Blessings of the Temple," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 91–92.

Lighting the World in Paris

Georgette Lalaus, Île-de-France, France

I've found that serving brings indescribable joy and that small actions can build individuals in remarkable ways.



With the homeless in the streets and refugees sleeping in the parks of Paris, France, the need for help is present daily before our eyes, even during the Christmas season. Two friends and I decided to form a community group called Solidarity to Act Together to help where we can.

With the support of many volunteers throughout the community as well as Latter-day Saints from the three stakes in Paris, we organized Light the World activities to help our brothers and sisters in need.

For three years in a row, we've held a year-end Light the World event where artists, volunteers, and guests from a variety of churches and organizations in Paris come to perform and donate supplies to those in need. It takes months of preparation, but volunteers and performers have experienced such immense joy participating in the event. None of them want to miss it. For our third Light the World event, 82 participants came despite a transportation strike!

Before the event, we prepared

and gathered backpacks filled with hygiene products to distribute to refugees and homeless people in Paris. We also gathered blankets, sheets, pillows, sporting goods, shower sandals, and even a bicycle, which were given to refugees.

Last year we also put on a fashion show during the event. A 22-year-old stylist who participated said the support he received gave him strength to believe in his abilities. As he spoke with me, I was reminded that everyone needs to feel needed and that all of us are in need in some way.

We look forward to next year. We expect even more participants and activities. Some have even offered warehouses and refrigerated vans to help us as we work with community agencies and partner with a large international catering company to provide balanced meals for those in need. We are also organizing a way to provide free French lessons for those learning French as a second language.

I find that serving in a noble cause brings indescribable joy. Small actions can build individuals in remarkable ways. The smiles and gratitude we have received motivate us to do even more. ■

The Power of Prayer in Prison

Portia Louder, Utah, USA

I will always remember this Christmas Eve.

I served four and a half years in federal prison for real estate fraud. Most of the women there were quiet and respectful. Then 10 women moved into the cell across from mine.

They would stay up late at night laughing and listening to loud music. They didn't seem to care how their behavior affected others. My roommates asked me to talk to them, but conversations like this usually don't go well in prison. I prayed instead for these women to change their behavior and for peace to be restored, but things only got worse.

While praying one night, I realized I hadn't made any effort to get to know my neighbors. I went to their cell the next day and talked with them. They showed me pictures of their families and loved ones. They apologized for being too loud. From then on, they waved and seemed happy when they saw me.

A few weeks before Christmas, they invited me to have Christmas Eve dinner with them. We also

planned to share with one another spiritual experiences we've had. On Christmas Eve, we gathered together and hung a few paper decorations. We didn't have a Christmas tree, but we all felt a peaceful spirit. After our simple dinner of tuna fish and potato chips, we shared our experiences. We all had different religious backgrounds and each of our stories were unique, but our hearts were connected and the Spirit was there.

April told us her mother had died of a drug overdose when April was 14. April lived on the streets and had a baby she placed for adoption when she was 15. She struggled with her own drug addiction, started dealing drugs, and was eventually sent to prison.

"One day I wondered why I was even alive," April said. "It wouldn't

have made a difference if I died. No one knew I was in prison. No one would even know I was gone." She then prayed and asked God if He knew who she was.

The following week, a counselor in the prison handed her a letter from the girl she had placed for adoption.

"God must be looking out for you," the counselor said.

"I write to my daughter now, and she visited me once," April said. "I don't know much about religion, but I know that God cares about me because He answered my prayer."

After April shared her story, we all sat quietly with tears in our eyes.

During my time in prison, I poured out my heart in prayer asking our Father in Heaven to watch over and protect my family. But when I prayed for my neighbors in prison, I began to recognize their divine potential and felt more fully the love and mercy of our Savior.

That Christmas Eve in prison was beautiful. ■



Christmas Presents or Tithing?

Anna Williams, Alabama, USA

I believed that the gospel was true, but could I afford to pay tithing?



I searched for a church until sister missionaries introduced me to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was baptized and confirmed a month and a half later. One of the things the missionaries taught me was the principle of tithing.

“You will receive blessings if you pay tithing,” they told me.

I was a single parent. I barely had enough money to buy food and pay my bills. Often it was a matter of paying tithing or buying food, paying my utility bills, or making a car payment.

For years, I went through stages of trying to pay tithing. Finally, I said, “If you believe the gospel is true, then you need to step out there. Once you step out there, God can bless you.”

I owed \$500 in tithing, but I also needed \$503 to pay some bills. I didn’t see how it would work, but I said, “I’m just going to try.” I paid my tithing. Nobody knew I was \$503 short, but somebody anonymously sent me five \$100 bills in the mail.

That was a turning point for me. It changed me spiritually. I realized that God loves me, that He cares for me, and that He wants me to succeed. From that point forward, I have paid my tithing. But it hasn’t always been easy.

One Christmas years ago, my eldest daughter remembers hearing me say that I could not afford to pay tithing *and* buy Christmas gifts for her and her siblings.

“We knew we weren’t going to get anything, but that was fine,” my daughter told me later. “We decided that we wanted you to pay your tithing.”

As always, the Lord provided, and they didn’t have to go without Christmas gifts.

For a single mother to be able to support her children and pay tithing is something major. Since I made the decision to pay tithing, I’ve been blessed. I’m not rich, but the Lord always makes a way for me.

I’ve been blessed in other ways too. The good examples of Church members and family have helped my children and me stay active in the Church. I’ve told them that’s all part of the blessing the Lord has promised—that the windows of heaven would open for us. ■

Someone Will Be Missing Next Year

Rebecca Clarkson, California, USA

On Christmas Eve, I thought about how much I loved our family. Then I felt a distinct impression.

It was Christmas Eve. We had just gotten our new pajamas, a tradition in our family. The kids played Christmas music and everyone danced around. No one was grumpy; everyone was happy, smiling, and having fun. Knowing that I was expecting another child, I was thinking about how much I loved our family, about how excited I was to have one more child on the way.

Then I felt a distinct impression. The Spirit whispered to me that one of our family members wouldn't be with us next year.

Later that night, as my husband, Tim, and I were putting gifts under the tree, he told me that he had

felt an impression earlier that evening that one of our family members wouldn't be with us for our next Christmas Eve. I told Tim I had received the same impression.

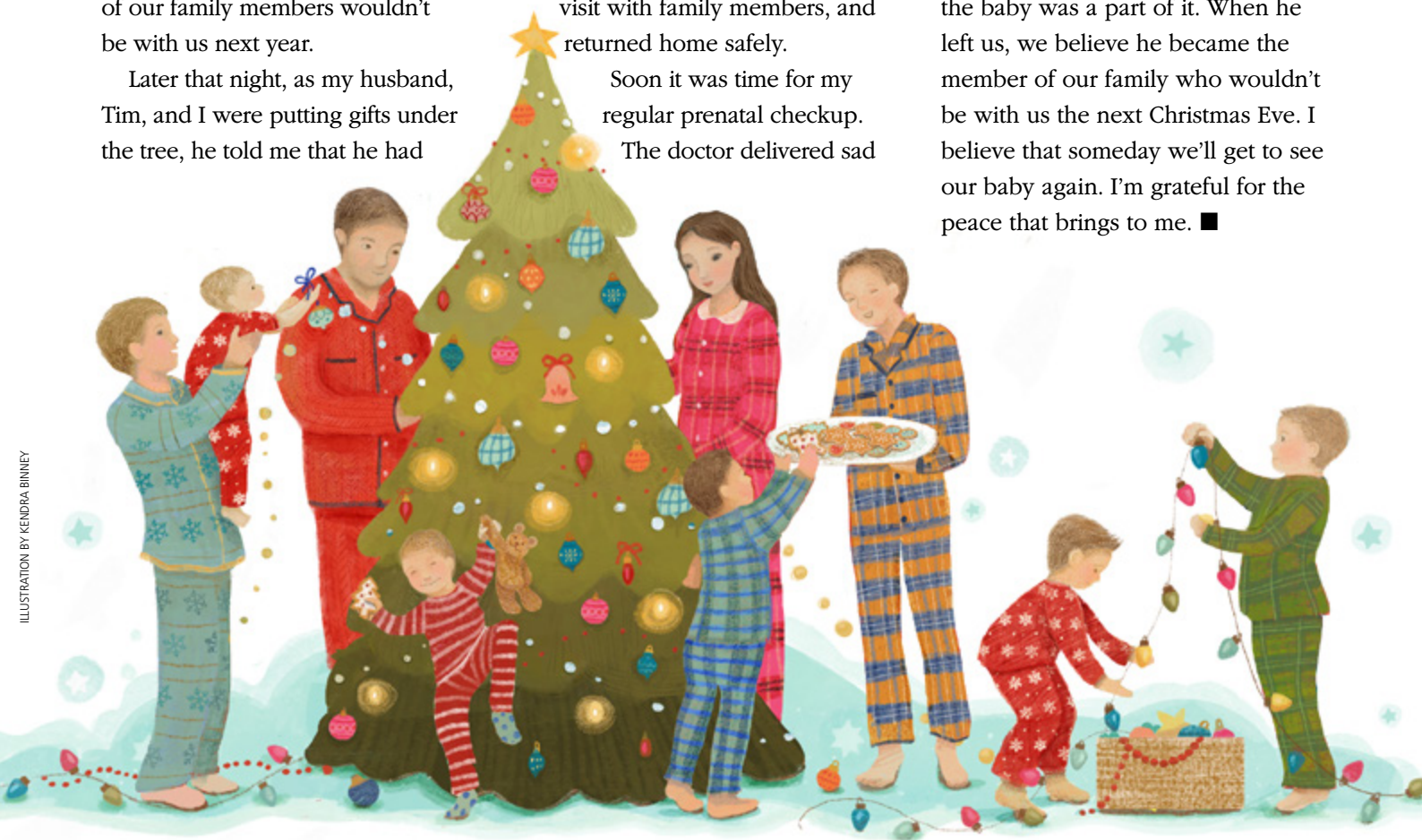
Before we left on a post-Christmas trip to visit family out of state, Tim talked to our children about being safe while we traveled. We were troubled by the thought of losing a family member on our trip, but we felt reassured that all would be well. We traveled, had a great visit with family members, and returned home safely.

Soon it was time for my regular prenatal checkup.

The doctor delivered sad

news. An ultrasound confirmed that the baby had died two weeks before the visit.

As Tim and I drove home, devastated, we realized that two weeks before had been Christmas Eve. We don't know exactly when the spirit enters the body, but Tim and I feel that our baby got to be with our family, if only for a moment, on that Christmas Eve with everyone dancing around and being happy. We felt so much joy, and we feel the baby was a part of it. When he left us, we believe he became the member of our family who wouldn't be with us the next Christmas Eve. I believe that someday we'll get to see our baby again. I'm grateful for the peace that brings to me. ■





Moroni 1–6

(NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 6)

What can we learn from the book of Moroni?

Moroni lived in turbulent times. He witnessed the final destruction of the Nephites, his father died in battle (see Mormon 8:3), and Nephites who refused to deny Jesus Christ were killed (see Moroni 1:2). Moroni also refused to “deny the Christ” (Moroni 1:3). He fled for safety and lived in hiding for many years.

“I write a few more things” (Moroni 1:4)

During this time, Moroni thought his writing on the plates was finished, but it was the will of the Lord that he “write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren . . . in some future day” (Moroni 1:4).



Why did he write it?

Knowing the divine purposes of the Book of Mormon, Moroni had to carefully choose what he wrote. After reading the book of Moroni, consider asking why Moroni chose to record what he did. What did he feel was essential? How does Moroni’s final testimony influence your feelings about the Book of Mormon?

What did he write?

Moroni added chapters 8 and 9 to the book of Mormon, included his abridgement of the book of Ether, and added his own book (the book of Moroni) to the plates of Mormon.

Moroni’s writing contains many things of worth for us. He wrote about the work of the Church (see Moroni 1–6), included teachings from his father, Mormon (see Moroni 7–9), and recorded his final testimony (see Moroni 10).





Moroni 7–9

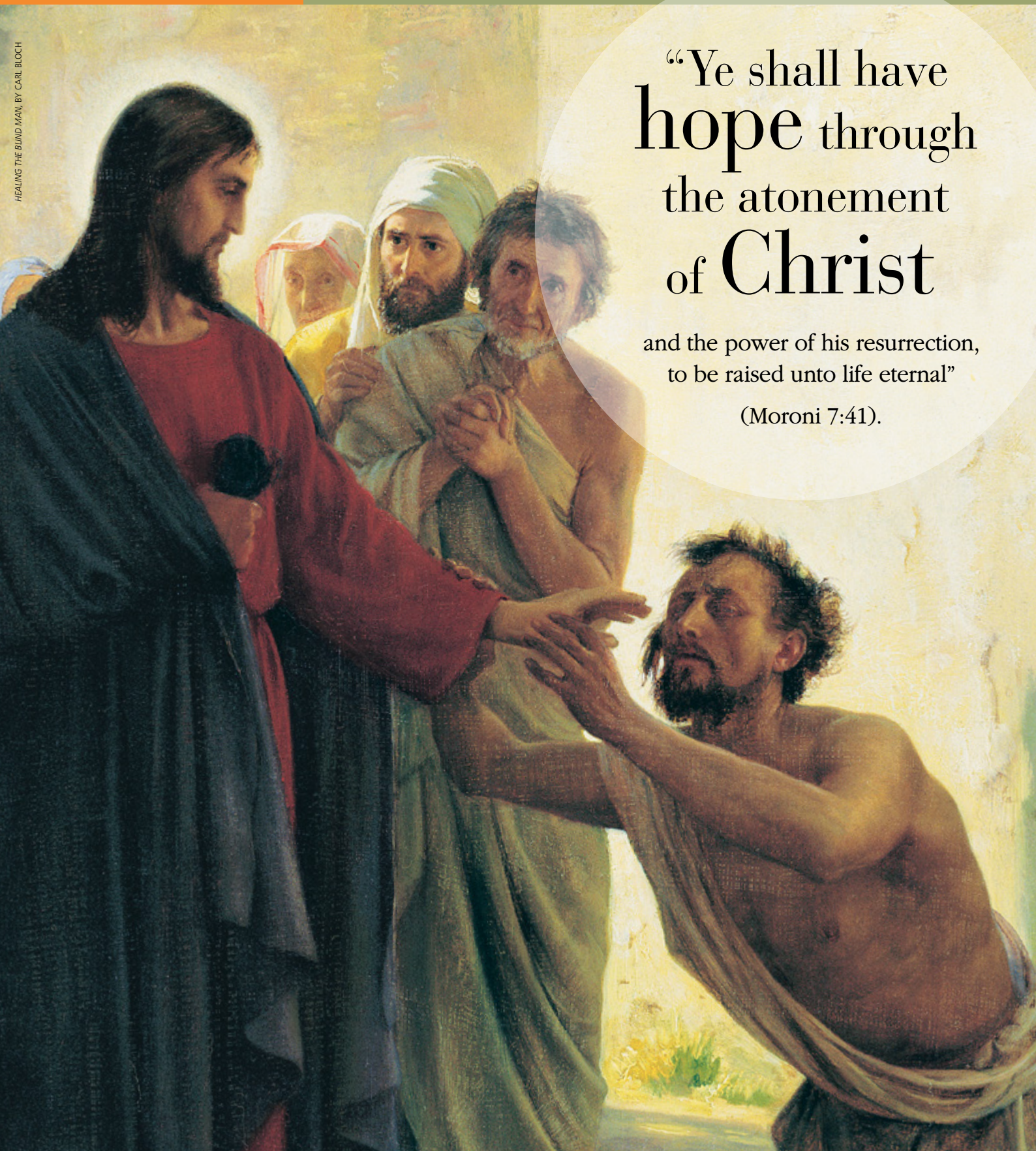
(DECEMBER 7–13)

**“What is it that ye shall hope for?”
(Moroni 7:41)**

“Ye shall have
hope through
the atonement
of **Christ**

and the power of his resurrection,
to be raised unto life eternal”

(Moroni 7:41).





Moroni 10

(DECEMBER 14–20)

Spiritual gifts are given by God through the Holy Ghost for our benefit (see Moroni 10:8). Each of us has been blessed with spiritual gifts from God, and there are many gifts we can receive.

Some spiritual gifts are identified in the scriptures (see Moroni 10:9–16; Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–25); many are not. How can you identify and develop the spiritual gifts God has given you? How can you develop other gifts? Here are a few ideas to help you:

How can I seek spiritual gifts?



Ask

Pray and ask God what spiritual gifts He has blessed you with or which ones you should strive for. He will help you. Your patriarchal blessing might also reveal your spiritual gifts. If you have not received your patriarchal blessing, consider visiting with your bishop or branch president about receiving one.

Study

Spiritual gifts require effort to receive them. While striving for a specific gift, consider learning more about it from the scriptures, your patriarchal blessing, or general conference talks. You can also ask others about their experiences.



Act

Learning about spiritual gifts is helpful, but you need to put that knowledge to use. When you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, repent, and keep your covenants, you are eligible to receive spiritual gifts. Also, find situations where you can use your spiritual gifts. Remember that these gifts not only benefit you, but they can also benefit others (see Doctrine and Covenants 46:26). How can you use your spiritual gifts to help others?





Christmas

(DECEMBER 21–27)

What do Book of Mormon prophets teach us about Christmas?

As you read the following scriptures, what does each prophet teach us about the birth of the Savior? Consider recording your thoughts or sharing them with your family.



Nephi, the son of Helaman (about AD 1)

“The voice of the Lord came unto him, saying: . . . on the morrow come I into the world” (see 3 Nephi 1:4–22).



Nephi (about 600 BC)

“I beheld a virgin . . . bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” (see 1 Nephi 11:13–33).

Abinadi (about 148 BC)

“All the prophets . . . since the world began— . . . have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men . . . ?” (see Mosiah 13:33–35).

King Benjamin (about 124 BC)

“The Lord . . . shall come . . . among the children of men, . . . and he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . and his mother shall be called Mary” (see Mosiah 3:5–11).

Alma the Younger (about 83 BC)

“He shall be born of Mary, . . . even the Son of God” (see Alma 7:7–13).

Samuel the Lamanite (about 6 BC)

“Five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God” (see Helaman 14:1–13).



How Do I Talk to My Kids about the Gospel in Everyday Ways?

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RESOURCES

- “Dear Parents” (the back cover of the *Friend*)
- “Geckos, Crickets, and Time with Children” (June 2019 *Liahona*)
- “Protecting Children” (Oct. 2019 *Liahona*)
- “Talking about Tough Topics” (Mar. 2015 *Liahona*)

While eating together or at bedtime

When your child is going through a tough time

7 Informal Talking Times

What did you think about those general conference talks we watched?


ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSIE PORTILLO

7 Ways to Start a Conversation

Have any of your friends asked about religious things?


As parents, it's our job to teach our children about the gospel. But a gospel discussion doesn't have to be formal! Here are some ideas for weaving gospel discussions into daily life.





Anytime—if you approach the conversation with openness, love in your heart, and a desire to listen and understand


Whenever you notice something that relates to a spiritual message



While telling family stories or talking about ancestors


During a service project or when helping others

Before and after Church meetings or activities



Is there anything we've read in *Come, Follow Me* lately that you're still thinking about?

Was there anything at church today that you had a question about?



I've been thinking about this scripture lately. What are your thoughts about it?

What have you read in the scriptures lately? Do you have any questions?

How are things going with your calling (or other Church assignment)? What would help you?

Thoughts and Tips

- **Teach your child that having questions about the gospel is OK.** After all, it was a question that prompted Joseph Smith to pray for help, which led to the First Vision! Help them realize they can still nurture a testimony without all the answers.
- **Point out when you feel the Spirit,** whether it's during home evening, church, or a beautiful sunset. This can help them start to recognize how the Spirit speaks to us. Explain that the Spirit can communicate to us through many different ways, such as warm or light feelings, clear thoughts, a sense of peace, etc.
- **Make gospel messages easily accessible.** Your teen might not look up Church magazine articles on their phone, but they might flip through a *Liahona* that's sitting on the table. They might not listen to general conference talks in their spare time, but they might catch a few words from a talk you are listening to as you make dinner.
- **Most importantly, keep trying, even if it doesn't seem to be working!** The scriptures are full of stories about children who didn't listen at first, like Alma the Younger. Trust that one day spiritual truths will sink into their hearts. ■

Young Adults

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By Young Women general board members and *Liahona* staff

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Digital Only

Our Job Is to Not Throw Stones

Name withheld

How to Be *on* but Not *in* Social Media

By Faith Ferguson

Find these articles and more:

- At Liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- In *YA Weekly* (under the Young Adults section in the Gospel Library)

Share Your Story

Do you have an experience 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.

Making Social Media a Positive Place

Five years ago, my husband and I decided to start a YouTube channel, where we began to genuinely share the way we live as members of the Church of Jesus Christ. Our idea was to talk about our beliefs through our lifestyle.

We have had the great blessing of receiving inspiring messages from several of our followers telling us about going to church for the first time or even getting baptized! These messages have filled us with so much joy.

We are very grateful for the enriching experiences that social networks have offered us in spreading the message of the restored gospel just by sharing our lives. But while social media can generate incredible experiences, help us develop meaningful relationships, and allow us to share our testimony of the gospel, it can also give us experiences that weaken us spiritually, lead us to judge others in unrighteous ways, and lose sight of who we truly are.

This month's young adult section will address those topics and more. It's easy to compare ourselves or our lives to what we see on social media, but we can learn to use social media to create a positive space where we resist judging ourselves or others, gain confidence in our divine nature, and most importantly, convey to others, through our example, the happiness that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings.



Bárbara Rodríguez



Judging

Righteous Judgment (Even on Social Media)

With the Savior's help, we can learn to judge in ways He would want us to.

By Young Women general board members and
Liahona staff

"Don't judge."

We hear this a lot in the world today, along with messages telling us it's not our right to judge others. Just the word *judgment* has a lot of negativity attached to it. But as members of the Savior's Church, we know that judging is something He has counseled us to do—as long as we do it in His way.

When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, He was harshly judged because the law of Moses set restrictions on what you could do on the Sabbath—and people didn't think He was acting within those guidelines. But the Savior rebuked them for being quick to find fault in others. Then He counseled them to "judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:1–2).

How often do we, like those who judged the Savior, judge others in unrighteous ways? Perhaps more than we might think! Because judging others is so easy, especially in the realm of social media, we may need to learn

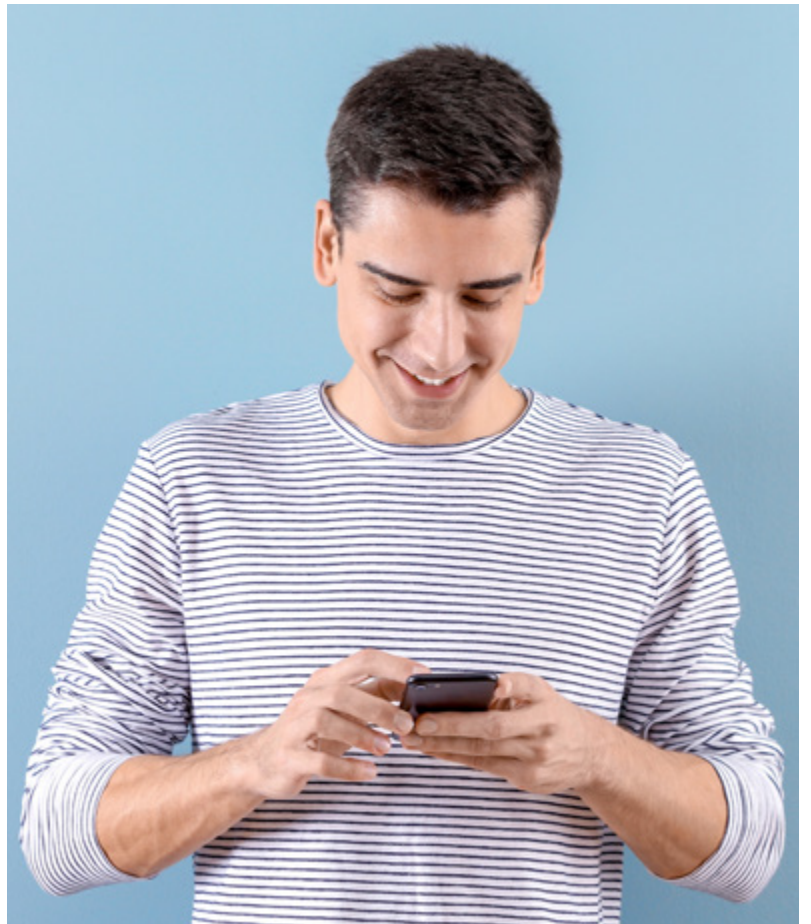
to how to apply the Savior's counsel to judge righteous judgment to the world today.

Distinguishing Righteous vs. Unrighteous Judgments

Judging is part of our agency. There are many things over which we have to exercise judgment in life: things like choosing a career, deciding who to spend time with and *how* to spend our time, choosing what media to consume, and so on. But how can we make these judgments—and ultimately *all* judgments—righteously?

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, gave six guidelines for how to judge correctly. We can know our judgments are righteous if:

1. They "refrain from declaring that a person [is] assured of exaltation or . . . irrevocably bound for hellfire."
2. They are "guided by the Spirit . . . , not by anger, revenge, jealousy, or self-interest."



3. They are “within our stewardship.”
4. They include “an adequate knowledge of the facts.”
5. They are not about people but rather about situations.
6. They “apply righteous standards.”¹

The prophet Moroni also gave a guideline for judging righteously: “All things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil . . . inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually” (Moroni 7:12).

When scrolling social media, considering friendships, or deciding how to spend our time, before making a judgment, we can ask ourselves, Does this post/person/activity:

- make me feel peaceful and good?
- invite me to do good?
- help me to love God and serve Him?

When we realize that all good things come from God, we can use our agency to make wise and righteous judgments about others, about ourselves, and about what we fill our life with.

Getting Out of the Cycle of Unrighteous Judging

Now that we have determined what righteous judgment is, what can we do when we find ourselves stuck in a negative spiral of judging? Here are a few ideas:

- Take a social media fast. This can give you an opportunity to slow down, regroup, and reconnect with others in real ways. When you see people more outside of social media, you realize that they are real people with real struggles, and you are less inclined to judge them.
- Instead of posting about yourself, post about someone you love who has inspired you. Tell others why you admire this person. This gives you a chance to look outside of yourself and to bless instead of impress.
- Choose to give one genuine, heartfelt response each day on social media, whether it’s a birthday wish, a congratulations, or even just a kind message.

- There are always going to be people on social media who share too much, only share their incredible vacations, have seemingly perfect families, or are often contentious. Before we judge, we can ask ourselves, “What does the Lord know about this person, and what can I learn about them?” Pray for help to see them as He does. And if their posts are constantly giving you negative feelings, you can always unfollow them.

Seeing everyone as they truly are—children of heavenly parents—changes our shallow impressions of them into an eternal perspective. There is power in realizing everyone’s true identity and purpose. As Sister Michelle Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, reminded us:

“You have a divine nature and purpose uniquely suited to *you*. . . .

“It’s easy to compare ourselves with others. There will always be someone who looks like they have everything together or are more important than we are. But we often forget that their purpose is different from our purpose. When we try to live true to who we really are—when we understand and appreciate God’s gifts and talents that are unique to us as individuals—then we can truly experience joy.”²



Ultimately, escaping from the cycle of judgment on social media takes action on our part. It takes looking outside ourselves to touch somebody else's life. It takes lifting others and sharing the Light of Christ. In doing so, not only do we serve others, but we are able to feel better about ourselves too.

Overcoming Self-Judgment and Toxic Comparisons

One of Satan's powerful tools is trying to prevent us from having a real understanding of our true identity. When we lose sight of our true identity, judgmental thoughts and self-criticism can replace feelings of self-compassion and love. We disconnect with others, ourselves, and even the Holy Ghost.

In truth, comparison isn't always about those we are comparing ourselves to; it's often about ourselves and our own insecurities. Comparison can actually be an unrighteous judgment of ourselves.

And while comparison may be the *thief of joy*,³ knowing our worth, our strengths and talents, and Heavenly Father's purpose for us and who we can become is a *key to joy*.

The Savior spent His life doing good (see Acts 10:38). He lived His life for others, without a single flaw. And yet He was

still rebuked and judged. But because He knew who He truly was and what His purpose was, He was able to handle judgment with grace, without letting it get in the way of what He was meant to do.

As we follow His example, we can do the same! The world makes it easy for us to lose ourselves in comparison and judgment and forget who we are, but we can learn from Sister Joy D. Jones, Primary General President, who taught: "If the love we feel for the Savior and what He did for us is greater than the energy we give to weaknesses, self-doubts, or bad habits, then He will help us overcome the things which cause suffering in our lives. He saves us from ourselves."⁴

As we know, "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10). Now replace the word *souls* with your own name. Let that sink in for a moment. Heavenly Father knows your name, He knows your worth, and His Only Begotten Son died for you because you are worth *that* much to Him.

So when the world feels heavy and the comparison is setting in, draw near unto Them and you will feel self-doubt and self-judgment melt away and feel the true confidence that comes from knowing your priceless value.

Looking to the Savior

We can always look to the Savior for guidance in all we do. Part of what He offers us through His Atonement is the enabling power to change and figure out how to do everything He has asked us to do. And when we choose to follow and draw near unto Him, He helps us learn to let go of unrighteous judgments and see others—and ourselves—through His eyes. ■

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "'Judge Not' and Judging," *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 9–12.
2. Michelle Craig, "How Do You Feel Joy in the Lord?" Nov. 22, 2019, blog.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
3. "Comparison is the thief of joy" is attributed to Theodore Roosevelt.
4. Joy D. Jones, "Value beyond Measure," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 15.



The Reality behind Those Picture-Perfect Profiles

By Bárbara Rodríguez

When we compare ourselves on social media, we're missing the bigger picture.

A little while ago, one of my followers on Instagram commented on a photo, saying, "How do you look so radiant with two kids, when I can barely handle one?" I immediately laughed and wanted to answer her with a picture of how I looked at that moment.

I responded, "I've always thought that I'm pretty careless in my appearance compared to other moms. That's the effect of social media—we tend to compare ourselves with someone else, while that person is comparing herself with another. But the reality is that I don't look radiant right now, and I don't dare upload a photo of how I look. I usually only dress up and look 'decent' on Fridays and Sundays."

I have been sharing about our lives on social media for a few years now. Mostly, I try to show what "real life" is like for members of the Church of Jesus Christ. And in doing

so, I've had some experiences that have prompted me to think about the virtues and the risks of social media.

Social Media Doesn't Show Everything

This wasn't the first time somebody had asked me a question like that. The thing is, social media shows only a very small part of people's lives. In my case, even when I try to be authentic, it's impossible for me to show everything. And we shouldn't be comparing ourselves or basing our worth on one beautiful photograph. Making comparisons, especially on social media, can make it harder for us to recognize our God-given strengths.

As Latter-day Saints, we do the best we can to be like Jesus Christ. But the truth is that none of us are perfect. And on social media, we should strive not to make wrong judgments not only about ourselves but also about others. We need to remember that even when we think someone's life is perfect, we don't see the personal challenges they might be facing. We never really know what's going on in people's lives beyond what they choose to share on carefully filtered feeds.

The Reality of a Family Photo

There's often so much happening behind the scenes of every family photo you see on social media. Some people might look at those photos and ask themselves,

“Why don’t my family pictures ever turn out so well?” But we don’t know what it takes to get those “perfect” pictures.

For example, we once tried to take a family picture after church. This can be complicated with two little children, but I really love to capture these moments and then look back at how much my kids have grown.

While we were trying to get the kids settled down for the photo, I had to take a moment to talk to my two-year-old son, Alvin, who was crying because he wanted me to carry him. I bent down, wiped away his tears, and then begged him to stand up so I could show off our outfits (which I had strategically matched that morning). My three-year-old daughter, Avril, was also asking my husband to hold her because she didn’t want to stand either. They really didn’t want to be taking pictures.

The photography session was unsuccessful—so we gave up. But when I got home, I found something better. My brother (who was taking the photos) captured the moment when all the chaos was happening. Both my husband and I were comforting our children in the photo. It didn’t really show off our outfits, but it was such a tender—and real—moment. I loved it.

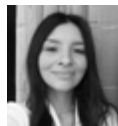
When I shared the photo on social media, I captioned it “The reality of a family photo.” I never imagined that so many people would relate to it, but it made me realize that things don’t always need to look perfect. It’s OK to just go with the flow and be real. But it also taught me a larger lesson—that when we believe someone is perfect, we just haven’t seen all the details.

Don’t Let Social Media Cover Your True Identity

Social media networks are a powerful tool that we can use for so much good. But we have to be careful not to get discouraged or compare ourselves to what we see on social media. As Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Hopefully, we can learn to be more real, find more humor, and experience less discouragement when confronted with images that may portray idealized reality and that too often lead to debilitating comparisons.”¹

I know that as we remember our divine nature as children of God, we won’t leave room for painful comparisons or personal judgments. And if we stop listening to those comparisons that try to discredit our potential, we will be able to live fuller lives without worrying about all those seemingly picture-perfect posts out there. ■



Bárbara Rodríguez is 25 years old and was born in Anzoátegui, Venezuela, where she met her husband. They currently live in Lima, Peru. Bárbara is dedicated to creating uplifting content on their social networks.

NOTE

1. Gary E. Stevenson, “Spiritual Eclipse,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 46.



MORE PAGES, MORE STORIES,



MORE FOR

January 2021 marks the beginning of a new youth magazine—*For the Strength of Youth*—designed to unify and connect teens all over the world.

50 Liahona



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YOUTH

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A Blessing of CHRISTMAS TRADITION

There was nothing special about spending Christmas in a new home, but one priesthood blessing changed everything.

By Isabel Toa

I was 14 years old when I experienced my first Christmas without snow. My family had just moved from the mountains of Utah to Texas, USA. To me, Texas felt too flat and hot. It was hard to feel the Christmas spirit when I had no friends at my new school and especially when there was no snow on the ground. I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere, so I often felt lonely and sad.

Despite my gloom, Christmas was only a week away, and I was depending on our Christmas family traditions to lift my spirits. The fun activities my family did together in past years always made me feel so happy. Traditions were a big part of how we celebrated Christmas, so I thought I had nothing to worry about. They were called traditions for a reason, so I knew they had to be kept.

KEEPING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT ALIVE

The days leading up to Christmas crawled by slowly. We hadn't done anything together as a family yet to celebrate, so I was feeling pretty defeated. When Christmas Eve finally arrived, I waited all day

for something to happen—anything that would show me that our cherished family traditions could still be kept in our new home. I'm sure I could have spurred these treasured traditions on my own, but I didn't want to. In a way, I was looking for a sign to show me that the Christmas spirit was still alive.

Day faded to night and I grew more and more upset. Tears welled up in my eyes as my family gathered together to say our evening prayers. My entire home felt cold and empty, even with all of us living inside it. Suddenly, my dad pierced the silence with one question.

"Would anyone like to receive a priesthood blessing?"

My heart skipped a beat. I had worried so much about whether or not we would be putting up Christmas lights or baking holiday cookies that I had forgotten about one very special tradition we did every Christmas Eve—we all received a priesthood blessing. Receiving a blessing from my dad in the past always gave me peace, but not everybody in my family enjoyed receiving one. Sometimes my siblings and my mom would say they didn't feel like

they needed one. I didn't want to get my hopes up again if everyone else was going to turn it down.


But this time was different. My mom stood up and sat down on the chair my dad had brought out for us.

"I would like one," she said softly.

We were all very surprised, but my dad didn't even hesitate. He placed his hands on my mom's head and began to speak. I could sense how tuned in my dad was to my mom's feelings and personal struggles. He spoke words of comfort and peace to her during this time of change.

I suddenly felt a burning sensation within my chest—almost like someone had lit a match inside of me. I knew I was feeling the Holy Ghost, even though the burning in my chest wasn't the way I had always felt the Spirit before. It was like Heavenly Father was speaking directly to me, and it wasn't even my priesthood blessing!

As my father quietly said "amen" and I opened my tear-filled eyes, I realized that my whole family was crying. We had all heard the Spirit speak to us in a tender and loving way that everything was going to be OK. My mom and dad hugged, and I



felt like the raincloud that had been hanging over my head for so long had finally given way to sunshine.

We all received blessings, including me. In my blessing the Lord reassured me He is always mindful of me and wants me to be happy. It gave me feelings of peace and warmth that I hadn't felt since I moved to Texas.

PRIESTHOOD POWER IS REAL

We may not have kept every tradition that year, but we always remembered how it felt to witness the power of God flow through my dad's priesthood blessing. I will always remember how it changed my feelings of sadness to peace and joy. I also learned a valuable lesson about the power of the priesthood. When everything around you seems to be going the wrong way, a priesthood blessing can remind you of the Lord's watchful and loving presence in your life. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

WHAT'S ON YOUR LIST?

Stop listing what you want, and start getting what you need.

By Annelise Gardiner and Sam Lofgran
Church Magazines

What do you really want for Christmas this year? We're talking about more than just presents—what do you really *need*?

A need is something that you must have to survive. At Christmastime, it can be easy to focus on just our physical wants, but what about our spiritual needs?

NEEDED GIFTS

We know that our spirits have constant needs, that gifts like scripture study and prayer help fulfill, but our spirits also have other needs, depending on our circumstances. We've gathered a few stories from youth around the world who discovered what other "gifts" their spirits needed. As you read, think about what gifts your own spirit might need.

The Gift of Seminary

Juan R., age 16, from Chile discovered that seminary was something that he needed. "In seminary I learn the truth, and the Spirit gives me wisdom. Anytime I feel the Spirit, I know I'm in the place where God wants me to be in that moment. This is how I feel when I'm at seminary, so I know it's important for me to be there. I always know that going will give me answers to questions or doubts that I have."

The Gift of Friends

Rhoeta M., age 15, from Idaho, USA, discovered that she needed good friends as she was investigating the Church. "When I began attending sacrament meeting, classes, and Young Women, I was instantly greeted by many friendly faces and a caring community. I was included in all the activities, and the new friends I made encouraged me to follow God's plan. They helped me set and accomplish my spiritual goals."

After learning more from the missionaries and connecting with her friends at church, Rhoeta made the decision to be baptized. "I am so grateful to have found such good people," she says, "and I'm blessed to have had such an excellent transition into the Church!"



The Gift of Service

Julie S., age 16, from Texas, USA, discovered that she needed a calling. “I recently got called as my ward’s chorister, and it means that I absolutely have to be on time to church! This has always been a struggle for my family, and this calling not only brings me a lot of joy since I love music, but it also makes my family’s Sundays less frantic and more scheduled.”

The Gift of the Gospel

Sam D., age 19, from Turkey discovered that the thing he was missing in his life was the Church. “I was baptized at the age of 16, and after that, I started to actually live my life. Everything was more clear. I had a purpose to live.”

SUGGESTIONS

Need a friend? Look for other people who need friends and become their friend. Reach out to the other youth in your ward or school classes.

Need a responsibility? Reach out to your bishop and ask for a calling. You could also look for ways to serve in your community.

Need spiritual nourishment? Attend seminary. Read your scriptures. Listen to a conference talk.

WHAT GIFTS DO YOU NEED?

These youth were able to find what they needed to grow their testimonies, become happier, and come closer to God. After reading their experiences, what have you noticed are some of your spirit’s needs? Make a list to help you keep track of them.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

Now that you’ve identified your spirit’s needs, how can you fill them?

Start by setting goals to achieve what you need. Setting goals is a great way to accomplish new things, and the Children and Youth program can help you get started.

Your family can be another great place to find help with filling your needs—both your immediate family and your ward or branch family. Even in Moroni’s day, a main reason for having Church meetings was to “speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls” (Moroni 6:5).

And of course, Heavenly Father wants to help you fill your spiritual needs and grow your faith in

Him. If you pray to Him, He can help you identify what you need and what goals you can set.

This Christmas, don’t wait for someone else to guess what’s on your spiritual-needs wish list—set goals and give those needed gifts to yourself! But also, don’t hesitate to ask for help to reach your goals. And, since this is the season of giving, look for ways you can help others fill their spiritual needs too.

Don’t forget the Rhoetas and Sams in the world. The people around you might never know what they are missing—what they need to become happy and find their purpose—unless you share the message of the gospel with them. That’s the best gift anyone could get for Christmas! ■

Some of my friends aren't good influences. Can we still be friends?

"Set a standard for the rest of the world! Embrace being different! The booklet entitled For the Strength of Youth should be your standard. It is the standard that the Lord expects all His youth to uphold."

President Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), 16, HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Share Good Things

If they are my friends, it is my duty to help them to be better, to share the gospel and all the blessings I have

received by living it. If they don't show interest in those good things, I may start to lose them little by little. Even though it is hard, sometimes that is the best thing to do.

Matheus T., age 16, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Speak without Fear

My friends know that I belong to the Church. We talked about what is right to do and what is not. Now when my friend is with me, he behaves in an exemplary way, and that makes me happy. This taught me that I should speak without fear.

Diego R., age 16, Mexico City, Mexico



Be a Better Influence

I have friends who are not good influences, but that doesn't mean that I don't speak to them. I treat them

with respect and kindness. I do not judge or criticize them. I know that friends can influence our way of thinking and acting and can even determine the person we will become. Whenever I can, I share the gospel with them and invite them to Church activities.

Saireth V., age 18, Morelos, Mexico

Responses may be edited for length or clarity. Published responses are intended for help and perspective, not as official pronouncements of Church doctrine.



Put God First

Do not be discouraged if your friends do not accept your good example. You should not have to lower your

standards or set aside your beliefs for others; we live to please Heavenly Father, not anyone else. Pray and search the scriptures for guidance, listen to the Holy Ghost's promptings, and most importantly, do not let worldly things cause you to stray away from the strait and narrow path.

Riley E., age 15, Manila, Philippines

Stand in Holy Places

I have learned from my Church leaders that we have to stand in holy places, even if we are the only ones. Continue living the standards set in your life and in your heart. Try inviting them to a lesson or sacrament meeting. You can carry the light of the gospel everywhere you go! And above all, show the Savior's love for each of them.

Allanis O., age 18, Setúbal, Portugal

What Do You Think?

How can I have the courage to follow through with spiritual promptings?

Submit your answer and, if desired, a high-resolution photograph by January 15, 2021, at liahona.ChurchofJesusChrist.org (click "Submit an Article or Feedback").



Wasn't it a bit strange for the brother of Jared to ask the Lord to make stones glow?

First of all, the brother of Jared prayed in faith, believing that he would "receive according to [his] desires" (Ether 3:2). This means that he trusted that "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). And the Lord honored his faithful request.

Secondly, the brother of Jared may have been following an earlier example: Noah's ark. The Lord told the brother of Jared that his barges could not have fire or windows (see Ether 2:23–24), but the Bible says that Noah's ark had a "window" (Genesis 6:16). However, the word translated as "window" may not have actually been a window. Some rabbis and other scholars have said the ark's "window" was a shining stone (see Genesis 6:16, footnote a). The story of Noah's ark probably would have been known to the brother of Jared. (The Jaredite record included an account covering the Creation down to the tower of Babel [see Ether 1:3–4].) So the brother of Jared's request may not have been all that unusual.

He Is the LIGHT

*Thousands of miles from home,
I learned a lesson from pinpoints
of light trillions of miles away.*



By Laura Fuchs

It might sound strange, but I had always been excited for Christmas on my mission, hundreds or even thousands of miles away from the usual family drama and commercial distractions. Christmas was about Christ, and what better way to celebrate than by helping others come unto Him?

One evening in December, my companion and I were heading back to our apartment after a day of missionary work in La Paz, a magical place on the outskirts of Laoag City, Philippines. I was sitting in the sidecar of a tricycle crammed next to my six-foot-tall companion, and I was just loving life. Cool air whipped past us, reminding me (almost) of snowy Christmases back home—but it

still wasn't nearly as cold as I was used to in December.

As we rode through the countryside, my eyes focused heavenward. Up above, far from the light and noise of the city, there were thousands of visible stars. But fewer and fewer stars were visible as we approached the center of town, until only the brightest ones could be spotted.

I thought about the light from the stars and Jesus Christ. I thought of the star announcing His birth and Christ Himself, the “bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). He is the brightest star, the shining example for all of us. And yet, like those stars I saw while looking out of the tricycle, even He can be obscured



by light pollution. The more distractions, the more artificial light, the less visible the natural light becomes. Out in a province of the Philippines, some stars can still be seen even from the middle of the town, but in megacities like Manila, you can't see a single star at night. The light from advertisements, businesses, and homes all block out the light of distant stars.

The same thing happens when we surround ourselves with distractions and artificial lights. It becomes more difficult to see Christ's light.

This is especially true around Christmastime. It is easy to overlook the holidays and make ourselves as busy as Manila during

rush hour. There are gifts to find, parties to plan, cards to write, and countless performances and events to attend. When we feel that we don't have a spare moment to look up, we might not even realize how obscured Christ's light has become in our lives.

As we light our homes and trees, we can't forget to let the Light of Christ into our hearts. We might want to pause the festivities for a moment to remember what we are celebrating. Christmas is about Christ. He is the light, and if we minimize distractions and look up, we can see Him, ever constant and ever shining for the whole world to see. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

3 LIFE LESSONS FROM MORONI

By David Dickson and Chakell Wardleigh Herbert
Church Magazines

From beginning to end, the Book of Mormon is a nonstop ride of powerful eternal truths, amazing promises and lessons, and inspiring examples of faith in Jesus Christ. And the best part is that it's all true!

But when we're nearing the end and reach Moroni's chapters, he sure has some of the most powerful truths and life-changing lessons for us! Moroni finishes off the Book of Mormon with his incredible testimony and his personal invitation to come unto Christ and to seek to know the truth for ourselves. But among those powerful statements, here are three additional life-changing lessons we can learn from his final chapters in this fantastic book.





1. Peek Past the Finish Line

There's a satisfying feeling that comes at the end of a tough but rewarding project: snapping the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle in place or turning in a top-notch project at school.

Moroni thought he was finished with his contributions to the Book of Mormon after recording the downfall of the Jaredite nation as found in the book of Ether. He starts with, "Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished" (Moroni 1:1).

The fact that he was still alive probably came as more of a surprise than you might suspect. After all, he was wandering alone, with enemies swarming on every side.

He had extra time on his hands. And in only 10 chapters, Moroni made the most of it. A few of the truths he included are the method of ordaining teachers and priests; instructions for the sacrament

(including the prayers); teachings on how to conduct Church meetings; a powerful discourse by his father on faith, hope, and charity; and the sacred promise found in Moroni 10:3–5 that teaches each of us how to receive personal revelation about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Wow!

In those 10 chapters he hadn't even planned to write, Moroni added critical truths for future readers of the Book of Mormon.

We can all learn from his example. The next time you find yourself with a bit more time on your hands than expected, or when you feel like you've worked hard and most certainly should be done already, is it worth praying and pondering to discover whether there's maybe a bit more you can still contribute?

After all, the whole world was blessed because Moroni did.



2 Remember the Stone Box

If you decided to grow your favorite fruit tree in your backyard, you would have to exercise more than a little patience. Even if it were the right time of year and you had ideal growing conditions, you'd still most likely be a few years out from plucking the first piece of fruit from your efforts.

But that's ultimately doable, right? After all, good things come to those who wait. And even if you're planting some other type of tree that won't reach full maturity for many decades (like an olive tree), you can at least have the satisfaction of knowing your children and grandchildren will benefit.

None of you have anything on Moroni, however. His father's life's work, which became Moroni's work after his father

died, wouldn't be yielding fruit anytime soon. Not in 10 years. Not in a thousand. Mormon wrote, "These things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob . . . and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth *in his own due time*" (Mormon 5:12; emphasis added).

Moroni didn't know exactly when this work would come forth, but he probably had a good idea that it was going to be a long way out. He saw a vision of our day and prophesied of certain conditions that would exist (see Mormon 8:35).

This much we know for sure: Moroni wasn't doing this for the good of any of his family or friends or even acquaintances. In some of the most heart-wrenching words

ever written, Moroni said: "I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not" (Mormon 8:5).

He lost *all* his family. *All* his friends. His *entire* civilization! And when he finished his record, he built a stone box to seal up the sacred record that wouldn't see the light of day for many hundreds of years.

Living righteously creates positive changes in the world. Sometimes those ripples take generations to reach full effect. But Moroni teaches us that we can always trust in God's timing. We only need to do our part.

3. Keep an Eternal Perspective

Let's be real: trials come, life is unfair, and sometimes, everything just hurts. Life is especially hard when we think we've finally gotten through a trial, only for another meteor shower of challenges to pummel us back into the ground again.

Whether we're dealing with anxiety or depression, losing a loved one, or some other challenge, sometimes holding on to faith and hope can seem so daunting. In these difficult moments it's easy to think, "How could things possibly get any worse?"

Well, for Moroni, that was a true statement. Things probably couldn't have gotten any worse for him toward the end of his life. During the hard times, when it feels like there is no reason to keep moving forward or holding on to hope, we can look at his example of unshakable faith in the face of so much devastation.

Some would call Moroni's life tragic. Even though he was faithful, he lost *everyone* he loved. He was the last survivor of his entire civilization. He had to finish his father's record because Mormon was killed before he got a chance to finish. And Moroni was being hunted down by the Lamanites and running for his life when he wrote his book of scripture.

Can you imagine how terrifying and hopeless that situation would be? If someone else experienced the trials Moroni did, they might have been tempted to let go

of their faith, to deny Christ, and to blame Heavenly Father for their terrible circumstances. But Moroni didn't.

Instead, Moroni kept holding on until the very end (see Moroni 1:3). He kept an eternal perspective to help him face his challenges. He knew what was true and knew that no matter what happened to him, as long as he had faith in the Savior and trusted Heavenly Father, all of the blessings he was promised would be fulfilled one day, and he would be saved by the power of Jesus Christ and the blessings of His Atonement (see Moroni 10).

Now, *that* is one powerful testimony.

When things seem like they can't possibly get any worse, we can take comfort

in keeping an eternal perspective and cultivating Moroni-like faith. If we do so, we are promised we "can do all things which are expedient unto [Christ]" (Moroni 10:23). We can know that Heavenly Father is with us. We can trust that His plan of happiness will provide a way for us to overcome every single tragedy we will face in mortality. And we can surround ourselves with the light, joy, and blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

With an eternal perspective, we *always* have a reason to hope. And we can trust that one day we will all be able to say, "How could things possibly get any better?" ■



Perfect in Christ

By Elder Gerrit W. Gong

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Spiritual light and life come when regular religious observance draws us closer to our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. With daily obedience, we find answers, faith, and strength to meet everyday challenges and opportunities with gospel patience, perspective, and joy.

As we seek new and holier ways to love God and help us and others prepare to meet Him, we remember that perfection is in Christ, not in ourselves or in the perfectionism of the world.

God's invitations are full of love and possibility because Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). To those who feel burdened, He invites, "Come unto me," and to those who come to Him, He promises, "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, . . . love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

In this assurance "by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" is also the comfort, peace, and promise that we can continue forward with faith and confidence in the Lord even when things do not go as we hope, expect, or perhaps deserve, through no fault of our own, even after we have done our best.

In various times and ways, we all feel inadequate, uncertain, perhaps unworthy. Yet in our faithful efforts to love God and to minister to our neighbor, we may feel God's love and needed inspiration for their and our lives.

With compassion, our Savior encourages and promises we can "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20). The doctrine of Christ, our Savior's Atonement, and our whole-souled following of His covenant path can help us know His truths and make us free (see John 8:32).

I testify His covenant path leads to the greatest gift our loving Heavenly Father promises: "Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). ■

From an October 2018 general conference address.

Mormon & Moroni

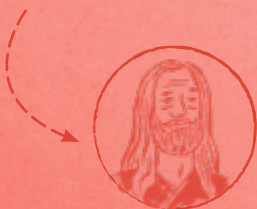


Mormon **abridged and compiled** the majority of the Book of Mormon (see Words of Mormon 1:3–5).



Became the **leader for the Nephite armies** when he was only 15 (see Mormon 2:1–2).

Father of Moroni (see Mormon 8:13) and a **disciple of Christ** (see 3 Nephi 5:13).



Moroni fought in the **Nephite army** with Mormon (see Mormon 6:11–12)



Finished compiling the plates and **buried them in the Hill Cumorah** (see Mormon 8:3–5, 14).

Visited Joseph Smith as a resurrected being (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33).



Three new Church
magazines next year!
Turn to page 6 to learn
about the exciting and
important
changes.



YOUNG ADULTS

**MAKING SOCIAL
MEDIA A POSITIVE**

42

YOUTH

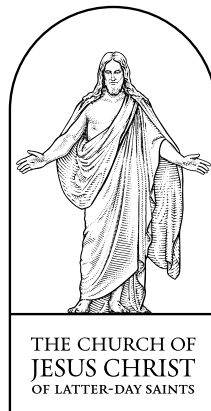
**LIFE LESSONS
FROM MORONI**

60

PARENTS

**7 SIMPLE
CHRISTMAS
ACTIVITY IDEAS**

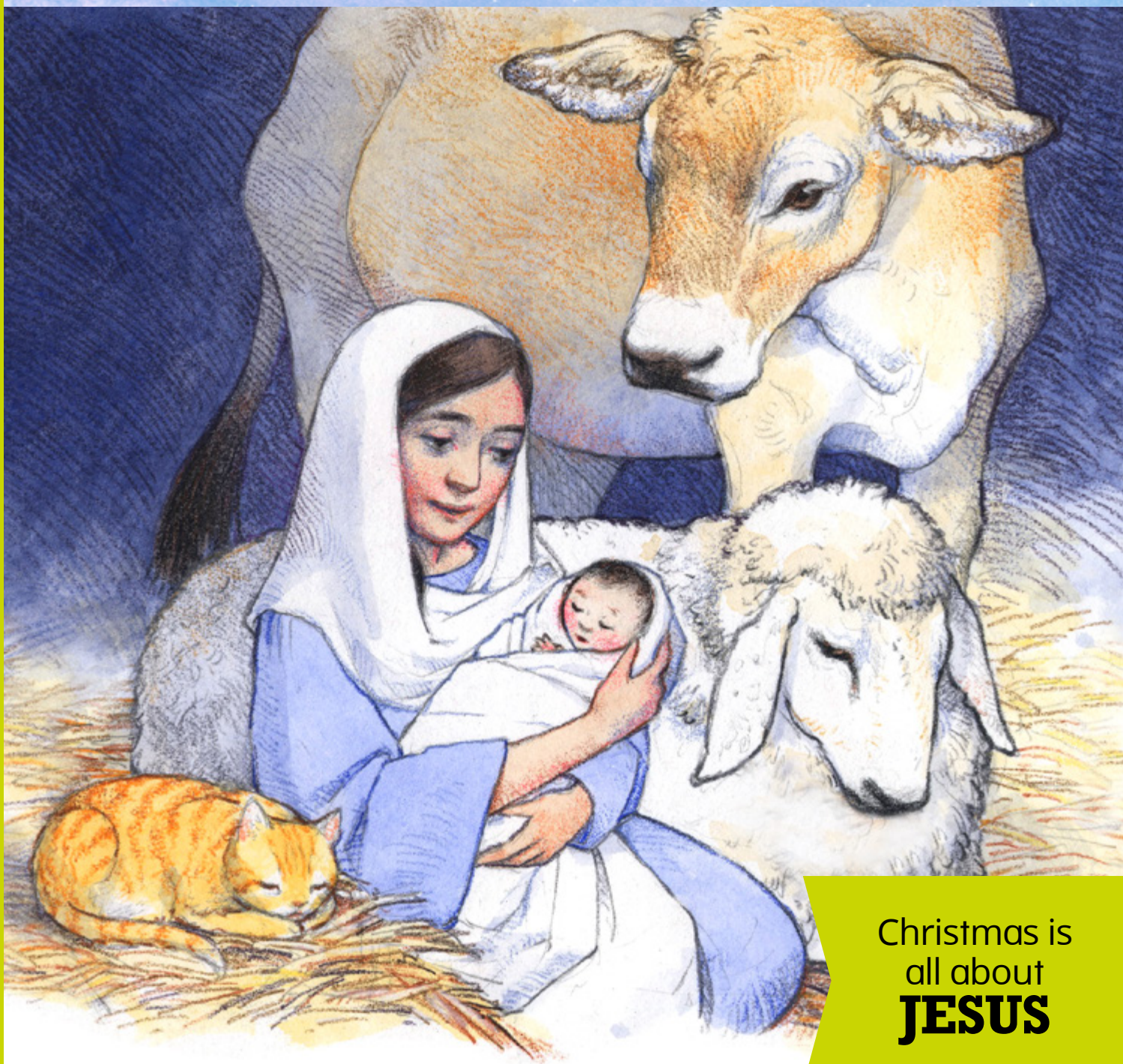
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December 2020

The children's section of the *Liahona*, published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

the Friend



Christmas is
all about
JESUS



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

Gifts of Love for Jesus

Heavenly Father gave us His Son,
Jesus Christ. And Jesus gave His
life for us so we can live with Him again.
This is the greatest of all gifts. Jesus gave
us this gift freely.

You may want to give a gift to Jesus.
What gifts can you give Him?



And there is still something more you
can give Him. All around you, there are
people He loves who you can help.

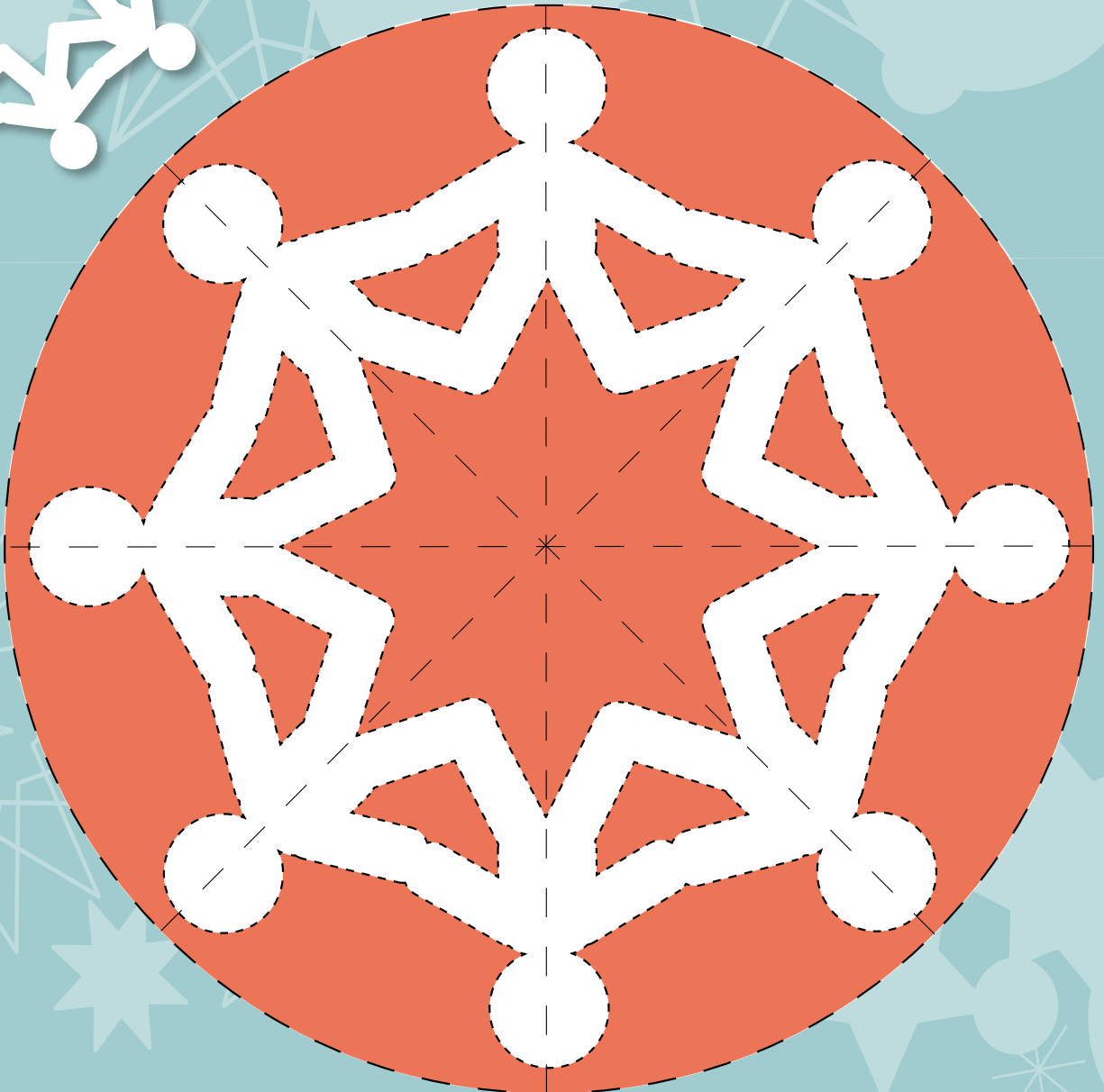
I pray that we will freely give, as
Jesus did. ●

*Adapted from "Gifts of Love," Brigham Young University devotional,
Dec. 1980.*

Service Snowflake

We can give a gift to Jesus by serving others. Make a service snowflake to remind you whom you can serve.

1. Cut out the circle.
2. Fold the circle in half along one of the lines. Then fold it in half again, and then again.
3. Cut along the dotted lines on the outline of the person. Do not cut the sides of the feet and hands.
4. Unfold the paper and write on each person the name of someone you can serve.



The Perfect Tree

By Sydney Squires

Church Magazines

(Based on a true story)

“Jesus, once of humble birth, now in glory comes to earth” (Hymns, no. 196).

“Mama, look at this one!” Joshua pointed to the Christmas tree. It was tall and skinny, with perfect green needles.

Mama paused and looked at the price tag. She shook her head. “No, I don’t think so.”

Joshua sighed and kept walking. The market was crowded with stalls of food and Christmas trees. It was crowded with families buying trees and ingredients to make delicious treats, like *bûche de Noël* (Yule log dessert). Mama had brought Joshua with her to buy some food, but he couldn’t keep his eyes off the Christmas trees. Some of the trees were tall and thin. Others were short and round. Joshua even saw one that was just his height!

Mama said they didn’t have a lot of money this year. They probably wouldn’t be able to buy a tree. That made Joshua a little sad. Whenever he went to the marketplace with Mama, he kept looking for the

perfect Christmas tree. Maybe, just maybe, they could find a tree to take home.

Joshua held Mama's hand as they walked to the next row of trees. Joshua gasped. There it was—the perfect tree!

He ran ahead and put a hand on the tree. It wasn't very green. It was missing clumps of needles. It wasn't too tall. In fact, it was bent far over, like an old man leaning on a cane.

"Mama, it's perfect!" Joshua said. "Can we take it home? Please?"

Mama glanced at the price tag. "Well, it's not too many euros. And I think we can fit it in the car."

Joshua could hardly wait. He kept playing with the sleeves of his coat as he waited for Mama to pay for the tree. Then a nice man helped them place the tree in the car. When they were finally home, his stepbrother, Matthieu, and Papa helped take the tree from the car. They carried the tree inside and set it in the corner of their front room.

"First, we need to do the lights," Matthieu said.

It was hard to hang the lights up since the tree was so bent over. Matthieu put the lights on the top. Joshua put them on the bottom. Next they hung the ornaments. Finally Papa helped Joshua place the star on the top.

Papa plugged in the lights and put an arm around Mama. Joshua smiled at the tree. The tree's lights made the whole room feel warm and cozy. He sat underneath the tree and looked up at the brightly colored ornaments. The tree didn't

look as bent over and sad now. It was beautiful. It was perfect.

"It's a perfect Jesus tree," Joshua said.

"What do you mean?" Mama asked.

"Our tree is just like Jesus," Joshua said. "Jesus was born in a poor, dirty manger. Our tree was poor and sad in the marketplace. But now the tree is beautiful and grand, just like how Jesus became a beautiful king."

"Our perfect Jesus tree," Papa said. "I love that."

Joshua smiled. This was going to be a very special Christmas. ●

This story took place in France. Turn to page F6 to learn more about that country.



Hello from France!

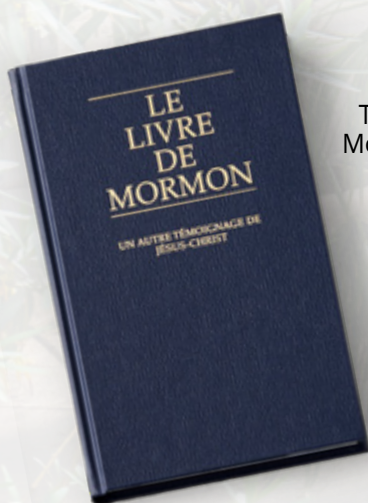


Salut! We're Margo and Paolo!

We're traveling around the world to learn about children of God. Join us as we visit France!



There are almost 40,000 members of the Church in France!
The temple in Paris, France, was finished in May 2017.



This is a Book of Mormon in French.

France is famous for its breads and cheeses. Many people buy fresh baguettes from *boulangeries* (bakeries) every day.



In southern France, people prepare for Christmas by making a “crèche,” or nativity scene. The scene is full of people waiting for Jesus Christ to be born. On Christmas Eve, they put the statue of baby Jesus in the crèche!



Meet some of our friends from France!



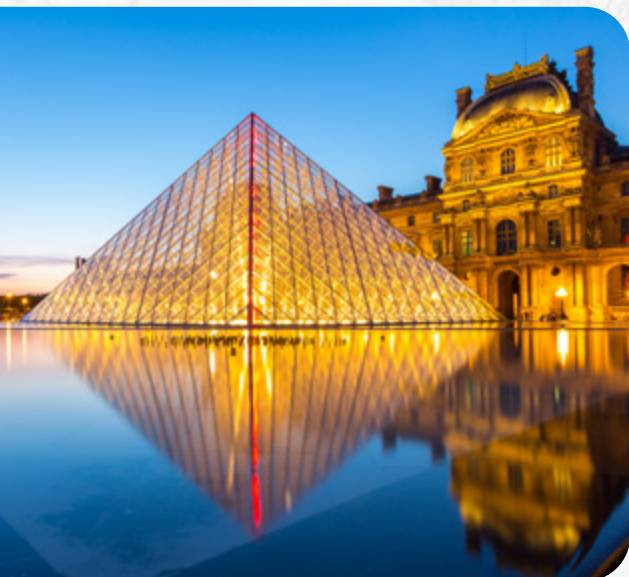
I love everything about Primary—the songs, the teachers, the activities, and the things I learn about Jesus Christ. I especially like it when we wish children happy birthday. I look forward to Primary every week.

**Julien B., age 10,
Haute-Garonne, France**



My favorite Book of Mormon story is about Nephi forgiving and loving his brothers. Thanks to Nephi's example, this part of the scriptures really helps me to ask my brothers for forgiveness more easily when we argue and also to forgive.

**Evelyne N., age 6,
Île-de-France, France**



The Louvre, in Paris, is the biggest art museum in the world! It has more than 380,000 pieces of art.

**Thanks for
exploring France
with us!**



French children love to play a game called “escargot.” You jump in a spiral shape to get to the end!

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



A Christmas Surprise

By Jane McBride
(Based on a true story)

"Have a happy fam'ly Christmas! . . . Wrap your hearts in love this year" (Children's Songbook, 51).

As Anna's heart sank as she walked into the room and saw the Christmas tree. The water heater in their house had burst, and water was all over the floor. Dad was still trying to clean up the mess. The few presents under the tree were completely soaked.

Anna and her little brothers grabbed some towels and tried to dry the presents. But it didn't really work. They were a soggy mess.

Anna's family was going through a hard time. Her dad didn't have a job right now. Her mom was going to have a baby soon, and she felt sick a lot. And now they wouldn't have any presents for Christmas.

That night as Anna got ready for bed, she could



hear Mom and Dad talking in the kitchen.

"What are we going to do?" Mom asked. It sounded like she was crying. "We don't have enough money for the house payment, and now we don't even have presents for the kids." Anna had an empty, twisty feeling in her stomach.

"We'll figure something out," Dad said.

Anna walked into the kitchen. Mom reached out and gave her a big hug. With her arms around Mom's tummy, Anna felt the baby move. She smiled. "We have a new baby coming. You always say that a baby is a miracle."

Mom smiled back. "That's right. We have a lot to be grateful for."

"We have each other," Dad said. He kissed the top of Anna's head. "It'll be OK."

On the way to her room, Anna heard her brothers crying. She sat down on David's bed.

"Everyone is so sad," David said quietly.

"And we won't have any presents," Robbie said, sniffing.

"It'll be OK," Anna said again. "You'll see."

Before she got into bed, Anna knelt and asked Heavenly Father what she could do for her family. She didn't have any money to buy presents, but she still had a warm, comforting feeling in her heart.

The next morning, she stayed in bed thinking for a few minutes before getting ready for school. Then an idea came to her! That afternoon she hurried home and did her chores and homework. Then she found some paper and string and a few markers and stickers she had gotten for her birthday. She took them all to her room and closed the door.

Anna almost laughed when she thought about how surprised her family would be. First she folded the paper and tied it together with string to make four booklets. She chose a star sticker to put on Mom's booklet and a planet for Dad's. She put a dog for David's booklet and a rocket for Robbie's.



Then Anna started drawing. For Mom she drew a picture of herself sweeping the floor. She drew a picture of herself cooking dinner with Dad, one of her playing football with David, and one of her reading a book to Robbie. It took her several days to fill each booklet with pictures.

Finally it was Christmas Eve, and Anna carefully placed her booklets under the tree.

The next morning, she gave each person in her family a booklet. "I like these pictures," David said. "I like playing football."

"They're not just pictures," Anna said with a sparkle in her eyes. "They're coupons! The pictures all show things I'll do for you."

"This is the nicest gift you could have given us," Mom said as she looked through her booklet. Anna was thankful that Heavenly Father helped her think of making Christmas coupons. A new baby was coming, and with Heavenly Father's help, everything really would be OK. ●

The author lives in Colorado, USA.



A Gift of Friendship

By Lucy Stevenson

Church Magazines
(Based on a true story)

This story took place in England shortly after World War II.

Hermann Mössner was nervous as he walked into the chapel. He and his friends from camp were still in their uniforms, marked with the letters “P.O.W.” Everyone knew those letters stood for “prisoner of war.” What would the members of the branch think? Would they see him as their enemy?

The chapel was near Leeds, England. But Hermann wasn’t from England. He was from Germany. After being forced to fight in World War II, Hermann had been captured by British soldiers and sent to an English prison camp. This was his first time at church in a long time.

Hermann took a deep breath as he sat down on one of the benches. He could see the branch president, George Camm, sitting at the front. President Camm was Hermann’s friend. Seeing him smile made Hermann feel better.

Several months ago, President Camm came to visit Hermann at camp after hearing that he was the only member of the Church there. At first Hermann was a little worried. Would President Camm hate him? Their countries had fought against each other in the war, after all.

But when Hermann and President Camm met, they smiled and shook hands. Then they prayed together. They sang songs and talked about the gospel. They even took the sacrament together.





"I love you, my brother," Hermann said when President Camm had to leave. He saw tears in President Camm's eyes as he waved goodbye.

After that, President Camm visited Hermann every Saturday. During the rest of the week, Hermann did his best to live the gospel. He shared his testimony with the other prisoners while they worked in the fields. He answered their questions while they carved wood after a long day's work. Sometimes he prayed with them.

"Hey, Hermann," one of the prisoners had said one night. "Could I join in with you and Mr. Camm on Saturday?"

Hermann looked up from the block of wood he was carving. He smiled. "Of course!"

"May I too?" another prisoner asked.

Hermann and President Camm were very excited to teach more of the prisoners. Soon some of them even wanted to be baptized!

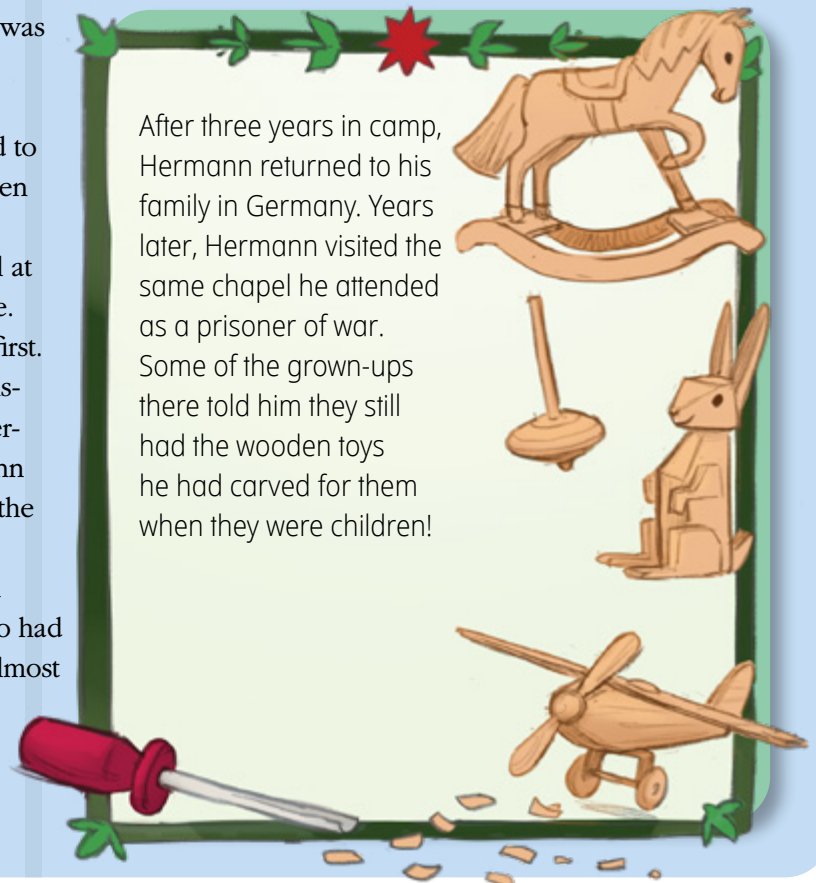
And now, as Hermann looked around the chapel at the families waiting for church to start, he felt peace. Some members were nervous around Hermann at first. But soon everyone came to trust him. The other prisoners who wanted to learn about the gospel got permission to leave camp to go to church with Hermann on Sundays. Later, Hermann was even called to be the branch Sunday School president.

Time passed, and Christmas got closer. Hermann wanted to do something to thank the members who had been so kind to him. Then he had an idea! It was almost

time for the branch Christmas party. Hermann gathered more blocks of wood and started carving. One by one, he turned the blocks into little cars, elephants, planes, trains, and horses.

Finally the day of the party arrived. Everyone ate food and sang Christmas songs together. Hermann and his friends from camp sang Christmas songs in German.

Then Hermann pulled out a big bag. Inside were 40 wooden toys! Hermann gave one to each Primary child. It was a Christmas they would never forget. ●



After three years in camp, Hermann returned to his family in Germany. Years later, Hermann visited the same chapel he attended as a prisoner of war. Some of the grown-ups there told him they still had the wooden toys he had carved for them when they were children!

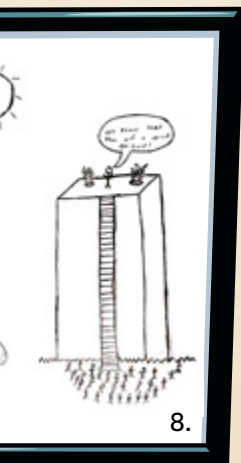


Book of
Mormon
**ART
SHOW**



ILLUSTRATION OF CHILDREN AND FRAMES BY GARY LACOSTE

Thank you for sharing your Book of Mormon art all year!



8.



9.



10.



11.



12.



13.



14.



15.



16.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Felipe L., age 8,
São Paulo, Brazil | 9. Lauren S., age 9,
Washington, USA |
| 2. Chloe D., age 8,
Queensland, Australia | 10. Anahí F., age 8,
Canelones, Uruguay |
| 3. Fernanda A., age 10,
Chihuahua, Mexico | 11. Martin S., age 5,
Jujuy, Argentina |
| 4. Slade A., age 9,
Idaho, USA | 12. Will B., age 8,
Utah, USA |
| 5. Lizzie P., age 8,
Pennsylvania, USA | 13. Johannes H., age 10,
Florida, USA |
| 6. Charlotte B., age 7,
Tennessee, USA | 14. Andie S., age 7,
Nevada, USA |
| 7. Emma S., age 8,
Anzoátegui, Venezuela | 15. Inês S., age 9,
Viseu, Portugal |
| 8. Jacob A., age 10,
Alberta, Canada | 16. Kayla S., age 9,
California, USA |





**By Elder W.
Mark Bassett**
Of the Seventy

Praying for Max



When I was six, an older couple in our ward wanted to find a good home for their dog, Max. They knew our family would love Max. So we adopted him!

A few weeks later, some of our friends came to stay with us for a few days. Our house was full of playful children running all over.

But Max was used to a nice, quiet home. Being in a house full of noisy children made him very nervous. One day when we were playing and laughing, we suddenly realized that Max was gone!

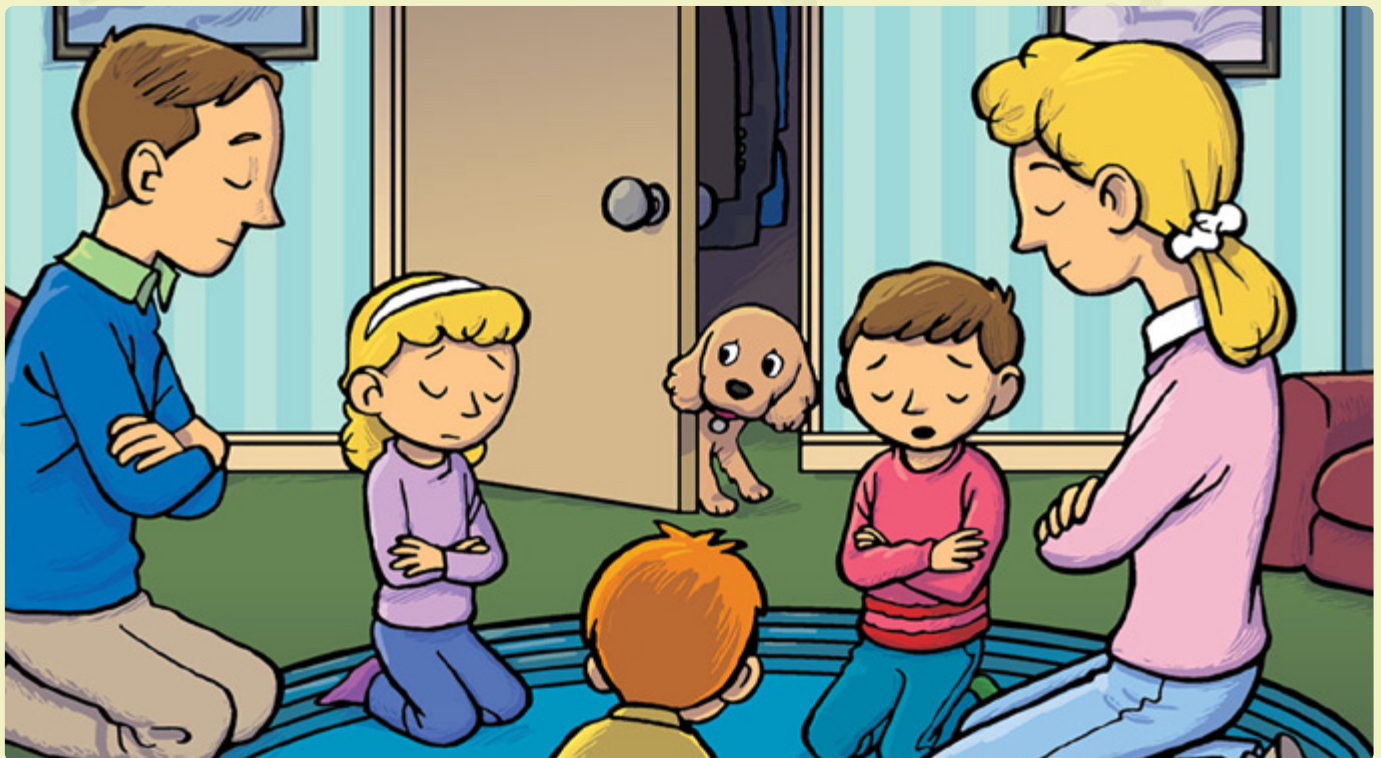
We looked everywhere for Max. I was near tears as my mom drove us all over the neighborhood. We even checked with Max's first owners. But he was nowhere to be found.

When we got home, someone said, "Let's pray for Max!" We knelt in a circle and said a simple prayer. We asked Heavenly Father for ideas for where to look for Max.

Just as we said "amen," a bark came from the closet! It was Max!

Heavenly Father knows each of us and loves us. Answers to our prayers may not always come right away. And Heavenly Father may not always answer our prayers in exactly the way we want. But that's how we grow in faith and patience.

If you have any problems or just want to talk, Heavenly Father will always hear you! ●





Light the World

Jesus brought light and love to the whole world. Here are some activities to help you feel and share His light. Color the numbered areas after you do each activity.

1

Read Luke 1:26–31 and sing “Mary’s Lullaby” (*Children’s Songbook*, 44).

2

Make a Christmas card for someone and sing “Away in a Manger” (*Hymns*, no. 206).

3

Read Luke 2:4–7 and sing “When Joseph Went to Bethlehem” (*Children’s Songbook*, 38).

4

Do a kind deed for someone and sing “He Sent His Son” (*Children’s Songbook*, 34).

5

Read Luke 2:8–18 and sing “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (*Hymns*, no. 209).

6

Read Matthew 2:1–11 and sing “With Wondering Awe” (*Hymns*, no. 210).

7

Talk about how you feel about the birth of Jesus Christ and sing “Silent Night” (*Hymns*, no. 204).



A Neighbor Nativity

By Lorraine Starks
(Based on a true story)

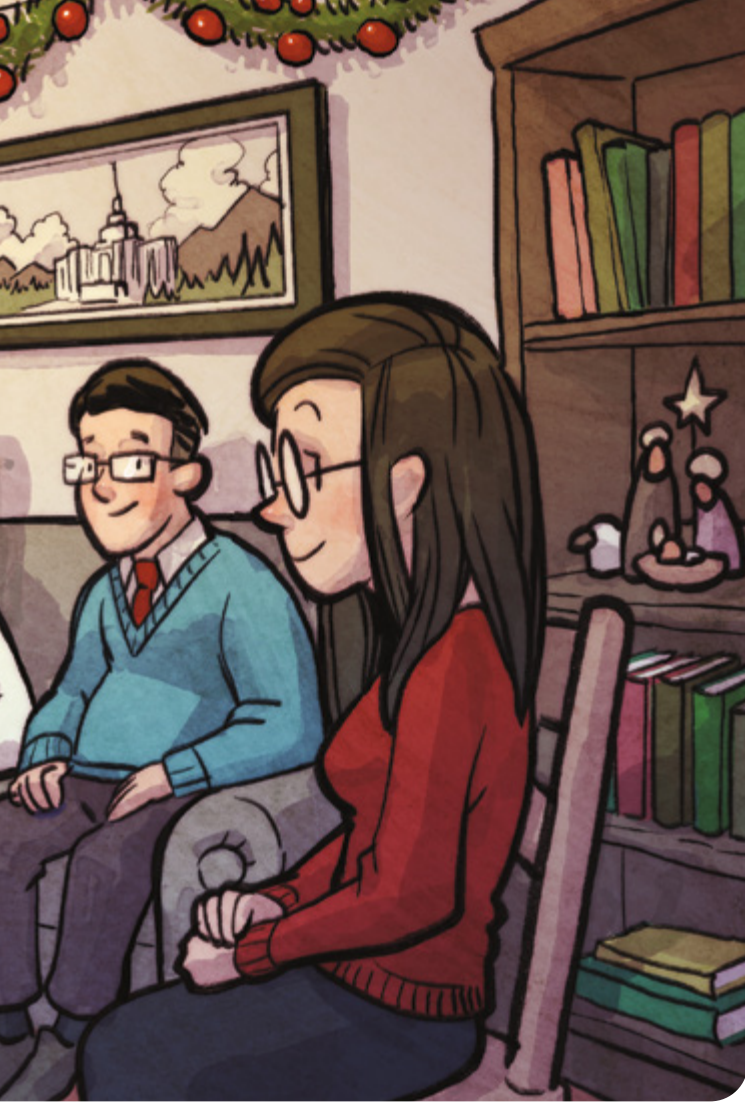
“For unto us a child is born” (2 Nephi 19:6).

Rose bounced on her toes as she peeked out the window. Their friends would be here any minute!

Every year at Christmastime, Rose and her family acted out the Nativity. They always invited people to come over and join them. This time they had invited their neighbors and the missionaries! Rose was excited because their neighbors had a baby to be baby Jesus.

Everything was almost ready. Mom was taking the treats out of the oven. Rose’s little brothers had picked up all their toys. Ellen was getting the costumes. And Rose had even taped a big, yellow star to the wall for decoration.

“Rose,” Mom called from the kitchen. “Can you help Ellen get the costumes ready?”



“OK, Mom!” Rose turned to help her sister, who was carrying an armful of blankets.

“We have blankets, towels, and dress-up clothes from the closet,” Ellen said. “We can even use this basket as a pretend manger.” She handed Rose a big basket. Rose put a soft blanket inside it for the baby.

“Perfect,” said Rose.

Rose’s little brother Jack pulled a gray blanket over his head and made a funny face. “Can I be the donkey?”

Rose laughed. “No, silly! You wanted to be a Wise Man, remember?”

“Oh yeah!” said Jack. He grabbed the toy crown and put it on his head.

Then there was a knock at the door.

“They’re here!” Rose said. “I’ll get it.”

Soon the house was full of happy people. Rose helped everyone get their costumes on. The sister missionaries were the shepherds. Her brothers and sister were the Wise Men. The cute baby was baby Jesus, and his parents were Mary and Joseph.

Rose put on a soft, white hat. She was a sheep.

Finally everyone was dressed and ready to go. Elder and Sister Yancey, a missionary couple from their ward, opened the New Testament to the Nativity story. They read the verses out loud. Everyone acted out their part.

At the end of the story, everyone sang “Silent Night.” Rose felt warm and happy. She knew she was feeling the Holy Ghost. It felt like Jesus was close to her heart.

After the song, Mom played the video “Samuel and the Star.” Ellen said a prayer. Then they brought out the treats. Everyone had fun visiting.

“So, what was your favorite part?” Sister Yancey asked.

“I liked singing the song,” Ellen said. “And playing with baby Jesus.” Ellen bounced the baby on her lap. She had been playing with him ever since the song ended.

“I liked bringing Jesus gifts,” Jack said. He was still wearing the pretend crown.

“What about you, Rose?”

Rose spread her arms out wide. “I liked everything!” she said in a loud voice. “But most of all, I liked having everyone here to celebrate Jesus. Because that’s what Christmas is all about.” ●

The author lives in Texas, USA.

Whom could you invite to celebrate Jesus’s birth with you this year?

Samuel and the Star



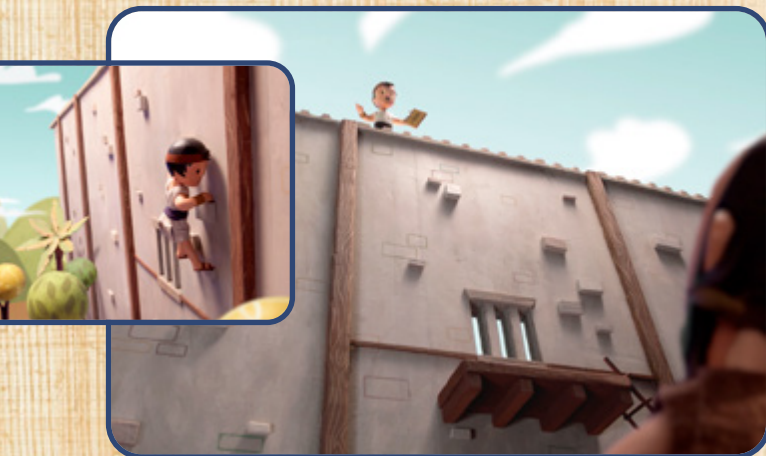
Many ancient years ago,
a man of God named Samuel
gave a prophecy.



He told the people many things about our Savior's
birth. He spoke to them of Jesus Christ, and how
He'd come to earth.



The people didn't listen. Their hearts were full of
doubt. So they took Samuel to the city gate and
threw him out.



But Samuel would not give up. He had to let them
know. He climbed atop the city wall and called to
them below.



"In just five years the Lord will come, upon a starlit
night, to save mankind from all their sins, and give
the world His light."



"And even though it's in five years, and though it's far away, the sun will set, the night begin, but be as bright as day."



The people fumed and stomped their feet. They said no Christ would come. They flung their stones. Their arrows flew. They missed him, every one.



The faithful waited, breathlessly, in hopes they would behold—the star, the light, the promises, more precious far than gold.



Then in five years, in Bethlehem, Christ lay in a manger stall. They saw the light and knew He'd come, their Savior, Lord of all.



And as it always comes to pass,
when prophets are so bold,
the Lord fulfills His promises,
like Samuel's made of old. ●

You can watch this video at
bit.ly/3cz7F2j. Or read the account in
Helaman 13–15; 3 Nephi 1:13–15, 21.



Moroni Saved the Scriptures for Us



The prophet Mormon put together a book about Jesus. He wrote it on gold plates. Before he died, Mormon asked his son Moroni to take care of the book.

Moroni did what his father asked. He kept the plates safe. Sometimes he had to hide from wicked people. He was often lonely. But he knew the book was very important.



Jesus visited Moroni! He showed Moroni how the book would help lots of people like you and me. Moroni added his testimony to the plates. He wrote to us as if we were there with him.



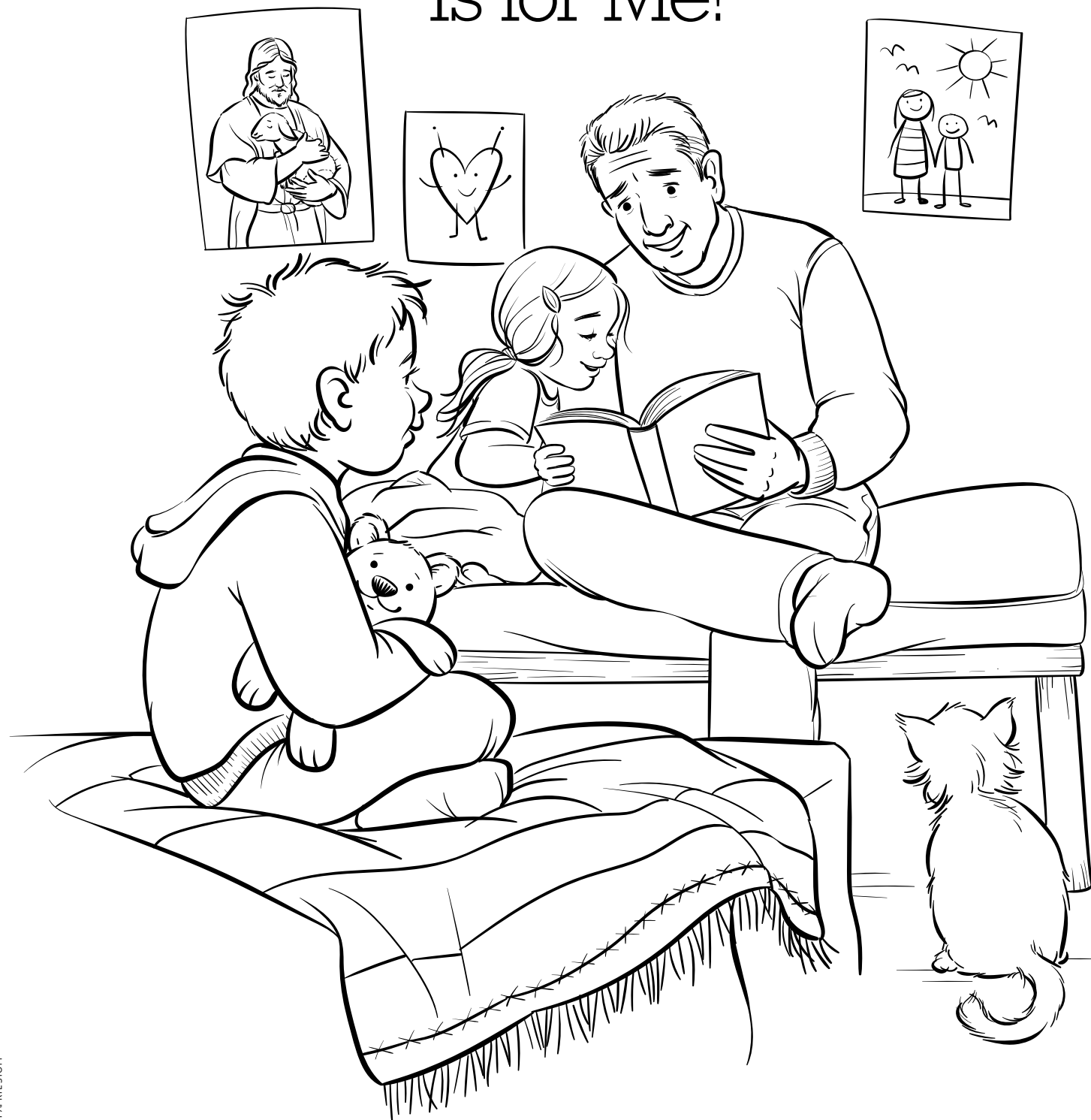
God told Moroni to bury the plates to keep them safe. Many years later, Joseph Smith translated them. Now they are printed as the Book of Mormon.



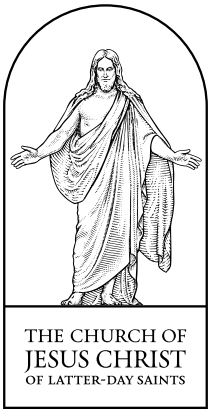
The Book of Mormon was written for me! It can help me with any problem. It is a gift from God. ●

Read about this in Mormon 8 and the Introduction to the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon Is for Me!



What did you learn from the Book of Mormon this year?



Dear Parents,

This month's magazine is all about gifts. One of the gifts we've been working on for your family is a full-length *Friend* magazine in your language!

Here are just a few things you can look forward to in the *Friend* in 2021:

- A monthly challenge for children around the world to do together to follow Jesus
- Stories of pioneers from many countries
- Church-history cards
- Even more stories from children around the world!

Since the new version of the *Liahona* won't include the *Friend* magazine, you can subscribe to the *Friend* at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or at a local Church distribution center. Whatever time remains on your *Liahona* subscription will automatically be added to the new *Liahona*.

With love,
The *Friend*

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Find the Liahona hidden inside!

ON THE FRIEND COVER
Illustration by Kathleen Peterson

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