

Ministering Principles

What the Christmas Story Teaches Us about Ministering

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

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