

My CHRISTMAS Gift

What would I give the Savior this year?

By Dustin Ward

My usual spot in ninth-grade seminary was in the back row, where I could talk and joke around with my friend. I had only signed up for seminary because there was an open space in my schedule. Seminary was offered during the school day where I lived, and a school counselor suggested I take it since I'm a Latter-day Saint. I knew the teacher's name, but that was about all I had learned from class.

Then my friend was gone one day, so I ran into a problem: I had no one to joke with. How would I pass the time? In a panic, I went with the only other option—I listened. It was the first time I paid any attention to the teacher.

As I look back, I don't remember a word he said that day, but I do remember being captivated. My friend was back the next day, but

instead of joking around, I listened and was again pulled in.

I eventually moved from the back of the room and sat on the front row, where I could pay better attention. Not a class went by in which I didn't feel a strong interest in the lesson or in the students who were sharing their testimonies.

I enjoyed seminary so much that I signed up for it again the next year. I had been baptized at eight years old but had never really gone to church. But something changed one day in December right before the Christmas break. The teacher invited us to come to the front of the room and say what gift we would give Christ that year.

"No one will do this," I thought. But, to my surprise, one by one the students walked to the front of the class. Some shed tears, others shared goals they had set, and some told stories. I couldn't believe it.

Time was ticking. I was the only one who hadn't gone. Before I knew it, I was on my feet. I had no idea what I was going to say. Then, with a shaky voice, I said, "This year for Christ's birthday, I'm going to start going to church."

From that day forward, I started going to church as my gift to the Savior. The ironic part was that I was the one who received the gift. Going back to church changed my life, and it all started the day I stopped talking long enough to listen and allow the Spirit to touch my heart.

The Spirit still speaks to me. All I have to do is stop to listen—and then follow. **NE**

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