**DECEMBER 2017** 

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ANSWERED

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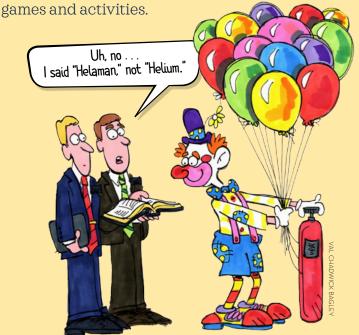
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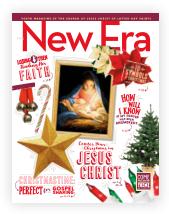
PERFECT for GOSI



If you looked through the contents page on the right and didn't find the words The Extra Smile, don't panic! The comics are still there. They've just been added to the Fun Stop pages, where you'll also find



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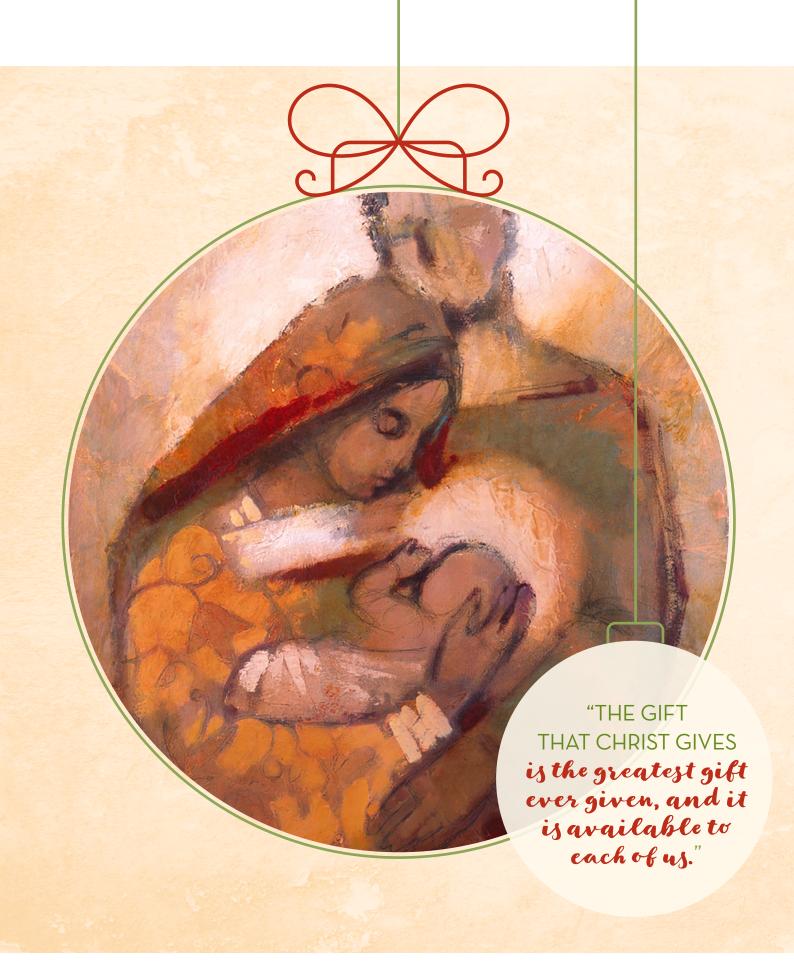
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By Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

# Jesus Christ THIS CHRISTMAS



t this time of year we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. His life was the greatest life ever lived.

### Focus on His Teachings

Our Savior's mission was to save us from death, to save us from sin, and to save us from ignorance. What did He teach us? And even more importantly, what have we learned? We live in peace and prosperity when we follow His teachings. In contrast, virtually every unhappiness and sorrow in the world is traceable to failures to follow His teachings.

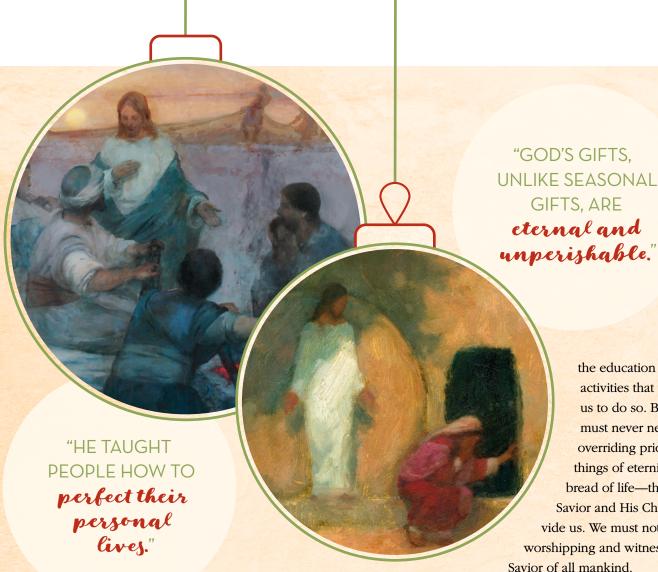
Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of the Son of God and also to remember His teachings.

What did Jesus teach the people of His day? The people He taught were in slavery to Rome. Yet he did not teach them the military arts or activities they could

use to free themselves from the yoke of Rome. He did not even teach them the principles of civil government. He said, "Render... unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

Infant mortality was high in the society in which He lived, and life expectancy was low because of a multitude of diseases. Did He teach them the principles of health? There was much hunger at that time. Did He teach them ways to improve agriculture or nutrition? The whole world needed His message, but He said He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And what He taught them was how to live their personal lives.

He taught them to be meek and humble and to hunger and thirst after righteousness (see Matthew 5:5–6; 23:12).



He taught them to love their enemies and bless them that cursed them, do good to them that hated them, and pray for them that despitefully used them and persecuted them (see Matthew 5:44).

He taught them that "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

He taught:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

Finally, He declared, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me

ye might have peace. In the world ve shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

He taught people how to perfect their personal lives. "Be ye therefore perfect," He taught, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

### Share the Gift Christ Gives

In this life we must choose between Jesus's way and the world's way. Of course we know that we must meet the requirements of the world in many ways, including the need to earn our daily bread and pursue

the education and other activities that will allow us to do so. But we must never neglect our overriding priority on the things of eternity—the bread of life—that the Savior and His Church provide us. We must not forget our worshipping and witnessing of the Savior of all mankind.

The gift that Christ gives is the greatest gift ever given, and it is available to each of us. That is the gift we should celebrate at this and every Christmas. Here I recall the words of our beloved Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926-2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In a Christmas message, he said:

"God's gifts, unlike seasonal gifts, are eternal and unperishable, constituting a continuing Christmas which is never over! These infinite gifts are made possible by the 'infinite atonement' (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:10-12). Without the 'infinite atonement' there would be no universal immortality,

nor could there be given the greatest gift which even God can give—eternal life! (D&C 6:13; 14:7)."1

Latter-day Saints are uniquely qualified to celebrate the mission of Jesus Christ throughout the year. We have the gift of the Holy Ghost, whose mission is to testify of the Father and the Son (see 3 Nephi 16:6). For that reason, we have a duty to testify like the shepherds, who, "when they had seen [what the angels described], they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (Luke 2:17).

### The Real Spirit of Christmas

We know whom we seek and we know why. We are children of a Father in Heaven who declared, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). And our Savior—the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Lord God of Israel—is fundamental to that work.

"THE SHEPHERDS OF OLD SOUGHT JESUS THE CHILD.

But we zeek Jesus the Christ." A few years ago, President Monson spoke these words:

"As we undertake our personal search for Jesus, aided and guided by the principle of prayer, it is fundamental that we have a clear concept of him whom we seek. The shepherds of old sought Jesus the child. But we seek Jesus the Christ, our Older Brother, our Mediator with the Father, our Redeemer, the Author of our salvation; he who was in the beginning with the Father; he who took upon himself the sins of the world and so willingly died that we might forever live. This is the Jesus

As President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995) taught us in his humble way:

"The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force.

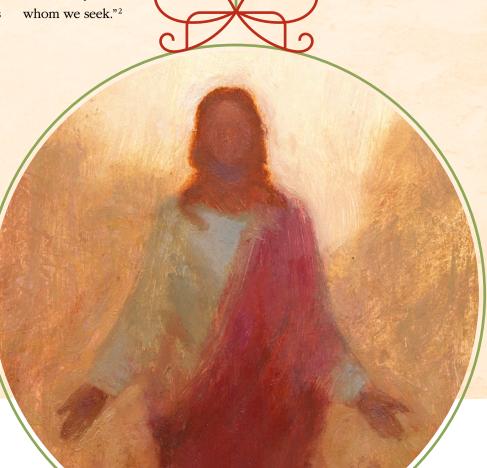
The real spirit of Christmas lies in the life and mission of the Master."

I pray that we will all emulate that life and celebrate that mission at this Christmastime. NE

From a Christmas address to the BYU
Management Society, given on December 9, 2015.

### NOTES

- 1. Neal A. Maxwell, *The Christmas Scene* (1994), 4.
- 2. Thomas S. Monson, "The Search for Jesus," Ensign, Dec. 1990, 5.
  - 3. Howard W. Hunter, "The Real Christmas," Ensign, Dec. 2005, 24.



What's Your Family's CHRISTMAS TRADITION?

Family traditions create memories and bridge gaps between generations.

### By Sarah Hanson

hen you hear the phrase "Christmas tradition," do you think of making a special dinner, going caroling, or hosting a family gift exchange? Or maybe you think of your funny neighbor who dresses up as Santa Claus each year, false beard and all? I know I do—especially that last one.

Do you also think of your family? Think about it—you probably have more traditions involving family than you realize! These traditions are an important part of celebrating the Christmas season. They create memories and provide a sense of family identity. And traditions not only connect you with your immediate family—they also bridge the gap between generations.

In the following stories, youth share how family traditions bring them closer to their families and the Savior. Christmas Temple Trip

Each year, my family goes to
Manti, Utah, USA. We cut
down a Christmas tree, we
watch the newest family
movie, and we go to the
Manti Temple. I love this tradition because I get to spend time
with family that I don't get to see

very often, like my great-grandma, greataunts, and second cousins. It is also special to me because I get to learn about my family history in the place where some of my ancestors lived and experienced trials that they overcame through the Savior.

The first time I went inside the Manti Temple was a spiritual experience for me. I could feel the Spirit so strongly as I performed saving ordinances for family members with my grandparents and great-grandma. I love this memory because it is a testimony to me that the gospel is true.

Anne R., 16, Utah, USA

### A GREAT BLESSING

"Being part of a family is a great blessing. Your family can provide you with companionship and happiness, help you learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and help you prepare for eternal life."

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 14.



### **Decorating Grandma's House**

My favorite Christmas tradition is decorating my grandparents' house.

My favorite memory from this
Christmas tradition is helping to decorate the tree each year.
The older grandchildren help the younger kids to place ornaments

on the higher branches until all the ornaments have been put up.

I like this tradition because it helps me spend time serving with my family as we help my grandparents. When I serve them, it helps me focus more on others and not on myself. It fills me with love for my family and for my Savior and brings me closer to them.

Aspen L., 15, Nevada, USA

### Remembering the Savior

Every year, my family does what we call a "Christmas Ceremony," where we review the events surrounding Christ's birth and His atoning sacrifice. Each year the ceremony is exactly the same, but I learn something new. Our tradition brings such a wonderful experience

into our home that brings our family together.

I love this tradition because we talk about the love of God and Christ for us. It brings the Spirit to the Christmas season. We celebrate Christ's birth and the great gift He gave to us through His Atonement. The tradition reminds me of that gift and how I can use it to become like Him.

I've gained a greater perspective from this tradition. At the very least, it has shown me that Christ loves me more than I can imagine. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are always there and always listening.

Matthew W., 16, Texas, USA

If we will build righteous traditions in our families, the light of the gospel can grow ever brighter ... from generation to

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922-2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 1990 general conference. **Secret Gifts** 

Every year, each member of my family picks another family member's name out of a hat and secretly gets a gift for that person. We first got the idea from the movie *Christmas for a Dollar*. We tried it, and now it's been a tradition for the past couple years.

This past year, I picked my brother's name. At first, I thought, "Oh, great," because we had

been butting heads. But looking for a gift he would like really humbled me. After Christmas, we were best friends again.

I like our tradition because it changed my perspective on Christmas. I used to always focus on what gifts I'd get and what I wanted, but after we started this tradition, it made me focus more on thinking about my family members and the looks on their faces as they opened their gifts. I put more time and thought into giving gifts. Even before Christmastime, I try to look for things my family members will like and what I could get them.

Makenna B., 16, Oklahoma, USA

Traditions not only connect you with your immediate family—they also bridge the gap between generations.

**Christmas Scavenger Hunt** 

My great-grandma didn't have much money growing up, so she and her family did scavenger hunts for Christmas because the only presents they could afford were little things like pencils and erasers. The scavenger hunt made up for not getting a lot of big or expensive gifts.

The tradition has been passed down, and now every Christmas, my family does a scavenger hunt. My siblings and I make scavenger hunts for each other and hide clues—I even hid a clue on my dog once. I like it not only because it's fun, but because it brings my family together and I get to connect with my great-grandmother, even though I've never met her.

This tradition helps us understand that Christmas isn't about the presents you get. It's about Christ, His birth, and everything He's done for us. I know Christ's Atonement is not just used for repentance; we can use it because Christ knows exactly what we're going through. We're never alone, and Jesus knows what we're going through because He went through it too. **NE** 

Rachel B., 16, California, USA



### I wanted to be with my family at Christmas, not with somone I didn't know. By Lauren Hanson sighed as I stared out the window at the freshly fallen snow, envisioning my siblings and myself building a larger-thanlife snowman, laughing and tackling it to the ground moments later. But it was just wishful thinking this year—my family was not here for Christmas. My dad had to work, and my siblings, who were all older than me and married, were spending the holiday with their in-laws. It was just my mom and me that Christmas Eve. My mom, ever the optimist, gave me an encouraging smile from across the room while she prepared our Christmas Eve dinner. Despite her efforts to make things feel normal without the rest of our family there, our house felt empty and lonely. 10 New Era



Shortly before dinner, a knock at our door signaled that our special guest had arrived. I opened the door to see a very shy, elderly widow hesitantly standing out in the cold. My mom had invited her over to join us for our Christmas Eve feast, and I could tell she felt as awkward as I did.

The normal clamor and jubilant conversation that usually filled the room during dinner was instead replaced by a mellow discussion. At one point, I looked around the room at the empty chairs and felt like crying. Just then the widow asked, "Do you miss your family?"

I nodded and looked into her eyes. Then I sensed it: *she misses her family too!* 

I suddenly had an outpouring of love for this widow. She understood me. My attitude did a 180-degree turn as I realized I wasn't alone. We shared a common bond of missing our families. This Christmas was far from normal, but sharing that moment with her brought me a new perspective—one filled with gratitude and love!

Later that evening we watched *Joy to the World* as part of our usual Christmas tradition. Sure, I had seen the film a dozen times, but this time it held new meaning for me. The Holy Ghost testified to me that the Savior, Jesus Christ, lived and died so that we might live again. Because of Him, I get to have my family forever. It didn't matter so much that my family was not there that Christmas Eve—I had an eternity to spend with them!

I'm so grateful for the evening I shared with that sweet widow. We all feel lonely at times, but we can find joy knowing that our Savior will never abandon us and that He has provided a way for us to have everlasting happiness and to have our loved ones with us forever. NE

The author lives in Utah, USA.







### By Charlotte Larcabal

Church Magazines

ou love your friends. You love the gospel. And you have no idea how to put the two together.

If this sounds like you, you're not alone. Lots of people want to share the gospel with their friends but are terrified about seeming pushy or weird. Sharing the gospel can be nerve-racking.

But never fear! Even if you've never mentioned the Church to anyone before, your holiday season can be filled with tons of normal, easy, and totally doable missionary moments. How?

The first thing to do is pray. Try asking Heavenly Father for opportunities to share the gospel.

Pray to know who to talk to or invite and pray for the courage to actually do it!

The second thing is to start. And start *now*. Here's a secret: Missionary work is *so easy* around Christmas. Why? We've got eight reasons.

EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD PARTY.

Chances are, your ward or maybe even your family will be planning a Christmas party. Invite a friend to join in on the fun! There will probably be a song or a message that's all about the Savior, and it could be just what your friend needs to hear.

INVITING PEOPLE TO CHURCH AT CHRISTMASTIME IS TOTALLY NORMAL.

There's something about Christmas that makes people want to go to church! This is a great time to let your friends know that they are welcome to see how the members of your church worship the Savior.



### **EVERY STEP OF THE WAY**

T had been talking to a neighbor who is I very interested in the gospel. I invited her to Mutual, but something always kept her from coming. One night I realized that I had not prayed about it. Right away, I knelt down and prayed for the Holy Ghost to be with me and to guide me. After I prayed, I waited for an answer but received none. Puzzled, I tried again, but this time I felt prompted to thank God for all the blessings I have. I also prayed that I could help others realize the many blessings they have and all the blessings they could have thanks to the Savior's power. I felt strongly that no matter how long it takes, my Father in Heaven will be with me every step of the way, lending me patience and blessing me more. Soon after those prayers, my friend came to Mutual with me!

Elora C., 14, Arizona, USA





### MIGHT NOT SEEM LIKE MUCH

while back, my friend from church moved away, and I was left the only Mormon at my  $m{\hbar}$  school. My Sunday School teacher had recently talked to us about how we could share the gospel with our friends. I prayed to know how I could do this, and I definitely received an answer. I was talking with one of my friends, and we started talking about his stance on dating. I explained that I don't believe in dating until the age of 16, and to my surprise, he had some of the same standards. It might not seem like much, but it was really an answer to my prayers, and my testimony of prayer has been strengthened.

David S., 13, Texas, USA

### CHRISTMAS TREATS ARE THE PERFECT WAY TO MAKE AN INVI-TATION OR A GOSPEL MESSAGE A LITTLE SWEETER.

A plate of cookies along with your favorite scripture? Some fudge and a quote about Christmas? Yes, please!

### FAMILIES TEND TO BE GATHERED TOGETHER.

Spending time with family is a big part of Christmas traditions, so it should be pretty easy to talk about your family, your holiday traditions, and your beliefs about families.

### LIGHTS AND COCOA ARE ALL THE RAGE.

Drink cocoa or check out the Christmas decorations around town for family home evening or a Mutual activity. Holiday activities are fun for everyone, and it's a great way for a friend to see how you live your religion.



CHRISTMAS IS A CELEBRATION OF THE SAVIOR.



Bring the Christmas spirit to social media by sharing "A Savior Is Born—Christmas Video"! How many of your Facebook friends would love to see a little angel help a grumpy janitor in "The Reason Behind Christmas" or a sweet story about selflessness in "The Coat: A Story of Charity"? Search LDS.org or the Mormon Channel for these and other great Christmas messages to share.

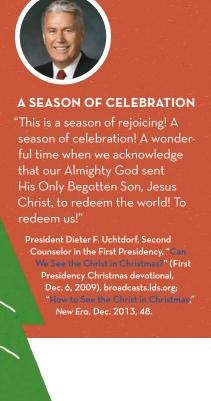
Many Christians will be a bit more focused on the Savior around Christmas. In addition to sharing daily service ideas, Mormon.org will also highlight the Savior's teachings and ways to "Light the World." That might be exactly what your friends are looking for to celebrate Christ at Christmas.

Service is an amazing way to be a missionary, and there are many opportunities to serve others around the holidays. You could visit a nursing home, sing Christmas carols to a neighbor, or donate goods to a local shelter. You can find service ideas for the first 25 days in December by visiting Mormon.org or pages 24–25 of this issue.

### WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

Because of the gospel, you know about Jesus Christ and all the hope that He brings. That's an amazing gift, and it's one you can give to others. If you sincerely ask Heavenly Father for opportunities to share the gospel, He will inspire you to know who you can talk to. Christmas is a time of sharing, of giving, and of remembering Jesus Christ. **NE** 







By Elder Terence M. Vinson Of the Seventy

The SPIRIT of





We can feel our Savior's love each day of our lives.

hen I was a boy, my father gave me a Christmas present I will never forget. It was a green Matchbox® racing car, which I absolutely loved. This car was the favorite thing I received that year. I played with it all the time. Then one day I got angry—I now can't even remember why—and I threw my cherished car in a fit of anger. It landed in a wisteria bush.

In Australia, Christmastime is in the summertime. These were long, hot days and the wisteria bush was thick with its full summer growth.

I soon calmed down enough to realize I had better find my car. I looked for hours. Days. Weeks, even. But I never saw my car again. It was forever lost in the tangles of the thick bush. I felt terrible! My father gave me something because he loved me, and I threw it away. Even today, when I think about this experience, I feel distressed at how I rejected this gift given in love.

### **CHRISTMAS**

Similarly, we sometimes reject a gift from our Heavenly Father or from our Savior. We can in particular reject the Savior's atoning sacrifice in small ways.

In order to not reject this priceless gift, we must keep our focus on the Savior at all times and not only during the Christmas season. Here are some suggestions for how you can keep your focus sharp throughout the year.

### DAILY PRAYER

One way to keep our focus on the Savior is by communing with our Heavenly Father. Our daily prayers must be more than merely speaking words. You need to *really* talk with your Heavenly Father. In your daily life, when you talk to a friend or family member every day, the closeness you develop is natural and deep. It's the same with our Father in Heaven.

Ask God what He wants you to do that day. Ask Him who needs your help.

Listen for responses and promptings,

both during your prayer and throughout the day. Then act accordingly. Sometimes it helps to center our thoughts on what we're thankful for. Every so often I remind myself to offer a prayer of nothing but gratitude. These tend to be the longest prayers that I offer. As you consider the blessings you have received, the loved ones in your life, and the Savior's Atonement, you think of more and more things to be grateful for. This process does something to you too. It turns your heart away from yourself and toward others.

### DAILY SCRIPTURE STUDY

Studying the scriptures each day helps to center our thoughts on Jesus Christ. There is a difference between reading the scriptures and studying them. If our intent is to know what the Lord wants to teach us, we learn more. Our Father in Heaven can still teach us new things even as we read familiar words. Often an answer will come from a verse we've read 100 times before.

There have been many occasions when I'll think, "I've read this verse so many times in the past, but it wasn't marvelous before. Now it's marvelous!"

When it comes to scripture study, we can sometimes make a mistake by always setting an arbitrary goal. Then our focus becomes reading a certain number of verses or pages a day. For me, I get more out of the scriptures when there's no deadline. Sometimes I'll take several days on a chapter. Or sometimes I'll use a whole study day on only a few verses. We need to think about why the words are there, and why they are important to us as individuals.

### **DATLY FOCUS**

Daily prayer and daily scripture study are only two tools among many that can help us to remember our Savior, which we covenant to do as we partake of the sacrament each week. As we strive to remember Jesus Christ always, we treasure the precious gift of His Atonement instead of rejecting it. May we keep our daily focus on the Savior sharp, at Christmastime and throughout the year. **NE** 





# THE MAGIC OF Christmas Carols

### A CAROL FOR JOAQUÍN

aroling isn't much of an Argentine Christmas tradition. In fact, Christmas here is quite different from the traditional snowy scene you might think of. Because we live in the Southern Hemisphere, Christmas always makes *me* think of a large fruit salad!

So when my parents suggested we try caroling as a family, my siblings and I felt a mix of confusion and excitement. We weren't sure of our musical abilities, so we decided to make and bring some cookies to give the people we visited a reason to smile, at least.

A man named Joaquín had been a part of our ward for as long as I could remember. That December he had gotten very sick and could no longer attend sacrament meeting. My dad and brothers were among those who took the sacrament to him in the hospital after church on Sundays.

On the Sunday before Christmas, our whole family jumped into the car to visit Joaquín, hoping we would bring a warm Christmas spirit. When we arrived, the nurse directed us to his bed. He had his scriptures and a hymnal at his bedside, as if he had been expecting us.

He was so obviously happy that we were there, and we all immediately felt such love for him. My brothers prepared, blessed, and passed the sacrament. Before leaving, we sang the beautiful melody in "Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains": "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, goodwill to men" (*Hymns*, no. 212).

Certainly it was peace and goodwill that entered our hearts as he called us "angels" and thanked us for visiting, when all we had wanted was to bring those feelings to him.

Julia G., Buenos Aires, Argentina

### THE LAST STOP OF THE NIGHT

t was Christmas Eve, and I did *not* want to be out caroling.

However, my mom thought it would be fun if the family piled into our old car and drove down icy neighborhood roads to sing carols to three widows in our ward, and my dad was happy to support her suggestion.

I felt awkward. Who would want to hear us? I would die of embarrassment if I saw anyone I knew. Grumbling and sulking, I crawled into the back seat with my brother and sister.

The drive to the first apartment was only a few blocks away. Nobody answered. We drove to the second stop. Again, no answer. My spirits began to rise.

As we pulled into the narrow driveway of our last stop, I thought, "Please let no one be home."

It was now dark outside. As my mother knocked and waited, the front porch remained dark. Good. Soon we would be home, where I could escape into my bedroom.

Suddenly the porch light snapped on and the door opened. I was so embarrassed. I felt certain we had disturbed her.

"Come in, come in," the small, wiry woman said. She pointed to her old upright piano.

"Do you play?" she asked my mother. "Let's sing around the piano."

Her warmth and enthusiasm

softened my heart. Maybe she didn't mind so much that we were there. We had sung a few songs when she offered us hot chocolate.

"Can you come help?" she asked me. As we entered the kitchen, I was stunned to see a beautiful table set that was delightfully decorated for Christmas. It was so festive! At each place setting was a small, carefully wrapped package.

"Who is this for?" I asked. I knew she lived alone.

"For my neighbors," she explained.
"Every Christmas I invite those
like myself—those with no family
nearby—over for Christmas breakfast
and a little treat."

The idea exploded in my 13-yearold brain. Admiration filled my stubborn heart. How beautiful this room was. How beautiful this petite older sister was. How beautiful was my mother to bring us here. At last I was happy.

At church the next month this sister thanked us again for visiting. She told us we were the only ones that year who had remembered *her*. A few months later she passed away unexpectedly.

I look back at that Christmas and feel thankful for wonderful parents and for this older sister, each of whom wanted to bring Christmas cheer to others. **NE** 

Brooke K., Utah, USA



## BEA DOER!

The best way to show your love for the Savior, at Christmastime or any other time, is to go and do what He taught.

espite the festivities, fun, and material distractions of the holidays, most of us still hear a lot about the Savior at Christmastime. We *hear* about shepherds rushing to see a holy baby born in a stable. We *hear* of Wise Men guided by a new star. We *hear* carols about choirs of angels and joy to the world.

What we *hear* should create feelings of reverence, respect, and happiness. But if all we do is *hear*, aren't we missing something?

### **HOW TO BE A DOER**

In the New Testament, James teaches a principle that may be especially important at this time of year: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." In fact, James says, those who hear but don't do quickly forget, while those who hear and do are blessed (see James 1:22–25). So what can you do to be a doer?

Here's a simple way to begin.







### 25 DAYS, 25 WAYS TO LIGHT THE WORLD

For each December day until Christmas, a teaching of Jesus Christ is highlighted, followed by a question and a suggestion.

1 FRI

### MATTHEW 10:8

"Freely ye have received, freely give."

What can you sacrifice today to make someone else's life better?

Put down the electronics and spend some quality time with family or friends.

5 TUE

**MATTHEW 15:4** 

"Honour thy father and mother."

Need some meaningful advice about something you're dealing with?

Ask your parents. You can benefit from their wisdom.

6 WED

MATTHEW 7:1

"Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Do you find yourself thinking negative things about others?

Instead of saying mean things behind people's backs, say nice things.

7 THU

**MARK 10:14** 

"Suffer the little children to come unto me."

How could you make a child's day?

Make plans and take time to help a child feel special.

8 FRI

MATTHEW 5:44

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."

Know someone who's difficult to get along with?

For an entire week, focus on being kind instead of right.

12 TUE

MATTHEW 5:4

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Do you know someone who's recently lost a loved one?

Offer to provide comfort and a listening ear.

13 WED

MATTHEW 7:12

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Have you seen someone get bullied on social media?

Reach out to them today and send some positive vibes in their direction.

14 THU

MATTHEW 6:21

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Are you spending time on the things you value most?

Clear some space on your calendar to invest in some one-on-one time with someone you love.

15 FRI

MATTHEW 5:7

"Blessed are the merciful."

Know a family struggling to make ends meet?

Come up with a plan to make their Christmas special and then fulfill your plan.

19 TUE

MATTHEW 5:12

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad."

When was the last time you celebrated someone else's accomplishments?

Find somebody who doesn't receive thanks that often, and make their day amazing.

20 WED

**LUKE 12:15** 

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Who has made your life more meaningful?

Give the gift of time. Plan something to do together with them and make a new memory.

21 THU

MATTHEW 6:14

"Forgive men their trespasses."

Does someone really get on your nerves?

Write down all of that person's positive qualities, and then try to imagine how God sees that person. 22 FRI

3 NEPHI 27:21

"That which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do."

Who is the most Christlike person you know?

Send a note of appreciation expressing your gratitude for their example.



### **MATTHEW 25:35**

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink."

Have you ever been really hungry?

Donate some of your favorite nonperishable items to a food bank in your area.



### **MATTHEW 12:12**

"Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days."

How can you make better use of your time on Sundays?

Identify something from a talk you heard at church that you can do to help someone in need. Then do it.



### **MATTHEW 22:39**

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Who in the neighborhood is forgotten during Christmas?

Pay them a visit and bring them some homemade goodies.



### **MATTHEW 25:36**

"I was sick, and ye visited me."

Did you know that many of those in nursing homes never have a visitor during their stay?

Visit a senior center today and provide some muchneeded attention. 10 SUN

### **JOHN 5:39**

"Search the scriptures."

Do you have a favorite scripture?

Share it with friends and family on social media.

MON

### **MATTHEW 25:35**

"I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

How can you help refugees in your area?

Visit IWasAStranger.lds.org and get involved.

16 SAT

### **MATTHEW 25:36**

"[I was] naked, and ye clothed me."

Do you or those around you have more than you need to stay warm?

Collect old (or new) winter coats, gloves, and hats for your local homeless shelter. 17 SUN

### 3 NEPHI 18:21-22

"Pray in your families. . . . Ye shall meet together oft."

Has it been a while since you came together as a family?

Sunday is a great day for family time. Schedule time to share your favorite Christmas memories with each other. 18 MON

### 3 NEPHI 18:15

"Ye must watch and pray always."

Has something small or big worked out for you today?

Recognize God's blessings by giving thanks to Him.

23 SAT

### **MATTHEW 25:36**

"I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Does someone you know seem discouraged?

Go for a walk with them. Spend most of your time just listening. 24 SUN

### **MATTHEW 21:13**

"It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer."

When was the last time you prayed with your family?

Pray with your family over dinner or before you go to bed tonight.

25 MON

### MATTHEW 5:16

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

What's one way Jesus Christ has been an example in your life?

On social media, share one of Christ's teachings that has blessed you.

Find additional ideas at Mormon.org.

# TWO GUESTS for Christians

### By Richard M. Romney

Church Magazines

ur family loves to celebrate Christmas. December 25 is, of course, the day we remember the birth, life, and Atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ. But just before Christmas Day, my family also takes time to remember someone else's birth, someone who has helped bring us all closer to the Savior in many ways—the Prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith was born on December 23, 1805. Our family adds another spiritual element to our holiday by studying what he learned and taught about Jesus Christ. We figuratively invite two guests into our home for the holidays—the Savior and the Latter-day Prophet who bore witness of Him.

Here are some activities that can help you remember them, too.

### What Joseph Saw

*Message.* We know more about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ because of what Joseph saw and heard during the First Vision.

Activity. With your family or on your own, read or watch a video about the First Vision. Write in your journal about what the First Vision teaches us about Jesus Christ.



Our family's holiday celebration is always more memorable because we include both of them.



### Trying to Be Like Jesus

Message. Joseph Smith taught that through study, faith, and charity, we can become like the Savior (see Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, chapter 37).

Activity. Create a list of attributes that define the Savior, like obedience, humility, faith, and courage. Watch for times when others demonstrate these attributes. When they do, offer them a compliment by telling them you noticed.

### Resources:

- The video "Christlike Attributes" at lds.org/youth/video/christlike-attributes
- "Quiz: Which Christlike Attribute Should You Work On?" lds.org/youth/article/quiz-which-christlikeattribute-should-you-work-on

### A Book of Mormon Christmas

Message. The Book of Mormon contains many references to the birth of Jesus Christ.

Activity. Recount the Christmas story using stories from the Book of Mormon, remembering that we have the Book of Mormon because of Joseph Smith.

### Resources:

- "Why We Need the Book of Mormon," lds.org/youth/article/why-we-need-the-book-ofmormon
- Prophecies of Jesus Christ's birth and ministry: 1 Nephi 10:4; 11:13-33; 2 Nephi 17:14; 26:3
- Testimonies of Jesus Christ's birth and ministry: 2 Nephi 25:26; Mosiah 16:6-8; Alma 7:9-13
- Fulfillment of prophecies about Jesus Christ's birth: Helaman 14:2-7, 12; 3 Nephi 1:13-15, 21



# TENSYMBOLS OF CHRISTIANS

LIGHTS. TREES. STARS. BELLS. EVER WONDER WHAT ALL THESE CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS MIGHT MEAN?

By Charlotte Larcabal and Eric B. Murdock

Church Magazines

ith all the hype of the holidays, you're sure to see Christmas decorations everywhere. It's a huge part of celebrating Christmas! But have you ever thought about how some of those traditional decorations can help us get in touch with the true spirit of the season? If we look at them in the right way, we can allow them to help us remember Jesus Christ in our Christmas celebrations as Christians have done for centuries.

## THE STAR

IT'S HARD TO GO ANYWHERE DURING CHRISTMAS WITHOUT SEEING STARS HANG-ING FROM STREET LAMPS OR SITTING ON TOP OF CHRISTMAS TREES. THE STAR IS ONE OF THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE SYM-BOLS OF THE HOLIDAY. IT REPRESENTS THE STAR THAT APPEARED IN THE SKY WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN. FIVE YEARS BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN, SAMUEL THE LAMANITE PROPHESIED OF THE SIGNS OF THE SAVIOR'S BIRTH, INCLUDING THE APPEARANCE OF A BRIGHT NEW STAR (SEE HELAMAN 14:5). THE STAR LED THE WISE MEN TO JESUS (SEE MATTHEW 2:2) AND REMINDS US TO FOLLOW THE LIGHT OF THE SAVIOR JUST AS THE WISE MEN FOLLOWED THE LIGHT OF THE STAR TO FIND HIM.

### LIGHTS AND CANDLES

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "Many of our memorable and enduring Christmas traditions include different kinds of lights—lights on trees, lights in and on our homes, candles on our tables. May the beautiful lights of every holiday season remind us of Him who is the source of all light." <sup>1</sup>

Christmas lights can remind us that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. They can also remind us to be lights to others and to help others come unto Christ.

For centuries, candles have brought brightness and warmth to the season. Candles can also represent the light of the star that appeared at the birth of the Savior, and like other lights, remind us that He is the Light of the World. Did you know candles were often used to decorate Christmas trees before electric lights were invented?







### **WREATHS**

TRADITIONALLY, WREATHS ARE MADE OF EVERGREENS SUCH AS PINE BRANCHES OR HOLLY. THEIR CIRCULAR SHAPE CAN REPRESENT ETERNITY (SEE D&C 35:1). WREATHS HUNG ON DOORS OR IN WINDOWS ARE LIKE A SYMBOLIC INVITATION FOR THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS TO FILL OUR HOMES WITH THE JOY OF THE SEASON.

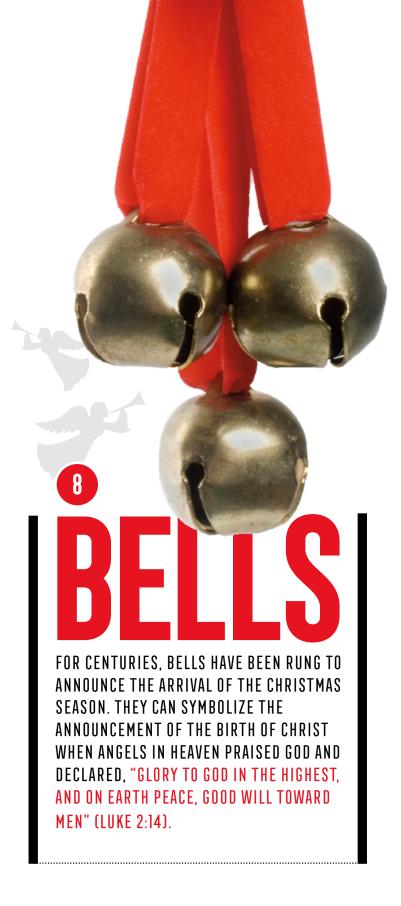






Because its red berries and prickly green leaves last all year round, holly is used as a Christmas decoration all over the world. The sharp edges of the holly leaf can remind us of the crown of thorns placed on the Savior's head (see Matthew 27:29). The red holly berry can remind us of His blood shed for all of us. Christians have long seen these symbols. In fact, in some Scandinavian languages, the word for holly is "Christ-thorn."





### NOTES

- 1. David A. Bednar, "The Light and the Life of the World," 2015 First Presidency Christmas devotional, broadcasts.lds.org.
- 2. Neal A. Maxwell, Apr. 1987 general conference.

### STOCKINGS

If you think about it, it's a bit strange for someone to put goodies in your old sock. But like many Christmas traditions, the tradition of Christmas stockings comes from an old legend. A long time ago (so the story goes), a poor man had three daughters and couldn't afford to give them a dowry (money or goods given to the groom's family by the bride's family). In those days, it was very hard for a woman to get married without a dowry. A Christian bishop named Nicholas heard about the problem and wanted to help, but the man refused to accept money. One night, Nicholas threw three balls made of pure gold in through the open window of the man's house. Each one landed in a stocking hung by the fire to dry. The next morning, each daughter found a gold ball in her stocking. With this bounty, they were all able to get married.

Stockings can remind us of the importance of service. The greatest example of service is Jesus Christ. He always "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Take some time to think about the Savior's selfless acts of service. How can you give Christlike service and show kindness to others?

kindness to others?







My name is Fabian R. I'm 16 years old, and I'm from the Netherlands.

Hello! I like learning about programming and 3D game development, and I'm taking guitar lessons. I'm also the only Church member at my school.

When I was younger, I always thought the Church must be true because my parents believed it. But then in middle school, I had a lot of questions. I really asked myself, "Why do I believe?" I prayed with faith and felt my belief grow. I eventually became confident that the Church was true.

One of the most beautiful things here in the Netherlands is that, though we may not have a lot of youth, the youth that are here are really connected with each other. We often organize activities together outside of our Church activities. It's very nice to have friends in the Church-we keep each other there.

I sometimes get caught up in the negative things in my life, but then I realize all my blessings. I have the gospel and a wonderful family. I have great friends. Those things may seem small, but they are actually the biggest blessings in my life.

For more stories like this one from the Netherlands, go to **@LDSYouth** on Instagram. And send your own photos and testimonies to newera@ldschurch.org.



## Finding Her Faith Again

The way back isn't always easy, but it's always there.

#### By David Dickson

Church Magazines

he words "[Falling] away into forbidden paths and [becoming] lost" (1 Nephi 8:28) probably don't sound very hopeful to most of us as we read them in the Book of Mormon. Quite the opposite, really. It's all too easy to imagine a sort of gloomy finality for this group of people described in Lehi's vision of the tree of life—the group who tasted the fruit and then left it behind.

But Te Oranoa M., age 17, from New Zealand has a different take on things. "What inspires me about this scripture," she says, "is that it doesn't say they are lost forever."

What an incredible insight! And it's one that comes from personal experience. "I, myself, fell away from the Church," she says, "but I have been able to come back."

#### **Fading Away**

Te Oranoa grew up in the Church and talks about gaining her own testimony and even setting spiritual goals. "But that testimony grew cold," she says.

In some ways, she found common ground with Amulek, particularly in the way he described himself to the people of Ammonihah: "I did harden my heart, for I was called many times

and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know" (Alma 10:6).

For Te Oranoa, that scripture hits close to home. "Just like Amulek, I knew all these spiritual things, and the Spirit was telling me to do certain things, but because I was being a bit stubborn and a bit prideful, I wouldn't do them. Afterward, my testimony kind of faded away."

In the end, Amulek's story would become more than merely familiar to Te Oranoa. It would also become a turning point on the road back.

#### Finding a Warm Memory

Even during the time when her faith had grown cold, she could still remember sweet experiences from before. Te Oranoa never forgot how she'd felt when attending the temple with her youth group or going to a youth conference.

"There was a pattern," she says.

"I'd feel really good when I came to church, but I didn't feel good when I missed church."

There finally came a day when Te Oranoa decided to see if she could connect with those good feelings again. The first thing she did was to read through recent general conference addresses.

An October 2016 general conference address, "Learn from Alma and Amulek," by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, woke something in Te Oranoa's soul. She recognized a lot of her own life and feelings as President Uchtdorf described how Amulek's faith had faded. She also remembered more strongly than



ever the happiness she had enjoyed when her faith was stronger. Instantly, she wanted to make some changes.

"I was hoping to find something to reignite that fire of my testimony," she explains, "so I read President Uchtdorf's talk, and yes, I felt on fire!"

### **Hoping for Eternity**

Te Oranoa's path back to faith hasn't always been easy, but there is a particular light at the end of the tunnel that keeps her going: the hope of an eternal family.

"Families can be together forever," she says.

"That's my biggest dream, my biggest hope in life. Whenever I want to learn about something, or I find a doctrine hard to understand, I try and relate it back to eternal families. For example, why is Jesus Christ's Atonement important to me? For one thing, I need His Atonement in my life so I can be worthy to enter the temple and be sealed to my family for all eternity."

#### **Turning to God**

It's perhaps worth remembering that the people in Lehi's vision who fell away after tasting the fruit did, in fact, still *taste* it. They must have known of its goodness, even if only briefly. And they can discover it again. That's the hope Te Oranoa clings to, for herself and for others.

"You don't have to keep going down those forbidden paths for the rest of your life," she says. "You can turn back to the Lord whenever you want." **NE** 







This year, as you've focused on and lived the 2017 Mutual theme to "Ask of God," you've had incredible and faith-building experiences.

Here are just a few shared by youth around the world.

As soon as I heard this year's theme was "Ask of God," I thought there was no way I would receive an answer. I believed I was completely hopeless, so why even waste my time? However a small voice of hope whispered to me, saying, maybe this is it. This could be my chance to seek and receive the answers I've been looking for. So with a bit of hope built up inside of me I began to ask of God.

I asked Him how I could be happy even with the extremely unfortunate circumstances of my life, and why would anyone even expect me to be happy?

It took me a few months before I realized I had received my answer, but it wasn't exactly the answer I had been expecting when I first started to pray about it.

I was waiting for my prayers to be answered by having my life somehow magically become possible to live happily, but instead something better happened. A seed of faith in the gospel had been planted within my heart.

As that seed grew and my testimony became stronger, I felt peace, I felt hope, I felt my Savior's love. And that's when I received my answer.

I realized that "the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives."

Although the problems and circumstances in my life didn't change, the focus of my life did.

I began to start being involved in the Church and focusing my life on the gospel again. And that's when I felt and still feel true happiness, even with my struggles.

Getting through each day has never been easier now that I rely on God and invite the Spirit to be with me. I didn't just get an answer to my prayers; I now have a strong testimony. I now have day-to-day support, I now see God's love more than ever, and above all I get to experience pure joy in life.

Ashley B., Texas, USA

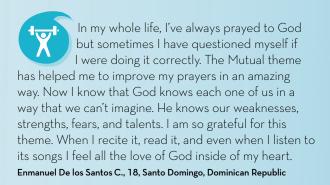
I wanted to feel the Spirit more in my life, so I prayed to Heavenly Father and asked how I could do that. I was in a quiet place and I opened the Book of Mormon.

I looked up "Holy Ghost" in the index. I found Alma 13:28, which says, "But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit." This was a beautiful answer to my prayer. The answer to my prayer was prayer!

As I tried to humbly come before the Lord in prayer and ask for the Spirit, I was able to feel it more in my life. I felt like I had more opportunities to serve, and I felt more connected to Heavenly Father throughout my day.

Even though this was a simple answer to my simple question, it helped strengthen my testimony that when we ask in faith, we will receive the wisdom we need from God.

Olivia T., 13, Hawaii, USA

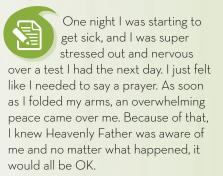


I've been going to church my whole life. I've been challenged to read the Book of Mormon and pray to know if it's true what seems like a thousand times. But I've never actually done it before. I had this mind-set where I thought I had to set aside a perfect night, and nothing else could be going on in my life to distract me. I was also scared that I wouldn't get an answer. But after going to youth conference and hearing all about "Ask of God" so many times, I decided to just try it.

It was a random school night, and I asked God to help me know if the Book of Mormon was true, and then I started reading where I'd left off a few weeks ago. I started to get this feeling of calmness, and a sort of feeling that I already knew it was true. But then I started doubting, wondering whether my brain was making it up because I wanted an answer so badly. I felt really frustrated, but then I looked down at the next verse, which was 2 Nephi 29:10, and it said, "Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written."

The Spirit hit me so strongly, and it felt like Heavenly Father was speaking directly to me through that verse. I know that the Book of Mormon is true, and that God will answer our prayers. We don't have to set aside a "perfect night" to ask Him.

Rebekah C., 16, Shanghai, China



Anna C., 16, Montana, USA

I had a question that I prayed about, and I soon realized I was just waiting for an answer and wasn't doing anything to recieve it. So I started reading and studying the scriptures, and I eventually did receive my answer through the Spirit.

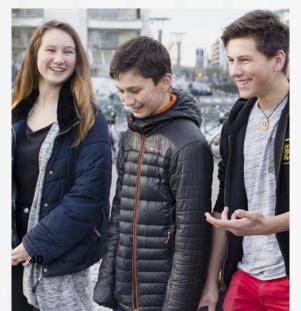
Elena B., 17, Arizona, USA













### 2018 Mutual Theme

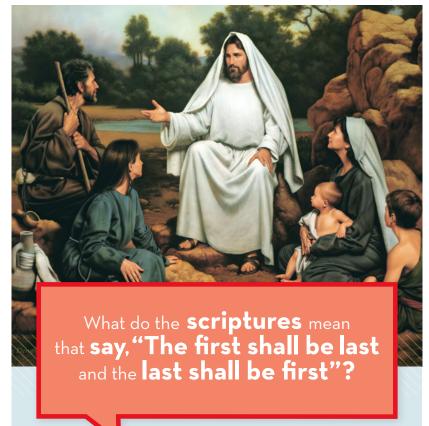
As this year draws to a close, you can get a jump start thinking about next year's Mutual theme, Doctrine and Covenants 19:23: "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me." **NE** 

# Why did Heavenly Father let the Great Apostasy happen?

postasy means to turn away from the Lord and His gospel. Throughout history there have been many times when more people chose wickedness than righteousness. When this happens, people often live without prophets or priesthood authority for a time. The Great Apostasy happened after people rejected and tried to change the pure truths and organization of the Church established by the Savior.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained: "Our Heavenly Father loves all of His children, and He wants them all to have the blessings of the gospel in their lives. Spiritual light is not lost because God turns His back on His children. Rather, spiritual darkness results when His children turn their collective backs on Him. It is a natural consequence of bad choices made by individuals, communities, countries, and entire civilizations. . . .

"In every dispensation, God's loving desire to bless His children is manifest in the miraculous restoration of the gospel truth to the earth through living prophets. The Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith in the early 1800s is only the most recent example" (Apr. 2009 general conference). NE



hen the Savior used this phrase, "the first" meant those who self-righteously assert their superiority yet reject the Savior and His gospel. "The last" meant His humble followers who make great sacrifices for the gospel (see Mark 10:28–31; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 10:30–31 [in Mark 10:31, footnote a]). In a general sense, "the first" are the privileged, prestigious, and selfish who get ahead in this life while defying God's commandments. But they will receive condemnation in the life to come. "The last," though rejected by the world, will receive a great reward in heaven.

This phrase has also been used to describe the pattern through which the Savior reveals Himself and His gospel. When He came to earth, He came among the Jews, or His original covenant people, and later the gospel was preached to non-Jews (Gentiles). With the Restoration, He revealed the gospel first among the Gentiles, and it will eventually go to the Jews (see 1 Nephi 13:42; Jacob 5:63; Ether 13:4–12). NE

## "I've been praying TOT something important, but I don't know if I have received an answer. How will I recognize it?"

eceiving answers to prayers has been described as a process: first you study your question in your mind; then you ask God if your answer is right. If your answer is right, the Lord will "speak peace to your mind" (D&C 6:23).

But what if you don't feel an overwhelming sense of peace? Or what if you feel like you have an answer, but you're not sure if it's you or the Holy Ghost?

According to Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our desire, worthiness, and preparation." It doesn't always come suddenly; most of the time it comes "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30), and often you have to take a step in one direction even before you feel like you have a full answer. Sometimes you might not get an answer at all—that's when you need to act anyway with faith that God will answer when the time is right.

If you're worried about whether your answer is coming from you or from the Holy Ghost, remember that the best answer will be one that "inviteth and enticeth [you] to do good, and to love God, and to serve him" (Moroni 7:13). NE

1. David A. Bednar, Apr. 2011 general conference.



### Decide and Wait for the Spirit

One summer I didn't feel like the Lord had given me an answer

about an important decision. I had prayed sincerely every day to know His will for me, and I told Him what I desired to do. Still without a distinct answer, I made my decision. I immediately felt the Spirit witnessing to me that the decision I made would help me grow and become more like my Father in Heaven. Sometimes we need to act to receive an answer—Heavenly Father respects our agency and our righteous desires. If we are living worthily, His Spirit will guide us through our desires because they will be aligned with His.

Amanda H., 16, Utah, USA

#### Pray for Help

I have prayed and received answers for many things, but the instances that stand out the most are the ones regarding schoolwork. Prior to an exam, I would pray to be calm and to be able to recall the information I had studied. Many times I remembered whole paragraphs of information that I know I never would have been able to remember without His help. He has blessed my life dearly, and I value the power of prayer and His influence I feel through it.

Emily B., 18, Queensland, Australia





Be Patient and Observant

A while ago, I challenged myself to pray for service oppor-

tunities. I thought of ways I could help others, but I did not receive what I believed was a prompting. I was getting discouraged, when my mom shared with me Alma 5:40: "Whatsoever is good cometh from God." I realized that the quiet thoughts of service I had were actually promptings from the Holy Ghost. I know that our prayers are always answered; we just have to be patient, be observant, and trust in the Lord. Lybee B., 16, Oregon, USA



#### Trust in the Spirit

When you learn to trust in the Holy Ghost and develop the ability to recognize the way that

Heavenly Father answers you, you will see how accessible the Spirit is to you. His voice prompts us so gently that if we are preoccupied with the things of the world, we will not notice the delicate whisperings and feelings that come from on high. If, however, we are living the way we should, then we will always have the promise that we will know in our heart what the Spirit is saying in response to our supplications.

Sister Ribeiro, 24, Brazil Porto Alegre South Mission



Try It and See!
Sometimes the Lord
requires us to act on

requires us to act on our faith before we get a complete answer.

Do you want to know if the Word of Wisdom is truly a commandment from God? Then live it! Do you want to know if the Book of Mormon is true? Then read it! Trust the promise in John 7:17: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Preston O., 19, Utah, USA



## By the Power of Christ

I was watching the Face to Face broadcast with Elder Rasband

and Sister Oscarson when a youth asked this same question about receiving answers. Sister Oscarson quoted Moroni 7:16, "By the power and gift of Christ . . . ye may know



## INSPIRATION COMES A PIECE AT A TIME

"When we seek inspiration to help make decisions, the Lord gives gentle promptings. These require us to think, to exercise faith, to work, to struggle at times, and to act. Seldom does the whole answer to a decisively important matter or complex problem come all at once. More often, it comes a piece at a time, without the end in sight."

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928-2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Oct. 1989 general conference.

with a perfect knowledge it is of God." That scripture shows us that we will be able to know the will of God for us with a perfect knowledge. Feel the Spirit and you will know the answer.

Sara S., 17, Santa Catarina, Brazil

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as official pronouncements of Church doctrine.

## **UPCOMING QUESTION**

"Sometimes I don't feel worthy to be loved by the Savior. How can I overcome this feeling and recognize my self-worth?" Send your answer and photo by January 15, 2018.

Go to newera.lds.org, and click "Submit Your Work." Sign in with your LDS Account and then select "New Era" under "Choose Magazine." Click "Add File" to select your file and photos, and then click "Submit" to upload and send us your file.

# FUN STOP

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	
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45				46			47	48			
49							50				

Across

- 1. Kind of Christmas I'm dreaming of, in song 6. 10-down gift #1
- 10. One that is out of place
- 11. Kirtland's state
- 12. Commercial
- 13. \_\_\_\_ Paolo, Brazil
- 15. "Angels We Have Heard \_ High"
- 16. Equipment
- 19. "Put it in a folder in a drawer"
- 23. Not outside the city
- 26. 10-down gift #3
- 27. Pacific island
- 28. Alternatively
- 29. Manmade beauty
- 30. Unitedly
- 33. 10-down gift #2
- 37. Holly berries' color

- 38. Outspoken
  - 39. "Am \_ \_\_\_ young?" ("Is my age not high enough yet?")
  - 41. Anger
  - 42. Nay's opposite
  - 45. Astray
  - 47. Peter's other name
  - 49. Mary rode this to Bethlehem
  - 50. Aroma



Down

- 1. Broadens
- 2. Secondary education in the U.S. (abbr.)
- 4. "\_\_\_ the season to be jolly"
- 5. When you'll get there (abbr.)
- 6. and 9. "I will \_\_\_\_ and \_\_ (1 Nephi 3:7)
- \_\_ Night" (popular Christmas song)
- 8. Ocean \_\_\_\_ (cruise ship)
- 10. Wise Men
- 14. Prince \_\_\_\_ Peace
- 17. One \_\_\_\_ time (individually)
- 18. Like Caesar Augustus
- 20. "\_\_\_\_ so glad when Daddy
- comes home"
- 21. Smooths out, as wrinkles
- 22. Number of gifts brought by 10-down

- 24. "A marvellous\_\_\_\_ and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14)
- 25. Scene of Jesus's birth
- 30. "\_\_\_\_ denied" ("You can't get in")
- 31. The \_\_\_\_ of Galilee
- 32. It's \_\_\_\_ ("There's no one else here")
- 33. Cooked in hot oil in a pan
- 34. Old-style
- 35. Decorate
- 36. Neither here \_\_\_\_ there
- 40. One-time acorn
- 43. Long, long time
- 44. Picnic crasher
- 46. Opposite of SW
- 48. "Understood," in a text message, perhaps

Answers on page 47.



## Tradition Addition

Grab a friend or family member and fill out this Christmas poem together before reading it out loud. Try not to read the lines ahead of time.

Christmas traditions bring holiday cheer!

Our family adds two or \_\_\_\_\_\_new ones each year.

Just last year we gift-wrapped some \_\_\_\_\_ with bows,

And gave them to friends saying,

(four-word sentence where the last word rhymes with nose)

This year, however, we're going all out.

We're \_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ shout,

"Merry Christmas to all, and a/an
\_\_\_\_\_ New Year too!"

LLUSTRATION BY JOSH TALBOT

Traditions like these give us lots to remember.

Like \_\_\_\_\_ while \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_each 12th of December.

So try it! You'll like it! There's lots to choose from.

Like decorating \_\_\_\_\_, topping each with a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (noun that rhymes with numb) !

Help Johnny find the chocolate orange at the bottom of his stocking without crossing any carrot sticks! (Yeah, he knows carrots are good for you. He'll eat 'em later.)

**Operation Orange** 





## MAKING NEW FRIENDS

hen my parents told me that my family was going to move, I was very excited to make new friends. When we arrived in our new city, we went to church. I could feel the Spirit very strongly there, and I knew things would go well.

Soon after, I began at my new school. I was one of the only Mormons in the school. When I walked in, I felt very out of place. I could tell I was different from the other students.

Over the first week or so, I tried to make friends. But I felt so awkward! I tried sitting by different people each

class and eating lunch at different tables every day. It didn't seem like I was making any progress.

I decided to strive to be a better example to my peers. I focused on Personal Progress and diligent scripture study. As I worked hard, I realized more fully that I am a daughter of God and that He loves me.

As time went by and I continued to do these things, I noticed something: I had begun to make friends at school. It was almost like people were drawn to me. They commented on how I stood out. I realized that it was because I was letting my light shine. I had different mannerisms

than my classmates. I dressed modestly, I used good language, and I was kind to others.

We are all children of God. I'm so grateful that I let my light shine, even though I felt out of place. I know that we are never alone if we are on the Lord's side!

Rebekah C., Prince Edward Island, Canada

#### It's Your Turn

The New Era welcomes your experiences and insights. Received an answer to prayer? Showed courage in living the gospel? Submit your story at newera.lds.org (click "Submit Your Work").

## COULD I SHARE THE BOOK OF MORMON?

uring Mutual, we were given an assignment to become mission-aries by getting a companion, sharing our testimonies with a non-member, and giving our nonmember friend a copy of the Book of Mormon.

After Mutual, I asked my mother for some advice. She promised me that if I prayed in faith and asked Heavenly Father, He would surely answer.

It took me two weeks to find someone who would accept the Book of Mormon. At first, I was rejected again and again. I was so tired of getting hurt that I was about to give up.

One night, I had a dream about a woman who was a close friend to my family. As I dreamed, I realized that she was the one for me and my companion to visit. When I woke up, I thanked the Lord for helping me.

At the next Mutual, my companion and I wrote our testimonies on the front page of the book and made a fruit basket for the woman. We went to her house, knocked on her door, and waited. Even though I was scared that she might reject it, I told myself to have a little faith. She finally came outside with a happy face and accepted the Book of Mormon.

Through this experience, I learned that when you have a little faith and you know that Heavenly Father is there, you can easily feel that the impossible is possible.

Rapunzel L., American Samoa

## MY VACATION FROM PIANO LESSONS

ne week, I decided to declare a holiday from practicing the piano. My piano teacher did not authorize this holiday and neither did my mom. For a full week I didn't practice. I thought it was great because I had a good time relaxing and doing other things.

The fun stopped on Thursday night, when my mom reminded me that my piano lesson was the next morning. I thought I had a solution: I woke up an hour earlier and started to practice. But I realized that my efforts were too little, too late. I had enjoyed the freedom to choose, but I hadn't considered the consequences.

The next morning when I met with my teacher, the consequences started to unfold. I had to admit that I hadn't practiced, and my teacher told me I should make up all the practice time I missed, in addition to my regular practice time.

I am grateful for the lessons I learned about agency, responsibility, and accountability. Every choice has a consequence, and I learned that I will make better decisions if I take time to consider the consequences first.

Blake H., Utah, USA

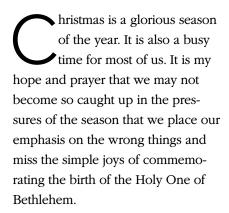


ANSWERS (FROM PACE 44) CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD: Across: ]. white 6, gold JO. mishit JO. Ohio J.S. ad J.S. Sao J.S. on J.6. gear J.9. file it 23. in town 26. myrth 27. Samoa 28. or 29. art 30. as one 35. Irad kincense 37. red 38. vocal 39. I foo 4J. ire 42. yea 45. errant 47. Simon 49. donkey 50. smell Down: ]. widens 2. H.5. 5. if 4. Tis 5. ETA 6. and 9. go. do 7. O Holy 8. liner JO. magi J.4. of J.7. at a list 9. I free 24. work 25. nativity 30. access 37. Sea 32. only me 33. fried 34. retro 36. nor 40. oak 43. eon 44. ant 46. NE 48. IC



By President Thomas S. Monson

## HOW TO **FEEL THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS**



Finding the real joy of Christmas comes not in the hurrying and the scurrying to get more done. We find the real joy of Christmas when we make the Savior the focus of the season.

Our celebration of Christmas should be a reflection of the love and selflessness taught by the Savior. Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit. We fee more kindly one to another. We reach out in love to help those less fortunate. Our hearts are softened. Enemies are forgiven, friends remembered, and God obeyed. The spirit of Christmas illuminates the picture window of the soul, and we look out upon the world's busy life and become more interested in people than in things. To catch the real meaning of the spirit of Christmas, we need only seek the Spirit of Christ.

May we give as the Savior quve. To give of oneself is a holy gift. We give as a remembrance of all



the Savior has given. May we also give gifts that have eternal value, along with our gifts that eventually break or are forgotten. How much better the world would be if we all gave gifts of understanding and compassion, of service and friendship, of kindness and gentleness.

As the Christmas season envelops us with all its glory, may we, as did the Wise Men, seek a bright, particular star to guide us in our celebration of the Savior's birth. May we all make the journey to Bethlehem in spirit, taking with us a tender, caring heart as our gift to the Savior. NE

From the 2013 First Presidency Christmas Devotional



## What does CHRISTMAS

look like where you live?



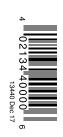






WE WANT TO SEE HOW YOU CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS. SEND US YOUR PHOTOS, AND TELL US WHY YOUR CHRISTMAS IS AWESOME!

SEND THEM TO NEWERA@LDSCHURCH.ORG



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS