

By President
Thomas S. Monson



Rediscovering the Christmas Spirit

Years ago as a young elder, I was called with others to a hospital in Salt Lake City to provide blessings for sick children. Upon entering, we noted a Christmas tree with its bright and friendly lights and saw carefully wrapped packages beneath its outstretched limbs. We then went through corridors where small boys and girls—some with plaster casts upon an arm or leg, others with ailments that perhaps could not be cured so readily—greeted us with smiling faces.

A young, desperately ill small boy called out to me, “What is your name?”

I told him my name, and he inquired, “Will you give me a blessing?”

The blessing was provided, and as we turned to leave his bedside, he said, “Thank you very much.”

We walked a few steps, and then I heard him call, “Oh, Brother Monson, merry Christmas to you.” Then a great smile flashed across his countenance.

That boy had the spirit of Christmas. The spirit of Christmas is something I hope all of us would have in our hearts and lives—not only at this particular season but also throughout the year.

When we have the spirit of Christmas, we remember Him whose birth we commemorate at this season of the

year: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

In our day the spirit of giving gifts plays a large role in commemorating the Christmas season. I wonder if we might profit by asking ourselves, What gifts would the Lord have *me* give to Him or to others at this precious season of the year?

May I suggest that our Heavenly Father would want each of us to render to Him and to His Son the gift of obedience. I also feel that He would ask us to give of ourselves and not be selfish or greedy or quarrelsome, as His precious Son suggests in the Book of Mormon:

“Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who . . . stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

In this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times, our opportunities to love and give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. Today there are hearts to gladden, kind words to say, deeds to be done, and souls to be saved.

One who had keen insight into the Christmas spirit wrote:

*I am the Christmas Spirit—
I enter the home of poverty, causing palefaced children
to open their eyes wide, in pleased wonder.
I cause the miser's clutched hand to relax and thus paint
a bright spot on his soul.
I cause the aged to renew their youth and to laugh in the
old glad way.
I keep romance alive in the heart of childhood, and
brighten sleep with dreams woven of magic.
I cause eager feet to climb dark stairways with filled bas-
kets, leaving behind hearts amazed at the goodness of
the world.
I cause the prodigal to pause a moment on his wild,
wasteful way and send to anxious love some little to-
ken that releases glad tears—tears which wash away
the hard lines of sorrow.
I enter dark prison cells, reminding scarred manhood of
what might have been and pointing forward to good
days yet to be.
I come softly into the still, white home of pain, and lips
that are too weak to speak just tremble in silent, elo-
quent gratitude.
In a thousand ways, I cause the weary world to look up
into the face of God, and for a little moment forget the
things that are small and wretched.
I am the Christmas Spirit.¹*

May we each discover anew the Christmas spirit—
even the Spirit of Christ.

NOTE

1. E. C. Baird, "Christmas Spirit," in James S. Hewitt, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited* (1988), 81.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

As you share President Monson's message with the family, consider emphasizing the question he posed about what gifts the Lord would have us give to

Him or to others this season. Encourage family members to record their thoughts and ideas (or, for young children, to draw a picture) about how to "discover anew the Christmas spirit—even the Spirit of Christ."

YOUTH

The Perfect Christmas Eve

By Jerie S. Jacobs

When I was growing up, one of the highlights of every year was Christmas Eve. My family and I made pizza, went caroling, and then gathered for a Christmas devotional. We sang hymns in shaky four-part harmony and blasted out carols on our odd assortment of musical instruments. Dad always ended the evening with a Christmas thought that left us in happy tears. Life didn't get any better than Christmas Eve.

When I was a little older, my mom began taking care of a young neighbor, Kelly. Kelly came over to our house every day after school while her mom, Patty, worked. Kelly followed me around like a puppy—loud and needy. It was always a relief when Patty collected her daughter and left my home and family in peace.

One December, I was horrified when mom invited Patty and Kelly to join us for Christmas Eve. My Christmas Eve. Mom smiled and assured me, "It won't change a thing." But I knew better. They would eat all our pizza. Kelly would make fun of our singing. I resigned myself to the worst Christmas Eve ever.

When the evening came, Patty and Kelly joined us, and we talked and laughed and sang. My mother was right. It was perfect. At midnight they thanked us and reluctantly parted. I went to bed with a full heart. I discovered that the truly precious gifts of Christmas are not diminished when shared. Instead they sweeten and multiply when we give them away.



Visiting Teaching, a Work of Salvation

Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

Faith, Family, Relief

Visiting teaching gives women the opportunity to watch over, strengthen, and teach one another—it is truly a work of salvation. Through visiting teaching, sisters minister in behalf of the Savior and help prepare women for the blessings of eternal life.

“We are ‘to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite [others] to come unto Christ’ (D&C 20:59), as the Lord said in his revelations,” said President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985). Further, he said, “Your testimony is a terrific medium.”¹

When we as visiting teachers increase our knowledge of gospel truths, our testimonies strengthen and support sisters who are preparing to be baptized and confirmed. We help new members become anchored in the gospel. Our visits and love help “win back those who have gone astray [and] warm up the hearts of those who have grown cold in the gospel.”² And we encourage sisters to come unto Christ through temple attendance.

“You are going to save souls,” said President Kimball to visiting teachers, “and who can tell but that many of the fine active people in the Church today are active because you were in their homes and gave them a new outlook, a new vision. You pulled back the curtain. You extended their horizons. . . .”

“You see, you are not only saving these sisters, but perhaps also their husbands and their homes.”³

From the Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 20:59;
84:106; 138:56

From Our History

When the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society, he said that the women were not only to look after the poor but also to save souls. He also taught that women in the Church play essential roles in Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation.⁴ Guided by the principles taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we as sisters in Relief Society can work together to prepare women and their

families for God’s greatest blessings.

“Let us have compassion upon each other,” said President Brigham Young (1801–77), “and let [those who are] strong tenderly nurse the weak into strength, and let those who can see guide the blind until they can see the way for themselves.”⁵

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 116.
2. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 83.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 117.
4. See Joseph Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 171–72.
5. Brigham Young, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 107.

What Can I Do?

1. How does Relief Society prepare me for the blessings of eternal life?
2. What can I do to increase the faith of those I watch over?

For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.