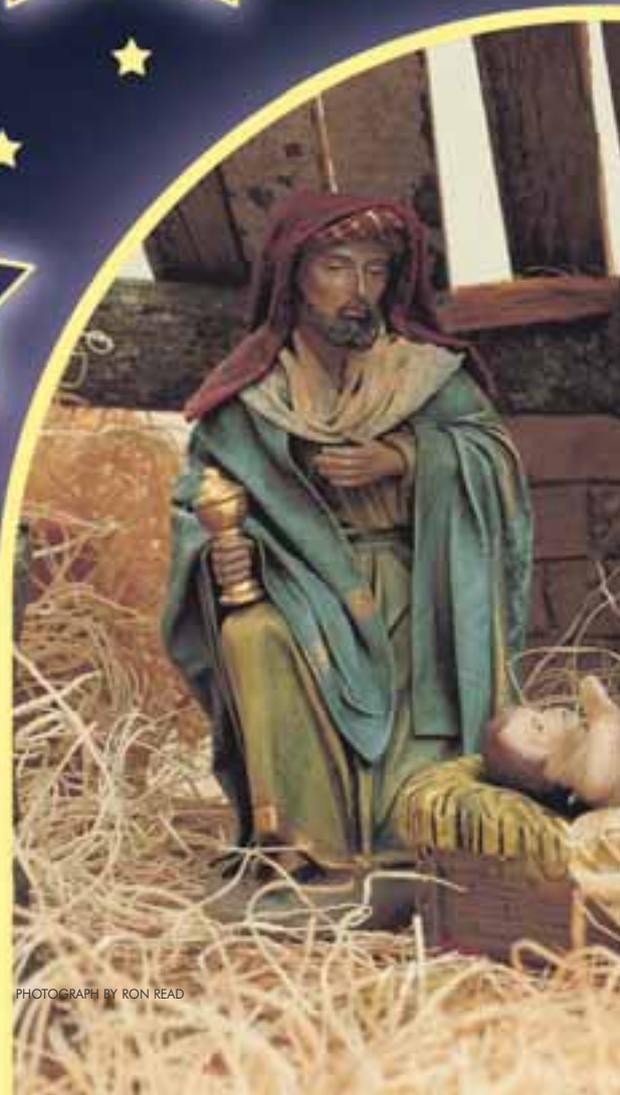
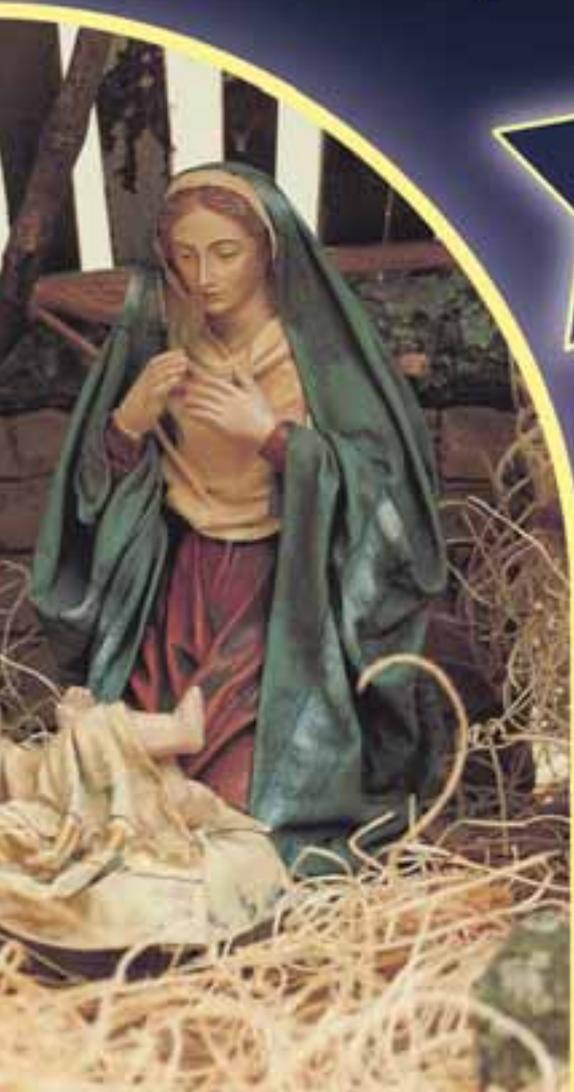


# What Is Christmas?

For activity and instructions, see pages 34–35.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RON READ



# What Is Christmas?

BY VICKI F. MATSUMORI



*And are willing to . . . stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places (Mosiah 18:9).*



What is Christmas? President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said that Christmas is children, remembering, giving, and prophecy fulfilled (see “What Is Christmas?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1998, 2–5).

Christmas is children. It is joy, excitement, and hope.

Christmas is remembering. It is a time to remember and show the love Jesus asked us to have for everyone.

Christmas is giving. Sometimes we give things. Other times we give service. President Monson said we “give to our Lord and Savior the gift of gratitude by living His teachings” (*Ensign*, Dec. 1998, 5).

Christmas is prophecy fulfilled. The angel declared, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

When Jesus Christ was born, a new star appeared.

But not everyone understood what it meant. The Wise Men from the East knew what the star meant. They came to worship Jesus. We can be like the Wise Men. We can learn about Jesus Christ and follow Him.

What is Christmas? It is when we celebrate the gift our Heavenly Father gave to each of us: the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ. We can give thanks for this gift by showing through our example that we will always follow Him.

## **Advent Calendar**

Remove pages 24–25, and mount them on light-weight cardboard. Cut out the numbered stars on page 35. Each day in December, read the scripture listed on the star for that date. Answer the question or do the activity. Then glue the star in the scene. Place the scene where it will remind you to follow Jesus’ example.

1

**Luke 1:26-33**

Who told Mary that she would have a baby?

10

**Matthew 2:7-10**

Where did Herod send the Wise Men?

16

**Matthew 5:43-44**  
Jesus Christ taught that we should love our enemies. In your personal prayers, ask a blessing for someone who has been unkind to you.

2

**Matthew 1:18-21**  
Why did Mary and Joseph name the baby "Jesus"?

21

**Mark 10:13-14**

Jesus Christ showed that children are very important to Him. Show your love for a brother, sister, or parent by reading a story to him or her.

3

**Luke 2:3-6**

Why did Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem before Jesus was born?

11

**Matthew 2:11**

How did the Wise Men show that they knew the young child was the Savior?

4

**Luke 2:7**

Why did Mary lay baby Jesus in a manger?

5

**Luke 2:8-11**

To whom did the angel announce the Savior's birth?

22

**Matthew 22:37-39**  
Jesus Christ taught us to love our neighbors. Work with your family to do something nice for a neighbor.

17

**Matthew 6:3-4**

Jesus Christ taught that we should help other people. Perform a secret act of service for a member of your family.

12

**Matthew 2:13-15**  
Why did Joseph take Mary and Jesus to Egypt?

23

**John 13:34**

Jesus Christ told us that we should love one another. Show your love to your parents by helping without being asked.

13

**Matthew 5:6**

Jesus Christ taught that we will be blessed for seeking righteousness. Spend at least 10 minutes reading scriptures or scripture stories.

24

**Isaiah 9:6**

The celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is a time for joy. Write in your journal the feelings you have for Him.

7

**Luke 2:13-14**

Who joined the angel in praising God?

18

**Matthew 7:7-8**

Jesus Christ taught us that our prayers will be answered. Volunteer to say the family prayer.

19

**Matthew 7:12**

Jesus Christ taught us to treat others as we would like to be treated. Write a letter to someone who is far away, such as a missionary or grandparent.

8

**Luke 2:15-17**

Where did the shepherds go after the angels left?

14

**Matthew 5:9**

Jesus Christ taught that we should be peacemakers. Be a peacemaker in your family by not arguing with others.

20

**Luke 17:12-19**

Jesus Christ praised the leper who thanked Him. Write a note or draw a picture to thank your Primary teacher for what he or she has taught you.

9

**Matthew 2:1-2**

How did the Wise Men know that Jesus had been born?

15

**Matthew 5:16**

Jesus Christ taught that we should be good examples to others. Set an example by choosing the right.

## Sharing Time Ideas

(Note: All songs are from *Children's Songbook (CS)* unless otherwise indicated; GAK = Gospel Art Kit; TNGC = Teaching, No Greater Call)

1. Use the song "The Church of Jesus Christ" (p. 77) to review principles taught in 2003. On pieces of paper, write phrases from the song. As you display the papers one by one, have children stand around the perimeter of the room and hold them. Discuss some of the principles—for example, belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means knowing that the Church was restored by Joseph Smith, who translated the Book of Mormon, and that we are led by a prophet today. Sing a song or hymn about the Restoration. Repeat the process for the other phrases on the papers. Ask the other children to stand by one of the papers that represents something they feel strongly about. Sing "The Church of Jesus Christ," and have the children turn to face each phrase as it is sung. Ask them to sing as if they were bearing their testimonies to others about these truths. Repeat the process by having the children choose different phrases. Bear your own testimony.

2. Help the children see how being a missionary now can help spread the gospel more quickly. Choose a child to be a member missionary, and ask him or her to contact as many people in Primary as possible in half a minute in the following manner. He or she approaches another child or adult, who stands. The member missionary shakes the other person's hand and says, "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." How many people did the member missionary contact? Repeat the activity with this difference: as soon as someone has shaken hands, that person becomes another member missionary and begins introducing himself or herself and shaking hands with others. Now how many people were contacted? How long did it take to contact everyone in the room? Explain that by living gospel principles, we will be good examples as member missionaries. Have the children locate and read Matthew 7:24–27; Mark 12:41–44; Luke 10:25–27; and John 5:39. List on the chalkboard some of these ways of becoming good member missionaries. Divide into groups, and have each group present a role play demonstrating something they can do now to be good missionaries. Sing songs or hymns about missionary work.

3. Help the children understand how they can develop stronger testimonies. Before sharing time, make a puzzle. On one side of a large piece of paper, write the word *TESTIMONY*. Cut the paper into eight puzzle pieces. On the reverse of four pieces, write parts of a testimony, such as (1) I know that Heavenly Father lives and that His Son, Jesus Christ, is my Savior; (2) I know that Joseph Smith was the prophet who restored The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; (3) I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God; (4) I know that we are led by a living prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley. On the reverse of the other four pieces, write ways that testimonies can be developed, such as (1) My testimony grows when I read the scriptures; (2) My testimony grows when I pray and listen; (3) My testimony grows when I keep the commandments; (4) My testimony grows when I share it. Hide the puzzle pieces in the Primary room.

Sing "I Want to Be a Missionary Now" (p. 168). The song suggests that the children have testimonies of their own. Discuss how a testimony is a feeling given by the Holy Ghost that gospel principles are true. This testimony does not stay the same. It gets weaker if we do not nourish it. It grows as we do things that help us gain a better understanding of gospel principles.

Have children take turns finding puzzle pieces. Post the first one, and discuss the principle or way in which children can help their testimonies grow. Sing songs that reinforce the principles, such as "He Sent His Son" (pp. 34–35), "The Church of Jesus Christ" (p. 77), "The Golden Plates" (p. 86), or "Follow the Prophet" (pp. 110–11). For

puzzle pieces about strengthening a testimony, sing songs from the songs listed in the *CS* index under "Testimony."

After all the pieces have been found, have some children turn the pieces over and put the *TESTIMONY* side together. Bear your testimony of gospel principles that have special meaning in your life.

4. To help the children review the Articles of Faith, which tell some of the beliefs that they can share with others, make a simple paper doll to represent someone interested in learning about the Church. Write numbers 1–13 on separate pieces of paper to indicate numbers of the Articles of Faith. Divide the children into 13 groups, and have each group choose a paper (smaller Primaries may need to give the groups more than one paper). Give the children crayons and square-shaped papers to decorate with information about their chosen article of faith—e.g., key words, pictures that relate to the principle expressed, the number of the article, song titles that reflect the principles of the article. Place the completed squares in a container.

Invite someone to share an experience in which they repeated an article of faith to help another person understand more about the Church, or tell the experience Sister Michaelene P. Grassli had of sharing articles of faith with a taxi driver (*Friend*, Jan. 1995, IFC).

Affix the paper doll to a chair at the front of the room so it looks like a person sitting there. Discuss giving others one special gift, the joy of the gospel. Have the children take turns choosing a square from the container. If the child can remember the chosen article of faith, have him or her say the article of faith and place the square on the doll's lap. (For younger children, have his or her entire group help by saying the article together.) If the child is unable to remember the article, have his or her group or a leader help. Sing songs listed on the square or others that help reinforce that article.

Invite the children to share their favorite articles of faith with their families.

5. Before sharing time, place a small star in a less obvious place but where everyone can see it. Sing a Christmas song from the *CS*. Ask the children to keep their eyes on you; then tell them the color of the star you placed in the room and point to it. Discuss how the star was not noticed by many until it was pointed out and they looked for it.

Have the children locate and read Matt. 2:1–2 and 3 Ne. 1:21. Discuss how the Wise Men and some of the Nephites saw a star but how others who were not looking did not see it or understand its significance. Explain that many people and things testify of Jesus Christ but that some people do not notice them because they are not looking for them. Talk about some of the people and things that testify of the Savior, such as the beauties of nature, the shepherds in the field near Bethlehem, answers to prayer, prophets of old (see Sharing Time, *Friend*, Dec. 1997, 14–15, 23), and our prophet today (see also "Little Testimonies," *Friend*, Mar. 1997, 16–18).

Give the children crayons and pieces of paper. Have the children decorate their papers with stars, making one star larger and brighter to remind them to look for things that strengthen their testimonies. Challenge them to watch for things and people who testify of the Savior. Bear your testimony of Jesus Christ, and express gratitude for this season that allows us to celebrate His birth.

6. Additional *Friend* resources: Sharing Times—Sep. 1999, 46–47, 35, and Oct. 1998, 14–15, 43; "Gunnar's Testimony," May 2000, 30–31; "Sandy's Missionary Chart," Oct. 1998, 36–37. *Ensign* resources: "Pure Testimony," Nov. 2000, 22–24; "Your Own Personal Testimony," May 2000, 41–42; "Why Every Member a Missionary," Nov. 1997, 35–37.