

Sacrament Meeting Christmas Presentation  
Based on excerpts from the words of President Thomas S. Monson  
(Submitted by Sally DeFord)

Here's a program I put together for our ward a few years back. The text comes entirely from President Thomas S. Monson's Christmas messages entitled, "The Search for Jesus" (December 1990 Ensign) and "In Search of the Christmas Spirit" (December 1987 Ensign), and the music is mostly mine. (Hey, the price is right... :) Feel free to substitute your own musical selections. The program lasts about half an hour.

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In the New Testament, John describes a journey by those who would worship: "And there were certain...among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip... and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus."

The search for Jesus. No search is so universal. No undertaking so richly rewarding. No effort so ennobling. No purpose so divine. For generations, enlightened mankind in the Old and New worlds anxiously sought the fulfillment of prophecies uttered by righteous men inspired of Almighty God. Then came that night of nights when the angel of the Lord came upon shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock, and the pronouncement, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Thus, personally invited to undertake a search for the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, did these shepherds concern themselves with the security of their possessions? Did they procrastinate their search for Jesus? The record affirms that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem... And they came with haste."

Choir: Shepherd, Leave Thy Sheep

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, he came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During his earthly ministry, he taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick; he caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life. With the birth of the babe of Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment -- a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, the promised Messiah, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Choir: Born to Wear a Crown

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter by the shores of beautiful Galilee, he said, "Follow me." To Philip of old came the call, "Follow me." To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instructions, "Follow me." And to you and to me, if we but listen, shall come that same beckoning invitation, "Follow me."  
But how do we follow him if first we don't find him? And how shall we find him if first we don't seek

him? Where and how should we begin this search for Jesus? The formula for finding Jesus has always been and ever will be the same--the earnest and sincere prayer of a humble and pure heart. The prophet Jeremiah counseled, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts."

Children's choir: If With All Your Hearts

Before we can successfully undertake a personal search for Jesus, we must first prepare time for him in our lives and room for him in our hearts. In these busy days there are many who have time for golf, time for shopping, time for work, time for play -- but no time for Christ. Lovely homes dot the land and provide rooms for eating, rooms for sleeping, playrooms, sewing rooms, television rooms, but no room for Christ. Do we get a pang of conscience as we recall his own words, "The foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Or... when we remember, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." No room. No room. No room. Ever has it been.

Choir: No Room, No Room

As we undertake our personal search for Jesus...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 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 whom we seek. And when we find him, will we be prepared as were the wise men of old to provide gifts from our many treasures? They presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These are not the gifts Jesus asks of us. From the treasure of our hearts Jesus asks that we give of ourselves: "Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind."

Children's Choir: If I Had Been In Bethlehem

In this marvelous dispensation...our opportunities to give of ourselves are indeed limitless... There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved. [Let us] not find ourselves in the unenviable position of Jacob Marley's ghost, who spoke to Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' immortal A Christmas Carol. Marley spoke sadly of opportunities lost, saying, "Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me?"

The Star of Bethlehem (Solo)

As we lift our eyes heavenward, we too, will see a bright, particular star which will guide us to our opportunity. Such was the experience of a Sunday School class some years ago when a wise teacher put aside the manual one Sunday morning. With her class members listening in, she telephoned [President Thomas S. Monson, who was then] serving as the bishop of a large ward in the central part of Salt Lake City. [President Monson tells us of this experience:]

The teacher asked, "Are there any poor in your ward--people who need a sub for Santa?" She then described her own neighborhood as one of affluence and mentioned that she wanted her class to remember this particular Christmas. I ...mentioned a family that would welcome [such help]--one that would also greatly benefit her class members.

The Mueller family had recently emigrated from war-torn Germany. The children were learning to speak our language, and were shy and reluctant to mingle with others. Their personal possessions were few; they had lost so much during the war.

I suggested an appropriate evening when her class could accompany her to our ward meetinghouse and together we would walk to their home. Again the teacher stated that she wanted her class to remember the true meaning of Christmas. I responded, "Could I suggest, then, that each child bring a gift that has a special meaning to the individual; a gift the person treasures and would rather keep for himself."

Just four days before Christmas, several adults brought this Sunday School class to our ward building in large, expensive cars. Such an array of wealth had never before graced the parking area. We then walked to the Mueller home, singing carols along the way. The laughter of the children and the hurried pace of their steps reflected the anticipation of Christmas.

It was at the Mueller home, however, that the frills of Christmas became the spirit of Christmas. I watched as one girl looked into the eyes of one of the Mueller children, a girl about her age, then tenderly handed her a beautiful doll she had received on her own birthday, a gift she herself loved. She anxiously told her newly found friend how to dress the doll and hold it ever so tenderly in cradled arms. I observed a normally rowdy boy take from his left hand his genuine leather baseball glove, and place it on the left hand of a German-speaking boy who had never seen, far less worn, a baseball glove. He then explained how to catch the baseball in the special pocket of the glove, which he had hand prepared hour after hour with a particular oil. Such was the experience of each child with each gift.

As we walked back to the meetinghouse, not a word was spoken. One could hear the crunch of the newly fallen snow as young feet made the two-block journey. We entered the building, there to have donuts and apple cider. In the blessing on the food, a beautiful girl, her voice choked with emotion, described the feelings of all of us as she prayed, "Heavenly Father, we thank thee for the best Christmas we have ever had." That night, as children who had found the real spirit of Christmas left the parking lot, and disappeared into the darkness, I recalled the meaningful words from the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem":

How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heaven.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

And so he had.

Choir and congregation: O Little Town of Bethlehem