

Dear Friends,

For this month of Advent, I'd like to share this heart-warming Christmas story with you all. Jesus in the centre of the Nativity scene is an image we can all take into the Christmas period and the New Year.

The Camel Had Wandered by Janet Eyestone Buck

Our family has always enjoyed a Christmas tradition of setting out a ceramic nativity scene--complete with wise men, camels, shepherds, sheep, and of course, Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. Each season the nativity scene was the same.

One year when my children were young, I carefully unwrapped each piece and set up an artistic display representing the first Christmas. The children gathered around to watch. We talked about the birth of Jesus and the visit of the shepherds and Magi. I then cautioned the children, as always, not to touch the pieces, explaining that they were fragile and easily broken.

This year, however, the temptation was too great for my two-year old daughter, Elizabeth. The day we set up the nativity scene, I noticed several times, with some irritation, that a camel had wandered from its appointed place or a sheep had strayed from the watchful care of the shepherd. Each time, I returned the piece to its rightful place, and then tracked down the culprit and admonished her to leave things alone.

The next morning, Elizabeth awoke and went downstairs before I did. When I walked into the living room I noticed right away that the manger scene had been disturbed again. All the pieces were clumped together in a mass, as tightly as they could be fitted together.

Impatiently, I stepped forward to put things right; but I stopped short as I realized that some thought had gone into this new arrangement. All twenty three figures were grouped in a circle, facing inward, pushed together as if to get the best view possible of the figure resting in the centre of them all—the Baby Jesus.

The spirit touched my soul as I pondered the insight of a two-year old. Certainly, Christ should be the centre of our holiday celebrations. If we all could draw in' around our Saviour—not only during the Christmas season but during each day—what a better perspective we would have. The love He offers to each of us would be easily shared with others who have not ventured so close.

I left the nativity arranged according to Elizabeth's design that year. It served as a poignant reminder during the rest of the season of what Christmas is all about.

Every blessing,

The Editor

