

A Broken Sheep

AND A CONTRITE SPIRIT

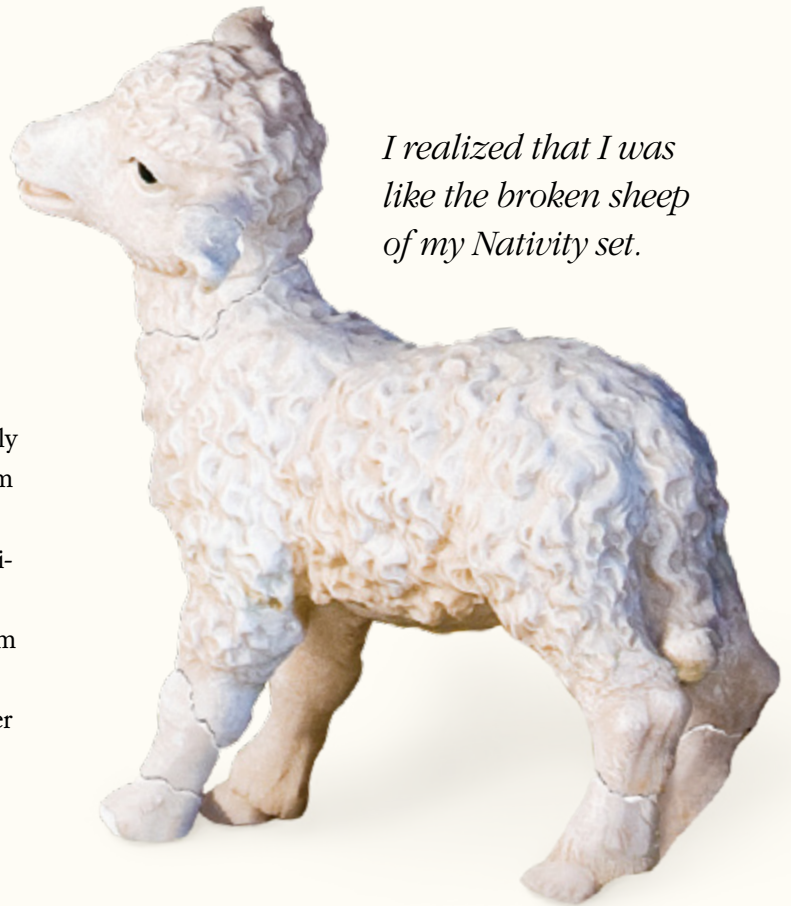
By Margaret McDowell Davis

The Christmas season began with the enjoyable busyness of shopping, baking, and decorating the house. I especially enjoyed placing my favorite Nativity set on prominent display on the fireplace mantel. Two days before Christmas, the house was abuzz with the gathering of children and grandchildren.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, I became concerned when I heard loud, accusing voices coming from the family room. I walked into the room to find a ceramic sheep from my favorite Nativity lying in pieces on the hearth. One of my grandsons had been admiring the Nativity, and he accidentally knocked the figure to the hearth. I could see his anguish as he apologized about the accident. I assured him that the sheep could be repaired.

Later, as I placed the mended sheep back with the other ceramic figures, the Spirit gently reminded me that I was very much like this sheep. I thought of the times when I had been broken through sin, sorrow, or suffering and needed to mend my spirit. I remembered how, during those times, the Good Shepherd took me up in His arms and carried me.

Prompted by this experience, I searched the scriptures for more about the Good Shepherd, and I rejoiced in the words of Isaiah: “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:11). I could not deny His love for me as I read that “he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture” (1 Nephi 22:25).



I realized that I was like the broken sheep of my Nativity set.

Ever since that Christmas Eve, the ceramic sheep has been a significant part of my observance of the Savior’s birth. Each time I place the broken but mended sheep next to the Christ child in the manger, I feel greater love for the Savior and His Atonement. I recommit to “follow the voice of the good shepherd” (Alma 5:57). I remember that the Lord is my shepherd and that I too need to remain close to Him, for when I am broken, I know He is there to help me mend.

Sweet are the words, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1). ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.