

## The Christmas Shoes

*Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:12-13*

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17*

*Jesus wept. 36 So the people said, "See how He loved him!" John 11:35-36*

Robert Layton wanted to succeed. He worked long hours to try to fulfill his dreams. Not only was he willing to compromise his family life for success, he wanted his wife to do the same. He believed that if she would work for the pharmaceutical company that he lined up that they would have enough money to move to a bigger house in a better neighborhood. His wife wanted to be home to raise their daughter.

What does success mean to you? What are your dreams for the future?

Maggie, her husband, and son, Nathan had a happy home, but their lives were altered when Maggie learned that she was experiencing congestive heart failure. Although there was a chance that she could live longer by having a heart transplant, their hopes were dashed when the donor heart was diseased. The doctor told them that the window of opportunity was probably closed.

Have you known someone who has a terminal illness?

Maggie was thankful when Kate took over the choir for her. Kate was afraid at first, but soon realized that she loved teaching. Robert wanted her to look for a higher paying job. He didn't want her to take the time to go back to school. He wanted to live in a more expensive house, even though his wife and daughter wanted to stay where they were.

Have you identified your dreams? Does your family or spouse want the same things?

Nathan overheard his mother say that when she was a girl she had a pair of red dancing shoes that made her feel really special. Nathan decided that he wanted to buy her red shoes for Christmas. The shoes that he saw in the store were the same ones that Robert found after they had fallen out of a truck. Even though Nathan worked hard to raise the money for the shoes, in the end it was not enough.

Have you ever worked hard for something and in the end it wasn't good enough?

Robert meant to do the right things for his family, but he didn't put a high enough priority on making them happen. He missed family events that were important because he was at work. When he went to pick up the lay-away Christmas gift for his daughter it had been sold. When he saw how much Nathan loved his mother and wanted the Christmas shoes for her it changed Robert's life.

Have you ever had an eye-opening experience that changed your life?

Nathan's mother, Maggie, was gracious and thankful, even in the middle of her pain. She loved the shoes, but more importantly she knew how to comfort her son, Nathan, by appreciating his gift to her. In the end it wasn't the red shoes that were the most important but rather the love that prompted the gift. The shoes were merely a symbol of Nathan's love for his mother.

Has someone given a gift that represents love to you? Have you given a special gift of love to someone.?

*Dear Lord, You have given the greatest gift of all when You sent Jesus to be our Savior. Be with us through the difficult times of life. Show us how to give and receive gifts of love graciously. Open our eyes to the needs of people all around us. Teach us how to make a difference in Your name. Amen.*