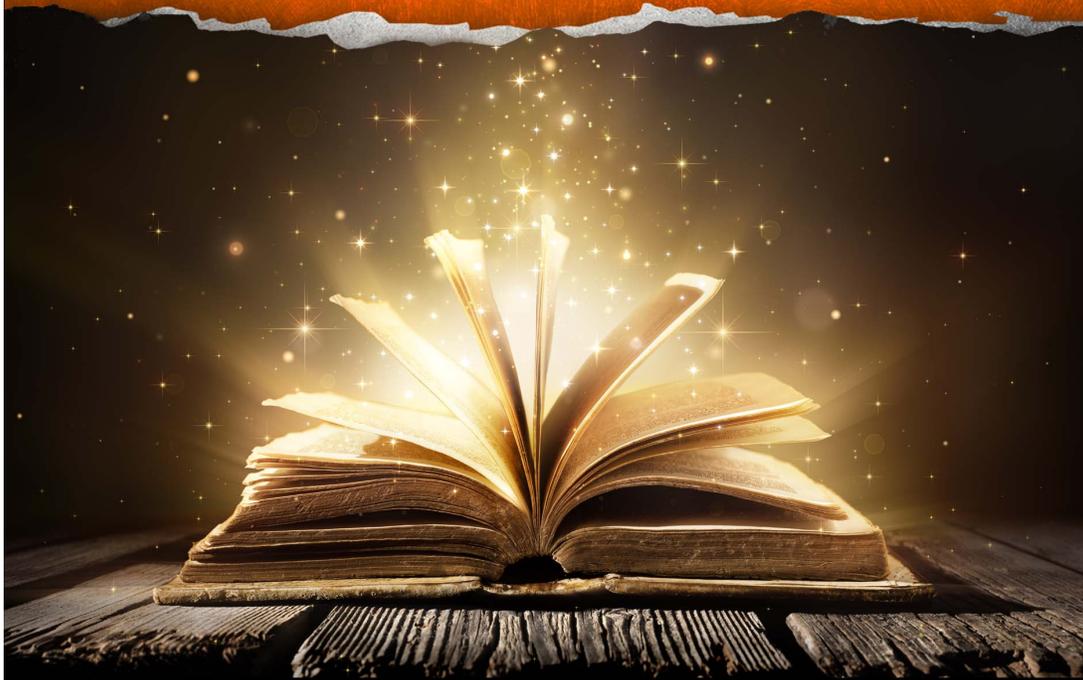


A SEW POWERFUL PARABLE

GABRIELLA'S
Shoes



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Gabriella's Shoes

"As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is his love to those who fear him. And as far as sunrise is from sunset, he has separated us from our sins. As parents feel for their children, God feels for those who fear him. He knows us inside and out."

Psalm 103:11-13 (The Message)

Once I became a parent, I began to understand in a new way...the Father's heart. The Psalmist declares, *"As parents feel for their children, God feels for those who fear him."* I love my three daughters with a deeper love than I ever thought was possible. Paul's prayer for his friends in Ephesus has become my prayer for my children, *"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for you."* (Ephesians 3:17-18). Our God longs for all children to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for them. That is the high calling of parenthood.

The Psalmist would agree. Psalm 103 is a prayer for parents. It's a psalm about the Father's heart. It is a reminder to us that leaving a legacy for our children has nothing to do with material possessions. Psalm 103 is about building a legacy of the Father's heart into the lives of the children he has entrusted to us. The psalmist declares that life is a precious – and short – gift from God, *"Men and women don't live very long; like wildflowers they spring up and blossom, but a storm snuffs them out just as quickly, leaving nothing to show they were here."* (Ps. 103:14-15) God longs for parents to build a legacy of the Father's heart for their children.

The Psalmist describes the eternal legacy we can give to our children *before* our lives are over, *"God's love, though, is ever and always, eternally present to all who fear him, making everything right for them and their children as they follow his Covenant ways and remember to do whatever he said."* (Ps 103:17)

What is your prayer for your children? In what ways can you show them today how wide and long and high and deep the love of God is for them?

Gabriella's Shoes is a prayer for all of us. This powerful, modern-day parable is about the Father's heart. Have a box of tissues nearby as you listen to Gabriella's story. *Gabriella's Shoes* will leave you with a deeper appreciation of the Father's heart. If you are like me, you will simply want to whisper through the tears, "Amen".

Questions for Thought:

1. Read Psalm 103 every morning for one week and pray for your children by name.
2. Read Ephesians 3:17-18 every evening for one week and pray for your children by name.
3. Take the time this week to schedule an individual date with each of your children.

Gabriella's Shoes

A Sew Powerful Parable by Dana Buck

A little girl's bedroom
Is a rare and magic place
When the world is big and scary
Here it's warm and snug and safe

No ugly frightening monsters
Ever penetrate these walls
Just teddy bears and puppets
Stuffed animals and dolls

Some days this is a castle
Or a house up in the trees
It's where all the bedroom tenants
Are served sandwiches and teas

It's a large and spacious ballroom
For a formal dance or prom
Or a cozy little kitchen
Perfect for a pint-sized mom

And when imagination's resting
When this room is just a room
It holds the pieces of her life
Safe as a baby in the womb

For all her special things
Seems each one has a special place
On a shelf, or in a shoebox
Tied with ribbon, wrapped in lace

A ballerina music box
Atop a chest of drawers
On the window sill are seashells
That she picked up on the shore

On the wall you'll find her artwork
(She likes to draw when she is sad)
Next to a pin board full of photos
From her last visit with her Dad

But of all the rare possessions
That are special to this girl
There is something here most treasured
More than any in the world

For deep within her closet
'Neath a quilt of reds and blues
Behind her skates and backpack
Are Gabriella's shoes

They were a present for her birthday
Wrapped in pink, a bow to match
They lie in the box they came in
Bits of pink paper still attached

Her Father bought them for her
He hadn't wrapped them, how'd she know?
Well he could never cut the paper right
And was hopeless with a bow

She'd seen her Mother do the wrapping
Seen her look of keen vexation
For she knew quite well her husband
Would not attend the celebration

Her Mother made her worry
She seemed sad right to her core
Her face held lines and creases
Never carried there before

Though she tried with all her might
T'was too much for her to fix
There's only so much you can do
When you're just a girl of six

So each night she'd say her prayers
Close her eyes and just believe
And think about the days
Before her Father had to leave

There were picnics at the ocean
What happy times they'd had
When she arranged her gathered seashells
And spelled "I love you" for her Dad

They'd wrestle on the carpet
Where he'd tickle and he'd hug her
Or they'd go to baseball games
(Those days he'd always call her "slugger")

And gathered on his lap
In his chair so soft and deep
He'd tell her tales of kings and princes
Till she'd finally fall asleep

Those were magic, happy times
All any girl could ever wish
Then came the day the telephone rang
And her Mother cried and dropped a dish

Later that same evening
Her parents, hand in hand
Had a tearful conversation
She could scarcely understand

And when after a story
Her Father carried her to bed
He seemed to hold her extra tightly
Against his neck she laid her head

When they came into her room
He gently set her on the floor
Then he smiled and did the thing he'd done
A hundred times before

He reached over to the dresser
Opened up the music box
And she giggled as they danced there
With her feet atop his sox

As the days passed into weeks
He spent more hours in his chair
When she hugged him he felt thin
He began to lose his hair

Story time was very different
With the tales now told by Mom
Her Dad under a blanket
In an effort to keep warm

Until one day a sitter came
(Their teenage neighbor, Joan)
Her parents left, were gone for hours
Then Mom came home alone

“Daddy’s sleeping over”
And the two sat down together
“While the doctors try to help him”
“And to make him feel all better”

“We can go and visit”
“Tomorrow, or the day after”
“He really needs his little girl”
“To bring her smile and laughter”

A kiss goodnight, then to her room
But in the hall she paused to look
And saw her Mother bow her head
As her shoulders drooped and shook

An aching heart consumed her
As the sun does to a vapor
So she colored pictures in her room
As her teardrops stained the paper

Her visits with her Father
Were always bittersweet
She couldn’t wait to see him
And his hugs were such a treat

But the place he stayed was scary
With machines and tubes and lights
Strange sounds and people bustling
And everyone in white

But each time before she left him
They’d do something she adored
Her Mom would take a photo
For her to pin up on her board

Then she would pray for Daddy
While her Mother held her tight
And after each gave him a kiss
They'd head home through the night

Remember back when you were small?
A birthday's near to heaven
And quite a monumental thing
To go from six to seven

For Gabriella it was hard
To anticipate tomorrow
Though her Mother tried her very best
Each smile was tinged with sorrow

That afternoon there was no visit
Nor would there be again
They both sat back in her Father's chair
And in silence thought of him

They sat until the clock struck twelve
The night, black as a starling
Her mother softly whispered
"Happy birthday my sweet darling"

As Gabriella rubbed her eyes
From the chair her Mom detached
And returned holding a present
Wrapped in pink, a bow that matched

"This gift is from your Daddy"
"He did all that he could do"
"He fought so hard for both of us"
"His last thoughts were filled with you"

“He wanted you to have this”
Her voice broke the slightest bit
“Your Daddy truly loved you”
“Go ahead and open it”

With care she tore the paper
Set the bow beside the chair
Then soon the box was opened
And all she could do was stare

Inside were shoes so beautiful
For a princess or a queen
As white as newly fallen snow
With stones that shone and gleamed

But then she noticed something
That tempered the surprise
These shoes were not a little girl's
They were more her mother's size

She held the box in puzzlement
Now why would Daddy get me
Such beautiful, exquisite shoes
That clearly do not fit me?

Then searching further in the box
So carefully and hard
There underneath the shoes she found
A happy birthday card

She removed it from the envelope
The words were so inviting
And here is what was written there
In her Dad's distinctive writing

“My darling little Gabby”
“How I wish I could be there”
“To tell you happy birthday”
“Give you hugs and smell your hair”

“I pray my words stay with you”
“Like a deep and glowing ember”
“And know I’m never really gone”
“If you simply just remember”

“Every time you see a seashell”
“Take a walk along the shore”
“Take in a game of baseball”
“Hear the crowd stand up and roar”

“And when you’re sitting quietly”
“And coloring your art”
“Just look up, and I’ll be there”
“If you’re looking with your heart”

“This brings me to your present”
“And I’m sure you’re wondering why”
“The shoes, the gift I’ve given”
“You can’t wear till time goes by”

“Someday you’ll meet somebody”
“And you’ll love like Mom and I”
“You’ll never want to let him go”
“He’ll take you as his bride”

“These shoes are for your wedding”
“And before the music’ through”
“Just close your eyes and think of me”
“And I’ll be there to dance with you”

As she finished reading
These treasured words from Dad
Mom sat down beside her
With a face more proud than sad

And cuddled there together
In the chair so soft and deep
The card slipped from her fingers
As they both fell fast asleep

For none of us can really know
The time that will be granted
In the end all that endures
Are all the seeds of love we've planted

Life's souvenirs are memories
Store up the ones you choose
And know they wait to dance with you
Like Gabriella's shoes