

# Wearing Your Own Shoe

We were a family of 5 boys before the miracle of adoption came to our family and we added 4 girls 8 months ago. The blessings little girls bring to a family were heaped on us all at once: dressing up like a princess, high-pitched giggles, baby dolls everywhere, and a new genre of books: The "happily ever after" with Prince Charming variety. Something deep in a little girl's heart wants to be delighted in, pursued, and rescued.

The tale of Cinderella is our girls' favorite. They especially love the part when the wicked step-sisters are trying to cram their large feet into Cinderella's dainty little glass slipper. They are on the verge of their seats when the moment comes and the true owner of the slipper is discovered. Why, it's only Cinderella who fits this shoe! For her it was made, and while the step-sisters looked ridiculous trying to make it fit them, it was easy and natural for Cinderella to slip the shoe on.

This story was my favorite as a child as well, and when I think of it I am reminded to "wear my own shoe." I used to be very uncomfortable with who God made me and how He wanted me to represent Him here on earth as an ambassador for the Kingdom. I constantly felt like the step-sisters did, trying to force myself to fit some uncomfortable mold that was never designed for my "shape." It only grew worse when we began to homeschool, as I was suddenly surrounded by a dizzying array of lifestyle options. Homebirthing, Homesteading, Home cooking, Home made everything.....Oh dear, I just wanted to disciple our kids, to really know them and have them know us, and most importantly to lead them into a relationship where they would know God. Now I have to milk goats too? And grind wheat and learn to sew and raise organic produce while starting a little business on the side? I was wiped out just chasing after the active little boys we had, I couldn't fathom doing one more thing.

The Lord had to speak to me, "Jenny, just do the One thing." "Father, what one thing do you mean? The homeschool thing? The country lifestyle thing? The 'get organized and discipline your life already' thing? WHICH ONE THING DO YOU MEAN GOD?" And in that still small voice He spoke to my spirit and said, "Love Me, Love others....that's it." That's so simple! I was getting so focused on the methods and molds of others that I forgot I Corinthians 13. The more excellent way, the thing that never fails, the greatest of all things: LOVE. When the love of God gets a hold of us and grips our hearts tight, there is no more doubts and questions as to who we are or for what we were created. We were all created to love, and we can all do that no matter what type of shoe we wear.

So the bushman in Liberia may have an incredibly different "shoe" to wear than a homeschool Mom in Iowa for example. But even as a homeschool Mom in Iowa, I have a different "fit" than another homeschool Mom in Iowa. As far as I know I am the only Iowa homeschool Mom to 9 children under 10, 4 of them from Liberia, living in a beautiful new home in the midst of a completely drug-infested neighborhood with her Prince Charming Brad. I used to lament that we didn't live on a farm like many Iowa homeschool families, as that seemed vastly more spiritual than being surrounded by meth addicts. But the truth is, I am a city girl with a knack for talking to really disturbed people, and these gifts would be wasted in the country. I have zero farming skills. I have a strong aversion to animals in fact. Farm life would be a poor fit for me right now. Now I have a son who is fanatical about goats, and God graciously gave me a dear friend who lives in the country on a goat farm and this son spends a good amount of time there wearing his own shoe.

I have a special place in my heart for homeschool families still trying to find a shoe that fits. They are devoted, dedicated, disciplined, and just want to find some "lifestyle package" that will guarantee them happy, obedient children who love the Lord. They will attempt to cram themselves into a variety of ill-fitting shoes in order to go to this "happily ever after" place. Yet their zeal and sincerity often ends up in discouragement, as they can't understand why they can never do it as well as those who promote X philosophy. The happiest, most well adjusted families I've met have very little in common except that they love each other and they love God. Some have lots of children, some have one. Some live on the mission field, some in a corn field. Some are reserved,

some are outgoing. Some are called to invent a cure for cancer, others are called to hold the hands of the ones who have cancer. They represent vastly different types of churches or home gatherings. There is no "one shoe" that can fit them all. They are comfortable and content in whom God made their family to be, and they are at peace in their own one-of-a-kind shoe.

Blessings, Jenny