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Week 34: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Christmas Shoes and Smiles special

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Randy: I'm so glad you're watching today. I think you're watching for a reason. I'm Randy Robison. This is Sheila Walsh. We're always glad to have you on *LIFE Today*.

You know Christmas is coming. This Christmas can be incredibly special. Not just special because someone gets a gift but special because we have a simple yet profound way that you can partner with us to change a life, possibly even save a life.

You know Sheila, you and I have been around the world and we have seen the beauty of these, right here, a simple gift of shoes and what it does. It makes me feel good to do it. But it is so much more than that. It is life-altering.

Sheila: Yeah! Here's what I really want you to know. On my very first trip I saw the impact that malnutrition has on children. It was devastating to watch. On subsequent trips I've been where there is no clean water in a village and children are dying every single day. But one of the things I began to notice no matter where I went with our outreach was that none of these children had shoes on.

Now that might seem like a simple thing. Why would that be so important? But what I would go on to learn is that if children don't have a simple pair of shoes to wear, it literally can hamper and even cost them their lives. That's why this is a very important program to me. It is something I've been looking forward to because I believe that when you see the need and how simply we can meet this need, I believe that every single one of us will want to do something.

Randy: Absolutely. The big thing with not having shoes is that the children will get hookworm; that's the predominant thing. And hookworm is one of those things that might cause death but it always compromises the system of the child, the immune system specifically. So when we're out there battling the dirty water or the malnutrition, when you get the hookworm in there and the compromised immune system it compounds. And so suddenly malnutrition becomes that much worse. Or a waterborne disease becomes that much worse.

So we realize, you're right Sheila, we saw this and we thought, is this something that really needs to be addressed? And we realized, yeah, from a health standpoint, it is definitely something that needs to be addressed. And that's why the Christmas Shoes and Smiles is such a wonderful thing to do. We want to show you just a little bit of how devastating this can be and then we want to show you how you can be a part of saving lives. Watch this.

On the mission field:

Announcer: The sounds of children running and playing and having a good time often give way to sounds of pain and suffering because they have never had a pair of shoes to protect their feet.

Janice: Is he saying something? It's pain -- it's paining. Oh my gosh!

I'm in a village in Angola and came upon this child. This little boy is Augusto, and this breaks my heart. His little feet are in some of the worse shape I've ever seen. There were many in this village with horrible conditions on their feet.

Announcer: As our mission teams travel throughout the world, they see the unsanitary conditions that children like Augusto must cope with. Conditions that can lead to a lifetime of misery simply because their feet are not protected.

Janice: They're completely infected. He said there is insects that have gotten into his feet. I'll be

surprised if he doesn't lose his toe. Disease comes in through their feet and just goes throughout their body. It can actually kill them.

Announcer: Augusto's condition is not unique. Thousands of children suffer every day from painful injuries or infestations such as hookworms that enter their bare feet. This can lead to diseases that cause chronic blood loss that leads to anemia, malnutrition, and sometimes, even death.

Janice: Please! Do what you can. Help bring shoes to little children like Augusto all over the world. You can be a part of something big and something even fun. But this is the reason we do it.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Can you imagine something as simple as a pair of shoes could save a child's life? As Christmas is approaching you might be asking well, you're coming to us a little early but that's because we want to be able to get the shoes to the children in time for Christmas.

We can do it in such an amazing way. Do you know that for \$3.60 we can send a pair of shoes like this to children who are in need? So this is an appeal that I feel so excited about because every single one of us can do something. Christmas can be a time where we just get self-indulgent. This has been a hard year but wouldn't it be amazing to turn the tables this year and make it end with one of the most beautiful outreaches of love to children? And all they're asking for is a simple pair of shoes.

Randy: Sheila, it's called "Shoes and Smiles." And when we give the shoes we certainly put a smile on a child's face. But there is more that we do. We also during this time address a very real need that impacts a child's ability to smile and that's with cleft lip and cleft palate. This is an issue that directly impacts the health because a child can't properly swallow or eat depending on the severity of it. So part of the Christmas Shoes and Smiles is to go in with the corrective

surgery. When you see some of the before and after of the corrective surgery and the smile that is literally on a child's face because they now can smile in a way they never could before. Boy, that warms my heart, Sheila. This is just such a wonderful thing that we can do, that we can partner with everyone watching to do that has just lifelong ramifications.

Sheila: I know. Because so often in so many of the countries, if a child is born with a cleft palate or cleft lip it is almost seen as if that child is cursed. They are sidelined; they are not allowed to join in. Can you imagine the heartache on the face of a mom or a dad the first time they get to look at their little one?

I remember when my son was born. The first thing Barry said was, "He's got ten toes and ten fingers!" You want to hold that little baby and believe the best for them. But here's the amazing thing. The doctors that we work with on the ground have offered to do this whole corrective surgery for \$500! I have no idea what that would cost here in the states. But for \$500 they can put a smile back on the face of a little one, of their mother, of their father, of their family, of their village. What a way to show the love of Christ in a practical, tangible way by putting a smile on a little one's face.

Randy: Sheila, you mentioned that this has been a difficult year for a lot of people. Certainly, it has been. We understand that. I would just ask that as you watch these images in just a minute, you will take a moment and say, Lord, what would you have me do? Because the reality is we can all do something. Some of us can do more than others. And if you can do a lot, I would ask that you step up and you do just as much as you can. But if you can do a little, let me tell you, that little is a lot. As Sheila mentioned, \$3.60 is the average cost for a pair of shoes to get that to a child that needs it. We can all give a pair of shoes. \$36 will give ten pairs of shoes. And then the corrective surgeries, now those are more expensive, \$500 on average for a corrective surgery.

Here's all I ask. You just pause, you watch these faces and you say, Lord, enable me to do something for your glory. Ask how you can help partner with us to give shoes and smiles. Watch this.

On the mission field:

James: I love you!

Announcer: For a child living in poverty in a developing country their smile may be the most valuable thing they own. But imagine if that child was born without a big beautiful smile.

People told me not to dream
 To live in their reality
 But I am walking through those doors
 Because I am sure
 There's something more
 Than what I've been told
 Oh, I know I found my way
 Oh, tomorrow is a brand-new day
 And the whole world is going know my name

Announcer: More than a decade ago, *LIFE Outreach* started an annual mission campaign called, "Christmas Shoes and Smiles." In addition to providing over two million children with a new pair of shoes, *LIFE* and its mission partners have also changed the lives of over 2,000 children born with a cleft lip or cleft palate by providing the surgery needed to give them their very own brand-new smile.

Tony: A big thank you to the *LIFE Outreach* family. It's a privilege to serve with you as we share the gospel of Christ and as we provide life-changing surgeries in our part of the world. Our partnership has resulted in children's lives being transformed; from disfigured faces to faces beaming with smiles all because of your generosity in providing these surgeries.

Our world is going to know my name.

End of video

In the studio:

Randy: I can't tell you how much joy it brings me to see those smiles. You saw our mission partner, Tony there on the ground. We have people in place. What we need are people just like you to partner with us. Go to the phones, go online, give the best gift you can because this Christmas you can truly put a smile on a child's face.

Sheila: Here's what I think, Randy. This has been probably the toughest year that you've lived through and it would be easy to just think, let's just get this year over with. Why don't we flip that on its head in Jesus' name and say, you know what? We're going to end this year stronger than ever because of Jesus.

So this is something that no matter who you are, what resources you have, we can all do something. Can you imagine \$36 would provide shoes for ten children? And the joy, I've been there. I've put the first pair of shoes on a little one's feet and it turns... literally turns their mourning into dancing. They go from not being able to walk to being able to dance around.

Wouldn't it be so much more special this Christmas as you and I sit around with our families and reflect on God's love and faithfulness knowing that in Jesus' name we have reached out, put a smile back on faces where a smile was impossible, and literally put shoes on the feet of little ones? I just think what a great -- great joy! Some of our appeals are where I think this is such a heartache. This is such a joy! This is Operation Christmas Shoes and Smiles! And together, we can all do this. I'm excited!

Randy: Oh my goodness. You know it's interesting. That last piece we saw ended with, "My name is..." and had the little child's name there. It reminds me because at Christmas you go and you write on the presents whose this is. And when I was a child, and I'm sure, Sheila, with you too, you always go to the Christmas tree and you say, "Where is my name?" When I look out at these children, sometimes you just see children everywhere. But God knows their names -- every single one of them. And I just want to step up and say, as an ambassador for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, your name is on a pair of shoes. Or if you need it, your name is on your lips, it's

on that surgery, it's on that corrective surgery. Let's put their names on so many pairs of shoes that there's not a child that doesn't have a pair of shoes this year. This can be special. Like Sheila said, this can be the most special year ever for so many children. It depends on one thing, how many of you will partner with us? We want, Sheila and I, Sheila, I know it's in your heart, we would give shoes to every child in the entire world over and over again.

Sheila: Absolutely.

Randy: But it really depends on how many of you join with us. \$36 for ten pairs of shoes. \$500 for the surgery. \$180 will give 50 pairs of shoes. Whatever it is you can do, I just ask that you do it.

Sheila: And do it now. What I wanted to say is Christianity is not a spectator sport. We get to dive in and make a difference. You join me. My husband and I have already committed that we're going to do two corrective surgeries this year. I need another Christmas present like I need a hole in the head. So let's do that. Let's determine that this year, I know it's been hard, I know it's been suffering, but Christ has been with us. He has been faithful. So let's determine that we're going to be a city set on a hill. We're going to send lights around the world.

So go to your phone, please go to your phone right now. Call that number. Make the very best gift possible. It is going to be a life-changing end to an unusual year.

Randy: We're excited about it and we're excited about you partnering with us.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet

puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and disease that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today, you will help secure and make ready 150,000 Christmas shoes to be shipped and delivered to children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted blue crystal shoe ornament. A treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may also request this keepsake boxed set of all *LIFE's* Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft lip or palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "A Mother's Strength" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of video

On the mission field

Clint: We're approaching a time of the year when *LIFE Outreach* does its Christmas Shoes & Smiles campaign. The smiles are for corrective surgery. But what we're doing today is we're getting these young boys and girls shoes for the very first time. You can actually see the importance of what we're doing because look at this little girl, Veronica, she's got these sores on her feet already. She's obviously never owned a pair of shoes. She's been walking around bare feet.

James: Betty, they just tough it out and they play. But we found out that right here in this area that hookworms get in the skin, get in the bloodstream, ultimately into the intestines and cause

very serious disease and sometimes death. We can turn it around by simply giving them shoes.

Sheila: Something as simple as a pair of shoes can really change a child's life. This is a happy place today. [Laughing] Look at this face! Who wouldn't want to give her a gift at Christmas? So thank you so much on behalf of her family, those who love her. I think you've put the biggest smile on her face that we've seen all day. So thank you. Thank you for the gift of shoes. Thank you for the gift of life!

[Children yelling]

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: In so many of the villages that we go into with our missions we see tears, we see quiet children. But I have to tell you, when we go in there with a gift of Christmas shoes we hear laughter.

I want to just share something with you that I've been doing this year. It's been a year that's been financially challenging for most of us so I decided to do, knowing that this campaign was coming up, was I went into my closet and I looked at all the shoes I had. And I thought, this is ridiculous. I have way more shoes than I can possibly wear. So I picked out three or four pairs that were in pretty good condition and I went to one of those sites where you took a photo of it and then you sell it. Just by selling these three or four pairs of my shoes that I hardly ever wear, it was enough to provide 20 pairs of shoes for children this Christmas.

So think of creative ways where you don't have to be bound by what we think we have in our checkbook. There's all sorts of ways that you and I can step up and make a difference. Have a bake sale! I want to challenge you as Sunday School classes and extended families, let's do this together this year. Can you imagine what it would be like if 2020 ended up with a wave of love

across the world in Jesus' name? Don't you think that would be exciting, Randy?

Randy: I think there are always sorts of things we can do and with the internet, people have found out, there are creative ways to communicate online. So we can do online campaigns. Whatever God puts on your heart is the bottom line. Go out and do it because the shoes and the smiles, both the smiles from having shoes and the smiles from having corrective surgery is just a wonderful thing.

Sheila, there are many things that we do that are difficult, that are hard. It is hard to watch the pictures of children's feet that are infected. It's hard to see them cry. I couldn't bear it if I didn't know that we have the answer, that we are the answer to their prayer, those who cry out and say to God, where are you? And God says, "I have people on this earth to alleviate your pain." We are those people.

So we celebrate the birth of a savior, we celebrate the idea of giving, we celebrate the joy of smiling but we only do it when we take up that role as Christ's ambassadors that he put us on this earth to be and we fulfill it. This year we're asking you to do it with us through Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

Sheila: I think it is interesting. I was reading through Ephesians six again. It talks about putting on the shoes of the gospel of peace. There is something about when we go into a village, these are amazing little shoes. We get them made for \$3.60. So for ten pairs: \$36. Very doable! There's something about when you care for the immediate physical needs of a child in a village that to me we've earned the right to share the news of Jesus Christ. That we don't come here just on our own. First of all, if there is a hungry child, we're going to feed you. If you need clean water, we're going to bring you clean water. If you have nothing on your feet, we're going to give you shoes. And then we're going to tell you about the Jesus who sent us. Make your best gift possible!

Begin video clip

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End of video**On the mission field**

Tammy: It's a great day when you can give "unto the least of these." I have hung out in this village all afternoon and I could not wait for this moment to be honest with you. But I've had a chance to play with the children. We've hung out and I've played at their playground with them. But you would not imagine what playground they play on. It was filled with broken glass, broken

tin cans, all kinds of debris, trash, animals everywhere, fecal matter everywhere. And I'm watching the kids play in this stuff. It was just awful. We would never allow our children to play in an atmosphere like that. But that's all they have in this village and they were the happiest children I've ever seen.

Yet even in that moment we witnessed before our very own eyes a little boy stepping into something and cutting his foot. The reason why is because you'll look around and you see that most of these kids don't even have shoes -- not hardly one of them. If they do, they're broken apart and falling apart. It's just not a good scene.

So let's do something special this time of year. It's not just about a pretty pair of shoes, it's so much more than that. It is really about the quality of life and something so simple as putting on a brand-new pair of shoes on their feet that will protect their feet whether it is infection, cuts, hook worm, whatever it is, it is going to protect their life. It is so simple. Let's do it. Let's make a difference one child at a time. They're a perfect fit!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Now you might be thinking it is a little early to be singing "Holly jolly Christmas" but let me tell you why. We want to be able to get the shoes. We made a commitment: 150,000 pairs of shoes. We want to get them to the children by Christmas. And for any gift at all, we send you, this is our shoe this year. It's a beautiful cobalt blue crystal. So for any gift at all, we will be sending you your own little shoe to remind you to pray for these children.

Randy: Absolutely. You know what? I have confidence that this is going to be a great Christmas for so many children because you simply go online, pick up the phone, make a gift, large, small, it's all big when it is in obedience to God. Let's make this Christmas the best Christmas ever for so many children as we reach out in the name of Jesus on Christmas with shoes and smiles.

Sheila: It's so exciting! Thank you so much for staying with us and let's make this the very best Christmas ever -- not just for us but for a lot of children we might not meet until we're finally home.