



The Courage

By Beth Foreman

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105).

My junior high English teacher taught me all about walking in someone else's shoes. She was an angry woman — with penciled eyebrows — who snapped her ruler in her palm while she walked up and down the classroom rows. And she scared me.

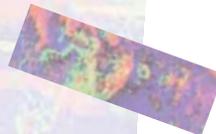
Yet my mom would remind me: walk a mile in her shoes. Be sensitive, understand her perspective, feel her pain.

Yes, if I had stepped in her shoes and walked a mile, I would have felt real pain, because she wore black patent leather high-heeled stilettos with pointed toes.

No wonder she was such an unhappy woman. Her feet were killing her.

Okay, I admit it. I've squeezed my feet into painful shoes for a few hours in church or a night on the town with my husband.

My feet feel fine at first. *This isn't so bad.* Yet somewhere between the Introit and the Hymn of the Day, I notice a tingling. By the time the sermon begins, my little toes are numb and I surreptitiously slip out of those pointy pumps ... ahh ... relief as I lean over and rub my aching feet. I slip them back on just in time to limp up to the communion rail. With my toes pinching inside those ridiculously pointed shoes, I can barely focus on the pastor's words. Back in the pew, I bow my head. *Lord, grant me relief.*



to Walk in ... *Those Shoes*

Yes, you're chuckling because you've been there, maybe not in the church pew, but in an office meeting, dinner party, or crowded elevator. You've said it before. *My feet are killing me.*

All I want to know is who started it?

Did you know high heels were originally worn only by men, beginning in the sixteenth century in France?

Men?

The heel made it easier for their boots to stay in the stirrups while riding. But it was a short man, Louis XIV, who began the high-heeled fashion trend. Heels made him appear much taller.

And the rest, as they say, is painful history.

Indeed, this temptation to wear uncomfortably high-heeled shoes has been around for many years. According to the 1918 book *The Secrets of Distinctive Dress* by Mary Brooks, "Common sense tells us that the low heels are better; our pride tells us that the high heels look better on us."

So it is with much dismay that I see pointed toes and high heels on shoe department shelves once again. Yes, it's easy for Katie Couric to cross her legs and flash her high-heeled foot in front of the television camera.

She's sitting down.

But what about the rest of us who are hopping into our cars and pumping our own gas? I can't wear the latest fashionable snakeskin shoes to trudge out onto the soccer field or race up and down the grocery store aisles. And when was the

last time I slipped on a pair of strappy heels to run the vacuum cleaner?

Given the option — and we do live in a free country — I opt for comfortable shoes. Because if my feet hurt, I hurt.

Therein lies the source of the cliché. Walk a mile in these shoes, and you may feel their pain. The shoes tell a story:

The fireman's soot-covered boots that wait on the porch for the next burning building.

The single mother's worn loafers that carry her from day job to night job.

The little boy's sneakers that were tucked in a box after he was shot by a gang-fight's stray bullet.

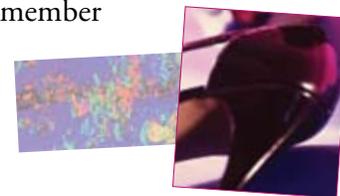
The grandmother's rumpled slippers that are hidden under her nursing home bed because no one visits.

The dust-covered sandals that never wore out, even after forty years of desert hiking. The tear-stained sandals of the women who wept at the foot of the cross over two thousand years ago.

And those same sandals, three days later, that carried the joyful women as they spread the Good News.

Jesus walked in my shoes, your shoes, the world's shoes. He felt our pain. He took away our pain.

The next time my feet ache, I'll remember that He walked in my shoes.



Beth Foreman is Features Editor for the Lutheran Woman's Quarterly.