

Abuelo's Shoe Shop

By Ray Goldrup

(Based on a true story)

"I am sorry' is not always easy to say"
(Children's Songbook, 98).

Miguel opened the door to his *abuelo's* (his grandpa's) shoe shop. He took a deep breath and smelled the leather. It was one of his favorite smells.

"Hi, Abuelo!"

Abuelo was kneeling down and tracing a customer's foot onto a piece of paper. He didn't look up. Abuelo's hearing wasn't very good.

Miguel sat down at a workbench. He looked at the stacks of cut leather. He imagined what Abuelo would make with each one, using his hammer and pliers.

The tools reminded Miguel of something else he loved. Abuelo always gave him a piece of candy whenever Miguel helped clean up.

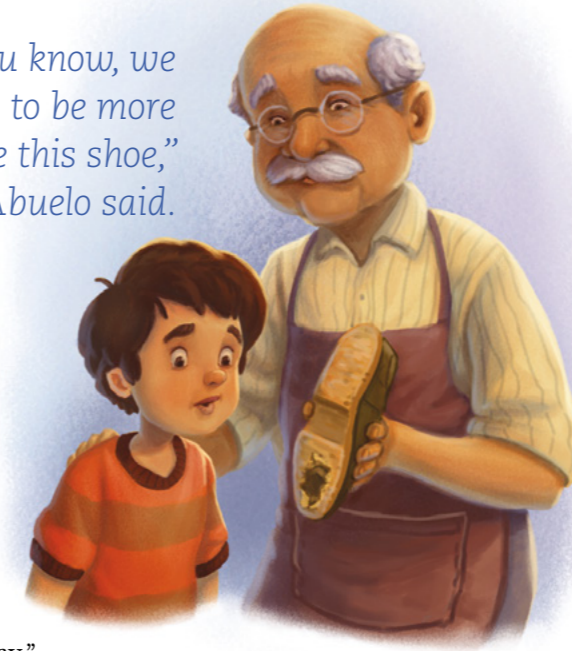
Miguel knew he wasn't supposed to take a treat without asking. But he was hungry now! And it looked like Abuelo would be busy for a while. *Maybe I don't need to wait*, Miguel thought.

Miguel reached under the counter for the candy jar. It was his favorite—sweet and spicy with chili powder! Part of him knew he should ask Abuelo first. But part of him just kept thinking about how tasty the candy looked. He hurried and put it in his mouth.

Pretty soon the customer left. Miguel watched Abuelo pick up a piece of leather and dunk it in some water. That helped make the leather soft and easy to work with.

Miguel ate the rest of the candy as fast as he could. Then he walked over to Abuelo.

"You know, we need to be more like this shoe,"
Abuelo said.



Abuelo looked up from his work. "Hello!" he said with a smile. "I didn't see you come in."

Miguel hugged Abuelo. He hoped Abuelo couldn't tell he'd eaten a piece of candy. Miguel pushed the worry away.

"It looks like you're busy today," Miguel said, pointing to the stacks of leather. "Do you need any help?"

"Sure! Could you pass me that thread?"

Miguel reached for a long piece of thread. He tugged it between his hands. It was tougher than it looked.

"Wow, that's strong."

Abuelo chuckled. "It has to be, to last through the wear and tear of life." Abuelo pulled the thread through the leather. Then he got that look on his face that Mamá sometimes called the "Wise Abuelo" look.

"You know, we need to be more like this shoe," Abuelo said with a nod.

Miguel squinted at the leather. "Um. We do?"

"Yes, indeed. We need to stay strong. That way Satan's temptations won't make us fall apart."

The red candy flashed through Miguel's mind. He knew he should tell Abuelo about it.

Abuelo took an old shoe off the shelf. "See this big hole?"

Miguel could probably fit his hand through the hole. "Yeah."

"This was once a small hole that could've been fixed easily. But the owner waited, and now it's going to be much harder to fix. Bad habits and bad choices are like that hole. Best to fix them early."

Abuelo nodded again, and the Wise Abuelo look turned back into a smile. They kept talking as Abuelo worked. The whole time, Miguel kept thinking about the red candy stick.

When Abuelo finished, Miguel helped him clean up. Then Abuelo reached for his jar of candy.

Finally Miguel couldn't take it anymore.

"I took one of your candies without asking!" he blurted out.

Abuelo set down the jar in surprise. "What was that?"

Miguel told him all about taking the candy. "I'm so sorry, Abuelo! I'll never do it again. I promise!"

Abuelo gave Miguel a big hug. Miguel felt so much better.

"Thank you for being honest. That's more important to me than just about anything else."

On the walk home, Miguel felt just like one of Abuelo's new pair of shoes. Strong as can be, and ready for life! ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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One day me and my mom went to pay my mom's water bill, and the guy in front of us dropped a whole lot of money but didn't realize it. I hurried and gave it back to him. He said thank you very much and that he didn't think any other kid would do that. I had such a good feeling after that. I will always remember that good feeling.

Brianna S., age 9, Idaho, USA