



When we were kids, we used to focus on what we would *get* every Christmas. What presents would we open on Christmas morning? What surprises would we find in our stocking? What items would Santa actually deliver from our list? Had we been good enough that year?

As we got older and started families of our own, our focus began to change. Instead of looking forward to what we would *get* on Christmas, we started taking more pleasure in what we could *give*. The real joy, we found, was seeing the expressions on our loved ones' faces as they opened their gifts and saw what we had lovingly made or bought for them.

We think this is a very natural progression. Most people, we imagine, go through the same transition as they grow up. The pleasure of *getting* replaced by the joy of *giving*.

Over the years, however, we've found that giving is about more than just buying the latest gadget or putting something special in a box. We've found that the real joy of Christmas is in showing and sharing our love to and with the people around us. Family, friends, neighbors, our team, our clients...all the little things we can do, and all the little things they do for us, is what really makes Christmas special. Sometimes that little thing might be a gift; other times, it might be a service. Sometimes it might be a kind word; other times, a shared activity or time-honored tradition. Either way, with each passing year, *giving* around Christmastime has become what we look forward to most as *getting* recedes into the background.

Recently, a friend shared a story with us that we think illustrates this feeling. It's an old folk story, one of the many collected and published by the Brothers Grimm back in the 1800s. Unlike some of their stories, this one is not a dark, cautionary tale, but a light and cheerful one. It's a simple fable that perfectly encapsulates the warmth and spirit of Christmas. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did.

The Elves and the Shoemaker

There was once a shoemaker, who worked very hard and was very honest, but as times were hard, he could not earn enough to live upon. Despite his efforts, at last, all he had in the world was gone, save just leather enough to make one final pair of shoes.

Then he cut his leather out, all ready to make up the next day, meaning to rise early in the morning to his work. His conscience was clear and his heart light amidst all his troubles; so, he went peaceably to bed, left all his cares, and soon fell asleep. In the morning he sat himself down to his work, when, to his great wonder, there stood the shoes already made upon the table. The good man knew not what to say or think at such an odd thing happening. He looked at the workmanship; there was not one false stitch in the whole job. All was so neat and true that it was quite a masterpiece.

The same day a customer came in, and the shoes suited him so well that he willingly paid a price higher than usual for them; and the poor shoemaker, with the money, bought leather enough to make two pairs more. In the evening he cut out the work, and went to bed early, that he might get up and begin betimes next day; but he was saved all the trouble, for when he got up in the morning the work was done ready to his hand. Soon in came buyers who paid him handsomely for his goods, so that he bought leather enough for four pair more. He cut out the work again overnight and found it done in the morning, as before; and so it went on for some time: what was got ready in the evening was always done by daybreak, and the good man soon became thriving and well-off again.

One evening, about Christmas-time, as he and his wife were sitting around the fire chatting, he said to her, "I should like to sit up and watch tonight, that we may see who it is that comes and does my work for me." The wife liked the thought, so they left a light burning, and hid themselves in a corner of the room and watched what would happen.

As soon as it was midnight, there crept in two little naked elves. They sat themselves upon the shoemaker's bench, took all the work that was cut out, and began to ply with their little fingers, stitching, rapping, and tapping away at such a rate, that the shoemaker could not take his eyes off them. And on they went, till the job was quite done, and the shoes stood ready for use upon the table. This was long before daybreak, and then they bustled away as quick as lightning.

The next day the wife said to the shoemaker, "These little elves have made us rich, and we ought to be thankful to them, and do them a good turn if we can. I am quite sorry to see them run about as they do, for they have nothing upon their backs to keep off the cold, and it is nearly Christmas. I'll tell you what, I will make each of them a shirt, and a coat and waistcoat, and a pair of pantaloons into the bargain, while you make each of them a little pair of shoes."

The thought pleased the good cobbler very much; and one evening, when all the things were ready, they laid them on the table, instead of the work that they used to cut out, and then went and hid themselves, to watch what the little elves would do.

About midnight in they came, dancing and skipping, hopped round the room, and then went to sit down to their work as usual; but when they saw the clothes lying for them, they laughed and cried and danced, and seemed mightily delighted.

Then they dressed themselves in the twinkling of an eye, and danced and capered and sprang about, as merry as could be; till at last they danced out at the door, and away over the green.

The good couple saw them no more; but everything went well with them from that time forward, as long as they lived.

We love this story and all its characters, who think only of giving, never getting – and in doing so, get more than they could have ever hoped. And we love this season and all the feelings that come with it! So, on behalf of everyone here at Hudock Capital Group, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May your holidays be as magical as the shoemaker's, filled with goodwill and good cheer.

Sincerely,



Barbara B. Hudock, CIMA®, CPM®
Chief Executive Officer
Founding Partner



Michael J. Hudock, Jr., CPM®
President and Founding Partner
Wealth Consultant

400 Market Street ● Suite 200 ● Williamsport PA 17701

570.326.9500 ● 866.855.0569 ● fax: 570.326.9577 ● www.hudockcapital.com

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