

Starting and Growing Your Church Orphan Care to Adoption Support Ministry

A guide for Leaders

“A Christian response to the cry of orphan children”
James 1:27

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Home for Good Foundation

About Home for Good

The vision began to develop in October 1996 when my husband and I began our six-year assignment in the Philippines. The children at the mission orphanage captured my attention and stole my heart. But my heart broke again and again as I saw the children lose hope, because no one loved them enough to take them home - for good. I quickly learned that adoption is the best solution for the children's needs, especially their spiritual needs. The Bible is filled with passages about how God provides for the needs of orphans, and an orphanage could not possibly be the earthly setting He had in mind if a home is available. Psalms 68:6 says, "God places the lonely in families."

After working with the children at the mission orphanage for six years, we began looking for a ministry that focused on adoption. Although there were a few out there, none really fit the scope of our vision. That vision is to reach the church with the message that: "Adoption is God's plan to provide for the needs of orphans, and He is calling some Filipino Christians to adopt and others to come along side to empower and encourage."

If you are reading this now, you probably already believe that orphan care and adoption is God's call to the church to practice pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27). For me, pure and undefiled religion means being fully involved in orphan care with out neglecting the very important aspect of seeking permanent homes for orphans.

Jesus brought God's love to earth in a form we could understand, adoption. God offers to adopt us as His eternal children, and the best way for us to model the Father heart of God is by offering to adopt the orphans in our midst. This is the core value of the Home For Good Foundation.

Many good people have expressed an understanding of this model, but have indicated they don't know where to begin the process of helping their church mobilize and launch an adoption ministry. I hope and pray this booklet will be a valuable tool and resource.

Maureen Clark

Co-Founder Home for Good

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INTRODUCTION

A resource to the church – and to the community

John 14:18 - I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you

Maybe I don't need to tell you the value of an orphan care to adoption ministry, but perhaps someone talked you into reading this manual, and you're still not sure. This manual is filled with convincing information. Scripture is the most inspirational. Open your heart and mind and ask God to reveal what He wants you to do. He will speak to you through His Word. So read it and soak it up. See the appendix for a list of Scripture references relating to orphans and adoption.

Adoption is the single most powerful word to describe God's love for mankind. Jesus brought God's love to us in a form we could understand - adoption. Galatians 4:4-5 tells us that God's primary purpose for sending Jesus into the world was to arrange for our adoption. "God sent forth His Son...that we might receive the adoption as sons." "But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name." (Jn 1:12) Jesus Himself said, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (Jn 14:18) He also said, "I go to prepare a place for you ...and I will come again to receive you to Myself; (to adopt you Rom 8:23) that where I am, there you may be also." (Jn 14:2-3)

Most church-goers are familiar with the term "Redemption" but few have been taught the doctrine of adoption. Jesus paid for our redemption by shedding His blood on the cross. In Romans 8:23 the word adoption is synonymous with redemption! In other words, Jesus died on the cross to pay for our adoption.

Your study of the subject would not be complete without talking to others who already have orphan care to adoption ministries. Refer to the list of churches engaged in this ministry and call or e-mail them with your questions. They are eager to share their stories, and will be a great source of inspiration. It is our heart's desire that your church body will become passionate about adoption. We are eager to help in any way we can. Don't hesitate to test us in this. And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. (Heb 10:24)

The role of the church can be as simple as coming along side of individuals with prayer and counseling, encouragement, and directing them to adoption resources. Or it could be as big as employing your own social worker, raising funds for adoption expenses, reaching out to the community, making a commitment to an orphanage or assisting families who are willing to provide foster care to children waiting for adoption. Your adoption ministry will create countless opportunities for evangelism as well.

Some believe that taking care of a child in an orphanage is enough, after all, there are far too many children to take them all home! It's a vital work and many hands are needed to carry out that work, but once you know what the bible says about orphans and adoption, you will be as convinced as we are that adoption is the very Father-Heart of God and must not be over looked, but must be considered a vital part of orphan care ministry. That's why we call it "orphan care to adoption."

Since adoption is the only way God offers, to enter into His eternal kingdom, it stands to reason, adoption is probably one of the most important doctrines of the bible.

Chapter 1 GETTING STARTED

Proverbs 16:3 - Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

Prayer Team

Begin by gathering a few faithful friends and hold frequent prayer meetings. Write out your vision and dreams, and prayerfully ask God to clarify your vision. Paraphrasing (Pvb. 29:18), without a clear vision you are likely to run wild. Write out prayer requests and record answers to those prayers. Diligently read and study all the scriptures relating to adoption (see appendix). As time goes on you will have a wealth of knowledge on the scriptural basis for adoption.

Find a mentor

Perhaps you already have some great ideas of your own, but through a multitude of counselors you will succeed (Pvb. 15:22). You will gain confidence and wisdom and form lasting alliances.

- Seek out and talk to people whose church is involved in adoption ministry
- Talk to pastors and leaders
- Look for materials
- Call or write to the author of the materials you find
- Learn who are the champions of your cause
- As you talk to these people, keep them in mind as speakers for future events in your church or community
- Hopefully, a true mentor will emerge. If nothing else you will have accomplished Pvb. 15:22

Core Leaders

Whether you are a pastor or an individual who wants to mobilize your church, you need to build a core group of leaders with a connection to adoption. If you don't already have some leaders in mind, you may find them while doing your adoption survey.

Adoption survey

An adoption survey will help you clarify and connect with the needs of your church and community. *Sample on page 12*

If church leadership is already on board, you may be able to do a church-wide survey. If they are not yet on board, the survey will be your foundation for presenting the need to your church. The questionnaire in the back gives ideas of questions to ask.

If you cannot do a church wide survey, you can approach individuals on your own, one by one. When you begin interviewing church members you will discover that 10% - 20% of them already have a connection to adoption.

Each person you interview can lead you to another with an adoption connection, specific interest area, or certain expertise. Leaders, ministry workers and advisors will also emerge during your interviews.

Whether the church is already on board or you are trying to present a case, do a survey. This will help you establish:

- The needs of the members and others in the community
- Who is interested in leadership?
- Who has special expertise?
- Networking connections
- Who has an interest in doing small projects?
- Who are the adoptees, foster and adoptive parents & grandparents?

When assessing the needs of the church you will build a deeper relationship with many wonderful people. Don't do this over the phone, but take the time to visit in person. When talking to those who have adopted, let them tell you what they want to about their adoption story. Be careful not to probe into things they may not wish to share. Assure them what they do share is confidential. If you hear a particularly touching story that you believe would make a powerful impact at a later date, be sure to ask them to consider sharing in the future. Never repeat or publish anything you hear without permission. Remember, they need to be sensitive to their child's feelings, and may not want to share in an open group setting. People will often reveal the difficulties they have experienced, and offer ideas about how the church could help others in the future. Be sure to survey foster families too. Their needs are different in many ways.

Assess the needs in your community. Get to know all those in charge of local Foster and Adoptive parenting groups, welfare representatives and private adoption agencies. Find out what they are doing and what their needs are. Ask them what they dream of. They have already given this a lot of thought. Some may be eager to share their work and burdens with you, while others may look at your inquiries with caution. Remember to be compassionate when talking to government and private agency officials. All the problems that have emerged cannot possibly be their fault. A good employee will likely defend their department. Learn to read each situation, and assure people you are not there to discover faults but to discover new territory and innovative ways to help children find homes through the involvement of the church.

As you talk to these people, tell them you are doing an assessment of the services available in your community. From your survey you plan to submit ideas to the church as to how they can take a greater role in supporting orphan care, adoption and foster care in your community.

You will learn much through these interviews and make many alliances. You will find an advocate in the social welfare department and in the private sector as well, they will be a great resource for information about how the system works. Be sure to share your plans with them. This will help insure that everything you do fits within the existing laws and government system.

Leadership

Allow your pastor/elders to determine the style of leadership and organization. As far as your qualifications go, they are usually happy to have an individual come forward and offer to help. A group of individuals is great also. Together, lay out a plan and present it to the board or pastor.

Lay out the plan

Luke 14:28 For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost...

Depending on the understanding of the ministry, and enthusiasm of your leadership, you should present enough materials to make your case. If they fully understand, you may only need to present a list of opening activities for your first year, and how you plan to carry them out. If your church leadership has not had much exposure to adoption as a ministry, more information will be needed. Here is a list of things to present:

- Names of church members who endorse the idea
- A few testimonies from members. These will come from your survey
- A few testimonies from pastors and leaders of other churches
- A suggested mission statement
- A list of Biblical references to make your case
- A list of ideas on how to minister to adoptive families in your own congregation, to Christians beyond your church, and ideas on reaching the community.
- Prioritize the first year's activities and name the people who may carry them out
- Create a budget with suggestions on how you might raise the needed funds. Most churches are financially stretched, so present a plan for funding your ministry that does not rely on the church budget, but ask only for logistical and prayer support.

Know your church structure

Knowing your church structure will help you reach your goal more quickly. If there is a pastor of Family Ministries – he would be the first person to talk to. Is your senior pastor the one to go to, or will he tell you to make a presentation to the Board of Elders? If you have a close contact with an elder, make an appointment with him and share your idea. He can then tell you how to present your ministry plan. Give him preliminary copies of your plans; this will help him catch the vision. Have you found a mentor yet? Be quick to seek the advice of others.

Approaching your leadership

Here are steps to consider in approaching your church leadership:

- Pray
- Take someone with you
- Present adoption scripture
- Take copies of testimony from other church leaders
- Include adoption statistics
- Include quotes from your survey and names of members who have shared their story
- Present a simple beginning plan, and know how you will accomplish it
- Be willing to listen, and prepared to answer questions

Chapter 2 BUILDING THE MINISTRY FOUNDATION

Isaiah 1:17 ...defend the orphan...

Your first official meeting

If you are now a leader and in a place you have never been before, there are wonderful books for new leaders. See the appendix for a list of reading options. By now you should know the kind of structure you will have. If there is a chairperson, then that person will call a meeting of all those who have shown an interest in leadership. Sometimes the pastor of Family Ministries will be the one to formally call the meeting and he appoints a chairperson. For a large group, the meeting could include the formal process of appointing or electing people who will take charge of various ministry areas. If your group is just you and a pastor, even that is a great start. Just grow from where you are. In your meeting you should:

- Present the report from the church pastor or elders who have given you the go-ahead.
- Present the first projects based on your best ability to estimate what can be managed in the early stages.
- Ask for volunteers to head up or participate in each project or event.
- Share Biblical adoption materials.
- Pray for the work.

Evaluate the success of your first meeting

Evaluate the success of your first meeting and write to everyone who was present. Always include your church leaders – they also need to know how it went. Keep them in the loop at all times. You may think it takes too much time, but that is the only way to help them help you, and to help everyone grow in understanding of this new ministry.

Clarify the roles

Does everyone understand who will do what, and to whom they will report? Now early stage is the best time to clarify roles.

Organizational chart

Create an organizational chart and ask church leaders if this is what you all understand to be the structure. This will be based on your church structure and you may need help from someone within the church leadership.

Assess the ability of your church to carry out the ministry

The extent of the ministry will depend on many factors such as the size of your church, the availability of members who can be of assistance, and many more things. The size, spiritual gifts and energy of your core group will dictate the initial projects you will undertake, and how fast you will expand. It is always better to have a quality program, work together and expand slowly until the manpower and resources catch up with the vision.

Suggested committee members/volunteers:

- Chairperson
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Hospitality
- Public awareness coordinator
- Spiritual formation
- Mentoring, counseling and support group chairperson
- Events Coordinator
- Referrals coordinator
- Librarian
- Adopting and foster family care coordinator
- Funding

The committee member positions you need, will depend on what projects you choose. Look at chapter 4, Potential ministry components. Plan to undertake the ministry components that fit the gifts and talents of the people God has provided for your committee.

DO THE KNOWN
HE WILL LEAD YOU
THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

Chapter 3 **MINISTRY LAUNCH**

Psalm 9:14 ... Thou has been the helper of the orphan.

Ministry Launch and Dedication

A ministry launch event in church on Sunday gives you and your group the blessing of the church that you need. This is the time the pastor should dedicate the team. If there are any families in the process of adopting at that time, they should be included in the ministry launch. If there is a families involved in the foster care system, include them as well. Ideally the pastor will explain what it's all about, or he may ask you to do it. A bulletin insert or message from the pastor in the bulletin will give the dedication more impact. Inspirational messages in the appendix of this manual give you materials for use in your church bulletin, or other media presentations. All those involved in the ministry may want to get together afterwards for food, fellowship and celebration of what God has done.

Your first activities

The ministry launch followed by an event on the same day will likely be your first activity. It gives the congregation a chance to comment, share their stories, offer or ask for help, prayer and encouragement. It could be as simple as an information table in a visible place or a dessert, lunch or dinner event to share posters, pictures and information on various aspects of the ministry.

Have sign-up sheets available for people to indicate their particular interest in the ministry. People may come forward who want to be included in activities, or who want to help. You're beginning to build the team and connecting with those who need help, and others who want to help with your church's new adoption ministry.

DO THE POSSIBLE

HE WILL SUPPLY

THE IMPOSSIBLE

Chapter 4 UP AND RUNNING

Philippians 2:2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

You are now up and running. Remember to follow with another meeting. You may have a lot of information to process such as names of people and various interests related to adoption that should be considered. Look again at your mission and purpose and decide how to incorporate any newly discovered interests into your plan. This is the time to re-prioritize, and if your group has made changes in the plan, report it to the church leadership.

Develop a budget

Your first proposal had a budget in it. Now is the time to refine it and make plans to raise the money needed.

The budget could be very small, shouldered by only the committee, or it could be large and require fundraising efforts. Any church can begin with the simple resources they already have and with little or no budget. Look at your **to do list** and decide what funds will be needed. Here are some things to consider.

Can you charge fees or ask for donations when you have events? This would be a way to defray costs. What will the church provide if anything, and what can your group raise on your own. Perhaps you need to add a fundraising event to your to do list. Be sure to clear with the church, the kind of fundraising activities they will allow.

Keep records

As you progress you will want to look back to see what you did and what it cost, so keep records. Ask for notes to be taken at your meeting and ask project leaders for reports. These can be very simple in outline form.

Potential Church ministry components

Here is a list of ministry areas. It's not exhaustive, but it would be exhausting to try to do everything, so prioritize. We will categorize this list in order to allow you to pick something from different areas. A component from each of the four areas will help you achieve balance.

- 1. Biblical teaching**
- 2. Orphan care and adoption**
- 3. Fund Raising**
- 4. Evangelism and community outreach**

1. Biblical teaching component

Bible studies on adoption for prospective families
Bible teaching for congregation through bulletins, mailti-media in church
Bible teaching that reaches the Christian community through local radio and other media
Biblical teaching impacting the un-reached community

2. Orphan care and adoption component

Regular orphanage outreach, letting needs of orphanage be known
Adoption counseling for prospective adoptive families and children
Resource library
Have a key person to answer question and refer people to the proper service
Fundraising help for prospective adoptive families
Logistical support
Adoption forums and adoptive family forums
Adoption Conferences or expo
Speakers on topics of special interest to adoptive families
Adoption information meetings for prospective adoptive families
Support group

Foster care

Foster care is an important part of helping with the orphan population. Be sure to find out all you can about it and try to have a component in your church ministry. Do not neglect the foster care aspect of the ministry. It is a doorway to adoption. A major portion of families who began by providing short-term foster care eventually go on to adopt. Foster children and families need this ministry.

You can:

Hold foster care information meetings
Foster family support group
Have speakers on topics of special interest to foster families

Orphanage

Every church should have a connection with an orphanage. Don't settle for random one time help, but make it a major component of your adoption ministry. Supply them with regular goods and services. They very much need and will welcome your help. Regularly send them short-term hands on helpers who can spend time at the facility. Choose a facility that is actively trying to get their eligible children adopted. Perhaps they need help with this and your church can provide a service that will enhance their adoption program.

3. Fundraising component

For ministry operation
For adoption expenses
For foster family needs
For the promotion of adoption and foster care
For orphanage needs

Events: Events raise funds and build awareness. Consider an event that is open to the entire community since it serves the added dual purpose of evangelism and community outreach. Events build awareness and open up an endless array of fund raising possibilities.

Grants: Individual, corporate, foundation grants can be a source of funds for operation.

Ongoing funding sources: Such as the coffee stand at church, or production of products for sale are helpful for ongoing expenses of the ministry as well as providing opportunities for families to raise funds for adoption.

If your church has a bookstore, adoption books and products could be included. Perhaps the church would agree to let the proceeds from these items go to the adoption ministry.

4. Evangelism and Community Outreach component

(Matt 5:16) Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Your leadership in the community will be a light and a witness. Promoting adoption in the community, and soliciting donations for adoption ministry are both excellent ways to be a Matthew 5:16 Christian. It creates incredible opportunities for witnessing, praying with people and sharing the gospel. People appreciate orphan care and adoption ministry and are happy to support it if they can.

- Provide public awareness through various media
- Invite the public to adoption information meetings or hold them at their corporate offices
- Make your community aware of adoption resources available through your church
- Open your adoption library and bible studies to the community

Prioritize

From your priority list consider which items have corresponding leaders to take charge of that area. Be bold about asking for help with those areas. Remember to keep in mind that God has given people different gifts and talents. It will not be a pleasant task for someone to take charge of a ministry outside his or her giftedness. If you have no one to head up a very important project, be sure to include it anyway in your initial action plan. Begin praying that God will send someone to fill that spot.

Let's sum it up:

Get permission and endorsement of the church

Choose the formation committee

Assess the needs in your Church

Develop an action plan

CONCLUSION

The opportunities to minister to adoptive families within and outside the church are limited only by your creativity. Living out Matthew 5:16 and James 1:27 open many doors for sharing the gospel, and will create numerous opportunities to reach and evangelize people you may not otherwise reach. This is why a pastor recently said that adoption ministry is the best thing his church has ever done.

Always keep this in mind, most people don't understand orphan ministry and adoption, they either never gave it a thought, or they mistakenly believe that caring for children in orphanages and foster homes is good enough. Our culture lulls us into believing that adoption is not ministry, but rather social welfare, and therefore belongs to the government. Many have never thought otherwise. Ours is an ongoing challenge to continually educate others in our church and society about the plight of orphan children and the urgent need for adoption. The Bible is very clear - adoption is God's heart. James 1:27 says it is "pure and undefiled religion" to minister to orphans and widows.

The adoption message is the very essence of the gospel. We not only evangelize orphans by adopting them, we open doors for evangelism simply by talking about adoption - even with strangers. The biblical message of adoption is a beautiful image of God's love for us, and teaching that message from the bible is an excellent way to share with unbelievers how they too can become an adopted child of God.

Christian families who adopt should be considered as missionaries to orphan children, and the church is the sending team, in support and in prayer.

We are humbled by God's use of adoption to demonstrate and prove His love for us when we were spiritual orphans. It is an honor and a privilege to model His heart and share in His ministry to orphans.

Gerry and Maureen Clark

What can you do?

What will you do?

Look ahead!

Look inward!

Look outward!

And most of all look upward!

Adoption Ministry Needs Survey

Refer to Chapter 1 “adoption survey” for discussion of adoption ministry survey

Name of person/s being interviewed _____

Address _____

City, province, Zip Code _____

Phone: _____ Date _____

Some suggested questions:

What is your adoption connection?

What kind of adoption? (Ie: fam. Member, infant, older child, I am adopted, Someone I know was adopted)

What are some special memories or experiences?

What were some needs that were not met or were hard to accomplish?

In what area if any did you wish you had more help?

What information if any did you wish you had?

What would you do different now?

Can I share your story?

Would you mind sharing your story?

Is there someone else you know that I should talk to?

Is there someone who was a big help to you or an inspiration?

Can you recommend any books, materials, agency, special social worker or attorney?

Are you interested in being involved in an adoption ministry?

Do you see the need for such a ministry in the church – and if so, why?

Do you have any suggestion for any adoption ministry components in a church ministry?

Philippine Resource agencies

Adoptive Families Foundation

They can help with logistical support such as information on how to select an attorney and adoption laws. They produce an inspirational book of true-life stories, called “24 Stories of Adoption”, for those who are thinking about adoption.

c/o Kaisahang Buhay.Foundation., 56 10th Avenue, Cubao

(632) 697-0122 jboren@info.com.ph

Kaisahang Buhay Foundation

They are a government approved Philippine adoption services. They can send you a speaker for your adoption information meeting, assist with the adoption process, and provide information on all aspects of adoption.

For inquiries call:

Phone (632) 912-1159

56 10th Avenue, Cubao

kbf@mozcom.com

Norfil Foundation

Their focus is on women and children. They have a foster care program and government approved adoption services. They can send you a speaker for your adoption information meeting, assist with the adoption process, and provide information on all aspects of adoption.

For inquiries call:

Tel. number: 372-3577 to 79

#16 Mother Ignacia Street Corner Roces Avenue, Quezon City 1103

norfil@philonline.com.ph

Home For Good Foundation

Online adoption information and contact information

Tools for the church, CD, DVD, Bible Study, Starting and Growing Your Church Orphan Care to Adoption Support Ministry.

www.homeforgood.org.ph/

Eight Action Steps to Success

1. **Get the facts:** Know more about the situation than a reporter who is writing a major news article. Do your homework.
2. **Get a goal and a mission**
Know exactly what you want to do and state it in a single, written sentence.
3. **Examine, educate and enlist your resources**
Ask people for help, most are too “polite” to offer
4. **Turn old business into new business**
Return to old contacts, former acquaintances
5. **Give people something tangible to remember you by**
Imaginative and extraordinary – not mundane
Be creative and make it memorable
6. **Break ranks, be bold**
What would you do if you were 10 times more bold? DO IT NOW!
What would you do if cost were no object? GOD CAN DO IT!
What would you do if you only had more faith? GOD CAN DO IT!
Psalm 37:5, John 14:13, 1st John 3:22
Who are you waiting for to give you permission to succeed?
Your boldness inspires confidence in others who rely on your leadership
7. **Get visible**
Be seen and heard - TELL EVERYONE
Emulate a positive example of visibility in your area
8. **Saturate everything with prayer**
You have not because you ask not
Without ME you can do nothing

Source: "The Path" by Laurie Beth Jones <http://www.jesusceo.com/>

Hiring an Attorney

Here are some suggestions to help keep your attorney fees reasonable.

1. Hire an attorney who is experienced in handling adoptions. Don't select an attorney just because he or she is a friend or on the recommendation of friends, unless they were satisfied with this attorney's fees and services for their own adoption. You don't want to pay an inexperienced attorney to learn on the job.
2. Have realistic expectations about the role of an attorney. The attorney should provide competent legal services, but should not be relied on to perform "hand holding" through the adoption process. Other professionals and support groups can fulfill that need.
3. Ask the following questions:
 - What is the average cost of the adoptions you've handled?
 - Do you charge a flat fee or bill by the hour?
 - If a flat fee, what does that fee include?
 - Does it include advertising for example?
 - Are expenses, such as preparation of letters and documents, photocopying, telephone calls, and postage, charged separately?
 - Is a retainer fee required up front, and if so, how much is it?
4. Come to all meetings well prepared, with papers organized and questions thought out in advance, since attorneys generally charge by the hour.

Books On Adoption

24 Stories of adoption, By Adoptive Families Foundation, Inc.

True-life stores of Filipino adoptions

Adoptive Families Foundation, Inc. C/O KBF, 56 10th Avenue, Cubao

tel: 697-0122

Secure in God's Embrace, Living as the Father's Adopted Child

By Ken Fong (Evangelistic with adoption theme)

Adopting for Good, A guide for People Considering Adoption

By Jorie Kincaid

The Whole Life Adoption Book

What to consider before you adopt

Creating a nurturing family environment

How to tell a child he or she is adopted

Understanding issues and behaviors that can surface in adolescence

How to respond when a child wants to search for a birth parent

By Jayne E. Schooler

Loved by Choice

True Stories that celebrate adoption

By Susan Horner & Kelly Fordyce Martindale

Five Books by Sherry Eldridge - www.adoptionjewels.org

This web site offers free articles, books and workbooks. The workbooks are one of kind concerning adoption issues and are designed to be used in a group study setting. They can be down loaded free at: http://www.adoptionjewels.org/books_work.htm

- **Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew**
- **Twenty Life-Transforming Choices Adoptees Need To Make**
- **Under His Wings** Creating a Safe Place for Adoptees to Talk about Adoption
- **Beauty for Ashes** a Healing Journey for the Adoption Triad
- **Twelve Steps for Adopted Teens**

From Orphans to Heirs, Celebrating our spiritual adoption and making a case for the doctrine of adoption

By Mark Stibbe (U.K.)

Adoped For Life

The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches By Russell D. Moore

Churches with adoption ministries

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What brings us together is the fact we belong to and serve Jesus Christ in the area of ministry to children. His example of overwhelming care and concern for orphans and widows motivates us to do the same. We operate with paid staff and with volunteer help.

Antioch Adoptions is a wonderful example of the Body of Christ moved by what moves the heart of God. Of course, we are human. We all have our days. We all have incredibly unique personalities. We laugh uproariously, disagree heartily at times, and weep together over difficult situations. We believe in prayer and practice it in everything we do. From ABC web site.

Bennett Chapel Baptist Church
P. O. Box 243
Shelbyville, TX 75972 USA
(936) 368 - 7195 or (936) 368-2412
Outreach Ministry (936) 591 0442
www.bcministry.org

See what this church has done- **Rural Texas Chapel Makes Adoptions a Community Affair**

With its small, rural setting, the Bennett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church-located in the remote Sabine National Forest in a community near Shelbyville, Texas-seems an unlikely place to find adoptive and foster parents. But due to the close-knit community and leadership of Reverend W. C. Martin and his wife, Donna, Bennett Chapel families have welcomed more than 100 children into adoptive and foster homes.

The flurry of adoptions originated with Donna Martin who, after her mother's death, felt a void in her life that led her to investigate becoming a foster parent. Donna learned of classes for prospective foster and adoptive parents being held in the city of Lufkin and brought her sister, Diann, to attend. Not long after finishing, Diann adopted a six-year-old and Donna and Reverend Martin adopted two children and became foster parents to two more.

The children changed the Martins' lives so much that the Reverend brought a message to Bennett Chapel. He did not tell his congregation to adopt, but he acknowledged the role the church could play in helping more children. "I encouraged our church to get involved," Martin says. "I told them it could really make a turn in society....The church needs to get involved in lives, not just souls."

After receiving an overwhelmingly positive response from interested families in his congregation, Reverend Martin contacted Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS) caseworker Susan Ramsey. "I told him I would come to teach the training classes for prospective adoptive and foster parents if he could get 10 potential families to attend," Ramsey explained. "When I arrived there were 24 families at the first meeting. It was incredible. And Reverend Martin let us hold the meetings in the church, which is the center of the community."

If Ramsey had not come to Bennett Chapel, congregation members would have needed to travel more than 70 miles for training in Lufkin. After the first series of classes, 18 families finalized adoptions. In the next two series, even more families signed up. Theresa Lathan and her husband, Glen, were one such family. They adopted five sisters who had been separated. Theresa explained, "I brought them together to let them know that they are sisters."

Most of the children adopted by Bennett Chapel members come from Houston and have histories of abuse or neglect. The special issues these children bring are sometimes magnified because fewer resources and professional medical services are available in the rural area. The prospective parents knew raising their children would not always be easy, but Ramsey credits the Bennett Chapel and surrounding community for being the drive behind the large number of successful adoptions. "The people in the Bennett community are comfortable with who they are," said Ramsey. "They are good, honest, hard working people who aren't threatened by the idea of bringing children into their homes. They don't view themselves as a blessing for the child. They view the child as their blessing."

Another central factor that led to the community's interest in adoption came from the efforts of Reverend Martin and the Bennett Chapel itself. Reverend Martin happily opened up the chapel to meetings, classes, and social functions where foster and adoptive parenting were the focus-independent of religious services. The advocacy of the church and members of the community functioned as both a support group and a source for information and referral for other families. Additionally, teaching local pre-service classes helped to include a network of neighbors that extended beyond the congregation into the surrounding Shelby County area.

The Bennett Chapel community is now working with DPRS to build a community-wide Family Outreach Center to provide much needed resources, support, and gathering space. "I really think that if we could get some of these resources in this community, we would see so much come out of that," said Judy Bowman, a supervisor with DPRS. "There are very few places in society where one small group has the chance to impact so many lives."

"We've been getting calls from other regions in the state asking us how we did it so they can replicate it," noted Bowman. "We have to tell them we didn't do it. There's no way we could go out and sell something like this."

Southern Gables Church

4001 S. Wadsworth Blvd
Littleton, CO 80123 USA
(303) 986 - 1527
www.sgc.org

This church has a web page for their adoption ministry. Their big event each year is an Adoption Expo. with other events through out the year.

United Evangelical Free Church

3333 Beverly Dr., Klamath Falls, OR 97603 USA
(541) 883 - 3158 unitedefc@charterinternet.com
This church does an adoption benefit fundraiser each year.

The Awesome Legacy of the Orphan

by Sherrie Eldridge

Perhaps when all is said and done, beneath the anger of many adoptees is the primal fear being forgotten. Forgotten by the one who gave them birth. Forgotten by the biological father whose name they may not even know. Forgotten by the blood relatives whose lives went on without them. But most of all, forgotten by God.

As I became aware of this issue personally and shared it with fellow adoptees in our support group, eyes welled. Searching for wisdom, I learned that far from being forgotten, the orphan is the object of God's special care and protection.

- He does what is necessary to preserve the orphan's life (Jer. 49:11)
- He gladdens the orphans' heart with the bounty of Providence (Dt. 24: 19-farmers were to only glean fields once & leave rest)
- He feeds them from the "sacred portion" (Deut. 24: 19-21)
- He defends the cause of the fatherless, giving food & clothing (Dt. 10: 18; Is. 1:17)
- He hears even the faintest of cries from the orphan (Ex. 22: 22-24)
- He becomes a Father to them (Psalm 68: 5)
- He rescues when the orphan cries for help (Job 29: 12)
- He considers helping orphans as an unblemished act of worship (Jas. 1: 27)
- He provides what the orphan is searching for – love, pity, and mercy (Hosea 14: 3)
- He blesses those who provide for the orphan (Dt. 14: 29)
- He has a unique plan for the orphan in history (Esther 2: 15)
- He strongly warns judges who issue unrighteous decrees & the magistrates who cause oppressive decisions against the orphan (Is. 10: 2; Mal. 3: 5)
- He is pleased when nations and people treat the orphan justly
- He will draw nigh and be a swift witness against oppressors of the fatherless (Is. 10: 2)
- He commands others not to remove "the ancient boundary stone" (could this be their biological history?) or encroach on the fields of the fatherless (Prov. 23: 10)

While studying the subject of feeling forgotten, I saw a poster-sized reproduction of a U.S. commemorative stamp. Two words grabbed my attention — "NEVER FORGOTTEN." The poster illustrated an army dog-tag on a chain, inscribed with the words MIA & POW — NEVER FORGOTTEN. "That's what I, and possibly many others adoptees, need," I zealously concluded. "A tangible reminder that we will never be forgotten!" Then, fantasizing as only an adoptee can, I envisioned commissioning a talented jeweler to design a golden dog tag (diamond-studded, of course), inscribed with the words ADOPTEE — NEVER FORGOTTEN! It could be worn daily as a reminder. A symbol.

Why, we could even make it available through our organization! (smile) However, the purest of gold, the brightest of diamonds, and the boldest of letters will not erase an adoptees primal feelings of being forgotten. Not that the feelings necessarily dominate or paralyze, rather, they lay dormant, triggered into consciousness only by specific present-day events, an unanswered letter, a geographical move, the death of adoptive parents. The guard condescends, "Little girl, you don't know what you're asking, this is the chariot of the king!" With Shirley Temple boldness, she replies, "Sir, he may be your king, but he's my daddy." Within seconds, the chariot came to a stop and the little girl was ushered inside. With gleefulness, she climbed straight into the lap of her daddy, where she snuggled safe and secure within his strong arms.

From: <http://www.adoptionjewels.org/>

This web site is a must visit. It contains materials for bible studies for adoptees. The only such material I know of. Thank you Sherry for permission to share this and for your work.

Pastor Brad Werner -A new adoptive father shares

Father Is The Christian Name For God

Romans 8:15-17

Central Presbyterian Church

2/1/04

¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.^[1] And by him we cry, "Abba,^[2] Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (NIV)

What does it mean to be taken into God's family by adoption? How does our adoption by God change how we think about our status in this world? How does being adopted impact how we relate to God? How much do we matter to Him? Having been adopted, how secure are we?

Maybe an illustration from real life will help. There is a friend of mine named Joe, who, when he and his wife adopted their first child they sat before a judge who said words to them that they will never forget. These words went straight to their hearts because they showed the power of adoption. According to Joe, this is what the judge said:

"From this day forth...

This child is yours as if you birthed her.

All rights and privileges of your name are now hers.

No one can ever take her from you."

(1) This child is yours as if you birthed her. (That means new life)

(2) All rights and privileges of your name are now hers. (That means a new family)

(3) No one can ever take her from you." (That means a new future)

In other words she had been given...

A change in status through being given new life

A change in significance through being given a new family

and a change in security through being given a new future. And that's exactly what this passage is talking about...

(1) A change in status through being given new life

¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship (adoption).^[1]

The word (sonship/adoption) refers to the Greek and Roman, legal institution which, in the same way as in our time, a couple can "adopt" a child and give that child the same status as a natural

child. The Spirit of adoption would also mean the Spirit who brings about adoption, the Spirit who enables us to believe in Christ. When this happens we are God's because He gave us Spiritual birth. We belong to Him and because of this we are no longer bound to a life of fear. We are no longer terrorized by judgment, guilt, disease, death or the future because of our status as children who have been given life by the Spirit of God. We bring absolutely nothing to God to earn this status. We simply receive. We are totally dependent. We come to Him, spiritually speaking, absolutely naked and afraid and God adopts us and gives us the very best He has. He robes us with the righteousness of Christ.

Inna came naked:

This whole idea of adoption came upon Lil and me as quite a surprise. There is an organization that brings about 20 children from Russia to St. Louis each year from ages 9-12 in the hope that they will be adopted. They stay with host families while they're here. My sister Marian got involved in this organization and Lil and I ended up going to one of the picnics. The picnics on the weekends are provided so that other potential adoptive families can spend time with the children. The next day we got a call from a woman we had met at the picnic. She said there was a little girl who had spent time with several families but still no one wanted to adopt her. She said her name is Inna and every time she prays for her we come to her mind. And if we want to spend time with her it would have to be tonight or tomorrow night because the children all go back to Russia at 3 in the morning on Tuesday. An hour and a half later Inna was at our home and over the next 24 hours we fell in love with her. Let's fast-forward 4 months. When we prepared to go to Russia in late December we not only packed our clothes but, as you can imagine, we packed some clothes for Inna too. We packed new clothes, the best we had for her. We thought she would enjoy having some new clothes to wear. But that's not the only reason we brought her clothes. We had been told to bring her something to wear because she would come to us without a stitch of clothing - absolutely naked. Stripped of everything including underwear. Inna had nothing to offer us. She is absolutely dependent on us. We, as her new parents, had the privilege and responsibility of giving her new clothes, the clothes of a precious daughter who has been given a new life.

Which spirit dominates your life – a spirit which rules your life by fear or the spirit of a trusting child? How do you find yourself relating to God these days – a power to be feared, a tyrant you have to keep at bay by your slavish keeping of rules?

Some of the biggest fears people have in our culture have to do with status. Status in terms of upbringing – (Where did you go to High School?). Or status in terms of where you live, what you drive, or where your children go to school. Or status in terms of titles: chairman, president, vice-president. It doesn't really matter whether these titles are in the context of a large corporation with thousands of employees or the local PTA – they can dominate our lives. What does God say is the solution to our fear that someone has gotten ahead of us? Simply rest in your wonderful God-given status of an adopted child who has been given new life?

Our adoption by God not only gives us a change in status but also...

(2) A change in significance through being given a new family

And by him we cry, "Abba,^[2] Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Believers are transformed from slaves to sons and daughters of God through the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. The Holy Spirit not only makes us God's children He makes us aware we are

God's children. He gives us our significance as adopted sons and daughters and then He confirms it.

In using the verb "cry", Paul stresses that our awareness of God as Father comes from deep within us. Paul isn't saying that you must have an emotional experience to be aware of your adoption. But he is saying that if this truth never affects you emotionally there may be something wrong. The witness of the Holy Spirit about our adoption as children affects the deepest and innermost part of our beings. It is because of this we cry out to God.

What do we cry? We cry "Abba". This word has its root in an Aramaic form used by small children. When this word passed into usage among Greek-speaking churches it was amplified by the addition of the word Father by the Roman Christians. This prayer is not concerned with outward appearance or patterns. Most of you don't demand that your children make an appointment to see you. God doesn't do that with us either. This term Abba was the term Jesus himself used in speaking to His Father. It's amazing that our significance before the Father is comparable to that of Jesus himself. In "adopting" us, God has made us full members of the family and given us all the privileges belonging to Jesus Himself. This is not a gift we can give to ourselves. This significance must be given to us from beyond ourselves—from God. The Spirit not only gives us our significance as adopted sons and daughters, He confirms it, ratifies it, secures it and seals it so that we may cry Abba Father. We know who God is and we know who we are: Father and children.

Inna saying "Papa"!:

We had done all the paperwork, social worker home visits, sent several letters and even a basket of fruit to Inna. They won't let you tell the children you plan to adopt them so all we could write to Inna was that we want to come visit her in Russia. It was so hard not to tell her. We wanted her to know how we felt. We also really wondered how she felt. Did she want to be adopted by us? Did she like us as much as she liked her host family? Would she remember us? Did she want to take our name? The last leg of the trip was a 4 and a half hour drive from St. Petersburg to Pskov. This gave me a lot of time to really think about these questions and how crushing it would be if she rejected us. By the time we got to the orphanage it was very dark. I got out of the van to stretch and all my questions just melted away as I heard Inna yell "Papa" and run into my arms.

We had come to get her. We had followed through on our promise. We had been true to our word. If we can do this in a frail, human way think about the implications for our relationship with God. It is only because God has made promises and then followed through by coming to get us that we can call him affectionately, "Papa". Which is a good English rendering of Abba Father.

Our adoption by God not only gives us a new status and significance but also...

(3) A change in security through being given a new future

(A) ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—
heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,

God cannot die, so we are not his heirs in that sense. Our adoption and our inheritance rest on our relationship to God, on His having claimed us as His own. More particularly, we are heirs of God only by giving our lives to the One who is the heir of all God's promises. We are fellow heirs

with Christ because the glory, which we are to inherit by grace, is the glory, which is his by right. The phrase co-heirs with Christ speaks of the certainty of our hope. Jesus Christ has already entered into his inheritance but we must still wait. The fact that He is already there is the guarantee that we too, who are His joint-heirs will not be disappointed.

Inna not wanting to wear her orphanage clothes:

I just told you that the orphanage made Inna leave all of her clothing at the orphanage when we came to pick her up. That's not entirely true. On the evening before the court date we got to visit the orphanage and have dinner with Inna and the Director. It was a wonderful meal and Lil and I were happy beyond words to finally be in the presence of our daughter. After dinner Inna tried on the clothes we had brought her. One of these items was a pair of snow boots we had brought her. A pair of snow boots that ended up being too small for her. Thankfully the orphanage allowed us to donate these boots so that Inna could keep the ones she had been wearing, and to Lil and me, these boots seemed just fine. So, after our time in court the next day, Inna was delivered to us wearing these boots. I thought: "Great!" "Now I won't have to buy another pair of boots." Boy, was I wrong. She wore those boots back to the hotel that day but that was it. Inna has not once put those boots on again. They are nice boots and they fit perfectly but she won't wear them. Of course, once I thought about it became perfectly clear. Those are the boots of an orphan. From now on she will only wear the shoes of a daughter - the shoes of an heir.

Inna's inheritance will more than likely not be much on a pastor's salary. Your inheritance is every spiritual blessing in Christ - the very glory of Christ. Once God adopts you don't ever put those orphan clothes back on again.

(B) if indeed (*provided* ESV) we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Suffering is indispensable to glory. It is not merely that the glory is a reward for the suffering; it actually grows out of the suffering. The fact that we are now suffering with him does not call into question the reality of our adoption but proves it. It's a guarantee of our being glorified with him throughout eternity. This is the suffering, which is inseparable from faithfulness to Christ in a world, which does not yet know Him as Lord.

As a co-heir with Christ you will share in his sufferings. In what ways have you shared or are you sharing in the sufferings of Christ? Have you been asked to compromise at work? Have you been rejected by friends or even a spouse because of your stand for Christ. Remember, the fact that we are now suffering with him does not call into question the reality of our adoption but proves it.

It is understood in our society that adoption is meant to better the life of a child. It is meant to provide a new life, a new family and a new future – status, significance, and security. The Christmas story teaches us that Joseph married Mary after Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And just like any other adoption, everything changed for Jesus – His status, significance and security changed. But instead of getting better, Jesus life changed for the worse.

In terms of status, Jesus left the good life and laid aside His glory. He gave up His kingly authority and constant worship to become a human child of suspect birth. In terms of significance and family Jesus left His loving, intimate relationship with the Father in heaven to become, in the world's eyes, an absolute nobody. He gave up the security of heaven for a future of rejection, betrayal and death. He gave up power, glory and comfort for weakness, suffering and death. He died naked and exposed. And as He died He cried out to His Father. But He didn't cry out Abba Father this time. He cried out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" The Father had turned away from the Son because the holy and perfect Jesus had become sin. God cannot be in the presence of sin. So for a moment in time the perfect Father turned away from the unique Son of God. God disowned His Son.

Why did this have to happen? Why did the most loving Father disown the perfect Son? Jesus cried out My God so that you and I would be able to cry out Abba Father. Jesus took on human flesh so that you and I would be able to take on glory. Jesus died so that you and I could live. Jesus suffered so that our suffering would have meaning. Jesus was willing to become sin and be disowned so that you and I will never be disowned by God. The unique Son of God made sure that none of His adopted brothers and sisters will ever be let go. Jesus gave up status, significance and security, life, family and glory in exchange for your sin and my sin. He gave all of it up so we could have it all.

VOLUNTARY, REDEMPTIVE, SUFFERING

The whole Life Adoption book , Jayne E. Schooler

Wrapping one's heartstrings around someone else's child **is a voluntary choice**. Each year, hundreds upon hundreds of adoptive parents around the world voluntarily stand before a judge to make a promise to a stranger's child: "We will be your family forever, by our choice to do so."

Adoption is not only voluntary: **it is also redemptive**. "Redeem" means to release, to make up for, to restore. An adoptive family's guiding light is the vision to restore to an abused, neglected or abandoned child the dignity of life that was ripped from him. It is a dignity that child was born to enjoy.

In addition to being voluntary and redemptive, **adoption involves suffering**.

To extend your energies around the clock with no guarantee of a night's rest to care for a seriously ill child- that is suffering.

Perhaps to be told, when your child has a bout with anger, "You're not my real mom or dad," and to continue to give love, in spite of that rejection – that is suffering.

An older child may act out their past hurts. To see a child recoil from affection because of years of abuse, and to know that you would gladly carry the pain for them but can't – that is suffering.

Why do people adopt? They adopt because they live their lives by these spiritual principles.

This holds true for foster parents as well.

To answer the second question – "What makes a child adoptable?" – We gain focus from the higher principle - that is "The value of life itself".

In an age that values life only if it is productive, and its presence convenient, there are still families who see beyond the ugly consequences of server abuse, beyond the fears of debilitating handicaps, beyond the barriers of age. They look beyond all these things and see a child. They see a life that by virtue of its very existence has worth, value, and promise. They see a child in need of adoption.

Yes, families still volunteer to take the risks inherent in restoring dignity to a child. In the process, they willingly suffer disappointment and pain. Yet they still choose to adopt because of their strong belief in the value of life. As they reach out to the abused, neglected, and dejected, these families are piloted by the Giver of Life Himself.

It's interesting; this sounds just like what Christ did for us?

As God's adopted children, let's celebrate the opportunities we have to follow His example.

The whole Life Adoption book , Jayne E. Schooler

What Does God Think About Adoption

From American World Adoption Association By Brian Luwis
<http://www.awaa.org/stories/spiritofadoption.aspx#top>

What Does God Think of Adoption?

Romans 8:15 — For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Through years of being involved with adoption in people's lives I have learned that adoption and orphans are high on God's list of priorities. His very plan of redemption for mankind is built upon his adopting us into his family through Jesus Christ his son.

On the other hand, have you ever considered the simple fact that Jesus is an adopted child? Yes, his earthly father Joseph adopted him. Even though one might pass over this truth as insignificant, I believe it shows us the importance of adoption to God. In fact the gospel of Matthew traces the bloodline of Jesus not through his biological mother, Mary, but through his adoptive father, Joseph. I believe this is also significant for it shows us that God does not view biological children as more desirable than adopted children... for His own son is adopted. God not only lived his earthly life as an adopted child, He ever lives to intercede for mankind, and to adopt and redeem us into his life and his family. Adoption is definitely high on God's list.

Is God Punishing Me Through Infertility?

In the beginning, God commanded that Man be fruitful and multiply. For the average couple, obeying this command is many times just a matter of deciding when. Not so with the couple that is dealing with infertility.

Many infertile couples in America experience failure upon failure, month after month. In many cases these failures keep coming with no reasons being given by new technology or medical procedures.

They are faced with many hard questions such as "How far should we go with modern medicine?" "How many times should we try?" They may begin to think that God does not want them to have children.

The couple may think that God, the sovereign Lord, has closed their womb to punish them. Feelings of inferiority and depression can turn the dream of childbirth into a nightmare. Just attending the baby shower of a friend can become emotionally overwhelming for the infertile woman. Yet it need not be that way.

For Renée and me, release came with new realizations and changes in our basic beliefs. I do not believe that biological children are a right as I once thought but rather that children are God's miracle to give.

Because God has designed a husband and wife with bodies to produce and nurture a child, it is only natural for a man and woman to think that something is wrong in their lives if they can't conceive. Unless God specifically promises a child, as he did to Abraham and Sarah, I would rest in God's word and especially this verse:

Jeremiah 29:11 — For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Remember, God is not punishing you by preventing conception. He has other ways to fulfill the desires that He puts in our hearts.

Please read "In His Time" for a compelling account of how God miraculously moved in an infertile couple to allow their desire for children to be fulfilled through adoption.

Is Adoption God's Plan B?

Because we believed adoption was God's plan B, my wife and I struggled with this misconception after having a biological child.

After Sophie was born we could not imagine that God would have us put a lesser value on our two children by adoption. That concept seems so foreign in light of what God has shown us in His word and what we have experienced in the past nine years.

We decided to search the Bible to find out what God says about adoption. In time, we learned that the eternal bond between a parent and a child is through their relationship. It is not based on any genetic connection we have with them.

God's very plan to make us a part of His family shows the importance of adoption as a means for a child to enter a family.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption as children through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

If I had realized the full meaning of this verse early in our pursuit of having children it would have saved an abundance of sorrow.

God made adoption the way for anyone to become part of His family.

It was His "good pleasure" to adopt us and a definite indication that adoption is part of God's plan A. Unless one adopts, it is hard to imagine that adoption could be as fulfilling as having a biological child; but I know it is. I have lived it.

I also know that God makes no mistakes and he places the same importance on adoption as he does on childbirth as a means for placing children in our home.

There is another verse that shows us adoption is not God's Plan B. And it is found in Psalms 113 where God makes a barren woman a joyful mother.

He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

For me the important word is Joyful. A joyful mother is His plan A. And how can a barren woman be a joyful mother of children unless she adopts?

After having such a beautiful biological child I know how easy it could be to misconceive God's position on adoption. If we focus on the biological connection we have with our children we overlook the deeper bond we develop through our relationship with them. It is evident in all my children that it is not the sins passed down by their forefathers, or what genetic traits they inherit, but how we love them and how we communicate with them that molds their character.

Thus the biological connection is not the heart of the matter. The relational connection is. The means of obtaining children, biological or adoptive, has no real importance. So when the biological means fails, or is not preferred, God delights in providing the means Himself for bringing parent and child together. One plan A — no plan B.

How did you get through this struggle?

Psalms 127:4-5 — As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them...

The scripture has many examples of the happy estate of those who have children. We agree with these scriptures wholeheartedly. But what do you do when it is not true yet, when you do not have children and wonder if you ever will?

I frequently referred to this verse in Psalm 37 as a way to comfort myself while we were waiting to have children.

Psalms 37:4 — Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart. I knew it was a good desire to have children and I believed, according to the verse, that God would take care of things.

So I followed my wife in her pursuit but I waited in the wings. I wasn't focusing on the first part of this verse that says, "Delight thyself also in the LORD and then He will give you the desires of your heart." I forgot my part of God's contract in this verse and I failed to see that adoption was part of His plan A. I know God is calling us to open our hearts to adoption and recognize it as part of His plan A and not His plan B. God does not make mistakes and He has no plan B.

God esteems adoption as an equal way to fulfill your desires for children. He knew this world would be filled with wars, famine, one-child policies and all sorts of ill from mankind. Before the world began He predestined children to be born in a woman's womb and raised by others. If we still lived in Eden, where no sin existed, there would be no abandoned children. However, as C.S. Lewis says, "It is not the best of all worlds but it is the only world possible."

James 1:2-3 — My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

We can take comfort in this challenging verse. God says we can do all things through Him. However we clearly cannot count it as joy unless He works through us. If infertility is taken as an opportunity for God to bless (as He did for our family) we can understand the depth of this verse. I thank God time and again for our inability to conceive. Otherwise we never would have known or had the privilege of raising Fei, Gwenn or Abel. Our children are so precious and full of life. Each one is unique. We would never have known them if God had not directed us to adopt.

I know many of you might be in a situation similar to ours. Let me encourage you to take this opportunity God has put before you. I do not know if it is God's will that you adopt but I do know it is God's will that all believers visit, defend or be an advocate for orphans.

James 1:27 — Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble...

I also know that if you are dealing with infertility and desire children, adoption is not second best. It is an amazing way to be "fruitful and multiply."

What is God's Definition of Mother and Father?

This concept has intrigued me as I have searched God's word to define what it means to be the father of a child by adoption. Not surprisingly, what I found was in keeping with God's character. Before searching I sometimes questioned whether being an adoptive father was less significant than being a biological father. Then I discovered what God's word says about being a father.

Proverbs 22:6 — Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Ephesians 6:4 — And, you fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In these verses God defines "mother" and "father" as teachers and disciplinarians. I have yet to find a verse that stresses the necessity of a biological connection in order to have authority over a child nor have I found any verses supporting the notion that authority should be shared between a biological family and an adoptive family.

I believe it is fair to conclude that when a child is adopted God grants the adoptive parents full and complete authority as mother and father. I have heard too many stories of open adoptions where the children are confused by parental roles and thus lack proper perspective on God's authority over them. God does not share His authority with another so I believe He is calling adoptive families to assume authority over their children.

Looking deeper it is evident that it is the relationship a parent has with a child, not the physical connection, that matters. If we tear down our preconceptions and expectations of what it means to be a mother and father, is it not simply to love? Real love covers all aspects of how our heavenly Father gives to us protection, blessing, hope and discipline. If we define mother and father as ones who love and take responsibility for a child then it does not matter if the child is biological or adopted.

God has adopted us into his family through a relationship with His son. I believe we need to adopt our biological children as well as our adopted children through a relationship with them. A biological connection to a child does not automatically establish the relationship we need with our child to help them develop into men and women of God. As the old saying goes, "You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink." If, however, you have a good relationship with that horse he will be more willing to drink. If we have a good relationship with our children we can do the most important thing a mother and father will ever do for a child — teach them who God is.

Is an Adopted Child My Own?

This question encompasses the most common misconception about an adopted child. I had the same question when we first adopted but soon started asking another question, "Is any child truly our own?" After Sophia, our third daughter, was born we knew she was from our body but was she more ours than Fei, Gwenn or Abel in God's eyes?

I started to wonder. What was God's plan for explaining to Fei, Gwenn and Abel that they are not biologically ours? Were they somehow not our daughters or son, but rather belonged to someone else? Who owns these children? I started to ask God: "Do we? Does somebody else? Or do you, God?" Look at what God says:

1 Corinthians 6:19 — Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

Wow! If we are not our own and God owns us, then He must own our children too. They are His, for it is by His grace that we move, live, and have our being. We have children by His grace also, adopted or biological. This seems like such a logical conclusion but I think when we hear "That's my boy" more attention is often placed on the "my" than the "boy." That boy is God's and God entrusts him to us. God is the true Father in heaven and we are just the earthly fathers.

Our daughter Sophia is an example of God's awesome creation for she is beautiful. I think all of our girls are beautiful but because Sophia is from our bodies I could see us focusing on the biological connection instead of the relationship we have with her. Without knowing and living the

truth that God owns our children I could easily see myself holding her and saying that's "my" girl, marveling at her physical beauty, wanting more children who look like her and my wife and me. I thank God that He allowed us to adopt children first so I could see that we never really own our children, rather we raise them as best as we can for 22 years until they leave...unless they decide to stay at home after college and try out the rent free, no-work plan...

God's word goes further to show we are not our own by naming us as His children. John 1:12 — But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

He calls us His sons. If we are His sons then so are our children. We can take comfort in knowing that the ownership of our children (adopted or biological) belongs to the Creator of the universe, our Eternal Father.

Why was I not Born from your Tummy, Mama?

This question is asked by most children of adoption, including our daughter Fei when she was five years old. Let me tell you a story to help illustrate how I believe God's plan of adoption is plan A for placing children in our homes.

One day I was looking at Sophia and marveling at the experience of being there when she was born. As I glanced at her I recalled being up late at night in the dimly lit hospital room, cutting her umbilical cord. It was a wonderful experience to see this innocent little girl come into the world. Cutting the cord somehow enabled me to connect with God's will in placing this precious child into our hands.

I was not there to cut the cords for Fei, Gwenn and Abel. I consider this a loss for us and for them. We of course shared with Fei and Gwenn our desire for them to have been carried in Renée's tummy. But there is something in the "Spirit of Adoption" that is just as significant (perhaps even more) as cutting the cord, that sealed our position of father and mother for Fei, Gwenn and Abel.

It is a mystery but God actually cut Fei, Gwenn and Abel free Himself — from the men and women who gave them birth — by adoption. He placed them into our arms.

If we reflect on this we can see Fei, Gwenn and Abel's unique perspective on God's sovereignty and love. Their destiny was based on the intervention of God's "Spirit of Adoption" in their lives and ours.

It is a great blessing for Fei, Gwenn and Abel to know that the God of the universe came down to direct their futures and entrust them to Renée and me.

One verse can encompass my purpose. It tells us that God has no plan B for our lives, only a plan A.

It is awesome to think how God orchestrated all the events in the whole universe for us to meet Fei, Gwenn and Abel and become their Mama and Papa. And He can do the same for you. No one is reading this by accident; before the world began God's plan A was for you to receive this message.

Psalm 139:15-16 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Adoption Scriptures

Orphans and Children of God

ORPHAN

shall not afflict any widow or orphan .	Ex 22:22
justice for the orphan and the widow,	Dt 10:18
the orphan and the widow who are in	Dt 14:29
and the stranger and the orphan and the	Dt 16:11
the stranger and the orphan and the widow	Dt 16:14
the justice due an alien <i>or</i> an orphan ,	Dt 24:17
alien, for the orphan , and for the widow,	Dt 24:19
alien, for the orphan , and for the widow.	Dt 24:20
alien, for the orphan , and for the widow.	Dt 24:21
to the orphan and to the widow,	Dt 26:12
the alien, the orphan and the widow,	Dt 26:13
justice due an alien, orphan , and widow.	Dt 27:19
snatch the orphan from the breast,	Jb 24:9
help. And the orphan who had no helper.	Jb 29:12
And the orphan has not shared it	Jb 31:17
lifted up my hand against the orphan ,	Jb 31:21
have been the helper of the orphan .	Ps 10:14
vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,	Ps 10:18
Defend the orphan , Plead for the widow.	Is 1:17
They do not defend the orphan ,	Is 1:23
the cause, The cause of the orphan ,	Jer 5:28
the alien, the orphan , or the widow,	Jer 7:6
the stranger, the orphan , or the widow;	Jer 22:3
For in You the orphan finds mercy.”	Hos 14:3
do not oppress the widow or the orphan ,	Zch 7:10
in his wages, the widow & orphan ,	Mal 3:5
would even cast <i>lots</i> for the orphans And	Jb 6:27
strength of the orphans has been crushed.	Jb 22:9
drive away the donkeys of the orphans ;	Jb 24:3
the stranger And murder the orphans .	Ps 94:6
pity on their orphans or their widows;	Is 9:17
And that they may plunder the orphans .	Is 10:2
Leave your orphans behind, I will keep	Jer 49:11
We have become orphans without a father	La 5:3
“I will not leave you as orphans ;	Jn 14:18
visit orphans and widows in their distress,	Jas 1:27

FATHERLESS

the **fatherless** and a judge for the widows, Ps 68:5
Vindicate the weak and **fatherless**; Ps 82:3
to be gracious to his **fatherless** children. Ps 109:12
He supports the **fatherless** and the widow, Ps 146:9
Or go into the fields of the **fatherless**, Pr 23:10
the **fatherless** and the widow they have Ezk 22:7

LONELY

God places the **lonely** in families Ps 68:6

ADOPTION

of **adoption** as sons by which we cry out, Ro 8:15
waiting eagerly for *our* **adoption** as sons, Ro 8:23
to whom belongs the **adoption** as sons, Ro 9:4
we might receive the **adoption** as sons. Ga 4:5
He predestined us to **adoption** as sons Eph 1:5

CHILDREN OF GOD

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the **children of God**, even to them that believe on his name. Jn 1:12

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit, that we are the **children of God** (Rom 8:16) And if children, then **heirs**; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Rom 8:17

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called **children of God**. 1Jn 3:1.

“The Gospel of Adoption”

God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to arrange for our ADOPTION!

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time came, **God sent forth His Son**, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, **that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Galatians 4:4-5 could be called “The Gospel of Adoption”

Jn 1:12 As many as received Him (Jesus Christ), to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to them that believe on His name **(so we are no longer illegitimate)**

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to **adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will

Romans 8

(15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption as sons** by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” **(16)** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are **children of God**, **(17)** and if **children, heirs also, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. **(22)** For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. **(23)** And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for **our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.**

Hebrews 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate** children and not sons. **(if we are not sons, we are spiritual orphans)**

1 Jn 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called **children of God** .

John 14:18 **Jesus said: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”** He also said in John 14:2-3 **“I go to prepare a place for you ...and I will come again to (adopt you) receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”** **Jesus knows how important it is for orphans to belong, and to have a permanent home and a loving father.** He also said “I will never leave you or forsake you” Heb 13:5

God calls us to help and care for orphans

Isa 1:17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. **Defend orphans.** Fight for rights of widows.

Visit with a Purpose

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to **visit orphans** and widows in their distress.

The word **VISIT** means far more than just a social call to an orphanage!

VISIT - from the original Greek: *Episkeptomai* (Strong's 1980a)

To be concerned for - to go in person to discover what is needed in order to fulfill the need

God Himself set the example when He **visited** us:

Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has **visited** us and accomplished redemption (adoption) for His people. (Rom 8:23 Redemption = adoption)

In both verses above the word "visit" and "visited" come from the same Greek root word: *Episkeptomai*

In Luke 1:68 we understand God's full reason for visiting us - for the specific purpose of accomplishing our adoption. We believe that James 1:27 is telling us to visit orphan children to accomplish their adoption.

James 2:15-17 If you do not give orphans what they need (adoption), what use is your faith?

Prepared by: Gerald D. Clark the Home For Good Foundation
Scripture: New American Standard Bible

God Defends and cares for orphans

Deut 10:18 He gives justice to orphans and widows
Ps 10:14 The helpless put their trust in you. You are the defender of orphans
Ps 10:18 You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed,
Ps 68:6 **God places the lonely in families** (Not institutions)
Ps 146:9 The LORD protects the foreigners among us. He cares for orphans and widows

The Bible includes warnings

Zech 7:10 Do not **oppress** widows, orphans, foreigners, and poor people.

Mal 3:5 At that time I will put you on trial. I will be a ready witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice

Deut 27:19 Cursed is anyone who is unjust to foreigners, orphans, and widows

Isa 1:23 Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows.

Jer 5:28 They are fat, they are sleek, they also excel in deeds of wickedness; they do not plead the cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; and they do not defend the rights of the poor.

Exod 22:22-24 Do not exploit widows or orphans. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, then I will surely help them. ²⁴ My anger will blaze forth against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows, and your children will become fatherless.

Adoption and Culture

Paul was a Roman citizen and also a Pharisee, he was highly educated and knew of ancient Greek and Hebrew cultures. When Paul wrote about adoption in the bible, he was writing in the context of the existing ROMAN culture.

In Hebrew culture, adoption was not popular among the Jews and rarely practiced. They knew that the Messiah would come through the pure bloodline of King David, and in their pride, they did not want to “pollute” the bloodline with adopted children.

In Greek culture adoption was practiced, but if the adopted child did not please the family, he could be disowned at any time. There was no covenant relationship and no eternal security in a Greek adoption. Even though it was Greek culture and language that gave us the word “agape”, agape was never applied to orphans.

In Roman culture and law, adoption was final and irrevocable - and it remains that way in modern American law as well as many other countries. A father can disown a biological child but he cannot legally disown an adopted child.

God proves His irrevocable, agape love for us by ADOPTION, and He chose to send Jesus into the Roman culture, “in the fullness of time” so that (among other things) we could fully comprehend Paul’s writing about adoption in the context of Roman law and practice.

Adoption has ALWAYS been dear to the heart of God. He arranged for Jesus to be adopted by Joseph. Moses and Queen Esther were both adopted, and both brought a form of “salvation” to the nation of Israel.

When a family decides to adopt a child, they make a conscious choice to seek out someone who does not know them, and they PRE-LOVE that child and agree to an irrevocable covenant relationship before ever meeting the child. Meanwhile, the child does not even know that someone is seeking and choosing them for adoption.

Adoption is such a beautiful picture of how God chose us and PRE-LOVED us before we even knew Him, and how He sought us out when we were not looking for Him. This is truly good news.

Adoption is Evangelism

How can we tell an orphan child that God will never leave or forsake them when all we do is leave them behind in an orphanage? How can we tell them Jesus loves them when we don’t love them enough to adopt them?

Christian families are the missionaries who can bring the love of God to orphans in a form they can understand - ADOPTION. This is truly evangelism and is exactly what Jesus did when He came into the world to bring God’s love to us in a form we could understand - ADOPTION.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time came, **God sent forth His Son**, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, **that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Jesus led us to His Father God, by arranging for our adoption, should we expect to be able to evangelize orphan children by doing anything less than adopting them? It is no wonder they don’t believe we love them unless we adopt them!

Adoption by a Christian family is the best way for an orphan to become an adopted child of God.

Gerald D. Clark the Home For Good Foundation

A collection of short Inspirational messages, useful as bulletin inserts

Where credit is not given, the message is composed by Gerry or Maureen Clark. Please give credit when re printing these articles. The Clark's give permission to re-print all material inspired by them as long as it is used in an effort to promote adoption in your church or to raise funds for adoption.

Our Fathers Business

Our father is asking us to be part of his business. His business is finding and caring for as many spiritual orphans as possible. We can fit into His business in many ways.

We can even apply His business plan to literal orphans among us.

It should be no surprise that a child that grows up as an orphan carries a void, an emptiness that is nearly impossible to fill, Just as we do in the spiritual sense, until we are filled up with the love of our heavenly father.

God's family business is open to all of us. We enter in with His word as guidance. Remember the high calling of James 1:27. For this is pure religion in His site. To care for Orphans..... and to add may own words, to be a part of our Fathers family business.

Inspired by the book "Secure in God's Embrace By Pastor Ken Fong

Our Divine Privilege

From Beth More: Christ's royal lineage comes through His adoptive father. We should not be surprised at the profound significance with which God views adoption.

God the Father allowed His son to be adopted into a family on earth so that we could be adopted into His kingdom in heaven.

Ephesians 1:4-6 He predestined us to adoption, as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to His will. It should go without saying it's a topic close to God's heart. He chose adoption as an acceptable means of dealing with parentless children. Adoption is our divine privilege and way of expressing God's heart.

Let our prayer be: Disturb us from our complacency oh God. May your command to take care of orphans be burned into our hearts and drive us to action. When the day is over may we say thank you for this divine privilege.

ADOPTION

“Modeling the heart of our Father”

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. (Eph 1:5-6)

God has determined beforehand that those who believe in Jesus Christ will be adopted into his family and conformed to his son (Rom 8:29) It involves a choice on our part (Eph 1:4) It is done in love (v 4) It is based on the good pleasure of his perfect will (v 5,9,11) Its purpose is to glorify God (v 14) but it does not relieve man of his responsibility to believe the gospel in order to personally receive God's predestination.

This is an awesome plan, which we are eager to embrace, but one we are not likely to ever fully understand. It tugs on deep emotional strings because this is how we are made by our creator, - to long for Him, and although we are not always conscious of it, we are forever grateful for our adoption into His family.

Perhaps this is why we see such outflow of God's special love towards orphans. His word defines helping orphans as an unblemished act of worship. (Jas 1:27) He commands us to defend the orphan (Isiah 1:17) and He has a strong warning for those who do not plead the cause of the orphan (Is 10:2; Jer 5:28; Mal 3:5)

When you consider God's design for adopting us, it becomes absolutely clear to the Christian that God's plan for the orphans in our land would not be to keep them isolated at arm's length, and merely feed and clothe them, but to adopt them into our family, making them our own – modeling the heart of our father who adopted us.

Adoption Facts:

**20 % of the population,
in one way or another,
is touched by adoption.**

In our church, our community, our neighborhood are adopted children and adults, there are parents who have chosen this worthy calling, there are grandparents and great grandparents of adopted children there are brothers and sisters and there are extended family members and there are children who's parents were adopted. If we want to mirror Jesus, we will speak of adoption with dignity and honor.

I will not leave you as orphans

On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus told His disciples, "I will not leave you as orphans." Why does God express His love for us in this way? It certainly implies that the condition of being an orphan is awful. It's something we don't want and if we were in that state we would want out of it badly. Jesus has no intention of leaving us in that condition, because He knows it is not good for us.

That's our example to follow, given to us by our perfect heavenly father. So, why do we settle for leaving the world's children in this condition?

God's adoption of us is an awesome plan and not one we are likely to ever fully understand, but are eager to embrace. It tugs on our deep emotional heart-strings because this is how we are made by our creator - to long for Him, to long for our adoption. Although we as Christians are not always conscious of it, we are forever grateful for our adoption into His family.

Perhaps this is why we see such an outflow of God's special love towards orphans. He considers helping orphans as an unblemished act of worship James 1:27. He has a strong warning for those who do not plead their cause in Is. 10:1-2; and Mal. 3:5.

When you consider God's design for adopting us it becomes abundantly clear to the Christian that God's plan for the orphans in our land would not be to keep them isolated, merely clothed and feed, but to adopt them into our family, modeling the heart of our adopted Father.

I Am An Adopted Child

In John 1:12 we hear, for as many as receive Him. He gives the right to become children of God. Eph 1:5 He predestined us for adoption as sons.

Moses, Jesus, Esther we all adopted and all became deliverers. To become an adopted child, we need to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

God does not have a wife or bear children. He only adopts. **If God has established it, then He has also Sanctified and made it Holy.** He has given us His model of adoption.

We as a church have a duty to erase the stigma attached to adoption and to the adoptive parents and children. Why would we want to hide the fact that we have been adopted or that we have an adopted child when there is no stigma in God's eyes. He freely and willingly adopted us even though we are flawed, sinners, rebellious and disobedient. He literally paid a ransom for us and as Christians He expects to model Him.

God's word shows us that He blesses adopted children and their parents. Mordecai became the Prime Minister of Persia, second only to the King, and his adopted daughter Esther delivered her people. He gives us these stories as models for us to follow. Moses, adopted child of Pharo, delivered the Israelites. Jesus the most profound adoption story ever told, delivered us and made a way for us to be joint heirs with him.

What is God's promise to us if we are faithful to care for orphans?

- He considers helping orphans as an unblemished act of worship (Jas. 1: 27)
- He blesses those who provide for the orphan (Dt. 14: 29)
- He strongly warns judges who issue unrighteous decrees & the magistrates who cause oppressive decisions against the orphan (Is. 10: 2; Mal. 3: 5)
- He is pleased when nations and people treat the orphan justly. He will draw nigh and be a swift witness against oppressors of the fatherless (Isa. 10:2)

He say "Anyone who receives a child in My name receives Me." Mark 9:37

- He commands others not to remove "the ancient boundary stone" or encroach on the fields of the fatherless (Prov. 23: 10) (could this be their biological history?)

It is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father... (James 1:17)

**No man stands
as tall
as when he
kneels
to
help
a child**

ADOPTees – HOW FORTUNATE I AM BECAUSE OF THEM

People who met the children, who were adopted from the orphanage I worked with, often said, “How fortunate those children are”. But I too am fortunate, because through them I have come to understand more deeply the awesome truth of how much God loves me as His adopted child.

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior you too are an adopted child of God. Being there through the steps of a child’s earthly adoption experience has imprinted this fact on my heart in the most profound way. I am forever grateful for what I have learned through these children who have experienced the adoption process into an earthly family, a family that is modeling God’s heart.

The word adoption has a deeper meaning than what we see and hear in the world’s eyes and ears. Society used the word as if it were slang, and it’s meaning has been seriously trivialized. For the Christian there should be a sense of awe and reverence as it pricks our hearts in remembrance of our own adoption. It is our legacy as Christians.

Thank you adoptees for helping me truly understand my own legacy.

Can we pray for the million children still waiting for adoption into their earthly family – waiting for another Christian to decide to model God’s heart in the pattern of their own adoption?

God’s Handprint

Adoption has God’s handprint all over it. God the Father chose us before the foundation of the world. As believers we are his adopted children.

“I would have never appreciated the meaningfulness of this had I never experienced searching and searching for the right child to adopt and love” says, Ptr. Ken Fong, in his book “Secure in God’s Embrace” a book he wrote in response to his experience adopting a child.

I am convinced that adoption of a child in need is the earthly model God had in mind in his command to take care of orphans in James 1:27. Why did He give this action such a high status as to call it pure and undefiled religion? Could it be that we are to care for them the way He cared for us when we were spiritual orphans? He invites us to come live with Him. John 14:17 ... He abides with you, and will be in you.” 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” He does not leave us to languish at a distance, wondering who our father is and if he will ever really love us?

Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. 17, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...” This is a personal God who invites us into His family. He calls it pure and undefiled religion when we do the same with earthly children in need of a family. Anything else in respect to caring for orphans can not fully meet the intent of this divine calling by a holy and righteous God who takes so many opportunities in His Word to remind us of the plight of orphan children.

Affirming God's Call To Adopt

Two ways of becoming a member of a family, you are born into it or adopted into it. Adoption is in every sense of the word, a family God saw fit to bring together according to His own divine plan.

An adoptive mother in the book, "24 Stories of Adoption, published by Adoptive Families Foundation, inc. expresses it this way; "Every night, I would pray and ask the Lord if this was His will ... that we take in this child and form a family. There was a particular Bible passage I would dwell on: "Do not withhold good if it is within our power to extend help." Luckily, too, our fellow church mates rallied to help us.

When they heard that Francis and I had taken Anna in, the Pastor's wife called me and asked what assistance or supplies we needed. Offers of help, occasional babysitting services, and even baby clothes came soon after. As the days went by, I was more and more convinced that this was what was ment to be...."

God's word itself will confirm His will for His children to reach out in this way. There are over 41 verses in the Bible declaring His concern for orphans. These verses are not directed at any one group of people. He is speaking to all of us. Just as the body of Christ is made up of many parts, so we all have a part in providing a loving home for a forgotten child.

Adopted Child Of God

We're all spiritual orphans, illegitimate by nature, born of the flesh, without discipline says John 3:5-6, Deut. 23:2, Heb. 12:8. But God says, "I love you and I'll take good care of you in that orphanage down there called earth" John 10:10. "I love you so much I don't want you to remain as orphans, I want you to live with me" John 14:18.

To make that possible, I'll adopt you as my very own children so you can live with me forever. Gal 4: 4-5.

But what do WE say to children? "I love you, and I'll take good care of you in the orphanage, till you grow up."

Our actions say, "I don't love you enough to take you out of the orphanage, and I don't want you living with me" The message the orphan children hear is: You don't really love me at all. Why does a child see it this way? We are all wired for adoption and adoption is missing!

We are the body of Christ and Jesus commands us to love the orphan children as He does. James 1:27. We most often fail at telling an orphan child Jesus loves them if we don't love them enough to adopt them. ADOPTION, The Gospel Message of God, "I love you, come, be my adopted child and live with me forever – starting today!"

"I've sent Jesus to arrange everything for your adoption and homecoming, He's already paid ransom.

A Sold Out Witness

When I became completely sold out to adoption it was no time at all before people came to me with questions about adoption. Apparently there is some mystery surrounding it that keeps people from understanding God's plan for orphans. Perhaps there is an enemy that larks who does not want to see such a critical problem solved, happy with the ongoing crisis.

Well-meaning people miss seeing the higher calling, only looking at the immediate problem. I am asked, "don't adopting parents wonder about the back round of the child." Well of course they do but the love of our family will give them a new and better back round. Why would people adopt that already have children? Responding to this, I would say, "can't God give us room in our hart and life for one more?" And the innocent questions go on.

This is a perfect opportunity to glorify God. Adoption is a natural thing when you consider, the earthly family Jesus was part of an adopted family? Jesus was the adopted son of Joseph. Mathew 1:1-16 say the Messiah would come from the house of David. Joseph not Mary was a descendant of King David. Bible historical record places him in the family of Joseph.

Remember dear friend, Mark 9:37 says, anyone who receives a child in my name - receives Me. What a great opportunity to witness is found in adoption.

Adoption facts

***There are more churches
than there are eligible children waiting for a family.***

***If only one family in each church stepped forward
to adopt, it would be difficult to keep the doors of most
orphanages open!***

Partakers of the Grace: Biblical Foundations for Adoption

With permission - by June M. Ring, PPL Adoption Resources Coordinator

As Christians, we want the Scriptures to inform everything we do. The Bible provides both specific examples and general truths relating to adoption.

The Scriptures give us the context for the institution of adoption in the world God has created. There are solid scriptural foundations for adoption as a pregnancy choice, as a means of building families, and as a solution for children without two parents. Just as we find our foundation for the sanctity of life in the Scriptures, we find our foundation for a biblical view of sexuality and the family—including adoption—in the Scriptures.

The following six points can help us construct a biblical view of adoption.

1. Adoption embodies the biblical theme of the covenant

More Than Legal

Adoption in strict terms is a legal process. But it is important to see that adoption is more than a legal contract—it is a relationship of promise. In fact, this distinction can be made of all family relationships. The relationship between God and his people is always covenantal and never contractual, and God intends that family relationships mirror his covenant relationship with us. The adoption process goes through the courts and is made legal, but as in all parent/child relationships it becomes much more than that. Law and promise are different in principle, the one pivoting on recompense for conduct, the other on acceptance of an unconditional gift.

Families Formed by Covenants

John Calvin wrote of God's example for us in forming families by covenant:

...[T]he Lord, who adopted his people, promised that he would be their God

...[T]he chief part of the word [covenant] consists of promises, by which he adopts and receives us as his own people. (1)

Authors Ray Anderson and Dennis Guernsey wrote about the connection between covenants and families, saying:

Covenant or commitment is something you give to another that cannot be taken away once it is given.... [T]his irrevocable deposit of affect we theologically call covenant and sociologically call commitment is the linchpin for a theology of the family. (2)

God's Covenant Family

The significance of this permanent promise relationship was not lost on the apostle Paul. In the time that Paul was using the adoption analogy in his writings, his likening of the Christian faith to "adoption as sons" made sense to his contemporaries. Christians were adopted into God's family, a privilege originally bestowed exclusively on Israel but through Christ made available to all through faith in him. Interestingly, according to a Roman-Syrian law book, a man might be able to disown his biological son if he had good reason, but he could never disown his adopted son. The adoption analogy used by Paul was a strong one indeed.

This is not to say that children adopted into families today have a greater standing than children born into a family. But this should clarify any misconception that somehow adopted children are second-best, or not *really* members of the family. A true understanding of adoption gives us an overwhelming sense of permanence; God's permanent relationship to his children, and the permanent relationship of adopted children in their families.

Paul teaches that the gift of justification brings with it the status of sonship by adoption. Adoption is the crowning blessing and belongs to all who receive Christ. The adopted status of believers means that in and through Christ God loves them as he loves his only-begotten Son. J.I. Packer Christianity Today (3)

2. Adoption upholds marriage as the building block for parenting

God Designed Marriage!

We learn in the second chapter of Genesis that it was not good for Adam to be alone. Adam's aloneness is the only thing that God finds "not good" before the fall. God ordained marriage between a man and a woman to remedy this situation. Neither animals nor another man were given to Adam as the suitable helper; Adam is to "cleave" or cling faithfully to his wife. Thus, God ordained monogamous heterosexual marriage from the very beginning. This covenant of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh (in that order) was established before the fall. (4)

It is no coincidence that it takes both a man and a woman to create a child. God's intent was for that unique combination to stay intact in a covenant relationship to raise the child. Marriage of the biological mother and father *should* be discussed as one of the options for a pregnancy resolution. Marvin and Susan Olasky's book, *More Than Kindness*, explores that option and analyzes how and why Christians might be doing more to explore and encourage marriage in crisis pregnancies.

When this does not take place, adoption is a viable alternative because it upholds God's original intent for two parents.

Families are an Extension of the Marriage Covenant

The husband and wife relationship, centered in Christ, builds a "tent" that not only shelters the couple, but means physical, emotional and spiritual security and shelter for their children. The relationship of parent to child is a covenantal relationship, bestowed on a family whether through birth or adoption. As Christ and his bride, the church, is a symbol of the marriage relationship, so God as Father to his people is a symbol of parental love for a child. God's plan for children is that they experience life in the midst of this covenantal relationship between a mother and a father.

It is worth noting that God desires not just a covenant between husband and wife as the foundation for family, but a lasting relationship between that couple and himself. A marriage firmly rooted and grounded in Christ is the strongest possible foundation for family-building, whether through birth or adoption. Proverbs 14:26 says, "He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge." Many birth parents realize the stability of a Christian family and view that quality as a priority when making their adoption plans.

Marriage Gives the Context for Parental Love

Like God's love for us, a parent's love is to be unconditional, selfless and sacrificial. This is an enormously difficult task that requires many years of faithfulness, not impossible for one person but much better accomplished by two. Of course there are many who through a spouse's death or abandonment are raising children as single parents, and the church can and should play a role in supporting them in a variety of ways.

Let us not let go, however, of the model that God has set before us, that of a husband-wife team rooted in Christ, supporting one another in their roles as parents. It is no wonder that God designed parents in two's from the very beginning.

Adoption can never be an easy choice, or a choice forced on a pregnant woman. Yet Christians could do much more to present it as a loving and unselfish choice that has benefits for mother and child. In order for Christians to view this question properly, we must maintain the conviction that the ideal family has two parents. Though divorce, unwed parenting, and even death can interfere with the ideal, they do not erase it. Whenever possible we should encourage the establishment of two-parent families, whether through marriage or adoption, because they are more stable and safer places for people to live.
Marvin and Susan Olasky
More than Kindness: A Compassionate Approach to Crisis Childbearing (5)

3. Adoption upholds the scriptural emphasis on the role of the father

Separate and Distinct

Although we have seen the importance of two parents, the father's role as illustrated in the Scriptures is separate and distinct from the mother's. The Bible speaks of the father as a man of compassion, a teacher at home, and a man to be honored by his children. Proverbs especially elaborates on these important roles a father can and should play in the lives of his children.

God chose to relate to us as Father. Our earthly fathers are important in modeling or being images of God as Father.

Joseph Adopted Jesus

God also assured that Jesus would have a father in Joseph. Perhaps the most profound example of adoption in the Scriptures is Joseph's adoption of Jesus. Joseph assumed the role of Jesus' father for all intents and purposes. It should not surprise us that God desired that Jesus have an earthly father, consistent with His plan for marriage and parenthood. The lineage of Jesus, as prophesied in the Old Testament, is fulfilled through Joseph (see Matthew 1:1-17). Joseph is fully and completely Jesus' father--participating in his naming, protecting him from danger by traveling to Egypt, teaching him a trade and presenting him at the temple.

Biblical Model Lost?

Much in today's society conflicts with the biblical model. We have denigrated and downplayed the importance of the father to the point of causing a major shift in our societal structure. For many women and children the father--who traditionally would have provided for them--has been replaced by our government. Estimates place the current number of fatherless children in the United States at 19 million, and the statistics regarding those children are grim:

-Half of fatherless families live below the poverty line.

-Adolescents of fatherless families are more likely to be sexually active, and daughters are more likely to become single-parent mothers.

-Adolescents in fatherless families are more likely to commit delinquent acts.

-Young adults who grew up in fatherless families were more likely to drop out of high school, divorce, and engage in drug and alcohol use. (6)

Christians can emphasize the importance of the father by encouraging his inclusion in counseling, no matter what the outcome of the pregnancy may be. It is important to note that many women choose adoption because they see the father as vital for their child.

The forgotten contributor to the two-parent team is the father. Kids gain confidence, self-esteem and the drive to be successful in life from their father. Without a father children are more susceptible to peer pressure, substance abuse and a whole host of social problems. It is not far reaching to say that a child's perception of God is often affected through his relationship with his father. A good father helps model to us and for us the love, discipline and sacrifice that God imparts to us as his children. A young woman--and young man--making an adoption plan can and should feel good about providing that vital part of the parenting team to their child that they may not be able to provide--a permanent, stable, capable and loving father.

*Ken Canfield
Executive Director,
National Center for Fathering (7)*

4. Biblical examples show how God has used adoption to provide for children and to further his purposes and kingdom

There are a number of examples of adoption in Scripture. Not all were cases of providing for orphans, although God specifically calls his people to care for orphans. Some were occasions of placing a child in adoption for a specific purpose, but all were cases of providing for the well being of the child.

Pharaoh's Daughter and Moses

Moses was born to Israelite parents, Amram and Jochebed, at a time when all baby boys were being killed by an edict of Pharaoh. As the result of a plan by Jochebed to save Moses' life, Pharaoh's daughter took Moses from the river at three months of age. She recognized his heritage and knew that his birth parents had placed him in the river to save his life. Pharaoh's daughter gave the baby to Jochebed to be nursed, probably until about age five. At that time, "she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son" (Exodus 2:10).

However, we read that "Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Hebrews 11:24). The book of Exodus describes Moses' subsequent forty years with his in-laws, his meeting with his birth brother Aaron, and his return to his birth family. Moses' adoption enabled him to have influence with Pharaoh yet identify with God's people, not only because of his genetic ancestry but also because of his faith. Moses did not so much reject his adoptive family as he did their sinful and unrepentant ways as a nation.

We can summarize Moses' adoption by seeing it in the context of two loving mothers whose first concern was a child--Jochebed, who parted with her child knowing that his life was at stake if he remained with her; and Pharaoh's daughter, who felt compassion on a child she knew by edict was to be killed. God used these two women to save Moses' life and provide him with a safe and secure childhood.

Jochebed's decision is a great example of a birth mother's love for her child. Her godly example sets straight the misconception that birth parents don't love their children. Her love for Moses prompted her to make the adoption plan.

Mordecai and Esther

Esther, an orphan, was adopted by her cousin Mordecai. The story of Mordecai and Esther is a beautiful example of respect and care between a father and daughter. We see simultaneously his love and concern for her--"Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her" (Esther 2:11)--and her respect and obedience toward him--"but Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up" (Esther 2:19-20). Their cooperation while Esther was in the king's favor saved the Jewish nation.

Biblical Types of Adoption

The two highlighted above, and Joseph and Jesus, are not the only examples of adoption in the Scriptures. Here are some other examples that are sometimes mentioned as types of adoptions. References are included so that you might explore them further.

Jacob's adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh--Genesis 48

Abram and Eliazar--Genesis 15

Eli and Samuel--1 Samuel 1

The overarching theme in the examples above, as it continues to be today, is two-fold. Adoptions take place for the well being of the child and with his best interest at heart, and as a means of accomplishing God's good purposes for his people.

5. Adoption is a scriptural metaphor that emphasizes the permanence of our relationship with God, the rights we have as his children and his redemption of us

Paul's Use of Adoption

The apostle Paul uses the adoption analogy in his writings several times, and in key passages. (Please see scripture references at the end of this text for examples.) Because adoption was common in Hellenistic times and culture, Paul's audience could understand the Old Testament teaching on adoption as an analogy to characterize God's relationship with his people. The scriptural idea of adoption emphasizes a) the sovereign character of God in planning our salvation, b) the newness of the family relationship he establishes, c) its climate of intimate trust and love and d) the gracious and immense inheritance our adoption affords us. This scriptural analogy gives us a wonderful picture of God's character and love for us as his children. (8)

Many Similarities

There are several similarities between adoption into God's family and a child's adoption into a human family. Calvin wrote, "God's covenant was not made to last only for a few days, or for a short time. When He adopted the children of Abraham, He took them under His keeping forever." (9) The adoption metaphor is a compelling illustration of God's covenant love for his people and his desire to see us as part of His family. Adoptive families can experience a small piece of that in the permanence of the family God forms in their midst, and birth parents can know that they set an enduring plan into motion for their child, just as God, sacrificially through Christ, put our salvation in place. The miracle of that transfer and grafting of the child into his new permanent family is a wonderful image of our permanent place in God's family.

Together on the Child's Behalf

Birth parents and adoptive parents can act together on the child's behalf, following the example of God acting on our behalf. Birth parents plan for permanence, the full rights of an heir and child in their new family, and love lavished on that child, just as God lavishes the riches of his grace on us. An adopted child knows that love daily from his family, and as he grows he gains an understanding of the love of his birth parents who planned that permanence for him. Understanding this simple truth can break down the myth that children who are adopted will always experience rejection. It can also break the myth that there is some sort of animosity between birth and adoptive families, knowing that they have worked together in the life of a child in a way they could not have worked independently.

Adoption Embodies the Gospel

These images and metaphors are not just helpful in our understanding of the adoption process, but can deepen our understanding of God's covenant family and his love for us. Using simple but powerful adoption metaphors can more tangibly convey the truth of the Gospel as we seek to minister to young women, young men and their families in a holistic way.

It should come as no surprise that the two times Paul referred to God as Abba are also the times he described our adoption by God. God sent his Son to redeem us, and God sent his Spirit to confirm his love in our hearts to create a bonding with our Heavenly Father, enabling us to come as children before him and say "Daddy." David V. Anderson, Christianity Today (10)

6. Adoption is an outpouring of God's grace on all involved

A crisis pregnancy is a time of intense struggle for a young woman. Her pregnancy could be a result of poor choices and lack of wisdom. Or, the events surrounding her baby's conception might have been out of her control, such as in the case of incest or rape. Whatever the situation, she is experiencing emotional pain and a feeling of helplessness to an extent that she may have never felt before. She is in the midst of a great time of need--the need for a resolution, the need for compassion, the need for support. Life seems on hold and things will never be the same again.

In a different set of circumstances, but feeling similar emotions, is the couple facing infertility. The inability to conceive or carry a pregnancy to term is one of the most difficult obstacles a family-oriented couple can face. Couples dealing with infertility experience a grieving process that can be debilitating and alienating. Again, life seems to be "on hold" and hopelessness can set in.

Perhaps most tragically, some children today experience utter hopelessness because of their family situation. More than 600,000 American children will spend all or part of this year in substitute care such as foster homes, group homes or shelters (135,000 of them are free to be adopted). Many of these children have experienced abuse or neglect, or have biological parents who cannot adequately care for them. Beyond our borders, many children in poor nations wait for permanent families.

Grace Breaks Through

In the midst of these types of seemingly hopeless struggles we have a loving God who gives us gracious answers. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses....Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Women in crisis pregnancy, couples desiring to parent, children in need of homes--adoption can be God's grace and mercy to all of them in their time of need.

Adoption Benefits Children

Children placed in adoption experience God's grace in a similar way to children who are born into a family. Adopted children can feel comfort and love, knowing that a future was planned for them that was in their best interest. As children grow older this can be palpable evidence of God's direction and sovereignty in their lives.

An adoption plan, as it progresses and after it is in place, can be a powerful example of God's working circumstances for good for all those involved. God uses adoption, just as He can any human relationship, to further His purposes and to bring about wholeness and healing.

The church's active involvement could vastly improve the prospects for adoption in our country. Local churches could counsel young women toward adoption as an alternative to either abortion or single parenthood.... It could give its hearty endorsement to adoption as a way of prospering the lives of all concerned.

Terry Schlossberg and Elizabeth Achtemeier

Not My Own: Abortion and the Marks of the Church (11)