



## The Lord has chosen us



by **Traci Loux**

The Lord has given us a heart for adoption. Early in our marriage, John and I would talk about adoption, but it wasn't until 2005 that we really felt the Lord saying that the time was near.

We moved to Kansas City in June 2006, and God began stirring our hearts more in this area. We began to get a deeper revelation of His heart for us in Ephesians 1:4-6, and began to understand that through "the spirit of adoption" the Father has called us His sons and His daughters.

In November 2006 we decided to move forward with domestic adoption. We started our home study in December and were home study ready by the end of Jan 2007. In just a few short weeks we got a call that a birth mom had chosen our family to adopt her baby girl that was due in April.

Elia Jane arrived early, on March 7, 2007 and our lives have been forever changed. As we welcomed her into our family, each of us was dramatically impacted by the love that the Father has for us and Ephesians 1:4-6 became a reality in our hearts.

In January of 2008 I began to work as an adoption consultant helping guide, educate, and lead others through their own adoption journey. In August of 2008, God put his finger on a little boy named Aiden who would turn 3 on March 1, 2009. Aiden was an orphan in Eastern Europe at the time. We completed our home study for Aiden's adoption on October 21st, went through the approval process, and returned home with him on March 24, 2009. The Lord surprised us by asking us to consider bringing home a second child from Ukraine, and in Jan of 2009 just two weeks before our flight to get Aiden, we decided that if there was a little girl needing a family we would also bring her home. The Lord clearly marked Emma for our family. And we returned home to the US with her along with Aiden on March 24, 2009.

In October of 2010, we welcomed



another child into our family through domestic adoption. Matthias has Down syndrome and has faced numerous medical complications. Mattie spent the first year of life in the hospital and had multiple surgeries during that time, including a tracheotomy and 2 open-heart surgeries. We are delighted that the Lord has chosen us to be Mattie's parents and are so thankful for the miracle of his life!

## TAKE CARE OF THE BASICS

by **Shane M. Jones, L.S.C.S.W.**

Many times when parents adopt/foster a child, they get so busy with managing all the newness of the new family member and changes to the family structure that they forget to take care of good health basics. Now, there are some basics that most everyone knows. Sleep well, eat well (especially not too many sweets), and have a reasonable structure at home. However, there are some specific things in these areas that if we know about them, parents will not only help their child, but themselves.



Dopamine when we sleep, which if we don't have enough we will display symptoms of ADD. So, parents this is for you too. The reason us adults start thinking we really do best on six to six and a half hours sleep is because we train our bodies to wake up at the end of the fourth sleep cycle when we will feel reasonably good. Waking in the middle of a sleep cycle can be down right painful, and leave us feeling "thick headed" all day long, so seven hours sleep can often leave us feeling worse. However, we generate more Dopamine in each subsequent sleep cycle, so being able to get through the fifth sleep cycle is truly awesome! That is when our eyes just "pop open", and we are feeling ready to get on with our day.

Children who come from "hard places" often have more trauma than we understand. Our reactions to experiences are based more on our interpretation than on fact. The experiences and feelings of not being safe will alter a child's brain chemistry, which can bring on depression and signs of ADD, and possibly Bi-polar symptoms. I do believe in the use of psychotropic medications, but if a child is on medications that are not really needed, then the brain will have even more difficulty regulating the neurochemistry than it would otherwise. How do things like sleep and diet help regulate neurochemistry?

Let's look at sleep. We all need five sleep cycles a night at about ninety minutes each. With falling asleep and waking up time we are looking at about eight hours, children need more than this. Our brains regenerate the neurotransmitter

Now let's look a bit at nutrition. When we are in a state of feeling unsafe, our bodies will not spend much time on digesting food, for it will be in survival mode. When the body is responding this way, even if food is taken in, the body will try to ignore it and not fully digest. This lack of complete digestion will cause "mal-absorption." Most of the serotonin in our brains is first produced in the digestive process. Serotonin is the "master regulator" of the brain. So, to help the body improve digestion probiotics (acidophilus like found in yogurt) are very helpful, along with eating smaller amounts every 2-3 hours. Another helpful thing is to (of course) cut back on carbohydrates and increase protein. Increase in protein will give a more stable energy and level of blood sugar mood swings.

These are just a couple of things that can make a big difference if we pay attention to them on a consistent basis, for both child and parent.

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## TIPS ON CHRISTIAN FOSTER PARENTING

by Kathryn Rateliff Barr

From their earliest days, God's people have answered the call to care for children who need a home. Deuteronomy 14:29, Psalms 10:18 and James 1:26-27 addresses how believers should extend care and support to orphans.

The Wesley brothers, who founded the Methodist church, set up orphanages to care for children who had no family to care for them. Today, many Christians feel a call to provide foster care for children in need.

### TRAINING

If you have the resources and the compassion for parenting foster children, you can contact a Christian foster program such as Lifeline Children's Services or Bethany Christian Service or The Methodist Home; or you can use other good programs like Kansas Children's Service League or KVC. Get the training you need to reach out to children who need foster placement, but love isn't all you need. Fostering can be rocky, and without training and support, you can create additional problems for foster kids if you aren't prepared for the problems that often come when a child is removed from parents because of abuse, neglect or incarceration. Learn how to reach out to these kids and build a bridge of love and trust a foster child can hold on to, according to Adoption.com.



### LIVE FAITH

The homes that foster kids come from can be horrifically damaging, providing negative parenting models, according to the book, "The Compassion Revolution," written by Dave Donaldson, cofounder of the charity Convoy of Hope. The book addresses how he and his family become involved in foster care. Your example can provide a healthy, loving, Christian role model for foster kids and for their birth parents, who might someday regain custody. Treat your foster child with love, fairness and impart the hope for a better future. If the foster child has no ties to the Christian faith, your example can create that connection and teach him about a loving God who cares for him. If the child and birth family have no strong objections, include devotions, Bible stories and church attendance in the child's routine.

### THE HURT CHILD

Your foster child might be carrying anger, poor personal boundaries, mistrust and fear when she arrives. Communicate your concern and desire to care for her at the same time that you establish clear limits and conditions on her behavior. Pray for your foster child's emotional, physical, mental and spiritual healing at the same time that you apply all of the tools you learned in training. Reinforce the child's belief in herself and her value as a human and a child of God. Praise her in specifics when she does well such as, "I'm pleased with the way you're catching up in school. Your determination is impressive."

### BUILDING SUPPORT AND MEMORIES

As a foster parent, you can work within the faith community. Address your child's past in the most loving way, helping your foster child stay connected with his birth family, if possible, as you also help him build connections in the faith community. You can take pictures of the child enjoying various activities, building healthy memories the child can access when times are stressful. Never lose sight of the reunification goal that guides many foster placements. A scrapbook of the child's life can anchor the love you share in the child's memory.

## FAMILY

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coming up whenever I spoke with anyone about adoption.

Deeanna was developing a reputation as the Christian go-to lady on adoption. I needed to connect with her. Through a series of phone calls and various connections, Deeanna invited John and me to their home for dinner.

Unknown to us, that night would change our lives forever.

### CHILDREN IN NEED

John and I held hands and said grace around the dinner table in Deeanna and Randy's modest home. Joining us were their five girls, who ranged in age from 5 to 15 and represented every size, shape, color, ethnicity and background. Several of the girls were already adopted; others were in the Wallace home through foster care.

"There are orphans right here in Hawaii who need adoptive families," Deeanna told us passionately. "They're trapped in foster care, and the church really needs to get involved."

We looked at their girls. Here they were, former legal orphans in our own state, our own community, our own neighborhood.

Throughout the course of the night, we learned that these girls had experienced abuse, neglect and abandonment. Unspeakable, harrowing things were

blessing of adoption. Deeanna said we reminded her of them.

Honestly, I thought she must be nuts to think that.

My head was spinning. John and I were Christ followers. We knew that God's Word spoke frequently about God's heart for orphans and the Christian's duty to care for them. We had talked about adoption before, and we were always open to it, but we'd never pursued it seriously. We thought maybe it would happen after we had birth children. As pro-lifers, we'd always said we'd adopt any baby who would otherwise be aborted. That was a no-brainer.

Why would these kids in foster care be any different? How could we do nothing about what we'd heard? We'd been so blessed. We had room in our house. How could we turn our backs on kids in need?

We weren't sure what we were going to do, but we knew we had to do something. Hearing about the needs of these kids awakened John's sense of protection. He's a military man, after all, and he couldn't just sit back and not take action. He had to do something!

I kept thinking about the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Remember the story? Jesus told a parable about a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who gets attacked. He's beaten, robbed and left for dead.

I sensed that God was challenging us, asking us if, like the religious men in the

**"There was no way we could see what we were seeing – precious faces, voices, and lives of real kids in desperate need – and go back to our comfortable life unchanged."**

## Here are my top five reasons for adopting a child



**CARRIE CRAFT**  
Adoption/Foster  
Care Expert

### viewpoint

Looking back on conversations with other adoptive parents and my own experiences with adoption and foster parenting, I feel that there are truly five solid rea-

sons to want to adopt a child.

While everyone may have their own motivation to explore adoption, the core of the desire for a family to adopt and what propels that family forward to completing an adoption, should be based on something deeper.

1 The desire to give a child a family. The prospective adoptive family wants to provide a child with a loving home and family. This includes everything that makes a home a loving place to be and a family that is an accepting group.

This desire includes the exchange of family traditions, the sharing of faith, and of memory making moments. It also

means accepting the child for who they are - even their faults. Understanding that the child has a history and heritage that also needs to be respected and embraced.

2 The desire to help a child move on in life. The adoptive parents have an interest in helping a child heal from past grief and pain, whether this comes from abuse, neglect, being abandoned, or orphaned. The adoptive family wants to help the child start a new life and knows that there will be ups and downs with adoptive parenting and is prepared for these challenges.

3 The ability to provide for another child in all ways. The prospective adoptive parent wants to share their home with a child and have the physical space for another child. They also have the time and the emotional space in their heart for a new family member. The adoptive family is also financially secure enough to adopt comfortably.

4 The entire adoptive family agrees to the adoption. Everyone in the family agrees that adding to the home through adoption is the right thing to do. All children in the home are also excited about adopting. Going through with an adoption when children in the home are not on board with the plan is not a good idea.

5 The adoptive family knows a child in need of a family. The prospective adoptive family is aware of a child who needs an adoptive home. The child may be a family friend, a relative, or a child they met at church or within the neighborhood.

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# ADOPTING ME: AN ADOPTED CHILD SHARES HIS PERSPECTIVE

by **Jamey Robert Stegmaier**

The day was no different than any other. It was the fall semester of my sophomore year in college; the changing colors of the leaves against the backdrop of weathered stone buildings made the walk to my dorm seem like a stroll through a promotional brochure for the university. I scanned my ID card to enter my residence hall, unlocked my room, and closed the door behind me.

Then I opened the letters from my birth mother for the first time.

I had requested that my parents send me the letters a few weeks before to that day. I had received them over the years—eight in total—forwarded from the priest who had arranged my adoption twenty years in the past.

Whenever I received a letter in the mail, I asked my parents to put it with the others.

“You can read the letters at any time,” my mother assured me. “Whenever you’re ready.”

It wasn’t really a matter of being ready or not; I just wasn’t all that curious. I was adopted when I was three days old, so my adoptive parents had always been my parents. My friends ask when I first found out that I was adopted, and I don’t have a good answer for them.

I’ve always known. My parents didn’t hide it from me. So there was no aura of mystery, no great secret about the contents of those letters. They were available, and I was in no rush to read them.

I should mention that I harbored no resentment against my birth mother. Although my parents didn’t know much, they knew that she had been a young, single mother, and she wanted to give me a better life than the one she was able to give me at the time.

As a child, that made sense to me, and I was grateful to have both a mother and

a father to raise me.

Perhaps you’ve heard someone say on television or in the movies or even in person, “You’re not my real mom/dad!” I’ve heard that line a number of times, but it’s never occurred to me to say it. What does that mean, “real” mom or “real” dad? My real mom is the woman who taught me how to read, who held her cool palm to my forehead when I got a migraine, who cried a little when I went abroad for the summer.

My real father is the man who rigged my Power Wheel tricycle for extra traction, who showed me how to find the best kindling for campfires, who complimented my posture after I received an award in high school. My parents are the people who nurtured me from the beginning.

In the back of my mind, one of the reasons I didn’t open those letters for so many years is that I was protective of my parents. I didn’t want them to feel like I was going to replace them. That one day I’d be done with them and return to my birthmother. Children are surprisingly conscious of their parents’ feelings; although I picked my fair share of fights with them over the years, my adoption was off limits. My parents gave me my life, the greatest gift possible.

But during my sophomore year, I became increasingly aware that there was another person out there who had given me life. I started to have questions: What if there was a disease that ran in my family that I needed to know about? What if my birth mother had passed away or was going to pass away before I even opened the letters? What if my birth mother or biological father were famous? What if I had other siblings out there? What if they attended the same college I did? What if I had met my biological brother or sister?

What if I accidentally dated my biological sister?



**STEGMAIER**

Enough was enough. I requested the letters from my parents. Including my mother and father in the process, I knew, would be important. I didn’t want them to feel out of the loop, especially since they were already sensitive to the distance between us when I was away at school.

I sorted the letters by the dates on the faded envelopes. The oldest was already open, read long ago by my parents on the day I was born.

I extracted the stationary from the pink envelope (my birthmother didn’t know that I was going to be a boy) as if it were an artifact from a forgotten time, an ancient papyrus that might turn to dust in my hands.

“From day one when I first found out I was pregnant, #1 on my list was to write an ‘open’ letter to my child and his/her parents...” She went on to explain her hopes for me, her blessings, and that her greatest worry was that I would hate her for giving me away.

I turned the handwritten pages one by one, soaking in the information. I felt like I was reading a biography about myself. So far removed from the content of the letters, it wasn’t until I opened the fourth letter and a photo fell out that I truly realized that I was reading about myself, my birthmother, my lineage.

The photo was of a baby, maybe a year or so old. Besides the longer hair that indicated that it was a girl, the child looked exactly—exactly—like me at that age.

Something opened in me and I started to cry. I had two wonderful, annoying siblings with whom I had grown up, but I had never looked upon the face of another and seen myself. I didn’t know that was a type of connection a person could have.

I shared that experience with my birth mother in a letter I wrote a few months later. I described myself, my hobbies and interests, in a matter-of-fact way

before assuring her that I didn’t hate her at all.

“If anything,” I wrote, “I love you for the decision you made. Thank you for giving me life—thank you for giving me this life.”

My birth mother’s one request was that I be raised in a Catholic family. Through the values of my parents, the teachings of Christ in Sunday school, and my personal spiritual awakening at my university’s Newman Center, I’ve come to realize that there’s enough love in me for many people in my life.

God has graced me with enough love for my adoptive parents and my biological mother, my siblings and my biological

## more information

**Next month we’ll share the adoption from Jamey’s birthmom’s perspective.**

siblings. Different types of love, but an abundance of springs to tap.

Not only do I have two parents who have raised and nurtured and loved me for twenty-eight years, but I also have a birthmother who carried me for nine months so that I may live.

I am truly blessed.

*Jamey lives and works in St. Louis. He writes a daily humor blog, [jameystegmaier.com](http://jameystegmaier.com). Published 2/189*

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