

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

HANDBOOK on

THRIVING
as an
ADOPTIVE FAMILY

Real-Life Solutions to Common Challenges

David and Renée
Sanford
General Editors

Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family
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*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this:
to look after orphans and widows in their distress
and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

—JAMES 1:27



Acknowledgments

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every
spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the
creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.
In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through
Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.*

—EPHESIANS 1:3–5

Lord, we thank You for our own adoption into Your heavenly family. It is out of gratitude and love that we partner with those who parent the parentless.

Our heartfelt thanks to each of the adoption experts who lent their time and energy writing chapters and contributing in other ways to this comprehensive new adoption handbook.

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Introduction

When did you first start thinking about growing your family through adoption? What was the first gift God gave you in your parenting journey of faith?

As a couple, David and I [Renée] knew adoption was our heart's desire for our family long before we were married.

How did David know? First, he loved children! Second, he strongly resonated with God's call to care for orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27). Third, adoption played an important role in his extended family.

I felt the same. Among other things, I loved being the oldest sister in a larger family—with two siblings by birth and three by adoption. Little did I know my heart's desire would one day open up the door for David and me to serve as general editors for this post-adoption handbook!

Each person's story is different, but every contributor to this handbook has demonstrated a personal commitment to adoption in God's plan for families. For us, adoption isn't theoretical. It's reality.

My family first grew by adoption when I was nine. My parents heard about a little boy who was going to be placed in foster care because his mother's degenerative disease had left her unable to properly care for her children. Through no moral fault of his mother, this little boy had experienced profound neglect. My parents welcomed that little boy into our home and later adopted him.

Several years later, other families from our church were adopting children from the Philippines where missionary friends lived and served. Again, my parents felt God's leading to meet the needs of an orphan child. A little girl this time, they decided. When they wrote to the orphanage, they happened to say, "If you have sisters, we'll take two." Two it was—two darling girls, aged one and a half and three years old. For me, as an almost 13-year-old girl, it was like having two pretty dolls (except when the littlest one threw tantrums!). For my parents, however, it meant embarking on an uncharted journey into parenting children who were adorable on the outside and hurting deeply on the inside. Little did my parents know what they were getting into.

At that time, I remember my mother started listening to a new radio broadcast hosted by Dr. James Dobson. Because my parents had grown up in broken

and neglectful homes, they took in whatever they could learn from God's Word and ministries like Focus on the Family. God's grace proved to be abundant as they poured into us children the love and nurturing they themselves had not received as children.

Still, the tools that my parents needed for the particular challenges of raising adopted children were just not available. They did the best they could, but they wish they had known more. Looking back, they would have done some things differently and, perhaps, everyone would have experienced a bit less pain.

Thankfully, much research and attention has been given to the unique needs and concerns of children who are adopted and their families. Careful study and insightful listening has led to a better understanding of how to more effectively parent children who have experienced the loss of their birth family and/or the horrors of abuse. Resources and support that were nonexistent or hard to find in years past are now available to adoptive families.

For those parents thinking of adopting, the material in this book will help you make an informed decision. For those families who have already adopted, we want this book to lay a solid foundation upon which you can build your family, strengthen your parenting skills, and feel supported and encouraged. And for those adoptive parents who are struggling at the moment, we want you to know that there's hope and help available and that you are not alone. Whether you read the book from start to finish (which we recommend!) or read a particularly appropriate chapter here and there, we trust you will find this book helpful at every turn.

To say the least, we're delighted that adoption is coming to the forefront of the Christian community as a way to minister to the orphans God so highly values. Now we want to make sure that children are not just placed, but that families prosper in every way possible.

All parenting is a brave journey of faith. After all, God alone can work the miracles of healing, health, and faith that we desire to see in our children and in our own hearts and lives. So, when God gives us the opportunity to truly meet our children's needs and better love them in ways they understand, let's receive those gifts with thanksgiving and praise.

May this book and the ongoing ministry of Focus on the Family supply many such gifts to you and your family today and for generations to come.

Part I

Becoming
an Adoptive
Family

Welcome Home

by Paul Batura

*To God be the glory
great things He hath done.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

The light of the long day was fading just as the clouds began to clear. Turning into our neighborhood, we saw that a typical late summer thunderstorm had soaked and saturated the blacktop streets. To the west, the sky was ablaze in an orange glow as the sun settled just beyond the summit of Pikes Peak. We were at the end of a 10-hour drive and two-week trip. Pulling within sight of our home, we spotted a giant blue banner draped across the front of the house. Large white lettering proclaimed the warmest greeting of our lives:

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME, RILEY HAMILTON!

7 Lbs 10 Ounces

Our 10-day-old adopted son stirred in the backseat of a borrowed green Subaru station wagon. In the blink of an eye, the hopes and dreams of all our years were beginning to be fulfilled.

Like many couples, we had desired children for a long time, only to be met with a series of disappointments. “Just be patient,” physician after physician counseled. Of course, this is always easier said than done. We lost our first baby at 12 weeks in utero. Then after two invasive surgeries over the course of a year,

our doctor informed us that “success” was very likely. Yet, one month later, my wife inexplicably suffered a grand-mal seizure and we were thrown once again into a cycle of tests, procedures, and consultations. More months passed. More disappointment. We would lose two more preborn babies at only two weeks gestation.

Meanwhile, our young couples Sunday school class continued to celebrate the announcements of expectant mothers almost on a bimonthly basis. At one point, nine of the women in class were pregnant at the same time, eliciting a crack from a father that “there must be something in the water!”

We laughed, but unfortunately, Julie and I weren’t drinking from the same tap.

And so, for four long years, our house remained quiet.

“Have you ever considered adoption?” asked my friend Marlen, just two weeks after the latest disappointment.

The fact is that we had—but the costs associated with adoption, both emotional and financial, intimidated us.

“My wife and I know a family whose daughter is thinking about placing her baby up for adoption,” said Marlen.

That evening, I arrived home and shared the news with Julie.

“Are you kidding?” she said, wide-eyed. “This is just what we have long fantasized about . . . remember? We’ve said, ‘If only we knew someone who knew someone who wanted to give us their child!’”

I remembered.

“For this to happen,” she said, “we’re going to need a miracle.”

For us, the miracle—our son, Riley—safely secured in his car seat for the long drive home, now seemed so obvious.

THE ADOPTION JOURNEY

Congratulations! You’ve made it. Can you believe it? It’s happened. You’re now an adoptive parent. Really! Truly. After years or months of waiting and the seemingly countless hours of painstaking preparations—the forms and files, the background checks and baby classes, the scrimping and saving, the travel, and yes,

even the tears borne of joy and sadness, you've finally arrived home with junior in tow!

If you feel as though you've just emerged from weeks in the wilderness, your feelings and emotions are well placed. Are you worn out? The fatigue of parenting will often manifest itself on various levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual, to name just a few. Now would be a good time to catch your breath and assess your condition. Enjoying the luxury of hours of uninterrupted rest might not be an option, but the book you now hold in your hands is a good place to start!

The paradox of parenting by adoption is now your story. At once, it's been both exhausting and exhilarating. It's been joyous and heartbreaking. You've given everything you've had to give, yet your cup is now overflowing with much more than you ever knew you had to offer. And it's only just begun.

It's critically important to consider the adoption journey much like the many miles of a circuitous mountainous marathon. The journey is long. It'll take your breath away. It can be unpredictable or maybe even frustrating and fascinating all at the same time. Eager as you are to finish, you can run only one mile at a time. You've already covered a lot of ground and exerted a significant amount of energy. Don't lose sight of your commendable progress thus far, but don't rest comfortably on your laurels either. It's time to keep moving, and you should be applauded for considering how best to approach and run the miles that lie ahead. Let's get started.

TRANSITIONING AN INFANT FROM THE BIRTHMOTHER TO YOUR FAMILY

The 33-year-old couple stood alone at the front of Henderson Hills Baptist Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, on a hot midsummer evening. Their eyes gazed out at the hundreds of empty seats in the cavernous auditorium. Never had they felt so alone and small and unprepared for what was about to take place. The back center door of the church swung open. In a silent, somber, and slow procession, the birth family of the boy they planned to adopt made their way down the aisle to the front of the sanctuary.

Three-day-old Konipher James was swaddled in a yellow and white blanket in his bassinet. His birthmother placed him beside the hesitant couple and knelt down to adjust his jumper. He was sound asleep, seemingly oblivious to the significance of the moment. The tears of the young woman who had given birth to him just two nights earlier fell softly on his tiny pink cheek. The only sounds in the air were the quiet sobs of those gathered in a small circle just beyond the first row.

The transfer and transition of an infant from his birthparent(s) to the adoptive family is likely to be a trail watered with tears and swollen with emotion almost beyond human comprehension. What is a gain for one family is a loss for someone else.

An entrustment or relinquishment ceremony as described above might sound like an awkward and emotionally laden step. Many adoptive couples would prefer to receive their child in a far more private setting. And each situation is unique, of course. But if given the opportunity, you might want to consider planning and holding such an event. Over time, the process appears to increase the likelihood of long-term adoptive success for several key reasons:

1. Though it's a potentially awkward and heart-wrenching occasion, it actually helps to ease the transition for both the birthmother and the adoptive couple. The birthmother is less likely to feel as if she is abandoning her baby.

2. It personalizes adoption and removes the impersonal and sometimes offensive influence of the law on the process. It's no longer simply a legal transaction but a heartfelt, personal decision.

3. It provides a significant event for both parties and an opportunity to state publicly their respective intentions, hopes, and plans for the years that lie ahead.

As it would turn out, the specific ceremony noted above played a key role two days later in reminding the heartbroken birthmother that her original selfless decision was a good choice made in the best interest of her child. "I reread the letter I read to my son on that dark night," the birthmother reflected, "and realized that if I meant what I said—that adoption was the best thing for him—then I couldn't change my mind and call the whole thing off."

OTHER OPTIONS

Circumstances might not allow for such a ceremony, but it will be important to plan ahead and consider how best to ease the transition between caregivers. In some states, it's illegal for a birthmother to relinquish a baby to the parents in a hospital. As such, transfers have been known to occur in hospital parking lots, adding insult to injury. Consult with your agency or attorney, but remember that the method utilized may be more important to the birthmother and child than to you.

In the event of a closed adoption, ask the social worker (or placement agency) as many questions about the birthparents as possible. Even if you get few answers, you may receive something your child will cling to later as information you otherwise would not have to share.

In a semi-closed adoption, you might want to consider exchanging letters to be read in private and later shared with your child at an age-appropriate time. Again, the ultimate goal is to help mitigate the pain the birthmother will experience. If she is able to communicate her thoughts and feelings at the time of relinquishment, the chances of her changing her mind will be significantly reduced.

TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR ADOPTED CHILD ADJUST TO A NEW HOME

Whether you're adopting an infant shortly after birth or receiving a child who has spent some time in either foster care or a traditional orphanage, the transition to your home can be a difficult time in a young person's life.

Here are a few suggestions to help ease this transition *if you're adopting an infant* (you'll find more help on this subject in chapter 6):

Clear your calendar: Be careful not to consider the arrival of your newly adopted child as clearance to return to your normally hectic schedule. Take time and allow the child to familiarize himself with your eyes, touch, scent, and sound.

Establish yourself as the primary caregiver: At the outset, at least for the first month if at all possible, it's best to limit the circle of care to only parents when

it comes to bathing, diapering, feeding, and comforting. There will be plenty of time to introduce your newest family member to other adults.

Don't underestimate the value of soothing music: Classical music has been shown not only to reduce anxiety but also to contribute to intellectual and cultural development.

If possible, consult with the previous caregiver: Ask for documentation/notes the foster family may have kept (e.g., feeding records, sleeping habits, and baby's "firsts"). This should be available even if the foster family needs to be contacted to obtain it. It's worth asking and waiting for. Typically, the foster family returns all notes along with the child so this should not be difficult. While you shouldn't feel bound by the old traditions and habits of a previous foster family, changing everything all at once can be incredibly tough for a young child to handle. Incremental adjustments tend to work best.

Establish your home as a place of grace: Regardless of how well you plan and how many experts you consult with, transitioning a child into a new home can still be a volatile and unpredictable season of great challenge. Do the best you can and prepare yourself for the inevitability of falling short from time to time.

And here are some general guidelines *if you're adopting an older child:*

1. Unlike the adoption of an infant or toddler, an older child is likely to be far more observant to the physical and practical order of the home. For example, if you already have children in the family and they each have their own room, it's a good idea to try and provide a similar level of accommodation for your new arrival. Be very deliberate about making the new child feel welcome and avoid signs of favoritism.

2. It's also a good idea to consult with the new child on room décor; older boys may be less inclined to participate in paint and furniture selection but if you're looking to maximize the new child's comfort and "buy-in" to the family, involving him or her in personal decisions is well advised.

3. Adoption experts warn, however, that when establishing the routines and rhythms of the household, don't necessarily expect a 13-year-old adopted child to act like a typical child of his or her age. It's not uncommon for an older adopted child to be developmentally challenged. In other words, be prepared to expect the unexpected.

4. Tracey Gee, a home study coordinator with Chicago's Finally Family adoption agency, stresses the need to tackle the safety issues. "You have to put yourself in the mind-set of an exploring five-year-old or eight-year-old," she said. "Put dangerous cleaning supplies out of reach. You should keep prescription medications up and out of the way. You have to look at safety issues as you would with any child, but you have to keep in mind the child's mental age as well as his or her physical age."¹

5. The seemingly simple matter of food choices can be an incredibly frustrating issue when adopting an older child. Going well beyond the matter of picky eating, some older children might come from orphanages where food was so scarce that they grew accustomed to hoarding whatever they were able to get hold of. Still others may have developed hard-to-break bad habits. It's wise to keep healthy snacks handy and above all, exercise patience in the kitchen and at the table. Even the most vexing dietary "demand" can be adjusted over time.

In such a short space, it's impossible to address the obstacles you might encounter during the initial period of transition of life with an older child. We'll look at more possibilities in chapters 7–9. You can, however, take comfort in knowing that an important decision on your part has forever changed your destiny and the destiny of your newly adopted son or daughter.

We cannot change a child's past, but we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit and help to affect the years to come with God's grace and guidance.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS THAT DON'T WARRANT ANSWERS

If you've already arrived home with your child, the chances are good you've encountered some of the most common awkward questions along with some very sincere and legitimate inquiries. Some of them might have touched on your initial motivations surrounding this entire adventure and maybe caused you to cringe when they were first posed: *Why don't you just have your own? What kind are you getting?* Maybe many were purely factual: *How much does it cost? How long will it take?* Those are fairly easy ones to answer, yet can still be insensitive or inappropriate.

Once your child is home, you've now crossed a bridge and such questions are no longer theoretical or hypothetical. Some of them may be asked in the presence of your son or daughter. It's good to be prepared with appropriate and pithy answers when faced with some of the uncomfortable queries well-meaning people will inevitably ask.

Before we tackle a few of the most common questions, consider again the words of King Solomon: "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."² It should be your goal to extend grace to the person asking a given question.

Where applicable, consider the following commonly asked questions and suggested answers:

Q: *Do you know his real mother or father?*

A: Jimmy's birthparents have offered us an opportunity to be his mom and dad. We are grateful for the privilege.

Q: *Do you have any children of your own?*

A: Including our newest one, we have _____.

Q: *I didn't even know you were pregnant.*

A: The Lord had something else in mind. We were given an opportunity to adopt!

Q: *It must have been nice not to endure nine months of pregnancy and give birth.*

A: Adoption is a labor of the heart.

It's important to maintain a sense of humor along the way. One newly adoptive mother said she used to fantasize about strolling through a store with her newborn child and having people ask her how she was able to get back into shape so quickly after the birth. The moment arrived in aisle four of the local supermarket, but she couldn't pull it off. She was just so proud of her newly adopted son.

An adoptive father is often asked if his son gets his eyes from him or his mother. He might reply, "God gave him his beautiful eyes."

Sometimes the easiest way to respond to questions or comments that have complicated answers is to simply respond with two words: *Thank you* or *Good question*.

IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE

Remember that if you're going to treat the newest member of your family just as you would a child born to you, don't forget to allow other people to do likewise. Some couples, nervous about the instability and uncertainty of a pending adoption, will decline invitations to participate in baby showers or other celebratory events. But once home and settled in, hope and expect your family and friends will treat you as they would any other new parents and welcome your newest family member with as much fanfare and joy as they deem appropriate.

Depending upon your schedules and the proximity of loved ones, some couples enjoy holding a dedicatory service at their church or they might host a more intimate gathering in their home. Whatever your approach, keep this in mind: There is no right or wrong way to celebrate!

COMING HOME DAY

Each family will have to decide for themselves how and when to celebrate the anniversary of their child's entry into the family. Some will simply mark the child's actual birthday as the date to set aside to give thanks and remember. Others will often remember the actual day they received their child from his or her birthmother or from the orphanage. If it was an international adoption, some will mark the day their child first stepped foot on American soil. Whenever you decide to remember this historic milestone, it's wise to make it special. Here are a few suggestions:

Tell them their story. In an age-appropriate fashion, tell them about the day your family grew and your life changed forever. Children love detail and will latch on to things that might surprise you, such as the name of their first teddy bear or the flavor of their first ice cream cake. If you have video footage of the day you received your child, you might watch this together.

Dr. James Dobson, founder and chairman of Focus on the Family, tells the story of how he and his wife, Shirley, used to tell their son, Ryan, in great detail about the day they brought him home from the orphanage. For years, little Ryan would say, "Daddy, tell me again about the big white building . . ."

Many families create a “life storybook,” chronicling their adopted child’s journey in becoming a part of their family. This might be a scrapbook or an album where you write an age-appropriate account or story version of your child’s adoption journey and keep pictures and unique facts about your child, special details about the adoption, information regarding his or her birthparents, and letters or mementos from the birth family.

You can continue to add to the life storybook over the years and enjoy going through it together from time to time. Pull the book out on the day you celebrate and remember all the special milestones that you and your child have reached together. (You might consider making two copies—one for Mom and Dad to keep safe and protected, and another version for your child to keep.)

Treat it like a birthday. Make a big deal out of it; buy some balloons and make his or her favorite meal.

Make it a family day. Incorporate the whole clan into the mix by setting aside time to go to an amusement or a local park.

“Gotcha Day” by Kelly Bard

Our daughter Lydia’s “Gotcha Day” is November 16, 1999. On that day, our seven-month-old baby was carried off a plane from Korea and into our arms for the first time. Every year we celebrate that day by watching video clips of the first “Gotcha Day,” enjoying Korean or Thai food with the family, and eating a “Happy Gotcha Day” cake, complete with candles representing each year.

“Gotcha Day” gives us the opportunity to continue celebrating the wonder of adoption—the day our daughter became a part of our family. We might not have video of my pregnant tummy or of her birth, but we do have photos, videos, and wonderful memories that we renew each year—the day we gained a daughter and new member of our family to love.

AND SO, WE BEGIN

At the Lord Mayor's Luncheon on November 10, 1942, the dishes from the main entrée were being cleared from the tables when Great Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, strolled to the podium. World War II had been raging in Europe for over two years and victories had been few and far between. But on this day, there was good news to celebrate. The Allies had achieved a significant victory over the Germans at El Alamein in North Africa. The prime minister's remarks were cautious but precise: "Now this is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."³

The arrival home and subsequent first year as parents is a season to celebrate. But as noted earlier, it's not the end of a long race, but rather the start of a life-long love affair with your precious child. As Sir Winston urged the faithful, the first year is merely the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end.



Paul Batura and his wife, Julie, are delighted to be adoptive parents and live in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with their three-year-old son, Riley Hamilton, along with his adopted dog, R. H. Macy. Paul serves as the senior assistant for research to Dr. James Dobson at Focus on the Family. He is the author of *Gadzooks! The Highly Practical Life and Leadership Principles of Dr. James Dobson*, in addition to numerous award-winning essays and short stories.

Phoebe's Story

by Greg Hartman

Guo Qiao Hong was born somewhere in China's Hunan Province. Two weeks later, she was abandoned in Zhuzhou City square—no note or anything—she was simply left on a bench in a basket.

I do not know if her birthparents ever named her, much less why they abandoned her. Maybe they desperately wanted a boy; maybe Guo was an accidental pregnancy, and they chose abandonment over abortion.

Guo Qiao Hong spent most of her first year in Zhuzhou Social Work Institute, an orphanage that named her and added her name to a very long waiting list. The orphanage is a modest four-story building with tiled floors and walls. Wooden high chairs surround big buckets of toys; the babies sit in chairs most of the day and play with the toys as over-worked nannies run around wiping runny noses and changing diapers.

I have a photo of Guo's crib—it is about as big as a case of soda, with spotless sheets and a teddy bear comforter. Just like baby beds you have seen before, except this one shares a room with 50 more just like it. Zhuzhou Social Work Institute is nothing fancy—the babies are clean and well fed, but Guo Qiao Hong was only one out of hundreds of thousands of babies China can't afford to feed.

On April 8, 2002, one of Guo's nannies bundled her up and took her on a 90-minute bus ride to Changsha, Hunan Province's capitol city. The nanny carried Guo through the lobby of the Grand Sun Hotel, took an elevator to the 21st floor, and handed her to me and my wife, Sarah. Nothing fancy, just a simple, unceremonious moment that changed all of our lives forever.

From Changsha, we took Guo to the American consulate in Ghuangzho, changed her name to Phoebe Ruth Qiao Hartman, finalized the adoption, then took Phoebe home to her new family.

Ever notice that God's most exciting work is, on the surface, nothing fancy? A shepherd boy, anointed Israel's greatest king with no one but his

brothers in attendance (1 Samuel 16:13); the blind, healed with mud and spit (John 9:11). Our Savior, entering the world in a manger and paying the whole world's debt upon a cross. Sinners, saved by grace with nothing more than a humble prayer.

Adoption is nothing fancy, either. We complicate it with paperwork, but it boils down to this: A child has no family; a family opens its arms. The Bible says that God adopts us into His family when we are born again (Ephesians 1:5).

When we adopted Phoebe, I caught a glimpse of what it must be like for God when someone asks Jesus into his or her heart. Think about it: Someone spends everything he has to save a person the world was ready to throw away. A life everyone thinks worthless is suddenly worth everything. No wonder there is joy in the presence of the angels when sinners repent!

Now that God has given Phoebe a family, I am looking forward to seeing what He will do with her. I suspect it will be nothing fancy—but glorious.

Afterword

*Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol Him who
rides on the clouds—his name is the Lord—and rejoice
before him. A father to the fatherless, a defender
of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families . . .*

—PSALM 68:4-6

As adoptive parents, it is an incredible blessing to know that God has chosen us to be the families into which He set our previously lonely orphan children. The spiritual, legal, and practical reality is that our children are orphans no more—they are, indeed, our very own.

In the Rosati home, we often pray and thank God for making us a family through both marriage and adoption. To us, it is nothing short of amazing that the God of the universe knit together our family through the blessing and miracle of adoption.

We also know, however, that challenges usually accompany blessings. Adoption is no exception. As adoptive parents, those challenges can be very unique and, at times, overwhelming. They can make us feel as if we're drowning in grief, fear, and pain. They can even make us question our calling from God. Let me encourage you: He who has called us is faithful! And we can stand on His promise that there is great hope for the future.

It is our sincere hope at Focus on the Family that this *Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family* was a blessing to you and your family. We pray it helped you understand that you're not alone in your struggles and provided practical assistance for whatever stage of the adoption and parenting journey in which you find yourselves.

We also want you to know that you can call us at 1-800-AFAMILY for confidential counseling and support. We want to walk alongside you down this remarkable road and help carry your burdens. We want to help your family thrive!

Above all else, we hope this book provides you with the hope that God is able to equip you to handle whatever may come your way. Remember, He has called us to this high calling as adoptive parents and our struggles are no surprise to Him, even when they surprise and discourage us.

So as you pray for and hug your precious children today, thank God for making you a family through the blessing of adoption and cling tightly to the One who placed your children into your family.

And, finally, please pray for the orphan children here in the U.S. and around the world who are still waiting for God to send them their own forever adoptive families. For more information on Focus on the Family's orphan care initiative, visit our Web site at www.iCareAboutOrphans.org.

Blessings in Christ,
Kelly M. Rosati, J.D.



Kelly M. Rosati is the senior director of the Sanctity of Human Life division at Focus on the Family, where she oversees the Adoption & Orphan Care Initiative. An attorney by training, Mrs. Rosati was the executive director of Hawaii Family Forum for 10 years, where she advocated for Hawaii's children and families in the legislature and media. She has been married to her husband, John, for more than 17 years, and they were blessed to adopt all four of their children through the U.S. foster care system.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. Dan Rafter, "Creating the Comforts of Home for an Older Adopted Child," *Chicago Tribune*, December 26, 2003, C1.
2. Proverbs 12:18.
3. See <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=388> (last viewed March 31, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

1. Bruce Perry, M.D., *Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children* (www.childtrauma.org), 2001.
2. John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1: Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).
3. Allan Schore, "The Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health," *Infant Journal of Mental Health*, 2001, 22: 7–66.
4. B. Bryan Post, *The Great Behavior Breakdown*, audio CD Recording (Oklahoma City, OK: Post Institute for Family Centered Therapy, 2004). www.postinstitute.com.
5. L. Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
6. Bruce Perry, M.D., *Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children* (www.childtrauma.org), 2001.
7. Adapted from a simpler diagram by Foster W. Cline, M.D., *Understanding and Treating the Severely Disturbed Child* (Evergreen, CO: Evergreen Consultants in Behavior, 1979), 28.
8. John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory* (Padstow, Cornwall: TJ International Ltd, 1988), 9.

Glossary

Adopt – to legally bring a child into one’s family

Attachment – the process by which a child forms stable and significant emotional connections with people; begins in infancy; if attachment has not occurred by age four or five, the child may experience difficulty in connecting socially with others

Closed Adoption – neither birth nor adoptive families share identifying information with one another; there is no relationship or communication between the two parties

Disruption – in the context of adoption, this occurs when a child is removed from the current placement after living there for some time; can also refer to a failed placement, particularly before the adoption is finalized

Dissolution – to void or reverse an adoption after finalization

Domestic Adoption – both the child and adoptive family are U.S. citizens

Emotional Age – refers to the emotional development level of the child; many children who experience trauma do not develop emotionally at the same pace as a typically developing child. A child may be 10 years old but emotionally only age six; therefore, he must be treated as a six-year-old to help him reach the developmental milestones that may have been missed

Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)* – a lesser severity of FAS, often with no outward physical manifestations or mental retardation

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)* – a catch-all category encompassing both FAS and FAE on a continuum

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)* – the most severe form of in utero drug/alcohol effects, almost always characterized by altered facial features, stunted growth, and/or mental retardation

Bonus Chapters and More Online

There's more!

Be sure to log on to www.iCareAboutOrphans.org to find more informative, practical, and up-to-date resources on adoption.

At www.iCareAboutOrphans.org you'll find three "bonus chapters" (modules of articles) on:

- "Characteristics of Successful Adoptive Families" by Debi Grebenik
- "Birth Family Relationships" by Mardie Caldwell and Renée Sanford
- "Your Child's Life Story" by Jayne Schooler

At www.iCareAboutOrphans.org you'll also find a number of additional stories of adoption addressing virtually all of the subjects covered in this book. Why more stories? Because "Experience is the best teacher . . . especially other people's experiences!"

While you're online, be sure to check out the many other adoption resources offered at www.FocusOnTheFamily.com.

Resources Guide

The following products, authors, and organizations are not endorsed by Focus on the Family. Discerning parents will find a wealth of useful information, but caution is advised. Not all resources are written from a distinctly Christian worldview, and some statements or claims may conflict with sound biblical teachings.

BOOKS

Atwood, Thomas C. and Jayne E. Schooler. *The Whole Life Adoption Book: Realistic Advice for Building a Healthy Adoptive Family* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008, revised updated version).

Burlingham-Brown, Barbara. *“Why Didn’t She Keep Me?”: Answers to the Question Every Adopted Child Asks* (South Bend, IN: Diamond Publications, 2005).

Christianson, Laura. *The Adoption Decision: 15 Things You Want to Know Before Adopting* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007).

Christianson, Laura. *The Adoption Network: Your Guide to Starting a Support System* (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2007).

Eldridge, Sherrie. *Forever Fingerprints: An Amazing Discovery for Adopted Children* (Warren, NJ: EMK Press, 2007).

Eldridge, Sherrie. *Twenty Life Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: Piñon Press, 2003).

Furnstahl, Shari Rusch. *From Stumbling Blocks to Stepping Stones: Help and Hope for Special Needs Kids* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers/Focus on the Family, 2007).

Gillespie, Natalie Nichols. *Successful Adoption: A Guide for Christian Families*. (Franklin, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2006).

Gray, Deborah D. *Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today’s Parents* (Indianapolis, IN: Perspectives Press, 2002).

Gray, Deborah D. *Nurturing Adoptions: Creating Resilience after Neglect and Trauma* (Indianapolis, IN: Perspectives Press, 2007).



David and Renée Sanford own Sanford Communications, Inc., which works closely with leading authors, ministries, and publishers to develop life-changing books and other resources. Their professional credentials, life experience, and passion for helping adoptive families well qualify them for this project. David and Renée were trained and served as foster parents to two sisters in 1996. They were then trained as adoptive parents in 2002 and adopted their daughter Annalise through the Oregon State Child Welfare system in 2004.

David and Renée have been married 26 years and are the parents of five children: Elizabeth (married to Billy Honeycutt), Shawna (married to Jordan Goertz), Jonathan (age 20), Benjamin (age 11), and Annalise (age 8). They have two grandchildren, John (age 3) and Havilah (age 1).

David, Renée, and their two youngest children live “on the road to Damascus” a few miles from downtown Portland, Oregon. You can visit them online at www.sanfordci.com.