

FROM ADOPTIVE PARENTS



FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

WHAT IS MY CHILD'S IDENTITY IN CHRIST?

An Adoptive Father's Perspective

Who is your child in Christ?

What is your child's identity in Christ?

Who has God called your child to be?

What is the call of God on your child's life?

When God looks at your sons and daughters, who does he see?

What potential is there in them?

What has the Lord revealed to you about their hearts, their gifts, their destiny in Christ?

Wow! These are pretty big and heady questions that can be quite intimidating for us dads (and moms). Can I really know the answers to some of these fundamental questions about my child? Would God really reveal to me who my child is, how He sees my child, and what His plan, destiny and desire are for my child?

The answer, of course, is a resounding YES.

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

The Lord has placed the mantle of "father" and "mother" on each of us parents. When He called us to have children, through adoption or birth, he placed that awesome authority on our lives to guide, inspire, love and instruct our children. One of the foundational aspects of this calling is seeking Him for our child's identity in Christ and then using this understanding and revelation from the Father to guide our parenting of each individual child.

Ephesians 1:18–19

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

In view of this mantle of authority God has placed on us for our children, it is clear that He is so eager to have our eyes opened and enlightened, to know our children and the hope to which He has called each one. This identity and inheritance is something that the Lord wants to share with us so that we can help our children grasp, understand and renew their minds according to their identity in Him.

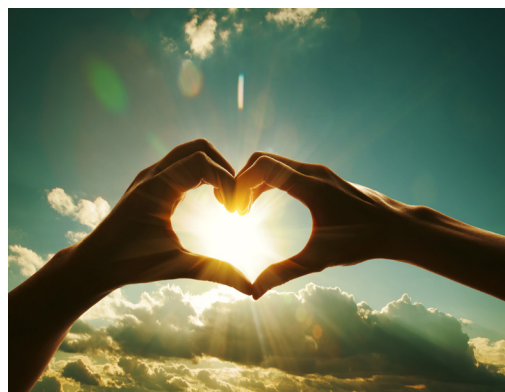
How do we know our child's identity in Christ? First and foremost, go to Him, seek Him and spend time in prayer actively asking the Lord to show you how He sees your child. He will be faithful to share His heart for your child with you. If you have Christian friends, a youth pastor, Sunday school teacher or a pastor who you trust, ask them what they see in your child. Share with them that you are asking the Lord to reveal to you a greater understanding of your child's identity in Christ, and then ask for their input. Write all these things down, especially any specific words of knowledge or reliable prophetic words received from trustworthy people. Keep a record of these — they are invaluable and can act as spiritual weapons for you and your children as they grow. But remember, God Himself has given you the spiritual authority to parent your child, so test any input you receive from others according to the scriptures and what the Lord is saying to you.

Go to Him. I can't wait to hear what He will tell you about each of your children.

PARENTING IN GRACE: IDENTITY

Defined by Behavior?

You will find that we speak a lot about identity in this blog. Stephen wrote a post about it in March (you can read it [here](#)), and I'd like to continue the thought. One of the most important roles we have as parents is to recognize and call forth our children's identities. Now it takes no effort at all to do this if we define an individual's identity by his or her behavior. If our child lies repeatedly, then we may decide she is a liar. Or if we have a child who is filled with anger and angry outbursts, then we identify him as a child with anger issues. There is a certain logic to this approach, and it certainly yields some benefits as we seek to parent our children well. None of us want our adopted children to remain defined by their behaviors learned in an orphanage. So we patiently (or not!) focus our attention on these behaviors in the desire to set them free.



Parenting Backward

Stephen and I have found, however, that parenting with our focus on the negative behavior is limited in its success. I see it as "*Parenting Backward*" in a way. I mean by this that when I focus on my child's anger, for instance, I become so easily absorbed and enmeshed in the issue of her anger, how it originated in her past and the depth of the problem that I find myself struggling with feelings of anger myself, along with anxiety, frustration and even hopelessness. Being clever, I realize pretty quickly that the problem is far too great for my parenting skills. The pain, neglect, abuse and rejection our adopted children have experienced is far beyond my own experience and understanding.

Parenting Forward

Over the years we have become increasingly focused on our children's identities in Christ and have learned to "parent forward" so to speak. Our goal is the same — to bring our children into freedom from the coping behaviors that were born out of distrust, pain and the need to survive. With this approach of parent forward, however, we identify the problem (it's never too hard to figure that out!), we acknowledge the connection to the past in our own minds and occasionally with our child, and then we begin to speak aloud *to ourselves* and *to our child* his identity in Christ. We call forth his righteousness in Christ and parent into his future, rather than parenting into the issues of his past. In other words, we choose to make decisions regarding our child based on what God has to say, rather than on the sometimes compelling evidence of his behavior. We are careful to speak these truths publicly (even if it is just at the dinner table) and often. As our children have gotten older, we have found that texts, emails, Facebook messages, letters left on their pillows, etc. are also good ways to "call forth."

For instance, Stephen and I believe that one of our sons has a strong gift for leadership, but we often see him waiting to be led and in a place of passivity. We have encouraged and even at times required him to take leadership roles as we work at parenting him according to his identity in Christ. When he has failed, we work it through, allowing him to face the consequences, and then try again. This has been a long process with some painful times and mistakes on our part, but one that is now bearing clear and recognizable fruit in his life.

Focus and Answers

This approach is not always easy. It is counterintuitive for most of us not to place our full focus on a problem in order to solve it. Many of us have even been trained to do exactly that — looking intently at the problem in order to find the solution. But I believe in the Lord there is a better way. As we look intently at our beautiful savior and focus on His words about our children, we will find the true answers to the complicated and difficult issues our adopted children face. Paul did this when he addressed the issue of blatant sin in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6). In the midst of dealing with their sin, Paul says, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” Do you see how Paul declared to them their identity in Christ there? He did not say, “Do you not know that you are sinful fornicators?” Rather, he called out that which was good and true, reminding them of their identities and pointing them to the future, not the past.

Transfixed by the Problem

This parent forward can only be done as we parents set our thoughts and affections on Jesus. I don’t know about you, but I find it quite difficult to do at times. Have you ever been in a situation where you find yourself drawn to look at something you really don’t want to look at and you know you should wrest your eyes away, but you just can’t? I remember when I was in elementary school, our family was in a bad car wreck with a hook-and-ladder fire engine. In the end, we were all fine, however my youngest sister had gotten pretty beaten up. I’ll never forget hearing my mother call out, “Don’t look at Pammy! Don’t look at Pammy!” (She was covered in blood at that point and my mother wanted to protect us from fear and terror.) Well, you know where this is going. Of course, I couldn’t help it. My eyes were drawn as if by a huge magnetic pull to her. I have recently realized that that is exactly the way I am sometimes with my children. I become aware of a behavior that needs our attention, a gaping wound not unlike my sister’s in a way, and I find myself transfixed by it and its connection with such a complicated past, as well as my inability to “fix” the problem, and I think to myself, “You’ve got to tear your eyes away from this. It is not helping to gaze steadfastly at this problem. Rather, it is producing fear, anxiety and even emotional distance from this precious child.” I sometimes find it so difficult not to dwell on the problem. I know enough about our amazing God to know that when I pull my eyes away from the problem and intently look to Him, that anxiety falls away with ease, solutions come and my heart is warmed again to my child as I catch again some of God’s thoughts about him or her. I am able to parent forward into the beautiful, freeing and whole person.

Transfixed by the Answer

Our faith cannot be in our parenting, nor can it be in our child. Our faith must be in Christ alone. I have found that when I mistakenly put my faith in my child to behave a certain way, to display a certain amount of progress and healing, then I open myself to being blindsided by disappointment, frustration and even anger. All of these emotions lead quickly to anxiety and emotional distance. However, when I place my faith in Jesus, in what He has called us to and what He has declared over our family — in essence, when I become transfixed by Jesus, the answer — then I can remain standing, even when the storms rage around me.

PARENTING IN GRACE: WHO IS THIS CHILD?

"To topple the 'stronghold of our experiences' we must 'let God be found true, though every man be found a liar' (Romans 3:4). The only One who has a right to shape our lives is Jesus Christ. We must determine to allow nothing and no one to shape us, not even our personal experiences, unless they are consistent with the promises of God. In truth, who is ruling our lives, God or our experiences?"

— Francis Frangipane, *The Three Battlefields*

Who is This Child?

I heard once that personhood can be defined in three parts: (1) **Identity**, (2) **Acceptance** and (3) **Approval**. This intrigued me, as I have become increasingly convinced that our precious adopted children's wholeness and healing directly correlates with their understanding and belief in who they are. Do you remember what God the Father said about Jesus when He was baptized? *"This is (1) My Son, (2) My Beloved, (3) In Whom I Delight!"* (Matthew 3:17) Jesus received this public affirmation from His Father — his *identity* as a son of his Father, his acceptance as one who is loved and the *approving delight* of his Father. When we ask the question "Who is this child?" as parents, we have the opportunity to partner with the Holy Spirit to see God's eternal purposes manifested in his or her life, going way past the surface issues of behavior into the depth of his or her identity in Christ.

What is God Seeing? What is God Saying?

My favorite example of this is found in the story of Gideon (Judges 6). I love this story! There is Gideon threshing wheat in secret, hiding in a wine press so that the Midianite enemy can't steal it from him. And then the Angel of the Lord shows up and says, *"The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor."* Notice, Gideon is not even wearing armor, he has no sword, he is hiding in justified fear — there is nothing about him that would indicate that he is indeed a "mighty man of valor." What in the world was God thinking? More importantly, what was God *seeing*?

Facts or Truth?

Do you see the huge gap between the Word of the Lord and the facts at hand? There is a disturbing and direct opposition between God's words and what can be seen at the present moment. In this situation, it is key to recognize the difference between *facts* and *truth*. Facts are simply an accurate description of a circumstance. Facts change, **but Truth — God's Word — remains.**

How often do we look at our children and see only a repeated negative behavior or character trait? We must look to who they are in the Spirit. Notice, God did not say, "You *will* be a mighty man of valor once I finish my work in you." I don't know about you, but to me it almost feels like God made a mistake here. But rather, I think what is going on is that God saw something in Gideon in the Spirit, something that had not yet manifested but was, nevertheless, TRUE. Also, let's take note that God did not attack him with words such as, "Gideon, you are a gutless wimp. Shape up!" As with Jesus, God spoke out loud into Gideon his identity in the very midst of the *facts* that spoke as loud as any words, "Fearful, not mighty."

Calling Forth the Treasure

Part of our role as fathers and mothers is to speak *WORDS OF LIFE and TRUTH* into our children — into, over and in the midst of their brokenness, their pain and their sinful behavior. As I mentioned in my last post, [Parenting in Grace: Identity](#), you may find this parenting forward as counterintuitive as we have. It feels at times, especially in the heat of the moment when you are so disappointed, angry or worn down, as if you are lying. But I think what is actually going on is that in that awesome moment of opportunity (that looks suspiciously like another behavior issue that you need to get control of!), you and I are actually “*speaking those things that are not as though they were.*” (Romans 4:17) You are calling forth by declaration, or what my good friend Michelle describes as “calling forth the treasure.”

Words that Shape Identity

Stephen and I have discovered a wonderful benefit from doing this over the years. As we have declared truth in the midst of opposing facts, we have equipped our children with language for them to use when they think about who they are. Proverbs 23:7 says, “*For as he thinks in his heart, so he is.*” You and I have the awesome opportunity, given by God Himself, to speak words that shape how our children think of themselves, and in doing so over and over throughout the years, we are actually shaping who they are — partnering with God to transform them from orphans into sons and daughters. Now *that* is something worth doing regardless of the cost!

A Real Life Example

Now, before I close, I'd like to give you an example from our experience. And please know that this is not how we always do things. We have tried to make it a part of the culture of our family, but we have missed the mark often, and still we see God be faithful. I thank Him for that daily. But let me tell you one story. (Excuse my incorrect grammar as I strive to honor my children.) One of our children came to us with an amazingly honed coping skill. This child could lie with the best of them! I am talking impressive here. At first we thought time would take care of the problem. Surely, love and security would replace the need to lie regularly. As I fixated on the problem (never helpful; lesson learned), I became anxious and fearful of where this behavior would lead our child. One thing I knew was that I needed prayer — for myself, and for my child. As a group of trusted friends prayed, one felt strongly that God was saying that this child was actually *a person of integrity* and that he would in fact have *a reputation for integrity*. Now at that point, the facts were directly opposing this word and I had no vision for it, but by faith I made a choice to believe. It seems like a no-brainer now, but at that point it was a real leap.

I vividly remember one day when something had been taken and our child looked me in the face and denied responsibility. I knew it was a lie. But how kind was God to remind me right then of the words — “*this is a person of integrity.*” Everything in me was wanting to say, “You are a liar. Again you have lied. What is wrong with you?” (I know that is ugly, but my fear for the future caused me to have such a strong reaction.) But instead, I declared out loud the truth of this precious child’s identity, calling that thing that was not as though it were. “You, my child, are a person of integrity. What you are saying is a lie, but you are not a liar. This is not who you are.” And from that point on, over the years and to this day, we are very careful to publicly and privately celebrate this truth when we see it, and declare it as truth when we don’t.

I do want to clarify that there were still consequences to the lying; we aren’t talking about sweeping things under the proverbial rug. I am thrilled and humbled to say that years later this amazing young person sat in an office at school and when asked what their strengths were, these were the words that came forth (the way our child thinks when asked about who they are): “People know they can trust me and rely on me.” And it is absolutely true, This is the reputation of this young person. How thankful to God we are, for it is clear to us that this is His hand at work.

CO-LABORING WITH THE FATHER TO TRANSFORM ORPHANS INTO SONS AND DAUGHTERS—ALL THE GOOD

*"I will bring upon them **all the good** that I promise them ... [They] shall be a name of joy before all the nations ... who shall hear of **all the good** that I do for them." (Jer 32:42, 33:9)*

From Eeyore to Big Joy!

Last night, we all sat around the table with friends, celebrating our daughter Katya's birthday. In keeping with our family tradition, we got to tell Katya — whom we adopted 13 years ago at age 10 — what we like about her. Once again, I was amazed at the transformational power the Lord has in one life, as I saw the change from who Katya used to be to who she has become. "*Eeyore*" has become "*Big Joy*" and it took years.

Nine "Goods" and One "Bad"

Katya's nickname when we adopted her was Eeyore. She was, simply, sad, gloomy and despondent much of the time. I will always remember the 10 kids sitting around the table, each with a small scrap of paper and a pencil. "I want you guys to write either 'good' or 'bad' as the answer to my question," I instructed them. "Here's the question: 'When you grow up, do you think your life will be good or bad?'"

As everyone shared their answers, I heard nine "goods" and one "bad." Our dear Eeyore, in keeping with her namesake, felt doomed to a bad life. "Katya, why do you think your life will be bad, sweetie?" I asked. She answered, looking down resignedly, "Because school is so hard, and I think it will be too hard for me to ever finish and get a job that will make enough for me to take care of myself."

"I Know the Plans I Have for You"

That story helped me see that she needed God's truth to replace the lies she was believing about who He is in her life. That very year is the one when we began to choose one verse for the year, have the kids write it and draw their own picture to illustrate it, and hang it all over our kitchen cabinets so that we would be reminded to pray and talk with them about the things God wants to do for us. Katya's verse that year was Jeremiah 29:11: "*I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for goodness and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.*"

And Katya began to change. About three years later, on one of her birthdays, as we listened to all the reasons her family members like her, we noted a common thread: "I like you because your eyes turn upside down like crescent moons when you smile." "I like you because you are so giggly." "I like you because you are happy and fun to play with." And we realized that Eeyore needed a new name; she had become Big Joy. Within several days, Katya remarked to me, "Mommy, I have been thinking about all those things the family said about me on my birthday and about why I have changed so much. I think the reason is that I began to believe that verse you have been praying for me is true."

“I Like You Because ...”

So last night, all these years later, it is evident that the change was enduring, as family and friends are still saying the same things about her joy.

“Katya, I like you because when we have issues in our family [all families have issues, you know], you just come over and hang out and laugh and smile and cheer us all up.”

“I like you because you have a way of bringing peace into tense situations, just by your smile and cheerfulness.”

“I like you,” says our Nicaraguan friend Alex, who speaks only a little English, “because you are always making jokes in English that I can’t even understand, but you still make me laugh.”

“I like you because you are fun to play putt-putt with.”



All the Good

So as we reflect on the past year, we see “*all the good*” the Lord has done for her. She completed her cosmetology training and is working as a hairdresser in a local salon, she developed wonderful independence during her four months in London with our friend Bek and she recently surprised us when she came home, chuckling, rubbing her wet shorts from her college and career fellowship one night. “I decided to be re-baptized tonight. Tonight, it just meant more to me, because I really understood what I was doing, and I just wanted it [my faith] to be my own decision.”

We still have an Eeyore or two in our family, and for you readers who do as well, may we have eyes of faith to see, even now, “all the good” that the Lord promises them and us. It will indeed bring us joy.

WITH 5,000 NEEDS, JESUS THANKS HIS FATHER FOR WHAT WE HAVE!

Checking Our Reserves

How often as parents do we take stock of the resources we have at hand and realize there is not nearly enough to meet the need? We check our reserves of patience, wisdom, energy, answers and even love, and become acutely aware that we don't have anywhere near enough to give to the situation at hand. I've never had to feed 5,000+ hungry people with five loaves of bread and a couple of small fish, but certainly I have looked at the needs of our children, the complicated issues of life, and seen a massive need, intimidating in its nature and impossible in the natural.

Maybe today you are facing a similar situation in your family. The scenarios are endless: a child with desperate and pressing emotional or physical needs, an adoption process that is stalled by laws and policy changes, a marriage stretched to its thinnest and threatening to tear or just an exhaustion both physical and emotional from the strain of parenting an adoptive family. How exciting it is to stand in that place of impossibility and hear Jesus say, *"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"* (John 6:5) John tells us that Jesus asked this question, knowing what He would do, but wanting to test the disciples. Most often my initial response is like Philip's, naming the lack in its detail, focusing on the seeming chasm between the need and the provision at hand. *"Philip answered, 'Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece.'"* (John 6:7)

Back in Your Hands

We look around us and gather up what we have at hand and explain to the Lord that there is no way we can do this. What we bring to the issue is so inadequate to meet the need. Bread and fish are a good start for feeding people, just as the good parenting ideas you have and the love you bring to your family are exactly along the lines of what is needed. But we cry out, "Lord, it is not enough!" I so love the exchange that happens next. Jesus says, give me what you've got my son, my daughter. He thanks God for it — for remember, what you have to give is of value and worth — and puts it right back in your hands to distribute to your family.



The Exchange

And in this exchange, as we apply faith to our parenting, we see God do miracles of provision in our homes. I want to encourage you today that whatever it is you have to bring, whatever you have in your hands, is exactly the material God wants to utilize to provide for the demanding need. It was the disciples themselves who fed that crowd of hungry people, not Jesus. You and I have what it takes to provide for every need in our homes. As we partner with God to raise our children, we will see what a joy it is to make that wonderful exchange and to operate in power for the good of our families.

The Excess!

This past weekend, we sang a song at our church that captivated me, “You Turn the Water Into Wine.” I got so excited about that! Jesus took water, which was a common, available, everyday necessity at that wedding (John 2) and turned it into something of significant value, something effective and appropriate for the occasion. The thing that was at hand was good, but the exchange was way better. The wine enhanced the wedding; it was extravagant and beyond the expectation of the hosts or guests, just as the 12 baskets of leftover bread were evidence that God intends not only to meet your needs, but to do so in excess. Don’t you think it was crazy good to have all that bread left over? Or to have the best wine reserved for the end of the celebration? Why would God do that? What outrageous goodness does He have in mind for your family, for your children, for your marriage?

We are believing God for things in our children way greater than the results of our good parenting, way beyond the effects of our great love for them. Because He is that way! Let us believe together as Hope at Home families.

Father God, when we look to You, we are not overwhelmed by the need in our lives, but indeed we are overwhelmed by Your goodness and Your plans to prosper our families and Your extravagant provision. Lord, would you manifest this provision in each family this day. Thank you God that you take the bread and fish we have in our hands to bring to the need and You make it more than enough. In faith we believe you for this exchange this day in each family and for each need. Amen.

WHAT IF?

One of my favorite parts of today was the collect call I received at 7:30 this morning from the Clayton County jail. It was my daughter, who calls me almost daily. She had an amazing testimony to share with me. But wait, I am getting ahead of myself. Let me give you some background.

My Hefty List

As a mom of 10 kids, there were many “*what if’s*” that I considered from time to time when they were young, in moments of anxiety. What if one of my children grows up to make those kinds of choices that land someone in jail? What if one of them makes the kind of choices that lead to a serious infectious disease such as hepatitis C? Or what if one of them makes the choices that lead to a teen pregnancy? My what if’s formed a pretty hefty list. (There were many other what if’s that never occurred to me in my wildest imagination that I have indeed faced, but that’s a story for another post.) My insightful husband would comment from time to time, when I allowed words to grant expression to my worries, “Sweetie, I would much rather have a prodigal than an older brother.” While given those two options, I agreed, however, my real preference was simply that we raise 10 disciples.

I Focused My Energies on Loving Her

Well, one of my what if’s did, in fact, come to pass. And I, ever bent on rescue, hope and restoration, have stood in awe to see the gracious Hand of God reaching out and touching my dear sweet young adult child as she walks into danger. This daughter, who had reactive attachment disorder (RAD) characteristics growing up, has lived in various Atlanta hotels and has been in and out of jail five times over the past two years. She is in jail again right now, this time for violating probation. Deeply hurt before we adopted her at age 10, the combination of counseling, all the love we could give, faith and careful attention to school environment just were not enough to bring her into full healing and wholeness. But they were enough to connect us so deeply that she knows, even now, that we continue to be her family. In fact, we were just planning last night which of us will go visit her at the jail this week. The Lord was also so tender to connect her deeply to Himself during her eight years in our home before she decided she was in love with a homeless young man in downtown Atlanta and would be living with him. When every attempt of mine to push her away from him ended up pushing her away from me instead, I determined to shift my energies and focus instead on loving her, keeping the relationship, praying for her and encouraging her to walk into the future God has for her.

So, from the jail, we have these wild conversations several times a week. Right after she went in this time, we sent her a Bible through Barnes & Noble (jails have a nice system for allowing this), and she was delighted. Soon I was hearing stories such as this: “Mommy, I have lots of people reading my Bible. I read it for an hour at 4 in the morning when they get us up for breakfast, and I read it for an hour after lunch. Mommy, can you send my friend T — a Bible just like mine so that we can study it together? Her prison number is xxxxxxxx.” (And in the background of my mind, I almost chuckle as I am hearing John Valjean from *Les Misérables* belting out the famous measures from “Who Am I?”: “Two-four-six-oh-one.”) And I wonder what kind of hearts may be hiding inside those bodies down at that jail.

The Voice in the Vent

So here is my story from my talk with my daughter this morning:

“Mommy, I am thinking of leaving my boyfriend when I get out of jail.”

Surprised, I say, “Oh, sweetie, I think that would really help you walk towards putting God first in your life, and using the talents He has given you. You have such an amazing gift of mercy and service. What has caused you to think of leaving your boyfriend?”

She replies, “I have met a boy here through the vent. [This is how guys and girls talk to each other in jail — through the heating vents!]. He is a strong believer and he reads his Bible every day like I do and we are talking about what we are reading. I told him my Mommy and Daddy want me to like a different boy who is following God and who doesn’t live in a hotel and who has a job and who will take care of me. Well, Mommy, he said, ‘I think your mama is right and I agree with her. When you get out, I think you should decide that you are not going to go back with him.’” Inside, I thank the Lord for putting this wonderful voice speaking truth into her life.

I then tell her about the Andy Stanley talk I listened to yesterday on how much Jesus cares that we use our talents, and that it doesn’t really matter to Him whether we feel like we have a lot of talents or a few; it only matters that we use the ones He has given us. And I read her Matthew 25, the Parable of the Talents. Before we said good-bye, I mentioned I expected some hard meetings at work and asked her to pray for me. Her prayer went something like this, “Lord Jesus, thank you for Mommy and thank you that You are going to help give her wisdom today in her mind and in her words. I pray she will feel You helping her with her meetings and she will be able to have peace. Thank you for the food you give us and for how much we have, when so many people have so little. Amen.”

And do you know what? The Lord did for me today just what she asked of Him. I seem to have lost my fear of the what if’s.

WHO IS YOUR BUILDING YOUR HOUSE?

Redemption in the Storm

I remember it as though it was yesterday. I was walking through a special exhibit at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and stood as though transfixed before a Russian masterpiece by Ivan Aivazovsky titled *The Wave*. In the larger-than-life storm depicted in the painting, I saw what our life had become after losing our son in an accident. In the lifeboats flanking the sinking ship, I saw symbolized the Hand of God, rescuing us from the sinking ship of grief.

Though I stood in an exhibit hall full of people, it was as though I stood alone before this painting, sure that the redemption in those lifeboats was soon to be multiplied.



You see, it was just before we were leaving to adopt our first two children, Anya and Alex, from their Russian orphanage. In those lifeboats I saw, and still see, the Lord's rescue for us, and His grace in extending that very rescue to many others. I longed to be an instrument of God's redeeming hope for them, the same way He had been redeeming hope for us.

And I imagine many of us have felt this same deep gratitude. The Lord pours out His goodness and love and kindness on us like no one else could, and we want nothing more than to pass it along to others.

I Wanted to Build the House

During the early years of our adoption journey, I, like many of you, became an avid student of loving and healing kids from hard places. I wanted to read all I could and learn all I could from the Lord and psychology and child development and educational theory and those

who had gone before. We longed, out of gratitude for all the Lord had done for us in restoring my joy and healing my broken heart after the death of our son, to be allowed by Him to pass on that same healing to our precious new children, building them a safe, secure and restorative home. I was so sincere and conscientious and intent and driven. As our family grew from Cristi and Trevor and Anya and Alex to include Katya and Sasha, Vasya and Ksusha, and Masha and Lana, I continued to pour into these treasures all of the love, wisdom, bonding, encouragement, grace and security I could. We learned and told and retold their stories. We made their adoption books and life albums. I learned Russian and took various children back to Russia to find their relatives and keep their connections. In fact, just two weeks ago I was in Russia and was able to have tea with their Aunt Raisa and cousin Sasha, and give them their own copy of a beautiful life album Katya had made to pass on to her Russian mama.



We prayed their friends into families. Many friends. Many families. We needed and benefited from all the wisdom we received. Many of you have experienced the same.

God Had a Different Plan

With time, I realized all that wisdom was critically necessary, but something more was needed in order for my

children to receive the most complete love available. I needed revelation from the Lord to extend the wisdom. In many quandaries, when all the wisdom still leaves me stuck in a labyrinth of confusion, there are so many times the Lord has given us special insight or clarity about how to respond or how to love or how to pray. I am coming to think of revelation as present, fresh truth brought to light, to extend the wisdom of past foundational truth. And I love the first thing Paul prays for the Ephesians in Chapter 1, *“that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.”* I now think of there being a bridge to healing for each of us and each of our children, and that the first half is composed of wisdom given by God. But it is only half. And to get all the way across the bridge into healing and wholeness, we need the other half of the bridge — the Lord’s revelation.

And today I read these words from I Chronicles 17 that ring in my heart with comfort, relief and expectation. It is the revelation the Lord gave to David when he showed him, *“It is not you who will build me a house ... [Instead], I declare to you that the Lord will build you a house.”*

Who is Building Your House?

So my dear, precious friends, I long for you to be spared of the stress and anxiety that I felt from time to time as you seek to love and learn and grow in all these foundations of wisdom. Yes, we benefit and our families benefit from learning all the wisdom we can (Proverbs 3). Yet our children benefit most if that wisdom is accompanied by the revelation that rests on the confidence that *“unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”* (Psalm 127:1) I pray you are encouraged and your burdens lifted by the reminder that it is the Lord who will build a house.

I am coming to have a clear view of my job. My job is to love my children, keep the relationship, speak to them of God’s treasure in them and pray for them. It is God’s job to build our house. It is God’s job to build yours. I am excited to see how they all will turn out!



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