

Celebrate Life

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34 Not a second best choice: How to support potential adoptive parents

by Lori Williams

An adoptive mother suggests ways family and friends can give support during the adoption process.



How to support potential adoptive parents

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A pile of shower gifts beckoned, but I took one more look at the crowd of friends before opening any packages. So many priceless gifts had already been given: encouragement, enthusiasm, prayer, even words of wisdom. For me, the shower for my soon-to-be adopted daughter was the perfect time to reflect on how my church family had helped my husband, Dean, and me during the yearlong adoption process. Here are the lessons Dean and I learned from our loving family and friends.



Adoption, too, is ordained by God.

Adoption is not a second-best choice, but a godly choice. Consider the words of Mark 9:36-37: "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 'Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.'"

Offer practical assistance.

A prospective adoptive couple can be easily overwhelmed! Within the first month of applying for our daughter's adoption, Dean and I completed a 10-page application, wrote an abbreviated version of our life story, prepared for our home study visit, compiled personal references, submitted to a background check, and redecorated a bedroom for our daughter-to-be. There were some tasks that only we could do, but thoughtful friends gave unexpected help along the way. When we needed assistance completing a mandatory FBI check, a policeman friend invited us down to the local station for a memorable fingerprinting session. Another friend cleaned out her garage and located a twin-size bed for our new daughter. Others donated several boxes of good used clothing.



Encourage with prayer and scripture.

Just weeks after we applied to adopt a Romanian orphan, the adoption agency sent us pictures and even a video of a beautiful 5-year-old named Aurelia. Her fragile and vulnerable smile contrasted sharply with the barred windows and stained concrete walls of the cheerless orphanage where she lived. Our hearts were immediately won over by her big brown eyes and abundant curly hair! From that day forward, Aurelia claimed daughter status in our hearts and minds.

Then came the devastating news: Aurelia was no longer available for adoption. Not knowing how to put our grief into words, we avoided our friends at church the following Sunday. But our perceptive Sunday School teacher, sensing that something was wrong, called to check on us. He cried with us, promised to pray for us, and then encouraged us with this scripture: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Miraculously, Aurelia again became available for adoption a week later. We still remember the pain of losing her for one week, but will not forget how our friends prayed for her long before they knew her.



Choose your words wisely.

We all know that encouraging words can buoy us up during times of heartache. But the opposite is also true: thoughtless comments can hurt. We never could tell if the familiar words "So you can't have children of your own" were a statement or a question. They seemed inappropriate either way. Likewise, the question, "Do you feel like you've been through labor and delivery?" seemed unsuitable even though my husband and I had just brought our new daughter home from Romania. After all, we had no basis for comparison!

On the other hand, questions like "Why did you decide to adopt?" are more appropriate because the answer does not have to include private information. For example, some good friends brought ice cream to our home one evening and asked us to explain adoption to their three pre-teen children. What a wonderful opportunity to describe how God had chosen Aurelia to be a part of our family!

Rejoice with those who rejoice!

Dean and I were numb with exhaustion as we carried Aurelia off the plane in May of 1995. But jubilation quickly replaced fatigue when we saw the crowd waiting for us at the terminal. So many friends and family had come to welcome our new daughter home that the crowd overflowed into the next gate! In the weeks to follow, there were more tangible expressions of support: home-cooked meals delivered to our door, the donation of a swing set, and special recognition for Mother's Day. Every expression of love clearly said, "Your adopted daughter is now not only a part of your family, but ours as well."

Embracing a forsaken child could be what King David had in mind when he penned these words from Psalm 68:6: "God setteth the solitary in families." After all, the family of God is where children such as these belong.

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