

In adoption, God gives himself to us: He opens our access to Him and provides all that we need, even when what we need is discipline. God does this for the unlovely—those who were dead in sin and trespasses, who were in bondage to the ways of Satan and the world and sin, who were His enemies and justly under His wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). This is the cesspool out of which He adopts us into His family in the beloved, and He does this by the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever stood between you and God, Jesus has removed by grace, not because you stood out against the crowd in the great orphanage that is the world. There is no material to work with in us but demerit, guilt, and rebellion, but God says He wants to be glorified by taking the chief of sinners and making him glorious by grace. The truth about our relationship to God can empower us to live in light of His love. No longer must we live as servants, desperately trying to do something to win approval. Instead, let us live in glorious freedom as children of God.

A Modern Parable of Horizontal and Vertical Adoption

A couple in my church in Philadelphia wanted to have children because they had great love in their hearts from God. I ministered to them over three years in their intense struggle of childlessness and they finally decided to adopt a child from Russia. They completed the legal work and one day received a photograph of a little boy. He had no idea, but there was suddenly a couple of Christians in America who began spending time with his picture. They gave him a name and started buying things for his room and praying for his whole life. So too, in eternity past, before the worlds were born, God knew his children and named them and poured out His love for them and planned all of what he would do in and through them before they even existed.

The day came when the couple got on a plane for Russia only to encounter many difficulties once they arrived. First, they received a scary medical report that turned out bogus. Then another family arrived from Eastern Europe and tried to take their child, resulting in a ten-day courtroom fight and

IN FOCUS

"Adoption"

unexpected expenses. Think too of the difficulties God the Father came into this world to overcome so that you could be His child, primary of which was the problem of our guilt, which He overcame through the cross of Christ.

Human adoption is a picture of God's adopting love for us, but God's adoption of us can also teach us something about what it means to adopt human children. It is not easy, yet you have all you need if you are a child of God. Yes, you must love the child you adopted, but you have a great love within you because God has an eternal and everlasting and costly love for you. He gave what we could never imagine, sending His Son to die on the cross that He might love us. Will you then give your heart to God?

Give Me Your Heart

In Proverbs 23:6, God calls to us: "My son, give me your heart." Your heavenly Father wants your heart. Will you trust His Word? Will you live and feed off the promises of adoption? If you do, it will radically change how you look upon life and the world. You will marvel that you have received an inheritance in the beloved and you will no longer seek your satisfaction in this world. Instead, you will have a new heart for the lost of the world.

Not everybody can adopt, nor is every Christian called to adopt a child, but the Church is called to look upon the world's lost. I know of no more beautiful expression of the gospel in our culture than for an unloved and maybe even unlovable child to be seen and loved by Christian families and Christian churches simply because of God's great love for them. That love is now within us, so we adopt that child and bring that child into our love. We raise that child in the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. What more glorious, more wonderful thing can we do?

Adoption on a horizontal level is a picture of God's love for us, where God loves us and invites us to give Him our hearts. But then He invites us to take His heart and look upon the lost, the alien, the fatherless, and bring them into His love. Believe God's Word that you have been declared God's dear sons and daughters and walk in that truth, giving your hearts to Him and receiving His heart as well so that you might live as His children in the world.

On the Inside

Tabi's Story	2
Dispelling Adoption Myths	4
The Other Side of Adoption	5
The Choice to Love	6
Longing for the Lap	8

Tabi's Story: a miracle in progress

—Tami Snowden



My journey began in January of 2002 when I left a 17-year health care career to follow God's calling to bring the love of Jesus to orphaned children of Central Asia. Moving to Kyrgyzstan, I began work at the baby orphanage in the capital city of Bishkek.

Shortly after I arrived I visited the quarantine corridor at the orphanage. I rarely visited this area, but this particular day something prompted me to go see the babies who were there. I soon found myself peering down at a tiny baby girl lying in a crib.

Her facial deformities (multiple facial clefts and dislodged eye that lay on her left cheek) were more horrific than anything I'd ever seen. Guliam, the orphanage director, entered the room as I stood staring at this little life. "Poor, poor girl," she said as she shook her head. That powerful and somber moment made me not want to ask what had happened or how old she was.

I felt strongly that God was asking me to help Tabi as he spoke to my heart.

When the orphanage director moved Tabihat (whom I nicknamed Tabi) from the quarantine corridor to my group, I observed sadly that Tabi's facial deformities frightened most caregivers. Orphanage workers fed Tabi and immediately put her down. In addition, Tabi's facial clefts made feeding a challenge. As a result, workers usually fed her last.

It was evident to me that Tabi would have no future in Kyrgyzstan without drastic medical help. In addition, I knew her deformities made it unlikely that she would be adoptable. Most likely she faced permanent institutionalization. I sensed strongly that God was asking me to help Tabi as He spoke to my heart; "Tami do whatever it takes to get this girl help. Don't give up."

The next 9 months were spent trying to find surgeons in America who would operate on Tabi and muddling through

political red-tape to obtain a medical visa to the U.S. God answered prayer after prayer, and I was granted permission to bring Tabi to America for surgery.

During our time in America, Tabi was learning to trust me as a stable caregiver and was starting to bond with me as her momma. Tabi blossomed quickly as a result of the love she received by so many. Although transformed by love and a family, during the night-time hours Tabi displayed evidence that she was grieving the only life she knew—sharing a room with 20 other children. Since leaving the orphanage three months earlier, Tabi cried throughout the night. I rocked her to sleep every night and kept her in a crib next to my bed. One evening as I rocked her, tears of grief rolled down my face for the orphaned children who would never know what it is like to be rocked to sleep. Babies in the orphanage are wrapped tightly in a blanket and put into their cribs. Toddlers are told to crawl into their beds, a blanket is placed on them and the lights go out. God began to give me a deeper sense of His heart for orphans: children should be raised in families, not in institutions. As good as any institution may be, it is not meant to replace family.

As thoughts of returning Tabi to Kyrgyzstan surfaced, I began to grieve. I entertained the notion of adopting Tabi, but I knew that the Kyrgyz government did not permit foreigners to adopt their children. I prayed that the Lord would provide a national family to adopt her and wrote to friends back in Kyrgyzstan asking them to talk with national families about adoption. Every conversation was unsuccessful. Day by day as I cared for Tabi, our love for each other grew stronger and stronger. I was Tabi's momma and no one, except Jesus, knew the pain I felt each day believing that I would one day lose her.

Throughout the months that ensued my desire to adopt Tabi grew stronger but I was very cautious to allow my heart to

think it might be possible. As I prayed and asked God for guidance I began to sense a green light from the Lord and decided that I needed to do whatever I could to try and adopt Tabi. It would take a miracle; this I knew. However, God had already performed a miracle on behalf of Tabi, in getting her to America; He could perform more. So, I contacted an adoption agency to begin the adoption process.

*God answered our prayers
... and we were going to be
together forever.*

As I dove into the adoption process, I soon learned that international adoption paperwork is required for both countries; the United States and the child's country of origin. I worked on documents to receive United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approval. Once adopted in Kyrgyzstan, Tabi would need this to receive an immigrant visa back into the United States. I also worked somewhat blindly on documents that I thought Kyrgyzstan may need to approve Tabi's adoption. Being in the dark as to what Kyrgyzstan might want, I followed guidelines set up by Kazakhstan. This included a home study, FBI clearance, psychological testing, medical testing and the list goes on. Within three months my home study and USCIS approval were complete—just in time for our July departure back to Kyrgyzstan. Praise the Lord; I would return to Kyrgyzstan paper-ready to adopt Tabi.

Since Kyrgyzstan did not allow foreign adoption, there was no established process in the justice system. I worked the whole adoption process myself along with help from my roommate who was a national. Our needs were overwhelming. They included signatures from the county mayor, Ministers of Education, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior, the Parliament and the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan. God would have to intervene.

It so happened that the timing of the adoption process coincided with Ramadan. I believed that God used this Muslim holiday to move Tabi's adoption forward quickly. All the people who needed to sign Tabi's papers wanted to do what was right and good in the eyes of Allah. Signatures came quickly and Tabi's adoption was completed in one and a half months.

On December 8, 2004, Tabi and I were making Christmas cookies when I received a phone call stating that the Prime Minister had signed the final document. I got off the phone and said, "Tabi, God answered our prayers. I am your momma and you are my daughter, and we are going to be together forever."

Tabi is now nine and will enter fourth grade in the fall. We have settled down in the Denver area. Tabi loves to swim, ski, ride her bike, and play with legos. She still needs more surgery to build an eye socket and receive an artificial eye, but the lack of an eye does not hold her back one bit!

I have had the opportunity to return to Central Asia the past few years and visit special orphanages for children who are considered by their society to be disabled and outcasts. Something as simple as diabetes, epilepsy or partial blindness labels children as disabled and condemns them to life in an institution. During these visits I am reminded that this would have been Tabi's fate. Instead, Tabi is flourishing and is an intelligent, confident, happy girl who loves God deeply and desires to serve Him. I give thanks to God for rescuing her and giving her the opportunity to be raised in a family, to have an education, an opportunity to celebrate important milestones; all those things that children raised in an institution do not have.

From the United States, I now work as an advocate for at-risk and orphaned children, especially those born with similar facial deformities as Tabi. My desire is that orphaned children find forever-families, just as God promises for them in Psalm 68:5–6 NIV.

*"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families."*

*Tami Snowden— Director of Children at Risk,
Stand4Kids Team of Pioneers*

Tami spent three years working in government-run orphanages in Central Asia. Currently Tami serves on the

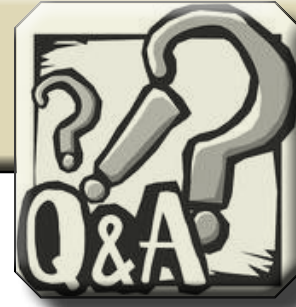


Stand4kids team, as an advocate for children at risk. Her goal is to impassion, equip and ignite the body of Christ to respond to the needs of children that surround them. Tami is a resource for field teams (and the local churches with whom they work) encouraging and helping them to minister to the most vulnerable ones in their communities. Tami has a nine year old daughter, Tabi, whom she adopted from Kyrgyzstan.

tsnowden@stand4kids.org

Dispelling Adoption Myths

—Tom Harvey



What keeps Christians from adopting? It can't be anything found in the Scriptures. The Bible is clear on what our religion is about, and caring for widows and orphans means, in some form or another, adoption. When it comes to a small child in need of a family, adoption is rather a given if you think about it. So we must have some pretty convincing reasons for not adopting. I've both heard and thought of many:

"Adoptions cost a fortune; we could never afford it." "It takes years to adopt." "Birth mothers can come back in ten years and just take their child back and break your heart and the child's." "We are too old. You have to be a young married couple to adopt." "Adopted children have more emotional and psychological issues that I'm not equipped to deal with." "What if I don't bond with the child? That would be terrible for the kid." "Adopted children tend to grow up causing more trouble than birth children." "There are actually very few babies that are being placed for adoption." And the list goes on—the list of myths surrounding adoption! All of the above "reasons" not to adopt are myths.

God has declared that He defends the orphan, and that means our involvement

Church, it is time to take back adoption! And believe it or not, we are doing just that. And you can get involved in this move of God by informing the loving people in your congregation and thus advocating for orphans. It is no accident that so many myths should revolve around adoption. God has declared that He defends the orphan, and that means our involvement. Consider, for example, the myth: "Adoptions cost a fortune; we could never afford it."

"We could never afford it" is one myth that I once believed to be true. Then our local church put together an *Orphan Care Ministry Team*. The team consisted mainly of people who had adopted, had volunteered in orphanages on missions teams, were interested in foster care, and who just wanted to see hurting children helped. Getting involved with that team, I soon began meeting many parents

who had been through adoption processes, both domestic and overseas. Upon completion of their adoptions, these folks received back most if not all of the money they paid out in adoption costs. Some funds came through tax credits available for those who adopt, some through the companies that they worked for, some from grants readily available, and some from fund-raisers that church friends and family organized for them. So many people want to help! Our *Orphan Care Ministry Team*, among other things, plans to assemble a fund that those in the congregation who are in the process of adoption can draw from in order to pay the various fees involved. The family will agree to reimburse what they take out, as tax credits and grants and funds from adoption advocates come through. In this way, this in-church adoption fund will be replenished for the next family that wants to adopt.

While the fact may be that adoptions can cost anywhere from zero to as high as \$30,000, there is also a lot of assistance available to those who do adopt. Governments, grants, companies and adoption advocates every year help people finance their adoptions. What seems impossible on paper for a single family, the church can come together and make happen.

Do you want to see your church family increase in the number of children they rescue and adopt? Start an *Orphan Care Ministry Team*. Contact the folks at CCTI, and let us help you. Together with those in your congregation who have this calling, you will see God begin breaking down all of the above mentioned myths that people have generally come to believe. God has an answer for each "reason" we have not to adopt.

***And in Jesus the answer is,
oh "yes" we can, and "amen!"***

***Tom Harvey serves with Rainbows of Hope,
a ministry of WEC International to children in
crisis, and he loves babies!***

rohtom@comporium.net

The Other Side of Adoption

—Charity Graff



Adoption; what a beautiful thing! Many of us have warm fuzzies when we think of those who adopt children who are in need of a family. This response is especially true toward those who take in special children labeled with handicaps or who have had a particularly difficult start in life because of abuse, neglect or abandonment. International adoption—how sweet and precious, we think.

*I am the one who holds the child;
who bandages the wounds;
who prays for healing.*

I am on the *other* side of adoption. I am the one who rescues those precious children, and who fights for their rights and often their very right just to live. I then play the game of putting them in the «system.» I put together their case studies—the history of their lives written in big words in a document that is submitted, read and re-read by the “powers that be.” Then I have to *wait*—wait, hope and pray that the perfect “forever family” will be found in whatever time frame occurs. Few rules are followed in this phase.

In the meantime, while I wait for a family to respond, I am the one who holds the child and bandages the wounds; the one who prays for healing; the one who rocks the child to sleep after nightmares. I am the one who tries as much as I can to prepare the child to be as normal and acceptable as possible so that someone will be attracted and want to parent this one forever, even with the scars.

While I know adoptive parents wait; while I know adoptive parents are anxious; while I know they have lovely ideals, dreams and hopes for the child they will adopt; I too have all those things hidden in my heart for every single child in my care.

It is one thing for adults to come to a decision to open their home and their hearts to a child who may be in need. It is one thing for a couple to decide they would like to adopt a child because they are unable to have their own. It is all within their power and right for adults to do these things.

It is another thing for a child who has been left to die, who has been abandoned at birth, who has been broken without cause, who has been damaged and wounded before even having had a chance to really live. It is another thing for that child to hope for something so simple as a mommy and daddy. That child waits, too.

These children know anxiety. They know how it is to not be able to sleep because they are desperate to feel the arms of a loving parent. And they know anxiety when they are sick, if they can’t speak or if their scars are ugly. They know it when they are 11 and can’t read yet; when they are three and can’t move their limbs because of cerebral palsy; when they are eight and have chronic ear infections. They know; don’t be fooled. They know rejection. They know they were not wanted once. They know they haven’t been *chosen* yet.

Because of God’s grace I am good at what I do; very good. As long as the children are in my home, they are safe. They are loved. They are secure. But I can only do so much. And they know it is only for a time.

If you are adopting, please know, your child is safe, happy and loved. I give my word on that. If you are in the waiting stage—waiting to be matched, waiting for a visa for your child, waiting to be given travel notice, waiting—know your child is waiting too.

If you have not felt led to adopt before, I urge you to open your heart, your home, your life to a child who by no fault of their own needs a mommy and a daddy—parents who will not abandon them or hurt them; parents who will hold them forever and call them their own.

They deserve that kind of love and care.

Charity and Evan Graff are directors of Gentle Hands in Manila, Philippines. As a child and youth welfare agency it is meant to be on the front lines of rescue and rehabilitation of at-risk children and youth through the love of Jesus and family centered care.

<http://gentlehandsinc.org/>

The Choice to Love:

The gift that blesses the giver and the receiver

—Anonymous

In my senior year at a Christian college majoring in Missions I found myself single and pregnant. As you can imagine this was a hard situation to be in. Along with strong feelings of shame and guilt, I also felt confused and didn't know what I should do with the baby. Should I take the easy way out and have an abortion (that way no one would ever know)? Should I raise this child myself without a father? Or should I consider placing my child for adoption? All three options went through my head. If it hadn't been for the amazing support of my family, church and Mercy Ministries— a Christian residential home for troubled girls— I'm not sure where I would be today or what decision I would have made.



But I am blessed to say that the Lord used Psalms 139: 13-17 to show me that I was to place my beautiful daughter for adoption. With the help of Mercy Ministries I found an incredible Christian family. Miraculously, the Lord brought to pass in my own life what Mercy had been teaching us—that with adoption you don't lose a child, but gain a family. How true this has become!

But there is more. Through the birth of my daughter, the Lord also birthed something new in my heart. I thought after being pregnant out of wedlock that the Lord would be done with me. But He showed me that no matter how far we wander, He always loves us and the plans He has for our lives don't change. And so, with Christian counseling and the deep healing of the Lord in my life, I am now a full-time

missionary, serving children in crisis all around the world. And the Lord has allowed my own situation to be a tool of ministry wherever I go.

You may wonder if it has been hard at times after placing my child for adoption. The answer is yes; at times it has been very hard. I think of her often and I love her so very much. Do I regret my decision of adoption? Never! My daughter is now 10 years old. She loves the Lord with her whole heart and she has a wonderful relationship with both the adoptive family and with me. Thank you Jesus!

God is faithful! My experience is living proof that only He can turn our scars into beauty marks for His kingdom purposes!



• NEWS • EVENTS • RESOURCES

Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living Through the Rediscovery of Abba Father; by Dan Cruver, Editor;



with John Piper, Scotty Smith, Richard Phillips, Jason Kovacs

"I can't recall ever hearing about, much less reading, a book like this before. This remarkable volume fills a gap in our understanding of both God's adoption of us and our adoption of others. I highly recommend it." –Sam Storms, pastor and author of *The Singing God*

For Book Information contact: <http://www.togetherforadoption.org/>

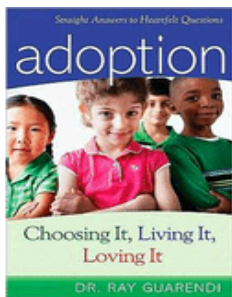
Dan Cruver oversees *Together for Adoption* and provides thought-leadership on the theology of adoption as a team member of ABBA Fund. As one who has been adopted by God and has adopted two children, Dan founded *Together for Adoption* to equip churches and educate Christians theologically about orphan care and horizontal adoption. He is the editor and primary author of *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living Through the Rediscovery of Abba Father* and is a regular contributor to *The Gospel Coalition Blog*.



Gentle Hands

Gentle Hands, run by Charity and Evan Graff, is a child and youth welfare agency in the Philippines. It is on the front lines of rescue and rehabilitation of at-risk children and youth and works towards improving human community life through the love of Jesus and family centered care. They are able to process adoptions both locally and internationally.

<http://gentlehandsinc.org>



Adoption

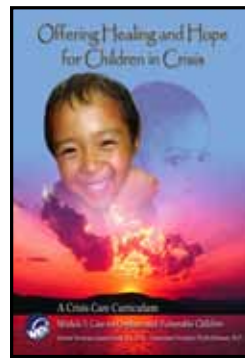
By: Raymond Guarendi; *Servant Books* / 2009 / Paperback / ISBN: 0867169133

Ray Guarendi, psychologist, husband and father of ten adopted children, considers the most commonly asked adoption questions with insight, humor and a heart for the adoptive family.

CCTI Curriculum

Offering Healing and Hope for Children in Crisis: Module 3, Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

Module developer: Janette Pepall, BA, DW



This module provides an overview of the situation for Orphans and Vulnerable Children worldwide and an understanding of their lives and needs. It explores the impact on children losing their families and homes, and discusses models of alternative placement programs for children requiring out of home care.

Some basic intervention strategies are considered and how best to care for those involved in the children's lives.

www.crisiscaretraining.org



The Connected Child: Bring hope and healing to your adoptive family; by: Karyn Purvis, David Cross and Wendy Sunshine; McGraw Hill; 2007; ISBN 9780071475006

Written by two research psychologists specializing in adoption and attachment, *The Connected Child* will help you:

- Build bonds of affection and trust with your adopted child.
- Effectively deal with any learning or behavioral disorders.
- Discipline your child with love without making him or her feel threatened.



The Co-Mission for Children at Risk

Their goal is to provide the most up-to-date resources and events to equip those who serve the fatherless. They have launched a global resource site as a place to share and find adoption and orphan care resources. By bringing together the knowledge and experience of hundreds of organizations, experts, and passionate believers who have responded to God's call to care for the fatherless, and then making that information easily available, this site is designed to equip believers to care for orphans.

www.orphancaresresources.org

Caregiver's Time-out

—Ed Somerville



Longing for the Lap

Eddie felt so warm and secure, submerged in the all-encompassing intimacy of the womb; then one day Baby Eddie was born. After a difficult and painful struggle, he entered a harsh new world of extremes; heat and cold, light and dark. Life on the outside would prove to be challenging!

Sadly, Eddie's mother had a very difficult childhood herself. Her mother seldom had time for her and often treated her cruelly. When Baby Eddie came along, his mother felt guilty about her failure to bond with her son. His blonde hair and pale skin repulsed her. He seemed to be perpetually dirty. He was often "colicky" and was unable to breastfeed.

In less than three years, Baby Eddie was joined by two adorable, dark-haired little brothers. They had no problem nursing. To Eddie, it seemed that was all they ever did! His mother's lap was usually full, and he found himself standing at her elbow, looking wistfully up at her. He so desperately longed to be loved and wanted.

As Little Eddie grew, he became fearful. He was afraid to answer the telephone. He was afraid of water. He would soil himself because he was afraid to ask his teacher to be excused to go to the restroom. He would wake up at night with nightmares and beg to climb into bed with his parents. He developed a bed-wetting habit that stayed with him for years.

One day, a friend invited him to a small church up the "holler." Old cars were parked out front and

dusty coal miners were chatting on the front steps. They extended calloused hands and warmly welcomed Eddie. When the service started, a little old lady banged enthusiastically on a piano while two lanky kids played a guitar and drums. Then the ancient pastor climbed to the podium, and though he could barely read, he began to preach as if he personally knew God!

A few weeks later, Young Eddie found himself kneeling at the old-fashioned altar with two granny women who lovingly prayed for him. In Eddie's imagination, he saw Jesus, the Son, climb down from the Father's lap and enter a sin-sick world. He died, rose again and then lifted Eddie in his arms and carried him, in spirit, back to the Father. Then Jesus sat down at God's right hand, leaving the Father's lap empty.

In trembling wonder, Eddie crawled into that place of perfect security and peace. He felt strong arms wrap gently around him. He heard his Father singing over him . . . with joy! In amazed gratitude, Eddie realized that finally he was accepted, he was loved and at last, he was home!

*For this is what the LORD says,
"I will extend peace to her like a river,
and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream;
you will nurse and be carried on her arm and
dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you..."*
Isaiah 66:12–13 NIV

*Eddie so desperately wanted to be
loved and wanted*

Crisis Care Training International is a ministry of WEC International.
Phyllis Kilbourn Ph.D., Founder, Director of Resource Development
Rosemary Sabatino, Director, info@crisiscaretraining.org
www.crisiscaretraining.org

Ed has been an educator for twenty years and the father of eight children. He and his wife, Debbie are serving with WEC in the development of "El Monte," a multi-ministry center in the south of Mexico.