

Seeds of Hope

By Tom and Jeanie Walters

"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 1:4, 5).

THROUGH THE BLOOD of Jesus Christ, all who are Christians have been adopted into the family of God. Because of Christ's sacrifice and our adoption, we look forward to spending eternity with our heavenly Father.

Adoption is a biblical concept. The Scriptures give us examples of how God placed children in particular homes to accomplish his divine purposes.

As adoptive parents, we believe our family situation is a result of planned parenthood of the most pure and holy kind. There were times, though, when we felt as if God had forsaken us. We questioned his mercy and his plans. But through Scripture and experience, we have come to believe God has worked a miracle in our lives. The Bible is clear. God uses adoption to further the causes of love and hope.



Tom, Jeanie, Cailan, and Cara Walters

The Story of Moses

When Pharaoh gave the order to his people that "Every boy that is born [to the Hebrews] you must throw into the Nile" (Exodus 1:22), Moses' mother managed to hide her baby and keep him. Later she made a basket, placed the child in it, and set it among the reeds on

the banks of the Nile. The basket was found by Pharaoh's daughter and Moses "became her son" (Exodus 2:10).

Author ChenZ Tucker suggests that God purposely used the rerouting of Moses' life through adoption. Moses became a liaison between his own people, the Hebrews, and his adopted people, the Egyptians.

Through God's power, he led his people out of the darkness of bondage and oppression and into the light of freedom.

The Story of Samuel

Samuel's story actually begins with his mother Hannah, who after many years of infertility vowed that if God gave her a son, she would "give him to the Lord for all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 1:11).

When Hannah conceived, she remained true to her word. As soon as her son Samuel was weaned, she "brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh" (1 Samuel 1:24) to be raised by Eli, the high priest of Israel. Hannah was a woman who trusted in God's plans. Her faith was confirmed when Samuel was later recognized as a prophet and judge over all Israel.

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The Story of Esther

Esther was orphaned at a young age. Her cousin Mordecai had "taken her as his own daughter." Esther is described in the Bible as "lovely in form and features" (Esther 2:7). She was so charming and attractive that



she was chosen by King Xerxes of Persia to be his queen. Through a thrilling and complicated series of circumstances, Esther was forced to make a difficult choice. She could either keep her Jewish heritage a secret and attempt to assure her own safety, or she could reveal her nationality to King Xerxes who had been persuaded to issue a decree ordering the destruction of the Jews.

The book of Esther is filled with conspiracy, betrayal, and intrigue, but in the end the strength of Esther's character is revealed. Guided by her conscience and her adoptive father Mordecai, Esther did what was necessary to save her people.

Our Story

After years of infertility treatments and two miscarriages, we were emotionally worn out and distraught. It was then, at one of our lowest points, that God chose to plant a seed. He didn't place a baby in Jeanie's womb as we had first desired. Instead, a seed was sown in our hearts.

It started on a warm summer Sunday afternoon in 1995 with a story that appeared in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Until that day, we had not seriously considered adoption as a way of starting our family. The article we read changed our way of thinking. It was about a Cincinnati couple, Rick and Diane Stafford, who adopted a little boy from Russia.

Their story was remarkable. Rick was listening to National Public Radio when he heard a feature about Americans adopting Russian children. The story focused on a seven-year-old boy with deformed hands and feet. The program included a sound clip of the boy singing. Rick was deeply moved by the little boy's voice. The Staffords immediately contacted

an international adoption group. A few months later, the couple brought the boy home to be their son.

We both read the story quietly that afternoon, and a seed was planted. It grew quickly, and before the afternoon was over, we knew—individually—this was something we wanted to pursue. The problem was, each of us wasn't sure how the other person would react to the idea. You can imagine our joy and amazement when Jeanie brought up the subject and found that her husband was thinking the very same thing! We contacted Lutheran Social Services in Indianapolis the next day.

We made up our minds instantly.



Our daughter was in China, and

we were determined to go and get her.

Going to China

As we completed the paper work, we realized one of the first decisions we would have to make was to choose the country from which we wanted to adopt. "Don't worry," our social worker wisely told us. "You'll have a feeling about where you're meant to go." A story on the ABC news program *20/20* helped us decide. It told of Chinese orphanages crowded with baby girls who had been abandoned by their parents. The Chinese government limits most families to one child in order to stem population growth. Most families want a son, not because they don't value girls, but because in their social system it is the son who cares for his parents in their old age.

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During the next months we completed the required paperwork, home studies, and background checks. There were several emotional setbacks along the way. The FBI lost a set of our fingerprints, and for a time the paperwork process came to a grinding

halt. On another occasion, our travel plans seemed threatened as it appeared China was contemplating an invasion of Taiwan.

To keep thinking positively, we set up a nursery and pored over a book of baby names. We decided to name our daughter Caitlin. We prayed daily for her health and safety, and that we would be able to

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bring her home soon.

Finally, on a June day in 1996, nearly a year after we began the adoption process, a small picture of a tiny baby arrived in the mail. She was beautiful. We loved her immediately. We were more certain than ever this was what we were meant to do when we read the name on her health record. Her last name was Fu, after the orphanage where she resided, but her first name was Cailan, which is about as close to Caitlin as you could possibly get. It was a lovely name, and we decided right away that she should keep it.

In August of 1996, we journeyed to China to bring Cailan home. It was a wonderful trip, and we had many experiences we will remember and treasure the rest of our lives. Probably the one that stands out the most is the evening Cailan's foster mother arrived at our hotel and placed her in our waiting arms.

Stepping off the plane as we arrived home, we experienced another exhilarating moment. Our family was waiting to welcome us at the airport with balloons, banners, and gifts. Many happy tears were shed—some by people who were simply bystanders witnessing the event.

Planting Seeds

If our story ended there it would be miraculous to us, but God wasn't finished working. Soon after we arrived home, we discovered that Jeanie was pregnant, and nine months and one day after we first held Cailan, our second daughter, Catherine, was born.

We believe God planned our family just as we believe he chose us to be adopted into his family through Jesus Christ. We believe God uses our stories and circumstances to further his purposes and influence the lives of others. If we had not first read

of Rick and Diane Stafford, we might never have become adoptive parents ourselves. Today our extended family also includes nephews from Korea and Guatemala. Children all over the world need loving homes, and it is our prayer that the Lord will use the story of our family to plant the seeds of love and hope in the hearts and minds of others.

"A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this" (Psalms 22:30, 31, KJV) ■

Tom and Jeanie Walters are freelance writers in Sunman, Indiana.



The Walters and their extended family.