

Excerpts for contemplation, discussion, and application from this week's issue of *THE LOOKOUT*.

Seeds of Hope (pages 3-5)

"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."

- Think of a time God gave you an idea that turned out to be a team effort. What happened?

"We believe God planned our family just as we believe he chose us to be adopted into his family through Jesus Christ."

- Name some ways you've seen God's planning and action over the course of your family's history.

"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."

- What do you think (or feel) about adoption?

Two Moms and a Baby (pages 6 & 7)

"Deep in her heart, Donna knew the most loving thing she could do for her baby was to give her to loving Christian parents who longed for a child."

"Donna knew she was doing the right thing by giving her baby daughter a better future with the waiting couple whom she would never see."

- In the light of Ephesians 1:3-14, what similarities do you see between earthly and divine adoption? What differences?

"Upon reading Donna's letter, Nita understood the sacrifice Erin's birth mother made for them and their daughter."

- In what ways are you able to relate to such a sacrifice?

The Father You Never Knew (pages 8 & 9)

"There are no true orphans in the world, no illegitimate children, for God is the Father of all life."

- Does this statement reflect your feelings about God? Why, or why not?

"Deep down inside, we want to know we are wanted."

- How does knowing that God wants you—enough to die for you—affect your thinking? Your feelings? Your actions?

"He relates to the real me, not the facade I serve up to others."

- In what ways are you "real" or "false" with God?

W O R L D W I N D O W S

By Steve Taylor

" . . . into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you"
(1 Peter 1:4).

THE WIFE OF A SENIOR SAINT in my church had Alzheimer's Disease. Studies show this disease lasts an average of nine years before it claims the life of its victim. Meanwhile, loved ones are left to cope with a spouse or close relative who doesn't recognize them, loneliness, and an incredibly heart-wrenching existence. The man I spoke of prayed that God would take his wife home to Heaven. She did not know him, and often lost her temper and said mean-spirited things that ripped at his heart. It was like a living death for him.

What do you say to such a man? He has served Christ for more than 50 years. Most of his friends are gone, and his family is scattered around the country. What is left for this man?

In a word, Heaven.

Paul wrote, "Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later" (Romans 8:18, *NLT*).

It is strange that the Bible says so little about Heaven. When all is said and done, there really aren't too many specifics. We aren't told what we'll do in Heaven, except that we'll worship God. We don't know what it looks like, except that it is brilliant and full of splendor.

But one thing we do know about Heaven. Jesus is there. There we will see him face to face. There we will fall at his feet and worship him. There we

will need no sun, for God's brilliance will be our light. There everyone is in good health. Our bodies won't be racked with pain, disease, weakness, or injury. We will never again have to say goodbye to someone we love. There will be no fighting, factions, arguments, conflict, war, or terrorism, for the perfect peace of God rules in Heaven. We will walk by sight, not by faith.

Heaven. It is the hope of the hopeless, the future of those who have no future. It is rest for the weary, delight for the depressed, and bliss for the blessed. Wayne Smith once said, "If you miss Heaven, you've missed it all." Indeed. ■

Steve Taylor is a freelance writer in Indianapolis, Indiana.