The CALL to ADOPT
The Christian church in America is in a sorry state, in my humble opinion! Not only do mainline churches often deny the deity of Christ, avoid teaching the Ten Commandments, and support various causes that are against God’s nature and laws, but rarely have I, a life-long Christian, experienced the modern body of Christ looking after orphans (and widows) in their troubled state, which is the only pure and undefiled religion according to James 1:27. It should be one of the church’s primary duties to look after “orphans…in their trouble.” This duty is not assigned by God to the state, to the unbelieving gay couple down the block, nor the secular orphanage in a foreign city. This important job is assigned to the church, Christ’s bride. As the church is made up of people, then it is the people of the church who are to provide orphan care. It may be that only one family in a small church is to actually adopt orphans, but it then behooves the rest of that church congregation, even if they have to team with another small church, to look after the orphans that have been adopted into that church body through that one family.
What does this mean? Well, it means a mountain of things. When a happily-married, healthy, and joyful couple brings forth biological sons and/or daughters, their children are typically just like their parents—happy, healthy, and joyful. Further, they are no doubt well-nurtured, with a reasonably structured life. These children are (most likely) going to be fairly easy to parent. Well, all children are sinful and have issues, but generally life is good and things go according to plan for the parents raising their birth children to adulthood. When a couple adopts a baby, there are a multitude of issues that set apart the raising of that adopted child from a typical birth child.

First, no matter how young the baby was at separation from its birth mother (and father) to come home to its adoptive family, the baby suffered and continues to suffer from the anxiety of losing its biological parents, which is a traumatic loss to that child. Second, the birth mother was probably under great stress during her pregnancy (why would she have to give the baby for adoption if her life was picture-perfect?), which compromises the overall development of the baby in-utero, another trauma to that child. Third, if after birth, the baby was malnourished or neglected, these also factor into a less-than-ideal physical development, another trauma to that child. Finally, if the child suffered from abuse and or neglect, experienced violence toward others through war or domestic incidents, or was raised on the porn channel (very common for children left in motel rooms by drug-seeking parents), then there are lifelong emotional, physical, social, and spiritual scars that the child will have to deal with, which means more trauma to that child.

If the adoptive family has had no birth children, then they have no hands-on experience parenting a typical birth child, and yet now are trying to be loving parents of their trauma-affected adoptive child. If the family already has children, then the birth siblings are going to experience trauma themselves as they try to bond with and learn to unconditionally love their newly adopted sibling(s), who may or may not want to cooperate in that life-long endeavor.

IT IS THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH WHO ARE TO PROVIDE ORPHAN CARE.
Throw in long-distance travel from a foreign country, a completely new culture—new language, new smells, new foods, new customs—and you have major trauma affecting a child, and his/her new family for the rest of their lives.

All of these things are generally more of a heartache and overwhelming burden than the biologically-related family has to deal with in raising their birth children. The adoptive family needs the emotional, physical, and social support of the church, as well as the even more important spiritual care. These children are from ‘hard places’ and the adoptive family requires a significant support system within the body of Christ, their home church, to come alongside them as a family and as individuals with a multitude of significant needs.

Think about most churches and how they bless new parents who are preparing to give birth to their first child or additional children: baby showers with gifts galore, prayer for healthy in-utero development and delivery, weekly verbal encouragement and blessings after Sunday worship, hands-on help with food and household chores before and after the birth, and the list goes on and on. How much more so does a family need support when adopting, as the path from the ‘hard place’ to the new home is much more difficult and challenging?

Additionally, and primarily, Satan does not want a successful adoption of an orphaned child into a Christian family! In most cases, the birth parents of the adopted child were probably not believers trusting in Jesus Christ. Thus, their child was probably not a believer. Satan, our relentless adversary, doesn’t have issues with non-believers leading a sinful lifestyle, and bearing non-believing children ‘out of wedlock’ or into abusive or neglectful situations, who will then grow to repeat those worldly lifestyle choices. But, when Christians want to adopt non-believing children, and help them trust in Christ to lead God-honoring lives, our enemy has issues! He is on the attack to kill and destroy, and he knows the weakest links—the traumatized orphan, the innocent birth children of the adoptive family, the marriage, family finances, or the church body itself. This is a war! Adoption is the frontline. Families who adopt are the targets of the enemy. The church needs to gird itself with the full armor of God to assist adoptive families, protect them at all costs, preserve and grow their faith, and help them raise their children to serve our loving, all powerful, Lord of all Creation, who desires and is able to achieve successful adoption against all odds.
REFLECTION / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What should the church’s role be in supporting adoption by Christian, joyfully-married couples? Discuss theory and practical aspects of this.

2. How does your church encourage adoption? What needs to be done to further improve the climate favorable to adoption within your church? What can you do to help facilitate positive changes in your church body regarding adoption?

3. As an adoptive family, what are your primary needs from your church body? With whom in particular can you discuss these: a pastor or elder in a leadership role? How and when can you begin this type of crucial dialogue with your church leadership?

PARENTS:
- Pray for your adoption journey and to get the most out of this weekly guide. Then, go to PART FOUR- Appendix II to read and do: A. through the FIRST CREATIVE DATE.
Thank you for having adopted, or for considering adoption as a family lifestyle ministry! I can’t tell you how many loving Christian families would not even contemplate it as an option. Over the years, I have encouraged a number of joyfully-married Christian couples to pray regarding adoption as a means to enlarge their family. I have had very few takers. It is not for the weak or faint of heart, but it is for far more families than will actually ponder it. In order to encourage you to further explore what God might have for your family regarding adoption, I would like to take a little time to share our story of how we began to consider adoption. We serve an amazing God who can bring to fruition what He desires for us when we are willing to trust and obey Him.

When I was a teen, I told my best friend in high school that I wanted ten kids. I had forgotten that conversation until just a few years ago when I was in my 15-passenger van driving to town and we conducted an audible headcount of seat beltsed children, so as not to remake the Home Alone movies! At that very moment in time, I remembered my childhood conversation. I thought to myself how amazing it was that I had ten children in my van, and that the Lord had put that desire in my heart.

Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.
-Mark 9:37

BEGINNING to CONSIDER ADOPTION
all those years ago. I have ten living children. I also have a daughter in Heaven, so in reality, God blessed me more abundantly than my heart’s desire!

Our youngest biological child, Abby Joanne, died more than two decades ago on Christmas Day, 1995. It was a sudden, unexpected, heart-wrenching death. The Lord used it for His purposes, as He always uses terrible things that happen. During the years that it took to recover from so great a loss, He turned the hearts of my husband, Cary, and me toward adoption.

My husband and I had both thought about and discussed adopting children, but we had never pursued it. My husband had our oldest son from a previous marriage, and within the first ten years of our marriage, the Lord blessed with four biological children. Later, after our sixth child, Abby, was born, while I was still at the hospital, I had my OB/GYN perform a tubal ligation. How I regretted that decision after her sudden death! My husband and I had equally wanted that surgery performed, as we were surrounded by well-meaning family and friends who indicated directly or indirectly that we indeed had borne enough children. “Don’t you know how that is happening?” was the most frequently asked question. Up until that time, not a person in our life had encouraged us with words such as “children are a blessing from the Lord”. Thankfully, we had just started home schooling, and from that point on, we heard many mighty men and women of God in that movement teach over and over again that a large family is a blessing, not a curse.

ONCE GOD HAD BOTH MY HUSBAND AND I ON BOARD WITH THE IDEA, HE ARRANGED EVERYTHING.

God used Abby’s shocking death to work in us to seriously consider adoption. We lived in the heart of Denver and were adding on to our house to make a bit more room for all of us. When our baby died, the house project came to a screeching halt; we lost interest in life and our future. All we could do was live one day at a time, try to raise our other children, and protect our marriage as the divorce rate is upwards of 75%1 for couples who have a young child die.

1. http://healingheart.net/articles/grief_and_divorce.html
Five years later, driving home from visiting my mother-in-law for Thanksgiving, my husband and I started talking about moving to a rural property. This was new territory as neither of us had broached the subject before. It was a God moment—His providence. By the time we arrived home, we had both agreed to sell our side-by-side city properties, purchase a remote farm on which to live with our five living children, with an end goal of increasing our family through adoption. After the unexpected death of our daughter, and my previous surgery, we both had finally realized we simply didn’t have as many kids as our hearts desired, and to heck with the opinions of others!

Once God had both my husband and I on board with the idea, He arranged everything. Our house under construction, and an adjacent property that we owned and used as our office, were both quickly sold to a developer for a high market price. We found the perfect fixer-upper farm, and purchased it for a low price. One-by-one, we told our children of our plans to move to the country, and they agreed with enthusiasm! Well, all except for our youngest, who was always slow to warm to change and wanted to wait three years. My husband told her it was already decided what was best for the whole family, and at age seven she was too little to stay behind!

Within six months we had moved five kids and 20 years of marriage to the middle of nowhere, and began to fix up our new homestead. The first year, we worked on fixing up the house and slept in the living room on mattresses until the bedrooms were ready. The second year we started acquiring livestock and fixing up corrals and barns. By year three, we were filling out adoption papers and awaiting our home study visit.

Several families we knew had adopted children through child welfare. They had all done so in an adjacent county which seemed to have had a Christian, home-school-friendly adoption unit. We worked with the staff of that county’s human services department with great success. We told our home study caseworker up front that we were interested in a sibling group because we had the room, and we knew those children are often harder to place. We also were willing to adopt children of a different race/ethnic group. We told our home study caseworker honestly and openly—though a bit tongue in cheek—that we might be her worst nightmare on paper: we were Christians, homeschoolers, had a lot of kids already, lived in the middle of nowhere, and owned firearms. She laughed, and we have remained friends since. It was smooth sailing from there on because apparently God had gone before us and we were just following His lead.
When our caseworker came out to make her site visit for our home study, we were nervous and so were our biological children. We had discussed with them that the caseworker would want to talk with each of them individually, separately from us. We role-played by going over some of the questions she might ask them. She met with my husband and me first, going over the lengthy paperwork questions, some of which were very personal—more so than we had anticipated. We discussed our child training and discipline philosophy, what we did in a typical home school day, showed her our living room filled with bookshelves, our kitchen cabinets filled with food, toured the farm, and got to know her as well. She did ask us briefly about our alcohol consumption (nominal), our use of drugs (none), our sex life (healthy), and why we wanted to adopt kids. She became a bit teary eyed when my husband talked about how much he loved each of our children, and wanted to share that same love with orphans.

Finally, our caseworker went into each of our children’s bedrooms and spoke with them individually. Afterward, she came back out to the kitchen table, sitting down with a serious facial expression. She shared that her biggest fear in placing kids with us was that she didn’t want adoption to ruin the wonderful family we already had. She shared some of the children’s comments, and we three were emotionally touched and connected. She obviously loved kids, loved her job, and wanted families just like ours to adopt children who were in her care.

During the next month, while our home study was being approved by the responsible authorities, along with our fingerprints processed for our background check, the caseworker gave us a list of sibling sets from the county, all children available for adoption. Most of the children on the list had already had their parents’ rights terminated and so would be in adoptive not foster placement, if they came to us. Most of the kids were older than our youngest child, and we wanted children younger than her. There was a brother and sister that caught our eye as being the right age, and their brief biographical profile noted that they shared some of our family’s hobbies and interests. They did not, apparently, exhibit the worst of behaviors, and so we thought we could manage raising them. They had been in a kinship placement that disrupted, and were available immediately. Our caseworker stated that they were in speech therapy, play therapy, with the boy also in occupational therapy, and those services would need to continue after they came to us, if we followed through with the placement.
The following week, accompanied by our oldest son still living at home, I drove for an hour and a half into the metropolitan area to observe these two particular children at their local public school. This son of ours had particular opinions about whom he thought we should adopt, so I had suggested he come with me. My biggest fear was seeing the girl, whom I knew to be visually ‘darling.’ I feared my heart would fall in love with her before my head could be logical in discerning the situation. The teachers in the children’s classrooms had thoughtfully told their students that we were volunteers, coming to help in each grade for an hour or so. We began by ‘helping’ in the brother’s first grade classroom. As we began to observe and interact with the students, it was a shock to see that this particular boy was drugged in order to be classroom compliant, and had very delayed, unintelligible speech. We stayed for an hour and helped various students with their math assignments. Then, we went to help with the sister’s preschool class. She was smiling and vivacious, trying every minute to be the center of attention. She was indeed darling, but she, too, had very delayed oral language skills compared to her classmates. She was friendly, in fact, too friendly, to both of us who were complete strangers to her.

Upon leaving the school, my son was adamant that those two were not the kids for us. He was obviously taken aback by their delayed social and academic abilities exhibited in our presence. I was intrigued by the children, and thought my husband and I should meet them and their foster parents to further investigate the situation before we could decide one way or the other. Our caseworker arranged for us to go to their foster home for dinner one night, on the pretext that we were new friends of the foster parents. The boy, whom I thought had been drugged enough at school to not even have noticed my presence there, immediately recognized me. So, we played into the conversation that I remembered him from a class I volunteered in with my older son. The dinner and evening went well. We especially were impressed with the foster father, who was the uncle of the children. We left, agreeing to meet with the foster parents again without the children present, in order to discuss some more private details of the situation.

A subsequent meeting was arranged with our caseworker in her office, with my husband and me, joined by the foster parents. We were informed that these two children were very delayed academically, emotionally, socially, and somewhat physically because of their background of severe neglect and abuse. They had been in several
foster homes prior to their current kinship placement. The uncle was very supportive of our interest. The aunt wanted a family of the same ethnicity/race to adopt them, but none were available. We promised we would do the best we could to raise them as Christians, and help them navigate growing up in our race/ethnicity, as well as helping them develop knowledge and experiences with their genetic heritage so they would be comfortable in any living situation as adults.

A follow-up meeting was set up to include the children’s therapists, guardian ad litem (GAL), caseworker, and our caseworker. We were able to read whatever we wanted of their extensive case files, and asked all the questions we could think of. Everyone was very cooperative, and encouraging. After that meeting and much prayer, we agreed this was the path God had for us.

The next step was to have these two children and their foster parents’ family all come out to our farm for a visit. That was a rather interesting day. Though the children had loved to play outside in the city, they were greatly agitated by the stickers and insects commonly found on a farm. Our biological children were standoffish—a bit shy and awkward in relating to the visitors—even though we had coached them ahead of time what to expect. The foster mom confronted me when we were alone that she was quite upset that a white family would be interested in adopting these two children of black and Hispanic background. I let her know graciously, but in no uncertain terms, that we were following the Lord’s leading and we saw past their color to the children God made them to be, and would be willing to navigate a trans-racial adoption, providing the children with what they needed in all aspects of their lives. It was quite uncomfortable, but thankfully, in the years that have followed, our relationship has grown warm with the aunt and uncle, as well as with additional paternal relatives who were close to these children. All of them now see the blessing it has been for these two children whom we ended up adopting six months after their placement in our home.
REFLECTION/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. At what point are you in your adoption journey? Discuss your feelings on what has come before, and what is still to come. What are the main underlying reasons behind your heart for adoption? Are they God-focused, self-focused, or child-focused, and why?

2. What is your family’s racial and ethnic background? How does this affect your attitude towards other adults and children of different backgrounds? What are your views on racial and/or ethnic discrimination and prejudice? What does the Bible say about the human race and different ethnicities/colors?

3. What kind of a child, or children, would find permanency in your family? What adjustments would you have to make, or are you making, as individuals and as a couple—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—to make a forever family through adoption?

PARENTS:

- Pray for each other to have endurance and perseverance as you continue on your adoption journey. Then go to PART FOUR - Appendix II, the SECOND CREATIVE DATE.