



EXPLORING ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE

Week 1

Class Vision

1. Understand that adoption and foster care are ultimately not about what we want but about what God wants for us and wants to do through us for others. Our part is to explore His heart and respond accordingly.
2. Prepare well, gain wisdom and acquire the practical knowledge necessary to become excellent at foster parenting, adoptive parenting, and child advocacy.
3. Build the connections with others that will become absolutely vital in the adoption and foster care journey.

Class Overview

Steps in the Adoption Process

- Step 1:** Pray/Investigate what God says about adoption
- Step 2:** Make sure you and your spouse are on the same page
- Step 3:** Discern what type of adoption or foster care is your calling
- Step 4:** Choose an agency
- Step 5:** Fill out paperwork, complete a home study, decide what types of kiddo(s) you are equipped to love
- Step 6:** Prepare for your kiddo
- Step 7:** Begin parenting in informed and loving ways

Being a Draggee

A. Most of you were dragged here by one of two things:

1. By your circumstances
 - i. Infertility
 - ii. Singleness
2. By your spouse

B. If you are a draggee . . .

1. Your responsibility before God is to be open to how He might lead you, how He might be speaking to you through your spouse and others and to explore the root causes of those things that are creating any reluctance.
2. _____ with your spouse is the key to unity on this issue.

C. If you are a dragger . . .

1. Remember your primary goals are
 - a. _____ to God
 - b. _____ in marriage
2. Resist the temptation to _____ and _____
3. _____ it before you _____ it

D. Oneness in marriage involves . . .

1. _____ amidst disagreement
2. Commitment to _____ before action

God's Word and God's Heart

A. What God's Word tells us about Him:

1. God Loves and Protects Orphans
 - a. Psalm 68:5
 - b. Deuteronomy 10:18

2. God opposes those who harm the orphan
 - a. Exodus 22:22-24

B. What God's Word tells us about us

1. We all sin
 - a. Romans 3:23
2. We were orphans separated from God
 - a. Colossians 1:21
3. We have been made heirs
 - a. Galatians 4:4-7

C. What God's Word tells us about others

1. Caring for others as a way of life
 - a. Deuteronomy 24:19
2. Caring for others as a pure expression of faith
 - a. James 1:27

D. What God's Word tells us about seeing all three in correct relationship to one another

1. We are agents of God's justice in the world to those who are vulnerable
 - a. Psalm 82:3
 - b. Isaiah 1:17
2. We will experience the fullness of God's Justice and Mercy
 - a. Revelation 21:3-5a

5 Ways to Care for Children in Your Home

(adapted from Welcome Home: Eight Steps to Adoption, Published by Hope for Orphans, © 2011)

A. Foster Parenting

When a child has been abused, neglected, abandoned, or cannot be cared for by their caregiver due to incarceration, the state takes temporary custody and places the child in a foster home until the biological parent is able to take the steps necessary to safely reunify with their child.

A few things to consider:

- The goal of foster care is to reunify a child with their biological parent.

- The foster parent is trained by the state (or by an agency contracted with the state) to provide appropriate temporary care for a child in these circumstances.
- A monthly stipend is provided to the foster parent to cover some of the expenses involved in taking care of the child.
- There are instances where a child's parental rights are terminated and the foster parent may have the opportunity to adopt.

B. Foster Care Adoption

When a child is placed in foster care due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or parental incarceration, the biological parents are given a period of time (usually around a year) to meet the requirements of a treatment plan (employment, stable housing, parenting classes, drug rehab, etc...) in order to qualify for reunification with their child. If the bio parent does not meet the requirements of the treatment plan in the allotted time and no suitable relative placement is found, those parental rights are legally and permanently severed by the court. At that point, a child becomes available for adoption and can be adopted through a private agency contracted with the state or directly through the state agency.

A few things to consider:

- The cost is free (or almost free).
- Many children qualify for monthly subsidies and Medicaid that may continue until 18 years of age (and beyond in some cases).
- Most children available for adoption from foster care are elementary school-aged and older.

C. International Adoption

International adoption involves children in foreign countries who live in an orphanage or in foster care within that country. It is generally administered through an agency with expertise in a few particular countries. It is governed both by U.S. law and by the laws of a given child's birth country, which vary from country to country and are subject to change. It is especially important to work with an experienced agency with a track record of successful adoptions from a given country.

A few things to consider:

- Travel to a child's birth country is usually required. Some countries require more than one trip and/or several weeks in-country.
- Country of origin laws and procedures can change mid-process.
- There can be unanticipated costs depending on the country.

D. Domestic Agency Adoption

In domestic agency adoption, the birth parent has chosen to place the child (usually an infant) in an adoptive home and has, in most cases, selected adoptive parents. Adoption through an agency is a regulated and supervised process in which the agency takes care of most of the details.

A few things to consider:

- Pre-adoptive and post-adoptive services are usually provided both for birth parents and for adoptive parents.
- Most domestic agency adoptions involve infants exclusively.
- Wait times are unpredictable and often extended.
- There is the potential of a last-minute change of mind by the biological mother.
- Some degree of an open, ongoing relationship with biological mom is usually encouraged by the agency.

E. Domestic Private Adoption

Domestic private adoption is typically done through an attorney who assists the adoptive parents in working with birth parents on the conditions and requirements of placing the child. In domestic private adoption, adoptive families are generally responsible to identify a birth mother.

A few things to consider:

- Waiting period can potentially be shorter than working with an agency.
- Costs can potentially be less due to the fact that fees are not going to agency overhead and other programs and services that an agency might offer. However, costs can be more unpredictable.
- The chance of biological parents changing their minds at the last minute can be much greater than with agency adoption due to a lack of good pre-placement counseling for the biological mom.
- Only consider reputable adoption attorneys with good references.