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Newsletter | March 2014

We are deviating from our normal format this month, in two ways. First, the Director's Column is actually written by his wife, Kathy, and is well worth the read—even though it may appear to be a bit long. And second, we've left out our "Completed Adoptions" because of the emphasis of our Spotlight article. But please take the time to read the Spotlight article, as it is particularly moving and serves as a great reminder of why we do what we do.

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Prayer Requests:

- Pray for all of the children of the world who are about to age out of their orphanages.
- Pray for the people in Ukraine, and especially the orphans, in the midst of the civil unrest and the government's retaliation.
- Praise God for continuing to keep us going, financially, and do not cease praying that He would raise up additional monthly supporters to allow us to keep doing this important work.

From the Director

Note: This column is written by my wife, Kathy. It originally appeared as a post on her blog, "Owning My Nothingness," and I reprint it here with thanks to her for her insights and for her heart. The title of this post, which appeared on January 27, 2014, is "When Is Enough?"

When is enough? It's been almost three months since we were asked that question in response to the news that we had decided to adopt Lilyan (who will be our seventeenth adoption and bring our total number of children to twenty-one). I've been trying to sort through my thoughts since that time in an attempt to find an answer. Recently, I was awakened early in the morning by a very bright winter moon peering through the window beside our bed. I was drawn to it and just had to get out of bed in spite of the cold temperature. I pulled up the blinds and sat staring at that moon, thinking again about this question. When IS enough? And some of the disjointed and swirling feelings and thoughts finally started to settle into a form that kind of . . . almost . . . resembled coherency.

It could be argued that the question was justified, coming from the person who asked. And I know that there are even some people out there who don't really have the right to ask the question but are wondering the same thing. I actually get this: I can understand people who are looking in from the outside questioning this decision. But I have to admit that it stung a bit nonetheless. It initially left me feeling like a naughty, greedy child who has been caught and scolded for sneaking into the cookie jar to steal more cookies after already having been given a more-than-ample serving of treats. So my examination of the question, "When is enough?," started with trying to analyze just why it had made me feel pain and even some shades of shame or guilt.

I think that at least part of the reason was wrapped up in my own feelings of doubt and fear. Scott and I had already walked a weeks-long journey to finally reach this place of decision. During that time, we had wrestled with our human limitations; the Herculean efforts required to take care of our children who are already home; my questions about the truth of God's promises to always give us whatever is needed to accomplish any work He calls us to (did I really believe this?); my doubts about how we can know if we're hearing God correctly when we think He's calling us into action again. Scott and I had talked and prayed, and then talked and prayed some more about our family's financial situation, our age, our health, how much further we could stretch ourselves in order to meet the needs of another very needy daughter, how much more strain our other children could handle. And then, quietly, softly, finally . . . God had brought me through those weeks of questioning to a place of peace and readiness to follow Him into one more exciting adventure filled with the promise of miracles and pain and indescribable beauty. Maybe I'll share more specifics about that coming-out-on-the-other-side in another post someday, but the point is that I was there. I was ready. I was still cautiously afraid, but Scott and I were both certain of our direction. However, my heart and my emotions were still a bit raw from the recent tussle with God and with my own fears. I was able to recognize that some of the hurt was irrationally connected to the timing of the question being scraped across my heart in it's bare and exposed state.

Once I was able to sort through these things, I was able to trust this person's love for us and examine the question without all of the emotional overtones.

When is enough? It seems to me that the answer to this question depends very much on what, exactly, is meant by it. I haven't had an opportunity to ask about the thoughts behind these words, but there seemed to be an implied feeling that our decisions to adopt are somehow connected to trying to satisfy some need in our own lives.

In spite of the fact that our children—each and every one—bring incalculable joy and loveliness to our family, and although the homecoming of every new one leaves us wondering how we could've felt whole without that one's presence in our family, we are not ever looking to "get more children" because of some personal feelings of incompleteness. In fact, we aren't ever "looking for more children" at all. More than once, we felt certain that our family was complete and that there were no more adoptions in our future. And we were at peace with that. We now have adopted grandchildren as our children grow up and follow a similar path: our house, even with the new addition, is full: our two vans are overflowing; we have enough medical equipment in our family room to pass for a physical therapy clinic; and the pots required to prepare meals for our family need so much storage space that I can't even keep them in my kitchen. Passing the baton seemed like a natural, good, right thing to do. As the directors of an orphan ministry, we are faced with multiple new listings of needy children every week, and as we work to try and find homes for them all, we know that they can't all come to our family.

So, from this perspective, "enough" would've been at least several children ago—before they became real, actual Rosenow children, that is. We could never bear not to have them around our table, goofing off in our family room, and sleeping peacefully in their beds now that they are here. But before then—when they were "hypothetical Rosenows"—it was "enough" a number of years ago.

But what about from the child's perspective as she waits in her orphanage, watching other children leave with their new families and wondering if anyone will ever want her? Some of our children remember their lives before coming home. Meghan has clear memories of being told that no one would ever want her because of the relatively mild deformities in her hands and feet. What would that child say to the question, "When is enough?" I would think that most would cry out, "Please. Maybe just one more?" The needs are endless; the number of orphans is not decreasing; so the answer to "when is enough" from that perspective would have to be, "never." Although every adoptive family reaches a place where they absolutely do have to stop adopting, it will, sadly, still never be "enough" from the orphan's perspective as long as children still wait for families.

And then, most importantly, there is God's perspective. He truly is the only One with the right answer to this question. Our belief and knowledge in God and His ways are the foundation of all that Scott and I do. He is the One we go to for guidance; the One we lean on for strength; the One whose wisdom we draw on as we make decisions about how to live our lives. His word is the lamp for our feet that illuminates the path we believe He has called us to walk in this life. And He makes it clear that what He asks of us is that we give Him all of ourselves—our time, our gifts, our resources, our energy—as we trust Him to use us and work through us to touch the lives of others and to accomplish His purposes. Scripture states emphatically that orphans are among those precious in His sight. And the call for all Believers to pour themselves out as living sacrifices to reach the needy of the world is loud and clear.

"And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday." (Isaiah 58:10)

What does your own "When-Is-Enough?" Journey look like? I have no idea. It may have nothing to do with orphans or adoption. But I feel certain of a few things. Whatever it involves, it will require a dying to yourself; it will demand your full giving of your talents and time and resources and dreams to Him for His own use as He turns those things into something more beautiful than you could ever even imagine on your own; it will take you to the end of yourself over and over again and sometimes leave you crying out, "What was God thinking??"

And sometimes . . . oh, glorious rapture . . . you will wonder how you can be so full when you have allowed Him to empty you so completely; feel so euphoric and love life so much while you are also exhausted and beaten down; be so tangibly cognizant of His lifting you up above everything earthly as you become increasingly aware that you can only achieve great things in this life when you stop depending upon your own strength and wisdom.

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength." (1 Corinthians 1:25)

When is enough? I believe that we can trust Him to answer this question for us, but I also believe that His answer will very likely look different from the world's answer. Often, we have no idea what we might be capable of accomplishing until we close our eyes and fall, knowing without a doubt that not only will He catch us, but that He will lift us up, soaring through the clouds, doing incredible, extraordinary, life-changing, world-revolutionizing things through us. And then . . . when it's enough, He will whisper to our hearts, "Well done," as He lovingly leads us on to other work until the day He finally calls us Home.

But until that time, He has promised to fill us and fill us and fill us to do whatever He calls us to do. And if I ever question that, I only have to look at the lives of the miracles. He's already brought into our family and see what He's accomplished through us, in spite of our many failures, simply because we said, "Here we are. Take us. Use us. Empty us of ourselves so that You can fill us with the power and strength and love that can come only from You." When I look into the faces of these ex-orphans thriving in our home, then I know, without any doubt—even if only fleetingly—that inside each of these kids there is a person who will change the world, a person would never have been there if we had trusted to our own strength and had listened to our own wisdom in answering the question, "When is enough?"

Spotlight: Happy Endings

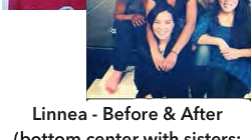
In January's newsletter, I looked at the fate of children who age out and are therefore ineligible for adoption. That topic is not particularly pleasant, but it's an important one to consider. Thankfully, though, not all orphans' stories end that way. I mentioned that TSC has seen several older children—some even on the brink of aging out—adopted over the years. Children over the age of about three become increasingly difficult to place for adoption, so whenever one of these older children finds his forever family, we are especially excited. This month, I want to focus on three TSC children who have come home as "older children" and see how their lives have been changed.

Tash was born in 1994 in Russia. As she grew up in the orphanage, she began to lose hope that she would ever be adopted. In her own words, she says, "It was a lonely feeling to see a stranger come and take a child and not me. It felt like there was no one out there that knew me." It's hard for me to imagine that kind of loneliness and despair, especially as others around you leave to join their families and you had to say goodbye to friends, likely never to see them again. This all changed for Tash when she found out that she was, in fact, going to be adopted. On her parents' second trip to visit her, one of the ladies at the orphanage told her that they were going to be her parents. The news surprised her, especially when she realized that she was going to have not one but two parents. Having been with her family for about a decade now, she feels like she is "wanted and that there is something to live for." Tash has graduated high school, is working at a daycare center, and is now volunteering for TSC. She's a far cry from the lonely girl in a Russian orphanage, watching friend after friend leave before her turn came. In fact, she would like orphans out there to know that "[t]here are people that are praying for them and to not lose hope."



Tash - Before & After

Linnea is now twenty-two years old and has come a long way from the little girl who grew up in an orphanage in China. As she watched other children leave after being adopted—including her good friend Quinn—she was sad for herself, even as she was happy for the others. But the toll of waiting eventually caused her to give up hope entirely. Then, in February 2005, she found out that her wait was over and that she was going to be adopted. As nervous as she was, there was also a lot of excitement at the news, because Quinn had already been adopted by this family, and they were now going to be sisters. Linnea has now grown up, and because she has been part of a family for so long, she has left behind her sadness and despair. Her family has "taught me how to love, care, and forgive to people. My parents meant so much to me, they sacrificed so much for me and I loved me unconditionally. I know my family loves me very much, and I can always trust and come back to them." This long-lasting, deep trust of another person is something that former orphans often have a hard time learning, but Linnea has. And she trusts not only her family, but the Lord, as she would encourage orphans with these words: "Don't give up hope! Pray for your future family, and believe that God has a special plans for YOU." Thankfully for Linnea, those plans included her being adopted and, more recently, getting married.



**Linnea - Before & After
(bottom center with sisters;
Quinn on far right)**

Josh is also from China, and he was adopted as he was nearing the age of fourteen, when he would become ineligible for adoption. Like Tash and Linnea, he felt jealous of the other children as they were adopted into families while he continued to wait. And wait. And wait. He did, however, hold out some hope that he, too, would eventually be adopted. Thankfully, that day did come, and he was told that he was going to have a family. It was only six months from the time that he was told the happy news to when he went home with them, but Josh said that it felt to him like a few years! In the years since, Josh has grown to appreciate more and more his parents and his siblings (he is one of twenty children). He is in college now and is enjoying his life. And again, just like Tash and Linnea, Josh's hopelessness has turned into hope not only for himself, but for others: "To children who are still in orphanages/foster homes: be patient because God is choosing the right family for you!"



Josh - Before & After

The thing that strikes me most about their lives is the transformation from hopeless, lonely children into flourishing adults who are now filled with hope not only for their own lives, but for the lives of the world's current orphans. Looking at only the raw numbers related to adoptions is often a bleak business, because the need far outweighs the work that is being done. But, looking at Tash, Linnea, and Josh and seeing how far they've come is encouraging. These are not only individual lives that have been changed, but their parents and siblings have surely been changed, and these changes are going to spread to others around them and, hopefully, to the next generation.

Greg
Administrative Assistant

Completed Adoptions

We normally include "before" and "after" pictures here of TSC children who have come home to their forever families. In this month's newsletter, however, we cover that topic in our Spotlight article, and so we decided to let that suffice this time. Look for this regular feature in our next installment.

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