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Newsletter | November 2013

In This Issue:

- [From the Director](#)
- [Spotlight](#): Guest Article
- [Completed Adoptions](#)

Prayer Requests:

- Please continue to pray for all of the children in China who have been pulled from their foster homes. (Read the Spotlight Article in our last issue for more information.)
- Pray for the people of the Philippines, and especially the newly orphaned children, in the wake of the terrible typhoon earlier this month.
- 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

A common idea among those who adopt, and especially among those adopting a child with a special need or some other complicating factor, is that of rescue. We picture the child's probable future if not adopted, and then we imagine the future he will inherit as a result of being adopted, and the idea of "rescue" is both natural and tenable. To see a child on a course that will almost inevitably lead him to calamity, or severe hardship, or death, and to pluck that child off of that course and set him on another, which will lead to happiness, health, life, is truly to rescue that child. I have often referred to the adoptions of some of my own kids as rescues, and I do not apologize for that expression.

But, there are at least two considerations which should lead us to be chary of using that expression indiscriminately. The first has to do with longevity, and the second with perspective.

Longevity. Whereas the classic understanding of a rescue is, basically, a one-time incident that changes an outcome for the better, the adoption of a child is a long-haul undertaking. We must not allow ourselves to be confused about this point. When we rescue a child from a calamitous eventuality, we are exchanging one future for another. The adopted child is, legally, morally, and logically, a permanent member of one's family, not a temporary project to be undertaken and completed. This is the reason many adoption workers and professionals reject the 'rescue' terminology: 'rescue' implies a project or a mission to be executed and completed; the adoption of a child is the taking on of a life-long responsibility, one that will include, perhaps, more challenges and frustrations than rewards and satisfactions. The adoption is, ultimately, for the benefit of the child, but it brings a way of life, not a checklist to be ticked off and done with.

Perspective. The child being adopted is a real person, not a principle or an abstract concept. That person, prior to the adoption, lives within a milieu that is his own. He has a place to live, persons who take care of him, friends with whom he interacts on a daily basis, food and clothing, and smells and sights and sounds with which he is intimately familiar and comfortable. These elements that make up his world, his environment, are known and, at least in the child's mind, "safe." When the new adoptive parents show up to take this child home, they are taking him out of his known environment and transitioning him to a new world, one which is unfamiliar and, almost always, frightening. And the older the child is at the time of his adoption, the more traumatic and difficult this transmutation is likely to be. It matters little that the new life is vastly superior to the one being left behind. There is almost always a trauma involved in moving from the familiar into the unfamiliar, from the known into the unknown. We, as the parents responsible for imposing this cultural shift upon the child, must be sensitive to the impact it will have on the child, giving him time to begin to know these strange people who insist they are now his parents, time to learn these new sights and sounds and experiences that characterize his new reality. Thus, the adoption of a child may well be, from his perspective, more of a kidnapping than a rescue, especially in the early days, and especially for an older child.

Recently, TSC dad Cameron Bernadsky, along with his wife and two of their children, traveled to China to complete the adoptions of additional children. In his blog, Cameron made the following observation, which served as the stimulus for this column: "It was sad to be reminded about how very difficult this transition is on these kids and how they give up all the security that they know on the promise that some stranger will love and take care of them. It is an endeavor that no parent should take part in lightly, and those adoptive parents must understand that, to these kids, we are not 'saving' them from anything, only taking them away from all that they have known." A poignant reminder for all of us.

I do not reject the term rescue as it applies to the adoption of a needy child, but as I said earlier, I urge everyone, myself included, to exercise sensitivity and propriety when using it. Our "right" to use this term and apply it to our adoption stories is not worth fighting over, nor even worth offending another over.

Soli Deo gloria!

Spotlight: Guest Article

I am Kathy, wife of TSC's director, Scott, and co-founder of TSC with him. I am writing the spotlight article for this issue of our newsletter and giving Greg a little break. And it will be a little different this time. This Spotlight is going to focus on how you can reach out and help the parents of ex-orphans—couples who have stepped out in faith to testify to the world that God created these children to be their sons and daughters. I know there are people out there always wondering how they might be able to help in some way.

As I write this, I'm sitting in a luxurious condo, alone with my husband, on a marina in the mountains of northern Tennessee. Believe me, this is a rare treat and very unusual surroundings for the two of us, parents of twenty children, sixteen of whom are adopted and most of whom have special needs. There are no wheelchairs in view and no timers dingling to remind us that it's time to catheterize any of our five children who have to have this done every three hours; no running checklists in our brains as we try to make sure everyone's PT exercises have been done for the day; no concerns about what to feed the crew for dinner tonight. We love our life passionately and would never want to trade places with anyone. But it's a hard life in spite of the incredible joys that accompany it, and when God provides an opportunity for the two of us to slip away together and rest, reconnect, and refuel for the daily grind, we are filled with gratitude. This time the offer for this little two-night getaway came out of nowhere from someone who doesn't even really know us very well. But this family trusted us enough to offer us free use of their vacation home—even though they had no idea how much we were in need of just such a mini-retreat right now.

And there are many families out there, trying to faithfully obey God's call on their lives to rescue these neediest of His. Yes, our lives are indescribably enriched by this calling, and we love the way God has brought these precious ones home to us, but the work is sometimes wearying beyond what most people can imagine. Are there ways you can come alongside an adoptive family and help. Yes! There are ways. Read on.

The one that's most prominent in my mind at the moment (for obvious reasons) is a weekend getaway. If you own, or have access to, a vacation home, we encourage you to offer the use of it as a place for adoptive parents to slip away and rest. If you don't own a home but could afford to gift an adoptive couple with a night or two in a local hotel, or even just an evening out, then please consider doing something like this. The upcoming Christmas season provides a great opportunity for you to bless someone in this way and to be a very tangible part of helping them continue along the path God has laid out for them. However, this is a way you can reach out to such families at any time in the year. Their hard work lasts all year.

Another way you can help adoptive parents is to provide meals or groceries for them. A fairly large group of people started just such a ministry for our family years ago. One volunteer tirelessly coordinates this meal ministry for our family year after year, organizing a schedule among these generous servants. Four to six times a month, this group provides our family with meal components—fresh meats, vegetables, fruits, staples. This is a gigantic help for our family's tight financial and time budget.

Lastly, if you happen to own a home with an in-ground pool, consider offering that home to the adoptive parents and their children when you leave to take your own family vacation. Usually, parents who have been called to adopt a large number of children have given up such luxuries as family vacations, and often the children's special needs are complicated enough that a typical family vacation wouldn't be possible anyway. But a home with an in-ground pool that's not too far away from the family's own home is an excellent way for a family full of many children, and children with even severe special needs, to slip away and play together and rest and have a genuine vacation. Once again, we know from past personal experience how beautiful this kind of gift can be to an adoptive family, and a swimming pool is the only place we've ever found where our family can play and exercise together without the need for any significant modifications for our blind son, our daughter with CP, or our children with paralysis.

God has so many roles for each of His children in the mission of saving orphans. Take inventory of the ways in which He has blessed you, think creatively, and ask Him to show you how you can use those blessings as part of this calling that's so precious to His heart. I will close with this quote from Christian author J. R. Miller, who lived from 1840 to 1912:

"God has strength for us. How does His strength come to us? Far more than we understand, does God strengthen us and bless us through human love. He hides Himself in the lives of those who touch us with their affection. He looks into our eyes through human eyes, and speaks into our ears through human lips. He gives power to us in our faintness, and hope in our discouragement through the friends who come to us with their love and cheer."

Completed Adoptions

The following children have come home to their adoptive families since TSC began in 2000. We include them as representatives of all of the children who have come home. Their faces provide just a glimpse into how significantly these lives are changed, as the children transition from the hopelessness and aloneness they once knew, to the comfort and security that come from belonging to a family. Thank you for helping us make these dreams realities, both for the adopted children and for their families.



Jeshua, in Guatemala



Jeshua, at home in Iowa



Jonathan, in China



Jonathan, at home in Vermont



Lydia, in Guatemala



Lydia, at home in Pennsylvania

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