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## Prayer Requests

- We encourage you to pray fervently for the children of the world who are waiting for their families to find them.
- Pray for the adopted children and their families, particularly as they go through the sometimes-painful process of getting to know each other and becoming a family.
- Pray for The Shepherd's Crook Ministries: that God would bless us financially and allow us to continue doing this important work in His name

## From the Director

I recently encountered a blog written by a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This is the church pastored by John Piper, one of my contemporary heroes. This blog, authored by John Knight, is titled [The Works of God](#), with the subtitle, Reflections on the sovereignty of God over disability, disease and suffering, for God's glory and for our good. John (Knight, not Piper) is the Senior Director of Development at Desiring God, a ministry of Bethlehem Baptist. He states that his son, Paul, "has multiple disabilities, including blindness, autism, and cognitive impairments." The insights you will find on this blog are challenging, uplifting, enlightening, and at times uncomfortable. Please take time to check out this blog and digest some of its teaching.

The Shepherd's Crook Ministries, as I've said in the past, exists to promote the cause of the orphan worldwide, and in particular the cause of orphans who are disabled or who are otherwise classified as difficult to place. My wife and I have children with disabilities, and many of you also have children with disabilities. The topic of the disabled is important to us, and in particular, the question of how these disabled ones fit into God's plan is one of poignant relevance to us. This is possibly what drew Kathy and me to this blog.

A recent post on The Works of God borrowed from a sermon by Dr. Piper in which he presented a tool he developed many years ago to help him deal with difficult situations. This tool is summarized in the acronym APTAT. (Dr. Piper pronounces it ap-tat.) The letters stand for the words, Admit, Pray, Trust, Act, and Thank. In dealing with a difficult situation, one of our best ways to approach it is to begin by admitting, to ourselves and to God, that we are unable to handle the difficulty on our own and in our own strength. Then, having admitted our inadequacy, we ask our God to help us, to give us whatever we may need to handle the situation. Then, perhaps most importantly, we trust God to do what He has said He will do. Next, we act. We do what we must do, whatever that may be, based on our admission of inadequacy, our prayer for help, and our trust in the Lord to answer our prayer. And finally, after we have done all of the other steps, we are to thank God for his help in the situation.

John used this sermon reference to explain how he dealt with a difficult issue having to do with Paul. Paul's doctors were increasing the dosage of Paul's daily medication, and John was upset and angry because of what the medication's side-effects do to Paul and the likelihood that those side-effects would worsen with the increased dosage. Ultimately, John resorted to APTAT to deal with the difficult situation. The "Act" part, in this situation, was to push back on the doctors, reminding them of the impact to Paul and requesting that they pursue another course, if possible. I found the whole blog post to be interesting and enlightening, and I plan to practice APTAT from this point forward, in a wide variety of settings.

If you are interested in reading this particular blog post, you can find it at [The Works of God/Bitter or Angry? APTAT](#). My thanks to both John Knight and John Piper for this helpful and God-honoring tool for dealing with the inevitable difficulties of life. Perhaps you are facing difficult situations, whether having to do with an adoption you're pursuing or a child you've brought home—or even something else entirely. I believe you will find that a rigorous and honest application of APTAT will help you, both with the immediate situation and, more importantly, with your relationship with the Author and Perfector of your faith.

Soli Deo gloria!

## Spotlight: Ethiopia

It has been a little while since we last looked at a specific country where some of the waiting children from our website are from. So, we are turning our attention this month to Ethiopia, a country with a long and storied history.

Ethiopia is located in eastern Africa, just inland from the horn of Africa and near the southern edge of the Red Sea (see the inset). In the ancient world, Ethiopia was a major world power. It is ranked as one of the four primary world powers of the third century A.D., along with Rome, China, and Persia. Of these, Ethiopia was the first to convert to Christianity, doing so in the fourth century after King Ezana was converted subsequent to the ministry of St. Frumentius of Tyre. This was not the first time that the Gospel was preached to an Ethiopian, however. In Acts 8:26-40, we read of the encounter between the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip, one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles (Act 6:1-6). Today, the majority of Ethiopians identify themselves as Christians, with most of them being Ethiopian Orthodox.



Geographically speaking, Ethiopia has a number of interesting features. One can see waterfalls and volcanic hot springs, some of the highest mountains in Africa, some of the lowest places in the world, and the hottest place year-round on the planet (its northernmost area, Dallol, Afar). Ethiopia is almost twice the size of Texas and is the second-most populous country in Africa, with just over eighty-two million inhabitants. The two largest ethnic groups in the country are the Oromo and the Amara, and the official language is Amarigna (Amharic), with Oromigna and Tigrigna as official regional languages.

As it pertains to adoption, Ethiopia is one of the few countries in the world that has seen an increase in activity over the past decade. In 1999, only 42 orphans from Ethiopia were adopted to the U.S.; that number rose to 2,511 in 2010, and Ethiopia has been in the top five for countries whose children were adopted to the U.S. every year since 2007.

We are obviously encouraged by this trend, and we would like to see that number continue to rise. Any children from Ethiopia listed on our website will be posted as part of our East Africa waiting children page. (Regulations prohibit us from stating explicitly on our website that a child is from Ethiopia.) Please join us in praying that more and more Ethiopian orphans will come home to their forever families in the months ahead.

## 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.



Anna Marie,  
in Russia



Anna Marie, at  
home in Georgia



Leighanna,  
in Taiwan



Leighanna, at  
home in Arkansas



Lily,  
in China



Lily, at home  
in Virginia

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