



# EMBRACING ADOPTION

by Philip Zielinski



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family.*

**H**ow did you expect God to build your family? First a spouse, then a child or two (or more)? No two families are the same. There are the husbands who come with children from previous relationships or surprise twins that double the joy. There are empty bedrooms, waiting to be filled, and children waiting for parents who will love them like their birth parents would not — or could not.

Our families may not be knit together exactly as we expected. God builds families and gives the blessing of children through birth and also through adoption. When we embrace the opportunity of adoption, we follow in the heart of God as He has given us the adoption as sons (GAL. 4:5) and given us His love by calling us “children of God; and so we are” (1 JOHN 3:1). God has adopted each of us into His family — as full members of His household — and so we have an image of the adoptive family’s love for their children.

God has called us to show mercy to those needing a family. God’s mercy opens our homes and hearts and leads us to be parents to children who each deserve to have a mother and father who love them and will take care of them. All children matter to God and are precious. That is why we embrace parenting by adoption and all the joys and challenges that come along with it.

## **Challenges**

Adoption comes with profound challenges that adoptive families can find difficult to talk about (and their loved ones find difficult to understand). There are, of course, the financial challenges of making adoption happen. International adoption can be particularly costly. However, many states have adoption programs that cost families little or nothing and can provide financial assistance to raise their children.



Once the bills are paid and the children are home, many families begin to experience the fallout from the trauma their children have experienced. The trauma the children experienced that separated them from their birth parents is something their forever family must deal with to bring them to health. Children's fear and anger are misdirected toward their adoptive parents, instead of at the source of their hurts. This struggle for attachment is usually contained deep inside the home. When you meet them in church or out and about, the struggling children will turn on their charm, or simply be checked out of reality and won't let you see their struggles. But behind those masks and emotional shields are kids and families swimming in the tumultuous waters of recovery and becoming a family.

"But aren't they thankful they were adopted?" Some day they might be, but maybe not. Children and families in adoption will have a lifelong battle with feelings of loss, rejection, guilt, shame, grief, confusion of identity, lack of intimacy and a struggle for control. Even in our own relationship with our perfectly loving heavenly Father, don't we struggle with our old nature and new life?


### Crosses worth bearing

Adoptive parents can find it difficult to let down their guard and share their struggles. Everyone they meet has such admiration for them for adopting that it can make understanding adoptive parents' tears and sleepless nights difficult. Adoption certainly is a noble endeavor, but that

doesn't mean that as an adoptive parent you can't seek help or that you must suffer in silence. Please remember that God has not forgotten you or your children. He has given you a family in Christ, your pastor and your brothers and sisters in Christ, to be a blessing to you in prayer and give you forgiveness and new life in times of sorrow.

The Church, as the family of God, can support adoptive families and become extensions of God's mercy. Through material, physical, emotional and spiritual support, adoptive families can be lifted up in difficult times and strengthened to endure the brokenness that has impacted their children. Lend a listening ear. Be willing to learn about their unique struggles.

Children are blessings, given at the pleasure of the Giver and are simply received by us. Even when the blessing comes with a cross to bear, through Christ we count our suffering a joy and give thanks that we have been counted worthy to bring up our children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord, who loves them and has set them into our family. **LW**

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Learn more about the Zielinskis' adoption story at [eyesoflife.org/phil](http://eyesoflife.org/phil).

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### HOW CAN I HELP?

- Check on the parents. How are they? Do they have time for themselves? Can you help them feel less stressed?
- For a family with a recent adoption, they're still in the "honeymoon" phase. Offer to do something for them that will allow them time to spend with their children, like running errands, cleaning or shopping.
- Know an adoptive family where the child has acted out in some way (running away, dressing or acting contrary to the family's values, trouble with the law, etc.)? If that isn't new to your own family, can you share how you dealt with your struggles?
- Ask about attachment and bonding. What can you read to understand their life as an adoptive family? Can you help them work counseling into their routine? ([adoptattachtherapy.com](http://adoptattachtherapy.com) has some helpful resources and articles.)
- Work through the parents. "Why don't you ask your mom and dad if it's okay for you to ..." "Mom, Dad, would it be all right if ..." In so doing, you'll help kids with attachment issues see the difference between parents and strangers.