

Adopted For Life

The creepiest sound I have ever heard was nothing at all. My wife, Maria, and I stood in the hallway of an orphanage somewhere in the former Soviet Union, on the first of two trips required for our petition to adopt. Orphanage staff led us down a hallway to greet the two 1-year-olds we hoped would become our sons. The horror wasn't the squalor and the stench, although we at times stifled the urge to vomit and weep. The horror was the quiet of it all. The place was more silent than a funeral home by night.

I stopped and pulled on Maria's elbow. "Why is it so quiet? The place is filled with babies." Both of us compared the stillness with the buzz and punctuated squeals that came from our church nursery back home. Here, if we listened carefully enough, we could hear babies rocking themselves back and forth, the crib slats gently bumping against the walls. These children did not cry, because infants eventually learn to stop crying if no one ever responds to their calls for food, for comfort, for love. No one ever responded to these children. So they stopped.

The silence continued as we entered the boys' room. Little Sergei (now Timothy) smiled at us, dancing up and down while holding the side of his crib. Little Maxim (now Benjamin) stood straight at attention, regal and czar-like. But neither boy made a sound. We read their books filled with words they couldn't understand, about saying goodnight to the moon and cows jumping over the same. But there were no cries, no squeals, no groans. Every day we left at the appointed time in the same way we had entered: in silence.

On the last day of the trip, Maria and I arrived at the moment we had dreaded since the minute we received our adoption referral. We had to tell the boys goodbye, as by law we had to return to the United States and wait for the legal paperwork to be completed before returning to pick them up for good. After hugging and kissing

them, we walked out into the quiet hallway as Maria shook with tears.

And that's when we heard the scream. Little Maxim fell back in his crib and let out a guttural yell. It seemed he knew, maybe for the first time, that he would be heard. On some primal level, he knew he had a father and mother now. I will never forget how the hairs on my arms stood up as I heard the yell. I was struck, maybe for the first time, by the force of the *Abba* cry passages in the New Testament, ones I had memorized in Vacation Bible School. And I was surprised by how little I had gotten it until now.

Families, the Bible tells us, reflect something eternally true about God. It is God's fatherhood after which every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph. 3:14-15). We know what human parenting should look like based on our Father's behaviour toward us.

The reverse is also true. We see something of God's fatherhood in our relationship with our human fathers. Jesus tells us that our fathers' provision and discipline show us God's active love toward us (Matt. 7:9-11; Heb. 12:5-17).

Little Maxim's scream changed everything—more, I think, than did the judge's verdict and the notarized paperwork. It was the moment, in his recognizing that he would be heard, that he went from being an orphan to being a son. It was also the moment I became a father, in fact if not in law. We both recognized that something was wrong, because suddenly, life as it had been seemed terribly disordered.

Up to that time, I had read the *Abba* cry passages in Romans and Galatians the same way I had heard them preached: as a gurgle of familiarity, the spiritual equivalent of an infant cooing "Papa" or "Daddy." Relational intimacy is surely present in the texts, but this definitely isn't sentimental. After all, Scripture tells us that Jesus' Spirit lets our hearts cry "Abba,

Father!" (Gal. 4:6). Jesus cries "Abba, Father" as he screams "with loud cries and tears" for deliverance in the Garden of Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7; Mark 14:36). Similarly, the doctrine of adoption shows us that we "groan" with the creation itself "as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23). It is the scream of the crucified.

We rarely feel how desperate—and how liberating—the call is. We assume it's a cry only at the beginning of the Christian walk, not through the ongoing work of the Spirit. We grow complacent in the present age, too comfortable to cry out for a Father we can sense only by faith.

The *Abba* cry of our adoption defines who we are and what family we belong to. None of us are natural-born children of God, entitled to all this grace, all this glory. It's not just the Gentiles—with their uncircumcised penises and pig-flesh-eating mouths—who were adopted into this family. The Jewish Christians, too, received adoption (Rom. 9:4). Yes, Abraham was the father of the Israelites, but he was an Iraqi Gentile before he joined the household of God. We Christians receive newcomers because, in Christ, we have been received. Our identity and our inheritance are found in Christ, or they are not found at all.

I was at first reluctant to adopt, because I assumed an adopted child would always be more distant than a child "of my own." I was wrong. And I should have known better. After all, there are no "adopted children" of God, as an ongoing category. Adoption tells us how we came into the family of God. And once we are here, no distinction is drawn between those at the dinner table. Love based on the preservation and protection of genetic material makes sense in a Darwinian—not a Christian—view of reality.

Russell Moore

A WARM WELCOME

... to you if you are visiting today.
Please stay on for morning tea.

- * Creche for 1,2 & 3 year olds runs 10 to 11am
- * Skids program for age 4 to Year 6 runs 10.30 to 11.15am
- * CD copies of sermons available.
- * Good books on sale.
- * Gifts to support the Church's work may be left in the box by the door.

TODAY

9.30am
Sermon **THE END?**

Reading 1 Samuel chapter 27

Morning Tea
10am at crèche
10.30am at skids
11am for rest

6 pm
GRANITE at Mark's

THIS WEEK

BIT 56 Tuesday 3.45pm
at West Tamworth Public School

DEACONS
Tuesday 7.30pm at Kay's

SMALL GROUP LEADERS
Wednesday 7.30pm at Carinya

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP
Friday 7pm at the Youth Hall

PREACHERS WORKSHOP
Saturday 8.45am to 3 pm

Birthdays

Tuesday	Andy Croaker
Wednesday	Catherine Smith
Thursday	Jenny Pearson
	Geoff Turnbull
Friday	Ethan Beckhaus

Serving Today:

10am crèche

Denise T Judith

skids@trinity:

Andrew Mc Sue W Aleesa
Lauren P Alex

Childrens Play Area:

Trudy

Morning Tea:

Sarah Heather Jessica

11.45am PAC pack up:

Peter Mo Bruce
Pete W Dave P

Lock-up:

Jeff

Elders:

Peter Finlayson 6762 4701
Ross Fotheringham 6765 3530
Warwick Lyne 6762 6810
John Paterson 6765 4074
Neil Seaton 6762 3197
Michael van der Graaf 6762 7717

3 Good Questions

- * *If He is there, why doesn't God say something?*
- * *If God is good, why is the world so bad?*
- * *If Jesus is love, why is he against Islam?*

Many of your friends ask these questions, or others like them, from time to time. Invite them to our **3 August Guest Services**, to hear answers.

Ask them to the first, and do not be surprised if they come and then want to come back for the others ... or if they cannot come to the first, tell them there are two other chances, so they don't need to miss out.

Please take as many of the printed invitations as you can use.

Hospitality Sunday

Why not ask some other Trinity family members home for lunch next Sunday ... and perhaps introduce them to other friends of yours. Friends coming with you to the first Guest Service may welcome the opportunity to join you. Remember to be wide-ranging in your invitations.

Preach The Word

We look forward to hosting our first *Preach the Word* workshop next Saturday, for those who preach and those who one day might.

If you know someone who is planning to come, but may not yet have registered, kindly tell Neil today, so we cater for all.

House Sitters

If you know someone needing a house sat, for any periods from very short to long, Gary and Tricia Gosson are available.

Paracetamol

Some discount chemists in town are selling limited numbers of 100-boxes of Panamax etc for a few cents. If you can get some when you are next there, we'll send them off to friends in the Philippines who need but cannot afford them.

Latest PNG Newsletter

If, last week, you did not receive a copy of the latest letter from Glenn and Beth in PNG, please take one with you today.

Speaking Personally

- * Jean Woods is home from hospital, while Kath Carter remains in Ward 8 at the Base
- * Desley Williams' father, Irvin Pollock, is at McKay Nursing Home (Jacaranda Unit)
- * Angie Taylor has gone off to live and study at UNE
- * HoSun is again visiting from Korea, with 9 students at Carinya
- * Several ladies are pregnant—remember to keep praying for them and their unborn children

The whole Bible in one year

Monday 26th

2 Chron 17,18 / Romans 9:25—10:13
Psalm 20 / Proverbs 20:2,3

Tuesday 27th

2 Chron 19,20 / Romans 10:14 - 11:12
Psalm 21 / Proverbs 20:4-6

Wednesday 28th

2 Chron 21-23 / Romans 11:13-36
Psalm 22:1-18 / Proverbs 20:7

Thursday 29th

2 Chron 24,25 / Romans 12
Psalm 22:19-31 / Proverbs 20:8-10

Friday 30th

2 Chron 26-28 / Romans 13
Psalm 23 / Proverbs 20:11

Saturday 31st

2 Chron 29 / Romans 14
Psalm 24 / Proverbs 20:12

Sunday 1st

2 Chron 30,31 / Romans 15:1-22
Psalm 25:1-15 / Proverbs 20:13-15