

**SCRIPTURAL HOPE AND HELP FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES:
A PRACTICAL GOSPEL-BASED BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY**

By Phil Layton

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Preface

As an adoptive parent myself and pastor of over 10 adoptive families, I've learned much about some of the unique struggles common to families formed by adoption. In counseling and caring for these parents and their children, my eyes have been opened to sin and its effects on children, and the grace and biblical wisdom needed to help. In the years since my wife and I adopted, I've seen the depth of challenges faced by many families (many far deeper than what we've gone through), and I've also seen there are few Christian resources applying God's Word in any depth to the issues faced by many adoptive parents. Most traditional parenting books don't cover adoptive issues or are counterproductive to them. The few Christian books for adoptive struggles mostly give practical helps from psychology and attachment-based research, but the gospel isn't often central or spoken of enough as to how it relates. A growing number of Christians have organized support groups, but my growing desire was to have a study group for deeper support with gospel-driven biblical studies and scripturally-based resources in print, audio and video.

I put together this study with the conviction that scripture is sufficient, that good science fits with that scriptural framework, that the gospel "is the power of God" (Romans 1:16), and without it, even good Christians will feel powerless, hopeless, and helpless. I pray this study will give hope and help for many to see how the gospel does relate to them as adoptive parents, and how much the scripture has to say about adoptive family challenges, literally from Genesis to Revelation. We're not left to self, or secular resources, or simplistic Christian clichés or superficial answers by those who don't understand unique needs. God's scriptural and supernatural '*divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness,*' notably in '*his very great and precious promises*' (2 Peter 1:3-4 NIV). This study will point to some of these promises parents so greatly need and how the gospel promises a power than can change us as parents as well as our kids. If you're reading this for help in changing your kids, I hope you'll see *you* need to change, too!

This study guide was developed for a group of adoptive parents at our church in a discussion-based class, though it could be adapted for other uses by individuals or groups. The lessons are organized around and can supplement the video curriculum and study series *Rooted: Gospel-Driven Parenting for Struggling Families*, developed by Hope for Orphans (each "Lesson" # corresponds to a "Video" # in the series of similar name). Brian Borgman's book *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption* and his teaching are also referenced in these studies and other helpful resources. With the class's permission I also recorded several of their testimonies and our group discussions, and have brought together some of the best teaching resources I could find. The 24-week class audio and print supplements are available at the below web addresses:

<http://www.goldcountrybaptist.org/page/1477/22701/Adoption-Parenting-Resources>

Alternate: https://www.sermonaudio.com/source_series.asp?sourceid=gcbc (click "Adoption Class")

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Lesson #1 Supplement to Intro: The Scriptural Framework and Foundation

A. The Gospel and the 1st book of the Bible

1. A foundational issue: "*it's not good for man to be alone*" (Genesis 2:18, speaking of mankind and marriage, but it's also not good if people are left alone, abandoned, or neglected [as modern science has confirmed] nor is it good for parents to be alone, without a church)
2. The first gospel (Genesis 3:15) is revealed in the context of conflict between mothers and offspring and Satan's opposition to God's design, and the turning of spouses against each other. Note also how the promise was understood of One who would not only defeat Satan but would also bring relief from the curse and reverse the effects of the fall (Genesis 5:29)
3. The family of faith was to include other ethnicities (Genesis 12:3b, Paul calls that text the "*gospel preached beforehand to Abraham*," Galatians 3:8). Note also the beautiful picture of adoption in Genesis 48:5-6 (for further study, hear [Baucham's sermon on Genesis 48](#))
4. The family struggles in Genesis as a result of brokenness and departing from the design:
 - birth-mother issues, like Hagar's son being given to Sarah for her own and growing up in conflict with Sarah's biological son Isaac, serious sibling issues with Isaac vs. Ishmael
 - There's a mom who doesn't love one son like the other, and a dad who loves a son who's like him but not the other (Isaac and Rebekah with their sons Jacob and Esau)
 - a father's favoritism with siblings of different birthmothers (Rachel's sons vs. Leah's)
 - family issues include violence, anger, aggression, chronic lying, inappropriate sexuality, bitterness, lack of forgiveness, manipulation, etc., all in the family of faith in the 1st book
 - difficult pasts affected but didn't define those God redeemed (Tamar's son, Joseph, etc.)
 - even evil done towards or by children in the past God intends good in it (Genesis 50:20)

B. The rest of the book of Moses - God's adoption of Israel

1. Moses, Israel's representative and leader, was adopted (Exodus 2:10, Acts 7:21 ESV '*when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son*').
 - Moses had struggles with identity, belonging, anger, violence, he ran away, he spoke back to God, disobeyed God, struggled with his biological siblings, etc. He knew the struggles of a sojourner and urged mercy to them; Ex 2:21-22, 22:21-23
 - God helped Moses overcome his past and struggles to be a great man of God
2. Through the adoptee Moses, God reveals the adoption of Israel His son (Exodus 4:22-23)
 - God the Father already had a natural Son in the Trinity but now speaks of Israel as His son (Romans 9:4 NASB '*Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons*')
 - God rescued Israel like an abandoned child in a wilderness (Dt 32:10-11, 1:31)
 - He chose based on love, not based on anything great about Israel (read Dt 7:7-8)
 - Israel was therefore to show that love; Dt 10:18-19, 24:17-22, Ex 23:9, 22:21-23

C. Learning from God's model as adoptive Father of Israel (Rooted study guide, p. 19)

1. God sees us (compare Exodus 2:6 on a human level to 2:23-25, read also Genesis 16:13)
2. God relates to us and enters our world (read Exodus 3:7-8)
3. God reaches into space and time to help us (read Exodus 3:12, 20-21, 4:12, Dt 31:8)

Lesson #2 Supplemental Notes on Seeing Our Children

Trauma – consider Israel’s past in Egypt and ‘law of survival’ at work (Rooted guide, p. 27-28)

- was their disobedient hoarding food (Ex 16:19-20) related to past and/or lack of trust?
- did their anger and aggression (Ex 17) also reflect a fear of survival and/or lack of trust?
- were their power struggles with Moses reflective of past experience also (Ex 2:14, 6:9)?

Grief and fear can be gripping and paralyzing – Ex 15:14-15 NKJV ‘*Sorrow will take hold... Trembling will take hold... They will be as still as a stone*’ (for help with fear, read Gen 50:21)

Attachment problems – Dt 1:31-32 NIV ‘*God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD*’

Disability - God mercifully called to remove what would make the disabled stumble – Lev 19:14

Lack of learning – Dt 31:13 NIV ‘*children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn*’

Bad learning – in Israel’s history lying by Abraham affected his son Isaac’s lying (Gen 12, 20, consider also sins of birthparents can impact their children but God’s love is greater, Ex 20:5-6)

Spiritual - James 3:16 says where ‘*selfish ambition exists, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown...*

- Could this principle include selfish sin of birthparents at the root of their child’s disorder?
- Is it possible selfish sin in a child unchecked could cause or compound a disordered life?
- What are the things that wisdom applies that lead to ‘good fruits’ being sown in this text?

Verses to help us see our children with compassion (Rooted study guide, bottom of p. 28)

1. James 1:27 says pure religion is ‘*to look after orphans and widows in their distress...*’ (NIV)

- ‘*to look after*’ can be translated ‘see, observe, pay attention to, look upon with mercy, study, examine carefully, show care for, take care of, visit graciously, go to help’
- ‘*orphans...in their distress*’ (‘distress’ can also be translated as ‘suffering, anguish, affliction, need, trouble, tribulation from fears within, that which causes pain, pressure’)

2. Psalm 103:13-14 (NASB) *Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful ...*

3. Matthew 9:36 says Jesus ‘*Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited* [or other translations have ‘troubled and abandoned’ or ‘cast away’ or ‘cast aside’, or ‘hurting,’ or ‘helpless,’ or ‘confused,’ or ‘dejected,’ or ‘dejected,’ or ‘faint,’ etc.]

Key Verses on Forgiveness (Rooted study guide, p. 29-30)

1. Note in Ps 103 above, v. 3-12 and how they relate to v. 13-14 and the frame of God’s children
2. Note Christ’s cry on the cross for those still in sin: ‘*Father forgive them, for they do not know*’
3. Note how Joseph treated those in his family despite their great sin against him (Gen 45:4-15)
4. We’re commanded to forgive in our heart in prayer before the offender asks (Mark 10:25)
5. We should also confess sins to each other and pray for each other to be healed (James 5:16)

Lesson #3 Supplemental Notes on Relating to our Children

I. Moving from the book of Moses to the historical books (Joshua-Job)

A. Like with Moses, God used others besides birthparents to raise/care for children

- Job 31:18 *'from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father...'*
- Esther 2:7 *'when her mother and father died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter'*
- Samuel (as 3-year-old brought to Eli to raise, 1 Sam. 1-2, he calls *'my son,'* 3:6)
- Obed (son of Ruth, a moabitess not biologically related to Naomi her in-law)
Ruth 4:16-17 (NIV) *Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son.' And they named him Obed.*
- Mephibosheth was orphaned at age 5 when he became disabled (2 Samuel 4:4).
2 Samuel 9: *The king asked, "Is there... one of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?...Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness...and you will always eat at my table." ...So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons...he always ate at the king's table.*
- Applications? (consider Brian Borgman, Grace and Grit of Adoption, p. 26, 75)

B. Relating to our children as God relates to His (Rooted study guide, p. 36)

- 1. Time** (*'Samuel grew and the LORD was with him...'* - 1 Samuel 3:19)
- 2. Proximity** (Joshua 1:5 *'As I was with Moses, so I will be with you'*)
- 3. Intentionality** (2 Sam 7:14-14 *I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; ...I will correct him with the rod ...but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him...)*

C. Five ways to enter the reality of your child's suffering (Rooted study guide, p. 37)

1. Know what happened to them, their heart impact (1 Sam 16:7, Borgman 76-78)
2. Understand their weaknesses and encourage their strengths (1 Samuel 23:16)
3. Know their fears (for further study, Shari McMinn, *Adoption*, chapters 39-40)
 - fear may be more obvious in running, "flight" (1 Sam 17:24)
 - fear can also be at the root of hostility, "fight" (1 Sam 18:29, Borgman, 79-80)
 - fear can also manifest in a "freeze" response (1 Sam 28:20)
4. Know their temptations and proactively seek to help them (Job 4:3-4, 16:5)
5. Relate to them on a heart level. Show how much you value and cherish them.
Dt 14:1-2 *'you are the sons of the Lord...the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples on earth'* (or 'special treasure')
Dt 32:9-10 (NLT) *'the people of Israel belong to the LORD...his special possession. He found them in a desert land...watched over them; he guarded them as...his own eyes.*

For further study:

- Scriptures in historical books for fear: Josh 1:9, 2 Sam 22, 2 Kgs 6:16, 1 Chron 28:20, Neh 4:14.
- Stories in historical book that show God as the Protector who can relieve fears?
- Value of kids having visuals and re-enacting God's great works? (Josh 4:21-24, Esther 9:27-28)
- L. Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: Biblical Perspective on Reactive Attachment*, p. 120-25.

Lesson #4 Supplement: helps for adoptive parents in Psalms and Proverbs

Proverbs 1:5 *'let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance'* (see 15:22)

Psalm 146 *'Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the LORD...The LORD opens the eyes...The LORD raises those who are bowed down...He relieves the fatherless...'* (NKJV)

Psalm 68 *'A father to the fatherless...God sets the lonely in families...our Savior, who daily bears our burdens...from the Sovereign LORD comes escape...God gives power and strength to his people'*

Psalm 103:13–14 *'As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed [or our frame, our make-up]'* (all verses in NIV unless noted)

God's adopting and fathering Israel from a hard place (Egypt) provides a model for us

Ps 78 calls parents to teach their kids so they'll trust God and not forget what He did for Israel:
¹³ *He divided the sea and led them through ...* ¹⁴ *He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night ...* ¹⁷ *But they continued to sin against him, rebelling ...* ²² *for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance.* ²³ *Yet he gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens;* ²⁴ *he rained down manna ...* ²⁵ *... he sent them all the food they could eat ...* ²⁹ *They ate till they had more than enough, for he had given them what they craved ...* ³⁶ *But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues ...* ³⁸ *Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger ...* ³⁹ *He remembered that they were but flesh ...* ⁴⁰ *How often they rebelled against him ... and grieved him ...* ⁵² *But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep through the desert.* ⁵³ *He guided them safely, so they were unafraid ...*

How was Israel like our children? How was Israel like us? What can we learn from God's parenting?

1. The troubled or grieving or in need of help

Ps 10:14: *You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief...The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless...You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear...the fatherless and the oppressed...* (NKJV)

Ps 73 *'Surely God is good to Israel... I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand... You will guide me, And afterward receive me... the nearness of God is my good'* (NAS)

2. Those who don't otherwise feel safe in bed

Ps 4:8 *I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety*

Ps 63:6, 8 *On my bed I remember you...My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.*

Ps 139: *You discern my going out and my lying down...You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me...if I make my bed in the depths, you are there...your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast...darkness will not be dark to you...When I awake, I am still with you...know my anxious thoughts...and lead me in the way...* (also Ps 23, Prov 3:24)

3. The fearful and fretful

- There is a prudent fear (Prov 22:3) but fretting is at the root of many wrong responses (Ps 37:8)

- In Psalm 23:4 why does David not fear? In Psalm 46, what do we learn in v. 1-2, 5, 7, and 11?

Practical applications: Empowered to Connect [podcast](#) 3/23/17 (creating an environment of felt safety)

More Practical Parenting Help in Psalms-Proverbs

Wisdom for speaking to children who are anxious and angry (see Borgman, p. 83-84, 91)

Proverbs 15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger* (NIV unless noted)

Proverbs 12:25 *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*

Psalms 94:19 *In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul* (NKJV)

A Proverbs 31 mother *‘extends a helping hand ... and opens her arms to the needy. She has no fear ... she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness. She carefully watches everything in her household ... her husband praises her...* (v. 20-28 NLT)

A child can learn from his mother to calm and self-regulate and trust in the Lord

Psalms 131:2-3 *I have composed [others have ‘calmed’ or ‘stilled’] and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me...hope in the LORD...* (NASB)

Psalms the fearful can be taught to pray or recite

Psalms 16:1: *Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.*

Psalms 56:3, 11: *When I am afraid, I will trust in you ... in God I trust; I will not be afraid.*

Psalms 27:1: *...whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalms 119:117: *Hold me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually!* (ESV)

Psalms 34:4: *I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears* (NLT)

Passages for the fear response (flight or freeze)

Proverbs 18:10 *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*

Psalms 55: *My heart pounds in my chest. The terror ... Fear and trembling overwhelm me, and I can't stop shaking. Oh, that I...would fly away...How quickly I would escape...But I will call on God, and the LORD will rescue me...and keep me safe...Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you* (NLT)

Passages on God's sovereignty and submitting our desires to Him

Proverbs 19:21 *Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.*

Psalms 138:8 *The LORD will accomplish what concerns me...* (NAS, see 139:16, 135:6, 103:19, 37:4, etc.)

Homework: Borgman, The Grace and Grit of Adoption, p. 75-80; Rooted, p. 40-41, 49-50 (with spouse);

Further study: Disarming Fear (*Created to Connect Study Guide*, chapter 4), Shari McMinn, p. 210-17.

More Help for Parenting Children in the Books of Proverbs-Isaiah

'You were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint' (Isaiah 57:10. Read Isaiah 40-43 to find that renewal)

Helping our children in how we interact (Borgman, p. 83-84, 91)

Proverbs 15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (NIV unless noted)*

Proverbs 12:25 *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*

A Proverbs 31 mother *'extends a helping hand ... and opens her arms to the needy. She has no fear ... she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness. She carefully watches everything in her household...her husband praises her...'* (v. 20-28 NLT)

Isaiah 66:12-14: *'carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you [God says]...You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish' (NRSV)*

Isaiah 35: *'Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God..." ...sorrow and sighing will flee away...'* (v. 3-4, 11 ESV)

A wise parent seeks to look past the behavior (or personal offense) to address the heart

Proverbs 19:11 *A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*

Proverbs 4:23 *Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. (NKJV)*

Proverbs 20:5 *The purposes of a...heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out*

Questions to help draw out: 1. What was going on? (for other questions, see Borgman, p. 75-80)

2. What were you thinking and feeling in your heart as it was happening?

3. Why did you do it; what were you seeking to accomplish? (heart motive)

4. What was the result? (source: Paul Tripp, [Helping Your Adopted Child](#))

We must learn how to do good, especially how to help those oppressed or orphaned

Isaiah 1:17: *'Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans' (NLT)*

Proverbs 1:5 *'let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance' (see 15:22)*

We can learn much from God's example parenting His difficult and disorderly children

Isaiah 1:2-6: *'This is what the LORD says: "The children I raised and cared for have rebelled against me...My people don't recognize my care for them...Your head is injured, and your heart is sick...'* (NLT)

Isaiah 63: *'He said, "Surely they are my...sons..." In all their distress he too was distressed. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.'* (v. 8-9)

God recognized when lying was rooted in fear, and sought to bring healing and comfort to fearful sons:

Isa 57: *'Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit...Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied...I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort' (v. 4, 11, 18)*

God spoke to a traumatic time when kids would be taken from birthparents (Isa 39:7). Isa 40: *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly...I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed...I will uphold you with my...right hand ...Do not be afraid...for I myself will help you...by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake...Fear not...you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you... do not be afraid, for I am with you...my sons and daughters (40:1; 41:9-10, 14; 42:16; 43:1-6)*

Helping our Children with Lies

A. 4 Lies our Children Believe as a Result of Their Experiences (Rooted guide, p. 45)

1. Neglect says “You are worthless...”

But God says *"you are precious and honored in my sight...I love you"* (Isa 43:4)

But God says *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands..."* (Isaiah 49:15-16)

2. Abuse says “...you deserve to be hurt...”

But God says vulnerable people deserve to be protected (Isaiah 1:17, 10:2, etc.)

God can help those hurt and confused from past shameful events: *‘be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth...’* (Isaiah 54:4)

3. Abandonment says “...there is no one you can trust, not even God” (trust in self)

God says *‘He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is safe... The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe...’* (Prov 28:26, 29:25)

4. Control and domination says “You are helpless and you are weak.”

But if we trust in our Mighty God, He gives His strength to the weak (Isaiah 40:29-31)

B. 5 Key Areas of Training (Rooted study guide, p. 46)

1. Spiritual Training – God and His Word, gospel, etc. (Isaiah 40, 53, etc.)

2. Authority – for their protection (Proverbs 2:1-11)

3. Self-management (Proverbs 25:28) – including asking for help (12:15, 18:1, 20:18)

4. Problem-solving – help develop judgment in situation that come up (Prov 1-9)

5. Relating socially – helping others, teamwork (Ecclesiastes 3:9-12), loyalty (Prov 21:21), parents reflecting God’s fatherhood to build trust, security, competence (see prior page)

Lesson #5 Supplement: Health and Healing in the Books of Proverbs-to-Isaiah

The heart of Jesus understands our struggles and offers redeeming, healing, and help

Isa 40: *like a shepherd, he will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother...with their young... how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles?... He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless...those who trust in the Lord will find new strength* (NIV)

Isaiah 53:3: *A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows ...chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed...* (all NKJV unless noted)

Isaiah 61:1-3: *He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted ...To comfort all who mourn, To console ...To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning...* (note how Jesus applied this in Luke 4:18-22 to His coming and ministry, including opening eyes to see and setting free ‘those who are oppressed’)

The Lord calls His people to extend His ministry to those needing help and healing

Isaiah 58:6-11 *‘loose the bonds of wickedness...undo the heavy burdens...let the oppressed go free, And ...break every yoke...bring to your house the poor who are cast out... healing shall spring forth... If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness ...The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen...’*

Isaiah 1:17: *Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans* (NLT)

For further study on ways we can learn to do good to help, read Rooted guide on pursuing holistic health. Scriptural framework for p. 55-56 (exercise, time outside, stimulation, stress reduction, mindfulness, etc.): *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity... a time to heal... a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace... a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love... He has made everything beautiful in its time... banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body... Remember your Creator in the days of your youth...* (Eccl 3:1-11, 11:10-12:1 NIV). Note also the NT affirms ‘bodily exercise is of some value,’ ‘glorify God with your body,’ the importance of a ‘sound mind,’ etc. Also note how Jesus looked to the physical needs in addition to the spiritual needs, etc.

We can learn much from God’s example parenting difficult children in need of healing

Isaiah 1:2-6: *Pay attention, earth! This is what the LORD says: “The children I raised and cared for have rebelled against me...My people don’t recognize my care for them...Your head is injured, and your heart is sick...wounds— without any soothing ointments...”* (NLT, or NIV has ‘not soothed with oil...’)

Isaiah 30:26: *the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted ...* (ESV)

Isaiah 57: *Are you not children of rebellion... When you lied, and did not remember Me, Nor give Me a thought? Was I not silent even for a long time... I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him...peace to him,” Says the LORD, “and I will heal him...”* (v. 4, 11, 19 NAS)

God the Father gives us practical wisdom for relating to those in need of healing

Key proverbs on the impact interactions can have: *‘A cheerful look brings joy to the heart ... A cheerful heart is good medicine ... the tongue of the wise brings healing ... a trustworthy envoy brings healing ... Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing’* (15:30, 17:22, 12:18, 13:17, 16:24 NIV).

Proverbs 4:20, 22: *‘my words...are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body.’*

Proverbs 14:30: *‘A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body...’* (NLT, others translations ‘sound / tranquil’)

Related Resources on Health and Healing for further study

Understanding Kids From Hard Places (below adapted from Tapestry Ministry and others) ‘Hard places’ impacting development can include prenatal issues (mother’s stress levels or substances), difficult labor and delivery, prematurity, birth complications, postnatal surgery, lack of normal attachment/affection from birth-mother, trauma, neglect, or abuse. Science has shown these can have significant impacts on the brain, beliefs, and behavior (www.empoweredtoconnect.org). Science has also shown these can change with loving and nurturing trust-building relational interventions (above website).

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (F.A.S.) – alcohol in pregnant birthmother affects child’s brain’s physiological development including ability to sequence or process verbal information, attention span, communication

Sensory Processing: senses (sight, sound, touch, smell) may trigger puzzling behavior that can be misinterpreted. Significant % of kids from hard places have some degree of sensory processing issues.

Special needs (though not unique to, or always or necessarily linked to adoption) are also more common in kids from hard places

Attachment problems (per DSM-5 manual): *Reactive Attachment Disorder* (RAD) is a ‘consistent pattern of inhibited, emotionally withdrawn behavior...rarely or minimally seeks comfort when distressed [and] rarely or minimally responds to comfort when distressed. A persistent social or emotional disturbance characterized by at least 2 of the following: 1. Minimal social and emotional responsiveness ...2.Limited positive affect [i.e., joy], 3.Episodes of unexplained irritability, sadness, or fearfulness... evident even during nonthreatening interactions...disturbance is evident before 5 years of age.’

Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (DSEDS): ‘A pattern of behavior in which a child actively approaches and interacts with unfamiliar adults [with] at least 2 of following... 1.Reduced or absent reticence [to strangers]... 2.Overly familiar verbal or physical behavior [hug, hop on lap]...3.Diminished or absent checking back with [parent(s)] after venturing away, even in unfamiliar settings. 4.Willingness to go off with [stranger] with minimal or no hesitation.’

Attachment issues (if most or all present, some given a RAD diagnosis, older term *Attachment Disorder*)

- Chronic lying, even about the obvious, phoniness, deceitfulness, may manipulate or triangulate parents, other adults
- Superficially engaging, charming, affectionate to others but won’t give or receive love to parents on parent’s terms
- Abnormal speech patterns (incessant chatter, other unusual traits), abnormal eating patterns (hoarding, gorging)
- Lack of eye contact, lack of remorse, difficulty learning from mistakes, learning problems (disabilities, delays)
- Inappropriately demanding and clingy, intense control battles, hypervigilance/hyperactivity, poor impulse control
- Destructive to self, others, property, animals, may engage in pointless theft, preoccupation with violence, blood, etc.

Note: the psychological/psychiatric community is not united on attachment theory or therapy, and diagnoses changed in 2013 DSM-5. Some studies have estimated 38% of foster children will receive one of above diagnoses (RAD or DSED) and many adopted children will also manifest at least some of attachment issues above, and some will manifest many.

Related online videos I've found some help in (not necessarily a full endorsement of all)

Shorter (usually 3-6 minutes):

Tapestry Ministry, "Meeting Physical Needs to Help Regulate Behaviors," <https://vimeo.com/188726469>

Dr. Purvis, "Children from Hard Places" – what they need to heal, be whole, <https://vimeo.com/8444867>

"", Empowered to Connect, "Understanding Sensory Processing," <https://vimeo.com/21253086>

"", Empowered to Connect, "Understanding Neurotransmitters," <https://vimeo.com/12458115>

Longer Videos (50+ minutes):

Irving Bible Church conference, "Healing" seminar, Ryan & Kayla North, <https://vimeo.com/154645972>

Dr. Purvis, "Impact of Hard Places on Brain, Beliefs, Body, and Behavior," <https://vimeo.com/152938496>

Brain – altered brain development and an overactive amygdala (*see especially 30:00-43:45)

Body – altered physical development, neurochemistry and ability to process sensory inputs

Beliefs – altered belief systems (fear, safety, trust, etc.)

Behavior – altered ability to self-regulate in response to stressors

Dr. Lawson (occupational therapist), "More than meets the eye: understanding how sensory processing can impact behavior," Tapestry Ministry seminar, <https://vimeo.com/117110874>

Dr. Makhoul (nutrition scientist), "Adoption Nutrition 101," CAFO webinar <https://vimeo.com/78675267>

Defining "trust-based relationships" as used in this study guide and Christian ministries

Larry Bergstrom, M.D, Complementary and Integrative Medicine, Rooted, p. 58: 'we must understand and address these trust and control issues. This foundationally begins through a deep understanding of God's love for us and the transformational healing power of redemption and grace found in Jesus.' Rooted p. 44: 'Building trust-based relationships with our children is hard work, but it's essential as we move toward helping them. We help our children because God, in his love, helped us...How does God help us change?'

- Not based on trusting our children, but based on how difficult backgrounds make it hard for a child to trust his parents, this model gives tools for trust-building and relationship-building. Ex: Tapestry, Irving Bible Church, Empowered to Connect (see <https://vimeo.com/6860006>)
- Trust-Based-Relational-Intervention (TBRI) was developed by Karyn Purvis and colleagues at Texas Christian University. She sees it rooted in how God lovingly parents us in scripture, as confirmed by scientific studies and strategies proven to help "children from hard places"
- "Hard places" include abandonment, neglect, trauma, substances or stress during pregnancy, difficult labor or delivery, and the TBRI approach takes into account research on how this can impact the brain, beliefs (including trust and fear), behavior, and body. Key principles include
 - o *Empowering* – attention to physical needs (ex: see above "online Videos" heading)
 - o *Connection* – attention to relational needs (ex: <https://vimeo.com/44170860>)
 - o *Correction* – attention to behavioral needs (ex: <https://vimeo.com/6965006>)

Other examples from Tapestry Ministry / Empowered to Connect

- "is it adoption-related or not?" <https://vimeo.com/44173929>
- "will trust-based parenting work for my child?" <https://vimeo.com/45041896>
- "how do I handle manipulation and control?" - <https://vimeo.com/44365631>
- "what do I do when I've tried everything?" - <https://vimeo.com/89200879>

For more Videos along these lines see: <https://vimeo.com/tapestry>

Lesson #6 Supplement: God's Pattern of Parental Love in the OT Prophets

Long before the NT spoke of God the Father choosing us and in love predestining us to adoption (Ephesians 1:4-5), OT Israel was adopted (Romans 9:4) as vividly portrayed by her prophets:

God spoke through His prophets often of His adopting love toward Israel as His child

It began in a birth-mother's womb, Jer. 1:5: *'Before you were born I set you apart...'* (NIV unless noted). Hosea 11: *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son... It was I who taught [them] to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them..."*

God chose to call children from other nations as His own, re-naming children who didn't know Him yet: *'I name you, though you do not know me...you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "...I have chosen you and not cast you off"... my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name...'* (Isaiah 45:4, 41:9, 43:7 ESV)

Amos 5:2 said Israel lay *'abandoned on the ground, with no one to help her up'* (NLT, NAS *'neglected'*). Israel was as an unwanted child God took as His own daughter, Ezekiel 16: *'This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem...On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood... for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine... I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. I clothed you...*

God's love in these contexts was to depraved, defiant, disinterested, disobedient children

Ezekiel 16 goes on to describe Israel's ingratitude, indiscriminate affection to strangers and not attaching to God, inappropriate acting out sexually, idolatry, etc. God says in v. 47 Israel was worse than Sodom: *in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they...Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done...did not commit half the sins you did...⁶⁰ Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you...*

Hosea 11: *my son...the more I called to him, the farther he moved from me...he doesn't know or even care that it was I who took care of him...My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows* (NLT)

Jeremiah 32: *Israel and Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth... nothing but provoke me...They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline... I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them...I will rejoice in doing them good... I will restore... (32:30, 33, 40-41, 44)*

Jeremiah 31: *I have loved you with an everlasting love. That is why I have continued to be faithful to you ...my dear children Israel... I will do this because I am Israel's father... I will give them comfort and joy in place of their sorrow... the people of Israel are my dear children. They are the children I take delight in. For even though I must often rebuke them, I still remember them with fondness. So I am deeply moved with pity for them and will surely have compassion on them... (Jer 31:3-4, 9, 13, 20, NET, see also v. 37)*

Isaiah 1:2-6, 54:8: *the LORD says: "The children I raised and cared for have rebelled against me... My people don't recognize my care for them...Your head is injured, and your heart is sick..." In a burst of anger I turned my face away for a little while. But with everlasting love I will have compassion... (NLT)*

More on God's pattern of parental love to His people in the Prophets

God's loving words to His children who were oppressed, hurt, or scattered from birth-lands

Zephaniah 3 promises God the Father *'will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing... I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor...I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the people'* (v. 17-20 NIV). Another translation has *'With his love, he will calm all your fears... I will gather you who mourn... you will be disgraced no more... I will save the weak and helpless ones. I will...gather you together and... give you a good name...'*

Zechariah 2:8: *this is what the LORD Almighty says... whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye* (literally 'center or pupil of his eye'; NLT *'Anyone who harms you harms my most precious possession'*)

Malachi 3:17 *"They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son..."*

Isa 43:1, 4: *Fear not...you are mine... you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you...* (ESV)

Do we show God's heart to our kids? Do we speak with honor and praise to them? About them to others?

Tripp, [Helping Your Adopted Child](#) p. 7-11: Your adopted child won't always respond in predictable and comfortable ways. At times he may seem like a stranger in your family, and you will scratch your head and say, 'Well, why in the world did he do that?' Your struggles with your adopted child will not always be the result of your mistakes. Sometimes your struggles will stem from inherent differences in the [brain's] hardwiring... Adoption will take you beyond the borders of your natural wisdom, love, patience, and strength. But you are not without resources. In your weakness you are the moment-by-moment recipient of the powerful grace of a loving Lord who understands exactly what you are going through.'

Resources for further study:

Hope for Hard Places, brief Christian Alliance for Orphans Video – <https://vimeo.com/116877854>

Stuck, Tapestry Adoption Ministry Seminar, Irving Bible Church – <https://vimeo.com/61691636>

How Their Brains are Different and How To Help (*Fostering Families Today* Nov/Dec 2006): <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/caught-between-the-amygdala-and-a-hard-place/>

For more Videos along these lines see: <https://vimeo.com/tapestry>

Lesson #7 Supplement: Love and Trust and the Heart

The normal pattern: *'From the womb, You made me trust when upon my mother's breasts' (Psalm 22:19) 'satisfied from her consoling breast... you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts... You shall...rejoice...flourish...'* (Isaiah 66:11-14). *'I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother...'* (Ps 131:2-3 NAS)

Attachment theory says the problem when that normal pattern is broken is a child doesn't develop normal trust in a caregiver, causing abnormal unhealthy patterns. But God's prophets don't describe trust in man as one's ultimate problem or ultimate solution, ultimate healing is in trusting God instead of trusting self: *'He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe...Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding...It will be healing to your body...'* (Pr 28:26, 3:5, 8)

A kid trusting himself can include trusting his own efforts to manipulate, dominate, control, confuse, etc.:

- Isaiah 30:12 *'you despise what I tell you and trust instead in oppression [or violence] and lies...'*
- Isa 59:4, 47:10 *'They trust in confusion and speak lies...you have trusted in your wickedness...(NAS)*
- Habakkuk 2:4 *'Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked...'* (NLT)
- Jeremiah 7:8, 17:5-8 *'you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless...This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert...But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes...It has no worries...and never fails to bear fruit.'*
- Isa 26:3: *You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*
- Hosea 10:13 *'You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way...' (NKJV)*

Hosea 14 says in God *'the fatherless find compassion.'* *The Lord says "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them...he will blossom...He will send down his roots...He will flourish...I will answer him and care for him...your fruitfulness comes from me" (v. 3-8)*

There is Much Hope and Help for Parents and their Children in the Prophets

Isa 57:10, 40:31: *You were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint...those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Lamentations 3:21: *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:* ²² *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;* ²³ *they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* ²⁴ *"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." ...* ⁴⁰ *Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD!* ⁴¹ *Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven ... (ESV)*

God the Father as our Shepherd wants shepherds after His heart to shepherd His child's heart

Zechariah 10:2 laments how the children of Israel *'wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd'*
Ezekiel 34: *You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick...I will seek out my sheep...I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD...I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak... They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid....(v. 4, 12, 15-16, 28)*

Jeremiah 31:25: *I will fully satisfy the needs of those who are weary and...those who are faint...(NET).*

Jeremiah 23:4, 3:16 *I will place shepherds over them who will tend them and they will no longer be afraid ...I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.*

Building Bridges to the Heart – Learning from God in His Prophets

Jer 8:21 *For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn...Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter...not been restored?* (ESV)

Isaiah 30:26: *the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted ...*

Isaiah 35:4 *'Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God..."* (NKJV)

God's Love in the Gospel of His Son is the Ultimate Bridge to the Heart and Healing in Families

Malachi 4 said Messiah would come *'with healing in its wings,'* and the message of His coming would *'turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers'* (v. 2, 6).

Larry Bergstrom, M.D, *Complementary and Integrative Medicine, Rooted*, p. 58: *'we must understand and address these trust and control issues. This foundationally begins through a deep understanding of God's love for us and the transformational healing power of redemption and grace found in Jesus.'* *Rooted* p. 44: *'Building trust-based relationships with our children is hard work, but it's essential as we move toward helping them. We help our children because God, in his love, helped us...How does God help us change?'*

Isaiah 42 says the coming Lord Jesus *'will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench... will not grow faint or be discouraged... I will take you by the hand and keep you...to open the eyes...in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them'* (v. 1-6, 16 ESV, or NET *'will not abandon'*)
Implications or applications for some ways parents often discipline? (see also *Rooted* questions, p. 66-67)

This same Lord said *'I will not leave you as orphans...love as I have loved you'* (John 14:18, 15:12)

And Isaiah 1:17 *'Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans'* (NLT)

Play and Variety and Creativity in Teaching Methods the Lord used in His prophets

In Isaiah 66 God compares His children to little ones with their mother, *"carried at her side; you will play on her knees. As a mother consoles a child...you will be happy, and you will be revived"* (v. 12-14 NET)

- For further study on how play can build bridges to your child's heart, read *Rooted*, p. 70-76
- For further study on how play can be used to help children heal and grow and learn behaviors:
 - o Dr. Purvis, 'Creative Ways to Help Learn New Behaviors,' <https://vimeo.com/12655640>
 - o " ", 'Impact of Hard Places on Brain,' <https://vimeo.com/152938496> (at 44:30 mark)
 - o Tapestry Adoption Ministry conference seminar, 'Playful,' <https://vimeo.com/62847652>
 - o Tapestry seminar, 'How play helps my child grow and heal,' <https://vimeo.com/85985545>

Various other methods of teaching in the prophets:

- Using visuals, including small models or props to illustrate events (Ezekiel 4:1-3, Jeremiah 19:10-11)
- Role play or acting out to help stubborn or rebellious ones who don't grasp verbal messages (Ezekiel 12)
- Allegory, parable (Ezekiel 17) or humor to show folly of what you trust (1 Kings 18:27, Isa 44:12-20)
- Helping physically, leading with cords, getting down on their level to meet their needs (Hosea 11:3-4)
- See also Dr. Baker and Dr. Timothy Paul Jones seminar helps for R.A.D. at www.sermonaudio.com/gcbc

2nd chances to obey, giving time to think, not always giving immediate consequences or answers
See scriptures in Borgman, p. 88-91. Study Jonah 4, note God kindly still meeting Jonah's needs in v. 4-6 and how God dealt with Jonah's sinful heart. Study also God's parenting His prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19 in his flight-fear mode (v. 3), how God didn't engage Elijah's irrational emotional words in v. 4, but God provided for his physical needs of rest, food, and drink, and came a 2nd time for the journey ahead, v. 5-8. Note also how God patiently repeatedly asked questions and what he showed Elijah to help obey, v. 9-19.

Lesson #8 Supplement: Biblical Counsel and Your Child in the Gospels

Paul Tripp, Helping Your Adopted Child: Understanding Your Child's Unique Identity: 'What looks like selfishness and rebellion in your adopted child might simply be the way she is coping with her fears and insecurities about her identity and place in the world... You might wonder why it seems like you have to deal with these issues of identity and belonging with your adopted child over and over again. This is because your adopted child's struggle with his place in life is taking place at the same time as his development. You might deal with a particular struggle when your child is 5 and think that it's solved. But...a 10-year-old is able to feel and understand things that a 5-year-old can't. Perhaps that same struggle will rear its head at age 12 and again at age 17... your child has to deal with old issues in new and different ways... she will be tempted to deal with her fears of identity and belonging in a negative way. She might test your love by challenging your authority. Because she struggles with where she belongs, she might become domineering and controlling... it's very important that you learn how to deal forthrightly with the sinful responses, while demonstrating a loving and patient awareness of the profound struggles underneath. You want your adopted child to be aware that you understand what he is dealing with, but also to know that you will require him to deal with them in a right way... Thankfully, God, in the Bible, has much to say about our identity as his children and our place of belonging in his family...'

Gospel Truths to Help Find Belonging, Understanding, Sympathy and Identity in Christ

1. Jesus knows what it's like to have an adoptive parent (Joseph, Mt 1:20-21; Lk 1:27, 33; Jn 6:42)
2. Jesus knows sibling tensions from growing up with Joseph's biological kids (Jn 7:3-5, Mk 3:21)
3. Jesus knows rejection and neglect by His own kinsmen who refused to take Him in (Jn 1:11)
4. Jesus knows identity questions, temptations of food, trust, testing Father's love, etc. (Mt 3:17-4:7)
5. Jesus knows anguish and feelings of overwhelming sorrow in a father's separation (Mt 26:37-39)
6. Jesus knows abuse and abandonment greater than we'll know (Mt 26:67-68, 27:30, 39, 46, etc.)
7. Jesus has compassion for those who are hurting or from hard places or in need of shepherding:
Mt 9:36 '*Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd* [NASB, or the other translations have 'troubled and abandoned' or 'cast away...cast aside...hurting...helpless...confused...dejected...faint,' etc.]
8. Jesus has a special concern in His heart for those adults mistreated as little ones (Mt 18:5-7, 14)
9. Jesus has special care for the fatherless (ex: His first resurrection was a fatherless son in Lk 7:12)
10. Jesus died and rose so we would be adopted and loved as God the Father loves His natural Son:
 - He promises not to abandon believers as orphans (Jn 14:18), but to make us a home (14:23), and that just as the Father loves Jesus, God loves us and puts the same love in us (17:23, 26)
 - He calls sinners '*my brothers*' after He rose, as His redeeming adopting work is done (20:17)
 - Despite their sin (abandoning, denying, lying), He related to His disciples as '*children*' (21:5)
 - Despite our sin, we're Christ's *real brothers*. He understands a child's temptation, weakness, and sympathetically and mercifully has grace to help in time of need (Heb 2:11-17, 4:15-16)
 - We can cry to God as '*Abba*' as our Brother Jesus did (Mk 14:36, Rom 8:15, 29; Gal 4:4-7)
 - Jesus is His Father's natural '*beloved son in whom [He] is well pleased*' but in love the Father chose to adopt us and sees us as in Christ the same way, '*accepted in the Beloved*' (Eph 1:4-6)

Learning from the 'Wonderful Counselor' in the Gospels to be our child's counselor

Linda Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on R.A.D.*, p. 75-76: 'Attachment Disorder is a man-made label for a constellation of behaviors. For each of those behaviors, we can find Scriptures that counsel how to respond in a way that pleases the Lord and leads a child with grace to God's transforming solutions... When considering how to parent the angry, alienated, rebellious child God's way, what better role model could there be than God Himself? We can learn from how He related to His people Israel... Israel was abandoned and abused [Ezekiel 16:4-5] ... adopted by God [Romans 9:4, Hosea 11:1], she was committed to autonomy and absolutely determined to reject God's love from infancy to adulthood (2 Kgs 21:15). Often driven by fear and anger, she digressed into reckless and manipulative behavior [that included demanding, efforts to control, theft, violence and acts destructive to self and others]. Discomfort and fear of attack were triggers to rebel. She wanted safety, but only on her terms. Judges, Kings, and Jeremiah record how she was indiscriminately affectionate to the strange nations around her, hugging them in political alliances [superficially engaging while refusing to look to her Father, resisting His affections, not asking His help]. She grew calloused...hardened by deliberately thinking wrong thoughts (Ps. 78:11) and denying God's kindness (Ps. 78:32). She lied, charmed, tried manipulation, dared God (Ps. 78:19-20), and back-stabbed Him (Ps. 78:56-58) ... counsel on guiding alienated children is based on lessons from God's parenting of Israel and Jesus' responses [to Israel].'

Weary Burdened Parents Are Called to Learn from Christ's Interactions in the Gospel

Matt. 11:28-29 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

1. Jesus knows what it's like for a mom wanting to gather little ones who are unwilling (Mt 23:37)
2. Jesus knows difficulties (frustration?) of bearing long with stubborn children of Israel (Mk 9:19)
3. Jesus has special care for parents struggling to help their children (Mk 5:22-24, 9:21-24, etc.)
4. He spoke of disabilities that are not a parent or child's fault, but are for God's glory (John 9:1-3)
5. He had compassion for physical needs He knew weakened people and their kids (Mt 15:32, 37)
6. Jesus made sure physical needs of little children were met along with the spiritual (Mk 5:41-43)
7. He taught the anxious and fearful using visual aids (Mt 6:26, 10:31) and His presence (Mt 8:26)
8. He spoke to those He loved as '*son/daughter/child/dear children*' (Mk 2:5, Lk 8:48, 54, Jn 13:33)
9. He calls parents to love their children in the same way Christ loved God's children (Jn 13:33-34)
10. He emphasized attachment and connecting to Him in love, even when correcting (Jn 15:2-5, 9-11)
11. He allowed and granted respectful appeals (Mt 15:24-28) and gave second chances (Jn 21:15-17)
12. He commands we forgive our child before he or she asks for it (in prayer, in our heart: Mk 11:25)
13. Christ's Spirit convicts our children even before they're saved (Jn 16:7-9, all have a conscience)
14. He looked beyond sinful behavior and speech to the heart (woman at well, disciples, Pharisees)

Biblical Counseling Books and Related Resources for Adoptive Parents

Biblical Counseling Movement Resources Specific to Adoptive Parents

Rooted Study Guide, chapter 8 specifically on “Becoming Your Child’s Biblical Counselor”

‘One of our primary roles as parents is to be biblical counselors for our children. Our aim is to help our kids see God’s love for them and integrate the gospel into everyday life. We want our children to see the beautiful picture of Christ—the one who will never reject them, who will never abandon them, and who will never abuse them...our goal is not so much behavior modification or obedience; it is ultimately about Christ...He is our righteousness and provides the opportunity for repentance’ (p. 78)

Brian Borgman, *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption*.

- Audio seminars for adoptive parents at www.ibcd.org and www.sermonaudio.com/gcbc

Paul David Tripp, *Helping Your Adopted Child* (New Growth Press booklet)

- Videos at: <http://media.sermonaudio.com/mediapdf/63017059410.pdf>

Julie Smith Lowe, “Counseling the Adopted Child,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Winter 2007

- Shame and Guilt in Parenting and the Gospel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ilVz5ozNNo>
- Counseling Kids Reluctant to Change: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qajl1x1BTgU&feature=youtu.be

Linda Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on Reactive Attachment Disorder*

Steve Viars and Amy Baker, seminars on adoption, attachment, special needs, etc. www.faithlafayette.org

Other Scripture-Rich Resources on Adoption

Shari McMinn, *Adoption: Encouragement Advice for a Hopeful Journey* (www.generations.org)

Michael Monroe and Karyn Purvis, *Created to Connect Bible Study* (www.empoweredtoconnect.com)

Twila Miles, *Whispers of Hope: Finding Perspective Post Adoption*

Russ Moore, *Adopted for Life* (2nd edition recommended, extra chapter ‘what I’ve learned 10 years later’)

Dan Cruver, editor, *Reclaiming Adoption* (includes chapters by John Piper, Jason Kovacs, Rick Phillips)

Biblical counseling or scripture-rich books on related subjects but not limited to adoption

Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles*

Joshua Mack, *Compassion: Seeing With Jesus’ Eyes* (P&R booklet, Josh is a counselor and adoptive dad)

Joshua Mack, *Courage: Fighting Fear* (P&R book, also titled *Fear Factor*)

Andrew and Rachel Wilson, *The Life We Never Expected: Hopeful Reflections on the Challenges of Raising Children with Special Needs*

Michael Emlet, *Angry Children: Understanding and Helping Your Child Regain Control* (booklet)

Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger: Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children*

Lesson #9 Supplement: The Role of the Church

Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10).

"Live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16).

"Stop passing judgment on one another" (Romans 14:13).

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you" (Romans 15:7).

"Agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"Serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

"Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2).

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another" (Ephesians 4:32).

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19).

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16).

"Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

"Spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

"Do not speak against one another" (James 4:11 NASB).

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

"Love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

"be of one mind, having compassion for one another" (1 Peter 3:8 NKJV)

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9).

"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (1 Peter 5:5).

"Greet one another" (1 Peter 5:14)

How a Church Can Help Struggling Adoptive Parents, (IBCD Seminar 2015)

I. Adoptive parents and families do need support, encouragement and oftentimes counsel.

A. They need the regular encouragement that we all need (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:12-13)

B. But they also need to be in an environment that if they need counseling or more directed help, they know they can get it (Isa. 35:3; 1 Thess. 5:14)

II. Do not minimize the difficulties of adoption, even if you do not understand them. In other words, try to understand. Prov. 1:5; 13:15; 14:29; 16:21-22; 20:5

III. If they open up to you, listen to the adoptive parents/families as they share their struggles, realizing that they are taking a risk in sharing their struggles. i.e., Don't be shocked by what they say (Jas. 1:19)

IV. Avoid parenting formulas and seek to free the parents from formula bondage

V. Encourage them to be creative and wise in their parenting (Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9; 3:21; Eph. 6:4)

Quotes from adoptive moms on how the church can better understand and support them

‘some of our kids struggle with appropriate touch with themselves, other kids and even teachers. They sometimes need redirection (but it doesn’t mean there is something WRONG with them). Most adults want to be affectionate with our kiddos out of compassion and yet this is often NOT good for the child who is still learning proper attachment.’

‘For the most part, our culture has no clue about what is going on at a deeper level for adoptive families, and sadly, many people don’t bother to find out before passing judgment, gossip, advice, etc. ... enjoyment of church and community for adoptive families is a tricky balance... Adoptive parents can’t – and shouldn’t – defend themselves by giving everyone all the gory details of their child’s story and needs... We would love to let our guard down but we’ve seen the consequences’

‘One thing I’ve observed and experienced on this journey is loneliness. [Sharing deep struggles with] a friend is tough, because, “Well (shrug), you signed up for this.” That’s like lecturing a friend on “signing up” for the side effects of chemotherapy. The path is tiresome, but worth it, and we still appreciate dear friends who bear the burden alongside us.’

‘I am so thankful for the people who understand this is challenging ... I really appreciate the ones who look at me and quietly say, “What you’re doing is not easy, but you’re doing a good job.” Such simple words are like balm to my soul’

‘Finding a church that we can be a part of has been excruciating. We actually quit going for a few years. Nobody at church knew what to say to us. We did get ... “You have to be careful adopting someone else’s kids with spiritual darkness attached to them,” or something along those lines from a handful of people. When we were at the hospital for open-heart surgery, we didn’t have a single person from church ... offer to help with our other children or bring a meal’

‘Delivered meals during hard seasons are a huge blessing for adoptive families, regardless of how long the child has lived with them. Our friends, family, and church encouraged us with their advocacy, kind words, boundaries, prayer, gift cards ... after a quick call on the cell phone to check in first, two of our closest friends came by with a latte, flowers, and hug... I just remember how they stood on the porch with me while I cried ... They listened ... again, and loved me. Again.’

‘I wish that people understood the logistics that are involved with managing our daily life or in going to activities that other families take for granted ... If the invitation [to an event for this mom] included “I’ll help you with getting everyone fed” or “don’t worry about getting to and from the car, we’ll help”... then I would have been much more likely to accept’ (most of above from Shannon Guerra, *Upside Down: Understanding and Supporting Attachment in Families*)

How can you help wrap around adoptive families (condensed from Focus on the Family booklet)

Adoptive families need your help. Many adoptive families desperately need support from their church families. As is often the case in other areas of life, however, asking for help can be difficult to do. Many adoptive families may interpret their struggles as failure, question their calling to adopt or, worst of all, feel abandoned ... Struggling adoptive families need their church families to wrap around and support them during times of trials. When churches do this, they mirror our heavenly Father, who wraps His arms around us during times of joy as well as times of trial. While the suggestions here may not apply to all situations, they represent a general “cry of the heart” of adoptive families who welcomed home an emotionally wounded or struggling child. The goal is to provide practical guidance for churches:

First things first. Before trying to provide support to a family in need, it is vitally important for pastors and church members to understand that children who experienced previous trauma may have a difficult time adjusting to their new adoptive family – no matter how committed and loving the family may be. Understanding this is vital for effective ministry. Healing for these children doesn’t usually happen overnight, and adoptive families need their church families to walk with them through their struggles. Churches can no longer think that typical parental expressions of love alone will “cure” the child. For many of these children, their souls are scarred and their hearts are hurt. As a result, time, understanding and unconditional commitment are essential to the child’s healing process. It’s also wise to remember that the last thing adoptive parents need is simplistic answers from people who understand nothing of their unique calling and struggle. These parents do not need admonitions that they are either too hard on little cutie-pie or not firm enough with that strong-willed child. This approach will alienate the already struggling family. The emphasis for all involved cannot be on a quick fix for the children. Rather, with time and God’s grace, we can slowly help these children heal.

How do we wrap around our adoptive families? Families struggling in these situations need compassionate, non-judgmental brothers and sisters in Christ to walk beside them to help bear their burdens ... an easy way to remember: **W.R.A.P.**

W.	R.	A.	P.
Wrestle in prayer	Respite care	Acts of service	Promises of God

Wrestle in prayer. The spiritual warfare involved in rescuing orphans is very real and often overlooked. Adoptive families need you to wrestle in prayer on their behalf. Pray for strength, patience, grace and mercy. Pray for God’s truth to be revealed to the families amid the schemes and lies, for spiritual eyes to see the truth behind their struggle and strength to exercise their faith and trust in their mighty God who will walk them through their trials. Pray for the child:

- That God would heal wounds of rejection, abandonment, fear and mistrust.
- That God’s love, which never fails, will cover him in all he does.
- To know and believe hope in Christ. To trust in and receive her new family’s love and desire to help her heal.
- Seek out a group of believers who will commit to pray regularly.
- Communicate to the family [you] would count it a privilege to intercede on their behalf. (James 5:16)
- Ask the family for specific prayer requests and assure them those requests will be held in the strictest confidence.

PRAY . . . FERVENTLY and OFTEN. Let the family know you’re praying for them regularly. For the struggling adoptive family, prayer will help move them toward wholeness and healing in Christ.

Respite care. No matter how wonderful, committed and loving adoptive parents are, they need a break from the demands of caring for their children ... For adoptive parents who struggle with challenging children, respite care is crucial to the well-being of the family ... to focus on their marriage, take time to regroup, and enjoy much-needed peace, quiet and rest. If possible, provide respite in the children’s home in order to maintain as much of the structure and schedule as possible.

Acts of service. One of the keys to effective acts of service is that they are offered enthusiastically, in a spirit of love and are specifically designed to meet the needs of the family. Being aware of the dynamics of adoptive families and children will aid in identifying needs that can most easily be met. Another key to effective acts of service is to make the offer as low maintenance as possible for the adoptive parents. However kindly intended, if the offer creates additional stress or work for the parents, it will be counterproductive ... This list of ideas will help get you started.

- Meals, Laundry, Cleaning, Yard Work, Errands, Financial help, etc. Don't say, "Let me know if you need anything," because you'll likely never be asked. Instead, tell them you're going to the store that week and ask if they have time to give you a list.
- Cleaning. Housework can take away a good deal of the family's bonding time. Identify a time when the family will be out of the house and offer to vacuum, clean bathrooms, or wash linens and remake beds. This may be difficult for a family to accept at first, so give them the opportunity to decline the offer without feeling pressured.
- Financial assistance. Gifts for the homecoming celebration (like baby showers for families expanding by birth
- Make it a point to really consider the many ways you might bless an adoptive family. The options are limitless!
- Again, paying attention to the family's needs is important. When serving the family, be sensitive to the amount of time you stay to visit ... The new child needs calm and quiet time to bond with mom, dad and any siblings.

Promises of God

Throughout Scripture, God makes many promises that can encourage us during the different seasons of our lives. His Word is living and active, but His powerful truths sometimes get lost amid pain and struggle. Providing encouragement with God's Word through notes, calls or e-mails can be a powerful source of comfort and strength for families. Hope-filled words combined with listening ears, understanding hearts, kindness and mercy will deeply resonate.

- *Who is our God? He is strong and mighty. He is more than able. Keep your eyes on Him.* Promise examples: Psalm 9:9, 46:1-3, 10-11, 68:5-6, 121:7-8, 147:5, 147:3, Isaiah 30:18, Jeremiah 32:37, Philippians 4:19, Revelation 17:14, 22:13

- *My focus is on God—now what do I do?* 2 Corinthians 4:18, Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 13:5, 50:15, 125:1, James 4:8, Isaiah 58:9, Galatians 6:9, Romans 5:3-4, Job 11:18

- *Fear Not.* 1 John 4:18, 2 Timothy 1:7

- *Jesus is the answer.* Isaiah 61:1-3

Take action

- Buy a box of cards and periodically send them an encouraging note.
- Even writing out prayers for the family can be a huge blessing.
- Take time to explore how the Lord may be asking you to serve. Often it's the small gestures that mean the most.

Other quotes on how the church can better support adoptive families

What the Church Should Consider (from Shari McMinn, *Adoption: Encouragement and Advice*)

It is important to discuss how a modern church can truly support adoption as a congregation-wide ministry. Adoptive families have additional issues to those typically found within a biological-only family. Just as step and blended marriage families might have different issues which need to be addressed from time-to-time, so do adoptive families. Church leaders and members who are attentive, but not interfering, will go a long way to support and practically help adoptive families in their congregation. The most important way that churches can help adoptive families is to pray for peace and harmony. Next most important is to simply ask “How can we help?” Listen attentively ... They may need to opt out of many programs, be involved in a modified way, and do so without feeling, or being made to feel guilty ... Well-meaning actions by others outside an adoptive family can easily be contrary to what the adoptive children need’ (chap. 71)

Excerpts from Brian Borgman’s book, *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption*

I have talked to many couples who began their adoption journeys with great anticipation and excitement, only to be met with behavioral and emotional issues that quickly moved them out of their depth. Every one of these couples went from feeling hopeful as parents to feeling hopeless. And often what makes this sense of hopelessness especially unbearable is feeling unsupported or misunderstood by the local and larger Christian community ... My wife and I have been there and we know of many other adoptive parents who have as well. To these parents the shared experiences are familiar and the hurt, isolation, and sense of shame are real ... I have heard many stories from discouraged adoptive parents who have received all kinds of advice and criticism that was completely lacking sympathy and understanding. It’s not difficult to find self-appointed experts offering a broad range of input that features easy answers from a black-and-white perspective. Some people seem to think that, whatever your challenges, it’s probably a lot like a lawnmower that won’t start: a quick diagnosis and a little tinkering are probably all you need to get everything humming again, so what’s the big deal? ... Many adoptive parents I talk to – and I talk to many – often feel misunderstood by family and friends. They frequently feel judged ... often think they are bad parents, ineffective disciplinarians, or even failures. They can feel hopeless, not to mention isolated from and unsupported by the very community that ought to understand (p. 9, 16-17, 98)

Linda Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on Reactive-Attachment Disorder*

If you are a friend, pastor, or counselor of the parent or sibling of an [RAD-diagnosed] child, pray for the family. Think biblically before you speak. Support the weak and correct with gentle grace...and compassion to others (p. 279-80).

Welcoming Families in the Messiness, By Robin Pennington (Hope for Orphans blog 8/29/17)

If we had a contest for “Epic Parenting Embarrassments” I might win. How about a 5th-grade son who was headed to Children’s Church with his class and decided the electrical breaker box looked interesting, pulling the switch that shut off the lights to the entire sanctuary during the middle of the worship service and leaving a couple thousand folks sitting in the dark?... Parenting is hard and humbling, and we all need a church community to help us and point us to God. But sometimes the parents who most need their church’s care feel unwelcome at church. How does it feel to be that parent who has a biological, adopted, or foster child with special needs who is not easy to care for day in and day out? ...

How does your church respond to families who have children with differences? By differences, I mean children who have unique needs due to physical differences, mental delays, learning issues, fetal alcohol, Autism Spectrum, sensory issues, congenital differences, a history of abuse or neglect, and the multitude of chronic health problems that plague so many sweet kiddos. Does your church embrace these families or do they feel ill prepared to deal with the unique needs involved in showing these children the love and acceptance of Jesus through the local church body? ... will that family feel judged because their child may not have normal responses or fit in the normal child channel of planning? Fortunately there are churches that are planning intentionally for how to meet the needs of families with kids with special needs. They are getting gospel driven training for how to love kids from neglect, abuse and physical challenges. The impact on the family when the church embraces these families and their children is profound ... take steps to make your church the kind of safe church that will draw hurting and exhausted families into the fold of grace and acceptance [she gives a positive personal example of children’s ministry director who said to a parent of a child with sensory issues: ‘we want to be able to work with you. We want you to know that we want you here and we want your child here and this is a safe place’]

Lesson #10 Supplement: Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-18 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*¹³ *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*¹⁴ *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,*¹⁵ *and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*¹⁶ *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*¹⁷ *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*¹⁸ *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests [note the context includes parenting in v. 1-4]*

James 4:1 (NKJV) *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You ...covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. [NIV 'You want something but don't get it...you cannot have what you want']...*⁷ *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*⁸ *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts...*¹⁰ *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*¹¹ *Do not speak evil of one another...*

1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

1 John 4:4 *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world* (NKJV, note context is spirits who oppose Christ in v. 3)

Romans: *'in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us... So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires... The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet'* (8:37, 13:12-14, 16:20, all ESV unless noted)

2 Corinthians: *'if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes... in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left... we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension [or 'lofty thought'] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'* (2:10-11, 6:7, 10:3-5 NIV)

Revelation 12: *'the dragon... went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus... And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.'* (v. 17, 11). For further study, see 1 Pet 2:11, Eph 4:26-27, 1 Thess 5:6-12.

Quotes on Parenting in the Trenches of Spiritual War

From article by Russell Moore, *Adoption and Spiritual Warfare* (www.crossway.org 7/15/15)

‘It’s not just impersonal economic and sociological factors at work. “The course of this world” is driven along by “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2) [in “children of wrath” and “sons of disobedience”]... The demonic powers hate babies because they hate Jesus. When they destroy “the least of these” (Matt. 25:40, 45), the most vulnerable among us, they’re destroying a picture of Jesus himself... They are grinding apart Jesus’s brothers and sisters (Matt. 25:40). They are also destroying the very picture of newness of life and of dependent trust that characterizes life in the kingdom of Christ (Matt. 18:4). Children also mean blessing—a perfect target for those who [are the thieves that] seek only to kill and destroy (John 10:10).

But Satan always uses human passions to bring about his purposes. When new life stands in the way of power—whether that power is a Pharaoh’s military stability or a community leader’s reputation in light of his teenage daughter’s pregnancy—the blood of children often flows. Herod loved his power, so he raged against babies... Molech, a demon-god... demands the violent sacrifice of human babies (Lev. 20:1–5)... Behind Molech, God recognizes, there is one who is “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). The spirit of Molech is at work among us even now... babies lying in garbage receptacles waiting to be taken away as “medical waste.”... Aborted babies can’t say, “Abba.” But the Father hears their cries anyway. Do we? ... The universe is at war, and some babies and children are on the line. The old Serpent is coiled right now... The protection of children isn’t charity... It’s spiritual warfare.’

Rosaria Butterfield: ‘My husband and I adopted all four of our children. Daily I homeschool one child with right-brained learning strengths and another with left-brain learning strengths. This means that by the end of the school day, I have no brain. God gave us two children when they were infants and two when they were 15 and 16 years old (and placed in our home five years apart). One son stood a foot taller than me when together we took our place before the judge to complete his adoption ... Liberals think I’m just another social justice advocate ... Darwinian evolutionists think working with all the bureaucracies to adopt children renders me nothing more than a glorified nanny to a group of kids doomed by biology and uncorrectable by environment. And at least one advocate of the Christian homeschool movement cautioned us against adopting older teens by declaring: “If you can’t spank them and can’t homeschool them, you can’t lead them to Jesus!” Let’s face it. There’s simply no “Mom’s Club” for me....

Adoption is neither social justice nor Christian charity. Adoption is a Christian calling that puts spiritual warfare in full throttle... to be courageous and risk-taking in practicing before a watching world what pure and unadulterated religion really advocates (James 1:27)... physical adoption of children isn’t for everybody. But... an adoption culture is built into the gospel itself and therefore should be evident in every church community. The culture of adoption—where all are working in different ways to protect children and advocate for their adoption into biblical homes—is a credibility test for evangelism. And this credibility test is needed both for the church and for those who despise us. If churches were known as solid support systems for believing families who adopted all kinds of children (with all kinds of problems and issues)—if our churches were places where unwanted children became sons and daughters, and where both “unwanted” babies and the desperate women who carry them were claimed by us—then I’m certain the mouths of the lions would be supernaturally shut’ (Gospel Coalition blog, 7/17/2015) Read also Brian Borgman, “The Grit of Adoption: Warfare,” in *After They Are Yours*, p. 54-57.

Adoption as Spiritual Warfare, by Dr. Joshua Mack

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Usually when we talk about adoption we speak of the privileges and opportunities that come from reaching out to orphans, and we should because it is all those things. Big time. But at the same time adoption is also difficult. It is difficult because we are sinners adopting sinful children in a sinful world. It is also difficult because there is a Satan. I am convinced one of the reasons orphan care is so difficult is because Satan hates children and he hates when believers get involved in things like adoption, because ultimately adoption is a means through which believers enjoy the love of Christ and by which they show the love of Christ.

The fact adoption can be difficult shouldn't cause us to run away. It should cause us to prepare ourselves for a spiritual battle. I find as you talk about adoption with people there are often two kinds of reactions. There are some people who live in fairy tale land and think about it as all easy and wonderful and then there are other people who only can see the difficulties. Both responses are a little bit right and a little bit wrong. Adoption and orphan care is a whole lot more challenging than you think is. But if you are a believer, it can be a whole lot more wonderful than you can imagine. You just need to use the resources God's provided in Christ.

If you look at Ephesians 6:10-20, that's Paul's approach. He acknowledges there is a battle, gives us hope for victory and shows us that the key is in using the resources God has provided for us in salvation, putting on the armor of God. Adoptive parents need to wear armor. It would be worth looking at each piece of armor, but we will look at just one piece, found in the middle of this passage, verse 17, it is very short, and it is the helmet of salvation.

We are going to see why adoptive parents (and really anyone involved in this kind of ministry in any way) need to wear their helmets. Even though this is short, just one phrase, I don't feel bad taking some time to look at it, because by picking this particular piece of armor, the helmet, Paul is indicating that this is an important concept because obviously a helmet is a pretty important piece of armor. The helmet is an important piece of armor because it protects a pretty important piece of the soldier's body. If you were a soldier you could, perhaps, lose a finger or you could lose a leg in war. You could even lose an arm in war. But you cannot lose a head and survive. A head is an important piece of the soldier's body. He doesn't want to lose it. And so the helmet is an important piece of armor.

The helmet protects an important part of the Christian soldier's body and that is our head and the head obviously represents our thinking, our mind, our way of viewing the world. It is vital for the soldier to protect his head and it is vital for us as Christians to protect our heads. We need to protect our way of thinking, the way we think and it is vital for us to protect our thinking because Satan is constantly attacking our thinking.

In Paul's day the Roman soldiers had to wear special metal helmets. You have probably seen some of the pictures of the helmet with the nose plate that comes down that they used to put over. They had to wear these metal helmets because in war not only did they need to be protected from arrows. There were also people riding around with broad swords that they would whack on the soldier's heads in order to knock him down so they would be able to kill him. And so they needed a helmet to protect their head.

And we as believers are fighting an enemy who is constantly coming after our heads, who is constantly coming after our thinking. One of the primary ways that he does that is through deception. We need to protect our thinking because we are fighting an enemy who is an amazing liar. Satan is constantly distorting and twisting reality. If you have ever had a relationship with a habitual liar, you know how important it is for you to keep thinking and analyzing, you can't stop, and that is certainly true in this war we are fighting, we as adoptive parents and people involved in orphan care are engaged in a spiritual war with someone who is breathing out lies. We will look at some of those lies and how to protect ourselves.

Since Satan can't force you to give up your salvation, he is going to do everything within his power to keep you from appreciating your salvation, because he knows that failing to appreciate your salvation is going to produce all kinds of practical problems in your life. This is one reason why throughout the book of Ephesians Paul is constantly praying that God would help us to understand and appreciate the resources that we have in Christ.

If you look back at Ephesians 1:18 this is how Paul begins praying for the Ephesians. He says, verse 16: *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might...*

Paul is not praying that they might have more power. He is actually praying that they might know the greatness of the power that is already at work in them, because he understands that as believers even as believers very often we fail to appreciate the significance of our salvation. In Paul's second time of describing what he is praying for in the book of Ephesians, Ephesians 3:14 says: *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Paul is concerned that believers do not fully appreciate how big their salvation is. The salvation God has provided is huge. And we don't always appreciate how huge it is. And what Satan wants is to get us to think of it as small. He wants to get us to think of our salvation as small, because if he can get us teetering or tottering on that he knows he has opened us up for all kinds of attacks, which is why Paul here in Ephesians chapter six, if you turn there again, Ephesians 6:17 tells us to put on the helmet of salvation. That is the point. That is the image. Paul is saying, "You must protect your thinking" ...

He is not saying you need to become saved. You need to take on the helmet of salvation meaning you need to appreciate how big your salvation really is ... You protect your thinking by understanding the glory of the salvation that God has provided for you in Jesus Christ ... If you are a Christian you need to appreciate when we talk about the helmet of salvation that you have been saved. You have been delivered or rescued from the penalty of sin....It is very important you understand the tenses of salvation, one of the most important things. Past tense, you were saved; present tense, you are in the process of being saved. If you are a Christian, God is doing a great rescue work in your life right now. He is rescuing you not just from the penalty of sin, but he is actively involved in your life rescuing you from the power of sin.

And what a privilege if we just stop and just enjoy that for a second, to have the almighty God at work in your life helping you become like Jesus Christ. Salvation is past tense. Salvation is present tense. We are not left on our own to sort of drift through this life as Christians. The Holy Spirit is actively engaged in saving us, sanctifying us. And the Bible doesn't stop there when it talks about salvation. There is past tense, saved, present tense saving. And there is future tense. God will save us. And we don't want to talk about salvation without leaving that part out, because this is our great hope.

And actually in 1 Thessalonians when Paul talks about the helmet of salvation he talks about the helmet of the hope of salvation, the future salvation that God is going to provide. This life, this salvation that God has provided is not only that he forgives you from sin ... that is not where salvation ends. God has a glorious future salvation for us as believers in which he is going to rescue us. He is actually going to return. He is going to display his glory as he declares us holy and blameless and above reproach on judgment day. He is going to display his glory when he reveals us as the sons and daughters of God in which actually he is going to save, redeem these old bodies by creating a new bodies, resurrection bodies which are going to be able to enjoy forever and the whole creation, Romans 8 says, is longing for this day when the sons of God will be revealed and we will begin to see the glory, the full glory of God's salvation.

And the way we protect ourselves from wrong thinking is by thinking deeply about this past, present and future salvation that God has provided for us in Christ. You are saved, but you ... if you are a believer, you need to not only... not only be saved, you also need to enjoy your salvation. We have to keep coming back to this reality if we are not going to be fooled.

God has provided something stunning in salvation. And so what Satan wants to do is to make that salvation seem small. This is reality. You have been saved from the penalty of sin. You are being saved from the power of sin. One day you will be saved from the presence of sin. And what Satan is constantly trying to do is to twist that reality and to deceive you into thinking that you are actually fighting a losing battle so that you give up. And so we have to go back to our salvation and we have to know the facts of our salvation and we have to actually apply our salvation to our everyday life and we have to analyze and evaluate the way we are thinking and to ask: Does this line up with what I know to be true about the salvation that God has provided for me? And we have to proactively think true thoughts about our salvation and our lives that line up with the salvation we have received in Christ.

This is what it means to put on the helmet of salvation. It is to go through life and to evaluate your thinking and say, "Hmm. Does that thought, does that match, does that go in line with what I know to be true about heaven? Or does that thought line up with what I know to be true about what God is doing in my life right now? Or does that thought line up, does it match, does it make sense? Is that thought true in light of what I know God has done in my life?"

That is a major part of sanctification. What we are constantly trying to do in sanctification is line our thinking, line our feelings and line our actions up with reality, the reality of salvation. But still I realize maybe it sounds a little bit out there, a little vague and so I thought what I could do is spend some time giving you examples of what it looks like to put on the helmet of salvation as adoptive parents, foster parents, people interested in mercy ministry.

One lie we are tempted to believe is, "I don't have what it takes to do what God's calling me to do."

If you are an honest and humble person you will find that adopting and working with children who are in crisis situations can often seem overwhelming. Sometimes when we are feeling the weight of that pressure we feel like God hasn't given us the resources we need to actually respond to the pressure in a way that honors him. And that is a terrible place for us to be, because if we doubt that God has given us the resources to fight a battle, we feel like we have an excuse to give up on the battle altogether. We can say, "Hey, God, what do you expect me to do? I am in this war and you didn't even provide what I needed to fight it. So what can I do but sin?"

Except that Paul says in Ephesians 1:3, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*" Every is a very comprehensive word, right? Paul is saying there is not a single spiritual blessing out there that you as a church do not have. So you are not just sort of supplied for this battle by God. Every single blessing that God could provide for us to fight this battle he has given us.

Now sometimes it doesn't look like that to the world. They look at the blessings and the resources we have and they sort of mock what we have as not much. When David went out to fight Goliath, Saul just didn't believe that trusting in the promises of God and these little weapons that David had, that they would be able to defeat that great giant Goliath. And so what did Saul do? He said, "No, this isn't quite enough, David. You need to wear my weapons, my armor and use my weapons." And David put that stuff on he is like, no, Saul, I don't think this is going to work at all. I would rather just use the resources God has provided. And sometimes in our own lives we are Saul. We are actually looking at our own lives in the battle we are facing and we are saying, "God, I think I need armor and I think I need resources that you haven't provided."

And what we need to do put on the helmet of salvation is we need to go back and we need to say, "No, I have been saved." Let's look at the salvation that God has provided. He has provided every spiritual blessing for me in Christ. I can, I do have the resources I need to live for Christ. And what are some of those resources, guys? We have the Word of God. God has spoken. We have the Church of God. God has, too, he has united us to people who will help us.

We don't only have the Word of God and the Church of God, we have the Spirit of God. God is with us. God abides in us and the Spirit of God is actively engaged in our lives opening our eyes to the Word of God, helping us put off sin. And so what we need to do if we are going to put on the helmet of salvation is in faith trust God. That is, salvation is as good as he says it is, that we do have the resources we need to fight the battle that we have been called to fight.

It's important you believe you are as rich spiritually as the Bible says you are. Too many of us are acting like we are beggars. What happens when a person thinks he is a beggar is he thinks that he doesn't have a responsibility to give, to serve, to work, I am a beggar and because a lot of Christians sort of think of themselves as beggars, the calls to serve others in need, it feels like hey how can you ask me to do that, don't you see how little I have here, but they need to start seeing themselves the way Paul does, as people with every spiritual blessing, we are people with incredible resources.

We have been looking at the importance of putting on the helmet of salvation. By putting on the helmet of salvation we mean, protecting our thinking from lies by remembering and enjoying what God has accomplished for us through Jesus Christ. To help us get a picture of what it looks like to do this, we have begun working our way through several lies that Christians are tempted to believe.

A second lie we are tempted to believe is that we are too big a mess to ever be able to do what God has called us to do.

We look at our lives and say, "You know what? I am a mess. And I have been a mess for a long time. And I think that I am always going to be a mess. I am never going to become the kind of person that God wants me to be." It almost feels holy to think this because we are like, "hey, I am serious about sin and I see it in my life and I hate it."

But do you know what? When we get to the point where we want to give up because we think we will never make it, we are not only saying something about ourselves as Christians. We are also saying something about God and the salvation he has provided. God tells us His great plan for us in Ephesians 1:4-5 "*...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*"

Do you see what is happening? God, before the foundation of the world, before he even created the world selected us as believers for the purpose of being holy and blameless and above reproach when we stand before him in eternity. God has a plan that has been going on since before the beginning of time that we might be holy. And so when we look at God and we say, "Ah, you know what? I don't think I am going to make it." We are not saying something so much about ourselves. We are actually saying something about the eternal God's power to do what he has been planning to do from before the beginning of the world, which is to present us holy and blameless and above reproach.

When you begin to wonder as a Christian if you are going to make it you need to put on the helmet of salvation. When you are tempted to give up you need to say to yourself something like, "No, this is what God is committed to. And, yeah, I am weak. Yeah, you are right, Satan. I ... if this were up to me, if my salvation were up to me, then I would be done. I wouldn't even make it. I might as well stop now. But my salvation is not up to me. I am being saved by God. And I know God will down what he has promised to do."

It obviously can be a matter of wisdom to take care of certain areas of our lives before we step out and make certain sacrificial choices like adoption. Of course! But that kind of wise planning is very different from a general hopelessness where you just sit back and do nothing about sin because you feel like you do not have the power or resources to do what God has called you to do.

Adapted from Josh's blog at: www.joshmarda.wordpress.com

Original Audio: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=31213921302>

Lesson 11-12 Supplement: The Gospel and the Roles of Father and Mother

Our Heavenly Father and His gospel is the pattern and power for earthly parents

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Father of mercies** and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

Note part of His gospel purpose is “to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children” (Luke 1:17)

Hebrews 12:6–11 *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ... God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons... he disciplines us for our good... earthly fathers disciplined us and we respected them ... they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them...For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

The NT epistles give a few commands to parents but more patterns of what we are to be

1 Thessalonians 2:7–12 (NIV) *we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember...our toil and hardship; we worked night and day ... you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, **encouraging, comforting** and urging you to live lives worthy of God ...”*

Greek for *encouraging* = to come alongside to help, aid, strengthen, entreat, persuade, etc.

Greek for *comforting* = to console, support, cheer up, advise, speak in a friendly manner

NASB: “imploring each one of you as a father would his own children...”

ESV: “like a father...we exhorted...and charged you to walk in a manner worthy...”

NLT: “as a father treats his own children, we pleaded with each one of you...”

Colossians 3:21 (NAS) *Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.* (NIV ‘do not embitter’, NLT ‘do not aggravate’, ESV ‘lest they become discouraged’, ISV ‘resentful’)

Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and **instruction** of the Lord.* [Greek ‘instruction’ = ‘word of encouragement or reproof,’ related to *noutheteo* – ‘to counsel, to correct, to call for proper belief and behavior, appeal to the heart’]

KJV: ‘nurture and admonition’, NKJV: ‘training’, YLT: ‘nourish them in the instruction’

See <https://vimeo.com/10766237> (Video on ‘creating a balance of nurture and structure’)

Titus 2:3–5 *Older women ... are to teach what is good, and so **train** the young women to **love** their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*

Greek for ‘love’ – root *fila* – filial love, friendly familial affection in action, related to *agape*

Greek for ‘train’ – *sophranizo* – advise, train or correct the thinking to act with proper mindset

- [Click here](#) for practical examples of training our thinking with the gospel

- [Click here](#) for training the mind that doesn't "feel" the same love for an adopted child

You've been over and over this ground with them, but here you are again. You stand there, looking at them, barely holding on to your temper, wondering, *What do I do now? What do I say? What don't I say? What discipline do I impose? Will anything make a difference?* To date nothing seems to have worked. You're out of ideas, and you really would do anything, if only you knew what.

You're not alone. I regularly get asked, "What's the right thing to do with my child who?" There's something inside of us that wants certainty, some clear path forward with our children, maybe a flowchart with multiple branches detailing the many if-thens of what we should do based on what they're doing. But the Bible doesn't give you anything like that. It's not organized according to parenting issues you encounter with your child. It doesn't even have a parenting section you can skim through.

Instead, it offers you something better. From cover to cover, it introduces you to *the* Parent who engages his children, and you get to watch him parent. You learn how he relates to them and what's important to him in that relationship. Every historical account, every law, every poem, every vision, every biography, every instruction, every interaction is meant to reveal this ultimate Parent... what he's like:

- when you're faithful and when you're straying;
- when you're happy and when your heart breaks;
- when you're strong and when you're frail;
- when you're confident and when you're confused.

You don't learn first and foremost how to straighten out your kid's problem, so much as you learn how to be with someone who is struggling. You learn that God, the wise Father, approaches his kids in a variety of ways based on who they are and what's happening in their lives. He doesn't pretend that for every problem there's a singular solution that'll be the key that turns the lock ... Like looking for the one right way to approach your kids. Watch God with his children and you'll quickly learn you can have the same issue as another of his kids, and yet he'll approach you both differently. Or think back over your life and you'll realize he varies his approach with you over time depending on how you've grown.

In other words, God's method of parenting doesn't lend itself to tightly scripted formulas—"If you do x and y, then z will result." It is more like playing jazz (I'm told!) than working off a score. You have to study the chords and chord progressions, and you have to practice and hone your technique. There's music to learn, but in the moment you're always ready to improvise based on what the rest of the band is doing and how the audience shapes and influences the piece. It feels dangerously uncertain, like it could spin out of control at any time. You start a riff and look for it to move toward a resolution, but you're not 100 percent sure where or how it will end. Is parenting then a hopeless matter of taking random shots in the dark? No, but your hope is found in your Parent—*the* Parent—not in the principles and techniques you've learned. Hope comes from realizing:

- he loves your child more than you possibly could, which means he cares that they're parented well even more than you do;
- he gave you principles and examples of parenting long before you ever knew you needed them,
- he's more concerned than you are that you have the resources you need to parent well;
- he gave up his own Son to rescue you from the foolishness that would distort the wisdom he gave you, proving he cares more than you do that you'll use his resources well;

- he committed himself to redeem every misstep in your life to bring about the future he desires, including all the missteps you've taken with your child;
- he promises to wipe away every tear that comes from times when you've failed;
- he put himself inside you to lead you—to parent you—so you could be the parent he longs for you to be, the parent your child needs you to be. His Spirit teaches you to trust his parenting of you far more than you trust all the graphs, flowcharts, and principles you could ever master.

Does that kind of hope offer you a certain future of guaranteed outcomes with your child—a future when you confidently know what to do in each situation? No. It's better. It offers you the certainty of God committing himself to work in you and in your child to accomplish his purposes in them and in you. That confidence will keep you stepping into your children's lives even when you don't know what to do next, because you trust he'll be with you every step of the way.