

Adoption Parenting Class 2 – Pastors and Elders Support

John Piper: I want to take this opportunity, to encourage those who are considering adoption or even have already adopted and might be running into difficulties: remember, I was 50 years old when we adopted Talitha. She was eight weeks old. She was born in Georgia. We were living in Minneapolis. She was our only daughter. We raised four sons, only adopted child, only African American child and it was a closed adoption. We don't have any idea who her mother or her father are. And we would be totally fine if Talitha wanted to know who they are, but I just mentioned those facts to show the challenges we were facing. They felt very significant to me.

And the reason I feel like I want to encourage folks is not just because we overcame some of those obstacles like being 50 years old, but because the more, the longer, and the wider the culture of adoption becomes in our churches the more stories multiply of great pain and great sorrow in these experiences. And I don't want to white wash any of that.

People need to have their eyes opened. Parents who are pondering adoption need to know the kinds of sorrows that they might encounter...So I just want to encourage those folks who are considering adoption that, yes, you will encounter the possibilities of incredible and unbearable challenges. Children who have lived in orphanages or passed around among relatives they bring issues. They bring stuff to the family that you don't have any idea about. I have seen cases of compulsive stealing and lying and running away from home and expressed hatred for mom and dad and bizarre behaviors like banging your head against this concrete floor until it bleeds. I mean, you are sometimes just: What have we gotten into? And everybody needs to know that whether it is a naturally born child or a naturally adopted child, that might be your lot. And when you embrace a child one way or the other God expects you to fulfill your obligations...

I'm so thankful that we did what we did. She just graduated from high school...We've got our tensions at home and I think probably some of them are unique to an adoptive situation, but she has been so blessed...she and we are not perfect and we are all growing to a greater maturity and that's necessary. But it's a good story and people need to know that we don't look back with any regrets. I'm 68 years old ... an old man ... a grandfather for a father ... but we are very thankful, we are so encouraged, and we just want to say that God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you will abound in every good work. He will be enough for you in whatever you have to face.

2007 message by Piper: 'There are huge costs in adopting...some emotional ...costs in time and stress...There is something very deep and right about the embrace of this cost for the life of a child! ... When people embrace the pain and joy of children...the worth of Christ shines more visibly...Praise God for people ready to embrace suffering —known and unknown. God's cost to adopt us was infinitely greater than any cost we will endure in adopting and raising children ... God does not leave his children without help ... his help will be there for our children as we bring them under the means of grace that God uses to awaken and transform his children.'¹

If you guys have your Bibles, let's turn to Ephesians 4 and I want to expand on what we're doing and why we're doing it this way starting with pastors and teachers and then talking about how we should talk to each other in the church. **Let's set the context first if someone can please read Eph 3:20-21. Now someone please read Eph 4:11-12.** So God gives pastors or shepherds and teachers to the church, and some are gifts to broader churches beyond one local church. **In v. 12 what do these men equip the saints/believers to do? So who ministers and builds up the body? What does v. 16 add to that to help us understand how the body gets built up? What does v. 29 add as rules for how Christians talk? How should we talk about our adopted kids?**

So for today I want to follow what God's Word says here and we're starting with pastors and teachers to let them equip us first to this work of ministry to each other and building up each other in parenting. And we'll also hear from some moms today who have a part in v. 16. Each of us have a part to play as we grow in knowledge and Christ-likeness (v. 13-16) and we will have opportunities to share with each other in the future, but let's make sure in this class or in general, we talk about our kids by the guidelines of v. 29.

We'll have the study guides for the Rooted class next week and we'll get to some of the practical things in the series and in Brian's book next week but I want to start with how this text starts, with God's gospel grace that is more than we can ask or think. And to God's glory in the church He has given us pastors, teachers to equip us to minister to and build up others in the body. Brian Borgman is one that's been helping your pastor/elders here. This is a part of what he shared with us when we flew up to meet with him a couple months ago. This is a recording of his answer to the question about how we can help adoptive families who struggle and open up to the church for help:

Play 16:03-18:41 <https://ibcd.org/70015/015-interview-with-brian-borgman/>

Brian: if adoptive parents come to you, listen to what they have to say and realize that their struggles are real. They're not just whining, they're not just complaining, they're not just bemoaning the fact that they didn't get the perfect kid. Adoption has a dynamic that is unique. Some of the most harmful things that I've ever read about adoption happen to be in really good books on adoption. Just little things where it's not a syndrome, it's just sin and they're just like any other kid. The fact is that there are issues that many, not all, but many adopted children deal with that make parenting them different than parenting your biological children. Typically adoptive parents will feel guilty that maybe their affections are not as strong, especially if they're going through hard times, as it is for their own biological children. The fact is that they're dealing with all kinds of things. Often times even secret shame for the way that they feel, be compassionate because they've done something that is very, very much a demonstration of the gospel and they need grace to help them. Just adding guilt onto guilt they're going to go away discouraged and not want to talk to anybody. Listen and be compassionate and realize they're in a situation where they may have a child that doesn't have the natural affection that maybe their biological children may have. When I used to read about things like Reactive Attachment Disorder, let alone things that are physiological, like Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, I used to think whatever, they're just kids. The fact is those things have an incredible impact on that child's mind and heart and sometimes create incredible and difficult barriers for adoptive parents.

For those of you that have read Brian's book, who can tell me what some of the impacts of FAS he learned about later that he used to spank his son for?

On Reactive Attachment Disorder, I have some good audio resources I can share for any interested. One is a biblical counseling seminar for families struggling with the most serious attachment disorder symptoms. It's by Amy Baker at the Association of Certified Biblical Counseling annual conference.² Another is by Timothy Paul Jones, he's a theology professor at Southern Seminary along with Don Whitney, so he has solid theology but he's also raised children on the most severe spectrum of all the symptoms and has found great help and has some great things to say. His message is called "Attachment Disorders and the Gospel." I'll link those on the PDF of our website sermon page for today,³ or you can email me and I can send it.

Play Voddie Baucham clip 43:54-46:50: <https://vimeo.com/157073909>

So this is a good place to stop and chat a bit, as we think about some people who need encouragement in this process of parenting, some people needing counsel, some people needing help. **As you heard part of what John, Brian, or Voddie shared, did anything stand out that helps you or encourages you?**

Encouragements to moms by Noel Piper on who and how to share struggles
Play 14:18-19:22 <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=126121539537>

For further study:

“venting vertically” to God rather than others – see James 5:13

Confessing to others when we need them to pray for us – James 5:16

¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/adoption-the-heart-of-the-gospel>

² <https://biblicalcounseling.com/product/attachment-disorder-amy-baker-breakout-session-2/>

³ <http://equip.sbts.edu/conferences/adopting-for-life-breakout-session-timothy-paul-jones/>