

Adoption Parenting Class 1 – Introduction

START RECORDING

A couple families in this room are new to our church so I thought it would be good to first go around the room and introduce ourselves and how the Lord has brought our families together. We'll also have some here who are giving support to adoptive parents in their family, some grandparents. Next week the elders will join to share how God has been growing our heart and understanding of adoptive families we shepherd. Before we pray today let's go around, since there's some new people here, let's share your names, and the number of children you have, and how many of those God brought into your family through adoption, and if domestic, international, or foster.

PRAY

This class we're recording to make it available to the parents here whose families have been blessed and grown by adoption, and have known some unique dynamics that go with that. It will be online through our church site to make it easy for those who miss a week to follow and I also hope these resources will be of help to any thinking about adoption or fostering outside this class and church as well. I've been asked to post these on SermonAudio because there's precious few biblical resources to support Christian *parents* after adopting precious children. The post-adoption journey often doesn't match the 'precious moments' pictures some have, but with biblical helps, Christ and His Word can become more precious. I also hope these studies will be a resource for parents needing encouragement, which all of us will at various times to various degrees, and some hearing this need right now.

Our church has 12 adoptive families, some families don't have that and feel alone. If you're listening online as a parent feeling under-supported, I hope this helps you know you're not alone. If you're not an adoptive parent but want to better understand them, that's a great need, if you want to be a good friend to adoptive parents and pray for them, I hope you listen in that spirit.

We all have different stories, we'll hear some stories in future weeks, today let's start with the big story of scripture. Let's begin in the beginning of the Bible, so turn with me to Genesis 1. I want us to start with scripture before we talk about other resources based on scripture we'll use in this SS class.

Ask volunteer to read Genesis 1:26-27?

- In v. 26 who is the 'us' God is talking to?
- In v. 27 theologians tell us being made in God's image includes relationship like Father-Son-Spirit in the Trinity. What would be a word in adoption literature for our close relationships of love?

In Genesis 1 it says 10x God saw what He had made and it was _____. But look at Gen 2:18 and what does God say for the first time is not good?

That's a foundational statement: it's not good for man to be alone. Even in the originally perfect creation, humanity was made for relationships, to be attached to others relationally. Man is less than a day old and without one to love and to love him when God says this. In the end of chapter 1 our parents are told to be fruitful and multiply children who reflect that image of God that includes relationship. It's not good to be alone for Adam or his children

What happens in Genesis 3? What does sin and the fall do to relationships?

If it wasn't good for people to be alone in a perfect world, how much more is it not good for people to be left alone in an imperfect world? I think that principle gives us a framework to help us understand that when children are abandoned, neglected, or left alone, it's not good. So it shouldn't surprise us when modern studies show us it's not good for people to be alone, and it's really not good for child development when sin makes a child alone, absent normal parental love. In more recent years there's been a lot of research on how being alone or un-attached in early years can have long-term impacts, and some of the behavioral things adoptive parents work through have those roots down below you can't see. We'll see some of that in our study. But do you see here our Creator said 6,000+ years ago it's not good when people are alone? And God explains more than psychology can how sin and the fall affect us and God gives a fuller solution to it that the world can: the gospel.

That's all just the 1st 3 chapters of the Bible! **SOMEONE READ GEN 3:15:** *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* "Anyone know what theologians call v. 15, the first _____? This is the first gospel. And it comes right before v. 16 where it promises pain to mothers in relation to children. The first gospel has to do with parenting and conflicts and even spiritual warfare (more on that in a future week but God is talking to Satan about a satanic war on women). v. 15 is about a mom's kids and opposition or enmity between her and those from the kingdom of darkness.

Motherhood has spiritual struggles and the enemy makes her a special target and her children, that's been true since the garden, but the 2nd half of v. 15 moves from offspring and women in general to a singular 'He.' God gives hope for this mom-child-Satan battle by a Man who would come. It's the first prophecy of Christ and the gospel where *He* would be wounded in the heel on the cross but would *crush* Satan in the process and reverse the curse and its effects for all in Christ. That's the gospel hope. The world can help change behavior for kids whose past was affected by sin, God's Word can transform hearts, bring beauty from ashes, and restore years locust has eaten

We could keep going in Genesis 12:3 to see God's multi-ethnic family plan to bless people of other nations by them joining the family of God's people. Paul calls that the gospel preached in advance to Abraham (Gal. 3). We can also see later in Genesis how God blesses infertile couples, allowing them to have children when they couldn't biologically. We see later the beautiful picture of Jacob adopting Ephraim and Manasseh, 2 sons born to an African princess, and making them full-fledged sons as much as his first-borns (Gen 48), and they became a full part of Israel. But not everything is beautiful in these families, Genesis has brokenness in families, too, like in today's news.

What are some of the parent-child or sibling struggles we read in Genesis?

Genesis has birth-mother issues, like Hagar's son being given to Sarah for her own and growing up with her biological son Isaac, then serious sibling issues that led to a disruption and Sarah sent Ishmael away. Genesis has chronic lying issues, indecent exposure, extreme violence and anger issues, bitterness, un-forgiveness, manipulation, control, we see parental favoritism with siblings who have different birthmothers (Rachel's sons vs. Leah's).

There's a mom who doesn't love one son like the other, a dad who loves a son who's like him but not the other, etc. And that's all just with the family of faith! That's all just the first book of the Bible! Whoever said the Bible isn't relevant to today? If your family has issues, you're not alone! That's just Abraham-Isaac-Jacob, but the God who could redeem and bring good out of their messed up families can do that with our imperfect ones. There's only been one set of parents who were once perfect, and they raised Cain! God's Word is sufficient for all of life and godliness and it has much to say to adoptive parenting issues today. I believe the gospel is the power of God for parents, including parents who said yes to the fatherless and need the grace of our Father in heaven. That's why I'm so thankful Brian Borgman wrote this book that our studies will be initially based off and building on:

After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption. There's also some audio and video resources to help supplement that I'm encouraged to share. **How many of you have Pastor Borgman's book? How many of you have read all of it? If you haven't yet, please read first 3 chapters for next week.**

5 years ago Brian Borgman spoke at our church men's conference and told me about this book he was writing on common challenges adoptive families face, and I have to confess at the time I was pretty ignorant of how much in personal and pastoral ministry those things would come up since, really the last several months have opened my eyes and heart a lot more. As elders he was very helpful when we flew up to Minden earlier this year to get his take on how to be better shepherds and I asked him several questions about this class and we've been corresponding. I've met his wife Ariel, I preached in his church, a very welcoming church that's welcomed many adopted kids. 3-4 years ago I emailed most if not all of our adoptive families at that time a [link to Brian's teaching on his own adoption journey at IBCD](#) as it really resonated with the things I was learning and hearing from adoptive parents.

I invited him to come out here to teach on this almost exactly 2 years ago, and this year bounced off him a number of resources we'll be going through. **PLAY BRIAN VIDEO INTRODUCTION:** <https://vimeo.com/64150397>
I like how that video was framed in the context of churches equipped to care. And I pray this class will help equip us in the church to care for each other, to care for our kids better with better understanding of what can cause their struggles, and to understand more God's care and adopting grace to us

Let me just ask you parents for a show of hands, I know the audio won't pick up our hands, and I promise not to get too personal with the questions, but how many of you would raise your hands to say you could identify when you heard Brian say 70+% of adoptive parents he meets have "unique struggle and challenges"? How many of you are finding adoptive parenting harder than expected? How many of you at some point weren't aware other adoptive parents also had struggles like you? For those of you that also have biological children, put your hand up. How many of us would say there's been some issues or struggles we've had with children we adopted that are different than our struggles with our biological kids, leave your hands up?

I know the past 6-12 months have been hardest for some. Some in this room have struggled more than others or in different ways, some have kids with physical or physiological issues, some new issues as kids started puberty.

There's a diversity of stories but also commonalities, moms often more than dads find it hard to parent or love well an adopted child they struggle with. If your parenting is in a good season, PTL, stay with us to better prepare for the seasons to come and also to be a better support to other adoptive parents

If you're in a harder season now and have felt alone, I can assure you you're not alone, even in this room, but details are best left to the counseling room. I want this class to protect the privacy and dignity of our kids. I don't want this class to be a place of complaining or commiserating our kids' problems, I want us to hear *solutions* to common *parenting* issues by other Christian pastors and biblical counselors who've raised biological and non-biological kids to adulthood like Brian Borgman and others who have their adopted child's permission to share their story and how God helped them through it.

If you have the book, turn to p. 14. Ask a volunteer to read 3rd paragraph?

Finally, I love adoption because my wife and I are adoptive parents. We know the great joys of adoption, but we also know the other side—the pain and tears, the anger and frustration. We know the perplexity of wondering, “Is this really worth it?” and the shame of having even asked the question. We know the thrill of watching Alex excel, and the guilt and heartbreak of erupting with an anger that seems to make all the joys and thrills evaporate

Another volunteer to read next section that starts with “discouraging words”

Some will read that last paragraph and think, “Well, that’s not just adoptive parents; that describes many parents.” True enough. All kids are sinners. I’ve heard many times there isn’t “supposed” to be any difference in the parenting experience between adopted and natural children. And certainly there are adoptive families in which the children assimilate beautifully, where the parental love is noble and unreserved. But there are also many godly, spiritually mature parents who struggle with a difficult adopted child, who feel the distance and detachment of the child’s affections and suffer the tensions of a weak or non-existent parent-child bond. For those of us who have lived it, we know there can be a difference.

For the sake of time today I want to skip over the less helpful quote, though we can come back to it next week if you think it would be helpful to discuss as a group that perspective. But let's skip to p. 16, another volunteer to read **Comforting Words?** *For years it seemed as though very few materials dealt head-on with the struggles of adoptive families. Thankfully, that seems to be changing. Tripp: For all its beauty, adoption also has significant challenges*

... Although you are doing a wonderful thing, you must recognize that children were meant to live with their natural parents. When children are raised by those who aren't their natural parents, there will be struggles and difficulties. Parenting an adopted child is often harder than parenting your natural child. Your adopted child deals with significant personal issues that your natural child never has to deal with. I was so glad and relieved when I first read these words a few years ago. How many of you know Paul Tripp? How many of you know his adoption story? He spoke in area 6-7 years ago.

Dr. Paul David Tripp is a pastor, author and has been a leader in the biblical counseling movement. He's also an adoptive father of children who are now grown. He wrote the CCEF booklet Brian Borgman mentioned and quotes from that helped him, *Helping Your Adopted Child*. Some of what's in that booklet is in the video series he's a key speaker on. His brother Ted wrote *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. Paul has also written *14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*. One experienced blogging mom I read said this is the first parenting book she's found where the principles all actually worked for children she adopted as well as her biological children. If you didn't get the title of Dr. Tripp's book, it's listed at the bottom of p. 4 of the Rooted study guide that I'll be handing out today in just a little bit. The video subtitle is "Gospel-Driven Parenting for Struggling Families" and I want to play their introduction to Dr. Tripp as most don't know his story. <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/rooted1/190883194>

Last part: *We would do it again 1,000 times. Has it been easy? Not it hasn't. There were times we felt completely unprepared for what we were called to do. But God meets you in those moments. God's grace really is sufficient. His mercies really are new every morning.* Just last November that video series came out I'm excited to share. Dr. Tripp does several video sessions with Voddie Baucham and others with professional and medical expertise

Dr. Jon Bergeron is a name not as familiar, but I want to introduce him as he introduces the series that he helped put together that brings together the best of biblical counseling and science of child development. Psychological research identifies patterns and problems that fit with Gen. 2:18 (not good to be alone of caregivers), but for solutions we need a biblical worldview of man, sin, the gospel, and parenting that fits with Genesis 3 and following. God's common grace has given our world observations and categorizations that help better understand and better help kids. I don't want to throw out the baby with the bath water, but I want to bathe everything with God's Word.

There's psychologically-based books and trainings by Christians, and they have helpful insights and ideas (ex: TBRI). **For those who are familiar, have you noticed what those tools lack?** So listen carefully to Dr. Bergeron's intro **PLAY TO 1:42** <https://hopefororphans.org/lesson/1-introduction-churches/>

I found his intro and videos encouraging! I feel out of my depth with some of these things, but Dr. Bergeron has been deeply involved as a career for over 10 years, his wife have been foster parents and adopted domestically and internationally children with special needs. I understand 2 of his kids are deaf and had been abused in the past. Dr. Bergeron for years has given leadership and vision in developing tools and resources for hurting families and he also helps churches, organizations, and counselors meet the needs of families adopting at-risk kids. He now has a resident professional practice at a counseling center at Austin Stone Church in Texas, but I appreciate what he said about not just trusting his experience or expertise professionally but testing all he says and others say with the Scripture, like Acts 17:11 says.

READ TOGETHER P. 4 OF ROOTED BOOK, 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5
ASK A DAD TO READ THE QUOTE BY PAUL DAVID TRIPP
TURN TO P. 9, ASK A MOM TO READ ON P. 9 THE 2 KEY IDEAS

I would encourage you as couples to take home and start looking through the booklets to see what's coming in future weeks and if there are related topics or sub-topics you want to see if they will be addressed, let me know, let's talk after or email, I'll do my best to bring in related resources to help.