

The adoption was approved! Our girl was coming home! There was relief, joy, and a dawning realization that this was just the beginning of the journey.

THE ADOPTION OF THE AGES

Why do we share our story with you? Because our story is the glimpse of a much bigger adoption story—our Creator who loves us and longs to rescue us. We are all orphans, trapped in cycles of destruction and selfishness. We can't save ourselves from falling back into sin and addiction. But Jesus stepped into our painful mess and paid the ultimate price, giving us an example of unselfish, genuine love. Then through His blood and shattered body, He offered us a chance to be part of His family.

"But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

His children. Could there be any more beautiful adoption story?

Maybe you're on a journey with God already. Or perhaps you've drifted away and are struggling now with something you can't seem to surrender to Him. You may not even know how God could possibly heal your brokenness right now. But listen to the Father's appeal to your heart:

"And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Our Father loves us with a fierce, undying devotion. He's willing to overcome any obstacle, to face any pain, if it means He can finally hold us in His arms. Even when we aren't sure if we want Him to adopt us, He's there. He's faithful. He never gives up.

In learning to love our daughter, we have glimpsed the heart of Father. We can't describe how much we love her now. But God loves us infinitely more.

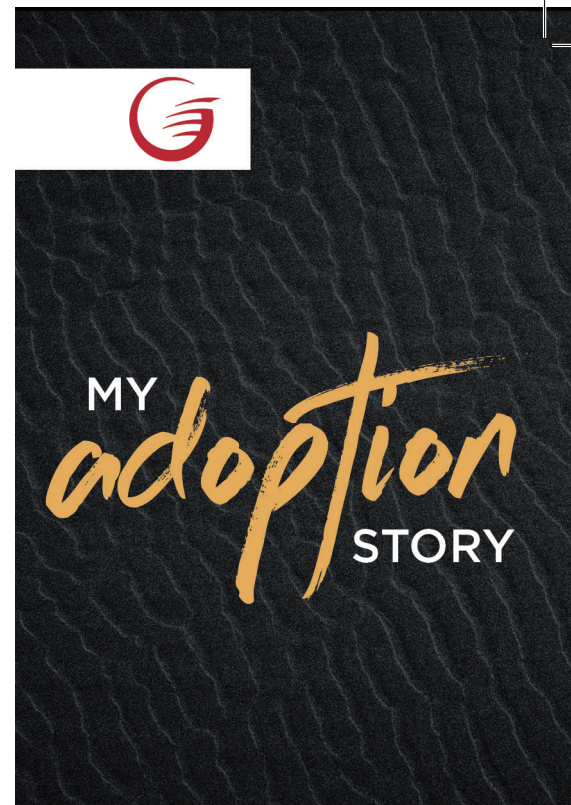
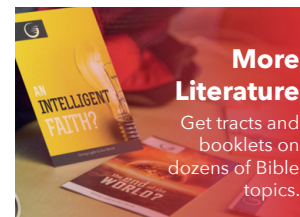
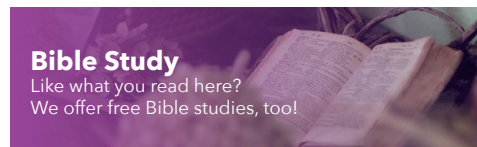
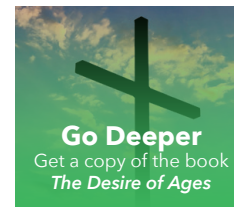
Lift up your face to your heavenly Father today. Will you surrender to Him and trust His love for you? As you do, your heart will awaken to love Him more and more in return.

You will never regret joining His family!

To find a local church family near you, visit adventistdirectory.org.

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design: ©www.typofire.com



Giving Light to Our World

The petite 13-year-old from another country sat in the passenger seat of our car, struggling before the words tumbled out. "Would you adopt me?" She motioned as if signing papers. "My dad says he will give documents."

That's right—your dad is in prison, snared by his own choices, unable to care for you. Your mother is dead. You want us. And we want you!

Several months earlier, we had chosen a somber-faced girl from an overseas orphanage photo listing. The plan was for us to host her in our home in America for a few weeks over Christmas vacation and give her dental care, warm clothing and a brief time living with a family.

When she first arrived at the airport, we worried our Christmas mission project might have been a mistake. Wordless with obvious terror, she barely spoke for the next 24 hours. But over the next 3½ weeks, the girl with the dark, mournful eyes slowly morphed into a boisterous, affectionate bundle of joyful exuberance, shouting for Mommy and Daddy just as loudly as our other three children. When the time came to send her back, none of us wanted to part. We had to bring her back for the summer.

So at the beginning of summer, as she stumbled through her request, our answer was ready. "Yes, we love you and we want you to be part of our family forever!" A few days later, she drew a picture of our

family and wrote above it, "Our complete family." Our happily ever after was about to begin.

COMPLICATIONS

But nothing great comes easily. Her father refused to sign the paperwork after all, insisting his daughter must first come to visit him personally. At the end of the summer, she went back to her country, and the months dragged on as we struggled through more obstacles. Then came the crushing final notification—the lawyer working with the father was giving up, convinced he would never release our daughter for adoption.

Our dreams were shattered. We pleaded with God for a miracle.

It came. Two women who worked at her school took pity and agreed to drive her to the prison themselves. Face-to-face, she pleaded with her father. His heart softened as she described our family, and he finally relented and signed the release.

MORE MIRACLES

However, adoption is complicated. The law in our daughter's country stated that she must be offered for in-country adoption for 14 months before becoming available to international families. And the cost of bringing her home would be a staggering nearly \$30,000. Then there was the confusing maze of adoption agencies, home studies, fingerprinting

and collecting dozens of documents about every area of our lives.

Yet the impossible miracle kept crawling along. People we hadn't heard from in years sent checks. Friends organized a concert, raising \$5,000 in one weekend. Someone donated airline miles to purchase tickets. We were grateful, but also desperate to be done with the expenses, mess, and distance.

ROLLER COASTER RIDE

In adoption, when you conquer one mountain, another rises. Papers were delayed, rejected and resubmitted. Finally, after months of wrangling, we boarded our first flight to her country to begin the official process.

Our sweet girl was thrilled to see us again. "You'll be home soon!" we promised, hugging her goodbye to go home and wait for a court date.

And then, silence. No court date. Finally, we were told there was a paperwork problem. We needed to show up for an appointment at the social services office in her country—by 3 pm the next day.

We found an unbelievably cheap last-minute ticket, and within an hour were on our way. Every part of the last-minute journey was a mixture of sweaty palms, pounding hearts and ultimate sighs of relief. We arrived at the office with twenty minutes to spare.

Once there, we were told, "There are serious problems with the person you hired to do your paperwork. You're missing critical documents." But we were fiercely determined. We loved our daughter, and we would bring her home!

In just one whirlwind day, we were able to pull together the necessary paperwork to give to the surprised government official. "How did you do this without help?" she asked in shock.

"God and friends," we answered.

But then our poor daughter started getting cold feet. "Maybe I no come America. I stay here with my friends." After all that we had done and all that our community had sacrificed, the fate of the whole process rested in the hands of an insecure teenager, overwhelmed by peer pressure. We braced ourselves for the worst, knowing that love risks rejection.

Finally, on a cold October morning, we sat in a foreign courtroom with our anxious child. There were probing questions from the judge.

"Why would you want to adopt an older child?"

"Because we love her and she makes our family complete."

Then, it was our daughter's turn to answer the judge, "Do you want to be part of this family?"

We waited in anticipation. Her shy, nervous answer was barely audible.

"Yes. I want to be with this family."