

The Goodness of God

By Adam and Kim Lewis

Editor's Note: Adam and Kim Lewis are both in their twenties, which is relatively young for a couple dealing with infertility. After spending considerable time searching for a medical procedure that would address Kim's ovarian failure—to no avail—the couple came to the conclusion that they would be content with their lives just as they were. Kim worked for Citigroup and Adam was a medical student.

That was in January 2004. Today, this extraordinary couple is the first to give birth to children through the National Embryo Donation Center (NEDC) in Knoxville, TN. Although Sam and Katie were born prematurely at 27 weeks, they are six months old this month and are doing great!



Hand in hand...



Adam, Kim, and the babies.

Kim Lewis: My pregnancy was going smoothly and then one morning I woke up in hard labor, and the babies were born four hours later. When Sam was born, he had a true knot in his cord and if he hadn't been born when he was, it might have been too late. On the way to the hospital, I prayed that God would stop this labor. "They can't be born now!" But they had to be born then. It's another prayer I am grateful God did *not* answer!

LifeLines: Why did you choose embryo adoption?

Kim: We had thought about traditional adoption, but it was my doctor who first mentioned embryo adoption.

Adam Lewis: We talked to some people who had adopted both domestically and internationally. Embryo adoption is so much less expensive than traditional adoption, and that played some part in our decision.

Kim: Really, it would have been several years down the road until we would have been financially ready for a traditional adoption.

LifeLines: Was your family supportive of the idea?

Kim: We have been really blessed by the support we have. When we first started thinking about embryo adoption, our family was together for Christmas dinner in 2003. When we talked about embryo adoption, Adam's cousin said, "Let's do that!"

LifeLines: Why did you choose Bethany?

Kim: Actually, it was my sister-in-law who heard about the embryo donation center through Focus on the Family, and the Center put us in touch with Bethany.

LifeLines: How did Bethany work with you?

Kim: We worked with Bethany on our family assessment and the NEDC handled the embryo transfer.

LifeLines: What was the home study process like?

Kim: At first, I was almost resentful about someone coming to our house and asking us questions. Once we went through the interviews, it was a wonderful experience. The questions we had to think and talk about made me feel more prepared to raise an adopted child. Our worker mentioned that from the beginning we need to tell our children that they are adopted embryos and not wait until they are sixteen and say, "We've got something to tell you."

Adam: The questionnaire was insightful. It helped us look at questions about telling your child about their adoption...questions about discipline... We answered the questions separately and then came back to see how our answers on parenting differed. Thankfully, it looked as if



Baby Sam on May 15, 2005.

one person had filled out the answers. Our strategies for raising children were alike, and that was very comforting.

LifeLines: *So, you were comfortable raising someone else's child from a frozen embryo?*

Kim: Because we were considering traditional adoption, embryo adoption didn't seem that different to us. We never really struggled with the idea of raising someone else's child. We were so familiar with infertility treatments, that the medical side of embryo adoption didn't bother us... We'd have done IVF [in vitro fertilization] anyway.

Adam: We had done some research. Typically, there is not much difference between frozen embryos and a normal pregnancy, as far as the health of the baby is concerned.

LifeLines: *How did you narrow down the profiles?*

Kim: We looked at the age of the genetic mother and that narrowed down the choices.

Adam: We also looked at the age of the embryos and the stage they were in. If they allow the embryos to

develop a little longer, the success of the transfer is greater.

LifeLines: *Did you know the gender of the embryos before they were implanted?*

Kim: We had no idea.

LifeLines: *Were there any surprises?*

Kim: With the transfer procedure, there were no surprises. As far as the pregnancy went, everything was normal until 27 weeks. No one could have known beforehand about my early labor.

LifeLines: *Why didn't you use a fertility clinic?*

Kim: The National Embryo Donation Center and Snowflakes are different from typical fertility clinics. Clinics have donated embryos, too, but they do not treat the embryos as children. They may thaw out more embryos than are desired by a couple, pick the "best ones," and let the others die. NEDC and Snowflakes don't do that. Like Bethany, they view the process as an adoption, not just a medical procedure.

LifeLines: *Is your adoption open or closed?*

Kim: NEDC does open and anonymous adoptions. There are advantages to both ways. It just depends on what you're comfortable with. We preferred an anonymous adoption because that process is quicker. I don't regret doing it anonymously, but at times I wish our children could know their genetic parents and genetic siblings.



Baby Kate on May 27, 2005.

When we give it to God, we get the answer we didn't even know we wanted.

Kim

Adam: That [open embryo adoption] would have been a very emotional process. We didn't want that added emotion when we were going through so much at that time.

LifeLines: *Were you concerned that the adoption could fall through?*

Adam: Kim did ask about the possibility. Come to find out, embryo adoption is really [legally] a transfer of property, so that was comforting to know.

Kim: With domestic adoption, the mother has nine months to make her decision. With embryo adoption, the couple probably already has children...they have thought about it and decided that they don't want more children.

LifeLines: *Any final thoughts?*

Kim: I am so thankful for those years of infertility. If I had been able to get pregnant on my own, we would not have had Katie and Sam. I have an appreciation for these beautiful babies that I would never have had. These children will not have a chance to live unless someone carries them.

Adam: We have seen the goodness of God through this. There is hope through embryo adoption. It opens up a whole new door for infertility. The embryos are genetically separate, living beings with the ability to grow. They are life. Katie and Sam are proof of that.



Adam's Favorite Scripture

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalm 100:5 NIV

Questions

Kim Asked Herself Before the Adoption

Q: Will I have trouble bonding with the baby?

A: *Carrying a child establishes a unique bond from the beginning. Feeling every kick and movement was an experience unlike any other. My pregnancy let me come to know and love Sam and Katie before they were even born!*

Q: Will it be obvious that the baby doesn't look like me?

A: *To be honest, from people who don't know our story (and even some who do!), a common reaction is, "Oh they look just like you!" We realize, of course, that they do not, but that doesn't matter at all to us! We just smile and say thanks!*

Q: How will other people feel about us adopting embryos?

A: *We have been very open about the adoption of Katie and Sam as embryos. People's reactions range from excitement to confusion, and even outright disapproval. Many people don't understand the process. They view it as the same as egg donation and don't consider embryos as separate human beings. Others say, "God opens and closes the womb," or "You shouldn't mess with nature." While it is easy to argue that embryo donation offers the chance to save a life already created, all debates are irrelevant when you look into the face of your child. One photo of Katie and Sam says more than a million words about embryo adoption as a celebration of life.*

Q: Will this baby really feel like mine?

A: *Yes! Early on, I worried that I would feel that I was carrying, giving birth to, and raising someone else's child. The opposite is true! Katie and Sam couldn't be more mine! God chose us for each other. He put our family together in a way we could never have imagined ourselves.*