



From Infertility to Adoption: Our Journey

By Chris and Sheryl Findley

Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined that our lives would be touched so powerfully by infertility and adoption. After we had been married for several years, we began trying to have a child. We assumed that things would work just as they had for our friends. But as one month turned to three, and as one year rolled into another, we painfully realized that our expectations were not going to be met.

We began treatments through infertility doctors. We each handled the frustration in different ways. Chris buried himself in his graduate studies while Sheryl learned all she could about infertility. It was a long and painful process. There were many tears of frustration, many prayers of desperation, and much tension between us. We couldn't understand why we had to go through this. Our friends would call and announce the news of their pregnancies, not realizing the ache that was eating away at our hearts.

After two surgeries, numerous rounds of infertility drugs, and four inter-uterine inseminations, we had to make a difficult decision. We'd had enough of the roller coaster. We decided to step

off this ride, regroup, and consider our next steps and whether or not we could release our dream of being parents.

We had always been interested in adoption. Our initial plan was to have one or two biological children and then possibly adopt. As we prayed and

talked, we began to wonder whether or not we should consider adoption. We knew that we wanted to be deliberate about this decision and not treat adoption as some sort of second best. If this was indeed where God was leading us, then it would be for the best, period.



The Findley's

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We found Bethany Christian Services through a friend. We received the materials and carefully thought and prayed through the decision to proceed. It was exhilarating and frightening. We knew nothing about adoption. We wondered if we would be accepted, and the idea of a "home study" was frightening. Would they find the dirty socks under the bed? Would having cats be a disqualifier? We had no idea what to expect, but we were encouraged by what we saw, and we tentatively moved forward.

In the summer of 2001, we were notified that a birthmother had selected us and wanted to get to know us. We were thrilled! We imagined meeting her and learning about the baby. We found out she was having a little girl and began thinking about names. About a month later, we were notified that she had chosen another family to parent her little girl. The familiar feel of the roller coaster came back as we zoomed into a deep valley.

Later in the fall of that same year, we received another call. We had been selected again. Though excited, we were cautious. In October 2001, we met Michelle*. She was a college student who was unexpectedly pregnant. From that first meeting, we felt a deep connection with her. We met her parents and swapped photos and stories for several hours. We wondered if this was indeed the one that would work out for us.

Over the course of that fall, we got to know Michelle. We met with her three

times over the remainder of her pregnancy. At one meeting, she asked if we wanted to know the sex of the baby. We glanced at each other and Sheryl said, "Yes, we would love to know."

"It's a boy," Michelle said. She invited us to her next ultrasound, and there we saw our son for the first time. He was sucking his thumb and looking quite content. We laughed as he turned (as if he knew we were looking) and made sure we had his sex correct. We began thinking of names.

Michelle had invited us to be at the hospital for the delivery, and at 4:00 a.m. on Christmas Eve, our social worker called us and told us it was time. In the darkness of that wintry, Pennsylvania morning, the two of us drove to the hospital, hoping to come home with a third.

The hospital staff graciously provided us with a room adjacent to the birthing suite. Just before noon, Aidan Thomas was born. Michelle held him and kissed him and then the nurse brought him to Sheryl within ten minutes of his birth. We just stared in wonder at this little miracle that had been so long in coming. As his chest rose and fell with each breath, there was a sense that for the first time in years, we were breathing too.

We discovered that we had also come to love this young woman who had given us Aidan. We had gotten to know her family and realized that we didn't want to lose contact with her. So, although we had been firm in our desire for a semi-open adoption, we

decided to make it an open adoption. Michelle agreed and each month we correspond by e-mail, and each August, she comes to visit.

Almost four years later, we have been tremendously blessed again through adoption with our younger son, Evan Robert. We have an open adoption arrangement with his birthmother as well, and we are incredibly thankful to have her and Michelle in our lives. Adoption is truly a miracle.

Although we could not have the same experience as that of our friends with biological children, they have not known the amazing adventure that was ours through adoption. It has been a rough journey at times, but it has been worth every step.

Chris is an Episcopal priest and pastor of St. Francis Church in Goodlettsville, TN. Sheryl serves as a counselor with Bethany Christian Services in Nashville.

**Name has been changed for privacy purposes.*

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