

Our Journey Has Just Begun

By Teri Cavender

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

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My "Journey of a Lifetime" began 15 years ago with my viewing a positive pregnancy test in the bathroom of a card shop where I worked. I had convinced myself that I was not pregnant because my clothes fit so well and I was not "showing." I was very naïve, to say the least! I did not have any medical insurance, a good job, or a large base of support. My life changed forever at age 19.

As my pregnancy progressed, I began to enjoy certain aspects of it. I liked to exercise and take care of myself. Feeling the baby move was amazing, and knowing that I had chosen life made my situation more bearable.

I had accepted that I was going to be a single mommy and did not even think that there was another choice out there. Three months into my pregnancy, God convicted my heart through a co-worker that adoption might be an option. That suggestion was as scary to me as the fact that I was having a baby! It was completely unknown.

So much changed when I met the counselors at Bethany Christian Services. They told me that they loved me and my baby, and they would help sort through the unknown that I was facing. I knew God wanted me to place my baby for adoption, and I could now see and hear how this worked.

Bethany told me that I could select a family, meet them, and have an ongoing relationship with my child. They also unexpectedly helped me with my medical expenses, which is something I am still thankful for today!

My healthy, beautiful daughter was born on January 16, 1993. In the weeks that followed, I chose a family for her, met them, and we discussed our expectations of our relationship for the future. I also cried, questioned God, and fought with my bittersweet decision. I knew I was doing what the Lord was asking of me, but I missed my daughter. I had no idea how God would mend this scar, but I trusted that He would.

On May 7, 1994, I married my husband of now 12 years, Ernest. From the beginning of our marriage, we both felt convicted that we wanted to grow our family through adoption. Once again, I looked to Bethany.

We excitedly filled out our mound of paperwork and were chosen immediately by a young birthmother who was expecting a biracial baby boy. Ernest and I named him Max. This adoption fell through. After seven months of hanging in there, the birthmother and her mother took baby "Max" out of interim care and decided to parent. We were devastated! Ernest and I wanted this baby so badly, but it was not our time...yet!



Winston and Max at the library last summer



Isabella, Winston, Max, and Rex, the dog

While Ernest and I were pursuing adoption, Bethany became interested in my story of being a birthmother. I began to participate in Bethany's ministry by speaking on behalf of birthmothers. I longed to be involved with Bethany as an adoptive mother, and yet God kept calling me to share my experience of an unplanned pregnancy and of choosing an adoption plan.

I enjoyed meeting different people who were involved in adoption for various reasons. Often, I would sit in a support group for couples waiting for their dream of adopting a baby and dispel myths about birthmothers and how we are an integral part of the adoption process.

Other times, I would sit and encourage women who had chosen life for their babies and were struggling with the decision of single parenting or making an adoption plan. Their courage was an inspiration to me! Ernest was as involved as I was, and God was deepening our love for the choice of adoption.

Yet, God was not ready for Ernest and me to become adoptive parents. He gave us our first two blessings through birth: our daughter, Isabella (now 8); and our son, Winston (now 4). In 2003, Bethany asked me to serve on their board, and I was honored, once again, to have an opportunity to share my passion for adoption.

About a year into my service on the board, during a monthly meeting, our director asked for prayer and suggestions about recruiting more families for transracial adoption. She explained that Bethany currently had no families approved and waiting for African American or biracial babies. There was a three-day-old, African American boy who did not have a home.

That was it. God had spoken! My husband did not know it yet, and my children had no clue, but this baby boy was meant to be in our family. I excused myself from the board meeting and

called Ernest to ask him if we could adopt him. Ernest thought I had lost it. We had just purchased our first house and had completely gutted it down to the studs. We had lived there for a grand total of three weeks and only two of the rooms were even livable. We barely had the refrigerator working. I was home schooling our daughter and Winston had just turned 17 months.

We cried and prayed over this decision for the next few days and felt the Holy Spirit's tug that, despite our outward circumstances, this was God's "right time" for us to adopt. Our baby, Max, came home 13 days later to a broken-down house full of love! People have told us from the first day that Max was blessed to have us, yet we have found the opposite to be true. We are blessed to have him. He is a joy to his sister and brother and a gift to our entire family.

I love my babies. I treasure the children God has given to us biologically, and I treasure my baby whom God gave us through adoption. As Ernest and I anticipate the birth of our fourth child in a month, and as my service on the Board draws to a close, my "Journey" has just begun. I have a birthdaughter (who is about to turn fifteen) to love and four other babies God has entrusted to me.

Ernest and I look forward to more children brought to us through adoption. We accept God's perfect will for growing our family. I am blessed with a husband who has shared every up and down and joy associated with the past 15 years. His passion runs as deep as mine, and now we see the same passion for adoption growing in our children. It is amazing to see how God took the sin of one young girl and sparked a lifetime of joy and goodness through His perfect plan of adoption!

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.

Matthew 19:14-15 NKJV



Our beautiful son!

Our "Journey of a Lifetime" has just begun!