

Averi Weaver

Jonathan Patches

CAP Stone

01 March 2021

The Forgotten Mission

“There are roughly 153 million orphans worldwide. Every day, an estimated 5,700 more children become orphans" (Who adopts). If one were to think about it, 153 million is an incredibly large number. There are 153 million children that don't have a permanent loving family. Some of the children have no family at all, others live on the streets, and yet we go about our everyday lives. We have all we need. We live in comfortable houses with plenty of food. We forget that there are children out there starving with no one to call Mom or Dad. How can we just sit back and do nothing for these children? Adoption and foster care has its many challenges, but Christians have a calling to care for the orphans.

Adoption is dated way back to the 14th century BC. Moses is one of the first cases of a child being adopted. His mother gave him up for adoption to save his life. Another example is Jesus. Many people do not think about this, but Jesus was actually adopted by Joseph. He was not technically, but Joseph was an amazing example of a great adoptive father. Esther was also adopted. Her uncle adopted and raised her and taught her to never forget her identity. Adoption happens when something in a family was broken beforehand. Children get put up for adoption for many reasons. One simply being that both parents have passed away. There are a whole host of reasons, but most times the parents have a child and don't want it so they put it up for

adoption. Another common reason is that the parents are too poor, or too young to take care of a child. Many children think that they were not wanted or that there is something wrong with them and that is why they have no family. They do not think that they deserve love. Children only accept the love they feel they deserve.

Countless children get pulled out of their homes because their home life is terrible. The children go through so much before being placed in a new home. Many of the children get physically and emotionally abused. They see horrible things being done to their parents or they see their mother or father getting abused. They experience so much trauma and pain and then on top of it they are put up for adoption or into the foster care system where nobody wants them. An example of the trauma kids have to go through are my own siblings. There were four of them and they lived with their parents. They saw their father try to burn their mother. Their dad killed their pet. Then they got pulled out of the home and they kept getting moved to different foster homes. Imagine how much pain and confusion that would bring little children. “These kids are emotionally wounded and struggle with a variety of issues because of that wounding” (Blacquire, 57). The older children even go through more, because they understand more. The sad part is that the older children are the children that no one wants. “The older the kids are, the more they are unadoptable. They have awkward adolescent years and no one wants them” (Moore, 140). Everyone wants babies and toddlers. The older children many times did not really get to enjoy a normal childhood, because they had to grow up so fast. They feel responsible for their siblings and many times they are basically the parents. They have so much burden and grief, but they are left in the system to age out and be on their own. The orphans in the world today are hurting and need someone to call family.

Children who were hurt by their past experiences tend to be more misbehaved. A lot of times one might hear the phrase, “Well, they were adopted,” as an answer to why they are behaving so poorly. Being adopted can make children misbehave, but there are unadopted children that can be just as misbehaved. The adoption itself is not the reason for their bad behaviour, but rather it is because of all the pain and trauma they went through before they were adopted. Adopted children can make life really difficult and many times they do have behavioral issues. I am not going to try to sugar-coat adoption and foster care and say it's really easy, because it's not. Adoption does have many, many challenges. Adoption can turn the family's world upside down for a while. The family's whole life is focused around them and trying to care for them for the first while. The children will test the parents over and over again to see how they will react. They will try to make life as difficult as possible to see if the parents really love them. Other times they misbehave because they don't know how to deal with their past hurts or with their current situation.

There are seven core issues that make adopted children act out. The first reason is loss. “Adopted children mourn the loss of their birth parents, even when they are happy with their adoptive family” (7 core issues). The birth parents could have been horrible parents, but they were still their parents. The children still had some connection and intimacy with their parents. The second reason is rejection. Adopted children might feel rejected by their birth parents. They will try to avoid situations that they could be rejected again. They might also try to make others reject them to prove their negative self image of themselves. The third reason is guilt and shame. “Adopted children often believe there is something intrinsically wrong with them and that they deserve to lose their birth parents, which causes them to feel guilt and shame” (7 core issues).

The guilt and shame can make the children think that they don't deserve nice things and that they don't deserve love. The fourth reason is grief. The adopted children have a lot of loss in their lives. They lose everything they knew when they get taken away from their parents. They lose their parents. The loss can cause depression, substance abuse or have aggressive behavior. The fifth issue is identity. The children can feel incomplete and not know who they are. Especially when they never knew their birth parents and family. They question who they are. The children can feel confused and out of place. The next issue is intimacy. This is one of the bigger issues and it can be really hard to understand and hard to deal with. "Many adopted children, especially those with multiple placements or histories of abuse, have difficulty attaching to members of their new family. Early life experiences may affect an adopted child's ability to form an intimate relationship" (7 core issues). The child can have a really hard time attaching to the new family. The parents do not understand why the child is not attaching after all the love and affection they showed them. The disorder comes from people coming in and out of the child's life all the time or a death of someone. The child is afraid that the new family will leave them so they try not to get attached and they distance themselves. "Your child was abandoned once. Make sure they know you are staying with them" (Russel, 210). The last reason is mastery and control. Adopted children can struggle with wanting to be in control. "Adopted children sometimes engage in power struggles with their adoptive parents or other authority figures in an attempt to master the loss of control they experienced in adoption" (7 core issues). Their lives can feel so out of control so they try to control everything so that they can feel like at least they have control over some aspect of their lives.

Foster care has many of the same challenges of adoption, but some are specific just to foster care. For example, after taking the children to visits with their birth parents the child normally acts very poorly. They are normally starting to adjust to life at their new home; then as soon as they have a visit they spiral out of control again. Visits are very confusing for the child. They are taken out of the home, and then once or twice a week they have a couple of hours with their parents again; and then get taken back to their foster family. The children do not know how to take it all in, so they handle it with bad behavior. Fostering can be very tiring and it can seem hard to go anywhere, but the impact the parents and family are making on these children is more than they know. Showing them love even when they reject it is what they need. They need to feel like they are loved. Many times they feel like it is their fault they were taken out of their family, so they do not feel like they deserve love. As a foster parent one must show them that they are worth loving and that they are special.

Another aspect of foster care is older children. Many times families have babies and young children, but the older children are the ones that are going to age out of the system in just a few years. "Think of the plight of the orphan somewhere right now out there in the world... With every passing year she's less "cute," less adoptable." Soon she will age out and have nowhere to go" (Blaquire, Faasse, 75). Foster caring babies are a lot easier than older children, but older children also need love and direction in their lives. "More than 23,000 children will age out of the US foster care system every year. After reaching the age of 18, 20% of the children who were in foster care will become instantly homeless" (Sorrell, 6). The older children have no place to go and no parents or anyone to help them along in their lives. They are lonely so they turn to drugs, sex, and other things that give temporary joy. One example of how they feel is told

by Noel Anaya, “Walking into court for my very last time as a foster youth, I feel like I'm getting a divorce from a system that I've been in a relationship with almost my entire life. It's bittersweet because I'm losing guaranteed stipends for food and housing, as well as access to my social workers and my lawyer. But on the other hand, I'm relieved to finally get away from a system that ultimately failed me on its biggest promise. That one day it would find me a family who would love me” (Thompson, Katie). These youth really want a family and many of them age out and feel rejected and alone.

Different religions have different views on adoption. There are different perspectives on adoption just like any other topic. One might think who could be against adoption, but believe it or not there are some religions that do not think that one should adopt. For example, Islam does not allow adoption. “Adoption is prohibited in Islam, since there is a possibility of sexual relations between an adopted son and mother or an adopted son with a biological daughter” (DHINGRA). Islam allows one to provide for orphans, but they cannot stay with the family unless they already hit puberty. The temptation is too much for the mother, because they are not biologically related so they just take out adoption. They are allowed to take care of orphans and they are encouraged to. They are just not allowed to actually adopt them. An example of a religion that can adopt children is Hinduism. The Hindu religion allows one to adopt; they just have many rules. If a male wants to adopt he has to: “Attained the age of majority; and be of sound mind. [He] must have a wife that is alive whose consent is absolutely necessary. It can be overlooked if the wife is incapable of giving consent due to insanity or other reasons. If a person has multiple wives, the consent of all the wives is necessary for adoption” (Asthana). If a woman wants to adopt she has to: “Have attained the age of minority, be of sound mind, be either a

widow, divorced, or unmarried in order to adopt. If she has a husband who is alive, she will not have the capacity to adopt a child” (Asthana). Many times the reason why the Hindu religion adopts is to carry the family name on. Other times sons were adopted so that they could perform duties and daughters were adopted to spoil and fuss over.

Another point of view is that of the Anabaptist. Anabaptists believe in caring for the orphans, because the Bible tells them to. For example, James 1:27, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (ESV). The verse says that they are to care for orphans in their hardships. Anabaptist also believes that, “The Father adopts children, and we’re called to be like him. Jesus cares for orphans, we’re being formed into his image” (Moore, 103). Anabaptist Valerie Miller says, “Anabaptist way that they are set up just their value system is largely built on family and doing family the way God set it up.” Miller tells how the anabaptist way of life is centered around family, so they are already set up for adopting. She talks about how Anabaptists naturally have a heart for children who are broken. Miller states that adopting is a blessing and it's an incredible experience and it is amazing what love can do. She then challenges her listeners to embrace the struggle of adopting.

My opinion on adoption is that of a Christian. I believe that adoption is something that the Bible tells us to do. God cares for the orphans and we are called to be like him, therefore we should be caring for the orphans too. “When we adopt and when we encourage a culture of adoption in our churches and communities we’re picturing something that's true about our God. We, like Jesus, see what our Father is doing and do likewise (John 5:19). And what our Father is doing, it turns out, is fighting for orphans, making them sons and daughters” (Moore, 66). As a

Christian I was an orphan, before I was adopted into God's family. God cares for the orphans with a willing and caring heart. I think we should be fighting for orphans with a willing heart just like Jesus did and is doing. I also believe that caring for orphans is part of fulfilling the Great Commission. The Great Commission tells Christians to spread the gospel to all nations.

Adopting is spreading the gospel to the children that come into one's home. They learn about God by the way the family lives their life and through teaching them. If they were never in a Christian family who knows if they would have ever heard about God. One reason why people find it hard to adopt is because they can't even get over small differences such as different musical styles (Moore, 35). I think that statement is very true. The church has ridiculous splits about music and dress; but there are kids out there that have totally different cultures with different music and dress. How can we adopt them if we can't even get over little things in the church? The children that need to be adopted come from all different backgrounds and cultures. We have to learn to accept different cultures or we won't be able to adopt.

Adopting is an amazing testimony to the people around us. Adopting children with disabilities is an amazing way to spread the gospel. "Think of how odd it must seem to American secularists to see Christians adopting a baby whose body trembles with an addiction to the cocaine her mother sent through her bloodstream before birth. Think of the kind of credibility such action lends to the proclamation of our gospel" (Moore, 71). The reason that Moore says it's such an amazing testimony is because caring for babies that are addicted to drugs and alcohol is so hard. The babies cry a lot and can have disabilities. They can be slower to learn. They can have birth defects. The alcohol can cause brain damage and create problems with development and growth. They are the babies that no one wants to take care of. Caring for these babies is an

amazing testimony to the outside world, because they see Christain taking care of the unwanted babies.

Adoption is not just charity it is a spiritual war. There will be really hard times, because the devil hates Christian families. He will try to break the family apart, but Christians cannot let him win. There can be a lot of hurt and pain, but there is so much reward. Adoption is hard and takes a lot of work, but it is all worth it. I was adopted along with all my siblings. I am the oldest so I remember all the adoptions of my four younger siblings. All of them were through foster care. I saw my siblings come with hurt and pain. I saw them change from very disobedient children to nice civilized children, for the most part. They improved so much. When we first got them we could barely even go on a walk without one of them having a temper tantrum. We basically never went away and our lives seemed out of control. Now six years later I can see a major difference in them. They are sweet children with a caring heart. Yes, they sometimes disobey, but we can go away and go on walks peacefully. They grew so much emotionally. This example reveals what a loving and caring family can do for children. “The calling to care for widows and orphans is a mission that is about more than just charity” (Moore, 230). It’s about taking in hurt and broken children and giving them love and a chance at a quality life. The children come from broken homes and giving them a loving family is definitely living like Jesus did.

Adoption and foster care can be really hard. It can be mentally and physically draining. There are so many ways that churches and people as individuals can help out. “There are an estimated 350,000 Christian churches in the United States. If only one to two families from each of those churches fostered or adopted just one child, there would be no more foster care system,

and every abused and neglected child in the country would live with a family” (Thompson). Yet only 5% of Christians have adopted. The percentage of gay adoption is greater than Christian adoption. That is sad. There are 115,064 children going to families with the same sex parents. These children are not going to quality homes. “Where are all the Christians?”(Moore, 78) As Christians we have a calling to rescue children like this. Most Christians, have a home, plenty to eat, and enough money. There are children out there with so much hurt and with no family, but we're living a nice life so it seems like the world is fine. We tend to forget that there are hurting children out there, because we are living pleasurable lives. “What if we as Christians were known once again as the people who take in orphans and make them beloved sons and daughters" (Moore, 16)? We as Christians should be known as caring for the orphans. Nevertheless, not everyone is called to adoption or foster care and that doesn't mean there are no other ways to help.

There are many ways that the church can get involved to help out. The church can encourage and pray for those who do adopt and foster care. Pastors can encourage the topic of adoption and especially those with disabilities. The pastor can ask thought provoking questions to get people thinking about caring for the orphans. “To allow churches priority to be adopted the pastor needs to make the connection between adoption and God's adoption of us” (Moore, 174). The pastor can preach about how adoption is part of the Great Commission. The church should be accepting and helpful to adopted and foster care children. The church should welcome the children that come into families within the church. The church can help out financially to the families. Adoption can be really expensive. The church can help fundraise or give offerings to the families. If financial issues are the reason that people are not adopting then the church should

definitely be helping. Individuals in the church can help out as well. There are many practical ways to help such as offering to do the grocery shopping or even pay for the groceries for a family that just welcomes children into their home. Another big way to help is to provide respite care. Sometimes all the parents need is a small break from the children. One could take the kids for just a few hours or even for a weekend to give the parents time for themselves. Another way is to come over to their house and do some chores such as: laundry, dishes, shopping, cleaning, mowing, weeding, and raking ect. Doing things like that could help out the parents more than one might know. Doing respite-in or respite-out care is one of the biggest ways to help. It is sacrificing time and energy, but giving the parents time alone is a huge blessing for them.

An example of how grateful parents can be is the example of Kent and Julie. Kent and Julie adopted a child with special needs. He took a lot of time and energy. They were struggling to keep up with all his needs. They finally told their Sunday school class. Their Sunday school class prayed for them and continued to pray for them every day. They asked how they could help. Kent and Julie said they could use a little time to relax. Several of the families agreed to come over to the house once a week for a few hours to let them go have dinner by themselves. Others offered respite care one Saturday a month. “Julie and Kent were so grateful they cried. These small services helped them get through a difficult adjustment time” (Blacquiere, Faasse, 160). This example shows how much small services help. The biggest way the church can help is to make sure they make the children feel welcomed and not outcast. The children went through a lot already, so they need to be treated nicely and feel included. The church has a large responsibility to take care of the orphans and that can be in many ways. It takes a church to adopt a child.

In conclusion, adoption and foster care is very challenging but Christians need to do their part in caring for the orphans. Adoption and foster care will take everything one has. Adoption takes a lot of courage and grace. Adoption takes a lot of prayer and support from others. Adoption is hard, but the impact and difference it makes in the children makes it all worth it. Adoption is a sacrifice and sacrifice is not easy, but we have to remember how much Jesus sacrificed for us. The calling that God gave to take care of the orphans should not be taken lightly considering that there are thousands of children without a home. I encourage everyone to do their part in caring for orphans. Adoption and foster care is not for everyone, but there are many other ways to help. "Adoption is not the calling to have the perfect rosy family, it's the call to give love, mercy, and patience" (unknown).

Works Cited

- Asthana, Subodh. "All You Must Know about the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance." *IPleaders*, 28 Feb. 2020, blog.ipleaders.in/hindu-adoption-maintenance/.
- Blacquiere, Bill, and Kris Faasse. *Called to Care: Opening Your Heart to Vulnerable Children through Foster Care, Adoption, and Other Life-Giving Ways*. Bethany House, a Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019.
- DDhingra, Sanya, et al. "Why the Muslim Personal Law Board Will Not Agree to Allow Adoption in Islam." *ThePrint*, 4 June 2018, theprint.in/india/governance/why-the-muslim-personal-law-board-will-not-agree-to-allow-adoption-in-islam/65757/.
- Moore, Russell. *Adopted for Life: the Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches*. Crossway, 2015.
- "7 Core Issues of Adoption." *AFFCNY*, 4 Aug. 2020, affcny.org/7-core-issues-of-adoption/.
- Sorrell, Cyndi, et al. "51 Useful Aging Out of Foster Care Statistics: Social Race Media." *National Foster Youth Institute*, 29 July 2020, nfyi.org/51-useful-aging-out-of-foster-care-statistics-social-race-media/.
- Thompson, Katie. "Aging Out of Foster Care: 18 and On Your Own." *Shared Justice, Shared Justice*, 30 Mar. 2017, www.sharedjustice.org/most-recent/2017/3/30/aging-out-of-foster-care-18-and-on-your-own.

“Valerie Miller - The Significance of Adoption - Anabaptist Perspectives Ep. 050.” *YouTube*,

YouTube, 4 July 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa9yCotjS-A.

“Who Adopts the Most?” *Adoption.org*,

adoption.org/who-adopts-the-most#:~:text=Christians.,all%20adults%20who%20have%20adopted.