

A Biblical View of Adoption

by Chené Tucker, MSW, LCSW

The decision to relinquish a child for adoption or to adopt a child is one that has multiple implications. For many clients, particularly those in the Christian tradition, questions regarding the "biblical acceptability" of placing a child through adoption are often present, whether they explicitly bring up the issue or not. In dealing with a woman considering making an adoption plan, it can be very helpful to direct her to the Bible as a means of helping her to access and integrate the spiritual implications of her adoptive plan. For adoptive parents and adopted people, the Bible has many examples that can help them to see how God used adoption to place children in a particular home for a divine plan and purpose.

Where is adoption addressed in the Bible? The story of Moses, a familiar biblical hero, is an excellent introduction. Born at a time when Hebrew newborns were being killed by the Egyptians, Moses was spared death when his mother sent him downstream in an ark covered with bulrushes. The daughter of Pharaoh found the crying child when she was bathing at the river's edge and decided to parent him, after returning the child to his birth mother to be nursed and weaned. The story of Moses, found in Exodus, is a classic example of adoption.

The story of Moses also supports the view of open adoption. The mother of Moses knew who was parenting her child and where the child was residing. Likewise, the daughter of Pharaoh met the birth mother of her child. Moses later moved away from his adoptive parents and began to identify himself as a Hebrew, returning to his people. This can be seen as a type of reunion. Obviously, Moses knew enough information about his background and roots to have an appreciation for his cultural heritage. In this example, God used the rerouting of Moses' life through adoption for a divine purpose. Moses became a liaison between his own people, the Hebrews, and his adopted people, the Egyptians. Through God's power, he would lead his people out of years of bondage and oppression into freedom.

A second biblical example is taken from the book of Samuel. Hannah, an infertile woman, was desperate for a child and prayed to God. A priest, observing her distraught nature, investigated. Upon learning the nature of her request, he prayed that the God of Israel would grant her wish. She committed in her heart that the child she would bear would be dedicated in service to the Lord all the days of his life.

To her delight, her prayer was answered. When the child was weaned, she brought him back to the priest and placed him in

his care for a lifetime of service in the temple. The scriptures mention that after placement of the child, Hannah "made him (Samuel) a little coat and brought it to him from year to year."

Again, in this example, we see a type of adoption. A child was placed in the care of another party. Contact, though minimal, was retained on a yearly basis. The birth mother, Hannah, knew where the child was and to whom he had been given. As the story continues, we see that Samuel grew up to become a mighty prophet and leader for the nation of Israel. We see how God allowed the rerouting of a young man's life for a divine purpose.

A New Testament biblical example of adoption is that of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born of the virgin Mary and spoke of His heavenly Father as God Almighty. According to the scriptures, Joseph, Mary's husband, was not Jesus' birth father but his stepfather. Jesus always knew where He came from and who His "birth father" was. As Jesus was later crucified and resurrected, He "returned" to His Father in heaven. This could again be viewed as a type of reunion, an adopted person being reconnected with his birth family.

In these three situations, we see an absence of secrecy regarding birth roots. Contact was maintained after adoption, particularly in the story of Hannah and Samuel.

The Bible can be a powerful tool in helping adoption triad members to integrate their adoption experiences into their faith. For the birth parent, it can help give a sense of "permission" to relinquish a child, knowing that adoption is scriptural and visible in the Bible and that God allowed and approved adoption, both then and now.

For adoptive families, it can help to answer questions about the validity of openness in adoption from a scriptural standpoint. It also demonstrates the way in which God used adoptive placements to enable children to fulfill a God-ordained plan, as well as to bless parents with a child.

Lastly, to adopted people it gives a message of God's sovereignty over the life of the individual. God in many cases has used adoption placement as a vehicle for His divine plan.

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