

July 29. Read Proverbs 4:23, Psalms 139:14. Families called to stand in the gap for children through fostering are truly doing kingdom work. As a former foster child and as a momma to a sweet little who was fostered for us, my gratitude runs deep. Personally, one of the greatest blessings of my life has been to see how families who stood in the gap guarded their children's hearts. One of the greatest gifts that foster mommies or daddies can give is to guard their children's hearts, especially because there is a high likelihood that this is a gift they have yet to receive. Parenting works better when blended with a strong undercurrent of prayer. When you are dealing with little hearts that have been bruised, however intentionally or unintentionally, relying on God is vital. Praying about how to specifically guard their little hearts is critical, for fostering children is a spiritual battle. When difficult circumstances have taught children to be wary and create thick walls around their hearts, you can be the constant and consistent voice of love and truth that they desperately need to hear. One of the best ways to do this is to let your foster children hear you praising God, for they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Let them hear you thanking Jesus for the gift of their presence in your home and in your family, knowing that the definition of family in God's view is different than the typical cultural definition to which most people adhere.

July 30. Read Joshua 1:9, 1 Peter 5:7. Yesterday we considered the need to relentlessly pray for your foster children, and, more specifically, to guard their hearts. It is quite possible that their hearts have not been guarded as carefully as their Heavenly Father desires, and you have answered the call to stand in the gap for these kids. That is sweet and amazing, and I encourage you to breathe in your Heavenly Father's grace and love. These children are precious to Him and so are you. With fostering, there are hard things to consider and endure, but the love of Christ will get you through it. There will be moments, days, or even seasons that are challenging, and these periods will quite possibly be more challenging than the average family may endure. Firstly, I want to encourage you that you are specifically gifted and supernaturally equipped to handle anything that comes your way, for God is with you wherever you go and with whatever you encounter. He will see you through. Know that as you parent these children, you are going to face some level of spiritual opposition, and you will have to guard your own heart as well. These boundaries are a way of loving your children, and these boundaries are good. Rely on your Heavenly Father to give you discernment in this. Even Jesus knew that there were times on this earth when he had to get away and just spend time with the Father. Follow His example, and when the circumstances surrounding your specific foster situation become overwhelming, remove yourself for a time of prayer and reflection. Ask God to guard your heart, to present you with opportunities to choose joy, and to sustain you by His faithfulness. Pray for the difficult season or time of growth to pass quickly, for He knows your heart. He knows it well because he chose your heart to love the little lives that will call you mom or dad for a season, and that is a beautiful thing.

July 31. Read James 1:27, Jeremiah 29:11. Perhaps you have always known you were called to adoption. Maybe for you, like me, toys like Cabbage Patch Dolls and Pound Puppies were more than a simple gift. Or perhaps you have come to consider this calling after years of wondering and wandering. Sometimes Jesus speaks to us in parables, and other times He is just clear and simple. Well, this is one of those times. In James 1:27, God clearly states, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.” That, folks, is both a command and a commission. As crazy, difficult, or even surprising as others may find your calling, please remember that it is a heavenly, God-ordained invitation to join a joyous and overwhelming adventure. So strap in, pray hard, and get ready to go on the ride of your life. Facing an uphill infertility battle, I heard more than one doctor tell me that I had a less than 2% chance of conceiving and carrying. This news came just months after leaving my teaching post to pursue my last course of medical intervention. God let me hit rock bottom. The nurse called to say the baby would not make it (again). Sitting in a random church parking lot, I simply wept. In His infinite kindness, God drew near to me - His broken, hurting daughter - by using a sign. An actual sign! It was on the marquee of the old Baptist church directly across from where I cried. The sign stated, “Moses was a basket-case too!” And I just froze.

Wait! Moses, the man called and chosen by God, was a hot mess just like me. Then God leveled me. Moses was also the first child adopted in the Bible. During Biblical times, only adults were adopted. The reasoning was logical: Why adopt a child who may stray to the right or left? However, Moses, the author of Genesis, the man chosen to free God’s people, began life as a persecuted minority. He was trans-racially and trans-culturally adopted by none other than the princess of Egypt! God used this supernaturally-organized relationship unequivocally in Moses’ life to accomplish His will for His Chosen People, the Israelites. Now tell me adoption isn’t God-ordained. He has a plan and a purpose...and it is good.

August 1. Read Ephesians 3:20-21. Well, the first step on an adoption journey is simply the decision to pray for God’s direction. So take a moment to get yourself in a position to be vulnerable. Get ready to listen to God’s leading on a possible next step. This critical next step is identifying WHO God is pre paring to be your child. While loving and creating a family through adoption is similar to a biological birth in some aspects, it also has some key differences. With an adoption, you get information, forms, and choices - and, if you are a bleeding heart like me, you will be ready and completely willing to take on a sickly, green flamingo if you can dress it up and teach it to say, “Mama!” But really, can you handle that bird? This is the point in my story when God leveled me. These children that are the heart and the face of each waiting reality are His children. My child to be is His Child. He loves these children like He loves you and me. And He wants the very best for them...and that best COULD BE YOU! As I prayed to figure out who my child was, I have to confess, my own life didn’t sing of overcoming, surrendering, or bringing God glory. It was simply the cry of my heart to find my child, just like every waiting child desires to be a part of a forever family. So be bold, be prayerful, and be ready to follow God’s path for your family. When you are open and humble, you will find that God is ready and wanting to give you abundantly more than you can ask for or imagine. You are searching for your particular child. Wherever you are and however you feel right now, know that God gives graciously and generously. He may move you from your place of comfort, but He will give you everything you need to handle it. God’s got this - you can count on it.

August 2. Read 1 Peter 5:8. Wouldn't it be lovely if all those sweet little ones awaiting a forever family and all those parents-in-waiting could find one another quickly? While 33% of the American population considers adoption, only 2% complete the process! This is heartbreaking. Why so few completions? Families have cited everything from fear to finances as the reasons why an adoption process never moved forward. Heartbroken couples...Heartbroken children...it seems so hopeless. So stop now, and pray hard! This hopeless place is exactly where the enemy wants us to stay. He wants us to stay stuck at consideration...and fear. Families grieve a child they've never held. Orphans grieve the parents they have yet to find. Satan is laughing at us, as we try to consider our next step. There are obstacles - it's true. It is a journey - this is true too! All this can cause Christians to consider an adoption process with apprehension instead of hope. To care for the orphan isn't optional. It's a command and an invitation into the unknown and the holy, into the messy and the ordained. This may feel overwhelming, but it's God's heart! Orphans are frequently attacked from the womb. Satan has an arsenal at his disposal that includes war, disease, poverty, and addiction. Regardless, be encouraged because Psalm 34:18 states, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." God is holding your child as he or she waits for you. Parents going through the rigors of an adoption often raise empty arms heavenward and scream, "Why is this so hard? Why isn't our child home yet?" Possibly, I screamed this.... As obstacles mount, you will hear the enemy's lies saying you aren't meant to adopt. The process is too hard, the bureaucracy is too much, or the cost is too high. Please, please - when the lies shout loudly, stay connected to the God who loves you. Satan's goal is to "kill and steal and destroy," but Jesus came so that we may have life abundantly. Every orphan is spoken for by Jesus. God is in the business of forming families, but remember you have a very real enemy who is in the business of trying to destroy all that God loves. Focus on the God who loves you and your child-to-be dearly. Focus on truth. Focus on the God who loves your family...your whole family

Adapted from www.ignitehope.online (Jacqui Jackson)