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There's No Place



Like Home

Gospel Grace for Adoption

God's discipline is never a punishment to hurt His adopted children. God never punishes His children in wrath, because *all* of His wrath was poured out on Jesus on the cross. God's discipline is always meant to free us from lies and idolatries that trap and enslave us. It always has the purpose of training us and changing us so that we look more like Jesus, the first-born, our big brother.

God's children obey Him because they love Him, not because they fear losing their adoption (John 14:23-24). If you are God's adopted child, nothing can stop His love for you (Romans 8:14-17, 31-38). Jesus loves you and longs to be with you forever. And all His adopted little brothers and sisters long to please Him, now and forever.

No Place Like Home

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Read Philippians 3:9 & 12	
♥ About God's begotten son, Jesus Christ	♥ About God's adopted sons and daughters
♥ Righteousness comes through faith in Christ.	♥ Vs. 9—It is not keeping the law that makes us righteous, but faith in Christ's righteousness. ♥ Vs. 12—Because Christ makes us His own, we press on so that we reflect His righteousness by thinking thoughts and doing things just like Him.

♥ Read Hebrews 12:5

God will never abandon His adopted children. And, God never punishes His adopted children; He disciplines. You can always respond to discipline as His secure adopted child, not as a foster child who might face abandonment or punishment.

Read Hebrews 12:11	
♥ Responding to discipline (suffering) that happened as a result of my sin.	♥ Responding to discipline (suffering) that happened although I did not sin
♥ Do you first think about the cross of Jesus Christ? Or, do you first think about your behavior and how you can either justify it or change it?	♥ Do you think about God as a Father of love who works even sin out for your good? Or, do you look back over your life to see if God is punishing you?
♥ When you sin, do you thank Jesus for the cross? Or, do you fear and worry what He'll do?	♥ Do you thank God for what He's doing? Or, do you rake over your thoughts and actions to search for failure that might have deserved this suffering?
♥ When you sin, do you want to love Jesus more? Or, do you want to love your sin more?	♥ Do you ask God to train you and teach you how He wants you to use this chance to look like Jesus? Or do you ask God why you deserve this?
♥ When you sin, do you feel godly sorrow so that you can repent? Or, do you think up ways to try and get a second chance?	♥ Do you trust God? Or, do you feel discouraged?
♥ When you sin, do you ask God to grant you repentance (a new heart)? Or, do you think about how to defend your sin?	

We All Need Adoption

The problem is that many Christians live as if we were foster children, instead of as if we are adopted. We act as if at any moment, our security will be removed. We act as if we might be rejected by the Father. We struggle to believe that our adoption into God's family has nothing to do with our daily performance.

The Bible teaches that our adoption into God's family has nothing to do with our behavior. It's true. You can never do enough good things to get adopted by God. As a matter of fact, it was while we were enemies of God, that God chose us and loved us and poured out the punishment for our sin on Jesus so that we could be cleansed and made righteous (Romans 5: 8).

As you parent your adopted children, remind them that the only thing any of us bring to God is our sin. All of us must be willing to deny ourselves and be crucified with Christ, then we are adopted into the righteous family of God. God's adopted children have nothing good of their own. It's our only firstborn brother, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is our righteousness (Mark 10:17-18).

Read Romans 8:29

♥ About God's begotten son, Jesus Christ

♥ About God's adopted sons and daughters

♥ He sets the standard that we conform to.
♥ He wants to be our firstborn brother.

♥ God chose us and planned the events of our lives so that we'd be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Christmas in our family featured the usual gathering of aunts, uncles, and cousins, complete with buttery-sweet pudding and off-tune carol singing. I'll never forget the year I was ten, when my aunt and uncle surprised us with a brand-new adopted daughter. How I begged to hold her, and then refused to give her up until they practically pried her from my arms. I couldn't stop staring into that precious unfamiliar face, beautiful eyes peering out of the pink bundle.

It turned out though, that things weren't always fun and games. And yet, nearly half a century later, at her mom's funeral, my heart skipped when this adopted daughter was the one who took the microphone. She wove stories chock-full of loving family memories, sweet and tender. We all cried, laughed, and cried some more, none more than she. And I thanked God for giving her our sinful family, saved by gospel grace and drenched in Christ's love.

Earthly adoptive families present a marvelous picture of our position in Christ. But, sadly, oftentimes in our fallen world, heartache abounds and a sense of defeat exists within the parents.

This booklet provides a resource for adoptive families. It targets specific issues that can arise and offers biblical resolutions. For each discussion and activity suggested, the emphasis is the grace of the Gospel. We long to help families see how the Bible clarifies any confusion that might threaten the beauty and hope of adoption.

The format of this booklet includes short biblical stories, written at a child's level of understanding. Each story is followed by an adult-level biblical discussion of an issue or struggle often faced by adoptive families. I hope that you will glean practical ideas, and that you will thoroughly enjoy your precious years with the family our amazing God has given you.

In the Lamb,

Ruth Froese

Father turned His back on Jesus. Why? Jesus never, ever did one thing wrong. Why did He lose the favor of God the Father? Because Jesus took our sins on Himself. God cannot look on sin, and so Jesus suffered separation from His Father. Jesus chose this agony, to make it possible that you and I do not need to be rejected. The wrath Christ took on the cross because of our sin, paved the way for our acceptance by the Father.

After Jesus died, they put His body into a tomb. Three days later, He rose! Forty more days passed before He returned to Heaven, where He is now, sitting on a throne right next to God the Father.

And what is Jesus saying to the Father as He sits there beside Him? He's talking to Him about us, if we have trusted what Jesus did on the cross to save us from our punishment for our sin. As Jesus sits there and talks to the Father, He's saying something like this:

(GIRLS) "Father, _____ is your daughter. She has confessed her sin and I have forgiven her. When she believed, I took her sin on me on the cross, and I gave her my righteousness. Remember, she's been adopted into our family. Father, have mercy on my adopted sister. Instead of wrath, give her mercy. Instead of punishing her, give her grace so she can to grow more like Me."

(BOYS) "Father, _____ is your son. He has confessed his sin and I have forgiven him. When he believed, I took his sin on me on the cross, and I gave dressed Him in my righteousness. Remember, he's been adopted into our family. Father, have mercy on my adopted brother. Instead of wrath, give him mercy. Instead of punishing him, give him grace so he can grow more like Me."

Wow, isn't that awesome? It makes all the difference in the world that Jesus died to pay for our sins. We do not have to wonder who we are. We do not have to wonder if we are loved. We do not have to wonder where we belong. When we confess, we are forgiven and cleansed, just like everyone else in the family of God.

♥ Read | John 1:9

Do you understand what it means to confess sin? It means that you agree with God about your sin. Everyone who believes Jesus died for their sin and receives Him as their Savior and Lord, is adopted into God's family (Romans 8:14-17).

Jesus' Adoptive Family

♡ Read Matthew 1:18-2:23

God chose a man named Joseph for a special mission—to provide the care and love of an earthly father for Jesus. In our discussions about adoption, it's wonderful to realize that Jesus knows what it's like to have two fathers.

Before Jesus came to earth, He was a prince. He commanded mighty hosts in the Heavens. But when He came to earth, He humbled Himself and arrived as a tiny baby. Joseph did not bring the baby home to a nursery painted blue filled with stuffed toys and a cozy crib, rather a simple barn that sheltered cows and sheep from the cold. Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger or feeding trough for his bed. It was a place where shepherds could come to see their Redeemer, and where multitudes of angels could sing praises to the new born King. When Jesus grew into toddler-hood, Joseph obeyed God and moved to another country to keep his son safe.

Here's how the Bible describes Jesus as a boy:

- ♡ He grew and became strong.
- ♡ He was filled with wisdom—He always did what the Father wanted.
- ♡ He had the favor of God the Father.

Once Jesus grew into a man, the Bible becomes silent about his earthly father. As a man, Jesus spent three years showing His disciples the glory of God's grace and truth. He held children on His lap. He healed and ministered and forgave. Everything He did was good and kind and wonderful. He made disciples who would be like Him and teach the world about Him, so that many, like you and me, would trust Jesus and eagerly wait for Him to return. When Jesus comes back, the only thing that will matter is our response to Him.

At the end of Jesus' life on earth, they beat His body, they bruised Him, they spit on Him, they mocked Him, and they nailed Him to a cross to die (1 Peter 2:28). On the cross, just before He died, God the

Jesus' Compassion

♡ Read John 11:32-44

Jesus walked the dusty road towards His friend's house. As His steps took Him closer, He heard sad sounds. The crying and wailing grew louder and louder. Why were they so sad?

When Jesus arrived at the house, his friend Lazarus was gone, dead. His sisters Mary and Martha were grieving their brother Lazarus' death.

Even though Jesus knew that He would bring Lazarus back to them and that they were not losing their family forever, He still shared their sadness. Jesus wept with them over the loss of their brother.

Please reread one verse again—John 11:35. Sometimes we make jokes about this verse being a favorite because it's so short and easy to remember. Everybody in the family could easily say it aloud, right? However, seriously speaking, John 11:35 is an important favorite verse for adopted kids.

You may not have lost a brother in death, but as an adopted child you have experienced the loss of birth parents. Although your adoptive parents have provided a home and a family, times of sadness may still come. When Jesus wept with Martha and Mary, He showed us that it's good to share sadness and weep together.

Adoption Family Compassion

An adopted child may not have lost a brother in death, as Mary and Martha had, but they have experienced the loss of their birth parents. Although you as their adoptive parents have provided a home and a family, there may still be times of sadness for your adopted child. When Jesus wept with Mary and Martha, He showed us that it's good to share in sadness, and to weep together.

♥ study idea: when Jesus wept ♥

Reread John 11:20-46. List the many different reactions Mary, Martha, and Jesus had. Put a check next to the emotions you have ex-

Mary	Martha	Jesus

perienced and think about times you have reacted similarly.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other." Romans 12:15-16

It's important to make an effort to empathize with your child and share in their sadness and grief. Notice the flow of the above verses. When we share sadness, as well as joys, harmony in the home is promoted. Sometimes it's not so easy to share grief over birth parent loss. For one thing, hardly anybody ever talks about it. Maybe you don't even recognize it as something to share sadness over.

♥ Action idea: Think Right about Emotions ♥

The following emotions are often felt by adopted children (in addition to the anger and fear we've covered). Talk about each one, and help your child learn how to think right according to what the Bible teaches. Don't belittle or ignore these feelings, but use them as teaching opportunities. Think of these emotions as gauges to learn from, gifts from God to guide us in teaching our families how to glorify God.

strong emotional response	Thinking right about it
♥ I feel like running away.	♥
♥ I feel like I'll never fit in.	♥
♥ I feel smothered.	♥
♥ I feel like I'm too much to handle, and I'll be abandoned again.	♥

We all need to confess sinful emotional responses. Remind your child that as we confess our sins, Jesus forgives us because He died on the cross for us. When we repent, we can learn to be contented and to obey God so that He is glorified.

Some adopted children struggle with not knowing their medical background. When doctors ask questions about the health of birth parents, adopted children have a unique opportunity to glorify God.

- ♡ During medical exams, adoptees may not know their medical history (exams precede going to school or camp, enrolling in college, getting married).
- ♡ During times of illness or medical crisis, adoptees may not know if an illness runs in their family.
- ♡ Blood typing of both birth mother and father may be unknown.

It's helpful for adoptive parents to be aware and acknowledge that visits to doctors, hospitals, or times of routine testing at school may be a struggle for adoptive children. Adoptive parents who take time to discuss this, play an important role in preparing adopted children ahead of time. They can be confident and frank about any questions regarding known history, or lack thereof.

♡ Read 1 Corinthians 10:31

God says that the little things matter. We can glorify Him even by the way we eat or drink! We can choose to glorify God during all kinds of mundane, everyday events. We can choose to respond for God's glory during all kinds of intense emotions.

Remember when Moses saw that slave driver beating a Hebrew man? He felt very strong emotion. He chose a sinful response—he blew up and murdered a man. But God worked on Moses, and taught him how to think right about things. Then, He gave him opportunities to obey Him, and when Moses obeyed God, he became a great leader.

The Bible teaches us that if we think right, we can do right, and then we'll feel right. Feelings aren't first, they come because of our thoughts (John 13:17, James 1:25).

A good way to share grief is to start with memories. Thinking about memories can open the door to talk about how God carries us when we are sad.

♡ Action idea: Make a Memory Box ♡

Some children lose their parents after a number of years. If that's the way it is in your family, try this. Deliberately, talk about the memories. Then decorate a "memory box" to tuck under the child's bed to look at anytime. The box can include drawings, pictures, and personal items. Also, write prayers of thanks and include them in the memory box. Until we are thankful, we will not see the power of God's grace.

A child who never knew birth mom and dad can't grieve by talking about memories. However, adoptive moms and dads can still help an adopted child who has never met a birth parent to make a special box to go under the child's bed. It can include items such as the clothes they arrived in, copies of any available paperwork, stories or poetry about adoption, and a picture the child draws on each birthday. Be sure to include prayers of thanks to God.

♡ Read Proverbs 25:20

As you consider the grief your child may harbor over the loss of birth parents, it's wise to consider Proverbs 25:20, which teaches that singing songs to a heavy heart puts a chill into the relationship. Cheerfulness can be promoted and modeled, but the Bible tells us not to force it. The Bible tells us that we need to share grief, not ignore it. In wise adoptive families, there is shared grief, yes, but also, there is always hope. Even while He wept in John 11:35, Jesus was bringing hope. We must do the same.

Here's an example: Joey's adoptive mom thought he seemed particularly sad one day. In the past, when he'd acted that way, she had told him to cheer up. Then he would scowl and stomp off to his room. This day she decided to do something different. She sat down beside him, looked into his eyes, and said, "Honey, I know I'm not the mom who gave birth to you. I'm a different mom and I love you very much, but Jesus loves you even more. I'm so glad He has given me this privilege of being your mom." Then, she hugged Joey. Joey smiled at her and

went outside to play, humming a little tune. In this way, Joey's mom had acknowledged that he might be sad at the same time as giving him reassuring comfort.

Sometimes people think that the solution for grief is a process, with steps. God's Word talks about people, not processes. And God's solution for grief is tender comfort, not a process. *"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Isaiah 41:1*

All too often, the wound of grief scabs over with anger. Small children can exhibit this anger in some very unpleasant and destructive ways, to the home and to siblings. Older children can exhibit the anger in destruction to self (starving, cutting, or worse), and violence to others. So please ask God whether angry behavior in your home might be rooted in the grief of loss—either parental loss over the ability to bear birth children, or children's loss over the ability to have their birth parents.

Remember, Jesus taught us that grief is good. But grief is not good if used as an excuse for anger. We can confess sinful responses and handle grief well, because Jesus died for us. We can respond like Jesus, because when we confess our sin, God gives us Jesus' perfect record.

♡ Action idea: Comfort Journal ♡

How can you apply the comfort of God's Word for the grief of loss your child make experience? One way to talk about God's comfort is by working together on the "Comfort Journal" on the following page. Be sure to do this exercise together (when you feel sad it's not very comforting to be given an assignment to do alone). Pray before you begin, asking God to shine His Word on both of your hearts, and be sure to simplify the verses for small children.

If there is a need for ongoing comfort, you might help the child make a comfort notebook, working together on one page per week until the child has a booklet to put into the memory box. Pray asking the Lord to guide you to passages that will be meaningful for your child.

♡ Action idea: Discussion of Differences ♡

As a family, discuss each of the following areas of potential differences. Be sure to give each person time to contribute.

- ♡ Personalities—Laid back and relaxed, or uptight and intense
- ♡ Cultural differences—food, special days, clothing
- ♡ Physiques—large or small, tall or short
- ♡ Skin color
- ♡ Hair that is wavy or straight
- ♡ Things that are frightening
- ♡ Things to do during spare time—sports, music, art

♡ Read Isaiah 43:7

Why did God create us?

- ♡ To glorify God

What does it mean to glorify God?

- ♡ You glorify God by obeying Him and then telling people it is a pleasure because you get to do it for God.
- ♡ You glorify God by suffering and choosing to focus on God's strength and refusing to focus on the suffering.
- ♡ You glorify God by enjoying life as His child and telling people how wonderful He is.
- ♡ You glorify God by thanking Him for all things, such as the differences you talked about from the previous page.

Look back at the above list of differences. Answer the question, "How can I use the way God has made me to glorify Him?"

Contentment instead of chaos

♡ Read Exodus 1:22-2:15, Exodus 6:20a

As you read the story of Moses to your adopted children, aren't you struck by how God used all those wildly different families to grow him into a great leader?

When Bob played hockey in the NHL, one of the interesting statistics he was part of was the fact that more children from broken homes succeeded in the sport, than children from secure homes. We serve a great God who can use the difficulty of many homes to grow anyone for His purposes. Our job as parents is to turn our children towards the gospel grace of Jesus Christ so they'll come to know and serve Him.

♡ Read Romans 8:28-29

God says that ALL things work for good for those who love Him. How can God work difficulties out for good? Because He uses everything to make you more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

The question is, how can you help your children to accept what's in their past? Jesus accepted everything that the Father planned for Him (John 5:19). The best way to teach is by modeling. Are you content? We can learn contentment no matter what's in our past (Philippians 4:11-13).

Acceptance and contentment in the life of an adopted child begins with recognizing and acknowledging differences. Differences are not inferior, they are wonderful! God created each person in a unique way. Wise adoptive families celebrate and enjoy the differences.

Comfort Journal				
Passage	Summarize the passage in simple words	This passage is comforting because...	Because God comforts me, He wants me to...	What I might say to comfort others
Psalm 63:6-8				
Other suggested passages: 2 Cor. 1:3-10 Lam. 3:19-29				

Moses' Many Homes

♥ Read Exodus 1:22-2:15, Exodus 6:20a

His back bruised and bloody, Amram could hardly lie down to sleep. The slave driver had beaten him that morning, so he was the one to hold and walk the baby. He walked back and forth with baby Moses to keep him from crying. If he cried, they might find him and kill him.

But in a few months, he was too noisy. All they could think to do was hide him in a pitch boat shoved into the River Nile. Do you know the story—the devoted sister's vigil from behind the bullrushes, the dramatic rescue by the princess? And, the miracle! His birth-mother being ordered to nurse him until he was old enough to eat food. Then it was off to his adoptive home, an Egyptian palace.

For the next forty years, Moses lived as a prince in a royal family. From hunted son of a slave, to favored prince of a Pharaoh. I wonder, did he remember his first family? Did his princess mother tell him about pulling him out of the bulrushes and rescuing him from the death sentence for Hebrew boys? Or, maybe, did he ask questions? We don't know. But we do know that one day he saw a Hebrew slave being beaten, and quick-as-a-wink, he attacked and killed that brutal slave-driver. Moses then fled into hiding in Midian, and became part of a priest's family, a shepherd family.

An interesting thing happened when he met the girl he would marry. She told her father that an Egyptian had helped water her sheep that day. From this we know that Moses looked and acted like his adopted Egyptian family. Meanwhile, Exodus 2:11 says that he thought of himself as one of the Hebrew people. So Moses looked and talked like an Egyptian prince, thought like a Hebrew slave, and lived like a Midianite shepherd. All that before God used him to lead His people out of slavery and into freedom.

Maybe you've had many experiences too. Don't be afraid of them; you never know how God will use them. No matter where you come from or how many places you've lived, God can work it all for good, if you love Him.

Ruth Trusts God

♡ Read Ruth 1:16-18

Ruth had a really big choice to make. Would she go back to her birth parents, or would she stay with the mother of her dead husband? Ruth decided to stay with her husband's mother. Why? Because she knew it was what God wanted her to do. She did not follow her feelings, but determined to do what pleased God.

When you read the story of Ruth, you notice how she did what God wanted, although at times it certainly must have felt wrong. Her response to her mother-in-law was, "All that you say I will do." (Ruth 2:5).

Ruth could have let anger create a bitter scab over her grief of losing/leaving her family. That's what her mother-in-law did, but Ruth kept her feelings in check. How could she do this? Because Ruth had fallen in love with God, she chose to trust Him and obey Him.

- ♡ Every time Ruth's new mother became bitter and angry, Ruth chose to trust and obey.
- ♡ When they were nearly starving, Ruth didn't complain about having no food. Instead, she trusted & obeyed by working hard.
- ♡ When Ruth's mother-in-law told her to become the wife of an older man, she trusted & obeyed by marrying Boaz.

Ruth could have been very upset about losing her first home and country, and about all the strange things she was asked to do, but instead of being angry, she chose to trust and obey God.

At the end of the book of Ruth, God tell us that she became King David's great-grandmother. In the Psalms her great grandson David wrote when he was being treated unfairly, he trusted God instead of becoming angry. Psalm 23 is a good example. Keep your Bible next to your bed and read Psalm 23 before falling asleep. You'll find it very reassuring and comforting.

Trusting God over Feelings

♡ Read Ruth 1:6-18

Although Ruth could have been very upset about losing her first home and country, and about all the strange things she was asked to do, she chose to trust and obey God.

choice	
♡ Anger	♡ Trust and obey

♡ Read Ephesians 4:26-27

Our Bible verse tells us that when we are angry, we must not sin. Let's think about two parts to anger: 1) The REASON you are angry, and 2) What you DO OR DON'T DO because you are angry.

Sometimes there are GOOD REASONS to be angry. Jesus became angry and cleared out the temple because the people were selling things instead of praying. Jesus showed us a good reason to be angry—misuse of the church. If God is being insulted or mistreated, that's a good reason to be angry. However, even if you have good reason to be angry, you still need to trust God. God has promised to pour out His anger on His enemies, and you must trust God to keep His promises. Let Him take care of it, it's not your job (Romans 12:19).

Sometimes there are SINFUL REASONS to be angry. If the reason for being angry is self-centered, it's a sinful reason to be angry. If you're angry because you aren't being treated right, or the way you think you should be treated, it is self-centered anger, and therefore sinful.

We also have to talk about what you DO or DON'T DO because you are angry. Anger stirs up energy. That energy can be used in a right way, or a sinful way.

Put off fear	Renew your mind	Put on love
"Jody, did you know that Jesus told us exactly what to do in the situation you find yourself in? He taught us to be kind to our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Our whole family is going to pray for your enemies each night, OK? And we'll also pray for God to show you wise ways that you can be kind to them."	<p>"Jody, do you know that what you're being teased about is not a surprise to God? He knows about it, and He is in control of it. He also allowed Jesus to be mocked, way worse than you are being mocked. They spit on Him, and put a crown of thorns into His head, and beat Him terribly. Because He endured this, you have an example of how to endure it. And you're able to forgive your persecutors instead of being afraid of them."</p> <p>If Jody is a Christian, you could say, "Jody, this is an opportunity to grow for God's glory. You can memorize Matthew 5:16, and remember that you can respond like Jesus and so glorify God."</p> <p>If Jody is not saved yet, you could say, "Jody, when you know the forgiveness of the cross, you'll be able to forgive your enemies, and not be controlled by them."</p>	"Jody, let's think of a verse you can repeat to yourself while you are responding with love when you hear the teasing. I'll work with you to memorize 1 Timothy 1:7, and then I want you to repeat it to yourself during the entire bus trip. I'll give you a cool notebook, and you can write it out if you need a way to keep from being distracted."

There are many reasons for fear—Tommy was fearful because of guilt, Susie was fearful of consequences, and Jody was fearful of her enemies. Sometimes adopted children can't identify the reason for fear—maybe they fear repeat abandonment or loss. The Bible teaches how to handle fear in light of the gospel. The box below helps us see how.

Put off fear	Renew your mind	Put on love
I'm afraid of losing my home and family.	Jesus provides an eternal home. Those who confess their sins and believe that Jesus forgives them are adopted into God's family. Because of the gospel, all of us can be assured that we will never lose our heavenly home, and that we will always have a church family to be part of.	I am faithful to love and serve my church family, and I thank God that Jesus is making a home in heaven for me.

Put off fear	Renew your mind	Put on love
<p>"Susie, I've asked you to clean up your toys. You have responded by crying. Now you have a choice. You may either dry your tears and pick up these toys, or you may go into your room to compose yourself and then come out when you are ready to obey. Which will you choose?"</p>	<p>"Susie, when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night God had given Him the hardest job ever, think about what He did. He was so afraid, that He sweated blood. He could have cried and tried to get out of His job. But because He loves you, He didn't. Instead, He prayed to the Father and said, "Not my will, but yours." He was willing to suffer through the most difficult experience anyone has ever endured, because He loves you. If you believe that He died for you so that you wouldn't have to be punished for your sins, you do not need to be afraid. His love can flow through you and you can show me you love me by obeying me, just like He obeyed.</p>	<p>"Susie, Jesus said that those who love Him are those who obey Him (John 14:21), and He says that children must obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1). If you love Jesus, you will obey me now. If you don't love Him yet, I do, and I have a job to train you so that you obey me. That's why your choices are to either pick up, or compose yourself and then come back and pick up."</p>

On the following page, we'll consider an example where a little girl has become so fearful that her physical body has been affected by her fear. Part of her parents job in helping her is to be careful themselves so that they don't become fearful too.

Lately, Jody has been teased by the other children at school. They're calling her names like "Jodopted." She has become so afraid of them, she can hardly breathe. By the time the bus arrives at school, her heart is racing. The other day she fainted, and the nurse told her she had a panic attack. Her mom can either be convinced that her daughter has some type of disorder, or she can persevere in teaching her to handle her fears biblically by loving her enemies and praying for them.

Sometimes adopted children use the energy of anger in sinful ways. One way is by hurting other children. Another sinful way is by destroying or damaging property. When I worked at a receiving home for foster children, it was not uncommon for the energy of anger to be used for smearing feces on the bathroom walls. Sometimes older children show anger by hurting themselves, deceiving parents, stealing, or being promiscuous. We cannot make excuses to justify sinful ways of using the energy of anger. The Bible says, "Even a child is known by His doings, whether it is pure and right" Proverbs 20:11.

The good news is that if we know Jesus, all of us, young and old, can learn to handle anger well. When Jesus was being mistreated, He acted as the perfect example of how we can respond rightly if we are being mistreated. Don't be discouraged if you have sinned with anger. When you confess your anger as sin, there is hope, because Jesus died to forgive your sin.

♡ Read 1 John 1:9

There's hope for those who are guilty of sinful anger! How? By confessing it as sin, and trusting that Jesus forgives. Remember that Jesus was beaten and bruised for that sin. When men were very cruel to Him, He trusted God that His plan was best. We can trust God too. Sometimes people will be cruel to us, like they were to Jesus. Instead of getting angry, stop and pray. Tell God you trust Him and believe that His plan is best.

When you are angry, by God's grace, you can learn to use the energy well. Here are three ways to do that: 1) Hold back, 2) Release under control, and 3) Create a plan to solve problems.

1. **HOLD BACK**—But don't hold back by holding in. Decide ahead of time that when you feel anger, you will confess the sin of not trusting God. If you enter into unplanned, un-peaceful interaction, or find yourself doing something destructive, physically get up and walk away (Proverbs 29:11). (A very small child can be physically held back from the situation by being removed.) Confess the desire to punish (rather than to help) the one you are angry at, and make a plan for release under control.
2. **RELEASE UNDER CONTROL**—Start by praying, no matter the age. Tell God about your anger, and ask Him to help you express your

anger well. Releasing under control does not mean that you clam up, but that you communicate biblically. Often families choose non-biblical patterns of communication in place, and need to learn how to release under control. On the following page, you'll find a practical plan for releasing under control through "Anger Release Conferences." The conferences follow the teaching of Ephesians 4:25-32.

3. CREATE A PLAN TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.

- ✓ Choose to act instead of react. Decide on an act of kindness that you will do for the person. Then act by blessing the person.
- ✓ Now, if you are able to come up with an idea for possible solution, you can talk with the person you were angry with.
 - ♥ Tell the person that you have confessed your sin of anger, and ask if they will forgive you. If they say no, that is their choice. It is OK though, because you are forgiven by God.
 - ♥ State that you would like to talk peacefully about ways the problem could be solved. Suggest a possible solution. Do not insist on it, just ask for their thoughts about it.

ious feelings, they might be sinful. Adopted children, like all children, sometimes act in obnoxious ways. But adoptive parents who fear feel sorry for their children and make excuses for them, only help the child to respond sinfully. This is hurtful to the child.

Ephesians 4:22-24 teaches us to put off sin and put on obedience to God. A fearful child can learn to put off the fear, and put on love by renewing their mind. For example, Tommy lies about his bad report card because he is afraid his adoptive parents might not keep him.

Put off fear	Renew your mind	Put on love
"Tommy, I see that you are afraid you will be disciplined if you tell me the truth, but you may not cover up your bad grades even if you are afraid of what might happen."	"Tommy, Jesus had a chance to lie to the judges when they wanted to crucify Him. But He told the truth because He loves you. Yes, He was willing to tell the truth and be crucified. He let them crucify Him for our sins, such as your lie, so that He can forgive us. Jesus didn't lie, and you can have courage to be like Jesus and tell me the truth. You may need to be punished by me, but you will not have to go to hell for eternity if you believe Jesus died for you, and confess your sins, such as lying. If you are His child you will love Him and tell the truth because you love Him. If you are not, I need to teach you to tell the truth because that's how I love God."	"Tommy, because God loves you and I love you, please tell me the truth right now. You are safe in God's love and my love. Someday I pray that you will love God and always tell the truth, because you love Him."

In the example on the next page, Susie's adoptive mom has asked her to clean up her toys or else lose a privilege. Susie starts to cry. Her mom thinks Susie is crying because of she is afraid of losing a privilege, and answers, "Oh, honey, I'm so sorry you feel this way. It's going to be OK." But this only feeds Sue's reaction of fear. A wise mom would teach Sue that she can have self-control over her fear, when she focuses on the truth of the gospel.

Kind Instead of Fearful

♥ Read 2 Kings 5:2-3

It's hard to imagine the fear Namaan's slave girl must have battled. Sadly, in parts of the world today, many little girls face similar fear.

So the lessons that live on from her example can have great repercussions. In adoptive homes, we are encouraged by how she chose to obey the God of love. Adoptive parents can use this story to help their children to show love instead of fear. If the little girl had been ruled by her fears, she wouldn't have been kind to Namaan.

Even more importantly, we can take the opportunity to help our children talk about Jesus and how he didn't let fear control Him. If He had paid attention to His fears, He wouldn't have died for you on the cross. Because He loved you, and died for you, when He becomes our Savior and Lord, we are given His perfect record. That means we, and our children, can replace fears with love, just like Jesus.

Read 1 John 4:18

You have a choice:

♥ Fear

♥ Love

Some fears are good. Wise fear can keep us away from dangerous places and people. The Bible says that wisdom begins with fearing God. What does it mean to fear God?

- ♥ When you fear God you think of His glorious works with **awe**.
- ♥ When you fear God you **appreciate** what He did for you on the cross to forgive your sins. You are very thankful.
- ♥ When you fear God you have **apprehension** of His judgment.

Some fears are sinful. If something frightening happened to you as a little child, you didn't sin. But now, if you still have fearful and anx-

♥ Action idea: Anger Release conferences ♥

The instructions below teach you how to hold a conference.

where?	what will we do?	what are the rules?
<p>The conferences will last 20 minutes, and will take place at the same time and in the same place, every day in which there is an unresolved issue which could result in anger.</p> <p>Your location needs a chair for everyone, a Bible, a notebook and pen, and a "speaker item" to hold in hand during turn to talk (no one else may speak until it's handed off). ("Speaker item" can be a small stone, or anything.)</p> <p>If there's a Dad in the family, he's the leader of the meetings, and the Mom is the note-taker.</p> <p>Anyone can ask the leader for a meeting. He calls the meetings, opens with prayer, and closes with prayer.</p>	<p>Everyone involved in the incident sits down in the selected place.</p> <p>After the leader prays, he reviews the rules from Ephesians 4:25-32 (see next column).</p> <p>Each person gets a chance to hold the "speaker item" and tell their story of what happened, according to conference rules. When done, they hand item to next person. Rule breaking is handled in next column.</p> <p>Now you go around the room a second time. This time, everyone gives an idea for solution. The note-taker writes down every possible solution—no-one's ideas can be ignored.</p> <p>Now you go around the room a third time. This time, everyone gets a chance to choose a solution. If there is agreement, it's good. If not, no problem, hold off until another time. Note-taker records decision or indecision.</p> <p>Whenever 20 minutes are up, the leader closes the meeting in prayer. Meet again the same time the next day, unless there are no unresolved issues.</p>	<p>Ephesians 4:25-32</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">♥ No lies. Is it true?♥ No bitterness. Is it forgiving?♥ No rage. Is it gracious and controlled?♥ No slander. Is it kind? Does it build up? <p>If someone breaks a rule (lies, speaks bitterly, rages, or slanders), the others raise their hands, and the rule breaker loses a turn. The leader asks what rule has been broken, explains it to the breaker and asks if they see it as sin. If they confess it as sin, they can contribute next time around, if not, they are silent until the next conference table. New mercy is extended at each conference.</p> <p>Deal with the most current issues first, then go back to unresolved issues in notebook. Do not exceed 20 minutes, unless all (including rule breakers) agree to an extended meeting time that day.</p> <p>No one may talk about the issues until the next meeting. (If someone does, bring it up at the next day's meeting.)</p>

A Kind Little Girl

♡ Read 2 Kings 5:2-3

Imagine the day the little girl was carried off. The Bible doesn't give us many details, but it's possible that Mama had joined Papa in the field that day. Boys had run through town shouting, warning, "Hide! Hide! The Syrians are coming!" She cowered, shaking in the dark corner behind the sleeping mats. But then she heard screaming, and she thought it sounded like her friend Zorah. So without thinking, she bolted out of the door to help her.

Thunk. She flew straight into the armor of a burly soldier. Rough and mean, he grabbed her arm, then her hair. He dragged her towards the olive grove, where five of her girlfriends sat, tied to each other with rope. He looped the end of the rope around her neck, and attached her to the lineup.

And so the little girl was carried away from Israel, from Samaria, from her parents, her home. Namaan, the commander of the soldiers who attacked her town, took her to his house to live, to help his wife. Namaan's wife gave her many jobs to do, and the little girl worked harder than ever before, as a slave. She could have been angry and disagreeable, but she had been taught that God was in control of her life. She loved God, and so she was kind and helpful and respectful.

One day she found out that her mistress's husband, Namaan, was very sick, a leper. The little girl wanted to help. She suggested that if Master Namaan were to go to her home town, Samaria, the prophet of God who lived there could help him. When you read 2 Kings 5:4-14, you see that God did help Namaan.

The little girl who became Namaan's slave had many reasons to be afraid. But she chose to obey the God of love, to show love instead of fear. Think about Jesus. If He had paid attention to His fears, He wouldn't have died for you on the cross. Because He loved you, and died for you, you can replace your fears with love too.

Samuel's New Home

♡ Read | Samuel 1:20-28, 2:12-19, 2:22-26

Samuel's mother, Hannah, had begged and begged God to give her a child. But as soon as he grew old enough to stop nursing him, she left him at the temple with Eli. And not just for a few days or a week; the temple became his new home.

Remember how she begged for a child? Why did she give him up? You see, she had promised God that if He gave her a child, she would leave him at the temple to serve God.

We can imagine little Samuel toddling along beside his mother to the temple, looking up at her with trust in his eyes. Do you think he knew he wouldn't be going home that day? What do you think he thought when she said, "Darling, you'll stay here at the temple with Eli from now on, he'll take care of you and teach you how to serve the Lord. Good-by!"

Once a year Samuel's mother visited him and brought him a new coat to catch up with those extra inches he'd grown. Instead of letting him cling to her and cry, she said, "Samuel, dear, dry up your tears. You have a job to do. You must trust God and thank Him so you can help Eli teach people to confess their sins and praise God."

Samuel chose to be obedient to Eli. Whenever Eli called, he said, "Here I am." But the brothers in Samuel's new family were bad men. They disobeyed God by enjoying their sin, and so we can just imagine how badly they treated Samuel. Oh no! First his mother practically abandons him, and now he's got these terrible brothers! But no matter how hard it must have been for Samuel, he chose to obey and thank God. He refused to feel sorry for himself.

Although we never hear about Samuel grieving for his mother, we do know that he grieved when he lost King Saul and never saw him again (1 Samuel 15:35). We can be like Samuel. We can grieve lost parents without indulging in self-pity over being left in a new home.

Thankful in A New Home

♡ Read 1 Samuel 1:20-28, 2:12-19, 2:22-26

Samuel models the difference between grief and not feeling abandoned. While he did grieve over the loss of Saul in 1 Samuel 15:35, he did not wallow in self-pity over abandonment after his mother left him in a new home.

What's the difference between grieving a loss, and self-pity for abandonment? Here's a little test to see if there's grieving, or wallowing in abandonment. When you grieve, you let people comfort you. You let others share the grief with you, and you're thankful for them. When you focus on abandonment, you don't want to be comforted or share the grief. You aren't thankful for what God has provided.

Focusing on abandonment is sin. You could call it self-focus or self-pity or wallowing. Because Jesus died for you, you can confess this sin. Then you can learn to think thankful thoughts instead of wallowing.

Samuel refused to feel sorry for Himself, just like Jesus when He was abandoned. Jesus understands. His disciples all ran away when men came to kill Him. Even His Father abandoned Him. Not only does Jesus understand, He made sure that we never need to be abandoned by Him. He suffered His Father forsaking Him on the cross so that we never need to. He will never leave you nor forsake you. We may lose home, family, and people on earth. Jesus knows. He treasures you so much He made sure that, if you believe Him, you will never lose your Heavenly family (Hebrews 13:5).

The amazing gospel hope that Christ was forsaken on the cross so that our Father will never forsake us is an important truth for your adopted child to grasp. And God has chosen you to provide that reassurance. Take every opportunity to speak the gospel hope of Christ's work on the cross into the life of your adopted child. No matter what happens on earth, the heavenly family and home will never fail! Now that's something to be thankful for!

Read Matthew 6:28-30

♡ what to do together

- ♡ Go for a walk someplace where you are sure to see flowers, such as a bike path, a field, or horticultural gardens.
- ♡ Open your eyes and simply stare at one tree, flower, cloud, or person.
- ♡ Be glad they are there, created by the Creator.

♡ what to talk about

- ♡ On the way home, have each person share what they stared at and were glad about.
- ♡ Thank God together for His creation.

Read Romans 8:28-29, 12:13

♡ what to do together

- ♡ Bake cookies, make a meal, or something you enjoy making, and take it to a neighbor or person in your church who is going through a rough time.

♡ what to talk about

- ♡ This day is a unique event filled with potential to be a blessing.
- ♡ It is your choice to make each day a good day.
- ♡ Don't be a fool who supposes that troubles are evil additions that God can't turn into blessing.

Read Matthew 7:24-27

♡ what to do together

- ♡ Create a drawing, painting, or collage that illustrates the home built on rock and the home built on sand.
- ♡ Include the specific ways you obey and disobey.

♡ what to talk about

- ♡ Talk about real actions of doing what God says in His Word vs. the destruction of only hearing them.
- ♡ Have each family member think of 2 ways they obey and 2 ways they disobey.

♡ Action Idea: ways to Grow Thankfulness strong ♡

Read Isaiah 40:26-28

♡ what to do together	♡ what to talk about
♡ Go outside, have everyone look up steadily at the sky. ♡ Count stars for one minute and compare how many you count.	♡ Remember that you are on a planet traveling in space with marvelous and wonderful things around you, and that God numbers and names every star.

Read Philippians 4:5-6

♡ what to do together	♡ what to talk about
♡ Keep a family prayer journal in which you enter problems, and what you thank God for as you pray about the problem. ♡ Pray together.	♡ Remember that today, in this problem, God has added some stroke to the cosmic canvas, that someday we will see and understand with joy.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4b "love does not envy"

♡ what to do together	♡ what to talk about
♡ Give each family member one piece of paper for all the other family members. Tell them to choose one strength they see in each person and write it down (help smaller children). ♡ Bring the papers to a special meeting.	♡ You will not demean your own uniqueness as a creation of God by your envy of others. ♡ Share the notes that have been written for each person, then stop and thank God for those special strengths He has created for your family.

♡ Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19

You have a choice:

♡ wallow in abandonment ♡ Be thankful

Thankfulness takes practice. It's as if we must exercise our minds. The story of Samuel can provide a springboard into some helpful thankfulness exercises.

After you read the story "Samuel's New Home" aloud to your child(ren), talk about how Jesus is making a home for His family in Heaven. Imagine it being a certain color or shape. Do they imagine it to be yellow wood, or red brick? Do they think it might be tall like a high rise, or short like a ranch? Tell them some wonderful things about the heavenly home, from the last two chapters of Revelation. Then together, thank Jesus that He's preparing a new home for you.

Now have them think about how Jesus has given them a home with you. (If they don't like it, it's an opportunity to talk about how we can confess the sin of complaining, because Jesus died for us.) Together, thank Jesus for giving them a home on earth with you as their parents.

When we refuse to wallow and insist on thinking thankfully, it's like putting on a pair of new glasses and seeing everything fresh and new. That's what gospel grace does. When we confess our sins, Jesus makes us new creations, who can learn to think differently in a wonderful, thankful way. The stability of their world does not depend on a steady home, it depends on rejoicing in God and Who He is.

On the following pages, you'll learn reasons to rejoice, through six Action Ideas called "Ways to Grow Thankfulness Strong." As you work through the exercises with your adopted children, it will help their world to no longer feel rocked. Growing thankfulness as a family steadies everything.