

EMPOWERED

To Connect

Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster

We believe it is critically important that parents who are preparing to adopt or foster a child must be honest and realistic about the journey and the challenges that lie ahead. Just as Jesus in Luke 14 challenged those who would follow him to 'count the cost,' so too parents who respond to God's call to adopt or foster must be willing to count the cost of the adoption journey and prepare to "lay down their lives" to love their child and help him or her become all that God intends.

The following questions are designed to help parents (and parents-to-be) begin to honestly assess the journey ahead...and what it will require. We encourage you to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider these questions. They are not meant to scare you or in any way discourage you from continuing on this amazing path. Instead, our desire is simply that these questions will point you toward the hope and help that you need to form a strong and lasting connection with your child as you faithfully follow God's call in your life.

- 1. Are you willing to acknowledge and fully embrace your child's history, including that which you know and that which you will likely never know?*
- 2. Are you willing to accept that your child has been affected by his/her history, possibly in profound ways, and as a result that you will need to parent your child in a way that exhibits true compassion and promotes connection and healing?*
- 3. Are you willing to parent differently than how you were parented, how you have parented in the past, or how your friends parent their children? Are you willing to "un-learn" certain parenting strategies and approaches that may not be effective with your child, even if you have used these strategies and approaches successfully with your other children in the past?*
- 4. Are you willing to educate yourself, your parents, family and friends on an ongoing basis in order to promote understanding of your child's needs and how best to meet those needs?*

5. *Are you willing to be misunderstood, criticized and even judged by others who do not understand your child's history, the impacts of that history and how you have been called to love and connect with your child in order to help him/her heal and become all that God intends?*
6. *Are you prepared to advocate for your child's needs, including at school, church, in extracurricular settings and otherwise, in order to create predictability and promote environments that enable your child to feel safe and allow him/her to succeed?*
7. *Are you willing to sacrifice your own convenience, expectations and desires in order to connect with your child and help him/her heal, even if that process is measured in years, not months?*
8. *Are you willing to fully embrace your child's holistic needs, including his/her physical, emotional, relational and spiritual needs?*
9. *Are you willing to seek ongoing support and maintain long-term connections with others who understand your journey and the challenges that you face? Are you willing to intentionally seek and accept help when you encounter challenges with your child that you are not equipped to adequately deal with?*
10. *Are you willing to acknowledge that you as a parent bring a great deal to the equation when it comes to how your child will attach and connect? Are you willing to honestly examine (on an ongoing basis) your motivations and expectations relating to your adoption journey? Are you willing to look at your own past (including your past losses and trauma, both big and small) and consider how your past may impact your interactions with your child? Are you willing to consistently examine your role as parent as you experience challenges and difficulties along the journey?*

As you read through the above questions, you may have concluded that some of the questions didn't apply to you and your situation? That may be the case to some extent, as every adoption and foster care experience is unique. However, we encourage you to spend some time reading and talking with other experienced adoptive and foster parents about what you should realistically expect as you travel this journey. We find that parents sometimes start with less than accurate assumptions about how the adoption or foster care journey will unfold, and as a result they are more likely to form unrealistic expectations. We believe that these questions are helpful and instructive for *all* parents considering or pursuing adoption and foster care, and we hope that as you work through them they will lead you toward greater insight and understanding.