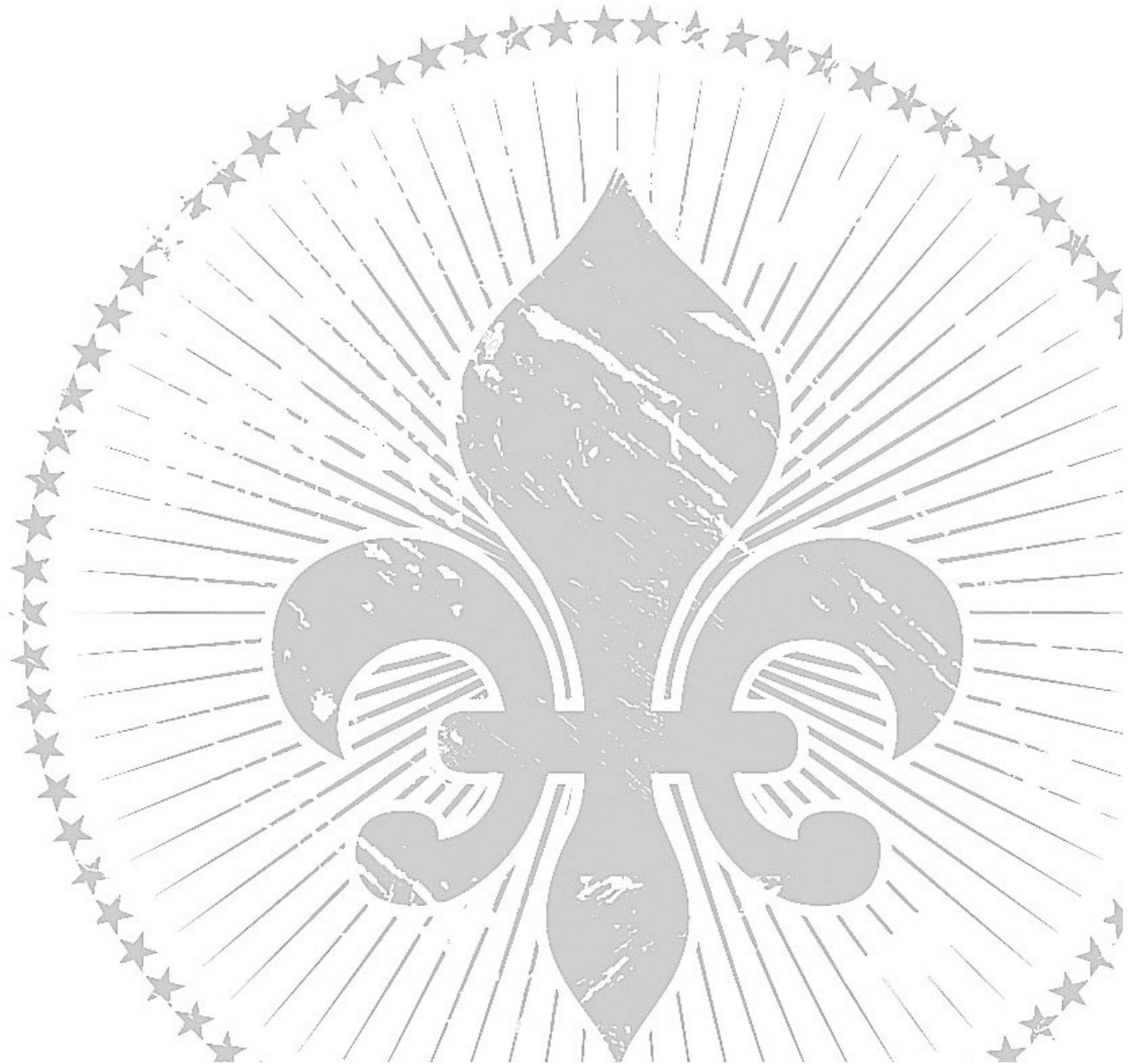


Adoption 101
God's Heart and Our Call

Simon and Mandy Groce



Outline

- Theology of Adoption
 - Adoption and the gospel
 - God's heart for the fatherless
 - Our adoption as sons
 - Our call
- Types of Adoption
- Typical Adoption Process
 - Domestic
 - International
 - The Home Study
- Financial
 - Costs
 - Options
- Adoption Issues
- Resources

Theology of Adoption

Adoption and the gospel

The gospel calls us to missional love. As we love God, we will love others. We should have a heart for adoption, whether we adopt or support those who do.

"Adoption is, on the one hand, gospel. In this, adoption tells us who we are as children of the Father. Adoption as gospel tells us about our identity, our inheritance, and our mission as sons of God... Jesus reconciles us to God and to each other."

As we love our God, we love our neighbor; as we love our neighbor we love our God. We believe Jesus in heavenly things - our adoption in Christ; so we follow him in earthly things - the adoption of children. Without the theological aspect, the emphasis on adoption too easily is seen as mere charity. Without the missional aspect, the doctrine of adoption is too easily seen as a mere metaphor."

- Russ Moore, Adopted for Life

- **Adoption without gospel = charity**
- **Gospel without mission = only words**

We often see pictures of poor and dirty children on adoption websites and videos designed to tug on our emotions. We don't want to be motivated by emotion alone, but by (1) who God is, (2) who we are in Christ, and (3) what God has called us to do in His Word. We should allow the weight of Scripture to overwhelm us, causing us to respond in faith to God's call.

OT

- **Psalm 68:5** - "A Father to the Fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling."
- **Deuteronomy 27:19** - "Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow."
- **Psalm 41:1** - "How blessed is he who considers the helpless."
- **Psalm 10:14** - "you (God) have been the helper of the fatherless"
- **Psalm 10:17-18** - "O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed."
- **Proverbs 23:10-11** - "Do not move an ancient boundary stone, or encroach on the fields of the fatherless. For their Defender is strong; He will take up their case."
- **Psalm 146: 9** - "The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin."
- **Jeremiah 22:3** - "Thus says the Lord, 'Do justice and righteousness . . . do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless and the widow.'"
- **Isaiah 1:16-17** - "wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."
- **Hosea 14:3** - "In [God] the orphan finds mercy."

NT

- **Romans 8:14-17** - "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."
- **Ephesians 1:3-8a** - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight"
- **Galatians 4:4-7** - "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."
- **James 1:27** - "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress."
- **James 2:15-17** - "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Who God Is

Who we are in Christ

What God has called us to do

Biblical Principles

- God's primary metaphor of self-revelation is his title "Father".
 - Through Christ we have the privilege of calling God "Father" and of being called his children.
 - We are joint heirs with Christ, and have all the rights of sons.
 - We have the security that God deliberately chose us and included us, not based upon anything we have done or are, but by his love!
 - We have become members of a family with all the joys and blessings of being included.
 - Scripture consistently uses familial terms to describe our relationships in this new Kingdom. We are brothers and sisters through our union with Christ. God is our Father.
 - As his children we are given many good gifts.
 - We receive discipline from God, as any beloved child does.
- OT uses the term "fatherless" approximately 40 times. The fatherless were, in Israel, at great risk. Because that society was patriarchal they had very little legal, social or economic security.
- The OT is full of admonition to God's people to care for the fatherless. True followers of God the Father were exhorted to care for and demonstrate compassion to the fatherless in tangible and practical ways.

Biblical Examples of Adoption

God used adoption for two purposes throughout history, (1) to extend His glory by accomplishing His purposes and (2) for the good of the child.

- Moses - adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:10)
- Esther - adopted by her cousin Mordecai (Esther 2).
- Ephraim and Manasseh - adopted by Jacob (Genesis 48)
- Eliazar - adopted by Abram (Genesis 15)
- Samuel - adopted by Eli (1 Samuel 1).
- Jesus - adopted by Joseph (Matthew 1:1-17)
- God's adoption of Abraham and Israel
- God's adoption of us as sons and joint heirs

God ensured that Jesus would have a father in Joseph. Perhaps the most profound example of covenantal adoption in the Scriptures is Joseph's parenting of Jesus. Joseph clearly fulfilled the spirit of adoption by being willing to marry his betrothed who was with child that was not his. The lineage of Jesus, as prophesied in the Old Testament, is fulfilled through Joseph (see Matthew 1:1-17). Joseph is fully and completely Jesus' father--participating in his naming, protecting him from danger by traveling to Egypt, teaching him a trade and presenting him at the temple.¹

¹ <http://www.ppl.org/adopt.html>

Types of Adoption

1. **Embryo Adoption** - there are currently over 400,000 frozen embryos in cryo-banks across the United States. Embryo adoption allows those children the chance at life. The adopting mother must be able to carry the child to term. Contact nightlight.org for more information
2. **Domestic Infant Adoption**
 - a. Agency Driven
 - i. Open - birth and adoptive parents are in contact.
 - ii. Semi-Private - limited contact between birth parents and adoptive parents (letters and photos, but no identifying info)
 - iii. Closed - No contact between birth parents and adoptive parents
 - b. Independent
 - i. Adoption attorney required
3. **Domestic Foster Adoption** - children adopted from foster care system. Contact the Kentucky State Cabinet for Health and Family Services at 1-800-928-4303 or 1-800-432-9346.
4. **Inter-State Adoption** - mostly older children. Find out more at <http://adoptuskids.org>.
5. **International Adoption**

Domestic Adoption

Domestic adoption takes many forms depending on the agency and the birth mother. Typical domestic adoptions go through an adoption agency. Your agency will determine the process and steps for completing your adoption. As such, picking the right agency is one of the biggest keys to a successful adoption process. See the resources section for questions to ask before selecting an agency.

An adoption attorney will be used throughout the process to read and sign your “risk letters” that the agency sends you regarding the financial and emotional risks in adoption. You will also need an attorney to represent you (the adoptive family) at termination and finalization of the adoption.

You will have several post-placement visits prior to finalization where a social worker observes how the baby is adjusting and developing in your home.

Birthparent Rights - Newborn Adoption

The birth parent rightfully retains many rights during pregnancy and even after. With domestic adoption in Kentucky, you will be foster parents for 30-60 days following the birth of your child. It simply takes that long for parental rights to be terminated in the legal system depending on the circumstances of your adoption. The birth mother or father can change their mind and keep the child until these rights are terminated.

Levels of contact with birthmother can range from:

- no contact
- yearly letter to birthmother
- pictures and letter every few months
- sporadic phone conversations
- regular phone conversations
- face-to-face contact

Bottom line: know your agency's philosophy with birthmother contact after adoption!

International Adoption

Currently there are more than 145 million orphans worldwide. Most adoptions to the United States come from the following countries:

- China
- Colombia
- Ethiopia
- Guatemala
- Haiti
- India
- Kazakhstan
- Liberia
- Philippines
- Russia
- South Korea
- Taiwan
- Ukraine
- Vietnam

Typical International Process

The timeframe to complete an international adoption takes approximately 6 to 36 months from application to placement depending on the agency and country. The process is different for every country and agency, but generally consists of the following steps:

- **Apply to an Agency** - The agency reviews the information in your application to determine that you meet U.S. and country adoption requirements before you begin the adoption process. This ensures you will be able to successfully complete the adoption journey. When selecting an agency, make sure they have Hague approval and are Joint Council accredited.
- **Complete Home study** - Once your application is approved, you will either have someone from your agency, or an independent third party conduct a home study. The home study process will provide you with the opportunity to learn more about adoption, help you determine your ability to parent an adopted child, and allow your social worker to learn more about you. After your home study report is complete, it will be sent to your agency for review and approval.
- **File for USCIS Approval** - Approval from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is required in order to bring a child from another country into the U.S. as an immediate relative. Fill out and send in form I-600A, advanced processing for your Orphan Petition. You will then be sent information on getting fingerprinted for an FBI background check. Waiting for USCIS approval can take 3-6 months.

- **Prepare a dossier** - A dossier is a compilation of documents you prepare in a specific fashion for submission to the foreign government. Your agency will provide detailed instructions for how to complete each document.
- **Authentication and Translation** - Your dossier will be translated into the native language of the adoptive country.
- **Child Referral or Travel** – Depending on the country, families will either travel to pick out their child or receive a referral from their agency. If receiving a referral, families will be sent a photo of the child, all medical information, and a child study which explains how the child came into care, why inter-country adoption is necessary for the child, and information on the child's development since coming into care. Families are encouraged to review the referral information with a medical professional before making the formal decision to accept the referral.
Families typically receive a referral 3 – 18 months after the dossier is complete
- **Court Approval** - The adoptive country court reviews the translated dossier, child information, and referral acceptance information and legally approves the adoption.
- **Final Processing** - Once the adoption is approved, your agency's in-country staff will obtain your child's birth certificate, passport, and set an appointment for a final medical checkup and embassy appointment.
- **Travel** - Family travels to the country to receive their child and obtain child's exit Visa. Your agency will notify you when you may travel to meet and receive your child. Most agencies assist families with all adoption related transportation, translation, and appointments while in country. Travel can last from one week to 40 days depending on the country. Many agencies will provide a child escort for an additional fee.
- **Post-Placement** - Family returns home and completes a post-placement report typically 1, 3, and 6 months after child's arrival date. Depending on the country, you must continue to submit post-placement reports annually until child turns 18 years of age.
- **Finalize Adoption** - Depending on the country you adopt from, your child may not be a US citizen. This depends on if you saw your child prior to (IR3 Visa) or after (IR4 Visa) their court date in the foreign country. If your child entered the US with an IR4 Visa, you must finalize the adoption in the U.S. (re-adoption).

International Adoption Pros and Cons

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literally saving a life • Relief of poverty and starvation • Virtually guaranteed a child after approved HS • Costs are known up front • No birthmother complexity • Typically a "closed" adoption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex process • Tons of paperwork • Costly • Travel (sometimes twice) • Child's adjustment to US culture • Language barrier for older children • No newborn infants available • Prenatal care lacking • Many unforeseen issues (medical, governmental, etc) |
|---|---|

The Home Study

The home study can be one of the most intimidating portions of the adoption process. Every state or country requires a home study for prospective adoptive families, whether for domestic, international, foster, or embryo adoption.

The purpose of the home study is to educate you about adoption, meet legal requirements for adoption, give an accurate report to the courts about you and the safety of your home, and ensure placement of the child.

What's Involved?

Your home study social worker will typically investigate:

- Family background
- Finances
- Employment
- Marriage
- Children
- Family dynamics
- Parenting style
- Discipline
- Expectations about adoption
- Police/FBI Background check
- Physicals
- Medical and Life Insurance
- 4-6 references
- Interview each family member

In addition they will also verify that your home is safe for children:

- General home safety
- Smoke alarms within 10' of bedrooms
- Fire extinguisher
- Pets cleared by vet
- Guns locked in cabinet
- Chemicals in childproof cabinet
- Medicine in childproof cabinet
- Crib bar spacing
- Fire evacuation plan
- Outlet covers

In-state adoption agencies generally provide the social worker and home study. However, if you are working with an out-of-state agency, you will need to contact an in-state home study agency.

Typically your home study social worker will also provide any post-placement visits and reports.

Adoption Finances

Adoption can be very expensive. Domestic adoption can cost between \$8,000 and \$35,000 depending on the state and medical conditions of the birth mother. International adoption can cost between \$15,000 and \$50,000 depending on the country, agency and travel costs. Foster adoption is the cheapest option and can be free especially for older or minority children. Embryo adoption costs vary depending on medical insurance and doctor choice.

Domestic Adoption Expenses

	Low	High
Application	\$100	\$500
Home Study	\$1200	\$3000
Document preparation	\$500	\$2000
Attorney fees	\$2500	\$12000
Agency Fees	\$0	>\$20000
Birth parent medical expenses	\$0	>\$20000
Birth parent living expenses	\$0	\$12000
Birth parent legal representation	\$500	\$1500
Birth parent counseling	\$500	\$2000
Post Placement supervision	\$200	\$1500
Court petition and advertising	\$500	\$5000

International Adoption Expenses

	Low	High
Application	\$100	\$500
Home Study	\$1200	\$3000
Agency Fee	\$3000	\$8000
Country Fee	\$6000	\$15000
USCIS Fees	\$900	\$1000
Documents and Mailing	\$300	\$500
Visa	\$400	\$800
Travel	\$1500	\$15000
Post Placement supervision	\$200	\$1500
Re-adoption in the USA (if req'd)	\$500	\$1500

Financial Options

- Federal Adoption Tax Credit - up to \$13,170 Refundable for 2010 and 2011
- Employer Adoption Benefits
- Grants - hundreds available online, see resources section
- ABBA Fund - interest free loans to Christians
- Lifesong - interest free loans and matching grants to Christians
- Helpmeadopt - fundraising help
- The Tesfa Alliance - Tax free giving for families
- Second mortgages or HELOC
- Loans from retirement savings

Adoption Challenges

- Financial
 - Saving sacrificially
 - Grants, scholarships (see previous page for starters)
 - Fundraising (i.e. meals, yard-sales, bake-sales, concerts, etc.)
- Potential roadblocks
 - Possible medical issues undiagnosed in-country
 - Changes to family history
 - Changes in employment
 - Changes in address
- Home Study
 - Renovations, improvements, child-proofing
- International Travel
 - Vaccinations
 - Travel surrogacy options
 - Dietary
- Education of Family (extended and nuclear)
 - Racism/Conflict over diversity
 - Respectfully sharing your child's birth story

Post Adoption

- Raising kids in an adoptive family
- Celebration as a family
 - Adoption Day
 - Family meals
 - Children's books that celebrate adoption
- Adoption language
 - Honest and sincere
 - Age appropriate responses
 - The do's and don'ts
- Talking with kids about adoption
 - Gospel centered
 - Regularly & joyfully
 - Evangelically
 - Pointing to God's sovereignty

Other Possible Difficulties in Adoption

- Social – Responding to outside influences for all members of your household
 - Handling ignorance as you encounter it (because you will)
 - How to encourage your children when people stare and ask questions
- Relational – Responding to your children as questions arise
 - “Mommy, when is my skin going to turn peach?”
 - “Where is my belly mommy now?”
 - “I wish my eyes were blue too”
- Marital
 - Pressures on your marriage and home life
 - One spouse not "feeling" like the child is theirs
 - Don't adopt if your marriage has issues
- Racial
 - Adoption as an in-road to the Gospel
 - Adults and children in the community
- Waiting
 - Prayerfully & patiently
 - Support
 - Having realistic expectations

Faith without Works is Dead

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

Matthew 25:35-40

Adoption Resources

Adoption General Info

- **Adoptive Families Magazine** - <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/>
Adoption information for families before, during, and after adoption.
- **Adoptive Agency Search** - <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/search/agencies.php>
Search for an adoption agency in your area by country.
- **Come Unity** - <http://comeunity.com/>
Parenting, adoption and special needs resources.
- **Rainbow Kids** - <http://www.rainbowkids.com/>
Adoption information, support, child photo listings, articles and resources.
- **A Child's Desire** - <http://www.achildsdesire.org/>
Children's Charity
- **U.S. Dept. of State** - <http://adoption.state.gov/>
Links to US laws on international adoption and a list of agencies that have received Hague Accreditation
- **Tapestry Books** - <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/>
A good source for adoption-related books and resources.
- **Embryo Adoption** - <http://nightlight.org>
Embryo adoption facilitator.

Health & Medical

- **Shriners Hospital for Children** - <http://www.shrinershq.org/>
Free care provided to children.
- **Speech Therapist** - <http://teachmetotalk.com>
Local speech therapist.
- **Wide Smiles** - <http://www.widesmiles.org/>
For families considering adoption of a child with cleft lip or palate.
- **The Center for Adoption Medicine** - <http://www.adoptmed.org/topics-folder>
University of Washington Adoption Clinic, lots of good adoption specific medical info.
- **Dr. Shawn Taylor** - 1-800-333-8874
International adoption doctor located in Lexington, KY.
- **Children's Hospital - International Adoption Clinic** - 800-344-2462 x 62877
International Adoption Clinic located in Cincinnati, OH.
- **Orphan Doctor** - <http://www.orphandoctor.com/>
Dr. Jane Aronson's website specializing in orphan care for serious issues.
- **First Steps** - 502-459-0205 x7209, <http://sevencounties.org>
Provides Speech/Physical/Occupational therapy to children

Country Specific

- **Yahoo Groups** - <http://groups.yahoo.com>
Most countries have a specific Yahoo adoption group
- **China Adoption Resources** - <http://www.chinaadoptionresources.com/>
China specific adoption resources and info.

- **Ukraine Adoption** - (502) 254-2813 or (502) 253-9825
Local volunteers who facilitate Ukraine adoption without agency fees.
- **Russia Adoption Info** - http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/russia_adoption.php
General Russia adoption information
- **Korea Adoption Info** - <http://www.adoptkorea.com/>
General Korean adoption information

Ethiopia Specific

- **Ethiopia Adopt Yahoo Group** - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EthiopiaAdopt/>
Ethiopian adoption support and info group on Yahoo
- **Ethiopia Adoption Agency Group** - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EthiopiaAAR/>
Ethiopia adoption agency reviews and recommendations on Yahoo
- **Multilingual Books** - <http://www.multilingualbooks.com/amharic.html>
A website with books and courses for learning Amharic.
- **Ethiopian News** - <http://www.ethio.com/>
Up to date news on Ethiopia
- **English Amharic Dictionary** - <http://www.amharicdictionary.com/>
Extensive listing of words and phrases
- **Library of Congress** - <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ettoc.html>
Information on Ethiopia (very extensive).
- **Amharic** - <http://www.amharic.com/>
A site for multimedia Amharic language courses.
- **Ethiopian Food** - <http://tesfaalliance.org/food.php>
Recipes for Ethiopian food.

Kentucky/Indiana Specific

- **Adoption Assistance** - <http://www.adoptionassistance.com>
Local home study agency.
- **Adoption Coach** - <http://www.theadoptioncoach.com>
Local adoption education classes.
- **Special Needs Adoption** - <https://apps.chfs.ky.gov/snap/>
Search for special needs children waiting for adoption.
- **Kentucky Adoption Services** - <http://www.kentuckyadoptionservices.org/>
Local Christian adoption agency
- **A Helping Hand Adoption Agency** - 502 649-6092, www.worldadoptions.org
Local Christian adoption agency
- **Adoption and Home Study Specialist** - adoptionsspecialists.org
Local home study specialist, also call at 502 423-7713.
- **Chinese Children Adoption International (CCAI)** - (502) 261-0543
Local adoption agency specializing in Chinese adoptions.
- **Ukraine Adoption** - (502) 254-2813 or (502) 253-9825
Local volunteers who facilitate Ukraine adoption without agency fees.
- **Project G.L.O.W.** - <http://www.projectglow.org>
Provides local parenting workshops, classes, and support groups.

- **Teresa Kinderger** - kylawyer.net, 502-425-9920
Local attorney for re-adoption.
- **Love Basket** - <http://www.lovebasket.org>, Sara Price 502-423-5780
Local adoption agency, home study and resources.

Adoption Mailing Lists

- **International Adoption Lists** - <http://comeunity.com/adoption/listservs.html>
Mailing lists listed by country
- **Ethiopia Adopt** - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EthiopiaAdopt>
Ethiopia specific adoption group at Yahoo.
- **Yahoo Groups** - <http://groups.yahoo.com>
Most countries have a specific Yahoo adoption group

Blogs of Adoptive Families

- <http://heldts.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.ethiopiaadoptionjourney.blogspot.com>
- <http://thewhitefamilynews.blogspot.com/2006/11/introducing.html>
- <http://5mcckids.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.heartsofhopeadoption.blogspot.com>
- <http://nomorecountingthecost.blogspot.com>
- <http://owlhaven.wordpress.com>
- <http://www.pastorspensees.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.tandk.us>
- <http://www.fiedstyle.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.gillispiefam.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.abushel-and-apeck.blogspot.com>
- http://fullhousehandshearts.typepad.com/my_weblog
- <http://www.ouradoptionlog.blogspot.com>

Financial & Fundraising

- **IRS Adoption Credit** - <http://www.cwa.org/taxcredit.htm>
Details of the \$13,170 tax credit for 2010.
- **Lifesong** - <http://www.lifesongfororphans.org>
Fund for adoption that works with local churches, interest free loans.
- **ABBA Fund** - <http://www.abbafund.org/>
Christian organization offering interest free loans and funds for adoption. Need based.
- **Help Me Adopt** - <http://helpmeadopt.com>
Fundraising and many links to other resources, including grant and loan programs.
- **The Tesfa Alliance** - <http://tesfaalliance.org>
Receive tax deductible donations for your adoption.
- **Grants** - <http://www.affordingadoption.com/grants.php>
Hundreds of grants are available. Search online for more.

Domestic Adoption Agency Selection Questions²

1. What is the level of contact, if any, that your birthmothers tend to expect after the adoption?
2. How many babies/children do you successfully place a year? How many adoptions do you have per year that are disrupted?
3. Adoption Fees: What is the total fee for an adoption with your agency? How is the total fee split for legal fees, counseling services, the baby's birth, birthmother expenses, and agency work?
4. Do most of your birthmothers utilize Medicaid for the maternity/birth costs? If she has insurance, how much could we stand to pay toward her maternity bills? When in the process do we learn of her medical financial situation?
5. How much do we stand to lose if the birthmother changes her mind and decides to keep the baby?
6. Does this agency conduct its own home studies for clients, or do we need to utilize an outside agency for the home study? What is your home study fee?
7. Do you do the post-placement visits once the baby is in our home or do we need to find another agency to do these? What is the fee per post-placement visit?
8. Do we need to find an attorney on our own to represent us at termination and finalization or do you have adoption attorneys that you already work with regularly that we should use? What is the typical legal fee cost for these procedures?
9. What is the required adoptive parent training required prior to our adoption? How many hours are required? Do you have mandatory support group meetings for adoptive parents? What is the cost of this training?
10. Questions to ask yourself:
 - a. Do I feel comfortable with these people?
 - b. Are the people in this agency friendly and helpful? Are they on our "team?"
 - c. Do I feel like I can call my caseworker *anytime* I have a question?

International Adoption Agency Selection Questions

1. How many children they have brought home in 07, 08, and 09 respectively? Ask for it by year so you know their trends.
2. What specific orphanages (by name and location) do they work with -- or whether they have their own -- in what provinces?
3. What other agencies work with those orphanages, and how it is determined how kids go to which agency?
4. What is their financial arrangement with the orphanage? Do they fully fund it? Partial? How much?
5. If while in process the country program closes to you in some fashion, what are your options (another country with the agency, partial refund)?
6. Who, by name, are the in-country staff responsible for the adoption? What is their background and how long have they worked with this agency?

² http://www.highviewbaptist.org/docs/adoption/Domestic_Adoption_Agency.pdf

7. Are those people subcontractors, or employees of the agency?
8. What has been the actual average time frame for your agency from dossier submission to referral this year? And then from referral to court? And then from court to travel?
9. Fees and costs: research ALL the potential fees and costs for your adoption. Ask for clarification about which ones are and are not included in your fees.
10. How are the children identified and received? What criteria do they have for accepting children into the program (e.g. orphaned, abandoned, proof of mortality of parents, or declining health of extended family members etc.)?
11. What is the agency's relationship with the government and how do they maintain strong relationships with the court systems etc. to ensure speedy processing while simultaneously assuring no "incentives" are exchanged to speed things along etc..?
12. What percent of "aid" goes toward sponsorship programs that encourage healthy families in poverty to KEEP their children rather than give them up (e.g. financial support for food and school to families that provide continued care for orphaned children etc.)?
13. What kind of in country and U.S support systems exists for families when the process does not go smoothly (health crisis, identification of parents thought dead, etc.). What proportion of adoptions experience these kind of difficulties each year?
14. When the adoption is disrupted, or problems arise, what is the most common reason, and what is the agency doing to mitigate those types of problems in the future?
15. How many older children do they place each year?
16. Do they place HIV+ children?
17. What is the facility like for older children? Are they getting an education while waiting?
18. Questions to ask yourself:
 - a. Do I feel comfortable with these people?
 - b. Are the people in this agency friendly and helpful? Are they on our "team?"
 - c. Do I feel like I can call my caseworker *anytime* I have a question?