

Adopted for Life (The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches) by Russell D. Moore, Crossway Books, Carol Stream, IL, 2009. (9 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Abba Father

More important than your name, however, is hearing it called out by One you've come to know, or rather who has come to know you. When you see him for the first time face-to-face, when your legal adoption is fully realized, the Spirit within you will cry out, "Abba! Father!" And you'll hear another voice, louder than all the others, cry out the same thing. You'll turn to see him, the Messiah of Israel, the Emperor of the universe, Jesus of Nazareth. And you'll call him "brother." (page 43)

2. Slaves No More

The pull toward slave nostalgia is a real danger for all of us. Satan once held all of us in "lifelong slavery" through our "fear of death" (Heb. 2:15). The temptation for all of us is to shrink back to the petty protectors we once hid behind, to be slaves again to placate the Grim Reaper. That's why Paul could thunder to the Galatians, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?" (Gal. 4:8-9). Perhaps the most striking aspect of this rebuke is the apostle's insistence that the believers want to be slaves again. Why? They're afraid.

Jesus, by contrast, is pronounced the "beloved Son" of God, is likewise brought through the waters of baptism, and is then tempted by the Evil One to believe that a Father who promises him bread would give him only stones (Matt. 3:13-4:4). Listening to his Father's voice, even to the point of crucifixion and apparent abandonment by God, he "learned obedience through what he suffered," and "he was heard" (Heb. 5:7-8). Jesus isn't fearful because he knows who he is. (page 49)

3. Satan's War Against Babies

The demonic powers hate babies because they hate Jesus. When they destroy "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40, 45), the most vulnerable among us, they're destroying a picture of Jesus himself, of the child delivered by the woman who crushes their head (Gen. 3:15). They know the human race is saved-and they're vanquished-by a woman giving birth (Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:15). They are grinding apart Jesus' brothers and sisters (Matt. 25:40). They are also destroying the very picture of newness of life and of dependent trust that characterizes life in the kingdom of Christ (Matt. 18:4). Children also mean blessing -a perfect target for those who seek only to kill and destroy (John 10:10).

The demonic powers are, we must remember, rebel angels - angels created to be "ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation"

(Heb. 1:14). In rebelling against this calling, the servants are in revolt against the sons, and that kind of insurrection leads to murder, as we've seen in other contexts (e.g., Mark 12:1-12). As James tells us, our lust for things we can't have leads to wars among us (James 4:2). The same is true in the heavenly places. The satanic powers want the kingdoms of the universe -and a baby uproots their reign. So they rage all the more against the babies and children who image him. As the wisdom of God announces, "All who hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). (page 64)

4. Protect God's Children

The protection of children isn't charity. It isn't part of a political program fitting somewhere between tax cuts and gun rights or between carbon emission caps and a national service corps. It's spiritual warfare.

Our God forbids Israel from offering their children to Molech, a demon-god who demands the violent sacrifice of human babies (Lev. 20:1-8). Indeed, he denounces Molech by name. He further warns that he will cut off from the people of God not only the one who practiced such sacrifice but also all who "at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech" (Lev. 20:4). Behind Molech, God recognizes, there is one who is "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

The spirit of Molech is at work among us even now. Even as you read this page, there are bones of babies being ground to unrecognizable bits, perhaps even a few short miles from where you're sitting. There are babies lying in garbage receptacles, waiting to be taken away as "medical waste." These infants won't have names until Jesus calls them out for the first time. There are little girls waiting in Asia for a knock at the door, for an American businessman who's paid a pimp to be able to sexually assault them. There are children staring out the window of a social worker's office, rubbing their bruises as they hear their mother tell the police why she'll never do it again.

Aborted babies can't say, "Abba." But the Father hears their cries anyway. Do we? The universe is at war, and some babies and children are on the line. The old serpent is coiled right now, his tongue flicking, watching for infants and children he can consume. One night two thousand years ago, all that stood in his way was one reluctant day laborer who decided to be a father. (pages 65-66)

5. Adoption Culture in Churches

An orphan-protecting adoption culture is countercultural - and has been. Some of the earliest records we have of the Christian's speak of how Christians, remarkably, protected children in the face of a culture of death pervasive in the Roman Empire. The followers of Jesus, though, did not kill their offspring, even when it would have made economic or social sense to do so. This is still distinctively Christian in a world that increasingly sees children as, a commodity to be controlled and, at worst, a nuisance to

be contained. Think of how revolutionary it is for Christians to adopt a young boy with a cleft palate from a region of India where most see him as "defective." Think of how counterintuitive it is Christians to adopt a Chinese girl-when many there see her as disappointment. Think of how odd it must seem to American secularists to see Christians adopting a baby whose body trembles with addiction to the cocaine her mother sent through her bloodstream before birth. Think of the kind of credibility such action lends to the proclamation of our gospel.

Adoption culture in our churches advances the cause of life, even beyond the individual lives of the children adopted. Imagine if Christian churches were known as the places where unwanted babies became beloved children. If this were the case across the round the world, sure, there would still be abortions, there would still be abusive homes. But wouldn't we see more women willing to give their children life if they'd seen with their own eyes what adoption culture looks like? And wouldn't these mothers and who may themselves feel unwanted, be a bit more ready to hear our talk about a kingdom where all are welcomed? (page 79)

6. The Call to Believers

Not every believer will take a pregnant teenager into his or her guest bedroom. Not every believer is called to adopt children. But every believer is called to recognize Jesus in the face of his little brothers and sisters when he decides to show up in their lives, even if it interrupts everything else. (page 81)

7. The Call to Compassion

Thousands of years ago, a man named Job recognized that his own judgment would have to do with his treatment of orphans. In the book of Job, the suffering man told God that he would neither withhold food or raise his hand against the fatherless (Job 31:16-22). Job said instead that "from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow" (Job 31:18). Why was this so? Job said, "For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty" (Job 31:23).

Joseph's faith was the same kind of faith that saves us. Very few, if any, of us will have a dream directing us to adopt a child. None of us will be directed to do what Joseph did - to teach Jesus Christ how to saw through wood or to recite Deuteronomy in Hebrew. But all of us are called to be compassionate. All of us are called to remember the poor. All of us are called to remember the fatherless and the widows. That will look different in our different lives, with the different situations and resources God has given us. But for all of us there'll be a judgment to test the genuineness of our faith. And for some of us, there'll be some orphan faces there. (pages 82-83)

8. Choose Peace, Life and Love

What if a mighty battalion of Christian parents would open their hearts and their homes to unwanted infants - infants some so-called "clinics" would like to see carried out with the medical waste? It might mean that next Christmas there'll be one more stocking at the chimney at your house - a new son or daughter who escaped the abortionist's knife or the orphanage's grip to find at your knee the grace of a carpenter's Son.

Planned Parenthood thinks "Choice on Earth" is the message of Christmas, and perhaps it is in a Christmas culture more identified with shopping malls than with churches. But we know better, or at least we should. Let's follow the footsteps of the other man at the manger, the quiet one. And as we read the proclamation of the shepherds, exploding in the sky as a declaration of war, let's remind a miserable generation there are some things more joyous than choice - things like peace and life and love.

9. Consequences to Sin

So, what if you're not sure if you're a follower of Jesus or if you know you don't believe all these claims of "good news"? Might it be that the infertility is God's getting at you for your lack of faith? God has told us how he deals with sinners, and this isn't it. As a matter of fact, the Bible is filled with righteous people crying out to God as to why he lets the wicked prosper. You've seen that guy you know is cheating on his wife pushing the stroller down the sidewalk. Prostitutes and slumlords and child molesters all become pregnant or have children. That isn't a sign of God's approval of their lives, and your infertility isn't a sign of God's disfavor.

As a matter of fact, as we've seen earlier, if you don't know Christ, God is not disciplining you at all (Heb. 12:8), though he is sovereign over everything that happens in your life. He is calling you to be found in Christ, and the curse that awaits you comes at judgment, not now. For now there's a temporary suspension of doom, and God is doing good to you, as you can see by the air you're breathing and the blood pushing through your veins (Acts 14: 16-17). As Jesus tells his disciples, the horrible circumstances that happen to people in this life aren't a one-to-one 'retaliation for sin (Luke 13:1-4). But Jesus does tell us that if we don't repent, these things-be it infertility or towers falling on us-will be the least of our problems.

Jesus rebukes his disciples' assumptions that a man born blind is being particularly punished, either for his sin or for that of his parents (John 9:1-3). Jesus recognizes, though, that blindness is not good; it is part of a universe in which God's reign is not yet realized. It's right to be sad about infertility. That's why God so often in Scripture hears the prayers of barren women. (page 90)