

Adoption / Mary's Story

Mary: I was told about my adoption when I was 8 years. I was old enough to understand a little, but it was still very hard to accept and very confusing. It caused me a lot of problems as I grew up.

Carol: Hello, welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Carol. We're looking forward to our time together today.

Tammy: And I'm Tammy. I wonder if you were adopted...or have adopted a child? Or maybe you have a family member or friend who has been adopted.

Carol: Perhaps you are taking care of someone else's child because they've become an orphan? ...Maybe the child of a family member, or a friend – or even the child of parents that you don't know. Whatever the situation, it takes a lot of physical care, and love from your heart to take care of a child who is not your own.

Today Dee and Mary have come to chat with us. Welcome ladies.

Dee: Thank you.

Mary: Thank you.

Carol: Mary, we would love for you to tell us more of your own story of being adopted a little later...

Mary: Sure, I'd be happy to do that.

Tammy: But first, here's a song that most of us know...

Song: *Happy Birthday to You...*

Carol: Do you celebrate your birthday? And those of your family and friends? How do you celebrate? I celebrated mine just yesterday!

For some people, birthdays are very important, while other people may let another year pass without thinking much about it. In fact, you might not even know exactly *when* you were born...some people don't.

Dee: Celebrating the birth of a child is different in different cultures, but for most people, the birth of a child is a special event. Everyone loves a baby.

Tammy: They make us smile, don't they? And we just want to cuddle them.

Dee: Oh yes! We all have a beginning, a day we were born, and so it seems no one is left out of this celebration, right? You would think so. But, for some people, birthdays may not seem like a celebration. Celebrating this day might bring pain or confusion.

Tammy: That's true...but tell us more...

Dee: I guess when everyone around you celebrates *their* birthday and you know nothing about *yours*, it can be hard.

Tammy: I'm sure it would be.

Dee: We all like to know where we've come from and where we're going. For someone who's been fostered or adopted there may be things about the day of their birth that are difficult for them to understand. They may have questions about the circumstances of their birth...but *never* have the answers!

Tammy: Dee you sound as though you know a bit about adoption...

Dee: Yes Tammy. My husband and I had one little girl born to us. Later, we felt that God wanted us to adopt a second child. We let people know that we would like to adopt and began to fill in the papers that were required.

Someone told us about a relative with a teen who was pregnant and couldn't take care of the child because she had to go back to school. From there, God opened the way and we moved forward...but the process took quite a long time. Our second little daughter was a year and a half old when the adoption was final. We were very excited to have another little girl in our family.

Tammy: Many people adopt children, for many different reasons don't they!

Dee: Yes. You can't usually tell by looking at someone if they're adopted or not...unless they look completely different from their parents of course.

Tammy: We heard from Katherine some time ago about how she and her husband added two little orphans from another country to their family – a brother and a sister. They looked *very* different from their new parents, but they were loved with just as much love as their own natural children. When they were little and in an orphanage, there were not enough people to properly take care of them. The staff did their best to feed and care for their physical needs, but there were not enough arms available for warm hugs and kisses. So these children had been deprived of the basic love that all children need to develop properly.

While they were waiting and the pictures of the children arrived, it broke their hearts. Their five-year-old daughter Mary said, "My sister will smile when she comes to our house, won't she?"

But Joo-Ling didn't smile for a *long* time. It must have been terrible for a little girl to be torn away from her mother when she was only just two years old. No one really knows what happened, but the agency believed that, because Joo and her new baby brother were mixed race children, their mother gave them up so that they could have food, clothing, education, and a chance to be adopted into a loving family.

But all Joo-Ling knew was that her mother took them to an orphanage one day and left them there. ...Yes, they had food and clothes, but no one to love them. How sad Joo-Ling must have been. How many times this dear little girl must have cried herself to sleep, longing for her mother's arms.

Dee: Yes...because we were not there, we really don't know what a child has gone through before adoption. So when a child becomes aware that they're adopted, it's very important for them to know they're not alone...and that you love them just as if they were your own natural child.

And it's so important to answer an adopted child's questions if you can. They need answers about where they came from, even if they don't have *all* the answers or understand quite why things happened as they did.

Once a child knows that they're adopted, they may have a conflict in their minds. They don't want to be different from others, but they need to know about that part of their life.

Carol: We're together on Women of Hope, and today we're talking with Dee and Mary about adoption and taking care of a child who is not your own natural child. I wonder if *you* are taking care of children who are not your own? You would know how hard it can be sometimes, especially if the child has suffered physically before they came to you.

Dee: Yes – every child – every person – needs to have their *physical needs* met – things like shelter, and enough food and water. If a child feels a threat to these basic needs either now or from the past, they may react and sort of panic. They may feel unsafe. This can look like *bad behavior* but they may be acting like this because they're afraid.

Tammy: What kind of behavior problems might they have Dee?

Dee: Our little girl sometimes had trouble sleeping...and she sometimes had temper fits, as most children do at some stage. She would even hide food - perhaps to be sure she had some when she needed it.

Tammy: You would have had to reassure her often that she was loved and safe...

Dee: Yes – and she also needed the security of clear home rules to feel protected.

Tammy: That is so true...children need to know what's okay and good for them, and what might be harmful. Rules make them feel safe.

Dee: *All* kids test rules. Adopted children might test them a little harder just to be certain they will still be loved and feel safe. As a parent, or care giver, this can be challenging but it helps to understand this so you know why it's happening.

Tammy: And when the child's basic physical needs are met...and they feel safe...they also need love don't they?

Dee: Yes... we all need to feel loved! We long to be understood and accepted the way we are. A person who's adopted or fostered might not even remember much about the past, but they might

have an emotional sense of loss deep inside...one that they don't even understand themselves. Feelings can come up from nowhere ...even a *happy* birthday celebration can bring tears. It's very important as the child grows up to allow time to let them talk about their feelings, and answer any questions. Spending some time one on one with each child will give them a chance to ask you things that might be hidden deep in their heart.

You may need to be very patient as you help your adopted child understand and accept things about their past...as they learn that you love them and they're safe.

Carol: God often has a way of taking something difficult and making something beautiful out of it, doesn't he?

Carol: This is Women of Hope. It's good to be with you... Mary, let's talk about your story. When did you find out you were adopted?

Mary: I have always known I was adopted because I grew up with my birth father's side of the family. His aunt told me I was adopted and that she knew my birth mother. Both my parents were from the Philippines but they were from different provinces.

My birth mother was already married and worked away from home. She knew she could not go back to her home area pregnant or she might be killed. So for this reason, she made plans to abort me. But let me tell you how God stopped that from happening!

While preparing for the procedure, she fell asleep and had a dream. In the dream an angel came to her with a little girl...and told her not to give up the child. She ran out of that place and *my life was saved!*

She gave birth to me, and put me into an orphanage but didn't let my birth father's family know. But they found me when I was about three and took me out of the orphanage. My father was very young and made a lot of bad decisions. He became an alcoholic so I was never close to him...I was afraid of him. As a result, I was passed from one family to another. This made me feel that no-one wanted me. As if this wasn't enough, the pain in my life continued... There was one aunt who was like a real mom to me. One day when she came to pick me up from school she didn't look well. That day she had a heart attack and died. I was only 5 years old...and devastated! But finally, after a few years, another aunt adopted me. By then I was 8 years old.

Carol: Did things get better after you were adopted?

Mary: Not really...it was horrible at first. I didn't feel secure and was extremely afraid. I often had tantrums, and was very angry and hateful. As you can imagine, I got into a lot of trouble. I began stealing. I felt like my family didn't really want me and they were sorry that they had ever taken me in. They were very stressed and ashamed by all this and wanted to send me back.

I didn't care about my behavior so they took me to see a psychologist. It was a very dark period in my life in every way. I wrote about how I was feeling in a journal. That helped, but I didn't have anyone to talk to who understood.

Carol: How old were you by this time?

Mary: I was in high school. I was still looking for love and I started to take an interest in boys. I wanted to be noticed and wanted...not rejected! My family became *over protective*, and made strict rules – afraid I might get into more trouble with boys.

One dark night when I was about 14 or 15 years old, I wanted to take my own life...to commit suicide. But God had other plans for me...

That night I turned on the TV and saw a Christian program. They were talking about love...I couldn't stop listening. I felt like the man was talking just to me when he said, "God loves you"! I began crying – this is what I wanted more than anything. I asked God, *Are you real? If you are then show me!!* I knew God had heard me and I felt a weight lift off me. Very soon afterwards, God *did* show me that he was real. I was walking down the hallway at school and I heard two kids talking. One said, "Did you know there's a bible club meeting going on?"

They were not talking to *me* but it seemed like God was. I turned around and followed them to the meeting. There I met so many new friends. They cared for me and showed me true friendship. They even prayed for me.

I attended weekly bible studies there at my school...and God began to change me. The blackness in my life began to disappear. He showed me about *his* love and how I needed to trust *him*. He taught me that in this world there is *sin*...people disobey God. I learned that people will make mistakes that affect you...that you can't control. But *you* can be the one to change and *stop* this cycle of bad decisions in your family.

Mary: Over the years God has provided *mentors* – women who were like mothers and sisters – to guide me in God's ways. It's been a lot of work to keep changing from the inside out. But God is faithful...he helped me to begin to do things the right way – *his* way.

Carol: You learned some very big lessons about life...and about God didn't you?

Mary: I did! I'm now a mother, and a teacher, and I *really* want to help young people to learn about God and follow his way.

In God's word, the Bible, there are some very special words that mean a lot to me. They come from Jeremiah 29, verse 11. God says, "For I know the plans I have for you ...plans to prosper you not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."

This is so true! Sure, I still have a daily battle with my old character and wrong thinking. I have to follow what God's word tells me for my life. But, every time I trust God I find that he is faithful – he does give hope and has given me a *future*. If my mother had not had that dream, I would not have had any future!

Carol: Mary, what would you say to someone who has been adopted from a tough situation?

Mary: It's important to know *who you really are*, not just who your earthy family is and why they acted the way they did.

God is our maker; that means that if you are broken only *he* can fix you. Turn to God; he's the only one who can tell you who you *really are* and who you are really *meant to be*. And he's the only one who can help you to forgive the people in the past who have hurt you.

There are some more special words in the Bible in Ephesians chapter 1. Would you like to read it to us please Carol?

Carol: Sure. It says, (v4) 'Even before he made the world, God loved us... (v5) God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.'

Mary: My earthly adoption has been easier to accept because I know that God has adopted me as his child. The Bible even says, 'it gave him great pleasure.'

This means *he wanted me!* He chose to make me *his* child. It's like a Cinderella story. Now I'm a child of the living God!

Carol: Ok now here is a hard question. *What has helped you to forgive your family for the rejection you felt?*

Mary: I think it's realizing that if someone does not have a relationship with God they don't understand what true love is. So, since they didn't have the love of God in their hearts, they couldn't give that kind of love to me. They were empty themselves and didn't have God's love filling them up so they could love me.

God's love is different. His love never ends. Jesus himself suffered abuse, hurt and rejection on the cross...so he understands the pain we've gone through. Jesus suffered on the cross in our place so that we could be made whole.

Once I understood God's love, which healed my broken heart, I could understand – and forgive my family.

Remember that journal I was keeping? When I went back and looked, there was a big gap... The first part of the journal showed how my life was full of darkness but after that gap I could see how God had changed my life. I experienced a new life of hope. You can too.

My story has a very happy ending, a *forever* happy ending...yours can too if you give it to God.

Tammy: Mary, thank you for sharing your story with us today.

Mary: It's been a pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Dee: And me...

Tammy: It's time for us to go now. Remember, your story could have a happy ending, a forever happy ending... if you give it to God. We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings

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