

ADOPTION IS A FAMILY LOVE AFFAIR

This article for my Love in Action Newsletter was originally published in November, 2009. Since then Trey and his family have continued to put love in action to get through many challenges. I have been there for some of the challenges and some of the challenges they handled on their own. The original article is worth publishing again since November is Adoption Awareness Month

My first encounter with Trey was a little over a year ago. He attended a day care that was in the home of a family where I was providing in home services. We also crossed paths during one of my consultation visits at the Head Start Center he attended. For being only 3 & ½ years old, Trey was very articulate. He moved about his environment with confidence. They possessed above average fine and gross motor skills. Neither Head Start nor the day care had any concerns about him. For some reason, Trey caught my attention. He is built like a little “fire plug”. That’s my nick name for him. I’m sure there’s a football scholarship out there waiting for him. What was it that caught my attention?

I was soon introduced to his mother, Lee and his sister, Chenoa. Chenoa was 7 years old. We crossed paths when Lee picked her children up from the day care. Through casual conversation I found out that Trey had been adopted at birth. Prior to Trey’s adoption, Lee and Chenoa had experienced a lot of trauma in their lives. They could not find a safe place to live. When Trey’s adoption was finalized, they moved to this part of the country. I found out that Trey was a crack cocaine baby. I literally could not believe it. He was too well regulated. The minor melt downs I observed at the day care were definitely minor. Socially, Trey adapted and fit in very well.

Lee asked me to see Chenoa because of night time fears and some regressed behaviors. As I got to know the family, I asked Lee what kind of help she received when she got Trey. I was impressed because Trey was so well adjusted and regulated. I was interested in what the adoption system in her state of previous residence provided. Unfortunately, what I found out was typical of what happens across the nation. The only professional advice or help she received was a suggestion from the emergency foster home worker. The worker wisely told Lee to hold Trey tightly through his withdrawals. He was seven days old when Lee got him. Later on Lee found out that he could have experienced “shaking baby syndrome” had she not held him tightly through his withdrawals.

Lee told me Trey’s story. I was thoroughly amazed. Because of her own trauma history Lee drew on what had helped calm her when she experienced PTSD. Her formula is text book for those who know about healing womb and birth trauma. First of all, Trey was never left alone. Chenoa, age 4 at the time, would tag team with her mom when Lee had to run an errand or be briefly away from Trey. The duo caretakers held Trey and comforted him. They wrapped him in materials that were soothing. Lee held Trey against her own skin so he would become familiar with personal touch. Lee sang songs and had Trey listen to soothing sounds while she rocked his shaking and traumatized little body. The fragrance of candles was always in the air. Warm baths and soothing massages with lotion were common place. Trey was never left alone. Lee trusted that love never fails.

There it is folks, healing 101 in a nut shell. I get Holy Ghost spirit bumps when I talk and write about this story. Trey's story is one of unconditional love and sacrifice by his mother and sister. What can be more Christ like than that? In addition to her love, Lee provided Trey with a nurturing womb experience. Something that Trey never had. The family provided Bryan Post's AAA ingredient for early development: Attention - spending time, singing, interacting; Affection - Holding, rocking, kissing, carrying; and Attunement - Feeding, making eye contact, soothing, attentiveness.

My journey with Trey, Chenoa, and Lee continues. Trey's healing journey is a family affair. I am helping to develop Trey's and Chenoa's stories in narrative form. These will be and have been given to them in small doses for their continued healing. Without their continued healing, Trey would remain stuck. Lee continues to do her own work. I have been blessed and it is a privilege to be allowed to be part of their journey. They have taught me much about putting love into action.

I now understand what attracted me to Trey. It is the Christ in him. Neuropsychology says this is an oxytocin response and a positive neurological feedback loop. I don't disagree with this human interpretation. However, the spiritual interpretation is that the Holy Spirit is alive and well in Trey and spills out to others. What a deal! What an adoption! And no one spent hundreds of thousands of dollars putting Trey into treatment programs and residential facilities. That scenario is far too common with adoptions today. The intervention of love and motherly instinct was sufficient. The end. But this is actually just the beginning - "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." John 4:18.

Have courage and rest in the comfort of Jesus.

In Christ,

Ken Thom

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