Opening Your Heart to a Child
by Carolyn Cavanaugh

ADOPTION MAKES HEADLINES when celebrities bring home children from other countries. The news is sometimes met with controversy, although adoption is nothing new. It’s a way of growing a family when infertility is a problem, or caring for children whose birthparents are unable to continue in that capacity.

The Bible cites several instances of adoption, most notably Moses’ adoption by Pharaoh’s daughter.1 In Galatians 4:5, God uses the term to describe how children are added to His family through salvation. It’s a wonderful process!

So why are the numbers of adoptions going down? There are several factors. Infertile couples often turn first to technology for help building their families. Fewer babies are available for adoption because women are more willing to either have abortions or parent children on their own.2

Myths and misperceptions about adoption also persist.3 As the National Council for Adoption reports, “Women who now deliver unplanned babies without a supportive male partner may not know that one million stable couples are now available to adopt the babies that they may attempt to raise with great difficulty, and that the evidence shows that both they and their babies can live better lives if the adoption option is selected.”4

Changes in laws and higher funding support have, however, led to an increase in adoptions of children with special needs. This category can apply to children with disabilities, sibling groups, children over two years of age, or children of a different race or ethnicity than the adopting parents.

Also, international adoptions have nearly doubled in the last decade, although some countries have tightened up their rules out of a sense that they can better care for their orphaned children themselves. The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption seeks to implement uniform standards and safeguards that protect all parties involved in these arrangements.4

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DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES, I encourage everyone to consider the pleasures of adoption. My husband and I know about them from experience. We adopted our son from Korea twenty-three years ago. Yes, it involved a maze of paperwork, legalities, and waiting. Along the way, you may run into other roadblocks like we did.

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Not flesh of my flesh, not bone of my bone, but still miraculously my own. Never forget for a single minute you didn’t grow under my heart but in it.5

2. The Supreme Court’s 1972 Stanley v. Illinois decision opened the door to allowing an unmarried birthfather to override a birthmother’s adoption plan; Roe v. Wade (1973) and subsequent abortion rulings stripped fathers (married or unmarried) of the right to overrule a mother’s abortion plan. The percentage of women releasing parental rights went from 8.75 in 1973 to 0.9 in 1989-95. There were 19.4 infant adoptions per 1,000 births in 1996. Adoption Factbook III, National Council for Adoption, https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/documents/AdoptionFactbook.pdf.