

Day 12

Enduring Treasure: *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7 NIV*

We had agreed to foster/adopt eight year old Matthew, a child we met in our neighborhood. We'd already gone through the rigorous licensing process in record time but it was no small thing to do the emotional work surrounding bringing a child into our home. The preparations, both physical and emotional had been exhausting. Now it seemed we were finally ready. Expectations were high all around. Our other three children seemed to be prepared (as much as possible), the bedroom was ready, the paperwork was all completed...and then the phone call came and it was a bullet to our hearts.

“You can still visit Matthew in his current foster home, but it may not be possible for us to place him with you,” the overloaded caseworker said with a sigh. We would learn over time that things rarely end up as promised in the complicated government system with which we were working. But today, it was all new and it felt like we had driven our car full-speed into a brick wall.

I was late for my appointment to see Matthew, so I quickly jumped into the car. As I started the engine, Christian children's music erupted from the speakers. Just a few hours before, our family had been riding in the car, listening to that music and celebrating that Matthew would finally be joining us.

With tears and my eyes, I strained to see through the rain as the windshield wipers beat out their rhythm. Words came tumbling out in a raw and desperate prayer as I poured out my heart to

God. It was only then that I heard the lyric in the children's song over my ranting. "I cast all my care upon Him."

Suddenly I realized that God was reminding me that I was not alone. Our family was not going to have to carry this burden by ourselves. God Himself was inviting us to give our burden to Him. He had called us to foster/adopt and He would carry the burden of the task. Not me, Him.

Matthew did eventually come to our home and was adopted three years later. The enduring treasure of I Peter 5:7 has been a lifeline for us as we have walked the journey of being adoptive parents for him and, later, for another child.

If I'm honest, I'm still anxious at times about these boys. Today, they are grown men but parenting doesn't stop and there are continued temptations to become anxious along the way. The truth is that parenting adult children has been the greatest challenge of my life. I'm still holding on to the treasure of this verse each day through the ups and downs.

My Prayer: *Father, you are perfectly able to carry even the most intense and heaviest burdens of my heart. I choose to cast all of my anxiety on you right now and trust you to do what's best for me and for my child. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 13

Enduring Treasure: *"...all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Psalm 139:16 NIV*

The day had finally come. My husband and I were on our way to the Christian adoption agency where we would be preparing to welcome our new little one.

Months before, we had gotten our foster care license only to find out that the little girl we were preparing for was going to live with her grandparents. While I was glad she would be with her family, there was a great sense of loss. No other child was directed to our home. God must have other plans. So we jumped at this new opportunity to participate in the adoption process through a private agency.

As we crowded into the room with all the other "expectant" parents that September morning, there was a current of great anticipation. When the introductions were over, we were all directed to listen carefully as Psalm 139 was read.

It was beautiful to think about our little one being created especially by God with no mistakes. Carefully each one was knit together in their mother's womb just as God intended. Their eye color and hair color was specifically chosen by Him.

Then came verse 16. "...all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." The speaker stopped. "All the days," she repeated, "the good *and* the bad ones. Today your child may be taking their first breath. Or today they may be suffering at the hands of a drunken mother overcome with the demands of life. None of this is a surprise to

God. These days, too, are ordained by God and He has plans to redeem these days in your child's life."

I heard little else that morning. I couldn't help but wonder what my new child was facing that day. I prayed and cried and prayed some more as we began the long wait. Days of waiting. Days ordained by God.

We never did find our child at this agency, but four months later, a very special eight year old boy joined our family. As his story unfolded over time, we learned that on the same September morning while we were listening to Psalm 139 and praying, he was being abandoned...again. Through unique and painful experiences, God ordained our paths to intersect through a Christian foster care worker.

Seven months later, I held another little one in my arms who was recovering from severe abuse. His birth mother shared how terrified she had been when she found out she was pregnant and the constant pressure she was under to have an abortion. When? In September. Though she hadn't known God then, she knew she couldn't follow through with the abortion and ran away to a strange city...our city. Ordained by God, I thought to myself.

As these boys have been in our family, their "ordained days" have continued. Life hasn't always been what many would consider to be good for them. The challenges, mistakes and failures have come along the way mixed in with the joys and the victories. *All* of the days have been ordained, though, and God is not finished yet.

My Prayer: *Father, our lives are Yours. You have designed each day according to Your plan. Help me trust you to know what is best for each of my children for each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 14

Enduring Treasure: *“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 NLT*

When we first pursued becoming an adoptive family, we had stars in our eyes. We imagined that we would make a big difference in the life of the child God would bring to us. We had been carefully reminded through the adoption training process that many of our child’s patterns might be set by the time he or she came to us and that, especially if we connected with an older child, we should be realistic with our expectations.

We talked together in our family about this and prayed about it. We made a conscious effort to change our thinking from a “we’re going to change you according to our agenda” perspective to a “we’re going to let God show us who you are and seek to be a positive influence in your life” mindset.

When the opportunity to adopt came to us, it was for an older child. There was a lot of proverbial water under the bridge by the time we entered the picture and we were thankful to be able to bring a positive Christian perspective into our son’s life. We took him to church with us and made sure he had lots of opportunities to be exposed to the truth of God’s Word.

We also had lots of meaningful interactions through the course of everyday life. We were so thankful for these opportunities that seemed to be given by God. Our son made a profession of faith and didn’t resist attending church participation in other Christian activities. He had many excellent role models who loved him and were committed to him.

We had heard from other parents of teenagers the stories of rebellion and arguments. This sadness was not part of our teenager's experience, thankfully. However, it seemed that no matter how much we sought to pass on our ideals and values, there were constant reminders that the influence from his life before his adoption was the strongest in terms of setting his life course.

When he turned 18, this began to show up dramatically. He decided to move out right away. He didn't cut off communication with us but made immediate contact with his birth family, who were not Christians, and did not seem to be at all open to any support or influence from us. Though we maintained good contact with each other, we were forced to watch our son make one decision after another that brought pain and brokenness to his life.

Our relationship with our son has been strained often as we have struggled to find the balance between being supportive as parents and helping him in an unhealthy way to live an unhealthy life. The pain has been crippling at times.

We daily cling to the truth of Philippians 1:6 that when God starts a work (and we believe He has in this case), He will be faithful to complete the work. Though our adoption journey has not been easy, we are not sorry we embarked on it. We were obedient to God's calling and are thankful to be a small part of His grand plan to work in our son's life.

My Prayer: *Father, each one of us is on a journey with you, whether we realize it or not. Help us to pray faithfully and wait patiently for you to do your final work in those we love. And thank you for your ongoing work in our lives, too. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 15

Enduring Treasure: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10 NASB*

We held our baby boy in our arms for the first time and knew he was “ours.” It’s impossible to explain that feeling to anyone who hasn’t had that experience and many adoptive parents have told me they didn’t feel that way. But we did. We were head over heels in love from the first moment.

After we brought him home, the story slowly came out piece by piece and we learned about what brought him into the foster/adopt program. At just five weeks of age, he had sustained injuries that had resulted in several broken bones and a fractured skull. We took him to multiple doctor appointments and many tests were conducted. The results were consistent: our little guy was not going to have any residual effects as a result of his injuries. We were overjoyed!

Along the way, we noticed some small delays in development but nothing too far outside the bounds of “normal” (whatever that is). He developed severe asthma around his first birthday when so many milestones occur and we took that into consideration, too.

As our baby developed, his personality came out like a shout. He let the world know he was smart and kind. His heart for God was strong and his creativity was almost without limits.

In his young teenage years, though, we decided to pursue having extensive testing to get some answers regarding his development process. Little things had begun to cause concern, for us and for

him. Our concerns were verified when doctors confirmed there were definite signs of a Traumatic Brain Injury. In addition to his injuries as a very young infant, we knew his brain chemistry could have been affected by his mother's difficult pregnancy, his premature birth, his early separation from his birth mother, etc. And that was what we KNEW. There were many missing clues concerning his early experiences and development.

I remember one of our conversations when we were all going through the testing drama. The elevator door closed behind us after a grueling appointment and he asked me, "Dad, what did the doctor say about what's wrong with me?" Of course, I quickly replied, "He didn't say what was WRONG with you. He was helping us know how you learn. They want you to have a diagnosis so we can get help for you if you need it."

Then, he said the words I'll never forget, "Instead of having a label, I would like to just be me if that's okay."

Yes, son, you can just be you. Today and every day just be the person God wants you to be. And I'll be the best dad I can be to you while you do that.

My Prayer: *Father, you have created my child. Help me celebrate their uniqueness and gifts. Help me to allow them to discover their place in your world just as I have done. Thank you that my child is different than any other you have ever created and thank you for letting me in on your plan to use them for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.*