

Is Adoption Your Option?

What you need to know before you adopt

Renay Johnson and her husband, Dwain, already had three children of their own when Renay learned that a local crisis pregnancy center needed to place an African-American baby. "If the baby is a boy, I'll know it's God's will for me to say yes," Renay told a friend.

The baby indeed was a boy. A week later, after first signing legal documents and undergoing a background check, the Johnsons had their new son, Demarcus. Renay says the way God moved in her life was like a dream come true. She knows that under normal circumstances, adopting is an extensive process.

And she's right. Randy Martin of Covenant Community Services, a foster care and adoption agency in Bakersfield, Calif., says prospective parents need to educate themselves about adoption and pray before they bring a child into the family.

"There are plenty of children to adopt, and we are looking for parents who will see adoption as a ministry," Martin says. Parents who want to adopt should be prepared to do the following, he says:

- Contact a local adoption agency. Agencies jump-start the adoption process and place parents with children.
- Go to orientation. Prospective parents are told what to expect during the adoption process.
- Participate in a training program. Parents fill out an application and learn parenting skills, though they have not been introduced to the child.
- Take part in a home study. The agency will conduct a study of the emotional and mental stability of the family. It is a critical evaluation that can take up to

90 days to complete.

Says Martin: "When couples don't say they feel God's calling to be 'a father to the fatherless,' then they are doing it for the wrong reason. Some want to adopt because they had a bad childhood and want to make it up to a child or because a spouse insists they do it. But we need strong, committed parents to fulfill God's calling."