

Thinking About Adopting Your Foster Care Kid?

As of today we've had our new girls in our home for twenty days—twenty glorious, noisy, dramatic, wonderful days. As parents for 26 years, John and I are used to noise, to mess, and to drama, but **adopting teens from foster care takes this to a whole new level ... in a good way.**

Currently, John is out of town for work and last night we Skyped with him. In addition to our new teens ages 15, 12, and 12, we also have three little ones at home ages 7, 5, and 4. So please picture six excited faces (mine makes seven) crowded in front of the computer trying to chat with Dad. From the other side of the world, John was soaking it all in.

"There is so much life at home," he said with a smile.

That's a good way to sum it up.

When John and I first thought about adopting again, we knew we wanted older kids who would soon be aging out of foster care. We also knew we wanted to adopt a sibling group. We knew that sibling groups are harder to place. We also knew we wanted some of those siblings to be girls, because girls are SO vulnerable when they age out of foster care. And while we thought in *generalities*, God had four specific girls in mind. (The fourth will be moving in later this summer.) We have no doubt God put that desire on our hearts for a reason. **We can't imagine our life without these girls.**

So what is it really like adopting teens from foster care?

1. **It's emotional.**

My heart aches when I hear about the pain in their past. I'm sad that I wasn't there to hold them during hurts. I'm sorry

they had to go through what they did, while at the same time, I'm thankful that I can hear their stories and attempt to understand. That sadness is mixed with excitement of discovering the personalities of each kid. There is joy in feeling the connections and bonds growing. There is hope that our family unit will continue to grow strong. There is love. Growing, intertwining, deepening love.

2. **It's dramatic.**

There are many relationships that are interacting all at the same time. There are teen siblings who've been through a lot together and other kids in the family who are trying to adjust to all these new people, too. Each relationship has unique interactions, some I don't completely understand yet. The drama comes from fun and fights, from pulling together and at times pushing apart. It's as if eleven pinballs have been released into a pinball game at once and everyone bounces off everyone else (while staying within the confines of who "the Goyers" are). The drama isn't bad. Instead it's a sign that everyone is still getting used to everyone else. Even in this short time, it's fun to see how individual relationships are changing and growing. (Then there is the dynamic of having twins! I never really understood the twin bond before. These girls are screaming at each other one minute and hugging each other the next. I'm in awe.)

3. **It's holy.**

I can't think of a better word to describe it. Despite the emotions and drama, despite the paperwork, the DHS visits, the check-ins and home studies, there's a sense that this is good, this is right, and this new sense of family makes God smile. Those who were once not-a-family are now a family. Those who were orphans—wards of the state—are now cherished children. Those who were apart are now together, with God in the center. His

Spirit is here in the midst of the noise and mess, and He is pleased. I feel that pleasure.

Those are the three top things that came to mind when I thought about how this adoption is going.

Do I have any regrets in choosing to adopt teens? Not one.

Am I falling in love with these kids? Yes, very much.

Do I get overwhelmed and tired at times? Everyone would nod yes to this one. Mom does get tired and cranky!

Is it hard figuring out how to deal with teen issues in today's world? Yes! Even though I've raised three kids to adulthood, raising teens today is different than ten years ago. Each personality is different, too. I'm still trying to figure it out!

Will I have to give up some of me to make more room for them? I already have.

Is it expensive? Yes, they eat a lot and like clothes!

Is it worth it? Yes, yes, yes!

What it's really like adopting teens from foster care is seeing that God had something more wonderful planned than I ever could have imagined. It's seeing His way of caring for orphans is hard but beautiful. It's understanding that while we're giving a lot we've been given some pretty amazing gifts. I'm so thankful that these gifts now call me Mom.

Tricia Goyer *has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31, and HomeLife Magazine.*