

## *American Adoption Congress Decree (Fall 1997)*

### **A Christian's Dilemma about Open Records... The Parable of the Braided Ribbons**

Long, long ago, in eternity past, God determined that there would be a beautiful braid made of shining ribbons—a braid woven in the secret places of our hearts, a braid called “adoption.”

Each ribbon was a different color. One, the deepest of purples. Another, the richest of greens. The third, the most vibrant of reds.

Each ribbon had a purpose, each a vital contribution, and each a unique position that provided contrast and complement to the other two ribbons.

The green ribbon was to represent the birth family and their deep, yet often-forgotten contribution to the adoptee's life. The purple ribbon represented the adoptive family, chosen to nurture that God-given gift of life passed on from the birth family. The red ribbon was the adoptee—a unique weaving together of nature and nurture into one, marvelous human being, with awesome potential.

The challenge for the adoptee would be to learn how to integrate, or braid, the green, purple, and red ribbons. This would be no small task. However, the more the adoptee knew about both biological and adoptive families, whether positive or negative, the greater the potential for integration and maturity would be.

“This all sounds lovely,” you may be saying, “but how does it play out in daily life?”

It happens every time the birth family is honored in front of the adoptee. Whenever that happens, the adoptee is also blessed and honored and the blossoming of the adoptee's full potential is one step closer.

This kind of conversation can begin from day one: “I'm so glad your birth mommy gave you to us! You are so beautiful.”

It can also be done on special occasions. One adoptive mother I know celebrates her child's birthday by saying, "Let's say a prayer for your birth mother before we blow out the candles."

This is honoring. This is building a child's self-esteem. This is an indirect validation of the adoptee's core being that was formed during the first nine months in the birth mother's womb. It is a literal calling forth of the core personality of the adoptee that oftentimes remains dormant and underdeveloped.

This kind of honoring and openness requires sacrificial love on the part of the adoptive parents. It requires that they put aside all feelings of over-protectiveness, jealousy, and insecurities about the child's possible future reunion with birth parents. In a word, it means a continual letting go of fear and putting the child first.

Another adoptive mother I know placed a photograph of her daughter's birth mother in the nursery. This adoptee will grow up knowing the face of the young woman who gave her the gift of life. She will never have to search for her mother's face in a crowd.

Celebrating the differences between the adoptee and the adoptive family is another way of restoring honor to the birth family. "I wonder who gave you that beautiful red hair." Or, "I wonder where you got that creativity. Must be from your birth dad!"

As an adult who was adopted at ten days of age during the closed adoption system, where information about birth parents was kept secret, I longed to know about my birth family. When I finally met my birth mother five years ago, it was as if a part of me came to life that I never knew existed. I felt validated and alive! I finally found someone who looked like me and whose voice sounded like mine. Even though some of the information I received was painful, and even

though the eventual outcome of our reunion was unsuccessful, the knowledge and growth I gained helped me weave yet another strand into my braided ribbon called adoption.

I believe this is God's plan for adoption—a plan that embraces truth and honesty, openness and honor.

### **The Dilemma**

When I lay these beliefs beside what is actually happening today among some fundamentalist Christians in the adoption community, I am confused and alarmed. Some of my fellow Christians who profess to be Bible believing and pro-life are actually siding with darkness and deception when it comes to the subject of open records. When I turn on the television and hear them zealously advocate closed records, I grieve.

“If only they knew the truth about how closed records wound adoptees of any age, certainly they would change their minds,” I tell myself. I wonder how much they have been influenced by those with political power who claim to promote ethical policies and practices and protect all parties involved in the adoption, whose real mission is to preserve and promote closed records. I wonder if they have been misled by lobbyists who label advocates for openness and honesty in adoption as “anti-adoption.”

I am told their logic is that opening records will drive women with unplanned pregnancies to seek abortions rather than live in fear that their relinquished children will find them someday. As for birth mothers of children already born and relinquished, these Christian leaders have terrified them about contact with their grown sons and daughters. They charge that to open records breaks a promise of confidentiality once given birth parents, yet history has proven these arguments untrue.

### **What Would Jesus Say?**

In the midst of all this debate, I wonder what Jesus would say. If he were the presiding judge, what would he say about open records? How would he respond to everyone involved? What would be his counsel? What would he say to the tearful adult who was adopted as a child, who has tried in vain for years to access birth records, only to be treated like a child? What would he say to one who has to hire an expensive adoption professional to search for his roots or to the one who lays on a gurney not able to tell the physician what her medical history is? What would Jesus say?

I believe he would put his arms around those adoptees and weep with them.

What about the birth mother that longs to see the child she relinquished, only to be told that the records are sealed? Would Jesus not want her to be reunited with her beloved child? Of course he would! He came to bring reconciliation, not alienation.

What would Jesus say to the birth mother that didn't want to be found, or to the adoptee that didn't want to be found? I believe he would encourage both of them to face the past and deal with the pain, for only then would they be able to enjoy the abundant life for which they were created.

What about adoptive parents who feel threatened at the prospect of open records? What would Jesus tell them? I believe he would tell them that there is plenty of love to go around and if they practice this attitude and support their child, then his or her reunion with the birth parents will only deepen their child's love for them. He would take away fear!

What about the Christian leaders and organizations that support closed records? What would Jesus say to them? I think he would be dismayed by their lack of discernment in not recognizing a wolf in sheep's clothing, and for adding insult to injury to some of his precious children.

What would Jesus say to the ones with political clout and questionable motives? His anger with their deceptive practices may well lead him to overturn their tables as he once did with the money changers outside the Temple.

### **What Does the Bible Say about Open Records?**

Specific applications to the subject of open records can be drawn from broad principles of Scripture. First, we must look at the particular theme in the totality of Scripture to avoid the danger of isolating one text and basing an entire belief upon it. Second, our findings must be consistent with the character of God as revealed in the Bible. After these steps are taken, we can then make applications to daily life.

- **Live in the Light.** “Let light shine out of darkness” (II Cor. 4:5). “A day is coming when God will reveal all that is spoken in darkness and it will be listened to in the light; what was whispered in people’s ears will be proclaimed on the housetops” (Luke 12:3). “Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (John 3:20). “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness” (John 2:9).
- **Seek Truth.** “...you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). God promotes truth on every level—physical, emotional, and spiritual. Truth is not a concept to be studied, but a relationship in which to be entered. Truth is a Person. Jesus said, “I am the Truth” (John 14:6). When truth is revealed on any level, it is a personal encounter with God himself.
- **Promote Openness about Biological Origins.** The book of Matthew begins with 17 verses outlining the genealogy of Jesus, listing 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile in Babylon, and 14 from the exile to Christ. If Jesus, the

adopted Son of Joseph, knew his biological history, shouldn't adoptees have the same right today? If God thought it wasn't important to know our origins, why would he methodically include the list of generations in the book of Matthew?

- **Bless your Ancestral Family.** Caryle Marney once suggested that there are at least 80,000 generations behind each one of us, and that we are incapable of blessing ourselves or being a blessing until we are first able to bless our own origins. Marney terms this process as "going through home again." Exodus 4:18-31 is an account of Moses' revisiting his biological home. I challenge you to meditate on these verses.

A closer look will convince you that this was a painful process for Moses, whose origins were shrouded in mystery because of his adoption. Only by re-establishing a connection with his birth family was he able to bring an end to his subconscious search for identity. Only by resolving the issues of his dual identity was he able to move forward into his God-given calling to be one of the greatest leaders of all time.

Thus, God prompted not only Moses, but also Aaron, his birth brother, toward an adoption reunion that would ultimately prove to be life changing. In this biblical account, it is clear that God opened the way for Moses.

- **Discover your Unique Footprints in the Sands of Time.** God has a special plan for every person's life. Esther, an adoptee that lived in biblical times, was instrumental in saving her people, the Jews, from extinction from the Persians. Her adoptive uncle, Mordecai, said, "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14b) Scripture noted that Esther did not reveal her nationality and family background because Mordecai had forbidden her. Nonetheless, I believe

that because she was aware of her roots that she was able to go before the King with confidence and step into her God-given purpose in human history.

- **Remember that God Protects the Orphan.** “Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry: and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless (Exodus 22:22-24).

Restoring openness and honor to the entire adoption triad is what Jewel Among Jewels Network, Inc. is all about! We seek to be an advocate for adoptees by educating prospective adoptive parents, adoptive parents, mental health and adoption professionals, and anyone that is interested in knowing about adoption from a biblical perspective.