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Adoption Has Been the Most Wonderfully Difficult Thing We've Ever Done

By Adam Meyer
UCF Forum columnist
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My wife and I have decided to toss common sense out the window – and adopt a second child from China with Down syndrome.

For the past several years we have been challenging ourselves to live differently with our three biological boys (now 12, 10 and 8). We have felt called to live beyond the normal pursuits of our culture, which seem to primarily value the pleasures of this world and the focus on anything that benefits oneself.

It seems as though the commonly accepted ultimate goal is to get as comfortable as possible as quickly as possible for as long as possible. Many consider that success comes with a bigger house, a pool, the opportunity to take a couple of nice vacations per year, a nice car and retirement nest egg so we can leave work behind in our later years and

travel off into the sunset of life focusing on getaway travels, golf courses and enjoying all of the easy things that life has to offer.

While we, too, were traveling that road – but not necessarily with the concrete outcomes that our culture may deem to be true signs of “success” – we felt that God was calling and asking for more from us.

In 2011, we were living in Michigan and decided to pursue fostering or adopting a child. This laborious and overly complicated process was not finalized by the time we moved to Florida in 2013, so we picked up the pursuit of this dream in Florida – and ran into more red-tape barriers.

Tired of dealing with the bureaucracy, we began to explore international adoption. We had always pushed this concept aside because of the extreme expense involved in going through the process, the huge time investment, and the fact that adopting a child with a disability was the quickest route to completing an international adoption. However, we knew we wanted to do something different and we finally realized that we could not overlook the reality: Our professional lives have long centered on working with people with disabilities.

We finally embraced that we were being called to connect with a child with a disability personally, not just professionally.

Our one-year adventure led us to adopting our son Timmy in April 2016 from China. We knew from the outset that Timmy had Down syndrome. We also knew that, at 31 months of age, he was not yet walking and he was well behind in typical child development. In part, this was because he was the first child with Down syndrome to ever survive in his orphanage. Previously, they were uncertain as to how to best care for these babies until an American missionary couple landed in the orphanage and improved the child care there.

We figured that we would get the walking figured out in due time. However, writing this today, we have made progress with his physical development but he is not yet walking. We still believe it will happen but we have no idea when.

Adopting Timmy has definitely been the most difficulty thing we have ever done in our lives. We had no idea of all of the challenges that we would experience with attaining the right therapy. Being on the receiving end of a society that is not the most welcoming and understanding in this area has proved difficult.

We are well past our comfort zone. Yet, I would not change it for the world. The joy that Timmy has brought our family has been incredible. We are blessed with his serene demeanor, his exuberant laugh, his radiant smile and an energetic life in his eyes and his overall personality. We love seeing how dedicated he is to being as independent as possible. He loves lounging with his brothers or playing rough with them in his own wonderful brotherly way.

We all seem to feel better after spending time with him. My inner peace has increased substantially. I feel closer to God than at any point before and I am amazed as to how our family has been blessed in incredible ways since this journey began.

Experiencing the profound benefits of the challenges has impacted us in such wonderful and maddening ways that we have decided to adopt one more child from China this summer.

Isabelle is two weeks older than Timmy and also has Down syndrome.



Isabelle

Our lives will never be the same.

The common dream of achieving increasing comfort with age will look much differently for us.

Not knowing what will be demanded of me at age 60 and beyond is scary.

Hey, just getting through the next week or the next day can be daunting.

But the joy that comes with the pain tells me that life begins at the end of our comfort zone.

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