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Perfect Fit

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PERFECT FIT

Cedarville's Director of Campus Experience Knew Exactly Where He Belonged

BY BRIAN BURNS '95

On June 21, 1973, my parents, Bruce and Jeanie Burns, were in Florida enjoying one last vacation before I was born. A call came from Indiana to let them know that I had arrived and would be delivered to my granny and papaw.

Growing up, I do not remember when my parents told me that I was adopted. I know that I do remember they called me their gift from the Lord, and I always knew that I was wanted. They loved me and my sister, Lisa, who was also adopted, in every way — praise, encouragement, and discipline.

SURE AND SECURE

I never had a period of doubt until after high school and college when people started asking me, “What’s it like being adopted?” At the time, I was a house parent at Joy Ranch Home for Children in Hillsville, Virginia, working with more than 20 high school kids, some of whom had experienced failed adoptions. I began to wonder, “Should I know more?”

I asked my parents, and they shared letters with me from my biological parents and told me about the circumstances around my birth. I thank my biological parents for giving me the gift of life and placing me in the home God knew I needed to be in.

A lot of times in adoption, there’s an insecurity when other people ask about it. But I didn’t experience that in my home. I knew where I stood. And if I stepped out of line, I knew there would have been consequences.

Sometimes you’ll hear people differentiate between their adopted and their biological children. My parents didn’t do that. I have a younger brother, Matthew, whom my mom gave birth to. My younger brother looks more like my dad, but I act more like him. There was no difference between any of us in our parents’ sight. We were all gifts from God to them.

PERFECT FIT

Growing up in a pastor’s home was a blast. I can remember playing hide-and-go-seek at church while Dad worked on his sermon. I remember youth events we sponsored in the community and getting to know other people and

hanging out with friends. As an extrovert, a pastor's home was a perfect fit for me. Now at age 44, it's even clearer to me. Watching my kids with my parents, and my wife with my parents — this is my family. This is who we are.

My dad is my biggest hero. He's the one who taught me, "Any job worth doing is worth overdoing." I saw that in my papaw and my uncles. I see that tenacity in the way I approach my job at Cedarville. Looking back now, I can see there was no mistake. The times of self-doubt occurred because other people were curious.

Adoption to me is something bigger than acceptance and love. Adoption is a true picture of the Gospel.

I had a special relationship with my granny and papaw. As I mentioned before, I was delivered to them while my parents were in Florida. We always used to joke that Granny saw me first, so I was more hers than Mom's. I remember one time at a family reunion for Dad's side of the family, one of my great-aunts had put together a family tree and people were looking at it. Next to my sister and me, she had written "adopted." Granny hated that. She would say, "They're my kids!" She talked to her sister and had those words removed. My granny lived till she was 93, and we always had a special relationship.

TIME MAKERS

As a family, we would take a vacation every year, which were incredible, intentional times. One of my favorite vacations was our trip to Disney World. This trip ignited a respect that I have for Disney and their approach to business and how they equip and empower their cast members. It was during this trip that I remember my dad telling me that life requires the proper perspective and must be fueled by integrity and passion.

My dad did a lot of visitations (going to people's homes), but he always made time for our family. My brother and sister and I were involved in sports and fine arts: soccer, basketball, band, school plays. Mom and Dad were at our games and plays. They'd be there for opening night. They took an interest in each of our individual lives and made a point to have the family actively involved in each other's lives.

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

When you're a pastor's kid, you hear your dad preaching, but it's different when you see it, when he's not in front of anyone else. He made time to spend with his Savior. A relationship with Christ takes time; it takes commitment. It's not a feeling. In the morning, after I finished my newspaper route, I'd walk into the kitchen, and there he was with his Bible. It's who he was, and it's still who he is. Or I'd catch him on vacations, very early in the morning, studying the Word. I saw the consistency of his walk.

My parents demonstrated that it is vital to not let the urgent things of life crowd out the important. My parents' commitment to God and His Word was their highest priority and to this day, they demonstrate that to me and my family.

Both of my parents have a strong work ethic and a commitment to excellence. In my life, I have always been challenged to do things with excellence, no matter if the job is big or small. This was made clear to me one summer when my dad decided it was time to build a treehouse. This was not a normal treehouse; this treehouse had walls, a roof, and real working windows. When we were building it, I watched my dad take time to make sure everything was measured and fit properly. I can still remember this treehouse build; it inspired a commitment to excellence and work in my career and personal life.

SOMETHING BIGGER

Adoption to me is something bigger than acceptance and love. Adoption is a true picture of the Gospel. When my parents chose to adopt me, they took all of me and gave all of themselves to me. God has provided a way for us to be adopted into His family. We do not deserve this, neither can it be earned. This adoption opportunity is granted to us by the grace and mercy of God. He adopts us, forgives us, provides for us, and offers us the opportunity to be a part of His eternal family. Earthly adoption is a picture of this. Being adopted has helped me appreciate in a different way the beauty of salvation and God's adoption story. I'm so glad I'm adopted, by my earthly parents, and by my Father in heaven.

Brian Burns '95 is Cedarville University's Director of Campus Experience.