

Abundant Living MINISTRIES

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The Great Advent Adoption

For many years I was confused when reading the first chapter of Matthew. The first seventeen verses record a historical genealogy from Abraham to Jesus... a list of hard-to-pronounce names. So, when starting to read the New Testament, I usually just skimmed over that. What I found puzzling about this detailed ancestry, was the fact that Jesus' lineage was traced through *Joseph's* family tree, not *Mary's*. Since we know that Jesus was born of a virgin, Joseph was *not* Jesus' biological father. So, I couldn't understand why God decided to include Joseph's background at all.

I had heard theologians explain that, when Mary wed Joseph, she legally gained all her husband's family heritage and legacy. This provided at least a partial explanation for me. And, in fact, it reminded me of one of the beautiful "perks" of marriage... i.e. the joining of two families and all their corresponding blessings. Plus, it provides a wonderful illustration of the benefits anyone receives when they, through repentance and faith, become part of the church, "the bride of Christ."

But a few Christmases ago, the genealogy-thing took on an added and special meaning to me, because of our grandchildren. John and I are blessed with 12... and they are all wonderful. Seven of these children entered the Charles "tribe" through the miracle of biological birth. How we rejoiced with the arrival of each one!

And, the other five of our grandchildren landed in this household through the wonder of adoption. Each *Gotcha Day* (the day the parents finally picked up their child from China or Ethiopia) was cause for a great celebration! To us, and their parents, it didn't (and doesn't!) matter one iota how the children came to join our family... each one, whether "birthed" through biology or through adoption, is *ours*... we love them more than they could possibly understand and we love them forever! And since they are *ours*, each child gains all the family history, legacy and benefits of their parents and grandparents. In fact, we observe "Charles" traits in all of them that they have "inherited" from us, whether via genes, association, or imitation.

Now when I read Matthew 1, I recognize that God feels that same way towards me... HIS child. In the scriptures, both terms *birth* and *adoption* are used interchangeably describing salvation and the arrival of a believer into His family... the divine GOTCHA DAY!

Consider these verses...

John 1:12 & 13 (NIV) ... to all who did receive Him (Jesus), to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children *born* not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but *born* of God.

1 Peter 1:23 (NIV) For you have been *born* again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.

Romans 8:15 (NLT) So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He *adopted* you as His own children. Now we call Him, "Abba, Father."

Ephesians 1:4-6 (NLT) ... Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to *adopt* us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son.

Now, when I read the Christmas story, I marvel not only over Jesus' miracle birth to His mother, Mary, but also over His God-orchestrated adoption to His earthly father, Joseph. It is evident that God's launching of His Son into the world, was carefully-planned generations before His

birth. God decided, as recorded by Isaiah the prophet, that a young virgin would mother the Messiah. This was generations before Mary came on the scene. Likewise He promised repeatedly in the Old Testament that His Son would be a descendent of King David. And He chose Joseph to fulfill that promise through the powerful inheritance and lineage that *adoption* provides.

That God loved humanity enough to make a way for individuals to join His family for all eternity is the message of Christmas. Whether we think of ourselves as His birth-children or adopted... the terminology doesn't matter. The beautiful reality is that when we place our trust in what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross, we become part of God's *forever family!*



That is a life-changing message of joy to our world! *Written by Sharon Charles*



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Almost 30 years ago, Sharon wrote a Christmas story for our children. They loved it! The next year, she wrote another... a tradition was born.

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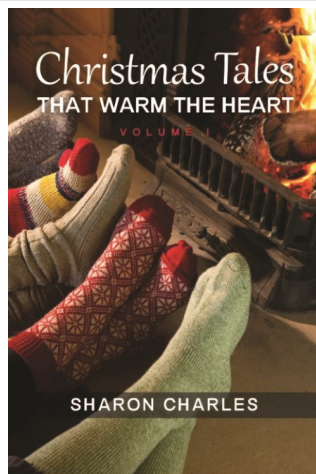
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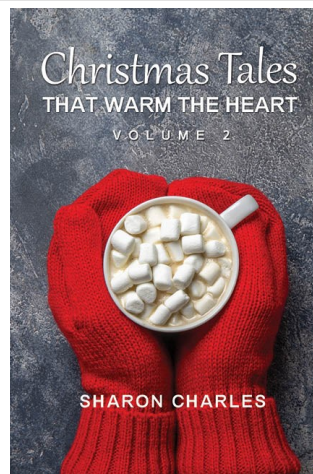
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