

# Every Child Deserves a Forever Family

By Nicole Sanchez

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My husband and I recently adopted our beautiful 2-year-old son. When I share this amazing news with people, I sometimes get a response that, well, stings.

They usually ask me what country we adopted him from. When I reply "Tacoma," their eyes get big. After I proudly tell them we adopted him out of the foster-care system, sometimes their eyes get even bigger and all of a sudden, they have nothing to say. Then there's the other group of people who start sharing "horror stories" of how they know someone who adopted and it failed miserably.

What is going on? What is wrong with people? A child is a child no matter where they are from. We have to change the way we think about orphans and foster children. They are *all* God's gift to us and are truly our greatest hope for the future.

Please do not misunderstand my feelings on international adoptions. I think it, too, is a beautiful and wonderful thing. I have friends who have adopted internationally.

Adoption in any form is the greatest expression of love, but what I cannot understand is why so many people do not have room in their hearts for the children in their own backyard. They seem to look down on them — like they are second-class.

This is simply not true. Every child deserves a forever family. Every child. They are not in foster care because of anything they did. It is because of their parents' mistakes. And don't forget, biological children have problems, too!

So what are we going to do? I know there are many children in the foster-care system with needs, great needs. Some of their needs are over my head and perhaps yours, too. But even if you can't take in a foster child or adopt one, you can certainly help them. And believe me, the need is great. Huge.

In our state, there are an estimated 9,500 children in the foster-care system right now. Read that again — 9,500 children. Hundreds of those children are already legally free — waiting to be adopted.

But for some, they never get a forever family and they age out of the system. Can you imagine? Never having a family to celebrate your birthday with. No mom or dad to call for help. Who is going to walk you down the aisle? Where are you going to spend the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas?

This Christmas, I challenge you to look in your heart and ask yourself what you can do to help the orphans in *our* foster-care system. Is it as simple as collecting toys, writing a check, or as my husband and I did, taking the huge leap of faith and fostering a child you pray you will be able to adopt.

I truly believe it is a calling to adopt and, perhaps, it is even a deeper calling to foster a child you want to adopt. There are no guarantees, but you will know you did what you could to make a difference.

You opened your home and your heart to a child in need. And who knows, you just might end up with a forever son or daughter.