

Being an Orphan / Adopted into God's Family

Katharine: Our own Joo-Ling spent two of her first four years in a crowded orphanage where there were not enough staff to properly take care of each little one. She had to care for her little brother Jung-Eup and listen to him cry when he was hungry, wet or in pain. The sisters at the Catholic orphanage did what they could, but they simply didn't have the time those babies needed. There was not enough food to go round, and there was no medicine.

Carol: Welcome to *Women of Hope*. We're so glad you could join us today. I'm Carol, and

Tammy: I am Tammy. How nice to be back with you. My, this sounds like a sad story.

Carol: Yes, when we think of a baby drinking, we think of them snuggling into their mother. They may be drinking her breast milk, or even from a bottle – whichever, it's a time for the mother and baby to learn about each other isn't it.

Tammy: Thank you for being with us today Katharine. Tell us more about your two little children. How sad that there was no-one to hold them when they were so small, especially when they were being fed.

Katharine: Well, they're not little any more. They're grown up now, but yes it was sad – and it had a long-lasting effect on them...

Both children suffered because there was no-one to hold them and love them. Jung Eup developed severe infections in both ears because the bottles were just stuck in his mouth – the milk dribbled down into his ears and formed harmful bacteria.

Carol: Katharine, what made you adopt these children? Is it because you had no children of your own?

Katharine: No Carol, we already had four children. But we heard about these little children in another country who had no-one to care for them so we talked to our children about it. We all agreed that we wanted to help these little ones. We applied with an adoption agency for siblings from an orphanage. They searched all the orphanages and finally found two children who were healthy enough to be taken out of the country. But still, our little ones had to spend almost a year at the agency's center to receive medical care so that they were well enough to leave.

The pictures we received while we were waiting broke our hearts. Our five-year-old daughter Mary said, "My sister will smile when she comes to our house, won't she?" But Joo-Ling didn't smile for a long time. It must have been terrible for a little girl to be torn away from her mother when she was barely two years old. No one really knows what happened, but the agency believed that, because Joo and her new baby brother were mixed race children, their mother gave them up so that they could have food, clothing, education, and a chance at being adopted into a loving family. But all Joo-Ling knew was that her mother took them to an orphanage one day and left them. There, they had food and clothes, but no one to love them. How sad she must have been. How many times this dear little girl must have cried herself to sleep, longing for her mother's arms.

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope* today, Katharine is telling us about her two little adopted children.

Tammy: It breaks my heart to think of little ones not only having no mother to hold them – but *no-one* to hold them when they cry!

Katharine: Yes – it broke *our* hearts! Jung-Eup was too little to remember his mother, but he knew, somehow, that he too had been abandoned. As an infant, when his stomach hurt, or his ears ached, there was no one to pick him up and care for him. Only his small sister was there to talk to him, hold his hand, and cry for his pain.

Then, they were both taken from the place they considered home and brought to another place, where people poked them and cut their hair and made them take medicine. And before they could get used to that place, they were put on a huge airplane and flown to an even stranger place, where two people, who were smiling huge smiles and crying at the same time, grabbed them and hugged them, using words like "Ummi" and Apba". If they knew what the words meant, they certainly didn't know who this "mother" and "father" were. But we did have new clothes for them, and toys, and snacks to eat. Then we all got on still another plane to go to their new home—where neither of them wanted to be!! There, grandmas, brothers and sisters, and neighbors were all crying and laughing...giving them more toys and food, and talking in a strange language they had never heard.

Jung-Eup had to have all his clothes changed immediately! He was toilet trained, but he had been given some medicine to keep him from using the toilet on the long plane ride. The poor little boy "exploded" just before we arrived at home. My older girls were so excited, but suddenly no one wanted to hold the new baby.

Jung-Eup was three years old, and weighed only twenty pounds. When I laid him on the bed to change him, I couldn't hold back the tears. His little swollen stomach and spindly legs reminded me of pictures of starving children I'd seen in magazines.

Carol: I think that 20 pounds would be about an average weight for a *one* year old...and he was three. He must have missed out on a lot of good nutrition in his first three years.

Tammy: Yes – it would be very hard for the people trying to care for the children in the orphanage...when there are not enough people and there's not enough food.

Carol: They must feel very sad too when the children they're trying to take care of look so thin and sad.

Tammy: So Katharine did these two little children that you adopted settle in to their new home after a while?

Katharine: At the end of that long day, the children found the pallets on the floor, like the ones they had slept on in the orphanage, and settled down with a new toy each tucked under their arms. Jung-Eup cried loudly for a while, but finally slept. We heard Joo-Ling's quiet sobs for what seemed like hours. An older sibling slept beside each of the new arrivals.

In those first few weeks, meals were heart-breaking experiences. These little ones had never had enough to eat, and when food was placed on the table, they would climb right up to the dishes and start to dig in, fearing the food would soon be taken away. They hoarded everything... Each new toy or piece of clothing was hidden under the covers of their pallet. What terrible, fears they had, and they couldn't communicate with us about anything.

When we took them to the doctor, he found that both children had scabies and they had round worms. Jung-Eup also had a tapeworm, which caused his stomach to swell. These were soon taken care of with medication and slowly they began to learn that there was plenty of food...and love for them. It took time for them to learn to trust us, but within a few weeks they were able to sit at the table, enjoy playing with toys, and go to bed without tears.

The sense of abandonment, however, was buried deep in their little souls. We found that Joo-Ling was unable to interact with us. She had built an emotional wall around herself, so that she would not be hurt again by the adults in her life. Jung-Eup would explode into screaming tantrums whenever he was corrected or felt he was

wronged. This behavior went on for many years.

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope* today we've heard from Katherine about what it was like when she and her husband adopted two little children from another country. From everything you have told us, it must have been very difficult at times Katharine. How did you cope with the hard times?

Katharine: Well of course through that time, we prayed often for these dear little ones. We also prayed for ourselves—that we would have wisdom to help them overcome their awful fears and to somehow help them understand that they were safe in our love. It was not always easy, but God heard our prayers.

Now that they are grown, both of them are healthy, hard-working adults, and they love their family.

Just the other day, Joo-Ling said to me, "Mama, I always knew you loved me. I just couldn't handle it for a while." And Jung-Eup came by on his day off to help me plant some bulbs in the flower garden. "You take it easy, Mama," he said. "I can handle this."

They're here for family gatherings and call often, always ending our conversations with, "I love you." My heart still breaks sometimes, but now that's because it's full of love and thankfulness to God.

Dear friend, does this story bring some tears to your eyes? Perhaps you lost your parents at a very young age, and were adopted by another family. Or you may have taken someone else's children into your *own* family, to love and care for them. If so, you know how difficult it can be sometimes. I'll admit, many times I was discouraged, wondering if we had done the right thing. Our two new children, as well as the older ones, had some problems getting used to the changes in our family life.

A few months before Joo-Ling and Jung-Eup came to live with us, my husband and I found some words in the Bible – God's book that helped us. It talked about people who had been without hope, and who were once far away, being brought near, because of Jesus, God's own Son. (Ephesians 2: 12-13)

Our little ones were far away, across an ocean. We wanted to bring them near to us, to our home, so we could love them. It was a happy day when they were finally home with us.

In the same way, God wants to bring us...who may feel hopeless and far away...to

his home. You may think he doesn't care for you, because you are sad and without hope for your future, or you are sick and discouraged, or lonely and feeling that no-one cares.

The wonderful part about being adopted is that no matter where you came from you know you have been specially chosen and loved by your parents. In the same way, no matter how far away we are – God cares about us. He chose us to be in his family before we even knew anything about it.

Even when we are at our worst, he wants us to come to him. It took months for Joo-Ling and Jung-Eup to trust us enough to come and tell us when they were sad or hurt, but that's what a family is all about. We went to all the trouble to adopt them, so that they could know about having a loving family...people who cared about what happened to them.

When all six of the children were at home, when we gathered around the table for a meal, or played games, or when I tucked them into their beds at night, I was so happy. I loved having them all at home. It took a lot of work—cooking, cleaning, washing the clothes – but it was worth every moment. I still love it when they all come home.

God is that kind of Father. He wants all of his children to come home. He loves having us around. He loves it when we tell him how we feel...when we share our difficult times with him...and our happy times.

In God's Word, there is the true story of a man who was dying. Jesus had been nailed to a wooden cross and this man was on a cross next to him. He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him: "Today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:40 - 43)

That day, Jesus, God's only Son, gave his life for all of us. He died so that we could be forgiven of our sins and live in God's family forever.

Just like the man in the story, we can ask Jesus to take us to Paradise with him. It's his home and it can be ours too. When we ask Jesus to forgive our sins, he promises a place in heaven—or Paradise—for us.

We wondered, as we waited for our two new children if we would have enough love for them and the four we already had. That question was answered as soon as we saw them. We couldn't believe how much we loved those little ones.

And, dear friend, God is waiting to pour his love over you. He wants to give you *hope*. He wants you to be part of his big, loving family. He's the very *best* adoptive parent there is!

Will you pray with me?

Our Father, you love us so much, even if we are far away from you. You love us so much that you gave your Son so that we might come and live in your family forever. Thank you for making this big, loving family for us. Help us to trust you as a loving father...to take care of us. In Jesus' name,

Tammy: Thank you for sharing your story with us about these two children you adopted. How wonderful that they now belong to such a loving family – and they always will...for as long as they live.

Carol: Yes – it is just like when we ask Jesus to forgive us for the wrong things we've done – like that man that was dying. He *will* forgive us, and we can be a part of God's family for *ever!*

Tammy: I'm sure you know how much we love to hear from you – we always tell you that we do. Today we'd like to share a listener letter with you from a widow. Katharine you have been a widow for quite a long time now haven't you?

Katharine: Yes Tammy – and there have been many times that I have needed to ask God for special help with my family – even now that they are grown – because I have no husband to help me now.

Tammy: So you would understand how this listener feels... This is what she wrote to us:

'Hello, my name is Soa Yat and I am a widow with 3 children. My husband died many years ago. At first it was so difficult for me because my husband was the bread winner for our family. After the death of my husband I felt like half of my body was paralysed. I lost all hope because I didn't know how to provide for my children and myself. Since my children were still very small, I couldn't leave them at home while I did farming or ran a business. No one was able to help me with my children. One day the good news about Jesus came to my village and I came to know the Lord. People kept encouraging me in the Lord. Some of the people in the church knew how to make bracelets and sell them so I went to learn how to do it in hope of making some money to feed my children. My Pastor told me about the Women of Hope program so that I could be encouraged as a woman. At first I thought to

myself, 'I can't waste my time listening to the program because I have to make bracelets so I can make more money to provide for my children.' Later on I tried to listen and work at the same time. When listening, I got so much encouragement from the Women of Hope Program. It seems like the program talked directly to me. One time they talked about how God loves the widow and the orphan so much and he will take care of them and watch over them. He will wipe all tears away, and he will provide for you, and he loves you so much. Since listening to your program I am so happy and encouraged. May the Lord bless you.

Katharine: Well I can certainly understand how this woman feels. And yes, I too found that God loves me and takes care of me in those hard times as a widow. He *often* says in his word, the Bible, that he loves the orphan and the widow. How special that makes me feel!

Carol: Thank you Katherine and thank you too Soa Yat for sharing how God gives you hope. It's time for us to go now. But we'll look forward to being with you again soon. We do enjoy hearing from you. You may write to us in care of this station or at TWR Women of Hope.

Thank you for letting us be a part of your life and lets get together again next week. Have a wonderful week and God's blessings on you.

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