

China Dream

I'm not sure where to begin, so I will start with the last few months and work backwards. On February 20th after returning from a youth retreat with my husband we discovered that I was pregnant. We were thrilled and cautiously optimistic. The pregnancy came after two miscarriages and almost a year of trying. It had been a long couple years, of waiting, hoping, then grieving those tiny lives that are now with Jesus, and hoping again. At five weeks along I traveled to visit a dear friend from Seminary days out in WA state. I packed my bags and threw a book in my carry-on I had begun one year prior. The book was called, Choosing to See, about Christian music artist Steven Curtis Chapman's wife and her journey through marriage, motherhood, adoption and the grief of losing a child. It was a page turner, and I'm not sure how it sat on my shelf for over a year, but it did.

I read feverishly on the quiet plane ride and was immediately transported back to China. Many chapters of the book were about the Chapman's calling and adoption journey in eventually adopting not one but *three* little girls from China. And although I had not yet journeyed this path myself, I had visited China, I had been to an orphanage in the countryside of Yunnan province. I had seen the orphanage rooms, lined with cribs, each with a precious baby waiting for their *forever families*. I had held cheery faced little girls with wide brown eyes and black hair. I had prayed over them, asking God's mercy on each one I held. And further, asking that someday God might give me the opportunity to be that forever family for one such little girl.

This visit to China as a nineteen year old college student was a culmination of what God had been doing in my life for several years prior. My interest in China and Chinese adoption began in 1994 when my mother traveled with a dear friend of hers to China to accompany and help her in her adoption of a little girl. Two years later my dad encouraged friends from church to consider Chinese adoption. We held a match day celebration at our home and after they brought home little Gracie from China my sisters and I became her go-to babysitters. I nannied her throughout my high school and college summers, and my heart was being moved and stirred. Further, I began to learn about and study China's one-child policy in my Sociology/Anthropology Major at Bethel College.

Being so close with Gracie's family I learned about their adoption journey and became more interested, the seeds of 'maybe someday' were being planted. So when I signed up for a missions trip to Ecuador with my church during my freshman year at college, it was no surprise that those plans would change when I learned that a trip to China had opened up. Our team from church would visit a family in China who worked in teaching English as well as with an area orphanage in the city of GeJiu. This trip affirmed my desire to adopt and began conversation with my then boyfriend, now husband, that if we were to head

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toward marriage, a Chinese adoption would be in our future. He was fully in support. :)

My wonderful husband Lars and I were married Spring 2003. It was around this time that what seemed to be the last piece of confirmation in an on-going puzzle was put into place. My older sister Emily was hired at a wonderful Christian adoption agency, called Chinese Children Adoption International, or CCAI, in CO while her husband was pursuing a Masters degree in Denver. This was too strange to not be confirmation from the Lord that this someday dream would happen. Now we had an inside link to the adoption process.

After Lars and I married, life picked up steam and this China dream would be put-on-hold. We moved to Chicago for Lars to pursue a Seminary degree. During our Seminary years I would occasionally revisit the China adoption dream only to learn that we did not even qualify. We were not old enough, we did not make enough money and didn't have the required net-worth to even be considered for the China program.

Lars' Seminary career came to a close Spring of 2006. And in a three month period he graduated, we received our first call to ministry and we were expecting our first child. We joyfully welcomed our son Quinten in June of 2006. And two years later our son Albin arrived. The next few years were full and fulfilling. Ministry life was good and we were enjoying our little boys. And at least for a season the Chinese adoption idea had been placed on the shelf. The timing wasn't right.

Now I will return to the plane ride and the book that served as a sort of final link to our decision. As I read, my heart was re-awakened to the passion for Chinese adoption and I wondered, why this book? Why now Lord? I'm already pregnant, why should I be thinking about adoption again? Suddenly my mind was spinning with questions. What will our completed family look like? Why have we had to experience so much loss? Will you protect *this* pregnancy Lord? Raw questions. I continued reading and welled with emotion as my heart ached for the little girls of China.

On the first night of my visit, I sat on my friends little girls bed in her pink bedroom, reading and praying through tears. "Please Lord, please don't be awakening this adoption desire because the little one I'm carrying isn't going to make it!" I felt mad, and confused as I cried and pleaded with God, "please don't take this baby." Maybe it was the emotions of pregnancy, maybe I knew deep down things would not end well with the pregnancy, I don't know. I wondered at whether it was God preparing me for something, or Satan trying to discourage

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me with doubt and defeat about my pregnancy. Either way, I prayed and tried to let it go, so I could enjoy my time with my friend. As I finished the book I simply shelved the emotions I felt. I didn't want to revisit the desperation I felt in those moments of pleading with God, so I did my best to let the moment be over and move forward.

Five weeks later I lost the pregnancy. So there we were. More wondering, more grief, but more peace as well. And after a few weeks of discussion and prayers, the only possible direction we were sensing was that maybe the time had come for our Chinese adoption dream to happen. God had grieved with us as the tiny lives I carried went to be with him, and as we lived into our belief that Jesus walks with us each day, so began a new journey. We had much to learn about the adoption idea. But, after contacting my sister's Emily's former co-workers at CCAI agency in CO, answers started coming. In the last two weeks we have learned that we now qualify. Our age, our income (after a significant pay-increase last January) and our net worth were all *enough* to allow us to qualify. All pieces to the puzzle.

So here's where I ask for you to pray. Would you commit to faithfully pray for discernment and direction as we step forward in trust. Would you also pray that we would be totally open to God's will for our family, whatever that will be. We still have a desire for more biological children someday, but whether the little girl with brown eyes and dark hair is number three or number four, we feel confident we are being lead to our little girl in China. So onward we walk, feeling lead, feeling hopeful and dreaming about who this little one will be, certainly hand-picked by God himself to be a part of our family.

She is precious in His sight. We are praying for her by name. And we can't wait to meet her. Pray with us, and if you feel lead we ask that you would consider donating to our adoption. As we do not have the ability to fund the adoption ourselves we are depending on our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as grant money to bring us to our little one in China.

Thank You for journeying with us.