

TWO stories, ONE lesson

By Dana Skwirut

My journey as a pregnancy counselor began with the notion that I would be changing lives; only to find that it was my life that would be changed. When I was in college getting my degree, I prayed that God would use me to minister to other women. He answered that prayer by leading me to Bethany Christian Services. I learned my way as a pregnancy counselor by shadowing a coworker as she met with women experiencing unplanned pregnancies. These women were weary and burdened, and they needed much rest.

Two particular counseling situations have stood out: so different in circumstance, but so similar in outcome. I not only had to learn how to teach the women I counseled how to go to Jesus with their burdens, but I had to listen to that same advice to find rest for my own soul, as my heart ached for these women...

One young woman came to me already knowing that the best choice for her and her child was an adoption plan. She had a fairly good support system at home and had a bright future ahead of her, as she was very passionate about life and pursuing her dreams. She was ready to do the self-sacrificing act of giving her son a family and giving a family her son. About halfway through the process, though, she began to question if she was making the right decision. Meeting the potential adoptive family was a lot to take in, and it made the process more real.

Herself an adoptee, this woman had her birthmom by her side to help answer any questions she had about placing her child for adoption. This young mother's strength was amazing. The time came for this little boy to enter the world, and she poured out her love on him those few days in the hospital. She was standing strong in

her decision, knowing God had brought her the perfect family for her son.

As the final hours before discharge approached, I did not think she would want me to stay with her. However, I told her I would like to be with her during this time, and she eagerly agreed. There we sat alone for almost two hours, talking and crying, and I saw firsthand what strength, courage, and love truly is. She held her son as we left the hospital, and then she handed him over to his new family—her now extended family—to take home. Two days later, I returned to her house to do final surrenders. I told her to take her time, and as she cried and took one final deep breath, she signed the papers after saying, "This is for him."

Another time I received a phone call that ended up changing my life for the next four months. A woman, who had been through some very serious trauma in her life, came to the conclusion that her then two-month-old son deserved a life with a mother and father; a life that she could not provide. He went into a loving interim care home for the next three months, while his mother and I worked tirelessly to find the right home for him.

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Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

At one point, the mother had found a family she felt comfortable with, and had even met them. Then, sadly, one day they decided that this was not the situation for them. We had to rely on God and trust in Him that this was all in His timing and that He was using this setback to prepare the right family for their son's arrival.

This was a very burdensome situation because many setbacks came and went. To be honest, at times I just wanted to give up. Seeing the pain and turmoil this mother was going through was almost unbearable, and I was becoming very frustrated that I could not make this process easier for her.

During the setbacks, she found a family on Bethany's website with whom she began to develop a relationship. They lived a few states

away, so she put her trust in God by not meeting them in person before placement. When placement day arrived, a new family was formed. As she left the office that day, she turned to me with a smile on her face and said, "We did it!" I had to laugh out of relief and responded, "No, *you did it*, and you did a great job."

The moment I will never forget out of this entire process came as we were praying over her and her son. As she prayed over him, her main concern was that he come to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior...so that should she not be able to see him again on this earth, she would see him again in Heaven.

These women have taught me to go to Jesus when I am weary and burdened. Our only rest is in Him. What an amazing love He has for us.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Domestic Adoption	Total number of infants placed (<i>including private</i>)	14
International Adoption	Total number of international adoption placements	17
Foster Care	Number of infants placed in interim care	9
	Number of state/contracted children placed in care	83
	Total number of licensed foster homes	69
Birthparent Counseling	Number of clients served	41
	Number of releases	9
Family Counseling	Number of clients served	14
Embryo Services	Number of embryo adoption home studies completed	1
Revenue	Children services	726,400
	Adoptions and counseling	313,400
	Contributions	163,200
	Other revenue	27,600
	Total revenue	\$1,230,600
Expenses	Pregnancy and adoption services	414,800
	Child and family services	838,600
	Support services	150,000
	Total expenses	\$1,403,400

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