

Jena Heath: Paul, Avery is eight. When did she come home? What year?

Paul Kimberlin: 2008.

Jena: How did you decide to adopt from China? Whose idea was it? What did you think about it initially? Be honest.

Paul: I'm not sure of the date, but probably around late nineties, '98, '99, something like that. We were married. We've done fertility. That wasn't working. At the time, my wife was a nurse. She would come home and tell me about the stories -- she worked in the postpartum -- the stories that she would have with the mothers and father getting a surrogate, and all lined up, and go through the pregnancy. The birth mother would give birth and see the baby and change their mind. The surrogates were just out of luck, all the money they've lost, all the time. We decided we couldn't do that. We didn't want to take that chance. We started researching countries and decided China would be the best one for us.

Jena: Why? What was it about China?

Paul: You had to go over there one time. Other countries you had to go over there two or three times. You went over there, picked the child up, and you came home and it was pretty much over. There's no connection, no background on Avery, our daughter. There was no chance of somebody coming back and saying, "Hey, that's my daughter," and complicating everything. That's what it was for me.

Jena: It was appealing to you that there wasn't going to be a relationship with a birth family, or the possibility of some birth parent reappearing like what your wife had seen, in some version of that with surrogate moms deciding at the last minute, "No. Actually, I don't want to hand the baby over?"

Paul: Right. That was the big thing for me. There was nowhere to even start to even find her birth parents. I guess that kind of sounds selfish on our part. To me, that is the way I liked it. I didn't have to worry about that.

Jena: Did you have any concerns about, or did you know anything about China? The idea of a cultural difference, a child who wouldn't necessarily look like you, did any of that factor into your thinking?

Paul: When we started thinkin' about it, we went to seminar in Plano. The lady that was givin' it had adopted children. We started talking to them. We became friends with them. Really, seeing her daughter was the one that said, "That's it because she's really cute." [laughs] We just started talking to them and found out a little bit through them.

Jena: You felt like you were comfortable at that point?

Paul: Yes.

Jena: What about your family? How did they react to adopting Avery, and friends? Was there much familiarity with adopting from China? Have you been the local education counsel about it? I know a lot of families find themselves in the position of answering a lot of questions.

Paul: We were definitely the source to come to about the adoption. Both sides of our family, they were ready for another grandchild. They were all, "Sure. Go for it." They were both fine with it.

Jena: How's parenting? How's fatherhood? What's the biggest challenge for you?

Paul: I have to say where do you start? [laughs] Probably just finding time to balance work and being there for her. That's the biggest one for me so far.

Jena: Tell us a little bit about your work.

Paul: I'm a manager at Walmart. I've just now opened a new store, so all kinds of hours. One day I might have to go at nine. The next day I might go in at two in the afternoon 'til midnight. Then on top of that, tryin' to be part of Avery's life and be part of Robin's, it's kind of hard.

Jena: That's tough. That's really tough. Would you offer any advice to people who are contemplating this? What would you say to somebody, a friend or someone who asked?

Paul: I would say go ahead and do it. It's great to, no matter what kind of day you have, to come home and for her to run up and scream "Daddy," it's the greatest. If you do go to China, be prepared to see stuff you never thought you would see because you will definitely see that. [laughs]

Jena: On that note, thank you.

Paul: You're welcome.