

Our adoption story- Jon & Suzanne Swett

I want to preface this story of our adoption with the reminder that when we choose to do life with Jesus, we aren't necessarily choosing the easy or most comfortable path in life. Jon and I were in our late 40's when this unchosen life was put before us. We had 1 daughter married, 1 a senior at WSU soon to be married and 1 three years from graduating from high school. We were entering into the time in our lives where our daily life didn't revolve around our kids and we could spend more time focusing on us as a couple.

October of 2008 Jon and I received a prayer request from Timberview about two little brothers that needed a forever home. I see now that our adoption story really started long before; God had a plan. In the late 90's when our third daughter got into school, I felt like I needed to contribute to our family income. I prayed for God to lead me to a job that would still allow me to be a good mom and wife. A few months later Jon came home and told me about a teacher at his school who needed someone to plan travel for sports camps in Hawaii. I had experience in this area because we had started a company in the early 80's called Adventure Trek that took kids on scientific field trips to the Hawaiian Islands and during that time I became a Travel Agent. This was an answer to my prayer! This turned into a very good paying job allowing me to work from home. This was God's first move!

With the additional income I was able to add to the family income, we were able to build our dream home with a separate living area for my parents to move into as they got older and needed care. We had an aggressive goal to pay off our mortgage in five years using my income. We planned conservatively knowing that we could live on just Jon's income in a worse case scenario. After praying about this bold move, we sold the home that we had lived in for seventeen years, moved into our summer cabin at Loon Lake with 2 of our daughters and broke ground. We survived the winter and I'll never forget that day in March 2004 when we moved into our home. The day started with praise and joy as we moved in until I received a call saying the company that I contracted with told me they were changing their business model and they would no longer need my services. I was devastated and remember not being able to sleep or eat. I just sat and cried and prayed, asking God what was I supposed to do? Why was this happening? I was so confused. Gods voice kept reminding me that we could live on Jon's

income and I needed to stop doubting and start trusting. Fear had a firm grip on me and the days that followed were hard. God had made his second move!

In October of 2007, I received a call from my brother-in-law asking me to check on his good friend's niece who was a foreign exchange student in Spokane from Germany. She was having a terrible time with a family that was not a good fit. Josi moved into our home and stayed with us for the remainder of her school year and part of the summer. I was a confident Mother, but always wondered if I would make a good Foster Mom. My biggest fear, was that I might have to say goodbye to a child I fostered and doing so would break my heart. It was hard saying goodbye to our German Daughter, but we did and I still stay in touch to this day. God's third move!

On October 21, 2008 I receive an email from our churches prayer chain from Suzie Toews, asking for prayer for 2 little African American boys, ages 5 & 6 who needed a foster/adoptive home. The state had been looking both locally and nationwide but had not been successful. The last line said "They want a family! Please pray for a home for these two little guys". Although I thought foster adopt meant, they needed a foster **OR** an adoptive home, the first thing that came to my mind was Josi. Having Josi in my home for almost a year & then having to say goodbye proved to me that I could do it. I felt like God was saying to me, 'yes Suzanne you can do this. I was burdened by this; God had planted a seed!

I struggled with how I would bring this up with my husband Jon. I still felt guilty about losing my job and our five-year plan to pay off our mortgage converted to plan B – Jon's income alone. Jon is a planner and thinks in very pragmatic terms. In three years, our youngest daughter would leave for college and we would become empty nesters! I decided to delete the email. But deleting the email did not delete it from my heart and mind. It played over and over in my mind for a couple of days. I was trying to ignore the thoughts and feelings I was having.

Four days after the initial email, I received the same email forwarded to me by a close friend. The exact same email from our church that I had received days before! I was so upset about this because after all we went to the same church and received the same prayer requests. Why was she sending this to me? God makes another move!

So the constant knocking on my heart got even louder, which prompted me to ask our daughter who was 15 at the time what she thought about having 2 foster brothers. She immediately said, “Yes, Yes, do it. I have always wanted brothers!” my response to her was, “Sami, they are not puppies, they are brothers and they will drive you crazy. And besides, there is no way I could say anything to your dad, he would think I was crazy!” Sami encouraged me to “go ask dad, the worst that could happen is he would say no.”

I finally found the courage and asked Jon what he would think about being foster parents? His response was short, to the point and fully anticipated. No! But to my surprise after a short pause, he asked a question that I was not expecting. He asked why I was asking him this. I told him about the emails and how I was feeling. He asked me to find out their story. I did and now both Jon and I became burdened. Now God was working in both of our lives.

After several nights without sleep, I was in the kitchen making dinner and Jon had just gotten home from work. We discussed how we were feeling, Jon became visibly upset. He walked into our sunroom for a few moments and came out looking a little pale. He said “come here, I need to show you something.” He pointed to my bible sitting on the table where I had left it earlier in the day. It was open to Psalms. In Jon’s words he had challenged God by saying “Ok God, give me a sign!” He opened the bible randomly and without looking placed his finger on the page. God’s word jumped out at him from the page: “Psalms 127:3 – Children are a heritage from the Lord...”. Check Mate! God wins and in ten days the boys were living with us and in a couple months fully adopted. We never had time to become foster parents.

So here we were, almost empty nesters close to 50 years old and we were brand new parents again! I remember saying to Jon on our drive home from visiting our daughter at WSU and on our way to pick them up for our first visit “I feel like I’m going to throw up!” and he responded, “you should, you are about to have twin boys!”

Little did we know that the boys were not the end to our adoption story. 1.5 years later we received a call from the state asking us to consider adopting a 5-year-old African American girl, who had been in multiple placements and was currently living at Salvation Army’s Sally’s House

because she had been rejected by all of her placements. They ended the conversation with a story about her walking the halls of DSHS asking any woman she saw if they would be her mommy. Although the decision to be Niki's forever parents wasn't as quick as the boys. We ultimately knew we were to be her forever parents. In July 2010, 9 days before becoming grandparents for the first time we were given our 4th daughter.

Our story could go on and on about our life the past 8 years, but my hope and prayer is that you take time to consider Gods word. He truly calls all of his people to orphan care. I am not a bible scholar but I know that because of the numerous references in the bible about orphans, God wants us to pay attention to his expectations; Psalm 68:5 – All orphans have a father, Deuteronomy 10:18 & Psalms 10:14 – All orphans deserve justice, James 1:27 – The people of God will care for orphans, Deuteronomy 14-29 - The people of God share their resources with orphans.

As you pray about how God may be calling you to care for orphans in their distress, take heart! He who calls you to this work will be faithful to equip you for the work he has called you to! “For the God who calls you is faithful, and He can be trusted to make it so” 1 Thessalonians 5:24 And in the words of my friend who resent me that email 8 years ago – “God is a dangerous God, not necessarily a safe God. Due to that, sometimes we need to just jump in full in trust that he is going to take care of it all.

This journey is hard in so many ways and love does not fix everything, but the life of our 3 children prior to coming to us forever was tragic to their little hearts. Every child deserves a family. With Jesus and community, we can do this!