

Our crazy, amazing, messy adoption journey started a little over 4 years ago, it's a journey full of twists and turns, a journey that brought our son to us and it all started with the word YES! At that time we had three children of our own and we had felt called to add to our family through adoption. Of course we had the thoughts of what will adding another child to our family do to our dynamic. We were going back and forth between international and domestic. After much praying our hearts were led to foster care. Even though we knew that we may not get to adopt through the foster care system and that the goal of foster care was reunification, we decided to pursue it anyways and if God wanted to bring a child into our family forever, he could do just that. So thus began pride classes, physicals and home studies. Once we got our license it took about a year before we received our first call, it was short lived, just 24 hours of respite then soon after that, we received a call for a long term placement. Just two months after that we received yet another call, it was for a newborn who might need a placement and they wondered if it came to him needing to be placed would we want him, I called my husband and asked him if he'd be up to another addition so quickly and to my surprise he said yes! I called the agency back and said we will take him!

I was told to be at the hospital at 3:00 in the afternoon on Monday. By the time I would meet him he'd be 5 days old. I remember walking into the hospital with a car seat in hand, I met my wonderful case worker in the lobby. I wondered why we were just standing in the lobby and not heading to the nursery, right before I could ask, if his mother was still back there, I looked up and saw his visibly and understandably upset mother walking out of the nursery, feeling awkward and like the enemy I stood there and waited while my case worker talked with the mother and her family. When they left I was taken to the nursery and there he was, the most precious dark haired baby swaddled tight and laying on this little side. I couldn't get over how beautiful he was. I didn't have much time to just stare at him, I was told I could get him dressed. My husband was at work so there was no one to capture this meeting with pictures or video. After gathering a few gift bags left for him by his family and receiving discharge instructions we walked out the back door of the hospital, in less than 45min I had been entrusted with someone else's perfect baby.

My heart couldn't help but ache for this precious boy as I thought about what his first few days were like. His birth was filled with sadness and loss for his mother not joy and celebration. There was no joy in introducing him to friends and family but chaos in trying to find placement for him. His little body didn't get to rest after his big journey into this world instead his tiny body was jittery. He didn't ask for any of this. This was not an ideal way to start life, but God loved him and had plans to prosper him and not harm him.

Once we came home he WAS and still is adored my other children. We totally enjoyed loving on this new baby, but in the back of our mind there was always constant uncertainty of our time with him. The days turned into weeks and the weeks into months. We watched as he rolled over, sat up and started to crawl. I was so happy to be able to see each milestone, but with each one there was a grief, I wondered if I would get to see him take his first steps and hear him say his first words? I prayed and trusted that even if he had to go, that I would be able to cherish the time I was given and be thankful that he was able to have a healthy nurturing start. My prayer was that God would place him where he

needed to be and if that was with his birth Mom, than that was best for him, God loves him more than me.

Before we knew it a little over a year and a half had passed and we are sitting in the court room for a termination hearing. While sitting in the hall waiting to go in I started to feel like I could breathe again for the first time since I had met that dark haired baby. Suddenly that breath was stolen back again as I sat there and watched his birth mom surrender her rights. My heart was breaking for this woman, this mom, his mom. I will never forget the sorrow that filled the court room that day. She may not have been found fit, but it wasn't due to lack of love. I don't know her past and I haven't walked a day in her shoes, whatever the reason was that she didn't get him back, I know it wasn't because she didn't care enough or love him enough. I have never experienced joy and heart break at the same time. Joy knowing that he'll soon be mine forever, and heart break for his mother. There is a quote I came across soon after this day and I love it as it describes that day perfectly. Its by Jody Landers as it says.

A child born to

another woman calls me mommy

the magnitude of that tragedy and

the depth of that privilege are not lost on me.

I 'm happy to say that after 919 days in foster care we became a forever family on December 30th 2015. We are all breathing normally now and enjoying each day with our son. We love watching him grow and learn. He is silly, sweet, painfully shy and very spoiled. He has brought so much joy to our family. We are so blessed that God chose our family and entrusted us with his care.

I want to end our story with this verse from Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.