

# The Practical Theology of Domestic Child Adoption

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Dr. Shrier

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## Current Situation

- 517,000 children in foster care
- 52,000 children adopted through foster care system.
- 118,000 children waiting to be adopted

(see paper for citations)

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## Current Situation (cont'd.)

- Most children wait 3½ years to be adopted
- Average age of child waiting for adoption was 8 ½ years
- Children under one adopted most rapidly

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## Alternative Understanding



Elizabeth Bartholet: Professor of Law Harvard Law School

- Advocates more children adopted from foster care
- Advocates broader parameters for prospective adoptive parents.

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## Alternative Understanding (Cont'd.)

Bartholet cont'd:

- Critical of routine late-stage family preservation
- Child neglect as serious as child abuse
- Late-stage programs jeopardize children's welfare.

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## Alternative Understanding



Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute found:

Safe Haven Laws allowing women to leave their babies

- Based on flawed premises
- Do not solve but encourage infant abandonment
- Need to research abandonment causes

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## Biblical Narratives regarding Adoption

- Romans 8:13-16
- Ephesians 1:3-5

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## Scientific and Biblical/Theological Analysis

### Conflict:

- Adoption into God's family comes through spiritual blessing in Christ
- Legal adoption comes through loss
  - Biological parents lose their child
  - Child loses their biological roots

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## Scientific Biblical/Theological Analysis (cont'd.)

### Independent:

- **Spiritual adoption** is always a blessing, ending in eternal union with God.
- **Legal adoption** involves mixed blessings, not everything is going to be good.

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**Scientific Biblical/Theological Analysis  
(cont'd.)**

**Dialogue:**

- Culture emphasizes 'real families' formed through blood ties
- Child's best interest may be served in adoptive home
- Scripture points to new life in Christ
- Adoption provides a child new life opportunities

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**Scientific Biblical/Theological Analysis  
(cont'd.)**

**Dialogue (cont'd.):**

- Safe Haven Laws provide mothers alternatives to their 'problem pregnancies'
- Safe Haven Laws deprive mothers of responsibility
- Believers saved through God's active grace
- Child's life may be saved through a 'safe haven'

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**Scientific Biblical/Theological Analysis  
(cont'd.)**

**Integration:**

- Safe havens exhibit community care for women and children
- Babies adopted demonstrate blessings described in Ephesians 1:3-5
- Safe havens provide Christians opportunity to follow God's example of adoption

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## Scientific Biblical/Theological Analysis (cont'd.)

### Integration (cont'd.):

- Christ's sacrifice is a believers spiritual blessing.
- Adoptive parents' sacrifice provides opportunities for their child, themselves, & the community.

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## Three New Local Guidelines and Practices

### Three guidelines:

- God's model of grace is displayed through adoption
- Adoptive parents have opportunity to exhibit sacrificial love and receive the resulting blessings
- Christians can show God's love through meeting the needs of foster kids

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## Three New Local Guidelines and Practices (cont'd.)

### Three local actions:

- Power point on Domestic Child Adoption posted on Dr. Shrier's website
- Information on adoption presented to devotional group
- Fliers on adoption placed in student mail boxes at APU

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