



Episode 001—Adopted

Welcome! You're listening to Adopted into Allyship, a podcast about loving wholeheartedly and fighting for connection. I'm Jamie K Corbin and this is episode one, Adopted.

This episode is the first in a three-part series meant to provide context for what you can expect here on the Adopted Into Allyship podcast. Before we get started, I want to offer a loving reminder that conversations around adoption and allyship are nuanced and sensitive, and what follows might be hard for some to hear. Please enter this space with grace and care for yourself and those around you.

While everyone's adoption story looks at a little bit different, my goal with this episode is to create some unity by discussing what all adoptions have in common: grief.

I have been adopted not once, but twice. The first adoption happened to me when I was a day old, and the second I chose when I was in my mid-twenties. Both were life-changing gifts from God.

Two years after my parents buried their son, they had all but given up on their hopes to have a family. They were older than most when they first became parents, had spent seven years loving my brother through the medical trauma of cystic fibrosis, and spent what must have felt like an eternity, waiting to see if any biological families would select an older couple to be parents of a newborn.

So discouraged about the chances of being selected, my parents chose to spend their adoption savings on a shiny, red, 1985 Dodge Daytona Turbo. If you google the ad for the car, you'll see that it reads "Pure Adrenaline" and it's obvious to me that the decision was my mom's best effort to numb the pain of losing both her son and her hope for a future family, and my dad's best effort to comfort my mom. They didn't know that what they were *actually* doing was purchasing my first car, just sixteen years ahead of time.

The legend in our family is that the phone call announcing my arrival into their life came so unexpectedly that my "nursery" was thrown together rather quickly and consisted of a dresser drawer atop the dining room table and a few Payless Drugstore bags filled with baby essentials that they picked up on their way to the small hospital a few hours down Interstate 84. Obviously, my parents were elated to be blessed with a second chance at a family.

And, God was not done – my parents were selected again, this time by a young woman excited at the idea of her baby having an older sister. The overwhelming joy of being

able to adopt not just one baby, but two, was so great that it overshadowed some blind spots that our family wouldn't discover until much later.

Fast forward twenty-four years from the shiny red car speeding adorable, black haired, blue-eyed, chubby cheeked baby me home along I-84 and those blind spots had gone, not unnoticed, but unacknowledged and therefore untreated, well into my early adulthood.

I already had a master's degree, and had achieved every ambitious goal I had set for myself, down to signing a contract for the exact grade in the exact district I had hoped to work for in my first year of teaching. I was engaged to the most extraordinary, saint like man. To an outsider looking in, it might have looked like I had everything I could ever want.

But, I was also exhausted from living a life of constantly seeking a sense of worthiness and belonging through achievement. I was overwhelmed by the unrealistic expectations I had placed on myself and I was destroying relationships left and right as I tried to control literally every situation and person around me.

I was sick in a twisted way that almost went undiagnosed because of how our culture celebrates and glorifies ambition, power, and hustle. I had so much, and somehow, I was miserable with grief because I still felt completely empty.

Enter my second adoption.

I tried my hardest to refuse my friend's invitations to check out her church, but eventually God put a literal Bible in my path on my way to work and I decided to take a hint. We attended church the last Sunday in February of 2009 and just kept going. I quickly figured out the mystery of my grief and saw the gift in the opportunity for another adoption, this time into the Holy family of God.

And, if you think that this adoption story ends with "and then all of her problems were solved, her hurts healed, and she lived happily ever after" then brace yourself for a major plot twist.

Somehow, since becoming a follower of Jesus, my heart continuously breaks, I only become more and more aware of my flaws, and I live one day at a time on an endless supply of desperately needed grace.

But I don't feel empty anymore, and I am not striving to earn acceptance through achievement. I've learned that because the Holy Spirit lives in me, divine peace can co-exist with my brokenness until I've completed my mission here in the world, at which point I will only know peace. And if the good news of choosing a second adoption can bring joy to a skeptical girl like me, whose life verse is "I believe, help my disbelief.", it can be true for anyone.

Often when we talk about adoption, whether it be into an earthly family or the family of God, at least for most people, all the warm feelings start glowing inside of us and we think, "Oh, how wonderful!"

And while that initial reaction isn't incorrect, it **is** incomplete. This is a crucial thing to understand early on into your adoption journey. I have borrowed these beautiful words of author Marion Roach Smith, who has written about difficult family experiences. She says, "Love and loss travel together." And it has been helpful to apply that sentiment to my understanding of what it means to be adopted. Adoption, no matter how much love accompanies it, is inevitably marked with loss and grief.

My parents were grieving the loss of their son, as well as their opportunity to conceive any other biological children without enduring similar medical trauma. Acknowledging that loss alone in our adoption story is heartbreaking, but doesn't even begin to describe the grief of my biological mother, who at seventeen aspired to be an anesthesiologist and was facing an unexpected pregnancy. Nor does it touch on the grief I experienced as a Mexican-American baby placed in a White family in 1980's Idaho. Or the grief my entire family continues to encounter as we navigate the many challenges of trans-racial adoption over time.

Let's consider the grief that is overcome by an adoption into the Holy Family. Believers and non-believers alike are struggling with grief present in our communities.

We carry it with us in our news feeds, tucked away on our phones never more than a few clicks away.

It rests in the back of our minds as we try to make the most impossible decisions in the time of a global pandemic.

We can hear it in our sighs when we are misrepresented by religious leaders who make headlines and in our cries when we feel like we just cannot go on any further.

Thankfully, adopted children of God, no matter how strong or weak our faith may be in the current moment, **always** have the Holy Trinity in our corner reminding us that they have already overcome the grief of this world! But imagine what it would be like without that assurance shielding us.

To be adopted means to have experienced loss and grief.

It means that however we find ourselves connected to adoption, we must be mindful of *all the feelings* in the adoptive space and honor each of them for what they are. This will be a reoccurring theme here on the podcast because it is such a constant challenge.

All of this to say, if you are a biological parent, an adoptive parent, or adoptee, you are permitted to feel all of your feelings without guilt or shame for not aligning to some fictional or half-truth definition of what it means to be adopted.

Handle your feelings around adoption and allyship with care and wisdom, friends! Do not ignore or minimize them, but do not follow them into depths of shame, darkness, or despair either.

Know that regardless of whether or not we find ourselves connected to earthly adoption, we *all* have the opportunity to be adopted into the family of God where we are connected to an unlimited supply of love, grace, and hope that will sustain us until his Kingdom has fully come.

I want to share with you one of my most utilized practices when it comes to navigating emotions, shared with me by childbirth educator and doula trainer Kyndal May.

It is the simple acknowledgment of which emotions we are feeling and honoring what we need in the moment to move through them. For example, I sometimes confess to my husband, "I am feeling insecure and I need closeness." At which point he will give me a giant hug and remind me of how loved I am.

The actual awkwardness of saying it out loud fades the more you practice it and I have found it to be an easy enough way to keep myself from spiraling in big emotions. I will link the feelings and needs inventories put out by the Center for Non-Violent Communication in the show notes in case you want to give it a try.

One of the ways that we can live into adoption and allyship is by maintaining steady, prayerful connection with our creator. It reminds us that we are his beloved children, whom he created for a purpose, and that He invites to play a part in bringing forth healing and justice amidst a broken world. It is an honor to pray with and for you, now.

Father God,

We come to you in grief and in gratitude for what it means to be adopted.

We hurt for losses that cannot be recovered in this lifetime, and we celebrate that there will be no need for such a recovery in our eternity with you.

We ask for the courage to acknowledge and work through all the emotions that exist outside the happily ever after narrative that is most often associated with adoption and confess that when given the choice we would rather not have to deal with them.

Thank you for having a large enough definition of family to include all of us and thank you for how you give those of us connected to adoption and allyship a safe place to take our grief.

Help us father, to find hope in the hard parts of adoption and show us how to share that hope with others.

In our brother Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Thank you for joining me for another episode of Adopted into Allyship, produced by Day Three Studios. If you gained insight or encouragement from this episode, yay! I would be most grateful if you would take a minute and rate the podcast, leave a review, and share it with those you know who could benefit from joining us as we work toward loving wholeheartedly and fighting for connection. I will be back with more next Thursday, but until then, know that I am cheering for you!