



Acting out love

Colorado family learns that God's plans can be very 'inconvenient.'

By Candice Watters

"I didn't even want to pray about it."

That's what Motte Brown said when his wife, Beth, announced in June 2008 that the adoption agency they were working with had called to say there were not just two Ethiopian siblings in need of a family, but four. The Browns always wanted a big family, but weren't able to have more than two children by birth. They wanted to adopt a little girl from China and were deep into that process. "God closed that door," Beth says, "but the desire to adopt never left us."

"We then decided to adopt two older Ethiopians, one with special needs," recalls Motte, manager of marriage and parenting preparation at Focus on the Family. "When Beth told me they came with two more — newborn twins — I said 'No.' " He was sure four would be more than they could handle. "I knew that if I did pray about it, God might and probably would have an answer I wouldn't like," Motte says. "I knew He would tell me to do it. It's His heart. All my objections would be from my own worldly perspective. God's truths about himself and what He values can be very inconvenient. And sure enough, as soon as I prayed about it, He had an answer."

But it wasn't that simple.

"Here I am, already 40," Motte says. "When I realized how short life can be and how our days are numbered, I started to ask, 'What are we saving for? Why are we holding onto our time, money and energy when we may only have a few years left anyway?' "

So they decided to go for it.

But they only had \$10,000 and needed \$50,000 by January. "Early on, friends asked, 'What if you don't raise the money?' " Motte recalls. "We said we'd find it somehow because these are our kids." Still, Christian friends and family members had their doubts. "What are you doing?" one asked. "You're going to ruin your life."

Still, they moved forward. And as Beth tells it, "It was miraculous. It was God-honoring. The man-centered way of thinking didn't pan out." The people they knew were most able to give didn't. And people who had very little gave with reckless abandon. "It was humbling to realize it was God at work, not us," Beth says. "We were shocked at who He raised up to give us money."

As the big day drew closer, Motte admits, they didn't do enough to prepare. "We had taken care of our paperwork, baby-sitting for our kids, and the money, but we were spiritually unaware of what we were getting into. We thought that because we were obeying God in such a difficult thing, He would make it easy."



We knew it would be hard, but we didn't think we'd be empty." Beth says, "We didn't have any idea what was coming at us. We should have been prepared, but there's no way to prepare for what we had to deal with."

Almost everything that could go wrong — did.

When baby Olivia was handed to Beth, she was visibly sick. They said she had a sore throat and gave them some cough medicine and said she'd be OK. She wasn't. Coughing. Shallow, labored breathing. As the night wore on, she got worse. Motte took her temperature — by candlelight. "I saw the thermometer race up and at 105 degrees, it still hadn't beeped," he says. "I was afraid how high it would go. I couldn't get my mind around a fever that high." At 1 a.m., he banged on the house manager's door; he said he'd take them to the hospital. But it was closed. And there was no doctor on call.

In a vain attempt to bring Olivia's sky-high fever down, the Browns bathed her in water that would make any American sick. They expected death. "You're numb," Beth says. "You're so tired. You expect to feel something, and you don't feel anything." But they pressed on. The adoption agency directed them to a clinic. The doctor said he thought it was pneumonia. He gave them penicillin and sent them home. "A baby that sick would have been in the ICU here," Beth says.

The next morning, an X-ray showed Olivia had three clusters of pneumonia in her left lung. Miraculously, her fever soon broke. "The Lord saved her life," Beth says. Though Olivia had medicine and no longer was in imminent danger, the Browns were worried they'd be unable to fly home the next day, as scheduled. "She was having diarrhea every 15 minutes," Beth says. "But she was breathing better, and they let us on the plane." Buoyed by prayers from friends all over the U.S. who were receiving updates on Facebook, they made it home. Olivia recovered completely — and hasn't been sick since. "If we had it to do all over, we would," Motte says. "You can't deny God's call. I've never second-guessed it — which is really weird. But these hard things are formative; they change you. We're seeing sin being worked out."

Beth says life in the Brown house definitely has changed. "We've had to make sacrifices," she says. "But I rest in His sovereignty. Even though it's really hard, I know it's God's will. He could have changed our course. Adoptions fall through all the time. I know these children were intended to be my children. "We're still in the cocoon of becoming something else. We were a caterpillar. We're not yet a butterfly. We're going to be a beautiful, happy, well-functioning family. But we're not there yet. We're not a mess, like at first, but we're going through a lot of growing.

"To say 'Love is a choice' is cliché. But it's lived out when you adopt. You have to confess your lack of love and pray that God will give you that love for them. You have to act out love. It's not enough to bring them home to a better life; you have to choose to love them. And that means bringing it before the Lord every day for the rest of our lives."

Candice Watters is a freelance writer and is married to Steve. They are co-authors of Start Your Family: Inspiration for Having Babies. To buy a copy, call 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459) or visit FocusOnTheFamily.com/resources.