

Dufresne Family

However, that's how all the good stories in the bible start. Jonah didn't want to go to Ninevah; however... Noah wasn't much of a boat builder; however... Sarah thought she was too old to have a baby; however... this is our "however" story. It's about a little girl named Xiao Lu (Shaw Lou).

My husband, Ron, and I have four children, ages 3 to 13. They keep us pretty busy. We had never seriously considered adoption; however, one evening last October, I took our 11 and 13 year old sons to a New Song concert at our church. As I entered the lobby, I passed a table with hundreds of photos of children from around the world. New Song was asking people, was asking me, to sponsor one of these kids. We had never considered sponsoring a child before. With four kids and one income, it seems like the money never quite goes far enough. However, as I pause by the table, one of the photos jumps out into my hand, and my hand closes around it without any conscious volition on my part. As I look at the photo of a scared little two year old girl, the fear in her eyes catches my entire attention. I can only focus on those dark eyes. Again, without any thought, my hand goes to my purse to pull out my wallet. I hear my voice saying, "I want to sponsor this little girl."

When I get home that evening, I show the photo to my husband. Jiang Xiao Lu. What a strange foreign name, Guangxi Province, what a strange foreign place. You always hear about the kids who are abandoned OVER THERE. Who are orphaned OVER THERE. Even though you believe its happening, it's never quite a sense of reality. OVER THERE does not seem like a real place. However, this picture of this little girl is very real. The fear on this little girls face is very real. What I really want to do is pull her into my arms and tell her she'll be okay. That there are people who love her, and a God who loves her more than she can imagine.

Of course, I can't do that, so as part of our sponsorship, we pray for Xiao Lu. I pray as an individual, my husband and I pray as a couple, and all of us pray as a family. In the midst of all this prayer, something crazy is happening. I start feeling a tug that we should adopt Xiao Lu. I say to God, "Absolutely not! We have enough children, we're too busy, we certainly can't afford another child. Case closed, that's it!"

However...I talk to my husband in bed one night. Do you think it would be crazy for us to adopt Xiao Lu? He asks, "Can we afford it?" "No, we really can't", I say. "Well go ahead and look into it" he says. So, I do. I get on the website, and gulp, twenty-some thousand dollars, it might as well be a million. We don't have twenty-some thousand dollars. I get on the phone and talk to a lady from the agency through which we are sponsoring Xiao Lu. "I'm sorry but our "sponsor policy" prohibits people from adopting children they are sponsoring? There is no chance of you adopting Xiao Lu? Oh, I see. Yes, thank you anyway." Well, that's that. Thanks anyway God. Must have been mistaken. But, prayer is definitely not an exact science.

However...I meet a woman at my aerobics class, her name is Susan Chapman . She's adopted a wonderful little girl named MiMi from China. She tells me it's not about the money and there are ways around the money issues, i.e. grants and tax credits. She says, "when it's His will, God opens those doors, and provides a way." I go home and pray some more. "God, what is your will?" I don't hear much, just this: "she needs a home, you have a home." "But, God, I need more than that to go on. What about the money? Four kids in a three bedroom house, how will we add another? How will we provide college for five children? How about some

details, here, God?" No answers. Just, "she needs a home, you have a home." Could it be that simple?

For a few weeks, I ignore this call completely. It is just too overwhelming. Raising four children is time-consuming and sometimes exhausting. I don't think I'm prepared to take on God's call. I feel worse and worse. I know I am being disobedient to God's will, but fear and doubt hold me back. How will our children react? What will my husband think? How will my family react? People will think we are crazy! Xiao Lu's photo on the refrigerator haunts me. Finally, on a Wednesday night in December, I go to my room and speak with God for a very long time. I finally tell God that I am willing. "God, if this is truly your will for us, we'll do it." I believe that the money will somehow be available. I believe that we will have the strength to deal with whatever issues Xiao Lu may have coming from her background. The first step is an application and home study which will cost between \$4,000 and \$5,000 dollars. How would you have us pay for this, God? Do we go into debt? Deplete our savings, Lord? What is your will? Please, God, if you will show me the way, we will take this step of faith?"

On Thursday night, I get a phone call. A couple has heard that we are considering adopting from China. She and her husband have been holding onto \$5000 dollars that they feel God is leading them to use in some way. They have been praying for quite a while, trying to determine God's will for their use for the money. When she heard we were considering adopting a child from China, she felt like a bell went off, and God said, "yes, this is what you've been waiting for." After much prayer she and her husband decide to ask if they can gift us \$5000 dollars to begin a Chinese adoption.

So, that's it... a glimmer of confirmation, we take a deep-breath and begin our paperwork. Our children are thrilled, they feel like Xiao Lu is already a sister.

However, our story has a catch, Xiao Lu isn't in an adoption program she doesn't even have paperwork, she is just being cared for by a foster family in China. We are sponsoring her to help "them" care for her...what? God, now I'm confused, "are we supposed to just adopt a child from China, not this child, just another child?" Was Xiao Lu just "the seed" to get us started in adoption. Just to clarify things, I call the agency again and they say, "there is no way you can adopt this child, she isn't in an adoption program." "Okay, just wondered, thanks," I say. Well, were just supposed to adopt.

However...funny thing how God works. I keep telling the lady I know from aerobics that I really feel that we are supposed to adopt Xiao Lu, and she keeps saying, "I hate to say "no way", but that would be like a needle in a haystack for you to ever get matched with that one child with all the thousands of girls available who already have paperwork done." I say, "you're right, I guess she was just the seed to get us started in adoption." But, this strong feeling, connection, to her doesn't go away and in my heart I know that Xiao Lu is supposed to be our child. I call the agency again and ask if they could at least try to help facilitate getting the local orphanage to start her paperwork ... finally someone tells me "the only way is if she has some kind of special need," a glimmer of hope. I wait and wait and wait, then, after weeks the agency calls me back and they say Xiao Lu has a blood disorder called thalassemia. I had a lump in my throat, and at that moment, even though I knew how impossible it was, I knew Xiao Lu would be our child! God just led from there...the orphanage started her paperwork, CCAA in Beijing received everything, we petitioned CCAA to put her on our agencies "special needs" list. God can only be God in all His sovereignty! We get a call from our agency and

they say “we have Xiao Lu on our “special needs list” and we would like to present her to your family for adoption! Amazing! She is really going to be ours!

However ...there were many challenges along the journey, the toughest one, by far, for me was the money issues. Financial fear can immobilize you, but we were able to let go of some pride and accept help from others, and learn to trust that God was working in their lives too. We learned to “let loose and let go.” Thinking we are “in control” is such an illusion, adoption erases any such illusion. We learned what “a journey of faith” really is, and with each step, I could feel my faith grow. Sometimes, God illuminates only the ground in front of your feet, you can’t see very far ahead. The only weapon you have against the “doubt and fear” is prayer. Many times, the answers to our questions can’t be answered. Where will all the money come from? Will this child be able to overcome her difficult beginnings and become the person God wants her to be? We’ve learned to stand content with the fact that God is in control and He knows exactly what His plan is for that little girl who lived halfway around the world. Trust and faith!

My husband, Ron, and I travelled to China to meet our sweet daughter. When we met she was 3 years old. I love this little girl. We are all still getting to know each other. She and I both have fairly reserved personalities; shy if you will. One thing I’ve learned after coming home was, I’ve realized Xiao Lu is an “individual” not a picture, and along the way you create an “image” of what this child will be like. After all, all we had was a picture. I prayed for her for so long, I felt I knew her, although we still hadn’t met. Unlike my 4 biological children I’ve learned that in adoption after you finally get a child, you need to, in a way, give up “the vision child” you have lived with for so many months. In some strange way, you almost go through a “mourning process” when you come home for that child who was forever in your prayers. Discovering who she is, not what you thought she would be, were very big “aha” moments for us. God continues to work in our family and we are so grateful He has blessed us with our fifth child.