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EQUIPPING PASTORS IN UNION BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,  
JOS, NIGERIA, TO TEACH ADOPTION AS A VIABLE  
MINISTRY FOR INFERTILE COUPLES

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING PASTORS IN UNION BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,  
JOS, NIGERIA, TO TEACH ADOPTION AS A VIABLE  
MINISTRY FOR INFERTILE COUPLES

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To all Christian couples in Nigeria who have endured the pains and shame of  
barrenness, but have remained strong and faithful to Jesus Christ.

And to all who venture into adoption as a ministry.

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## PREFACE

All glory to Christ Jesus who saved me from Islam and has given me an inheritance among His saints. The light of His gospel shone into my darkness and the Word of light gave me life. My quest for theological training over the years is for the purpose of increasing my skills and capacity to teach the Word of life more accurately so that many may receive the same light and be saved. All praise to Him alone for the grace He granted to complete this program.

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Mukaila Ademola Adebisi

Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Bible teaches that children are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27), they belong to God, and are gifts from Him to parents (Ps 127:3-5). It further teaches that children are sources of joy to their parents (Gen 30:22; 1 Sam 1:11; Luke 1:14; John 16:20-21). This biblical position is in contradistinction to the Nigerian cultural belief that sees childbearing as the goal of marriage that must be achieved at all costs. In Nigeria, there is an acute need for pastors and church leaders to be equipped with a balanced, biblical, and theological position on childbearing and childrearing (both biological and adopted) so that they in turn may teach the Christian community. The people that need the biblical counsel and comfort the most are infertile couples and singles that are not married and are without children.

#### **Context**

In the Nigerian culture, having children goes beyond a mere desire or satisfaction of the parental instinct. Childbearing is a source of pride, a way to preserve one's lineage, security in old age, and in some sub-cultures, it is believed to be the only way to immortalize one's soul.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, like in many African cultures, the central purpose of marriage in the Nigerian culture is childbearing. Inability to reproduce is viewed not only as the failure of the marriage but as a failure in life, irrespective of other achievements. Childbearing is prized above all achievements in life. In Nigerian culture, not having children is to be dead while still living. Traditionally, barren people are

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<sup>1</sup> Teniola Osundeko, "Precious Babies, Empty Wombs: Experiences of Infertile Women in Nigeria," accessed July 24, 2017, <http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2011/sep/092.html>.

believed to be bewitched or cursed by the ancestors or gods.<sup>2</sup> Hence, infertile couples feel tremendous pressure both within and without. The search for life through childbearing is responsible in some cases for extra marital affairs, divorce, and remarriage. It is also one of the major reasons that men have children outside of their marriages, and for polygamy in many cases.

When struggling with infertility, it is common for couples (particularly wives) to go to extreme extents as they search for solutions, such as consulting spiritualists, traditional medical doctors, and fertility specialists. In the process, some fall into the wrong hands and their situations are made worse. Some experience loss of finances, some damage to their reproductive organs, and others damage their general health, especially when harmful concoctions are ingested. Unfortunately, women had always been blamed for infertility until modern medicine revealed issues of infertility in men. However, women have suffered more in terms of stigmatization and pressures to seek solution. The reason is not farfetched; they have been playing more active roles in seeking solutions from sources other than their husbands.

Since Christians in Nigeria are living within the culture, they are affected by the cultural outlook. It is therefore not surprising that elements of this cultural outlook about childbearing are included in sermons from pastors and evangelists. Church practices have generally been skewed in support of this cultural position. Passages of Scripture such as Genesis 1:28; Exodus 23:26; Deuteronomy 7:14, and Deuteronomy 28:4 are popularly used to support the cultural position. Stories of Bible characters like Sarah (Gen 21:1-7), Rebekah (Gen 25:21-26), Rachel (Gen 30:22-24), Hannah (1 Sam 1:1-20), and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7, 11-15, 23-25, 57-58) are generally used to support the idea that all that were barren among the people of faith were miraculously blessed by God with babies. Additionally, the argument is made by some that Michal, David's wife

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<sup>2</sup> Danfulani Zamani Kore, *Culture and the Christian Home: Evaluating Cultural Marriage and Family in the Light of Scripture* (Jos, Nigeria: ACTS, University of Jos, 1995), 50-51.

(2 Sam 6:14-16, 20-23), the only Jew who remained barren in the Bible, was cursed as a result of her irreverent act to God and David.

It is generally believed and taught in many churches and denominations that, with prayers, fasting, giving and other services to God and His servants, no true believer will be barren. With such acts of service to God and His servants, every true believer who may be initially barren will eventually receive miracle babies, like Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samuel and John the Baptist. Not having these results usually ends in the particular couple being stigmatized as lacking faith, being prayerless or having not done enough in serving God and in making enough sacrifices in giving to God and His servants.

Because the church has been so influenced by the culture, infertile believers also suffer pains, pity, ridicule, and stigmatization, just like unchurched people. Out of pressure and desperation there have been stories of mature believers (including pastors and known elders) who have given in and compromised their faith. There are also stories of divorce, women involved in extramarital affairs where it was suspected that their husbands had faulty reproductive systems, and men having children outside of their marriages. It is no surprise then that modern reproductive technology has found extensive acceptance in Nigeria, even among believers. Christians who can afford the cost embrace the procedure without asking questions about ethical and possible theological implications.

With this over-preoccupation with childbearing, most Christians in Nigeria (fertile and infertile) are not being taught or aware of the blessings, biblical encouragement, and ministry opportunities associated with adopting children. It is extremely rare for pastors and leaders to teach this biblical idea as a viable Christian ministry from the pulpits of Nigerian churches.

### **Rationale**

The Bible recognizes the beauty, blessings, and joy of having children. Rachael was living a life of shame and humiliation before giving birth to Joseph (Gen 30:22-24). Hannah was taunted, despised, and constantly provoked by her rival, Peninnah, and was

in “great anguish and grief” until the Lord granted what she asked of Him (1 Sam 1:4-20). And John the Baptist was “a joy and delight to” his parents when he was born (Luke 1:14). However, these stories and similar others recorded in the Scriptures notwithstanding, the Bible as a whole, and New Testament in particular, does not teach childbearing as a matter of life and death.

There is, then, a need for pastors to be equipped to teach church members and confront the cultural position on childbearing in a balanced, biblical, and theological manner. This research project first explores the balanced, biblical, and theological position that Christians should believe with regard to childbearing.

Second, with the proliferation of practice of assisted reproductive technology, Nigerian Christians need to be aware of the ethical and theological issues involved therein, such as issues of artificial insemination by a donor’s sperm or egg donation. Then, the discarding of other fertilized eggs after selection in in-vitro fertilization. Pastors as teachers and shepherds of God’s people are responsible for informing and guiding God’s people away from errors and dangers. “The words of a priest’s lips should preserve knowledge of God, and people should go to him for instruction, for the priest is the messenger of the Lord of Heaven's Armies” (Mal 2:7).

Lastly, the care, through adoption, for children that are orphaned, abandoned, or rejected, is a biblically endorsed responsibility of all Christians (both fertile and infertile). James 1:27 make it clear that true devotion and service to God in practical terms is demonstrated by how believers “shepherd” the orphans.<sup>3</sup> Infertile couples may find a fulfilling ministry in the adventure. It is the responsibility of pastors to teach and encourage such couples to prayerfully reflect on if the Lord might lead them to consider adoption. And to do this, pastors themselves must be well equipped.

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Merida and Rick Morton, *Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2011), 69.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to biblically and theologically equip pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria (Plateau Baptist Conference of Nigerian Baptist Convention) to teach adoption of children as a viable ministry option to infertile couples for care of orphans, satisfaction of parental instinct, and fulfillment of the Great Commission to the glory of God.

## **Goals**

The following four goals were set in progression of how this project was carried out to achieve the purpose of equipping the targeted pastors.

1. The first goal was to assess the current biblical knowledge and personal convictions of pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, about childbearing and child adoption.
2. The second goal was to develop seminar papers in the following areas: biblical and theological basis of childbearing; biblical and theological basis of adoption, the problem of infertility, adoption practice in Nigeria, ethical and theological considerations of modern reproductive techniques, and Christians and the adoption course.
3. The third goal was to teach the seminars developed to the pastors in Union Baptist Association in Jos, Nigeria.
4. The fourth goal was to assess the changes in biblical knowledge and changes in personal convictions of pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, about childbearing and child adoption after attending the seminars.

A definite research methodology was employed in achieving these goals. The details of this methodology are described in the section that follows.

## **Research Methodology**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current biblical knowledge and personal convictions of pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, about childbearing and child adoption.. This goal was measured by administering the Biblical Knowledge and Personal Conviction on Childbearing and Children Adoption Survey

(BKPCCAS)<sup>4</sup> to twenty pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria. This goal was considered successfully met when at least twelve pastors (60 percent) completed the survey and it had been analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the biblical knowledge and personal convictions of pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria; about childbearing and children adoption.

The second goal of this project was to develop seminar papers in the following areas: biblical and theological basis of childbearing; biblical and theological basis of adoption, the problem of infertility, adoption practice in Nigeria, ethical and theological considerations of modern reproductive techniques, and Christians and the adoption course. This goal was measured by an expert panel<sup>5</sup> who utilized a rubric<sup>6</sup> to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the six seminar papers. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal of this project was to teach the seminars developed to the pastors in Union Baptist Association in Jos, Nigeria. The goal was considered successful when the seminars had been presented, and at least twelve of the twenty targeted pastors in the association were present and fully participated in the seminars.

The fourth goal of this project was to assess the changes in biblical knowledge and changes in personal convictions of pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, about childbearing and children adoption after attending the seminars. This goal was measured by administering the BKPCCAS to the same pastors who completed it before

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee before use in the ministry project.

<sup>5</sup> This expert panel consisted of two seminary professors (one from Southern Seminary and the other from Southwestern Seminary), an expert on adoption services, and a local pastor in Jos, Nigeria.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 2.



(and attended the seminars) comparing this post-test with pre-test using a *t*-test. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre-survey and post-survey scores.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following are the definitions of the key terms used in this ministry project.

*Adoption.* *Adoption* is artificial kinship in which someone that is not originally a member of a family is accepted into that family with all legal rights. “Child adoption is the legal act of permanently placing a child with a parent or parents other than biological ones.”<sup>7</sup>

*Infertile.* Being *infertile* is the inability to have life children, which may be due to numerous reasons (biological, physiological, pathological, etc). Infertility may be primary infertility or secondary infertility (that is, inability to have more children after an initial one or two).

This project had two delimitations. First, only pastors that were teaching or preaching on a weekly basis and were involved in counseling members on a regular basis in local churches within the association were selected to participate. This decision was aimed at giving the pastors immediate opportunity to disseminate knowledge gained to help affected members of their congregation. Second, the seminar was conducted in English. The transferability of the biblical counsels contained therein to non-English speaking members is the responsibility of the pastors that participated in this project.

This project had three limitations. First, the project may not be applicable to pastors not teaching or counseling regularly. Second, due to usual challenges with translation, pastors who do not understand English may not benefit from the training. Third, this project may not be applicable in other cultures.

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<sup>7</sup> Maria C. Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption in Eastern Nigeria in West Africa,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews* 2, no. 1 (December 2014): 86.

## **Conclusion**

The Bible teaches childbearing as one of the blessings of life. For couples that may not be able to have biological children, the Bible and Christian theology support adoption as a viable ministry opportunity and also for satisfaction of parental desire for such couples. However, Christian couples in such situation may not be aware of this opportunity unless they are taught and counseled. It is the responsibility of the pastors to teach and counsel such couples in the church. This project was therefore designed to equip pastors with knowledge to carry this assignment appropriately. Chapter 2 of this project will focus on biblical and theological basis of adoption.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF  
CHILD ADOPTION

**Introduction**

This chapter will examine examples of physical adoption of children in both testaments of the Bible, and exegete key passages that concern adoption of children.

**Biblical Basis of Childbearing**

The Bible teaches that all human beings (including children) are made in the image of God. “So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). Psalm 127 says, “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate” (vv. 3-5). Children, then, belong to God and are divine gifts, not properties of their parents; hence, according to Brian Brock, every child must be “received as most fundamentally coming from the hand of the Creator.”<sup>1</sup> Even though, functionally, parents as guardians have oversight over their children, parents and children have, as Brent Waters says, “common value and destiny” as images of God.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the thought and practice that children are treated as property that must be acquired at all cost is unbiblical and idolatry at best. Waters explained further that “children do not belong to their parents but are entrusted to their

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Brock, “On Language, Children and God: Naming, Dominion and Domination,” in *A Graceful Embrace: Theological Reflections on Adopting Children*, ed. John Swinton (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Brent Waters, “Welcoming Children into Our Homes: A Theological Reflection on Adoption,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 4 (November 2002): 424.

care by God.”<sup>3</sup> Parents do not have absolute authority over their children, but rather, parents are stewards and their duty is to “commend the ultimate destiny of children back to the love, grace and mercy of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Biblical records show further that children are sources of joy and delight to their parents. When Rachael gave birth to Joseph, she said, “God has taken away my disgrace” (Gen 30:22-23). The angel that appeared to Zechariah to announce the birth of his son, John the Baptist, said to Zachariah, “Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. . . . He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of him” (Luke 1:13:14); and John 16:21 says, “A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.” The desire in humans to have children is not only natural, but biblical.

Furthermore, it seems that passages in the Bible promise biological fruitfulness to all, especially the obedient and the faithful. For God even commanded, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). A major reward for Israel’s obedience to God was that “none will miscarry or be barren in your land” (Exod 23: 26). In addition, “You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless” (Deut 7:14). The prayer of Abraham for Abimelech resulted in God reopening the wombs of women in Abimelech’s household to have children again after his repentance and restoration of Sarah back to Abraham (Gen 20:11-18).

Some scriptures promise that those that are barren will be blessed with children. “He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children” (Ps 113:9; 1 Sam 2:5; Ps 68:6; Isa 54:1; Gal 4:27). Experiences of women like Sarah, Rachael, Manoah’s wife, Hannah, and Elizabeth are proofs of God’s faithfulness to these promises (Isaac, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist respectively). Not only

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<sup>3</sup> Waters, “Welcoming Children into Our Homes,” 425.

<sup>4</sup> Waters, “Welcoming Children into Our Homes,” 426.

did they finally give birth to children, but they gave birth to special children that played major roles in the nation, history, and lives of God’s people. Therefore, in the words of John Swinton and Brian Brock, “Israel understood fertility to be one of the prime indicators of divine pleasure in Israel’s obedience.”<sup>5</sup>

However, for a number of reasons, some people are unable to procreate. The case of celibate singles seems straight forward. They have the gift of celibacy (1 Cor 7:7-8), they “renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:12), that is, according to R. T. France, they “are celibate because they believe this to be God’s will for them.”<sup>6</sup> But Jesus mentioned two more groups of people (eunuchs) in this same Matthew 19:12 (“For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men”), who may never be married and therefore will never be able to have children biologically. They are eunuchs made by men (those castrated)<sup>7</sup> and those born impotent.<sup>8</sup> Many more people are infertile in the world today due to diseases, injuries to reproductive organs and systems, and many other possible reasons.<sup>9</sup>

Barrenness or infertility is accompanied with great pains and deep sorrows, even in Bible times. Rachael said to her husband, Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!” (Gen 30:1). The Bible records Hannah’s pains from taunting by her rival, and her weeping to the point of exhaustion and loss of appetite (1 Sam 1:6-8, 10-11). Wayne Grudem writes, “Infertility is a cause of deep sorrow, distress, and grief for many couples, and we

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<sup>5</sup> John Swinton and Brian Brock, introduction to Swinton, *A Graceful Embrace*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 726.

<sup>7</sup> The carrying out of castration of men, especially to use them as “custodians of a harem, was widely practiced throughout the ancient world.” The Old Testament has records of this practice but does not approve of it (Isa 56:3-5; cf. Deut 23:1; 2 Kgs 9:32; 20:18; Acts 8:27). France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 724.

<sup>8</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 724. This group is most likely born with congenital abnormalities and is therefore “physiologically incapable of procreation.”

<sup>9</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 4th ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015), 62.

must recognize that and show understanding and compassion for those who experience this grief.”<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, both from history in many cultures and contemporary practice, adoption of children is one of the recognized ways of solving the problem of infertility.<sup>11</sup>

### **Adoption in the Bible**

Biblically speaking, according to Donald Guthrie, adoption can be said to be the “idea that spirit-filled believers are now children of God,”<sup>12</sup> and that the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with the believers’ spirits that “we are children of God” (Rom 8:14-15). Wayne Grudem defines believers’ adoption by God as “an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.” Relating adoption to other theological concepts associated with salvation, Grudem explains, “In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life within. In justification God gives us right legal standing before him. But in adoption God makes us members of his family. Therefore, the biblical teaching on adoption focuses much more on the personal relationships that salvation gives us with God and with his people.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Adoption in the Old Testament**

There is no Hebrew word found in Old Testament describing *adoption*.<sup>14</sup> The term is not present in the laws of Israel nor the whole of Old Testament Scriptures.

The recurrence in the Old Testament of the blessing and command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ indicates that Israel understood fertility to be one of the prime

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<sup>10</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 777.

<sup>11</sup> Adesina Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption as Management Option for Fertility in Nigeria: Evidence from Focus Group Discussions,” *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 13, no. 1 (March 2009): 81.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981), 554.

<sup>13</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 736.

<sup>14</sup> G. H. Box, “Adoption,” in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (1908; repr., Edinburgh: Clark, 2003), 115.

indicators of divine pleasure in Israel's obedience. With such an understanding of human fertility, adoption as the need of a faithful people could not arise (cf. Gen. 29-30; 1 Sam. 1-2:11).<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, it appears as if adoption was not practiced in Israel.<sup>16</sup>

However, the Bible records occurrences of adoption in the history of Jews. Moses was first nursed by his own mother for the "first three months" of his life before being adopted by Pharaoh's daughter who brought him up in the Egyptian palace system.<sup>17</sup> Acts 7:20-21 says, "And he was brought up for three months in his father's house and he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son." (cf. Exod 2:10; Heb 11:24). Esther was also recorded to have been adopted by her uncle, Mordecai: "Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther. . . . Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died" (Esth. 2:7).<sup>18</sup> One more case of physical adoption recorded in the Old Testament is that of Genubath. Genubath has no Jewish blood whatsoever as his father was Hadad (Edomite) and mother Queen Tahpenes' sister (most probably Egyptian). Genubath was raised in Pharaoh's palace by the Queen (1 Kgs 11:14, 17-20). It should be noted, however, that all these three records of adoptions in the Old Testament occurred outside the geographical state of Israel (Egypt and Persia).<sup>19</sup>

Some authors have seen adoptions in other relationships in the Old Testament. Abraham and Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2-3) and Jacob and the two sons of Joseph—

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<sup>15</sup> Swinton and Brock, introduction to Swinton, *A Graceful Embrace*, 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Box, "Adoption," 115.

<sup>17</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: To the Ends of Earth* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1990), 136.

<sup>18</sup> Esther was the biological daughter of Mordecai's uncle, Abihail, whom Mordecai has adopted (Esth 2:15).

<sup>19</sup> P. H. Davids, "Adoption," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed, Baker Reference Library, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2001), 25.

Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48:5).<sup>20</sup> Going further, Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones are of the opinion that Jacob's children through Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali, Gen 30:1-8) and Zilpah (Gad and Asher, Gen 30:9-13), the maids of Rachel and Leah respectively, were also adopted children of Jacob.<sup>21</sup> However, the cases cited are within the families and without legal consequences. Moreover, Sarah (Gen 16:1-2) and Rachael (Gen 30:1-8) seemed to have deliberately planned adoptions of the children of their maids (Hagar and Bilhah respectively) to solve their own problem of infertility. Leah did the same with her maid, Zilpah, to have more children (Gen 30:9-13).

It has been speculated that adoption was unpopular in Israel for two reasons: (1) Hebrews dealt with the issue of childlessness through the practice of polygamy (Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, Gen 16:2; Jacob and Rachael and Bilhah, Gen 30:4; Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah, 1 Sam 1:1-2); and (2) the practice of levirate marriage (Gen 38:8-10; Deut 25:5-10; Matt 22:23).<sup>22</sup>

### **Other Images of Adoption in the Old Testament**

Though adoption as practiced in the Greco-Roman world was non-existent in Old Testament and Judaism, there is concept of being God's son or sons. God calls Israel, "my son." In Exodus 4:22, God calls Israel His own son. He told Moses, "Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son.'" Hosea 11:1 is closely

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<sup>20</sup> By observing the relationship that existed between Abraham and Eliezer (Gen 15:2-4), F. F. Bruce opines that there may have been a form of adoption practice "similar to that attested in the Nuzi documents during the patriarchal age, but there is no trace of it in Post-Settlement times." F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Paternoster/William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 197.

<sup>21</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 135. In traditional Nigerian culture (and African culture generally) where polygamy is practiced, Bilhah and Zilpah would be considered as Jacob's wives and their children considered Jacob's direct children. In the same vein, because of Sarah's hostility to Hagar (Gen 16), it would be viewed that Sarah sought to deprive Hagar the position of being a second wife.

<sup>22</sup> Box, "Adoption," 116. Then, according to Bruce, "the levirate marriage is that by which a dead man might receive by proxy a posthumous son who would perpetuate His name and inheritance in Israel." Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 197.



related passage: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Israel is the adopted son of God. Douglas Stuart observes, “Hosea and Exodus both link the adoption of Israel to sonship with liberation from Egypt, the emphasis being placed on the very first encounter of Yahweh with his infant nation.”<sup>23</sup> By His election of the Israelites (Deut 7:6-8), God incorporated Israel into His family and called Israel “my son” (Hos 11:10). Gang V. Smith says that “God demonstrated this love supremely in his deliverance of a great multitude from Egypt. This experience established the father-son relationship and gave the Israelites a unique identity as ‘my son.’”<sup>24</sup>

Isaiah calls God the real father of Israel. Isaiah 63:16 says, “But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.”<sup>25</sup> Commenting on God being called father in the Old Testament, Edward J. Young writes, “*Father* here signifies the one who brought the nation into existence. . . . In the Old Testament designation, *Father* for God is comparatively rare and possibly does not convey the wealth of meaning found in the New Testament ‘*Our Father*’; never-the-less, it is a word of tender comfort, and shows the theocracy was a work of God and not man.”<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, scholars have seen a case of God’s adoption of Solomon, David’s son and the king who succeeded David in 2 Samuel 7: “I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.” This statement, according to Andrew E. Steinmann, “can be understood as a promise that God would adopt David’s future son Solomon as God’s own son and

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<sup>23</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 177.

<sup>24</sup> Gang V. Smith, *Hosea, Amos, Micah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Other passages where God is referred to as the father of Israel include 1 Chron 17:13; Pss 68:5; 89:26; Isa 9:6; Jer 3:4, 19; Mal 1:6; 2:10.

<sup>26</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 1976), 487, emphasis original.

chosen king (1 Kings 1-2).”<sup>27</sup> The reference here to the descendant of David (Solomon) as son of God, in the words of Edmond Jacob, “must be understood in the sense of an adoption and not a begetting.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Adoption in the New Testament**

The case of Jesus and Joseph, His earthly father (Matt 13:54-55; Luke 3:23, 4:32; John 6:42) is the only instance of physical adoption in the New Testament. Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, but he was recognized as His father and Joseph carried out fatherly roles in the life of Jesus by naming Him (Matt 1:25), as well as carrying out His customary baby presentation in the temple. Luke 2:22-23 explains, “When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord.’” (Luke 2:22-23). Joseph also provided and protected Jesus when in danger (Matt 2:22-24) and equipped Him with family trade for economic survival (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). Joseph, rather, adopted Jesus, and as Stephen Post puts it, “thus protecting Him from fatherlessness and from public scorn. . . . So, it is that in the Christian narrative, we are saved by the birth of a child who was also an adoptee.”<sup>29</sup>

Several New Testament writers alluded to the idea of adoption. Though Paul is the only New Testament writer that employed the use of a technical term *huiiothesia* to espouse adoption doctrine (details of which is contained later), he and other writers

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, *2 Samuel*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 137.

<sup>28</sup> Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 236.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen G. Post, “Adoption: A Protestant Agapic Perspective,” in *The Morality of Adoption: Social-Psychological, Theological, and Legal Perspectives*, ed. Timothy P. Jackson (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 174.

nevertheless made references to the same concept without necessarily using the term.<sup>30</sup> Paul used familial language, calling believers children of God in many of his letters (Rom 8:16-17, 21; 9:8; Gal 3:26; Phil 2:14-15). Believers are referred to as heirs of God's kingdom and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:12, 17; Gal 3:29; 4:1; Eph 3:6; Titus 3:7; Heb 6:17; Jas 2:5). The Apostle John in his Gospel says, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13). He likewise emphasizes the idea of believers being God's children further in his epistle (1 John 3:1-2, 10). Similarly, Grudem comments that in 1 Peter 3:6 Peter sees "believing women as daughters of Sarah in the new covenant."<sup>31</sup>

### ***Huiiothesia***

The apostle Paul is the only New Testament writer who employed a technical term, *huiiothesia*, to describe the concept of adoption. This term is found in the following New Testament verses: Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5-7 and Ephesians 1:5.

*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* defines *huiiothesia* as "*huios* 'a son' and *thesis* 'a placing' . . . it signifies the place and condition of a son given to one whom it does not naturally belong."<sup>32</sup> In Paul's thought, therefore, God in His love and eternal plan (Eph 1:5) and through the redemptive work of Christ, believers become adopted sons of God (Gal 4:4-5). Timothy Paul Jones says, "Paul does not let us escape . . . that this relationship was birthed in the suffering of Jesus. This

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<sup>30</sup> Other passages in the New Testament making references to believers as children of God include Matt 5:48; 7:11; Heb 12: 5-11. Other passages by Paul include 2 Cor 6:18, Phil 2:15, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 737.

<sup>32</sup> W. E. Vine and F. F. Bruce, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1981), 32.

adoption is centered in the cross of Christ.”<sup>33</sup> With the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, they received the “the spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15), and “the spirit produces the cry ‘Abba Father’ and indicates by his presence the reality of the coming inheritance.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, according to Davids, “adoption is a free grant to undeserving people solely from God’s grace.”<sup>35</sup>

The origin of Paul’s thought and use of *huiothesia* has been argued by scholars. Some posit that Paul’s idea was influenced by his exposure, education, and acquaintance with Greco-Roman culture where adoption was well practiced.<sup>36</sup> Frank Thielman explains that *Huiothesia* was “common in Greco-Roman world where it referred to a legal practice by which the father of a family accepted as his heir a male child who was not his own.”<sup>37</sup>

Those who say *huiothesia* in Paul is Hellenistic in origin often buttressed their position by the fact that the Greek *huiothesia* is not found in the LXX.<sup>38</sup> Charles E. B. Cranfield substantiates, “The earliest known occurrence of it are in inscriptions of the second century B.C.”<sup>39</sup> Similarly, no counterpart Hebrew word for adoption is found in the Old Testament, and adoption as a legal act was not practiced in Old Testament time.

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<sup>33</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, “A Picture of Adoption: Adoption and Orphan Care in Scripture and Christian Thought,” in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care*, ed. Russell Moore (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 22.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, “A Picture of Adoption,” 22.

<sup>35</sup> Davids, “Adoption,” 25.

<sup>36</sup> F. H. Palmer, “Adoption in the New Testament,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. Derek R. W. Wood (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 16.

<sup>37</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 51.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 425.

<sup>39</sup> Charles E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1979), 395.

Additionally, the five occurrences of *huiiothesia* in the New Testament, according to this position, are all Pauline.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Paul’s audiences in the three cities and churches to which he wrote, using the technical term, were all in the Roman Empire (Rome, Galatia, and Ephesus). They were all accustomed to the idea and practice of adoption because it was even in their politics since, according to Jones, “five of the first century emperors were adopted.”<sup>41</sup>

On the contrary, others biblical scholars have argued that *huiiothesia* has Jewish background, the absence of Hebrew counterpart term in the Old Testament notwithstanding. God chose the Israelites, delivered them from bondage in Egypt, and called Israel His own “firstborn son” (Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9; Deut 1:31; Hos 11:1). Again, God calls Himself the father of the children of Israel and calls Israelites His own children (Isa 1:2, 43:6-7; Hos 1:10). All these are pictures of God’s adoption of Israel in the Old Testament. Hence, according to these other group of authors, this reality is what might have been behind Paul’s line of reasoning, which gave rise to the use of *huiiothesia* in describing the relationship between Israel and God in Romans 9:4.<sup>42</sup> According to F. F. Bruce, Paul’s statement about Israel as “to whom belong adoption” (Rom 9:4) is most likely a reference to Exodus 4:22. Thus, the apostle might have borrowed the term *huiiothesia* from Greco-Roman culture, his theological background is more of Jewish.<sup>43</sup> Paul might, therefore, be saying in Romans 9:4 that the adoption which believers now enjoy, in the words of Robert Jewett, “belongs first and foremost to Israel.”<sup>44</sup> James M. Scott argues that Paul’s earliest view of *huiiothesia* is in Galatians 4:5. When Galatians 3–

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<sup>40</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 182.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, “A Picture of Adoption,” 20.

<sup>42</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 269.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 197.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 563.

4 are examined closely, the context shows that “out of the multiplicity of possibilities . . . the line of argumentation in Galatians 4:1-7 . . . leads to the same conclusion that *huiiothesia* in Galatians 4:5 refers to a specific Old Testament Jewish background, even though the term is not found in either the Septuagint or any other Jewish literature of the period.”<sup>45</sup>

Scott argues further that a parallel could be seen between the deliverance of Abraham’s descendants from the captivity in Egypt “at the time appointed” in Exodus and the redemption of believers from under the law into adoption as God’s children “at the fullness of time and thereby become heirs of the Abrahamic promise.”<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, this group of authors arguing for the Jewish background of *huiiothesia* see Paul’s adoption idea in the New Testament as a continuum of the Old Testament reality, as Gruden opines,

Though there was a consciousness of God as father to people of Israel, the full benefits and privileges of membership in God’s family and the full realization of that membership of God’s family, did not come until Christ came and the spirit of the son of God was poured into our hearts, bearing witness with our spirit that we are God’s children.<sup>47</sup>

Judging these two positions, that is, the ideas that Paul’s usage of *huiiothesia* is of either Greco-Roman or Jewish background, Robert Mounce is of the opinion that Paul’s position is a case of “both and.” That is, Paul’s adoption idea is influenced both by his Judaism, which provided him with the history and theology and Greco-Roman affiliation that gave him cultural physical example and terminology.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, according to Theilman, “Paul must have known that his Gentile readers in Roman Asia would hear resonances of this practice in the term” on one hand, and his use of the term

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<sup>45</sup> James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of Huiiothesia in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 267.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 267-68.

<sup>47</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 737.

<sup>48</sup> Mounce, *Romans*, 182.

to describe relationship of Israel with God in Romans 9:4 “means that he probably also had in mind biblical ideas of Israel’s ‘sonship’”<sup>49</sup> on the other hand.

### **Analysis of Passages with *huiiothesia* in The New Testament**

In the following passages, the apostle Paul used the technical term *huiiothesia* (adoption) to describe the special relationship into which God has ushered believers at redemption. In this section, each of these passages are investigated to varying degrees.

In Romans 8, the apostle Paul writes,

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom 8:13-17)

The Holy Spirit regularly reassures believers that they are heirs of God. For believers to believe that they are children of God, to actually act as children of God, and to continue living lives of utter dependence on God and His love, are all made possible with the help of the Holy Spirit (v. 14).<sup>50</sup> The apostle is saying here that the Spirit which believers received, delivered them from the powers of sin and enables them to live in obedience to God (vv. 13-15). According to Schreiner, Paul is further saying, “that believers are children of God is inseparable from the obedience of believers” to God.<sup>51</sup> The believers received the Spirit of sonship (*huiiothesia*, adoption, v. 15), and this Spirit of God leads or controls them and “those who are adopted are those who have received the Spirit and are

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<sup>49</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 52.

<sup>50</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 555.

<sup>51</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 424.

not slaves to the power of sin”<sup>52</sup> and power of law (Gal 4:5). Not only that, believers become “heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” at adoption (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7).

Clearly, these privileges of sonship were made possible only by the sacrificial death of the son of God “born of a woman, born under the law,” Jesus Christ (Gal 3:4).

Moreover, in Greco-Roman cultures, *huiiothesia* is a term that

stresses the legal rights and privileges that are conferred on the man who is adopted. Paul therefore uses this word to highlight the status enjoyed by believers, heirs of all that God has promised his own people. . . . In claiming that Christians enjoy [*huiiothesia*] . . . then, Paul is claiming not only that we believers become his adopted children, with all the rights and privileges pertaining to that status, but also that we have become his own people, inheriting the status and blessings promised to his people Israel.<sup>53</sup>

According to Romans 8:15, at conversion of believers, the spirit was given and adoption was initiated. However, in Romans 8:23, the Bible says, “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” For Paul not to contradict himself, the “waiting for adoption as sons” in verse 23, Guthrie observed, must mean “that believers anticipated through the spirit, a time when the full benefits of the adoptive status will be realized.”<sup>54</sup> The apostle John also states, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Grudem posits that both Paul and John agree here that “the full benefits and privileges of adoption” by believers will not be realized “until Christ returns” and believers receive “new resurrection bodies.”<sup>55</sup>

In Romans 9:4, Paul explains, concerning “the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons.” As stated earlier, the Greek *huiiothesia* (adoption) or counterpart in

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<sup>52</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 424-25.

<sup>53</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 268.

<sup>54</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 555.

<sup>55</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 737.



Hebrew is not present in Old Testament scriptures, but the concept was pervasively present as it relates to Israel's election by God. The knowledge that God was the Father of Israel was clear and can never be confused. Several Old Testament scriptures attest to this reality (Exod 4:22; Isa 1:2; Jer 30:20, 31:9; Hos 1:10, 11:1). This reality was what might have been behind Paul's mind that made him to use *huiiothesia* (adoption) to describe the relationship between Israel and God in this Romans 9:4.<sup>56</sup> However, as observed by Leon Morris, it also "means that Israel did not naturally belong in the heavenly family, but that God was gracious enough to admit them" through adoption.<sup>57</sup>

Galatians 4:4-7 says,

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba*, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

According to this passage, the sending of God's son achieved two results: redemption of those under the law and adoption into God's family those redeemed (vv. 4-5).<sup>58</sup> The end purpose of God's sending of His Son and the work of redemption Jesus did is the adoption of the redeemed into God's family according to Paul in this passage.<sup>59</sup> Jesus being "born of a woman" (v. 4) signifies His full humanity. Schreiner says that Jesus "lived under the law and took its curse on Himself" to redeem and free "those who were under the authority and dominion of sin."<sup>60</sup> According to PHEME PERKINS, the verb, "*exagorase*"

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<sup>56</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 269.

<sup>57</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: Apollos; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 348.

<sup>58</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 172.

<sup>59</sup> Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 194.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 270.

meaning “redeem . . . refers to emancipation from slavery, with overtones of paying the price to purchase the slave’s freedom.”<sup>61</sup>

The adoption of believers into God’s family (v. 5) was made possible primarily and only by Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross.<sup>62</sup> All believers in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, have been adopted into God’s family. Trevor J. Burke writes, “God’s family comprises solely adopted sons and daughters- there are no natural born sons and daughters in his divine household.”<sup>63</sup> However, in this epistle to the Galatians in particular, Schreiner observes that Paul’s argument “is that Gentiles are now adopted into God’s family as his children, that they are the offspring of Abraham because they are incorporated into Christ.”<sup>64</sup> In Greco-Roman cultures, *huiiothesia* as a term, according to Moo, “stresses the legal rights and privileges that are conferred on the man who is adopted. Paul therefore uses this word to highlight the status enjoyed by believers, heirs of all that God has promised his own people.”<sup>65</sup> Jesus is the exclusive Son of God. All believers, both Jews and Gentiles, become children of God by adoption (Gal 4:5-7) through the generosity of Christ.<sup>66</sup>

The “Abba, Father” cry (Abba in Aramaic and Father in Greek usually combined, Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) is an intimate way, and perhaps emotional way as children, believers can express their heart felt affections in prayers to God, following the example of Jesus (Mark 14:36). The words basically have the same

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<sup>61</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. LEANDER KECK (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000),

<sup>62</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 271.

<sup>63</sup> Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 89.

<sup>64</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 271.

<sup>65</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 268.

<sup>66</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians*, in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. LEANDER KECK (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 284.

meaning, but the combined usage, Leon Morris writes, “certainly points to love and to intimacy” addressing God “in a warm and familial way.”<sup>67</sup> This familial consciousness of believers that causes them to cry “Abba Father” is brought about by the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6),<sup>68</sup> and the cry, as Jones agrees, is to “communicate simultaneous sovereignty and intimacy” of and with God.<sup>69</sup>

In Ephesians 1, the Bible says, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (vv. 4-6). These verses disclose that the adoption of believers into God’s family was predetermined by God long before the creation of the world (vv. 4-5), that God’s adoption plan was with His great pleasure, and “the goal of the adoptive sonship of believers is a relationship with God similar to that of Jesus’ own filial relationship with God.”<sup>70</sup> God’s purpose in doing this was for “the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (Eph 1:6). The picture this passage in particular is giving, as observed by Thielman, is that “God took pleasure in his primordial decision to adopt believers as his children and he did this so that they might praise him for the magnificence of his grace.”<sup>71</sup>

In summary, in God’s eternal wisdom, Christians’ adoption was planned before the world began (Eph 1:5). At salvation, adoption is accomplished when a sinner places his/her faith in the atoning work of Christ (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5), and the fullness of the adoption experience will be realized at Christ’s return (Rom 8:23). Consequently, the benefits of spiritual adoption to believers from these passages are reception of the spirit

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<sup>67</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 316.

<sup>68</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 554.

<sup>69</sup> Jones, “A Picture of Adoption,” 22.

<sup>70</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 52.

<sup>71</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 53.

(Rom 8:15), becoming adopted children of God, having an intimate relationship with God that enables the believers to cry “Abba Father” by the spirit (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), becoming co-heirs or joint heirs with Christ (Gal 4:7), and believers are no more slaves to sin and the law but sons of God (Gal 4:7).

### **A Case for James 1:27**

The key verse in the New Testament that supports practical adoption of children is James 1:27: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” Three key words, visit, orphans and affliction in this verse will be examined to some details. The Greek word, *episképtomai*, translated “visit,” is a verb that carries a number of meanings. According to Dan McCartney, it means “to visit, to bring justice to (Luke 1:68; Acts 15:36); to care for (Heb 2:6), to seek out (Acts 6:3), to concern oneself with” (Acts 15:14).<sup>72</sup> McCartney writes further,

Any of these meanings work well here. The most common meaning in the NT is “to go see a person with helpful intent” (BDGA 378). It is the motive of helpful intent, the objective of giving aid, or undertaking to look out for the interests of someone that is operative here. Given James’ concern that people do things for the needy rather than just say things to them (2:16), it is unlikely that James has only visitation or an intellectual interest in mind here.<sup>73</sup>

In the view of Dale Allison, *episképtomai* as a “verb carries the idea of ministry in general.”<sup>74</sup> John Calvin explains, “To visit in necessity is to extend a helping hand to alleviate such as are in distress.”<sup>75</sup> Tony Merida and Rick Morton posit,

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<sup>72</sup> Dan G. McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 129.

<sup>73</sup> McCartney, *James*, 129.

<sup>74</sup> Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 362.

<sup>75</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of James*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 299.

The original meaning of the word, *episkeptesthai* . . . has to do with personal touch and involvement. It means to care for others, exercising oversight on their behalf and helping them in their need. It is from the same root as *episkipos*, which means “overseer” (sometime translated as “bishop”). James is basically saying to be a shepherd to the orphan.<sup>76</sup>

Since James is more interested in the outward working of inner faith as stated in James 2:14-26, his intention here in 1:27 cannot be a mere social visit but rather to see to it that the sufferings of orphans and widows are alleviated.<sup>77</sup>

The Greek word *orphanos* means “bereaved, without parents . . . abandoned or deprived.”<sup>78</sup> There are two occurrences of this word in the New Testament. The first is in John 14:18, where it is used figuratively to mean that “Jesus will not leave his disciples ‘orphaned,’ i.e., ‘abandoned,’ or ‘unprotected,’”<sup>79</sup> or “friendless or desolate.”<sup>80</sup> Here in James 1: 27, this verb means being “bereft of a parent or a father.”<sup>81</sup> *Orphanos* sometimes means fatherless or motherless not necessarily the loss of the two parents.<sup>82</sup>

The Greek word *thlipsis* translated affliction in ESV means “a pressing” to experience a pressure that “burdens the spirit.”<sup>83</sup> Normally in the New Testament, this word means the trials, sufferings, and persecutions experienced by believers as part of the signs of the end-times (Matt 24:2, 29; Mark 13:19, 24), and that of pains and suffering

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<sup>76</sup> Tony Merida and Rick Morton, *Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 2011), 69.

<sup>77</sup> Donald W. Burdick, *James*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 176-77.

<sup>78</sup> H. Seesemann, “orphanós [orphan],” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged ed, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), PC BibleSoft DVD.

<sup>79</sup> Seesemann, “orphanós [orphan].”

<sup>80</sup> W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), s.v. “orphanos,” PC BibleSoft DVD.

<sup>81</sup> Vine, Unger, and White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, s.v. “orphanos.”

<sup>82</sup> Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 363.

<sup>83</sup> Vine, Unger, and White, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, s.v. “thlipsis.”

from wants (2 Cor 8:13; Phil 4:14).<sup>84</sup> However, as McCartney writes, here James perhaps means the “economic and social distress that widows and orphans commonly experience,” and these are the pains that true and faithful believers are called to alleviate in the lives of this category of people.<sup>85</sup>

Characteristically, the apostle James holds that true religion is not in words or talk but in practical demonstrations that show the fruits of a transformed life (Jas 2:14-17). Commenting on James, Daniel M. Doriani says, “What impresses him is devotion to God that manifests itself in concrete acts of love and righteousness.”<sup>86</sup> Ralph P. Martins explains, “James is holding up to condemnation the picture of the use of the tongue when it utters merely formal religious platitudes that have no substance evidenced by practical deeds.”<sup>87</sup> However, James in this verse might be echoing God’s demand in the Old Testament that the people of Israel must be concern about the most vulnerable in the society: the fatherless, widows, and strangers. In ancient times, orphans and widows were vulnerable and opened to exploitation in Israel (Isa 1:10-17, 58:6-7; Zech 7:10; Mark 12:40; Luke 18:2-8),<sup>88</sup> perhaps because they lacked protection of a father and husband, as shown by Naomi and Ruth’s story (Ruth 3–4).

The Old Testament has extensive records of how God cares for the orphans and fatherless. Care for orphans and fatherless is commanded by God in various ways and forms. This attests to the importance God attaches to the care and wellbeing of this group of people. God promises to help, protect, and sustain the fatherless and orphans (Ps 10:14, 16-18; 68:5-6; 146:9), and His blessings are sure for those who care for them as well

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<sup>84</sup> Vine and Bruce, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 32.

<sup>85</sup> McCartney, *James*, 129.

<sup>86</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *James*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 57.

<sup>87</sup> Ralph P. Martins, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word, 1998), 52.

<sup>88</sup> Martins, *James*, 52.

(Deut 14:28-29). His anger and judgment await those who oppress the orphans and fatherless (Deut 27:19; Exod 22:21-22; Zac 7:10) and He will execute justice for them (Deut 10:18). God thus commanded the Israelites to join Him in His care for the fatherless and the orphans by giving them justice, maintaining their rights, and being sure they are not mistreated, oppressed, or deprived of their belongings (Exod 22:22; Deut 16:11, 14; 24:17-22; 26:12-13; Ps 82:3-4; Prov 23:10). Throughout the Old Testament is the strong message that God was concerned, cared for, and defended the orphans and the fatherless; that He has commanded His covenant people to do same cannot be missed.<sup>89</sup> This care for the orphans, the fatherless, and other vulnerable people in society is a demonstration of their religious piety.<sup>90</sup> Even then, Dale C. Allison, Jr. writes, “Whether or not James echoes a particular scriptural text, Exodus’ prohibition not to harm widows and orphans became, in Jewish and Christian tradition, a positive admonition to do good to them, one often rooted in the imitation of God, guardian of widows and orphans.”<sup>91</sup>

Just like it was for the people of Israel when God commanded them to care for the oppressed (the fatherless, widows, and sojourners) because that was who they were in Egypt (Deut 24:17-22), the same outlook should be applicable to Christians. Believers in Christ are “rescued orphans”<sup>92</sup> who became adopted into God’s family through the atoning work of Christ (Eph 1:5; 2:12-14; Gal 4:5-7). Therefore, as David Prince explains, it behooves Christians to “be committed to leading the way in rescuing others [physical orphans], in seeing that others are granted an identity and an inheritance”<sup>93</sup> through their adoption into physical Christian families. God’s heart for the fatherless should be a

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<sup>89</sup> H. C. Lempold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), 492.

<sup>90</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah—Malachi*, Word Bible Commentary, vol. 32 (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 226.

<sup>91</sup> Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 363.

<sup>92</sup> David Prince, “What Are We For?” in *The Gospel & Adoption*, ed. Russell Moore and Andrew T. Walker (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 19.

<sup>93</sup> Prince, “What Are We For?,” 19.

motivation for believers to embrace physical adoption of children.<sup>94</sup> In ancient times, the fatherless and the orphans were often subjected to abuse and oppression. This is not much better in contemporary times where vulnerable children are exploited for cheap labor and even “trafficked for prostitution” in some cases.<sup>95</sup> Merida and Morton opine further that “God expected Israel to care for these groups because it reflected God’s mercy towards them. Israel was the sojourner before Abraham was called to be the father of many nations. Israel was the widow until God made her His own. Israel was the orphan until God adopted them Israel as His own son.”<sup>96</sup>

### Conclusion

In a broken and confused world, the power of the gospel brings hope. Those who come to Christ from dysfunctional family backgrounds can now take solace in “a greater family and to a greater Father—a Father who loves and out of love sent his own son for salvation.”<sup>97</sup> Christians should be eager to demonstrate the same love and provide families of love, care, hope, and faith to children that are suffering in this confused world that is full of pains. Practical adoptions “specially testify to the gospel, for believers who adopt children and include them as part of their family . . . long for such children to know the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>98</sup>

The concept of adoption has full scriptural backing and rich Christian theological support. Both the scriptures and Christian theology have revealed that the goal of adoption is to show humanity the love and mercy of God. Human emotional and

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<sup>94</sup> Prince, “What Are We For?,” 19.

<sup>95</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 66.

<sup>96</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 66.

<sup>97</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 273.

<sup>98</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 274.



other needs may be satisfied in the adoption arrangement, but the ultimate purpose of adoption is for the magnification of God's glory.

The next chapter will examine the theoretical support for child adoption as a treatment for infertility. Available literature of Nigerian origins will be examined to explore the practice of adoption in the Nigerian context, its successes and challenges.

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL SUPPORT FOR CHILD ADOPTION  
AS TREATMENT FOR INFERTILITY

**Introduction**

The word “adoption” is from Latin *ad optare*, which means “to choose for one’s self.” Though the word “adoption” is sometime used for anything of choice (a lane of the highway, style of dressing, a foreign culture, etc.), when used in Latin and English it denotes “the voluntary taking of children into a relationship with an adult.”<sup>1</sup> In the words of Annette Baron and Betty Jean Lifton, adoption “is the permanent placement of a child in a family with all the rights and privileges associated with that family.” It is “a social transaction through which a person belonging by birth to one family or kinship group acquires, through legal means, a new family or new kinship.”<sup>2</sup> Adoption, by nature, usually creates a new family which is often different from the traditional biological family because it connects another family, the birth family, and sometimes connects different races, colors, and even nationalities.<sup>3</sup>

Adoption, then, is a system where the desires of motherless babies and childless couples are both satisfied.<sup>4</sup> As C. B. Eke et al. explains, “Adoption in social

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<sup>1</sup> John Swinton and Brian Brock, “Introduction,” in *A Graceful Embrace: Theological Reflections on Adopting Children*, ed. John Swinton and Brian Brock (Boston: Brill, 2017), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Annette Baron and Betty Jean Lifton, “Adoption,” in *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 3rd ed., ed. Stephen Garrard Post (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 68.

<sup>3</sup> Karen March and Charlene Miall, “Adoption as a Family Form,” *Family Relations* 49, no. 4 (2000): 359.

<sup>4</sup> As will be elaborated later in this chapter, most of the few adoptions in Nigeria presently are of infants and young children.

circles plays the role of legal placement of a homeless child in a childless home.”<sup>5</sup> Adoption is a win-win situation where the tears of children crying for affection and care of parents, and tears and agonies of childless couples are wiped away.<sup>6</sup> In the same vein, not only does adoption give infertile couples an opportunity to experience the joy and fulfilling experience of raising children, as Adam Pertman asserts, it also gives “a positive option for people who, for moral or economic or personal reason, believe they can neither undergo an abortion nor parent a child.”<sup>7</sup> In adopting children, though the adoption triad (adoptees, birth mother/parents, and adoptive parents) must be considered appropriately, Pertman states that the ultimate purpose of adoption is to provide “opportunity for children to grow up in stable homes with loving parents,” especially for those who for various reasons might not have had this opportunity.<sup>8</sup>

The practice of adoption, or artificial kinship (as some refer to it), has been said to be “as old as civilization.”<sup>9</sup> Adoption was practiced widely in ancient cultures. Derek Williams observes, “Records from Mesopotamia and Syria show that in the ancient Near East it was a legal act which brought a person into a new family relationship, with the full privileges and responsibilities of a child by birth.”<sup>10</sup> For instance, among Athenians, an adopted son had all the rights and privileges of natural born son, and his position as

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<sup>5</sup> C. B. Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption among Parents/Care-Givers of Children Attending Pediatric Outpatients’ Clinics in Enugu, South East, Nigeria,” *Nigeria Journal of Clinical Practice* 17, no. 2 (March-April 2014): 189.

<sup>6</sup> Maria C. Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption in Eastern Nigeria in West Africa,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews* 2, no. 1 (December 2014): 86.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Pertman, *Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution Is Transforming Our families and America* (Boston: The Harvard Common Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Pertman, *Adoption Nation*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Baron and Lifton, “Adoption,” 68.

<sup>10</sup> Derek Williams, ed., *New Concise Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1989), 8.

first son cannot be usurped if perhaps his father gives birth to other sons after his adoption.<sup>11</sup>

In Arabia, in the early days of Islam, adoption was practiced but not principally for preservation of family lineage. It was common for a stepfather to adopt his stepchildren, slave owners to adopt slave children that were fathered by them, and murderer fugitives to be adopted by their protectors. An adopted son was viewed and accepted as equal to natural born.<sup>12</sup> However, after Muhammed took the wife of his adopted son, Zaid Ibn Muhammed, the Islamic view and practice of adoption in Arabia changed. To justify that his action was not an incest (Qur'an, Sura, iv. 27), he pronounced a revelation of "Qur'an xxxiii 1-5 and 37," claiming, according to T. W. Juynboll, "that to call an adopted son a real son was wrong, inasmuch as the process of adoption could never create any bonds of blood-relationship."<sup>13</sup> Hence, marrying a divorced wife of an adopted son "was therefore not contrary to the will of Allah."<sup>14</sup> From this point on, adoption became an invalid institution in Islam. Currently, adoption is illegal in Egypt under Islamic law.<sup>15</sup> This history and practice of adoption in Islam plays a major role in acceptability of adoption in the predominantly Islamic Northern Nigeria.

### **Reasons for Child Adoption**

People adopt for varieties of reasons. Ray Guarendi writes, "It's probably safe to say that the range of reasons to adopt is nearly as broad as the range of personalities of

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<sup>11</sup> W. J. Woodhouse, "Adoption (Greek)," in Hastings, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, 109.

<sup>12</sup> T. W. Juynboll, "Islam," in Hastings, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, 111.

<sup>13</sup> Juynboll, "Islam," 111.

<sup>14</sup> Juynboll, "Islam," 111.

<sup>15</sup> Adeniyi Abiodun Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption as a Management option for infertility among women in a Developing Country," *International Journal of Women's Health* 4 (2012): 365.

parents.”<sup>16</sup> For instance, adoption can occur on a compassionate basis, especially when children and women captured in wars are adopted, or to rescue and care for abandoned children. There are also reported cases of women purchasing children and adopting them as their own because they are childless or to increase their family size. Some families adopt children or grown-up people to replace family members lost to wars or diseases. Others adopt to perpetuate their lineage (family continuity), to have people to care for them in old age,<sup>17</sup> to inherit properties,<sup>18</sup> to satisfy parental instinct,<sup>19</sup> to avoid discomfort of pregnancy and labor pains,<sup>20</sup> and for the love for more children.<sup>21</sup> Still some adoptive parents, even though they have biological children, adopt for religious reasons, some for humanitarian reasons, and yet in the words of Allen Fisher, “a substantial minority of adoptive parents are motivated by altruism rather than infertility” to adopt, to give a home, care, acceptance, and hope to rejected children either normal or handicapped, irrespective of race and color.”<sup>22</sup>

It is thought-provoking to note that those that adopt special needs children report satisfaction and fulfillment years after. Fisher states, “More than a decade after the adoption, the parents felt a great sense of gratitude that the option had made their lives

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<sup>16</sup> Ray Guarendi, *Adoption: Choosing It, Living It, Loving It* (Cincinnati: Servant/Franciscan Media, 2009), 11.

<sup>17</sup> G. H. Box, “Adoption,” in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (repr., Edinburgh: Clark, 2003), 115.

<sup>18</sup> Baron and Lifton, “Adoption,” 68.

<sup>19</sup> Brent Waters, “Christian Adoption?,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 307.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Obioma Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption and Emergence of Baby Factory in South Eastern,” *Nigeria International Journal of Education and Research* 3, no. 8 (August 2015): 65.

<sup>21</sup> Kathryn Joyce, *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking, and the New Gospel of Adoption* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013), ix.

<sup>22</sup> Allen P. Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good as Having Your Own”? Towards a Sociology of Adoption,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 338-39.

much richer, and only 10 of the 70 expressed any regrets about the experience.”<sup>23</sup>

Adoption is recognized by the United Nations as an alternative way of caring for children whose parents and family members are unable to care for.<sup>24</sup>

However, infertility is the most common reason why people adopt. In a survey completed in 1990s, of the 2,587 adoptive parents who participated, 69 percent reported that they adopted because of their own inability to bear children.<sup>25</sup> As observed by Mardie Caldwell, “Many often result to adoption as path to parenthood after they have exhausted all possible options of fertility treatments.”<sup>26</sup> Guarendi explains, “Certainly many adoptive parents have no intention of rescuing anyone. They want children and a family. In a way it is they who want to be rescued—from childlessness.”<sup>27</sup>

Though no accurate data is available according to Fisher, in the early 1990s, it was estimated that about 4 percent of Americans were adopted. This estimate is similar to what is obtainable in Western Europe’s and Australia’s populations as well.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, a survey of 1,416 Americans revealed how widespread the practice of adoption is in America. Sixty-four percent of these respondents “had a personal experience with adoption, meaning that someone in their family or among their close friends had been adopted, had adopted a child, or had placed a child for adoption.”<sup>29</sup> In this modern time, apart from infertile couples and other heterosexual couples adopting children for various reasons, there are two other groups of adoptive parents. First are

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<sup>23</sup> Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good?,” 339.

<sup>24</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 188.

<sup>25</sup> Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good?,” 338.

<sup>26</sup> Mardie Caldwell, *Called to Adoption: A Christian’s Guide to Answering the Call* (Nevada City, CA: American Carriage House Publishing, 2011), 15.

<sup>27</sup> Guarendi, *Adoption*, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good?,” 335.

<sup>29</sup> Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good?,” 335.

single parents. Adoptions by single persons has been reported to be of “dramatic increase” since early 1990s in America, and single women are the majority of these adopters. Another group of those adopting children are the homosexual partners. However, the actual number of children being adopted by gay and lesbian parents may never be known “because many applicants for adoption may conceal their sexual orientation from” various authorities responsible for adoption for fear of being denied child adoption. This point notwithstanding, it has been estimated that children being adopted by homosexual parents in America as of 2001 are in excess of one million.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Challenge of Infertility in Nigerian Culture and Child Adoption Practice in Nigeria**

Because survival and continued existence of any society depends on reproduction, children remain a high value in all societies.<sup>31</sup> Human beings desire to bear children for various reasons. These diverse reasons have influenced various cultures of the world as reported widely in literature.<sup>32</sup> However, as described in chapter 1, in African cultures, childbearing is the main purpose for marriage.

#### **Value of Children in Africa**

Africans value children to maintain family lineage, name, and to preserve family inheritances (mostly land and chieftaincy titles). Children also serve as a workforce on farms and as assistance at home. Hence, the more children a family has, especially male children, the better in the thinking and practice of Africans.<sup>33</sup> Adesina

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<sup>30</sup> Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good?,” 339.

<sup>31</sup> E. Sydney Hartland, “Adoption (among Lower Races),” in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1951), 106.

<sup>32</sup> Francis C. Ezenwankwo, Alero A. Roberts, and Mobolanle R. Balogun, “Acceptability of Child Adoption in the Management of infertility: A Survey of Women Attending Fertility Clinics in the Tertiary Facilities in Lagos,” *Journal of Clinical Sciences* 11, no. 2 (July-December 2014): 35.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Teg-Nefaah Tabong and Philip Baba Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning of Infertility and Childbearing: A Qualitative Study of the Perception of Childbearing and Childlessness in

Oladokun et al. observes that, despite Nigeria's diversity in ethnicity, religious affiliations, cultural practices, "childbearing is a unanimous measure of matrimonial bliss in all communities." At every wedding ceremony, irrespective of religious approach or cultural program, "special intercessional prayers are usually offered for the new couples against infertility."<sup>34</sup> Immediately after marriage, parents, extended family members, and friends expect pregnancy to happen, so much so that just three to six months after marriage, if no pregnancy shows up, everyone starts worrying and the couple is pressured both internally and externally.<sup>35</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor and Owumi opine, "Thus, childless couples would often suffer from combination of personal, interpersonal, social and religions expectations which brings a sense of failure to them."<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, with over seventy million couples reported to struggle with infertility in the world, surveys from the early 1990s to date have shown progressive increase in cases of infertility among Nigerian couples. Thirty percent of Nigerian women have been reported to be infertile,<sup>37</sup> while some other researchers have reported that 25 percent to 40 percent of Nigerian couples struggle with infertility.<sup>38</sup>

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Northern Ghana," *PLos One* 9, no. 1 (2013), <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0054429>.

<sup>34</sup> Adesina Oladokun et al., "Acceptability of Child Adoption as Management Option for Fertility in Nigeria: Evidence from Focus Group Discussions," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 13, no. 1 (March 2009): 81.

<sup>35</sup> Olanike A. Ojelabi, Pauline E. Osamor, and Bernard E. Owumi, "Policies and Practices of Child Adoption in Nigeria: A Review Paper," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (January 2015): 78.

<sup>36</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, "Policies and Practices," 78.

<sup>37</sup> Sonja L. Nieuwenhuis et al., "The Impact of Infertility on Infertile Men and Women in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 13, no. 3 (September 2009): 86.

<sup>38</sup> Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption," 366.



## **African Cultural View of Infertility, Causes and Treatment Approach**

Just like in most African cultures, inability to bear children in Nigeria is a great problem. Infertility is seen as “a personal tragedy and a curse, impacting on the entire family and even the local community.”<sup>39</sup> As observed by Oladokun et al., so pronounced is the humiliation that childless people are exposed to that “in some cultural settings . . . infertile couples are even not allowed to take lead [sic] role in important [extended] family functions and events . . . [and] are often socially ostracized by their immediate families.”<sup>40</sup>

According to health workers, infertility in itself is not “a life-threatening condition,”<sup>41</sup> but a plethora of psychological, social, cultural, and economic challenges complicate its management, especially in African settings.<sup>42</sup> Childless people are exposed to “depressive illness and marital disharmony.”<sup>43</sup> Among the Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria, for instance, the family name is held in high esteem. Inability to procreate can bring about stigmatization of the particular family and they may become isolated.<sup>44</sup> According to Omosun and Kofoworola, the Yorubas call barren women “*agon*,” which is a root “word that means to hold in contempt or to despise. This is probably a consequence of the societal belief that a woman has to prove her womanhood through motherhood and children are held as sources of pride, strength and economic fortune for

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<sup>39</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.

<sup>40</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 80.

<sup>41</sup> Ezenwankwo, Roberts, and Balogun, “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 35.

<sup>42</sup> Ezenwankwo, Roberts, and Balogun, “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 35.

<sup>43</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 80.

<sup>44</sup> Nieuwenhuis et al., “The Impact of Infertility,” 95.

the family.”<sup>45</sup> In some communities in Ghana, proper burial rights do not occur for infertile people when they die.<sup>46</sup>

Traditionally, in most household and communities in Nigeria, married men and women are referred to and called by the name of their firstborn, e.g., “Baba Mark” or “Mama Mark,” respectively—meaning Mark’s father or Mark’s mother. Thus, this cultural norm puts incredible pressure on the infertile who have no child with whose name he or she will be called.<sup>47</sup> Generally, infertility is stigmatized, but the cultural impact is different for men and women. Women may lose support, especially from the husband and his extended family members.<sup>48</sup> Infertile women suffer intense psychological pressure due to the “social pressure to become pregnant,” comments from family members and community, and personal pressure due to the general belief that only women who bear children are truly married or can claim the ownership of a husband or accepted by the husband’s family.<sup>49</sup> In the words of Omosun and Kofoworola, “in African society, a woman’s place in marriage is precarious until confirmed through child bearing and a man usually marries a second wife in an attempt to have a child.”<sup>50</sup>

Once more, in African culture, the inability to have male children is equally bad. Tabong and Adongo write, “The significance of male children is so intense that couples without male children are treated in the same way as those who do not have children at all.”<sup>51</sup> In some settings in the traditional context, infertility is not just failure

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<sup>45</sup> Adenike O. Omosun and Odeyemi Kofoworola, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Towards Child Adoption Amongst Women Attending Infertility Clinics in Lagos, Nigeria,” *African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine* 3, no. 1 (2011): 7.

<sup>46</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

<sup>47</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 79.

<sup>48</sup> Nieuwenhuis et al., “The Impact of Infertility,” 95.

<sup>49</sup> Nieuwenhuis et al., “The Impact of Infertility,” 95.

<sup>50</sup> Omosun and Kofoworola, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice,” 5.

<sup>51</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

to have children, but may also include having very few children or having only female children (whatever the number) without having a male child. The pursuit of having male children is another reason for polygamy.<sup>52</sup>

From an African worldview, causes of infertility may not only be natural or biological, but foremost supernatural. It is mostly believed that infertile women are witches and infertile men are wizards. If not, then an infertile person must have offended the gods or the ancestors who in turn visited them with infertility, or perhaps they offended some spiritually powerful people who placed a curse on them.<sup>53</sup> Again, customarily, in many African cultures, inability to bear children is blamed on women.<sup>54</sup> However, an increase in access to medical tests is changing this notion. According to Tabong and Adongo, medical researchers have shown that “about 50% of infertility is due to the female, 20-26% to male and 20-30% is unexplained” in most cases of infertility among Africans.<sup>55</sup> Biomedical common causes of infertility in men in Africa have been identified to be low sperm count.<sup>56</sup> The causes of infertility in African women include lack of ovulation, poor quality of eggs produced, and blocked fallopian tubes secondary to infection (sexually transmitted infection or infection secondary to unsafe abortion or postpartum infection).<sup>57</sup> Oladokun et al.’s research revealed the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in Nigeria, and the inadequate treatment of which results in tubal infertility in both sexes, among several other complications.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

<sup>53</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

<sup>54</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

<sup>55</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

<sup>56</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.”

<sup>57</sup> Tabong and Adongo, “Understanding the Social Meaning.” However, abortion has been said to be the main method of resolving the issue of unwanted pregnancy in Nigeria. Nieuwenhuis et al., “The Impact of Infertility,” 94.

<sup>58</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 87.

With the high premium placed on childbearing and psychosocial and cultural pressures that accompany barrenness, it is no surprise then that many couples go to an unimaginable extent in pursuit of biological reproduction. Spiritualist, traditional healers/herbalists, and hospitals are places infertile persons seek healing. Spiritualist and traditional healers/herbalists are often consulted first because of the belief in their powers to deal with spiritual forces causing infertility which medical personnel are believed not to have powers to deal with. Further, it is believed that healers maintain a high level of confidentiality, unlike in hospitals where people que up in open gynae clinics to see doctors. Hospital visits are often the last option when the efforts of spiritualists and traditional healers have not yielded the desired results.<sup>59</sup> However, in modern times, those who are educated seek medical attention for the treatment of their infertility first.<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, in pursuit of procreation, some go outside their marriage to become pregnant or impregnate someone else.<sup>61</sup> Established cases confirm that when the inability to bear children is due to infertility of the husband, the wife commits adultery in order to bear children.<sup>62</sup> Instead of thinking of adoption, it is common for an infertile couple, supported by their families, to consider divorce for women and the marrying of another wife (polygamy) for men.<sup>63</sup>

Although the advent of Artificial Reproductive Technology has led to an improvement in infertility treatments, the availability of such centers and services are limited in Nigeria. They are owned by private persons and are expensive to access. With

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<sup>59</sup> Tabong and Adongo, "Understanding the Social Meaning." Some authors have reported that some infertile couples sought the help of biomedical, traditional, and spiritual healers not necessarily sequentially, but simultaneously and this often led to a huge "economic impact." Nieuwenhuis et al., "The Impact of Infertility," 95.

<sup>60</sup> Ezenwankwo, Roberts, and Balogun, "Acceptability of Child Adoption," 37.

<sup>61</sup> Tabong and Adongo, "Understanding the Social Meaning."

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Hippo Books, 2008), 205.

<sup>63</sup> Oladokun et al., "Acceptability of Child Adoption," 87.

level of poverty in the country, not many people who need help can afford it, and the success rate of treatment is low as well.<sup>64</sup> Despite increased cases of infertility in Nigeria, management efforts are frustrated “by poor facilities, expertise and poverty.”<sup>65</sup>

With high cultural value attached to having children, the high cost of accessing Artificial Reproductive Technology and its low success rate, and the abundance of neglected and uncared for children in Nigeria, it could be assumed that adoption, which has been recognized as a management option in solving the problem of infertility, would be readily acceptable in Nigerian culture. However, this is not the case.

Child fostering has been more practiced in the culture than adoption. Though not officially institutionalized in Nigeria, child fostering is popular in traditional culture, as it is in many parts of Africa.<sup>66</sup> Fostering is referred to as customary adoption in Ghana.<sup>67</sup> Some writers refer to this practice as adoption under native law and custom since the total care and upbringing of the children concerned are performed by foster parents.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, worthy of note is a cultural and mystic belief that if an infertile woman has a child or children around her, the presence of those children will attract conception and birth of a baby for the woman.<sup>69</sup> For this reason and belief, many women, especially those struggling with infertility, are often counseled to foster children from

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<sup>64</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 80.

<sup>65</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 80.

<sup>66</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 369.

<sup>67</sup> Gilbert Ti-enkawol Nachinab, Ernestina S. Donkor, and Florence Naab, “Perceived Barriers of Child Adoption: A Qualitative Study among Women with Infertility in Northern Ghana,” *BioMed Research International*, June 9, 2019, <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/bmri/2019/6140285/>, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 189.

<sup>69</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 85.

their relations (a cousin, a nephew, or a very junior half sibling). This belief is the reason why some agree to adoption.<sup>70</sup>

In a study in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, 95.2 percent of respondents were open to fostering children, especially those related to them, and 93.4 percent would foster children from people they knew but were not related to.<sup>71</sup> In another study done in Kano, Northern Nigeria, the majority of respondents were disposed to fostering but not adoption. It must be noted, however, that these respondents were predominantly Muslim, and Islamic law approves fostering, not adoption.<sup>72</sup> Islam has developed the concept called *kafalah*, which supports a fostering system where orphans and abandoned or neglected children are taken care of by able adults, but such children cannot take the names of the guardians and foster parents and neither can they inherit from these foster parents.<sup>73</sup>

### **Factors Militating Against Child Adoption in Nigeria**

Unlike in most Western cultures, adoption as a management option for infertility is not widely tolerated in cultures of developing countries, Nigeria inclusive.<sup>74</sup> Socio-cultural consideration is the foremost reason why many are not inclined to adoption, particularly in Southern parts of Nigeria, while religious belief is the reason for aversion to adoption in Northern Nigeria. The biological family is viewed as ideal for family formation and any deviation is considered abnormal so much so that others may

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<sup>70</sup> Simon Utebor, "Is Baby Adoption an Alternative to Infertility?" December 30, 2018, <https://punchng.com/is-baby-adoption-an-alternative-to-infertility/>.

<sup>71</sup> Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption," 368.

<sup>72</sup> Sanusi Abubakar, U. M. Lawan, and J. N. Yasir, "Knowledge and Attitude Toward Child Adoption and Fostering among Infertile Women in Northern Nigeria," *Sahel Medical Journal* 16, no. 1 (January-March 2013): 23.

<sup>73</sup> Ojo Ibraheem Tajudeen, "Adoption Practice in Nigeria: An Overview," *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization* 19 (2013): 11.

<sup>74</sup> Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption," 365.

even be suspicious of the intentions of someone thinking of adoption.<sup>75</sup> In a study conducted in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, 78.3 percent of 506 women, and another 13.4 percent of the same population who were suffering from infertility, gave cultural concerns and lack of family support as the reasons why adoption was not acceptable to them.<sup>76</sup> In another study in Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria, 64 percent of the 396 women surveyed gave cultural unacceptability and lack of models or presence of examples of adopters in their locale as the reasons they would not consider adoption for management of their infertility.<sup>77</sup> Yet in another study conducted in Sokoto, Northern Nigeria, 71.6 percent (179 women) of respondents were unwilling to adopt because their husbands and parent in-laws would not support the idea and also because adoption would deprive them of their “conception role as women.”<sup>78</sup>

Second, in an African culture with strong family ties, familial acceptance of the adopted is necessary. This acceptance may not be freely given to an adopted child because an adopted child may not be considered kin and then would have no “genealogical rights.”<sup>79</sup> From this cultural view, some believe adoptive parents will have psychological struggles and may not be able to love an adopted child in the same way as a biological one.<sup>80</sup> In Adesina Oladokun et al. study in Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria, some

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<sup>75</sup> Onayemi and Aderinto, “Child Adoption Investigation in Nigeria,” 87.

<sup>76</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.

<sup>77</sup> A Oladokun et al., “Attitude of Infertile Women to Child Adoption in Nigeria,” *Nigerian Journal of Physiological Science* 25 (2010): 48.

<sup>78</sup> E. I. Nwobodo and Y. A. Isah, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Child Adoption among Infertile Female Patients in Sokoto North-West Nigeria,” *The Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal* 18, no. 4 (December 2011): 274.

<sup>79</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 369.

<sup>80</sup> Utebor, “Is Baby Adoption an Alternative?”

women are of the opinion that adoption is bad and that it “does not remove the stigma of being barren or childless.”<sup>81</sup>

Among the Igbos, a major tribe in Southeastern Nigeria, child adoption is not well accepted. In Igbo culture, an adopted child may not be accepted by extended family members and hence treated as an outsider in family meetings.<sup>82</sup> Adoptees are often discriminated against in the sharing of inheritance, particularly communal land. Maria Agbo states further that adopted children are not allowed to inherit the staff of office of the family (a position and honor given to the eldest man in a village or community).<sup>83</sup> Lack of acceptability of the adoptee by extended family members and community may lead to the adoptee being shamed and told that he or she is a “child of the government” and not a true child of the parents.<sup>84</sup>

Shame and the need for immediate and extended family’s acceptance of the adoptee make many either shy away from adoption or seek to do it in secrecy.<sup>85</sup> These cultural and familial reasons for rejection of adoption is not just a Nigerian phenomenon, it has been said to be common in developing countries of the world.<sup>86</sup> The idea that people want to hide their adoption journey is seen in the research done by Omosun and

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<sup>81</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 85.

<sup>82</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 68.

<sup>83</sup> Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption,” 88.

<sup>84</sup> Oladokun et al., “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 86. Some respondents who took part in this research by Adedokun et al., held that the Yorubas view an adopted child as a bastard who will ultimately ask for his/her biological parents in the future. Generally, in most of Nigerian cultures, children are expected to grow in their fathers’ houses. Among the Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria, a male child growing up and living among his maternal kinsmen is usually ridiculed and stigmatized as a bastard. The situation is worse with those born out of wedlock and worse still for illegitimate children (those born as a result of extra-marital affairs). Illegitimate children are complete out cast. Hence, these groups of children are constantly put under pressure culturally to look for their fathers and his people. Children, especially males, who grow up among their mothers’ relatives, are expected to leave one day to look for their fathers, otherwise they are unrecognized and cannot have inheritance among their mothers’ kinsfolks.

<sup>85</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 189.

<sup>86</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.



Kofoworola in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, where Igbo women (natives of Southeast Nigeria) who relocated away from their kinsfolk “were more willing to adopt than Yorubas” who are native of Southwest Nigeria living among their own people and culture.<sup>87</sup>

Third, in Africa, men often opt for polygamy either to have children or to have more children, rather than consider adoption. They typically prefer biological children over adopted children. High value is placed on blood relatedness. Hence, infertility, either primary or secondary, has been recognized as one of the reasons for polygamy in African culture where having several children is prized.<sup>88</sup>

Fourth is the influence of personal faith and religious practices. Choosing adoption is seen as a lack of faith by some people. People exercise their religious faith and also believe that their treatments will yield positive result. Adewumi et al. report in their study in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, that some Christian women rejected adoption “because they felt that adopting a child translate into a lack of faith in God who will therefore not answer their prayers.”<sup>89</sup> In Islam, according to Ojo Ibraheem Tajudeen, “adoption is prohibited under the Quranic edict.”<sup>90</sup> In the research done in Kano, Northern Nigeria, by Abubakar, Lawan, and Yasir, of the 146 respondents surveyed, 116 believed fostering is a good thing to do. The majority of these respondents (85.9 percent) were Muslims. Therefore, the preference for fostering over adoption by the respondents in this particular study is consistent with teachings in Islam that forbid adoption in its true definition. Islam only accepts fostering.<sup>91</sup> Most states in Northern Nigeria have not approved the practice of adoption because of Islamic influence.

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<sup>87</sup> Omosun and Kofoworola, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice,” 7.

<sup>88</sup> Nachinab, Donkor, and Naab, “Perceived Barriers of Child Adoption,” 3.

<sup>89</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 369.

<sup>90</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 11.

<sup>91</sup> Abubakar, Lawan, and Yasir, “Knowledge and Attitude,” 23.

Fifth, disagreement or opposition from one of the spouses, in-laws from one or both sides, and lack of support from friends and other people whose opinions are respected by the intending adoptive parents. In some cases, women are disposed to adoption as a solution to infertility but would not do it because of disapproval or lack of agreement with their husbands. In Omosun and Kofowarola's research, though only 33.7 percent of their 350 respondents were willing to consider adoption, only 9.7 percent of these women had approval and support of their husbands.<sup>92</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi observe, "The patrilinear and kinship nature of most Nigerian families make it very essential for a woman to gain the full consent and support of the husband and the extended family in a decision to adopt."<sup>93</sup>

Sixth, prospective adoptive parents have many fears. Such fears may include possible hereditary diseases, or psychiatric and epileptic diseases.<sup>94</sup> Closely related is the fear of possible behavioral patterns of the adoptee, which may be different from the norm in the adoptive family.<sup>95</sup> And often, as observed by Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, "couples willing to adopt are constrained by the fear of tarnishing their family's good name, should in case the adopted child is indeed anti-social."<sup>96</sup> There is also the fear of the biological parents claiming the child (adoptee) in the future,<sup>97</sup> or the adoptee becoming disloyal or completely abandoning the adoptive parents later in life in search of the biological family.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Omosun and Kofoworola, "Knowledge, Attitude and Practice," 4.

<sup>93</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, "Policies and Practices," 79.

<sup>94</sup> Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption," 369.

<sup>95</sup> Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption," 369.

<sup>96</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, "Policies and Practices," 79.

<sup>97</sup> Eke et al., "Perception of Child Adoption," 190.

<sup>98</sup> Adewunmi et al., "Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption," 369.

Seventh, for the few people considering adoption, some are wary of patronizing government adoption agencies. The reasons for distrustfulness include lack of confidentiality, high cost in adoption procurement, bureaucracy, long waiting time for adoption process to be completed, “the hijacking of the adoption process by middlemen,”<sup>99</sup> and corrupt practices where government officials demand gratifications before doing their duties.<sup>100</sup>

Eighth, ignorance of government laws and processes guiding adoption in Nigeria on the part of adoptive parents is another reason for low patronage. Consequently, unscrupulous elements take advantage of this ignorance of prospective adoptive parents which in turn leads to the discouragement of other would-be adopters.<sup>101</sup>

### **Sources of Information on Adoption and Growing Acceptability of Child Adoption in Nigeria**

All the negatives enumerated above notwithstanding, awareness of adoption as a treatment for infertility is growing in Nigeria just as it is in other developing countries.<sup>102</sup> Sources of how Nigerians get to know about adoption seems more of person to person sharing of information. Researchers report that respondents have heard or been counseled about adoption by friends or extended family members. In a study in Enugu, Southeast Nigeria, by Eke et al., 49.8 percent of respondents claimed they “first heard about adoption through their friends.”<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in a study in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, 47.8 percent

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<sup>99</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 194.

<sup>100</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 193.

<sup>101</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 193. The high cost involved in the adoption process, and waiting period, where adoptive parents must wait for years in adoption process, have been reported as discouraging factors in Ghana as well. Nachinab, Donkor, and Naab, “Perceived Barriers of Child Adoption,” 2.

<sup>102</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.

<sup>103</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 193.

percent of respondents claimed friends as their sources of information about adoption.<sup>104</sup> The finding of a study in Kano, Northern Nigeria, by Abubakar, Lawan, and Yasir, was even more pronounced: “Most of the respondents mentioned friends (72.3%), family members (70.6%) as their source of information about child adoption.”<sup>105</sup> Other sources of adoption information include media, churches, social welfare, and orphanages.<sup>106</sup> Globalization, influence of western culture, education,<sup>107</sup> and media publicity of the wide practice of adoption as a management option for infertility in the Western world are factors creating awareness and social acceptability of adoption in Nigeria.<sup>108</sup>

Apart from the growing awareness of adoption as treatment for infertility (though still low as reported in developing countries), acceptability of adoption has been on the increase in Nigeria. Increase in research on the subject of adoption by health and social workers, personal testimonies of those that have adopted, and promotion of adoption by non-government and religious organizations as a substitute to abortion have increased both awareness and acceptability of adoption among Nigerians.<sup>109</sup> Other factors currently increasing tolerability of adoption among Nigerians in recent years include the primary cultural premium placed on having children, increased cases of infertility, and the high cost of accessing Artificial Reproductive Technology treatments.<sup>110</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi state further that “this option of child adoption is recently becoming acceptable and more successful and affordable for infertile couples compare to ART. It

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<sup>104</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 367.

<sup>105</sup> Abubakar, Lawan, and Yasir, “Knowledge and Attitude,” 21.

<sup>106</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 191.

<sup>107</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 190.

<sup>108</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 368.

<sup>109</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 76.

<sup>110</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 76.

gives them the unique opportunity to be parents without the financial and the emotional rigors of the uncertain assisted, reproductive process.”<sup>111</sup>

A real evidence of this increase in interest and actual adoption in recent years has been reported in Lagos area, Southwest Nigeria. In a period of twenty-one months, between 2007 and 2008, 210 children were adopted in Lagos via its Social Welfare Department of the ministry of Youth, Sport, and Social Welfare (the department responsible of Adoption processes in Lagos State).<sup>112</sup> Then, about four years later (2012) in Lagos, in research carried out in three tertiary hospitals within Lagos, Ezenwankwo, Roberts, and Balogun discovered that among the 355 respondents surveyed, 31 of the women have adopted before and “226 (63.7%) expressed willingness to adopt if given the opportunity.” This team of researchers further discovered among their subjects that willingness to adopt “was positively correlated to respondents of older age . . . being Christian, and married.”<sup>113</sup>

Acceptability of adoption is higher among women who are educated and of higher income.<sup>114</sup> Tertiary levels of education lead to more exposure and willingness to research information about meaning and implications of adoption, and experiences of people that have done it aid the acceptability of adoption.<sup>115</sup> Financial capacity to meet

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<sup>111</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 78.

<sup>112</sup> Omosun and Kofoworola, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice,” 2.

<sup>113</sup> Ezenwankwo, Roberts, and Balogun, “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 36. Anu Thomas and Oluwatoyosi Funke Ojo report,

It has been revealed by many indigenous orphanages, especially in Lagos, that things have changed from when they used to appeal through the media for Nigerians to come forward to adopt a child, to having a waiting list of couples interested in adopting babies. According to a high-ranking source from the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Welfare, the Ministry now receives huge number of applications on a weekly basis without a corresponding availability of adoptable children. (Anu Thomas and Oluwatoyosi Funke Ojo, “Nigeria and Changing Face of Child Adoption,” May 11, 2019, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/05/11/nigeria-and-changing-face-of-child-adoption/>).

<sup>114</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.

<sup>115</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 370.

the standard set by agents of government responsible for adoption, like, housing and condition of living, stable source of income to carter for the adoptee, are the things these middle class people can provide. This middle-class status of prospective adoptive parents in Nigeria is consistent with what has been observed among American adoptive parents as well, who are usually of college level education and of higher income.<sup>116</sup> Acceptability of adoption is lower among women who were less educated and poor in Nigeria.<sup>117</sup>

### **Key Reasons for Adoption in Nigeria**

Just like in the West, as stated, infertility is the foremost reason why adoption is considered by Nigerians. Simon Utebor writes, “The moment all medical attempts fail, the next option is legal adoption. It is a provision that allows a woman and a man to have a child, without necessarily through the process of carrying a baby for nine months.”<sup>118</sup> Professor of psychology in Nigeria, Toba Elegbeleye, posits that adoption is a modern “way of circumventing the challenges posed by infertility.”<sup>119</sup> According to Adewunmi et al., a prolonged period of infertility and frustration with failed attempts of infertility treatments are motivating factors for adoption.

In Enugu, Southeast Nigeria, Eke et al. report that 88.4 percent of respondents in their research gave infertility as the reason they would consider adoption.<sup>120</sup> Adewunmi et al. report in their study in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, that almost half of the respondents (47 percent of 506) “thought that adoption should be encouraged and 211 (42.6%) said that they were willing to adopt if their infertility became intractable.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good?” 338.

<sup>117</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.

<sup>118</sup> Utebor, “Is Baby Adoption an Alternative?”

<sup>119</sup> Toba Elegbeleye, quoted in Utebor, “Is Baby Adoption an Alternative?”

<sup>120</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 192-93.

<sup>121</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 367-68.

Also, Nwobodo and Isa report in their research carried out in Sokoto, Northern Nigeria, that “willingness to child adoption was significantly commoner among respondents whose duration of infertility was more than 5 years . . . and those with no living child.”<sup>122</sup> Increasing age of women and length of marriage influence a desire to adopt.<sup>123</sup> Omosun and Kofoworola state, “Women of an older age group (40-48 years) with a longer duration of infertility (more than 15 years) were more likely to adopt.”<sup>124</sup>

The desire for a particular gender, especially male, is another reason for adoption in Nigeria.<sup>125</sup> There is a higher desire for the adoption of a male child among the Igbos of Southeastern Nigeria. The reason is that males are valued for propagation and preservation of family lineage among the Igbos in their highly patrilinear culture.<sup>126</sup> Without children, especially a son, one cannot be given certain traditional titles in Igbo land. Therefore, to qualify for such a title, some are constrained to adopt, especially a male child.<sup>127</sup>

Other reasons why people choose adoption in Southern parts of Nigeria include seeking company for an only child, acquiring the gender that is missing in the existing number of children (gender balance),<sup>128</sup> security for care and sustenance in old age (Nigeria is a country without social security for the elderly),<sup>129</sup> showing mercy or gratitude to God for His blessings, and wanting to serve the less privileged in society.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Nwobodo and Isah, “Knowledge Attitude and Practice,” 274.

<sup>123</sup> Ezenwankwo, Roberts, and Balogun, “Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 36.

<sup>124</sup> Omosun and Kofoworola, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice,” 4.

<sup>125</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 65.

<sup>126</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 194.

<sup>127</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 65.

<sup>128</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 65.

<sup>129</sup> Adewunmi et al., “Factors Associated with Acceptability of Child Adoption,” 365.

<sup>130</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 192.

## Child Adoption Laws in Nigeria

The adoption law of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria of 1965, “known as the Eastern Nigeria Adoption Law, 1965 which came into force on 20th May, 1965,” was the earliest statute on adoption in Nigeria.<sup>131</sup> This was followed by Lagos State that enacted its adoption law as part of family law in 1968. Other states in Southwestern Nigeria predicated their adoption laws after that of Lagos State. Oyo State passed its own adoption law in 1984.<sup>132</sup> States in South Western Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo) have been recognized as areas where adoption practices have been much more recognized than in other parts of Nigeria.<sup>133</sup> Most states of Western Nigeria therefore have agencies of government responsible for adoption procedures, although thorough usage of these agencies and the efficiency of personnel involved are often called into question.<sup>134</sup>

While in most states of the Southeast and Southwest Nigeria, adoption laws are operative, the reverse is the case with states of Northern Nigeria, there are no adoption laws. Child adoption is not supported by these states because of Islamic influence, as stated previously. “Ironically” as observed by Ojo Tajudeen, “the largest number of adoptable children, i.e., children in dire need of care and protection, come from that part of the country.”<sup>135</sup>

Orphans and abandoned or neglected children who are uncared for by their parents or close relations and whose relations are unknown and cannot be located by the juvenile court are considered adoptable in Nigeria.<sup>136</sup> According to most adoption laws in southern states of Nigeria, only children under the age of 17 or 18 years and unmarried

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<sup>131</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 8.

<sup>132</sup> Onayemi and Aderinto, “Child Adoption Investigation in Nigeria,” 90.

<sup>133</sup> Onayemi and Aderinto, “Child Adoption Investigation in Nigeria,” 90.

<sup>134</sup> Onayemi and Aderinto, “Child Adoption Investigation in Nigeria,” 96.

<sup>135</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 8.

<sup>136</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 8.



and have never been married are adoptable.<sup>137</sup> Generally, in most laws of the states, adoptive parents(s) may be single or a married couple. One person can apply for adoption to the court or jointly by a married couple. A male alone may not adopt a female child except “circumstances exist which would justify the making of such an order.”<sup>138</sup> The maximum age limit of at least one of the adoptive parents (in case of joint adoption by a couple) must not be more than forty-five years in the case of a first adoption. However, if they have adopted before or have other children, the maximum age is fifty years.<sup>139</sup> The minimum average age stipulated by the laws of most states is twenty-five years.<sup>140</sup> In all southern states of Nigeria, except Lagos state, applicants for adoption must be of Nigerian nationality.<sup>141</sup> Unfortunately, in Nigeria, most applicants for adoption do so after they have tried for years and have exhausted all means of having biological children and fail before turning to adoption as last result of having a child. By this time, they are older and mostly disqualified because of the laws.<sup>142</sup>

In 2003, the Nigerian National Assembly enacted the Child’s Right Act 2003. Part XII of this Act, sections 124 to 148 (23 sections), makes extensive provisions about how adoption should be practiced in Nigeria. It contains procedures and guidelines: all states in the federation should provide services and facilities that will aid child adoption practice; what qualifies a child to be adoptable; the process prospective adoptive parents must follow to be able to adopt a child, e.g., making an application to a court of law;

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<sup>137</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 8.

<sup>138</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 9.

<sup>139</sup> Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption,” 88.

<sup>140</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 9.

<sup>141</sup> Tajudeen, “Adoption Practice in Nigeria,” 9.

<sup>142</sup> Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption,” 88.

prohibition of payment for to facilitate adoption, etc.<sup>143</sup> Regrettably, however, many states are yet to adopt this national legislation and review their state laws on adoption accordingly. Many states that have adopted this Child Right Act are yet to commence full usage and implementation. They “have continued to regulate adoption practices with state legislations, making it nearly impossible to achieve the uniformity desired by the Acts.”<sup>144</sup>

### **Child Adoption and “Baby Factory” Phenomenon in Nigeria**

“Baby factory” or “miracle baby center” are the names given to a clandestine practice popular in southern Nigeria (more prevalent in Southeast<sup>145</sup>) where unwedded pregnant young girls are camped illegally, and after giving birth, their babies are secretly sold to those seeking children for adoption.<sup>146</sup> According to some researchers, the precursor of this evil phenomenon was the practice of persuading teenage pregnant girls not to abort their pregnancies but to give up their babies for adoption after birth. This noble act of persuading pregnant teenagers against abortion was started by good will individuals, medical practitioners, orphanages, and certain non-governmental organizations. Often to avoid shame and stigmatization, these philanthropists usually keep these pregnant girls and cared for them until they delivered their babies.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> “Nigeria Child’s Right Act 2003,” accessed October 26, 2020, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5568201f4.pdf>. Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owunmi are also of the opinion that the passing of the child Right Act into law by Nigeria government and the media coverage of the same perhaps have increased Nigerians awareness of adoption policy and process. Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 78.

<sup>144</sup> Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 78.

<sup>145</sup> Onayemi and Aderinto, “Child Adoption Investigation in Nigeria,” 90.

<sup>146</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 190. According to Maria C. Agbo, “the incidence of illegal orphanage homes ‘baby factories’ in almost all the Eastern states of Nigeria are so numerous in daily news that they cannot be counted.” Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption,” 88.

<sup>147</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 190.

Unfortunately, numerous stories of unscrupulous elements have hijacked this honorable course for financial pursuits—they outright sell the babies for huge sums of money in many situations.<sup>148</sup> Some extreme cases have been reported where vulnerable teenage girls with little or no parental care were recruited, camped, and turned into breeding objects; that is, young men were also recruited to impregnate these girls.<sup>149</sup> The babies born are usually offered to desperate “buyers”—adoptive parents, who in most cases are seeking secret adoption to avoid the shame of barrenness and stigmatization.<sup>150</sup>

Several reasons have been adduced for adoptive parents’ patronage of these frauds. Foremost is the desire for secrecy and confidentiality to avoid social stigma both on the part of the adoptive parents and the child being adopted.<sup>151</sup> The infertile couple (especially women) want to avoid the sociocultural shame of barrenness. Therefore, to make the “purchased baby” look like their own naturally born, there were reported cases where women, after planning with their “Baby Factory” agent, start faking pregnancy until their “baby” is born. Some relocate from their living environment for a period but return with the announcement of arrival of their “baby”<sup>152</sup> The objective in both scenarios is to hide the process of adoption from extended family members, neighbors, and friends, and present their babies as biologically born. On the part of the child, the desire for the baby to be seen as naturally born promotes the acceptability of the baby by extended

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<sup>148</sup> Agbo, “Socio-Cultural Challenges of Child Adoption,” 88.

<sup>149</sup> Chidi Nkwopara, “Imo Police Smash Baby Factory, Nab Impregnator, Rescue 17 Pregnant Teenagers,” *Vanguard*, May 9, 2013, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/imo-police-smash-baby-factory-nab-impregnator-rescue-17-pregnant-teenagers/>.

<sup>150</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 19. Some of these babies are also “allegedly sold to ritual killers for back magic,” human traffickers for sexual exploitation, and “fake fertility treatment operators.” Ojelabi, Osamor, and Owumi, “Policies and Practices,” 78.

<sup>151</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 70.

<sup>152</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 194.

family members and the community, thereby protecting the baby from stigma and possible ostracization in the future.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, apart from the desire for complete bonding, many want to adopt new babies (infants) to keep the adoption in complete secret, even from the child adopted. Socio-cultural pressure for procreation,<sup>154</sup> bureaucracy of government systems that make the adoption process complex, difficult, and time consuming,<sup>155</sup> and the poverty level in Nigerian society that make teenage girls vulnerable (to search for survival at all costs) are other reasons that allow the “Baby factory” phenomenon to thrive in Nigeria<sup>156</sup>

For babies adopted through these sources, normal adoption protocols are skipped. Among these omitted procedures are pre- and post-adoption counseling for adoptive parents and pre-adoption screening of adopters to check their suitability and trustworthiness for the care of the prospective adoptee. Couples that have maladjusted or unhealthy marriages that are not suitable to be adopters. Other character issues or lifestyle problems in one or both spouses that are indications that the adoption may fail and may result in the abuse of the adoptee. In addition, pre-adoption screening of the adoptee for certain infections (e.g., HIV/AIDS) or hereditary defects (e.g., sickle cell disease) are not usually carried out for babies from these “Baby Factories.”<sup>157</sup>

## Conclusion

From the various reports and research cited in this chapter, it is evident that awareness and acceptability of child adoption as a management option for infertility is on

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<sup>153</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 70.

<sup>154</sup> Omeire et al., “The Challenges of Child Adoption,” 70.

<sup>155</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 193.

<sup>156</sup> “The Menace of Baby Factories in the South East, Parents Encourage Pregnant Teenagers to Dispose Babies,” *The Herald*, April 28, 2013, <https://www.herald.ng/the-menace-of-baby-factories-in-the-south-east-parents-encourage-pregnant-teenagers-to-dispose-babies/>.

<sup>157</sup> Eke et al., “Perception of Child Adoption,” 194.

the increase in Nigeria. However, still running deep are the psycho-social and cultural barriers making Nigerian women feel that no matter how good adoption may look, it does not eliminate feelings of barrenness and correspondingly being denied the experience of pregnancy and the childbirth process. The next chapter of this project is a practical session geared toward equipping pastors (who are the primary teachers and counselors of infertile church members) with a balanced scriptural perspective on what they should teach and how they should help Christians struggling with infertility in the church. Infertile Christians need to see adoption as a divine calling and a ministry, and therefore a mission far beyond mere satisfaction of human instinct for parental experience and fulfilment of cultural expectation of having children.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The focus of this chapter is the detailed description of the project preparations, implementation, and the processing of the data gathered. This ministry project was implemented over a period of twenty-four weeks (from January to June 2021). The first six weeks were spent working on the approval forms for the Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary authority, writing seminars 1 to 3, and booking an appointment to meet with the Moderator (Chair) of the Union Baptist Association, in Jos, Nigeria. In the next fourteen weeks I wrote seminars 4 to 6, developed the rubric, met with the Association Moderator and subsequently the pastors, and distributed and collected the pre-test surveys. In the last four weeks of executing this project, the seminars were delivered, post-test surveys were completed done, and the data analysis was completed using the *t*-test for dependent samples.

#### **Target Group**

The target group for this project were the pastors in the Union Baptist Association of the Plateau Baptist Conference, Jos, Nigeria. The Nigerian cultural view of childbearing is antithetical to the biblical teachings on the subject. Those struggling with infertility are subjected to disdain without, and feelings of worthlessness within. Both of which make life valueless for those suffering from childlessness. This cultural position must be confronted and corrected by the biblical position on childbearing on one hand, and the beauty and godly position of adoption on the other hand.

The pastors are in the best position to re-educate people since they are the ones teaching, discipling, and often saddled with the counseling of those suffering from infertility in their congregations. I chose the Union Baptist Association pastors for the

implementation of this project with the aim that not only will these pastors begin to teach the Bible standard on childbearing and children adoption in their various churches, but they will spread the insight and knowledge gained to other pastors in other Associations, Baptist Conferences, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and to pastors in other Christian denominations across Nigeria.

### **Week 1**

The week of January 18, 2021, I finalized work on Ethics Committee forms and submitted them to the PDS office on January 22.

### **Week 2**

During this week of January 25, I worked on the final editing of the Survey Instrument, Biblical Knowledge and Personal Conviction on Childbearing and Children Adoption Survey (BKPCCAS). I also received the reply and approval of the Ethics Committee this week from the PDS office (January 26).

## **Preparations of Seminar Sessions**

I began writing the seminar sessions during this first phase of implementation and concluded writing during the second phase. Six seminar topics were determined, all with certain general features which included learning goals, learning objectives, and questions for interactions that sought to explore previous experiences and participant knowledge of the particular topic. Questions were also embedded within the seminar session or at the end to stimulate further thinking and summaries of the sessions.

### **Week 3**

I wrote seminar 1 during this week of February 1. The title of seminar 1 was “God’s Beautiful Gift of Children: Biblical and Theological Basis of Childbearing.” My goal in this first session was to state the biblical and theological basis of childbearing and to show the pastors that children are not properties of their parents, contrary to the cultural

position. The learning objectives were (1) for the pastors to appreciate the biblical position that children are gifts from God to their parents and not properties to be acquired at all costs; (2) to understand that parents are essentially guardians as both children and parents belong to God; and (3) to understand that the Nigerian cultural view of childbearing is contrary to biblical position.

I started this seminar session by showing the Bible teaching that children are made in the image of God; they belong to God (Gen 1:27; Ps 127:3-5) and that they are not the properties for parents to be acquired at all costs. Biblical records show that not only is childbearing a source of joy and delight to parents (Gen 30: 22-23; Luke 1: 13-14; John 16:21), but that childbearing is a part of God's blessings to the faithful among the people of Israel (Exod 23:26; Deut 7:14).

I showed in this seminar how the Nigerian cultural view of childbearing is in opposition to the biblical position and teaching. For example, in the Nigerian culture, like most African cultures, having children goes beyond a mere desire or satisfaction of the parental instincts. In Nigerian cultures, childbearing is a source of pride—a way to preserve one's lineage and family name, preserve family inheritances, have security in old age, serve as a workforce on farms, and as assistance at home. Hence, in the thinking and practice of Africans, the more children a family has, especially male children, the better. As a result of this value attached to childbearing in Nigerian culture, the central purpose of marriage then becomes childbearing. Any marriage without children is considered a failure.

In this seminar I showed the unfortunate influence of the cultural view of childbearing on biblical preaching and teachings of Christian leaders. Church practices and preaching generally have been skewed in support of this cultural position. Certain passages of Scripture (cf. Gen 1:28; Exod 23:26; Deut 7:14) and stories of infertile women in the Bible, such as like Sarah (Gen 21:1-7), Rebekah (Gen 25:21-26), Rachel (Gen 30:22-24), Hannah (1 Sam 1:1-20), and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7, 11-15, 23-25, 57-58) are



widely used to support the idea that all who were barren among the people of faith were miraculously blessed by God with babies. Therefore, the Bible is then erroneously used to support the cultural position and popular saying in Nigeria, that “all born by a mother are to give birth to children too.”

I then pointed out that two major consequences are observed because of this compromised teaching in the Nigerian church. First, infertile believers are exposed to pains, pity, ridicule, and stigmatization, just like unchurched people. This invariably has led some to seek similar solutions of adultery, divorce and remarriage, polygamy, and the use of unethical Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART) methods, just like unbelievers do in the culture. The second result is that most Christians in Nigeria (fertile and infertile) are not being taught nor are they aware of the blessings, biblical encouragement, and ministry opportunities associated with adoption. I concluded this seminar by raising questions for further discussions. (1) How do we reconcile the spiritual gift of celibacy with the idea popular among Nigerian Christians that, it is God’s will that every Christian must be married and have children? (2) Because of the sin of Genesis 3 (the fall of man), some, including faithful believers, will never be able to have children due to diseases or malformation of their reproductive systems?

#### **Week 4**

In the week of February 8-14, I wrote seminar 2, titled “Infertility: Causes, Pains, and Treatments.” My goal for the seminar was to acquaint the pastors with general knowledge of infertility, its causes, pains experienced by infertile couples, and possible treatments. The learning objectives of this seminar were (1) to understand that the ultimate root of infertility, like all diseases and disfunctions in the world, is traceable to the fall of man in Genesis 3; (2) to appreciate that infertility is accompanied by pains not only in modern times but even from biblical records; and (3) to comprehend that, contrary to the African view of the cause of infertility, not all cases of childlessness are a result of bewitchment and curses.

According to Wayne Grudem, “Infertility is the inability of a couple to conceive and bear children due to lack of normal function in either the man’s or the woman’s reproductive system.”<sup>1</sup> Experts report that infertility is on the rise in the world today and its causes may be biological, chemical, or pathological; that is, as a result of malformation of any of the reproductive organs, diseases, injuries to reproductive organs and systems, or many other possible reasons.<sup>2</sup> However, the cultural belief of Nigerians is that barren people are bewitched or cursed by ancestors or gods, or cursed from some spiritually powerful persons whom they have offended.

In this seminar I affirmed that, from the biblical standpoint, infertility “is another result of the fall, one of the diseases and disabilities that entered the human race after Adam and Eve sinned. Infertility was not part of God’s good creation as he originally made it or intended it to function.”<sup>3</sup> I also called the attention of the pastors to the fact that the pains and agonies they often witness in barren people have been around since Bible times (Gen 30:1; 1 Sam 1:6-8, 10-11).

Just as I detailed in chapter 3, I then called the attention of pastors to various approaches to treatment of infertility. Culturally, infertile Nigerians often consult spiritualist and traditional healers/herbalists first because of the belief in their powers to deal with spiritual forces causing infertility, which medical personnel are believed not to have powers to deal with. Further, it is believed that these healers maintain a high level of confidentiality, unlike in hospitals where people que up in open gynae clinics to see doctors. Hospital visits are often the last option when the efforts of spiritualists and traditional healers have not yielded the desired results. However, seeking medical treatments are becoming more popular among the educated middle class. I briefly

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 762.

<sup>2</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 4th ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015), 62.

<sup>3</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 763.

mentioned the unbiblical solutions of adultery and polygamy, which some turn to, and to which pastors are aware. I then introduced ART methods, which were discussed in detail in seminar 3.

### **Weeks 5 and 6**

During the weeks of February 15-28, I called the Moderator of the Association and booked an appointment with him. I secured an appointment with him for March 4.

During these two weeks I also wrote seminar 3, titled, “Assisted Reproductive Technology: Theological and Ethical Considerations.” This seminar sought to achieve two goals: acquaint participants with general knowledge of the ART methods, and evaluate each method in light of the Bible and Christian ethics. The learning objectives were to list (1) the commonly practiced ART methods; 2) ART methods that are biblically and theologically acceptable; and 3) ART methods that are not biblically and theologically acceptable, and reasons why Christians should reject and not practice them.

For a time of interaction at the beginning of this seminar and to view the pastors’ experiences, I posed two questions: (1) how many pastors present have seen couple(s) and their children helped by an ART method? and (2) All ART methods are good, helpful, and Christian ethics acceptable—do you agree or disagree? Why?

Just as the name suggested, I emphasized in this seminar that ART methods are medical technological methods that man has found useful in overcoming some challenges of infertility. I listed the ART methods currently being practiced as follows:

**Artificial insemination.** There are two types: by husband and by a donor. Artificial insemination by husband does not in any way contradict Scripture, but rather, can be seen as an application of wisdom in consonance with the call “to subdue and transcend nature,” through medical science.<sup>4</sup> However, in Artificial insemination by a donor, the sperm of a man is used to fertilize a woman to whom he is not married. Some

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<sup>4</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 768.

see this as adultery and unacceptable because it violates the biblical standard of a couple conceiving and bringing to birth their own baby. The Bible standard is that “children should be conceived and born to a man and a woman who are married to each other.”<sup>5</sup>

**In vitro fertilization (IVF).** IVF is the process where both a woman’s egg (ovum) and man’s sperm are harvested, and the sperm is allowed to fertilize the egg outside of the woman’s body.<sup>6</sup> Often, more eggs are fertilized than finally introduced back into the woman’s uterus. The fertilized eggs may be a product of a husband and wife, or a third party may be introduced. I stated in this seminar that evangelical ethicists differ on the morality of IVF, even in cases where there is no destruction of embryos. In IVF, several eggs are usually fertilized, selection is made of one or more most likely to survive by the doctor, these are placed in the womb of the woman, and then other embryos are either frozen or destroyed. While some feel the procedure is unnatural, hence biblically unacceptable, others are of the opinion that in cases where there is no destruction of embryos, the procedure is acceptable.<sup>7</sup>

**Biblical arguments against discarding fertilized eggs.** Several Bible passages support the fact that human life begins from moment of conception (Ps 51:5; cf. Ps 39:13). In Exodus, those that cause abortion through accidental injury were basically charged with murder and capital punishment was the verdict (Exod 27:22-25). While in the womb, Jacob and Esau struggle with each other. They were recognized and viewed as two nations (Gen 25:22-23). John the Baptist at six months in the womb was already performing a typical human activity (Luke 1:44). Wayne Grudem states,

These passages are relevant for the question of reproductive technologies, because they mean that we should not condone any such technology that will certainly lead to the death of even one unborn child who was conceived when the man’s sperm

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<sup>5</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 774-75.

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 768.

<sup>7</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 768.

fertilized the woman's egg, the cells began to divide and human embryo began to grow into a little baby.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, all IVF procedures that introduce a third party (through sperm or ovum) and/or involve destruction of embryos (IVF with selective reduction, IVF with multifetal pregnancy reduction, and all other related methods of reduction in IVF methodology) are biblically and morally unacceptable.<sup>9</sup>

**Embryo adoption.** Embryo adoption is usually from excess or extra embryo that the original parents are no longer using. They can be adopted by other infertile couples. They are like orphans whose original parents are no more caring for them. All biblical encouragement for care of orphans seems applicable to these orphaned embryos. Adopted parents can bring them to birth and care for them as their own adopted children.<sup>10</sup>

**Surrogate motherhood.** In this method of ART, a third party (a woman) usually for a fee, agrees to carry the embryo of another couple, or agrees to artificial insemination with the sperm of the husband of another woman.<sup>11</sup> “Surrogate motherhood is almost the ‘mirror image’ of AID, except that the female ‘donor’ sells her ovum, her womb, and her time, whereas the man sells his sperm” in AID.<sup>12</sup>

**Summary.** According to Grudem, three biblically and theologically based principles should be used to judge the acceptability of any of the ART methods. First, modern medicine in general is morally good since in most cases methods and medicines produced are derived from godly wisdom of subduing the earth (Gen 1:28). Second, God intends that a child should be conceived by and born to a man and woman who are married

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<sup>8</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 765.

<sup>9</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 774.

<sup>10</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 771-72.

<sup>11</sup> Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 779.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, *Evangelical Ethics*, 74.

to each other (Gen 1:28; 2:24-25; then see extensive commands against adultery Exod 20:14; Lev 20:10; Matt 15:19; Rom 13:9). Third, the unborn child should be treated as a human being from the moment of conception (Gen 25:22-23; Exod 21:22-25; Ps 51:5; 39:13; Luke 1:44).

Based on this principle, therefore, the following ART methods may be judged to be biblically and morally acceptable: (1) artificial insemination by husband; (2) IVF where egg and sperm are from the man and woman who are married to each other and there are no destruction of any embryo; and (3) embryo adoption.

Consequently, the following ART methods may be considered biblically and morally unacceptable. It may be said that in these cases, doctors are seeking to either play God and/or working completely against the principles of the word of God: (1) artificial insemination by donor; (2) IVF with selective destruction and also where egg and sperm are not from man and woman who are married to each other; and (3) surrogate motherhood.

## **Week 7**

During this week of March 1, I met with the Moderator of the Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, in his office (March 4). I shared with him the purpose of my project, and my need for his blessing and approval to allow me to recruit pastors for the training seminar. I also shared with him my long-term vision of seeing pastors in Nigeria teach the biblical position on childbearing to counter the cultural view that sees childbearing as the sole purpose of marriage and life to church members on one hand, and the teaching of adoption of children to those suffering from infertility as a great ministry opportunity on the other hand. He was fascinated about my project and vision. He promised to personally be involved with the mobilization of the pastors in Union Baptist Association, Jos.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The moderator has couples in his congregation struggling with infertility and he confessed to me that it has never occurred to him to counsel them about the option of adoption. In addition, as we discussed further about ART methods (he had little knowledge about the methods), it dawned on him that, at least in one instance of his experiences in the past of couples that he knew have done IVF, one of them

I collected the names and phone numbers of all the pastors in the Association from him. During this week, I sent messages through text and WhatsApp to all pastors to introduce myself, to tell them I would be sharing a survey during the Association meeting coming up on the March 13, and that I would tell them more about my project topic and purpose on that day.

### **Week 8**

In the week of March 8 to 14, I sent a second round of texts and WhatsApp messages (March 10) to the pastors reminding them that I would be meeting with them during the Association meeting coming up on March 13. At the exclusive pastors' meeting, during the Association meeting on Saturday March 13, the Moderator allowed me to speak. I shared with the pastors the purpose of my project, and what they stand to benefit in improving their knowledge and skills in appropriate counseling of infertile couples in their congregations. I then solicited their support and distributed the survey to those present to fill for the collection of pre-test data. Some completed and returned the questionnaire before the end of the day when the Association meeting closed.

### **Week 9**

I wrote seminar 4, "Biblical and Theological Basis of Adoption," in the week of March 15. This seminar was a summary of chapter 2 of this project. This seminar intended to cover the concept and practice of adoption in both Old and New Testaments. The learning objectives for the seminar was to help pastors understand that apart from physical adoptions recorded, there are images of adoptions in the Old Testament and that the adoption of Jesus by Joseph is the only physical adoption record contained in the New Testament. I also wanted the pastors to understand that Paul's adoption teaching was

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influenced both by his Judaism (which provided him with the history and theology) and must have done the IVF with the donor ovum (due to the age of the woman involved). He confessed that in his ministry experience he has never counseled against biblically unethical ART methods because he was not even aware of them.

Greco-Roman affiliation, which gave him cultural physical example and terminology. Lastly, I wanted the pastors to see that James 1:27 clearly teaches the need for practical adoption of orphans by believers.

At the beginning of the seminar, this question was posed for interaction to survey the attitude of Nigerian preachers to adoption: “How much do Nigerian preachers preach about adoption? If not it is not common, then why?”

I proceeded by stating the definition of adoption as espoused by Christian scholars (Donald Guthrie and Wayne Grudem specifically). Then moved on to discuss, in detail, examples of physical adoption in the Old Testament: Moses (Exod 2:10; Acts 7:20-21; Heb 11:24), Esther (Esth 2:7), and Genubath (1 Kgs 11:14, 17-20). The images of adoption seen in the Old Testament were also discussed to a large extent (Gen 15:2-3; Gen 48:5; Exod 4:22; Isa 63:16). However, the case of Jesus and Joseph, His earthly father (Matt 13:54-55; Luke 3:23, 4:32; John 6: 42), is the only instance of physical adoption in the New Testament.

The pastors were saw in this seminar that, in the New Testament, though other authors alluded to the idea of adoption (John 1:12-13; Jas 2:5; 1 Peter 3:6; 1 John 3:1-2, 10), only apostle Paul employed a technical term, *huiiothesia*, to describe the concept of adoption. The apostle Paul used this term on five occasions in his epistles: Romans 8:15, 23, 9:4; Galatians 4:5-7, and Ephesians 1:5. Exegesis of the passages were done, and applications were drawn to enable the pastors see the seriousness of the scriptures concerning the concept of adoption.

I concluded this seminar with an exegesis of James 1:27, the key verse in the New Testament that supports practical adoption of children. The force of this verse makes it clear that the best of the “seeking out, caring for and concern” that believers can show orphans is their practical adoption to eliminate their parentlessness, just like God did at salvation for every believer.



## **Week 10**

In the week of March 22, on Friday 26 specifically, there was an Association Pastors' Fellowship meeting. During this meeting, others that had not yet submitted their surveys returned them to me. I also had an opportunity to thank the pastors for their interest in my project and promised to communicate with them as soon as the date for the seminary was fixed. I also gave out surveys to four pastors that were absent at the previous meeting when the forms were initially distributed.

During this week I wrote seminar 5, titled "The Practice of Children Adoption in Nigeria." This seminar was the summary of most parts of chapter 3 of this project. The learning goal for this seminar was to survey factors militating against children adoption in Nigeria, the growing acceptability of adoption as treatment for infertility in Nigerian cultures, and the challenges faced by intended adoptive parents and adoptees themselves. The learning objectives set for this seminar were for the pastors to be able to list reasons why people adopt children generally and particularly by Nigerians and to understand the historical background to the reason adoption is not well accepted and practiced by Muslims (who are main inhabitants of northern Nigeria). Two additional learning objectives were to list factors that are militating against child adoption in Nigeria and to understand the factors that aid the "Baby Factories" phenomenon in Nigeria.

Apart from sharing the observation that adoption is a win-win relationship where the needs and desires of motherless babies and childless couples are both satisfied, as part of introduction to this seminar I pointed out, as it has been written in literatures, that adoption has been practiced in various ancient cultures from time immemorial for various reasons that were listed. Though, the most common reason in modern times is for the treatment of infertility. And this is number one reason why the few Nigerians that have adopted ventured into it, as recorded in chapter 3.

I progressed in this seminar to state the factors that militate against adoption in Nigeria. Chief among these factors are socio-cultural considerations mostly in southern Nigeria (biological process is viewed as ideal for family formation, hence extended family

members may not accept adoptees because of his/her lack of genealogical tie), while religious belief is the reason for aversion to adoption in Northern Nigeria, where Muslims are in the majority. Adoption is forbidden in Islam. The history behind this edict in Islam was briefly highlighted in this seminar.

Stated further in this seminar was the steady growth in acceptance of practice of adoption. Apart from the growing awareness of adoption as treatment for infertility (though still low as reported in developing countries), acceptability of adoption has been on the increase in Nigeria. Improvements in education in Nigerian society, influence of Western culture, increase in research, and media publicity of the wide practice of adoption as a management option for infertility in the Western world are factors increasing awareness and social acceptability of adoption in Nigeria.

I concluded this seminar by raising the issue of the “Baby Factory,” a clandestine practice popular in southern Nigeria, where unwed pregnant young girls are camped illegally, and after giving birth their babies are secretly sold to those seeking children for adoption. I called the pastors’ attention to the reasons why infertile couples were patronizing these illegal centers. Key among these reasons were socio-cultural pressure for procreation, desire to keep the adoption in secret, even from the child adopted, and bureaucracy of government systems that make the adoption process complex, difficult, and time consuming.

## **Weeks 11 and 12**

During these weeks of March 29 to April 11, I wrote seminar 6. titled “Christians and the Adoption Cause.” The only learning goal this seminar sought to achieve was to show biblical, theological, and Christian historical reasons why Christians should be motivated to practice adoption of children. The two learning objectives were (1) for the pastors to be able to enumerate various biblical, theological, and Christian historical reasons why Christians should be motivated to practice adoption of children,

and (2) for pastors to seek to encourage infertile Christian couples to consider adoption as a viable ministry option.

In this last seminar, I enumerated five biblical, theological, and Christian historical reasons why Christians (both fertile and infertile) should be actively involved in child adoption. The first motivation why Christians should not shy away from physical adoption of children is because of their own spiritual adoption by God. The second reason raised was that Christians are commanded to follow examples of heroes of faith (Heb 6:12); therefore, the example of Joseph the adoptive father of Jesus is worthy of emulation. Third, God's heart for the fatherless, as extensively taught in the Old Testament, should be motivate believers to embrace adoption (Ps 10:14, 16-18; 68:5-6; 146:9). Fourth, Christian history, from the early centuries to Reformation and post-Reformation eras, are replete with the Christian practice of orphan care and adoptions of abandoned and vulnerable children. Modern Christians cannot afford to change this narrative. The fifth reason why contemporary Christians must be involved in adoption is for the pursuit of the fulfillment of Great Commission. Revelation 5:9 says that all tribes will be present in God's kingdom. Adopting children across race, color, and nationalities, as well as discipling these children, is a form of doing global mission and a way of preparing for Christ's kingdom where every race, culture, language, and color will be represented (the details of these points are contained in chap. 5).

I concluded this seminar by stating that with the points raised, Christian couples struggling with infertility have good motivation to prayerfully consider if the Lord might be leading them to consider adoption of parentless children as a viable Christian ministry.

### **Weeks 13 to 16**

In the weeks of April 12 to May 9, I experienced some delays and distractions. I was unable to do as much as I desired and planned for. However, I worked on the rubric and got approval to use it. In the week of April 26 to May 2, after several weeks of consultations, the final decision was made on those who would constitute the expert panel

and would evaluate the seminar papers. This expert panel of four people, made up of two seminary professors (one from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the other from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), an expert on adoption processes (who had worked for many years in adoption services and ministries in the United States), and the fourth person was a local pastor in Jos, Nigeria (who has a master's degree in Biblical Studies and over thirty years of pastoral ministry experience).

### **Week 17**

By the week of May 10 (on the May 13 specifically), the seminar papers and rubric were emailed to the expert panel members who were in the United States and hard copies were printed for the local pastor in Jos, Nigeria, as he preferred. During this week, I also visited a proposed venue to be used for the seminar. I chose a well-known Christian guest house hall—Agape Christian Retreat Centre in Jos. This location was easy to access for all participants both coming from within the city and the suburbs. A hall with capacity for sitting about 100 people was chosen. Agape Christian Retreat Centre had adequate room for social distancing because of Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Week 18**

In the week of May 17, I individually visited three of the principal officers of the Plateau Baptist Conference of the Nigerian Baptist Convention: the Chairman of the Conference, the Chairman of the Pastors' Fellowship of the Conference, and the Chief of Staff to the President of the Conference. The purpose of the meetings, apart from intimating them of my project and its purpose and soliciting their moral and prayer support (such is culturally expected, though not compulsory), was my own strategic move to start preparing them for the future spread of my seminar teachings to other pastors in the whole Plateau Baptist Conference.

I was well received by these leaders. They saw my mission as an answer to an overdue challenge. The chairman of the Conference Pastors' Fellowship shared a couple

of stories from his experiences in ministry while counseling infertile couples. One of his stories was about a couple who was desperate to have at least a child. After years of various trials, they decided to have IVF. Unable to afford the cost, they resorted to borrowing money. Unfortunately, the procedure failed. The woman was so depressed that she attempted suicide.

During my meeting with the Chief of Staff to the Conference President, he was skeptical about a pastor teaching infertile Christian couples to consider adoption. He preferred barren couples exploring whichever ART methods that worked. As our discussions went further, I talked about ethical issues associated with some of the ART methods and he was surprised at such practices (e.g., ovum and sperm donations) and promised that he would personally attend the seminar to learn more.<sup>14</sup>

### **Weeks 19 and 20**

Within this period, the weeks of May 24 to June 6, the expert panel members returned their seminar sessions evaluations. The evaluations showed greater than 90 percent of the indicators scored at “sufficient” or above in all categories by all the panel members. Therefore, apart from some typographical and grammar errors (which I corrected immediately), the seminar sessions were approved by the experts.

On June 1, I met with the Moderator of the Association again—this time to consult with him in determining the day of the week and date for the seminar to be held. This was necessary in order not to pick a day and date that would clash with a major activity in the Association or Conference, or day of the week that many churches and their pastors have services. After checking the Association and Conference calendars and some brainstorming, we agreed that Thursday June 24 would be a good date. I sent texts and WhatsApp messages to all the pastors to inform them that the date for the seminar

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<sup>14</sup> Both the chairman of the Conference and chair of the Conference Pastors’ Fellowship sent their associate ministers (one and two Pastors respectively) to fully participate in the seminar. But as he promised, the Chief of Staff to the Conference President attended the seminar personally and actively participated.

was fixed for Thursday June 24, 2021. I included in the text that they should confirm the receipt of the text. By the following day, June 2, I called each of those that had not responded to my text and WhatsApp messages. I made sure that they all received the seminar information.

### **Implementation of the Project**

Several activities were carried out as the day of the seminar presentation approached. I initially planned with the management of the Agape Christian Retreat Centre to provide lunch and tea break for about twenty-five people (the twenty pastors and a few people I hired to help with media coverage and logistics). However, this number changed when I discovered that six more people would be attending as observers (the Chairman of the Plateau Baptist Conference sent his Associate Minister, the Chairman of the Plateau Baptist Conference Pastors' Fellowship sent two of his Associate Ministers, and the former Vice President-Ministerial, for the Conference also came with his Associate Minister). I also discovered that some pastors, especially those living far from the venue, may come late if they had to wait to take breakfast from their homes. Therefore, I ordered breakfast for all the pastors and increased the order for lunch and tea break snacks accordingly.

All the seminar sessions were conducted within one day. Several factors were responsible for this decision. Foremost was the time factor. Pastors are extremely busy. To ask them to commit time, perhaps, once a week for six weeks, or six days of a week, might have not received their agreement and commitment. Even if they agreed, it would have been impossible to have all of them each of the days. Finance and ease of transportation were other factors. Some of the pastors were living in the suburbs of the city. So challenging it was that, for this one trip, I reimbursed the transport fare of four pastors.

## **Weeks 21 and 22**

In the weeks of June 7 to June 20, I sent reminders to each of the pastors again on the June 11 and June 18. The reminder contained details of venue address, timetable, and feeding arrangements during the day of the seminar.

During the week of June 14, I visited Agape Christian Retreat Centre to update arrangement in the night of increase in number of pastors coming for the seminar. On June 17, all participant notes were printed and arranged accordingly.

## **Week 23**

I sent reminders to each pastors on June 21. Again, for all those that did not confirm their receipt of the text/whatsApp messages, I called them on June 22 to be sure they all received the reminder.

On June 23, a day prior to seminar, I visited Agape Christian Retreat Centre to inspect all physical arrangements. The hall was well arranged to respect social distancing. Covid-19 protocols were well planned for. Participants were to wash their hands before entering the hall. Hand sanitizer was available as well as also extra face masks for those that might not have a mask on seminar day. The lighting systems were checked and a standby electric generator was available in case of a power failure, PA systems, etc.

The seminar was conducted on Thursday June 24. The schedule for the day was as follows:

Session 1: 9:00 a.m.- 9:55 a.m. “God’s Beautiful Gift of Children: Biblical and Theological Basis of Childbearing”

Short Break: 9:55 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.

Session 2: 10:00 a.m.- 10:55 a.m. “Infertility: Causes, Pains and Treatment”

Tea Break: 10:55 a.m.- 11:10 a.m.

Session 3: 11:10 a.m.- 12:00 p.m “Assisted Reproductive Technology: Theological and Ethical Considerations”

Lunch Break: 12 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Session 4: 1:00 p.m.- 1:50 p.m. “Biblical and Theological Basis of Adoption”

Short Break: 1:50 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.

Session 5: 2:00 p.m.- 2:50 p.m. “The Practice of Children Adoption in Nigeria”

Tea Break: 2:50 p.m.- 3:05 p.m.

Session 6: 3:05 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. “Christian and the Adoption Cause”

Post-Seminar Survey: 4:00 p.m.

The last exercise on the seminar day was the administration of post-seminar questionnaire to collect post-seminar data. Some completed their surveys and returned them immediately.

### **Week 24**

During this last week of the project (June 28 to July 4), I collected the remaining post-seminar questionnaire from the pastors. I entered the pre–and post-seminar survey data into a *t*-test template. The survey forms from two participants were excluded from processing because these individuals missed one session.

### **Conclusion**

The pre- and post-seminar surveys were measured by *t*-test for dependent samples. The details analysis of the results are the subject of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The focus of this chapter is to assess the project by evaluating the purpose and the goals set out for this project. This chapter will also assess the project's strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, my theological and personal reflections on my experiences while executing this project are offered.

#### **Evaluation of the Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to biblically and theologically equip pastors in the Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria (Plateau Baptist Conference of Nigerian Baptist Convention) to teach adoption of children as a viable ministry option to infertile couples for care of orphans, satisfaction of parental instinct (the desire to have children), and fulfillment of the Great Commission to the glory of God.

As stated in chapter 1, the Nigerian cultural view of childbearing is in complete opposition to the biblical position on reproduction. From the Nigerian cultural perspective, childbearing is the main purpose of marriage and the greatest goal in life. Those without children are not respected and are often stigmatized, and even ostracized in some situations. Therefore, life, and any marriage without reproduction, is considered a total failure. Hence, barrenness in Nigerian culture, to some extent, has been responsible for adultery (in search of pregnancy), divorce and remarriage, and polygamy.

Because of a lack of sound biblical preaching and teaching as an appropriate response to counter the cultural view, Nigerian Christians are not immune from this cultural outlook to childbearing. It is not uncommon then to see Nigeria Christians seeking solutions in the same ways as unbelievers, including engaging in unscriptural practices of adultery for the purpose of having children out of wedlock, divorce and

remarriage, polygamy, and particularly now in modern times, acceptance of any of Artificial Reproductive Technology Methods (as long as children are produced) without any recourse to biblical and theological ethical issues associated with some of the ART methods. For this same reason of poor biblical teaching and preaching, the pains and shame of barrenness are not properly handled, and child adoption, by both fertile and infertile Christians, is not taught as a form of Christian ministry and treatment of infertility. These are the reasons this project as an intervention was necessary.

The completion of this project showed that the project was relevant and well accepted. During the mobilization for the seminar, as I shared my purpose of the project (both short and long-term), the various subjects the seminar would cover, and the knowledge and skills pastors would gain in ministering to infertile people, I noticed that some pastors were curious, some were intrigued, and of course, some were skeptical. However, many were enthusiastic, so much so that when I delayed the date for the seminar (due to various preparations and challenges), they queried why I was delaying the seminar whenever they saw me. They shared with me their personal experiences and struggles either with counseling members struggling with infertility or dealing with members who had taken to unbiblical ways seeking to solve their problem of barrenness.

Finally, on the day of the seminar, I asked, “Who amongst you has preached or taught church members about children adoption?” Twenty-eight pastors were present with ministry experience ranging from three years to thirty-six years, and not one of them had preached about adoption. Then I asked, “Is there any one here who does not know someone personally who is struggling with infertility?” There were none. Everyone present knew at least one couple personally in his or her circle of influence that is struggling with infertility; either a sibling, a close family member, a church member, or a neighbor. The six seminar sessions were presented and there were questions and interactions. Generally, the seminar sessions were well received. At the end of the day, some shared testimonies of how the seminar had impacted them. They claimed they have

never heard anyone preach or teach on adoption before and they were not aware that the Bible had so much to say about adoption. The Moderator (Chair) of the Association himself quoted Luke 24:27 and said, “You have really opened our eyes to understand the scriptures in this area. I never knew the Bible has so much to say about adoption.”

One pastor confessed that he was offended after hearing my appeal at the pastors’ meeting advocating that pastors should teach about adoption. “Why should a pastor be teaching about adoption and destroying people’s faith?” he said to himself and promised himself that he will never preach it. He further said,

I only came to this seminar to see and hear what you had to say. But now I am completely overwhelmed. I never knew the Bible has so much to say about adoption. I never knew as a pastor; I have such a huge responsibility to biblically confront our dehumanizing cultural beliefs on childbearing. I’m so glad I didn’t miss this seminar.

Another senior pastor, a former moderator of the Association, recommended that since the Chief of Staff to the President, a former Vice President (ministerial) and the Associate ministers to the Conference Chair and Chairman of Pastor’s Fellowship of the Conference were all present, that a proposal should be made to the President of the Plateau Baptist Conference for all pastors in the Conference to go through the seminar. All present acceded to his recommendation.

From the enthusiasm shown by these pastors, it seemed they felt equipped and now confident to do their job of biblically teaching and counseling childless couples in their congregations. Therefore, from all that transpired in the seminar, this project fulfilled its purpose.

### **Evaluation of the Goals**

In the pursuit of this project, four goals were stated. The first goal was to assess the biblical knowledge and personal convictions of pastors in the Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, about childbearing and child adoption. In accordance with the methodology, this first goal was measured by administering the Biblical Knowledge and Personal Conviction on Childbearing and Children Adoption Survey (BKPCCAS).

Sixty percent of the targeted pastors needed to have filled out and submitted this questionnaire for this first goal to be considered successfully met. The BKPCCAS was administered to twenty pastors as planned under methodology and they all filled out and returned the questionnaire. Therefore, the goal was successfully met.

The second goal was to develop seminar papers in the following areas: biblical and theological basis of childbearing; biblical and theological basis of adoption, the problem of infertility, adoption practice in Nigeria, ethical and theological considerations of modern reproductive techniques, and Christians and the adoption course. In accordance with the methodology, a panel of experts consisting of two seminary professors, an expert on adoption services (all in the United States) and a local pastor in Jos, Nigeria, utilized an evaluation rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, theological accuracy, scope, teaching methodology, and applicability of the seminar sessions. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient levels. The six sessions of the seminar were developed and sent to each member of the expert panel with the evaluation rubric. The expert panel completed their assessments based on the evaluation criteria and their reports showed that the seminar met or exceeded sufficient levels. Therefore, the second goal was met.

The third goal was to teach the seminar sessions to pastors in Union Baptist Association in Jos, Nigeria. In accordance with the stated methodology, this goal was considered successful when the seminars had been presented and at least twelve (60 percent) out of the twenty targeted pastors in the Association were present and fully participated in all the seminar sessions. The seminar sessions were presented in one day. All twenty pastors were present for all sessions except for two who stepped out to attend to some personal matters. These two missed at least one session each. Eighteen pastors were present throughout the sessions. Therefore, since 90 percent (18 out of 20) of the targeted audience was present and fully participated, this third goal was also met.

The fourth goal was to assess the changes in biblical knowledge and changes in personal convictions of the pastors about childbearing and child adoption after attending the seminar. In accordance with the methodology, this goal was measured by administering the BKPCCAS to the same pastors who completed it prior to the seminar and attended all seminar sessions, and the pre-seminar and post-seminar scores were compared using the *t*-test for dependent samples. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre-seminar scores and post-seminar scores. The BKPCCCAS was administered and all twenty pastors completed the survey. However, the questionnaires (both pre and post) for the two pastors that missed a session were excluded during data processing. The pre- and post- questionnaire surveys were measured by *t*-test for dependent samples. The mean score for pre-seminar survey (variable 1) was 241.33, while the mean score for post-seminar survey (variable 2) was 292.78. The *t*-test showed that the seminar made a positive significant difference, which resulted in improvement of biblical knowledge and biblical personal convictions of the eighteen pastors:  $t_{(17)} = -11.49, p < .0001$ .

Two former professional doctoral students of SBTS completed projects similar to mine. They too measured the effects of their interventions on their targeted groups. Peter Joseph measured the positive effects of his sermons on the knowledge, attitude, and levels of engagements of 54 selected parents in his denomination (the Seventh-Day Adventist) in their spiritual leadership of their families<sup>1</sup>; while Adam Williams measured the effects of his seminar teachings on the knowledge and practice of spiritual discipleship of children by parents and children workers in his church in Frederick, Maryland.<sup>2</sup> These projects both reported statistically significant results after they carried out *t*-tests for

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Joseph, "Equipping Spiritual Leaders in the South Bahamas Conference of Seventh-Day Adventist, Nassau, Bahamas" (DEdMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Tressler Williams, "Equipping Parents at Mountain View Community Church in Frederick, Maryland to Disciple Their Children at Home" (DEdMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 70.

dependent samples between their pre- and post- interventions survey scores. Joseph reported,  $t_{(53)} = 4.940, p = .0004$ ,<sup>3</sup> while Williams reported,  $t_{(13)} = 4.521, p = .0002$ .<sup>4</sup>

However, this current study in comparison shows a greater  $t$  value of 11.492,  $p = .0001$ , which means in this study, the effects of the seminars taught to participating pastors were far more impressive. Table 2 is a sample of the responses (pre- and post-) to a selected set of questions. These responses show the impact of the seminar in improving biblical knowledge and convictions of the trained pastors.

Table 1. Pre-study and post-study participant responses to selected questions

		Disagree	Agree
<b>Question 6.</b> Inability to have children by some Christian couples is as a result of the fall of man and sin of Genesis chapter 3.	PRE	11	7
	POST	2	16
<b>Question 15.</b> Just like Sarah, Rachael, Hannah and Elizabeth, all true believers who struggle with infertility should eventually have miracle babies.	PRE	11	7
	POST	17	1
<b>Question 16.</b> Children born essentially belong to their parents.	PRE	9	9
	POST	14	4
<b>Question 22.</b> I believe doctors doing “test-tube babies” technology are playing God in some other ways.	PRE	13	5
	POST	3	15
<b>Question 25.</b> I don’t see anything wrong in people going for any of the “test-tube babies” technology method if they can afford it and as long as children are produced.	PRE	6	12
	POST	16	2
<b>Question 27.</b> All truths are God’s truth, God gave doctors wisdom, it is therefore okay for Christians to use any of the “test-tube babies” technology methods.	PRE	6	12
	POST	18	0
<b>Question 29.</b> There is no record of adoption in the Bible.	PRE	12	6
	POST	18	0

### Strengths of the Project

This ministry project had some strengths which future ministry research projects could find helpful. First of these strengths was my meetings with the Association

<sup>3</sup> Joseph, “Equipping Spiritual Leaders,” 99.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, “Equipping Parents,” 70.

Chairman and other influential leaders in the Conference to share both the short-term goal (completing this project) and long-term vision and mission of the seminar. The support of these leaders gave credibility to the project as they became sponsors of the program to other pastors.

The second strength of this project was the vision, knowledge, and understanding it gave to the pastors as gospel ministers to do a better job in teaching and counseling the infertile couples giving them biblical hope in this demeaning cultural context. Adoption, which has been recognized as a treatment option for infertility, has a very strong biblical and theological basis. It is therefore a double win for Christians to explore it as a ministry in solving the problem of infertility.

Third, the seminar sessions were saturated with Scripture. Bible passages were used copiously to show that the Nigerian cultural views and values attached to childbearing is at best idolatrous. Biblical and theological principles on childbearing and child adoption were espoused and extensively supported by Scripture.

Fourth, local research and articles by Nigerians were appreciably examined. The beauty of these writeups was that the literature and research cited covered the differences in the incidences of adoption practice in the three regions of Nigeria (North, Southwest and Southeast). These give insights into how adoption is practiced in the different cultures.

Fifth, the pervasiveness of the subject matter was a strength of the project. Every pastor present knew at least one couple (a sibling, a family member, a church member, or a neighbor) struggling with infertility. Therefore, the topic and its ramifying issues were not theoretical. As the sessions were going on, there were several “aha moments” where participants were either recollecting experiences or gaining understandings into why an infertile person had acted in a particular way. The pastors also gained insight on how a better job could have been done in teaching and counseling a childless person. Everyone had a story to tell or experience to share. Seminar 3, “Assisted Reproductive Technology:

Theological and Ethical Considerations,” was thought provoking to this audience. Many pastors were not aware that some ART methods are not acceptable to Christian ethics, and the seminar was an eye opener for them. They then saw more reasons why they need to teach about challenges of infertility and share with their congregations biblically correct options of treatment and why Christians should be wary of some ART treatment options.

Sixth, some wrong notions about adoption were corrected. For instance, one pastor shared his experience of witnessing an American missionary couple to Nigeria adopt two Caucasian children from the United States. According to this pastor, both children turned bad. The girl had a child out of wedlock and the younger, a boy, ended up abusing drugs. From his sharing, this pastor concluded that these children turned bad because they were adopted, and therefore adoption is bad. This pastor shared their story as his objection to the idea of teaching about adoption in the early part of the seminar day. As the day moved on, particularly after the session on the biblical and theological basis of adoption, it became clear to him that it is unwise to conclude that a biblical position is a bad idea just because of one bad experience. I also communicated to the participant that it has been documented by research that adoptions go sour in about 15 percent of cases.<sup>5</sup> But the question remains, do all biological children turn great in all situations?

Finally, mode of publicity was another strength of this project. I utilized face-to-face, person-to-person communication at the initial time of introducing the project and then reminded participants of the upcoming seminar day with text and WhatsApp messages and personal phone calls.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

A few areas stood out as weaknesses of this project. Foremost was that all six seminar sessions were packed into just one day. This did not allow for deep reflections on

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<sup>5</sup> Allen P. Fisher, “Still Not Quite as Good as Having Your Own? Towards a Sociology of Adoption,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 348.



the sessions and internalization of principles and concepts, and because of time constraints, participants were not allowed to share, interact, or ask questions as much as they would have liked.

Another weakness of this project was that an accountability system was not put in place before the pastors dispersed on the day of the seminar. The pastors left the seminar with enthusiasm and a feeling of satisfaction that some of their own questions were answered about how to be more effective and scripturally balanced in ministering to church members who are mostly rejected by the culture because they are barren. But the question is, how many of these pastors will be strong enough to confront this evil cultural belief (and also refute the compromises of other preachers) in their congregations and bring relief to members who are struggling with infertility?

Another weakness of this seminar was that there were no real-life testimonies shared by either an adoptive parent (or couple) or by an adoptee of their experience with adoption. Testimonies by either of these would have increased the impact of this seminar on the pastors.

Finally, a day after the seminar, one pastor sent me a text requesting the details about one of books I used. It then occurred to me that I did not share a list of some helpful resources with the participants for their further studies.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

The busy schedule of the pastors notwithstanding, this seminar should have been scheduled for about three hours per day, one day a week, for three weeks. With this schedule, the sessions would not have been rushed and more time would be allowed for questions, clarifications, and interactions. In addition, at least two of the sessions (seminar 4: “Biblical and Theological Basis of Adoption” and seminar 5: “The Practice of Adoption in Nigeria”) possibly could be split into two different sessions each. Both are too long to be a session each. By the split of these two sessions, their contents would not

be rushed through, and the pastors would have ample time to reflect and internalize the contents of the seminars.

Second, when doing this seminar next time, I will infuse an accountability system. Foremost will be to ask the pastors to commit to teaching and preaching on adoption at least once a month during the Sunday service for the next six to eight months after the seminar. Next, I would suggest that two to three pastors form into accountability groups/partners to check on each other to be sure they are encouraging one another to make this happen. This accountability system would ensure that pastors deliberately insert into their preaching schedules, at least once a month, issues related to childbearing and adoption as addressed by various sessions of this seminar to their congregations.

Third, the next time I teach this seminar, I will endeavor to have at least one adoptive parent share about their journey into adoption with seminar participants. As recorded in chapter 3, one of the reasons some people are reluctant to adopt is because there were no models of adoptions (adoptive parents or adoptees) in their community. If the pastors also have adoptive parents or adoptees share their testimonies with their congregations, and with couples struggling with infertility, then their messages will be more impactful.

Fourth, when doing this seminar again, I will take along a couple of the major books that I used in preparing the seminar for the participant to view and I will include a bibliography at the end of seminar 6 subsequently.

Finally, another step I would explore is to have an obstetrics and gynecology expert, who is also a strong Christian, to teach seminar 3 (“Assisted Reproductive Technology Methods: Theological and Ethical Considerations”). Such an expert and committed Christian would do a better job addressing the technical topic and better the understanding of the participants.

## Theological Reflections

From the teachings of the Bible and Christian theology, believers have an abundance of reasons why they should take adoption of orphans and other uncared for children seriously. Humans became orphaned in Genesis 3 at the fall, when man lost his relationship, inheritance, and identity with God.<sup>6</sup> But at God's appointed time, He sent His son, Jesus, to redeem man and reconcile man back to Himself. Galatian 4 says,

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (vv. 4-7).

The foremost reason, therefore, why Christians should not shy away from physical adoption of children is because of their own spiritual adoption. Tony Merida and Rick Morton rightly observe, "We were orphans, until God the Father adopted us and made us brothers and sisters of our elder brother Christ." Loving orphans to the extent of adopting them, as opined further by Merida and Morton, "is to demonstrate the love of God in a powerful way."<sup>7</sup> In the words of Stephen G. Post, "Adoption is . . . at the very core of the Christian narrative of salvation by faith."<sup>8</sup> Timothy P. Jackson observes further that "Christianity grew out of God's 'adoption' of the Gentiles [and Jews], the gracious extension of a covenant to those not originally God's people. . . . Therefore, a positive attitude toward adoption is tied to the very identity of Christian belief and believers."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, individual Christians (both fertile and infertile), church organizations, and denominations cannot afford to be wary of taking up the adoption cause. Merida and

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<sup>6</sup> David Prince, "What Are We For?" in *The Gospel & Adoption*, ed. Russell Moore and Andrew T. Walker (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Merida and Rick Morton, *Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 2011), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen G. Post, "Adoption: A Protestant Agapic Perspective," in *The Morality of Adoption: Social-Psychological, Theological, and Legal Perspectives*, ed. Timothy P. Jackson (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 174.

<sup>9</sup> Timothy P. Jackson, "Suffering the Suffering Children: Christianity and the Rights and Wrongs of Adoption," in Jackson, *The Morality of Adoption*, 189.

Morton state, “Once we begin to see the glory of God’s adoption of sinners as the highest privilege of the gospel, then our view of the adoption of kids changes dramatically. We get to demonstrate the gospel. . . . God is pro-adoption . . . historically, Christians have been.”<sup>10</sup>

Contemporary believers must be involved in child adoption. Again, from a biblical standpoint (examples of divine adoption and biblical command for the care of orphans and the fatherless), adoption of children by Christians cannot be based only on whether one is able to have biological children; “rather, we [must] see both orphan care and adoption as expressions of practical Christianity.”<sup>11</sup>

Second, as stated in chapter 3, Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, but he adopted Jesus thereby protected Him from cultural contempt of being seen as an illegitimate child.<sup>12</sup> Joseph carried out fatherly roles in the life of Jesus, such as naming Him (Matt 1:25) and protecting Him from danger when Herod was seeking His life (Matt 2:13-24). Joseph also trained Him in the family business of carpentry (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). Scripture commands believers to follow the examples of faithful saints who have pleased the Lord by their lives (Heb 6:12). Believers will do well to follow the model of Joseph and to cover shame as well as offer protection to vulnerable orphans through adoption.

Third, God’s heart for the fatherless should be a motivation for believers to embrace adoption. The Old Testament has extensive records for how much God cares for orphans and the fatherless as detailed. In the New Testament, God is pro-adoption. Believers should imitate Him by doing same (Eph 5:1). The adoption of those who come to Christ by God into His family was planned “before the creation of the world” (Eph 1:4-5) and actualized at His appointed time when Jesus came into earth and paid for salvation

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<sup>10</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 71.

<sup>11</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 71.

<sup>12</sup> Jackson, “Suffering the Suffering Children,” 189.

of humankind by His death (Gal 4:4-6). Therefore, physical adoption of children by believers is the practical demonstration of the spiritual adoption believers have received from the Lord.<sup>13</sup> God commands believers to be merciful to the needy and helpless (Ps 68:5; Jas 1:27). Adoption is a way of showing mercy to the needy and the helpless. While religious rituals are not bad in themselves, James 1:27 clearly teaches that authentic faith lies in the practical demonstration of care for orphans. The adoption of orphans is a way to demonstrate authentic faith in Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the early Christians' example is a reason why contemporary Christians should practice adoption of orphans. In the Roman empire, during the time of Christ and the early church, abandoning unwanted children in the "trash heap beside homes" was widely practiced. Some who wanted these children picked them and raised them. Unfortunately, in some situations they raised these children and turned them to prostitutes, gladiators, or slaves. However, in contrast, as Merida and Morton note, "the early Christians were known for showing mercy in caring for abandoned children, valuing their lives."<sup>14</sup> When they picked such children, they raised them as their own without making "distinctions between 'adopted' children and 'regular children.'"<sup>15</sup> Apart from the early Christians, some post-reformation leaders also showed great care for orphans. Revivalist George Whitefield, pastor and preacher Charles Spurgeon, and George Muller were great names in orphan care as evidenced in their establishment of orphanages. Merida and Morton conclude, "Countless Christians through the years have actively helped the fatherless through various forms of orphan care, such as financial assistance, regular visitations, building orphanages, adoptions, rescuing oppressed children, and foster care. They have obeyed the Biblical texts on this matter."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Prince, "What Are We For?," 20.

<sup>14</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 62.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew T. Walker, introduction to Moore and Walker, *The Gospel & Adoption*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 75.

Fifth, the fulfillment of the Great Commission is another reason contemporary believers should adopt. In most cases, children learn about God from their believing parents.<sup>17</sup> The Christian's desire to adopt children must therefore go beyond satisfying personal, emotional, cultural, and social needs of having children. Adoption must be seen "as part of our Great Commission mandate" as children adopted into Christian families are shown the love of Jesus and taught the gospel of Christ.<sup>18</sup> Again, quite often in orphanages run by secular people, children are not taught about God; that He made them in His own image and that He loves them so much that He sent His son Jesus to die for their sins. "Sadly, in an orphanage," Merida and Morton observe, "children often feel worthless, hopeless and unlovable."<sup>19</sup> However, the case is different in some orphanages operated by Christians. For instance, the children in the orphanage established by C. H. Spurgeon "were taught Christian education, sport and individuality." Some of these children came to know the Lord: "And there were boys who, upon growing up, experienced the call of God, attended the Pastor's college, and went on into a life in the ministry."<sup>20</sup>

Further still, in Revelation 5:9, the Bible says that all tribes will be present in His kingdom. Adopting children across race, color, and nationalities, as well as discipling these children, is a form of global mission and a way of preparing for Christ's kingdom where every race, culture, language, and color will be represented.<sup>21</sup> "Adoption and the global Christian mission are inseparable"<sup>22</sup> in the sense that it is common for adopted

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<sup>17</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 56.

<sup>18</sup> Russell Moore, *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 19.

<sup>19</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 63

<sup>20</sup> Merida and Morton, *Orphanology*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> David A. Gundersen, "Our Paper Pregnancy: God, the Gospel and the Global Cause of Christ," in *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care*, ed. Russell Moore (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Gundersen, "Our Paper Pregnancy," 31.

children to trace their roots. In many situations, those who are well disciplined can and have taken the gospel and the love of God they have experienced back to their birth places, people, and cultures.<sup>23</sup> One may adopt to build a family because of infertility or to help a child in distress, but in the words of David A. Gundersen, “The highest and best motivation for adopting is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>24</sup> Gundersen continues, “Running water, medical care, and a sound education are precious and valuable things. But seeing the glory of Christ, hearing the good news of salvation, finding reconciliation with God and walking in a manner worthy of the incarnate Savior of the world is definitely more precious.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Personal Reflections**

“Adoption? me? I can never make another person’s child, mine!” That was the response of an elder of a Baptist church five years ago when my wife and I counseled him and his wife to consider adoption. They had been married for eleven years and struggled with infertility.

A young couple who became sweethearts got married shortly after graduation. They were fortunate to get good jobs, so they planned to build their own house. They pulled their resources together, including taking loans (advance salaries) from their places of work. They completed their house about seven years after their wedding, though they had yet to have a child. They too struggled with infertility. As they were making arrangements to move into their newly completed house, the husband changed his mind and told his wife that she was not qualified to move into the new house with him since she has not been able to bear children for him. They dragged through this issue for about

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<sup>23</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, “A Picture of Adoption: Adoption and Orphan Care in Scripture and Christian Thought,” in Moore, *A Guide to Adoption & Orphan Care*, 31.

<sup>24</sup> Gundersen, “Our Paper Pregnancy,” 28.

<sup>25</sup> Gundersen, “Our Paper Pregnancy,” 31.

three years. Families from both sides were involved. They finally divorced. They were established church members.

A very committed Christian couple (leaders in their church denomination and another para-church discipleship organization) were married for over thirty years without children. The wife developed diabetes in her early fifties and decided not to accept any treatment, saying it was better for her to die since she could not bear any children. And she did die early.

I know all the above couples personally. The first two incidences happened in the last five years. When I started this DEdMin program, my plan was to write on youth discipleship. It was these first two stories and experiences that the Holy Spirit used to motivate my heart to change to this project.

The second and the third cases depict the effects of both external and internal pressures that the culture exerts on those suffering from infertility in the Nigerian culture. The first story revealed a lack of knowledge of biblical position on child adoption. These are just few personal and direct experiences I have had with people suffering from childlessness. The Nigerian church and its leadership must wake up to its responsibility to teach members the Bible position on childbearing and the beauty and blessedness of adoption.

Thus, this project became an exhilarating experience for me. During my pursuit of this project, it was a revelation for me to discover that not only are evangelicals in the United States adopting children, but that adoption is a movement and a Christian mission that the American evangelicals are pursuing today. May God do the same among Nigeria Christians.

### **Conclusion**

The preceding discourse under Theological Reflections showed abundant biblical motives for Christians' practical adoption of children, however, some authors



have suggested that adoption of orphans is a calling,<sup>26</sup> just as most Christian endeavors are a calling. Since Christians are gifted differently and therefore called into different ministries and assignments in the body of Christ (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12), to be an adoptive parent is a ministry for those that are called.<sup>27</sup>

Though all Christians must consider their gifts and possibility of their callings into adoption ministry, every infertile Christian couple has a unique opportunity to prayerfully consider if the Lord might be leading them to adopt. In the words of Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, there is a “strong biblical precedence for adoption as a Christian avenue for glorifying God and building a Christian family, especially for couples having difficulty conceiving children of their own.”<sup>28</sup> Beyond and above the desire to satisfy parental instincts, they may consider the possibility that God, as Stuart Scott opines, “may not grant [them] natural children in order to provide the opportunity of adoption to one of His precious un-parented children.”<sup>29</sup> As observed in the lives of Moses, Esther, and Jesus, adoptive parents are God’s instruments for preparation and preservation of His servants for divine assignments and transformation of generations.<sup>30</sup>

Pastors and counselors of infertile Christian couples living in a culture like that of Nigeria need to look at the biblical position of childbearing, point out the errors of the cultural position of childbearing and challenge of infertility, and counsel infertile couples appropriately. For Christians, as Kostenberger and Jones have observed, it is unbiblical “to place one’s hope or sense of worth too greatly on one’s ability to have children. The

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<sup>26</sup> Moore, *Adopted for Life*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Mardie Caldwell, *Called to Adoption: A Christian’s Guide to Answering the Call* (Nevada City, CA: American Carriage House Publishing, 2011), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 137.

<sup>29</sup> Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002), 67.

<sup>30</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 135.

final hope of the Christian does not lie in the ability to manipulate human reproductive system or in the ability to have children at all.”<sup>31</sup> Neither the Lord Jesus Christ nor the apostle Paul had biological children, but they served God and pleased Him with their lives. They had spiritual children and the New Testament placed more positive emphases on spiritual children who are products of gospel ministry (1 Cor 4:15; Gal 4:19; 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; 1 Pet 5:13).

However, on a positive note, the strong biblical backing of adoption brings a balanced biblical hope to encourage infertile couples to consider child adoption. They also have a unique opportunity in adoption, not just as a treatment approach to infertility, but as a viable ministry pursuit. For infertile Christian couples to be involved in adoption of the fatherless and orphans it is a win-win all the way. Their own parental aspirations will be satisfied, they will experience healing for emotional frustrations associated with childlessness, they will have improved marital and family atmosphere,<sup>32</sup> and they will have protection from cultural stigmatization. Adoption is a classical way of joining God in His care for these special groups of people. Orphan care is a biblical ministry mandate (Jas 1:27). The best way perhaps of doing this ministry is to be involved in the adoption of the orphans. When infertile Christian couples get involved in this adventure, they are demonstrating incarnational ministry to this group of people. Infertile Christian couples who become adoptive parents have exceptional opportunity to invest their God given resources (time, treasure, and talent) into the training and development of their adopted children. They are giving hope and meaning to lives that might not have found one in a broken world. And the crown of this effort is not only to care for the “least of these” (Matt 25: 40), but also the unique opportunity these new parents now have to present the

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<sup>31</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 133.

<sup>32</sup> E. I. Nwobodo and Y. A. Isah report, “A study in River state in southern Nigeria showed high patterns of marital adjustment in communication, cohesion, consensus and affectionate expression among couples practicing child adoption.” E. I. Nwobodo and Y. A. Isah, “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Child Adoption among Infertile Female Patients in Sokoto North-West Nigeria,” *The Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal* 18, no. 4 (December 2011): 274.

gospel of Christ to these children and disciple them, thereby making sure that these children are not left out of God's plan to have been brought up "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

## APPENDIX 1

### BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL CONVICTION ON CHILDBEARING AND CHILDREN ADOPTION SURVEY

The following survey will be used to provide a picture of the knowledge of the participants about the value the Bible attaches to childbearing versus cultural beliefs, the biblical and theological foundation for adoption of children, and ethical and theological concerns about modern reproductive techniques. As leaders, teachers, and counselors of God's people, it is imperative that we teach total counsel of God on all issues of life (Mal. 2:11; Acts 20: 27). After this survey therefore, you will be invited to a special 6 hours seminar on **“Teaching Children Adoption as a Viable Ministry for Infertile Couples.”** In contrast to the culture that sees childbearing as the main goal of marriage and purpose of life, this seminar will examine biblical basis of childbearing, biblical and theological basis of adoption, the practice of children adoption in Christian history, and the ethical and theological issues surrounding the Artificial Reproductive Technology (test-tube baby methods). This seminar will equip pastors to give godly counsels and balance biblical hope to suffering infertile couples in our congregations and Nigeria Christendom as a whole.

#### **Agreement to Participate**

**Mukaila Ademola Adebisi** is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the following questions before the seminar, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the seminar. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

**Directions:** Answer these questions and statements based on the scale provided. Circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:  
SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat, AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

**Part 1: Biblical and Theological Basis of Childbearing**

1	When a Christian couple is barren (i.e, unable to have biological children) it is because they are not properly born again.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2	When a Christian couple is barren (i.e, unable to have biological children), it is because they are cursed.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3	When a Christian couple is barren (i.e, unable to have biological children), it is because God is punishing them for certain sins in their lives.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	All infertile Christian couples need deliverance prayer sessions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5	It may be the will of God for some Christians not to have biological children of their own.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6	Inability to have children by some Christian couples is because of the fall of man and sin of Genesis chapter 3.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7	Jesus has removed all the effects of the fall of man; hence no true Christian should have a problem of infertility.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8	A marriage without children can never be a happy marriage.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9	A marriage without children is a failed marriage.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10	A marriage without children is a cursed marriage.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11	Those without children have lost their place in history and in God's plan.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12	It is God's ultimate will that everyone born must also give birth to children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13	God forbids adultery, but He will understand and will not frown at those who did it for purpose of having children because their marriage did not produce children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

14	The church and leadership should understand and not frown at those who commit adultery for purpose of having children because their marriage did not produce children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15	Just like Sarah, Rachael, Hannah and Elizabeth, all true believers who struggle with infertility should eventually have miracle babies.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16	Children born essentially belong to their parents.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17	When a Christian couple is barren and unable to have children, it is because they have not prayed and fasted enough.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18	When a Christian couple is barren and unable to have children, it is because they have not sowed very big seed offerings.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19	Some of the Christian couples that are barren and unable to have children must have married wrongly (i.e, outside the will of God).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20	As a pastor, based on biblical injunctions, I am confident to teach and counsel that a Christian couple without children can live a good life and serve God without being miserable.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

**Part 2: Theological and Ethical Considerations of Assisted Reproductive Technology.**

Note: the modern Assisted Reproductive Technology is called “Test-tube baby” method in general common language.<sup>1</sup>

**Directions:** Answer these questions and statements based on the scale provided. Circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:  
 SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,  
 AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

21	I believe doctors doing “test-tube babies” technology are helping people in some ways.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22	I believe doctors doing “test-tube babies” technology are playing God in some other ways.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23	All of the “test-tube babies” technology methods are God’s way of answering people’s prayers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24	“Test-tube babies” technology methods cannot produce proper children/human beings.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25	I don’t see anything wrong in people going for any of the “test-tube babies” technology method if they can afford it and as long as children are produced.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26	It is lack of faith for Christians to use any of the “test-tube babies” technology methods.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27	All truths are God’s truth, God gave doctors wisdom, it is therefore okay for Christians to use any of the “test-tube babies” technology methods.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 768.

### Part 3: Biblical and Theological Basis of Adoption

**Directions:** Answer these questions and statements based on the scale provided. Circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,

AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

28	There is no record of adoption in the New Testament, so Christians (both fertile and infertile) have no business going into adoption.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29	There is no record of adoption in the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30	Adoption is settling for God's second best.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
31	There are real examples of practical adoptions in the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32	There is abundance of images of adoptions in the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33	Physical adoption and spiritual adoption are two different things and should not be equated or used as justification for practical adoption.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
34	Biblical and theological data on adoption is so scanty, so no pastor or church should waste their time taking it seriously and teaching about it.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
35	I can't teach and counsel people to adopt children because, I don't see much of it in the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
36	I can't teach and counsel people to adopt children because, I don't see other pastors doing it.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
37	I can't teach and counsel people to adopt children because, I don't want to discourage and destroy people's faith in believing God for miracle babies.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA



#### Part 4: Christian and the Adoption Cause

**Directions:** Answer these questions and statements based on the scale provided. Circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,

AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

38	All Christians (fertile and infertile) should be excited about adoption because it is a form of Christian ministry.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
39	The example of biblical spiritual adoption of all Christians into God's family should be a motivation for Christians to be involved in practical adoption of children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
40	For Christian couples that are trusting God for children, to adopt while waiting is faithlessness (demonstration of lack of faith).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
41	Adopted children can never be like one's own children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
42	It is a shameful thing to adopt.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
43	Christians adopting children are not bringing glory to God because they gave up believing God for miracle babies.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
44	People should not adopt because adopted children will always leave and go back to their original parents later in life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
45	Adoption is God's second best (the permissive and not the perfect will of God).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
46	Adoption is wrong because it is not cultural. It is not common with our people/culture.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
47	Children adoption was not practiced by early Christians, they believed God for miracle babies, so modern Christians should not practice it.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
48	If one is to adopt at all, it should be done secretly, and no one should know about it to avoid shame.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
49	With all the scandals associated with "baby factories," in Nigeria, no serious-minded Christian should venture into adoption.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

50	People encouraging Christians who already have children to adopt more children, particularly orphans are promoting modern slavery because, non-biological children can never be loved like biological children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
51	People encouraging barren Christians to adopt are doing so to help the barren people to hide their shame of infertility.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Looking forward to seeing you at the seminar that will be schedule for a latter date. You will be informed about this date subsequently.

Name of Respondent/Personal Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>EQUIPPING PASTORS TO TEACH ADOPTION AS A VIABLE MINISTRY FOR INFERTILE COUPLES</b>					
<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. The key Scriptures were properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of each lesson sufficiently covered the issue (s) it was designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of issues related to Christian view of children adoption.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
Each lesson in the curriculum contains clear goal(s) and learning objectives.					
The curriculum makes use of learning approaches of lecture and discussions.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
At the end of the seminar, participants will be able to counsel others about biblical position on adoption.					
Overall, the lessons are clear and could be re-taught by another person.					

APPENDIX 3

RESULTS OF THE BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE AND  
PERSONAL CONVICTION ON CHILDBEARING  
AND CHILDREN ADOPTION SURVEY

Table A1. Part 1: Biblical and Theological Basis of Childbearing

1	When a Christian couple is barren (i.e, unable to have biological children) it is because they are not properly born again.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	15	3	0	0	0	0
		POST	18	0	0	0	0	0
2	When a Christian couple is barren (i.e, unable to have biological children), it is because they are cursed.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	10	4	2	2	0	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
3	When a Christian couple is barren (i.e, unable to have biological children), it is because God is punishing them for certain sins in their lives.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	6	6	3	3	0	0
		POST	14	3	0	1	0	0
4	All infertile Christian couples need deliverance prayer sessions.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	4	5	0	3	4	2
		POST	10	4	1	2	1	0
5	It may be the will of God for some Christians not to have biological children of their own.		SD	D	S	AS	A	SA
		PRE	1	1	1	3	7	5
		POST	0	0	0	0	3	15
6	Inability to have children by some Christian couples is as a result of the fall of man and sin of Genesis 3.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	7	3	1	4	2	1
		POST	1	0	1	3	5	8
7	Jesus has removed all the effects of the fall of man; hence no true Christian should have a problem of infertility.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	3	8	2	2	1	2
		POST	11	7	0	0	0	0
8	A marriage without children can never be a happy marriage.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	10	5	1	1	1	0
		POST	14	3	1	0	0	0
9	A marriage without children is a failed marriage.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	9	7	2	0	0	0
		POST	15	2	1	0	0	0
10	A marriage without children is a cursed marriage.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	8	6	3	1	0	0
		POST	15	2	1	0	0	0
11	Those without children have lost their place in history and in God's plan.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	11	6	1	0	0	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
12	It is God's ultimate will that everyone born must also give birth to children.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	6	5	2	3	1	1
		POST	13	3	0	1	1	0

Table A1 continued

13	God forbids adultery, but He will understand and will not frown at those who did it for purpose of having children because their marriage did not produce children.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	13	4	1	0	0	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
14	The church and leadership should understand and not frown at those who commit adultery for purpose of having children because their marriage did not produce children.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	13	5	0	0	0	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
15	Just like Sarah, Rachael, Hannah and Elizabeth, all true believers who struggle with infertility should eventually have miracle babies.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	8	1	2	2	3
		POST	11	5	1	1	0	0
16	Children born essentially belong to their parents.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	6	1	3	4	3
		POST	11	3	0	2	1	1
17	When a Christian couple is barren and unable to have children, it is because they have not prayed and fasted enough.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	5	11	2	0	0	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
18	When a Christian couple is barren and unable to have children, it is because they have not sowed very big seed offerings.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	11	7	0	0	0	0
		POST	18	0	0	0	0	0
19	Some of the Christian couples that are barren and unable to have children must have married wrongly (i.e, outside the will of God).		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	3	11	2	2	0	0
		POST	11	3	0	2	0	2
20	As a pastor, based on biblical injunctions, I am confident to teach and counsel that a Christian couple without children can live a good life and serve God without being miserable.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	0	1	0	1	5	11
		POST	1	0	0	0	2	15

Table A2. Part 2: Theological and Ethical Considerations of Assisted Reproductive Technology

21	I believe doctors doing “test-tube babies” technology are helping people in some ways.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	0	3	0	5	9	1
		POST	1	0	0	0	0	17
22	I believe doctors doing “test-tube babies” technology are playing God in some other ways.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	9	2	2	3	0
		POST	3	0	0	0	0	15
23	All of the “test-tube babies” technology methods are God’s way of answering people’s prayers.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	5	1	6	3	1
		POST	18	0	0	0	0	0
24	“Test-tube babies” technology methods cannot produce proper children/human beings.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	3	11	2	1	1	0
		POST	18	0	0	0	0	0
25	I don’t see anything wrong in people going for any of the “test-tube babies” technology method if they can afford it and as long as children are produced.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	3	3	7	5	0	0
		POST	16	0	0	0	0	2
26	It is lack of faith for Christians to use any of the “test-tube babies” technology methods.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	6	3	4	3	0
		POST	18	0	0	0	0	0
27	All truths are God’s truth, God gave doctors wisdom, it is therefore okay for Christians to use any of the “test-tube babies” technology methods.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	1	4	1	6	5	1
		POST	16	1	0	0	0	1

Table A3. Part 3: Biblical and Theological Basis of Adoption

28	There is no record of adoption in the New Testament, so Christians (both fertile and infertile) have no business going into adoption.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	4	11	1	0	2	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
29	There is no record of adoption in the Bible.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	9	1	2	3	1
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
30	Adoption is settling for God's second best.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	4	8	1	3	1	1
		POST	13	3	1	0	0	1
31	There are real examples of practical adoptions in the Bible.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	1	3	0	1	12	1
		POST	0	0	0	0	1	17
32	There is abundance of images of adoptions in the Bible.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	0	3	0	8	6	1
		POST	1	0	0	2	1	14
33	Physical adoption and spiritual adoption are two different things and should not be equated or used as justification for practical adoption.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	1	9	2	2	4	0
		POST	13	2	2	0	0	1
34	Biblical and theological data on adoption is so scanty, so no pastor or church should waste their time taking it seriously and teaching about it.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	7	11	0	0	0	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
35	I can't teach and counsel people to adopt children because, I don't see much of it in the Bible.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	5	10	1	0	2	0
		POST	15	3	0	0	0	0
36	I can't teach and counsel people to adopt children because, I don't see other pastors doing it.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PPRE	6	9	2	1	0	0
		POST	15	3	0	0	0	0
37	I can't teach and counsel people to adopt children because, I don't want to discourage and destroy people's faith in believing God for miracle babies.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	6	9	2	1	0	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0

Table A4. Part 4: Christian and the Adoption Cause

38	All Christians (fertile and infertile) should be excited about adoption because it is a form of Christian ministry.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	0	2	0	0	12	4
		POST	0	0	0	0	1	7
39	The example of biblical spiritual adoption of all Christians into God's family should be a motivation for Christians to be involved in practical adoption of children.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	0	1	0	2	8	7
		POST	0	0	0	0	3	15
40	For Christian couples that are trusting God for children, to adopt while waiting is faithlessness (demonstration of lack of faith).		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	8	8	1	1	0	0
		POST	16	1	0	0	0	1
41	Adopted children can never be like one's own children.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	4	11	1	1	1	
		POST	16	1	1	0	0	0
42	It is a shameful thing to adopt.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	12	5	1	0	0	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
43	Christians adopting children are not bringing glory to God because they gave up believing God for miracle babies.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	9	8	1	0	0	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
44	People should not adopt because adopted children will always leave and go back to their original parents later in life.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	6	11	1	0	0	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
45	Adoption is God's second best (the permissive and not the perfect will of God).		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	2	8	3	2	3	0
		POST	15	1	0	0	1	1
46	Adoption is wrong because it is not cultural. It is not common with our people/culture.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	5	10	2	1	0	0
		POST	16	2	0	0	0	0
47	Children adoption was not practiced by early Christians, they believed God for miracle babies, so modern Christians should not practice it.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	3	12	0	2	0	1
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
48	If one is to adopt at all, it should be done secretly, and no one should know about it to avoid shame.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	6	11	1	0	0	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
49	With all the scandals associated with "baby factories," in Nigeria, no serious-minded Christian should venture into adoption.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	5	10	2	0	1	0
		POST	17	1	0	0	0	0
50	People encouraging Christians who already have children to adopt more children, particularly orphans are promoting modern slavery because, non-biological children can never be loved like biological children.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	6	11	0	1	0	0
		POST	18	0	0	0	0	0
51	People encouraging barren Christians to adopt are doing so to help the barren people to hide their shame of infertility.		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
		PRE	4	12	0	1	0	1
		POST	16	0	0	1	0	1



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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING PASTORS IN UNION BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, JOS, NIGERIA, TO TEACH ADOPTION AS A VIABLE MINISTRY FOR INFERTILE COUPLES

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The purpose of this project was to biblically and theologically equip pastors in the Union Baptist Association, Jos, Nigeria, to teach adoption of children as a viable ministry option to infertile couples for care of orphans, satisfaction of parental instinct, and the fulfillment of the Great Commission to the glory of God. Chapter 1 presents the context, rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, definitions, delimitations, and limitations of this project.

Chapter 2 explains the biblical and theological basis of children adoption. The examples of physical adoptions and images of adoption in the Old Testament were examined in great deal. The fact of Israel's adoption by God is a major theme in the Old Testament. Adoption of Jesus by Joseph is the only case of physical adoption in the New Testament. This chapter explains further that though many New Testament writers allude to the concept of adoption in their writings, only apostle Paul employed a technical term to describe this concept. Pauline *huiothesia* is influenced by both Judaism that provided Paul with history and theology for the term, and Paul's affiliation with Greco-Roman culture, which gave him physical example and terminology. Finally, this chapter explains how James 1: 27 is the key New Testament scripture that gives support to physical adoption of children.

Chapter 3 addresses reasons why adoption is not well practiced in Nigeria. Socio-cultural consideration is the main obstacle against child adoption in southern Nigeria, while the influence of Islamic religion is the main factor militating against children adoption in northern Nigeria. Islam forbids child adoption.

Chapter 4 describes the details of the project implementation—development of the seminar sessions, implementation of the seminar, collation of the pre- and post-seminar surveys, and the processing of the data. Finally, chapter 5 states the evaluations of the purpose and goals of the project and suggestions for future improvement.



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