

# Editorial: The People Adoption Business

“God who made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, seeing that He gives life and breath to all and to all things; that He hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation... that they should seek the Lord... though He is not far from any one of us... For in Him we live and move and have our being... For we are also His offspring.” (Acts 17: 24-28) “Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?” (Malachi 2:10)

These passages, if interpreted correctly in the light of God’s redemptive purposes, revealed throughout the Scriptures, indicate that *God is in the adoption business*. He is not only the Father of Israel, but in a fundamental sense, He is also the Father of all peoples. He created in His image those whom He established within the “bounds of their habitation.” More importantly, He is not far from any of them. We, as good missionaries and professionals, need to keep this truth hung around our necks, as it were, like the priests to the nations God has called us to be.

Because of this fundamental Fatherhood principle, God has been in the adoption business for a long time. Many of us, including the Adopt-A-People (AAP) movement have rediscovered that glorious fact. It is this discovery that has motivated thousands of God’s people to get involved in the cause. The AAP movement has been one of the effective bridges between God’s people and God’s heart—His desire to redeem all. Although we can define AAP in various ways, the bedrock of the movement has always been the theological and biblical understanding. “To choose to adopt an unreached people is, first of all, *an embrace of the Father heart of God* for that people. We want to extend His reconciling love to a people we hope to increasingly understand.” (IJFM Vol. 7:4, Oct.1990, page 118)

Adopting an unreached people then is not just a good idea or a great program, nor is it a contrivance whereby the church and fellowships of believers can experience a “hands-on” event in the missionary endeavor. But first and foremost, it is cooperating with God in His embrace to redeem all peoples.

We need to be careful not to lose that fundamental biblical reality. AAP is not like adopting a stretch of highway. Jim Reapsome in the latest *Pulse*, seems to say. Writes Reapsome in his article “Final Analysis” “Adopting a mile of highway is not very complicated. We know what a mile is; we know whose mile it is to keep clean; we know how many people it takes to pick up the stuff... paper, bottles, beer cans and assorted refuse. A number of years ago, it occurred to some folks that the unevangelized people of the world could be parcelled out much like a stretch of highway. Once they were identified by name, they could then be adopted (not assigned, of course) for purposes of evangelization by various mission agencies and churches.” Without the biblical basis for this movement, it can become a tedious technical undertaking, depriving the Spirit from His infusion of power, understanding and glory.

Initially and throughout its development the AAP concept has had firm theological/biblical benchmarks, the AAP concept has developed into a momentum-building global movement, that has become a key ingredient in frontier mission efforts. From the start of the AAP movement, including the formation of the AAP Clearinghouse in March of 1989, its focus has always and exclusively been frontier missions—the adoption and reaching of the remaining unreached peoples of the world.

Since the AAP concept is so important to frontier missions, we have dedicated an entire issue to this key subject and challenge. This issue, from start to finish, with all its complex facets, will prove how key the AAP movement is to frontier missions even in its practical aspects of adoption.

Articles in this special issue are arranged topically each with its focus. The first set of articles deal with the theology/missiology and motivation as well as the early beginnings of AAP. The next set of articles, deal with the crucial aspect of prayer and intercession for the various people groups that are being adopted. Interspersed are the various unreached people profiles—including the Pushtun people. (See front cover of a Pushtun boy living in war torn land.)

Perhaps nothing else is as important as prayer and intercession. Darrel Dorr reminded us in the 1990 IJFM article (quoted before), that a people group adoption involves “the choice to *contend with Satan’s forces* on behalf of that people. It is encouraging that today’s Church is growing in its recognition of and power to deal with territorial spirits that rule over particular peoples or regions. To adopt an unreached people is to become part of a fighting force, and adopting churches should be prepared for the Enemy’s inevitable counterattacks on those who seriously challenge his dominion.” (ibid, page 118) To use Reapsome’s analogy: Those of us serious about people adoption need to “pick up lots of stuff”—spiritual garbage among the peoples we adopt through concerted prayer and intercession!

Towards the end of this issue we have asked authors to deal with the “nitty gritty” of adoption: How to choose a people and maintain adoption, the place of Third World churches in adoption, and even Software tools to help facilitate adoption, etc.

May our readers be thoroughly blessed, as well as become more informed, by this special edition on the exciting business of people adoption.

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