

AHH Special Needs Program

Paul and Dana Milne are in the process of adopting their second child from China. The Milnes are adopting Xue Lian, a girl living in an orphanage in Fuling, Chongqing, China. The Milnes are scheduled to travel by summer 2006. Xue Lian will be 10 years old in October 2006, and she was on the special needs list simply because of her age. She is diagnosed as a healthy child. Here is their story.

Testimony

It is so hard to know where to begin when I sit down to write about Xue Lian and how God brought our family together with her. I guess I should begin by telling you about her personal story and how she came to live at the Fuling Social Welfare Institute, otherwise known as the Fuling Orphanage in Fuling, China. Xue Lian was found in Pengshui County when she was less than a month old, similar to our adopted daughter Ella, Xue Lian was left on the street in hopes that she would be discovered and brought to safety. She was found by a female villager, named Chen Mei, and was kept by her and her husband for the next seven years. Unfortunately, as it states in her biography, they did not wish to adopt her and when she turned seven, Chen Mei's husband brought her to the orphanage to live. I do believe that Xue Lian's biological parents must have struggled deeply with the thought of leaving her on the street that day, in October of 1996. I am sure, like Ella's biological parents, that they took much time and consideration in their decision, and knew that their daughter might be better off being left than staying with them. I can only imagine that Xue Lian's foster family must have been having difficulty financially and would not be able to send her to school when she turned seven. I am sure that they brought her to the orphanage in hopes that she would be educated and have a better future. Although all of my thoughts on why and how my two adopted daughters were abandoned are mere opinions and ideas, I am confident in one thing and that is God meant for us to be brought together and no matter how that came to be, it was all a part of His plan.

My husband and I set out on our first trip to China in April of 2004. We had been waiting 14 long months to go and adopt our dear sweet, chubby Ella. We were excited about the trip, but a little sad to leave our biological daughter, Sophie, who was only five at the time. We flew to China and went through a similar schedule that most adoptive families go through, such as touring the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, etc. We then flew down to Ella's province, Chongqing City, and after only one short hour in our hotel, we went to the Civil Affairs Office to pick up our new daughter. A few days later that we traveled to Fuling to visit the orphanage where our daughter spent the first 10 months of her life. I had prepared myself for a very long time for this moment. I had hoped ever since we had decided to adopt that we would have this opportunity and as much as anything I knew that going to the orphanage and seeing the children there would have an everlasting impact on my life. I fully expected to be emotional over the sight of so many babies that had been left and to be overwhelmed at the thought that the majority of them would not be adopted. What I did not expect is that I would soon meet my future daughter, Fu Xue Lian.

We went about on the usual tour of the orphanage and when it was complete, we were able to spend some time outside in the courtyard. There we met a little boy and a little girl, who would in just a couple of years change my life. These two children were very curious, but still a bit shy. You could tell that although they wanted to interact with us, they were not so trusting of adults. We were able to give them some candy and take a few pictures, but were not able to spend much time getting to know them. I remembered thinking that they must be siblings, because they never strayed from one another's sight.

Once we arrived back in the States, it became very evident to me that I needed to be involved in getting other people to adopt. I could not easily forget what I had seen and how I had grown while I was in China. In addition to volunteering with a local international adoption agency, I committed to God that I would find a way to be involved in the in a missions trip to China and was astonished when I learned of an opportunity to volunteer at my daughter's orphanage in July. I was completely in awe that God had worked it out for me to return and spend four days in the same place my daughter had spent the beginning of her life.

After much planning, it came time to go and there would be six women from my home church to go with me. One of them was Joy, one of my closest friends. She agreed to go, but was adamant that she would not be adopting. While at the orphanage we were able to again spend time with the older children, and again I met the two children that we had been able to spend time with a year before. I had decided to speak with the Director of the orphanage and asked her about these two children. I asked her if the sister and brother were being adopted. She quickly replied that they were not siblings and Ming (the little boy) was not being adopted, but Xue Lian (the little girl) was. I then



asked her if I could have the information on Ming and she quickly got his file and jotted down his name, birthday and the day he was abandoned. After finishing my conversation with Director Yang I was met by my friend Joy, who to my astonishment asked “Dana, what would you do if I told you I wanted to adopt Ming.” I said to her “if you are thinking about adoption, then you should have him.” I was so excited, I knew at that moment that God was working a miracle, but I also knew the difficulty we would have in finding his file once we were back in the United States.

Once back in the States, Joy and I came up with the perfect plan, her family would adopt Ming and our family would adopt Xue Lian. This would allow these kids, who had already been through so much, to be able to stay close together. We started looking on agencies websites until one day I received an email about Chinese adoption. I knew by now that Joy was interested enough in adoption that I could pass the email along to her and that she would read it. She in turn passed the email along to her father, who sent it back to her and said to check out this one agency’s website. When she logged onto their website, she was astonished when she found that Ming was listed as one of their waiting children. It was clear that God had intended for Ming to be her son and that we had just witnessed a miracle.

After Ming was found we knew that we had to work hard to find Xue Lian and that if it was part of God’s plan we would find her, no matter how difficult it seemed to be. I remember the day very clearly, I picked up the phone and Joy was on the other end. She said, “Dana, I just got an email that was entitled “nine year old healthy girl.” She said “I clicked on it and I think it is Xue Lian.” I logged onto AHH’s website, and I could not believe my eyes when I saw her face staring back at me. Even though her Chinese name was not listed, I knew that this was the little girl that we had spent so much time searching for. Because it was so late in the evening when I received Joy’s phone call, I had to wait until the following day to contact the agency about Xue Lian. The next day, I phoned AHH and asked about the little girl they called “Brooke.” The woman on the phone explained to me that a family had applied to adopt her. She stated that even if this family was not going to adopt her, they work on a “first come, first serve” basis and there were four other families that had called before me. I then asked her if I could at least take the time to explain why I was calling about her and she agreed. I took a few moments and quickly explained how I had met Xue Lian twice, and that Ming was being adopted by our best friends and that we had been looking for her file for sometime. I could hear her typing in the background and when I was finished she calmly said to me “I am going to review this information with my supervisor and I will call you back.” I knew at that point that she had at least taken the time to hear my story and that I may wait one day to hear back from her, or never hear from her again. I also knew with every fiber of my being that God was working out another miracle and that I needed to be patient and give him the time to do it. I never expected the following day to get a phone call from the woman I had spoken with only 24 hours before. She said simply, “I have reviewed the information you gave me with my supervisor and we have decided to place “Brooke” with your family.” As soon as I heard those words I knew that God had meant for these two kids, who had learned to depend on one another so strongly, to stay together. I knew that they would soon travel halfway around the world to only end up being a short 15 minute drive from one another.

I have been a Christian since I was a small child, but on this day I sat on my couch crying my eyes out and wondering why I was so shocked that my God could be so good. The mercy and love that He has shown to these children is beyond words to me.

It has now been three months since we had finally found Xue Lian, and our paperwork to adopt her leaves for China this week. I know that we will face many challenges once we have finally been reunited with our daughter. We are aware that she is coming to a place with an unfamiliar language, a completely different culture, and that she may not know how to respond to the type of love we are about to show her. We also know that God can heal any wounds, even the ones that are caused when a small child has been abandoned twice by the very people that were supposed to love her the most. We know that we will be able to add to her story and hopefully end it with...And Xue Lian lived happily ever after.

Sincerely,

Dana Milne

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