

AHH Special Needs Program

In December of 2005, Scott and Tammy Smith adopted Isabella, a little girl living in an orphanage in Nanjing, Jiangsu, China. The Smiths adopted Isabella when he was 21 months old. Isabella's special need is cataracts. Here is their story.

Testimony



Miracles were for other people, or so we thought before we began our adoption process. As we look back now, there are so many things that have happened that have made it so apparent, without a question, that God's plan has always been for Isabella to be ours from the beginning of time. We began our process at about the time that Isabella was born in China. We had only been married for a year and a half on March 18 of 2004 when we submitted our first application to A Helping Hand. At that time, they requested that we be married for two years before re-applying and beginning our process. We were married for two years that following August and submitted another application in October of 2004.

While doing our home study we expressed to our social worker that we would be open to adopting a child with special needs that we felt we could work with. She recommended that we not do that because we live in a rural area not close to any doctors or children's hospitals and that it would mean a lot of travel time for us to take a child to an area where they could receive care. It made sense to us at the time so we proceeded to adopt a healthy child. The possibility of adopting a special needs child never really left our hearts or minds, though. When special needs list were posted on the AHH web sight, we always got on "just to look."

We had enough funding to start our adoption process, but by the time that our dossier was submitted to China at the end of May of last year, we were out of money. We had applied for 9 grants and received none. The other resources that we had counted on for help didn't go through and we had only lived in our house for 2 years so there wasn't any equity to borrow against. We were at a dead end and very distraught. Every time we got another denial for a grant, it appeared to us that maybe we had made a very expensive mistake. I even began to pray for God to take the desire from my heart to adopt if we were meant to go no further.

Then in June, another special needs list came out and we got on "just to look" again. There she was! It was my daughter, I just knew it. Something in me moved so hard that I cried. I printed out the picture and carried it everywhere with me. "Isabelle's" special need was listed as a cataract. Her eye appeared small, but she was beautiful and the special need seemed so minor. We were in no position to put "Isabelle" on hold because we had no money to proceed. We began to pray and have friends and family pray as well. My son mistakenly sent out a mass e-mail to I think everyone in town and I had people that I hardly knew say that they were praying for us. I had become friends with a lady also named Tammy who had just been to China in March to get their daughter. She told me the second that she saw Isabelle's face she knew that was my baby and her daughter's friend. I was just so sure that someone else would take her, though, because her need seemed so minor. Everyday I would get on and check to see if there was a "hold" next to her name. Grace knew how much I wanted her. She helped us submit an application for a grant to A Child Waits. She prayed with me on the phone over the application before she sent it in. Several weeks went by and we heard nothing. Every day I would hold my breath before I got on the AHH sight to see if "Isabelle" was still available. I was surprised every day when she was.

At the beginning of August my sons and I were in our car going out to do some shopping. My cell phone rang and when I answered it was Grace. She said "Tammy, are you sitting down?" I thought, "Oh, no, she's calling to tell me that someone has put Isabelle on hold."





She then told me that I might want to pull over. She said that the agency as a group had had prayer for us and another couple the night before because they knew that the only thing keeping us from proceeding with adoption of a special need child was money. She said, "This morning I am holding a grant from A Child Waits for \$2,500." I had to pull over and let my son drive, because by that time I was crying. I asked Grace if we should go ahead and put Isabelle on hold due to our financial status, and she told me "I have all the faith in the world that you could." I was so excited to go home and see that "hold" next to her picture because WE had put it there. From that point on things fell into place. We applied to China Care for a grant and got it. We sent out letters to all of our friends and family asking for them to just send \$10. We figured 100 people would get us \$1,000 closer. We were blessed so much more than we expected in doing this. People were so happy to be "made a part" of our adoption. Between the grants and the money raised as a result of that letter, we had just enough money to go get our daughter.

My friend, Tammy, and I then realized that our daughters were born on the very same day, March 8, 2004, both in the Jiangsu Province. Isabella was born in Nanjing City and Graeson was born in Gaogou City and both were found on March 12. We knew that it was God's plan that these little girls should end up only living about 7 miles apart. We have become best friends. Tammy was great support for me. She would tell me during my down times "You fight for your daughter, she is waiting for you!"

We prayed for Isabella (that's the name we officially gave her) to know us when we came and that the bonding would go smoothly. Our Gotcha Day was December 5, 2005 and she came right to my arms and it has been like she has always known us. My love and attachment for her has been no different than with my biological sons. Her brothers love her and she is crazy about them. We still have some issues to deal with about her eye, but we were prepared for that and with God's help we will deal with them. She does well and you would never know that she can't see in one eye. Her English is coming along real well and we can't tell you how blessed we feel every time she says "Wuv you!" (Love you)

We know now that God had been waiting for us to decide to take a special needs child and when we made that decision He moved in great ways. We are just in awe as we look back now at His plan for us and Isabella. Every set-back and bend in the road was part of God's plan to bring us to Isabella.

Prayer was so important during our process. When I first contacted A Helping Hand two years ago, I remember the girl on the phone telling me that their director is a "prayerful man." We decided then that this was the agency for us and found out that the whole agency is prayerful. We are so thankful to Grace. She was always so calming and supportive when I would contact her and I would end my calls to her feeling better. She really cares about placing these special needs children and we pray blessings on her and her family. Everyone at A Helping Hand has been a blessing including the China staff. You can really see God at work at A Helping Hand.

Sincerely,

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