



TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

With over 60 years of experience navigating adoption, Nightlight has created this booklet to help adoptive families learn how to navigate transracial adoption from a Christian perspective.

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christian adoptions



HUMANS ARE THE IMAGE OF GOD

Genesis 1:27 "So God created mankind in His own image".

This is the basis of our equality, beauty, and worth. It is important for children to be taught this to help them understand the value of their own race, and the value of races that are different from their own.

Remind your child that they are not defined by their appearance. In **Acts 17:26-29**, Paul preaches to the Athenians, **"God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth... we are all God's offspring... descended from one person."** Your child is a human being like everyone else.





HANDLING DISCUSSIONS ABOUT RACISM

In the words of experts Beth Hall and Gail Steinberg, "Address [your] child's needs without apologizing for being white." **You do not need to apologize for being white any more than your child does for their race.** Far from an apology, it is a thing of planned beauty by God.



Think of the words of the prophet in Isaiah 43: 5-7 *"I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth - everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*



Remember that institutions cannot be guilty of sin: it is only individuals who are guilty. Focus on institutions absolves individuals of guilt. Since institutions cannot repent, the focus on institutions implies that racism is a permanent fixture. But if racism is an issue of individual sin, then your child is not a permanently oppressed victim. Instead, they are the observer of someone else's sin.



Set the example that we oversee our own attitudes. Whether or not to be a victim is up to us. We can choose to go through life laughing or crying.



BEFORE AN ADOPTION TAKES PLACE

Consider your family members who will also be a part of the family when you adopt. Some people have decided not to adopt transracially, after determining their parents, the grandparents-to-be, are unlikely to ever accept their child. Others have determined the same sad reality but decided not to care what the grandparents-to-be will think.

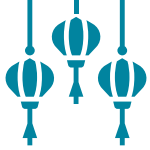
This is a decision you will have to make. But if it helps, remind your relatives of **Leviticus 19:34**, "*The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*"

Consider your neighborhood. Some families have moved to different neighborhoods out of sensitivity to their child's needs to be accepted and to be around a greater amount of cultural diversity.

Know that this will make your adoption public. You must be okay with that. Decide now what your response will be to comments from strangers about your adoption. Will you say something funny? Defensive? Instructive? Have a sense of humor. It will do everyone well.

Consider more than the required number of trips to their country of origin, both before and after an adoption takes place. Your child will probably ask for this, so start thinking about it early on. Especially when your child is mature enough to process and appreciate the trip, make it happen.





PRESERVING CULTURE

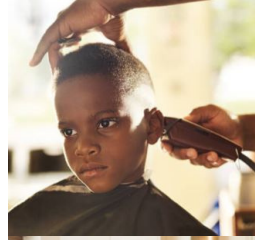
Preserve elements of culture. **Culture includes food, clothing, music, language, and holidays.** Learn to speak some of the phrases and teach them to your children if they do not remember/never learn. Learn to cook the food even if they don't remember/never experienced it. Read books or visit websites that come from their culture. Celebrate the holidays.

Culture also includes things like worldview, values, religion, relationship dynamics, expectations people have of one another, and the view of individual versus collective autonomy and responsibility. Become familiar with these more complex issues and share with your child when age appropriate.

Do not be threatened by your child's desire to connect with their race, ethnicity, country, and culture of origin. This is a good thing. But do not feel compelled to insist they pursue this more than your child desires to.

Communicate with the birth family. Or, if not practical, available, or advisable, then communicate with extended kin. If that is not possible, then communicate with people from the community/country of origin. By communicate, we mean through social media and the exchange of gifts, letters, photos, etc.

Spend time with people of the same ethnicity. Preferably, find a church with someone of your child's ethnicity, and even peers that can be friends. Or find an older mentor. Meet with someone online. Seek out someone who they can see looks like them.





SELF-ESTEEM AND RACE

Increase racial self-esteem the same way you increase self-esteem in general: **showering them with praise, giving them autonomy to make their own decisions, finding something at which they excel, and letting them thrive at it.** Tell them you love them. Give them hope that they will be successful.



Focus on unity and similarity. Most racial rhetoric today divides. But the Gospel unites. In Galatians 3:28, Paul says, *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* The Gospel unites, while the world divides. The Gospel focuses on our oneness, while the world is teaching us to focus on differences. The prevailing lens of the media sees the world in terms of the oppressed and oppressors (this is the fundamental tenant of Marxism). But the Gospel sees Christ, and the one-people he died for.



Tell them they are beautiful. Do it every day. Make sure they know it. And remind them that their beauty is a part of the promise of heaven. Three times in Revelation we are told that the Church triumphant will be comprised of people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation ([Rev. 5:9](#); [7:9](#); [1:11](#)).

PARENTING

Listen to your child. Some children may feel no loss at all over their racial identity. **The degree to which your child identifies with race will vary. Do not assume.** Tell your child that you are here to listen to them.

Understand that being a small ethnic minority affects dating. Your child will wonder whether they should or will be attracted to someone of the same race, or a different race.

Hair is not a trivial issue. If you are raising black children, know that hair care is different and that you will need to learn more about this subject. You may need to go to an expert salon.

Know there is a struggle to fit in. Transracially adopted children universally express this experience, so do not be oblivious or dismissive. It will happen.

Your child will hear disparaging comments sometimes. Be prepared for it. Tell your child what racism is, so they know it when they hear it. This will help them put the burden on the other person, rather than on themselves. Remind them that some people are toxic. Assure them that they deserve to be treated with dignity.





SELF-CARE

Join a support group or a group of friends who have adopted transracially. If one does not exist in your city, then do it online. You will need to share your experience, struggles, and advice.

Do not compare your child to others. This is good advice for every parent. It's good advice, especially, for adoptive parents. But it is good advice for transracial adoptive parents.

Be solution-focused, rather than problem-focused, as if there are no solutions and nothing will ever change. **Instead, create the attitude that we are not here to point fingers or cast blame, but we are all part of the solution. Have hope in the future.**

