



Lydia and Aaron





Dear expectant mom,

A warm hello from sunny Colorado. Thank you for taking the time to get to know us as you consider your options. While we cannot imagine the complexities of thinking through an adoption plan, whether and what family to choose to raise your child, and more, we know that you are seeking to make a decision that, you hope, is the absolute best for him or her.

We believe our stories – and yours – are ultimately in God's hand. That means all the good, and the hard. We believe, too, that if you decide to make an adoption plan, the story of you as your child's first parent doesn't end here. We know how important it is for adopted children to know where they come from, who their birth parents are. We value open adoption and the power and goodness of relationships for adopted children. You will always hold a special place in your child's life.

We are excited to be parents to another child, and our daughter is excited to be a big sister. We are humbled that our book is in your hands. And, we're praying that our wise, kind, good, and gracious God will lead you to make just the right decision (whatever it may be) in just the right timing, and that you would experience his peace and comfort surrounding you in this process.

Lydia, Aaron, and Cadence

Our Love Story

I imagine telling you our story while hanging out over coffee.

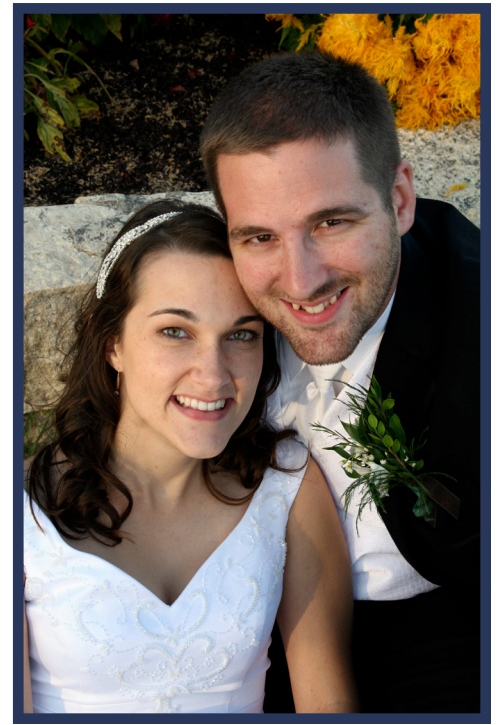
- Lydia



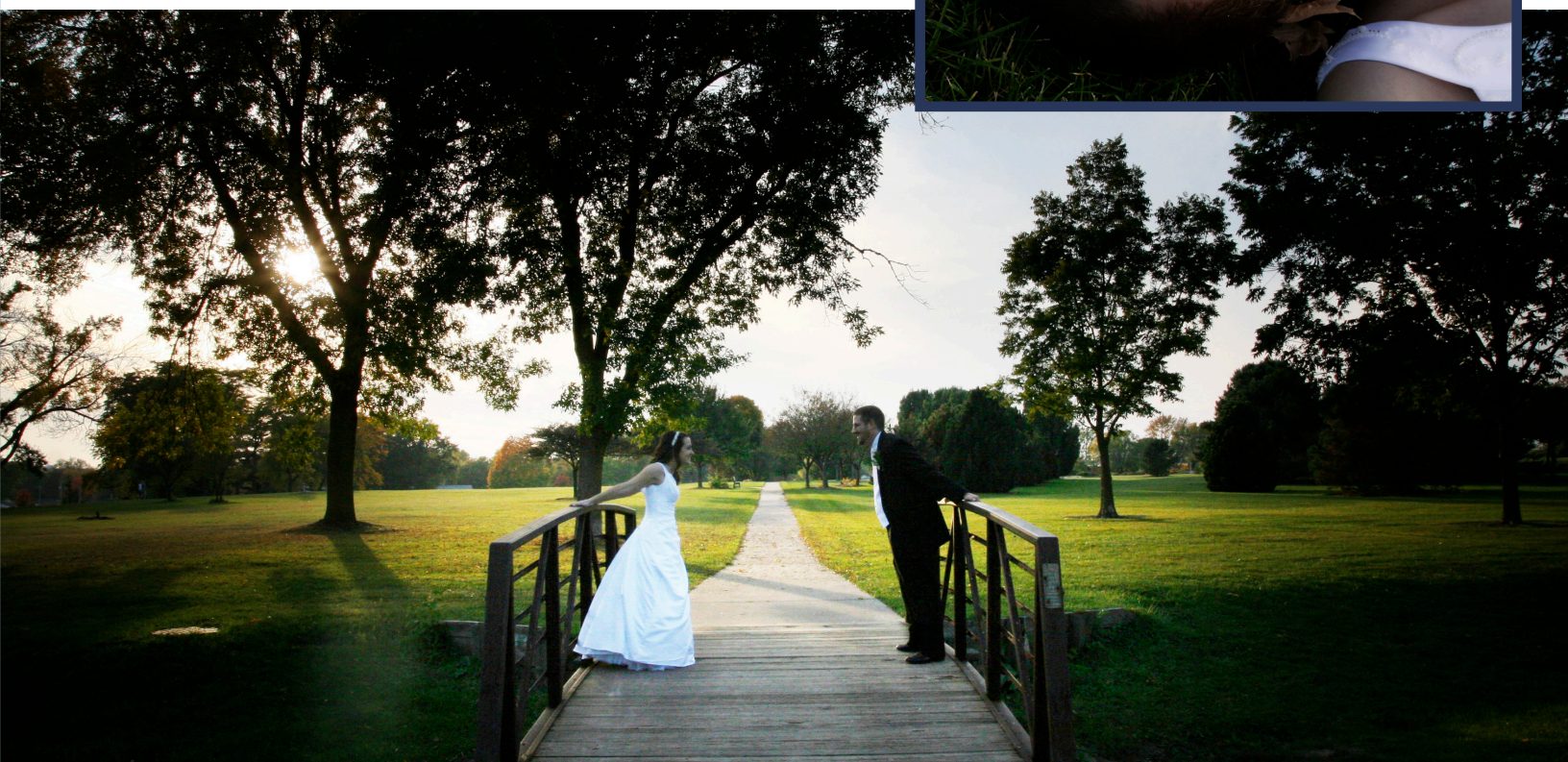
We met in college choir, and pretty rapidly became friends. In fact, at a School of Music retreat a few short weeks into our sophomore year (I was a new transfer student) I walked up to Aaron, put my arm in his, and literally said, "I think we should be friends." Perhaps it was a little forward, but we've now been together 19 years (married for 17).

I was drawn to Aaron through his leadership and care. He had a student leader role within the choir, so I saw him upfront leading us in various capacities. He also followed up on all prayer requests. When I asked for prayer after totaling my car, he called me to check in. Thus began a lot of calls over our dorm phones (we're old enough that our cell phones weren't smart), then lots of playing pool in the student center, and study time at Denny's – the only place open late enough for college students' study habits. We dated for nineteen months before getting engaged.

Our engagement came about in a multi-level surprise. Before our senior year, Aaron was serving over the summer leading the worship ministry at his home church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We maintained our relationship over the phone and a few letters. Aaron's parents wanted to surprise him for his last Sunday before going back to school, so his mom called me to see if they could drive the four hours to my house, pick me up, and drive the four hours back to theirs. What a fun idea! I agreed. Little did I know that Aaron, as surprised as he was, would decide to take advantage of us being in the same space before school – and take me to his favorite spot and ask me to marry him. I thought I was surprising him! We got engaged while walking along the Cedar River at Palisades Kepler State Park.



Our wedding was big and meaningful, taking place at Aaron's church. My church was too small for our guest list. We had friends play in a string quartet, several others sing, and lots of Jesus-focus in our ceremony, because we knew that we couldn't do marriage on our own.



Hi! I'm Lydia



I grew up with two siblings and two loving parents. I saw from a young age what it means to live as a follower of Jesus in this broken world. My parents weren't harsh about church attendance but did make it consistent. I've seen them awake in the morning with Bibles in their laps too many times to count. They valued meeting with other believers and caring for vulnerable people. I can remember when we brought groceries to needy families, and invited other people to live in our home.

I grew up in the South until about six years old, then the rest of the time in the more culturally and ethnically diverse Chicagoland area. This shift was instrumental in my adolescence, as it taught me that the world is much bigger than the southern towns my extended family was from.

My hopes for my kids are that they know how loved, unique, and beautiful they are, that their stories matter, and that God is the one who can use hard things to shape good in their lives. My support group for adoptive and foster moms has been very helpful in building my community, and training me in deeper and better ways to love my children. I sing all the time, and change words to familiar songs to fit the occasion or moment, just to be silly and add some lightheartedness to daily life. I love to laugh and seek to help my family laugh as often as I can. It matters to me that relationships remain honest, peaceful (because of pursuing peace, not sweeping things under the rug), and full of compassion.



A little more about me:

I am passionate about living for Jesus and showing my children his great, intense, forever love, even in my imperfect ways. I long for my life to mean something and to show people God's love and mercy accurately. I really enjoy being outside, sunshine through windows, musical theater, Christmas lights, reading good fiction or theology books when there's some time, exercising to stay healthy for my family, good coffee, time with friends, and visiting other countries. Very early each morning, I'm either sitting with my Bible, journal, and coffee, or I'm doing a brief workout before coming home to get Cadence up and ready for the day.



Hello! I'm
Aaron



I grew up in a family of six with my older sister, older brother, and younger sister in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The most crucial thing to know about me: Jesus Christ is my life, my everything. For my sake, he died and was raised! May my every breath show his incredible grace to save.

As a teenager who knew he had been changed, I sensed a growing desire to serve in vocational ministry. Older trusted believers identified music as an area of passion and reasonable skill, and counseled me that leading worship might fit well. I went to college in pursuit of becoming a worship pastor. I'm currently in my twenty-second year in vocational music ministry in churches, and my fifteenth in my church in Colorado. I'm deeply passionate about the gathered church proclaiming and savoring the unchanging life-transforming gospel of Jesus and seeing him on display in our lives. I desire to live and lead in ways which value and grow whole-person health.



I've worked hard from my first moments with Cadence until now to pursue and grow secure attachment. I'm committed to working hard to avoid taking attachment for granted in all future seasons. As expected, child rearing is joy-filled AND hard. It brings out the best in me AND exposes my sinfulness. I'm so grateful for the incredible privilege of raising and knowing her. I see my primary job as showing her the Father's heart for her. Most nights after reading stories, I pray over Cadence, and then kiss her cheek and whisper, "you are sooo loved."

A little more about me:

I'm an introvert, a homebody, and an Enneagram 1w2. I work hard to be without pretense. I say what I mean and mean what I say. I never want "I'm sorry" to be foreign or far from my lips and heart. I enjoy running, and am a fan of most major sports. When I find time for reading, I'm usually drawn toward books which explore emotional health. A book I've read every year since college is Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. I'm always moved by its emphasis on compassion and care for the marginalized. Otherwise, when I'm home in the evenings or weekends, my aim is to share interests, hobbies, and activities with Cadence. I really believe being her papa has helped me have more fun in daily life.

Lydia by Aaron

Lydia is faithful, loving, and dedicated. She pours herself out in genuinely loving God and loving people. She regularly gets up early to spend real time knowing God through Bible reading, journaling, and prayer. Relationally, she's quick to apologize and ask for forgiveness. She's gentle and humble and deeply desires to reflect Christ's heart in all that she is and does.

She is nearly always finding opportunities to learn, grow, and serve. She's smart, wise, and capable. She has served our church in many ways through the years, such as on the mission board, singing on worship team, teaching Sunday school, and being a youth leader. She also keeps her eyes and ears open to serve others in simple along-the-way moments as they arise. Her generous heart stretches mine – and our budget!

It's a precious gift to watch Lydia as a mother. She's patient and kind, seeking to enter into Cadence's world and meet her where she's at. She works hard to regulate her own emotions when Cadence is having a hard time, so that she can calmly help her navigate her big feelings. She's creative, fun, and playful, instilling a sense of wonder in Cadence's everyday life.

I've been impressed at Lydia's diligence to surround herself with people and resources to help grow her ability to care for and style Cadence's tightly curled hair. She attends a yearly conference for foster/adoptive moms (Filled Retreat) and co-leads our local chapter's support group. She's committed to the lifelong wellbeing of our child(ren).

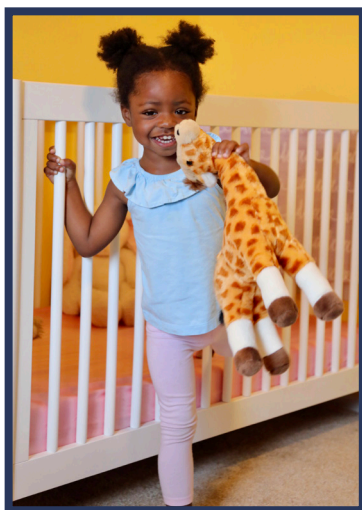
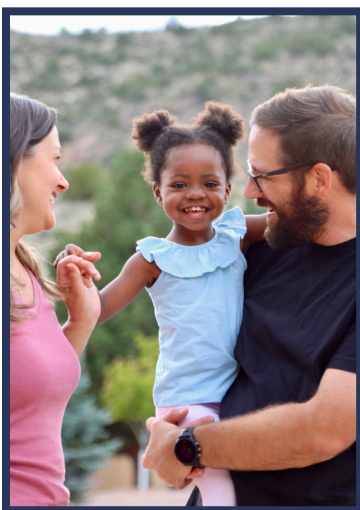
I always said I would never date an Aaron (since my middle name is Erin, and my family still calls me that) – and behold, I dated and married one! He does everything with lots of thought, intentionality, and intensity. He thinks deeply about everything. In his work as a worship pastor, he schedules, plans, and leads our weekly church worship services, thoughtfully and with a Gospel focus. It's never based on his preferences, but instead what makes the most sense for our church.

He is an incredible dad – or “Papa,” as Cadence calls him. I've been floored by how he loves our daughter, how funny and goofy he can be, how selfless and loving. He'll hold her for longer hours than I am able, carry her through the zoo when she's sleepy, and repeatedly play the same game because she wants it “again, again!” I know he'll do just the same with any other child in our home. He loves Jesus and talks to Cadence often about him. We joke that he's more of a helicopter parent, and I'm more free-spirited.

Aaron values honesty and talking things through, time at home, and opportunities to be introspective. He cares for people well, then loves to recharge at home. He's an introvert at heart. While I love to go out and do all the things, he is a homebody.

We are a good balance, and a good team, and seek to work out differences in our opinions and parenting as well as possible.

Aaron by Lydia



Meet Cadence

Meet our spunky and spirited daughter Cadence, who is almost three. She is full of life and joy, passion, curiosity, and sensitivity. She likes to run everywhere, blow bubbles outside, explore the library, sing songs, dance, climb everything, and snuggle. We have noticed for her whole life that she loves what we call “withness” – she just wants to be with us and does not particularly enjoy playing by herself most days.

Cadence has a slew of friends her age – many of whom have been adopted themselves! And she enjoys singing in our church services before playing with several friends in the church nursery. It is precious to watch her with younger kids and babies in our community – she loves to talk about them and give kisses. At the same time, we think she’s an introvert who later needs to recover at home in her familiar environment after lots of social interaction.

We waited many years but didn’t know it was this little girl we were waiting for to make us parents for the first time. Even when things are hard, it is a true privilege to be her parents. We talk often about adopting again, not only to keep adoption and the language about adoption normal in our house, but also to help her think about and adjust to having a baby sister or brother.

Day to Day

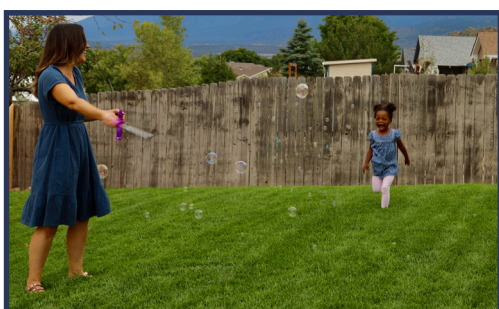
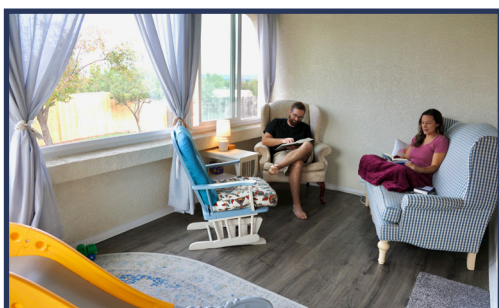
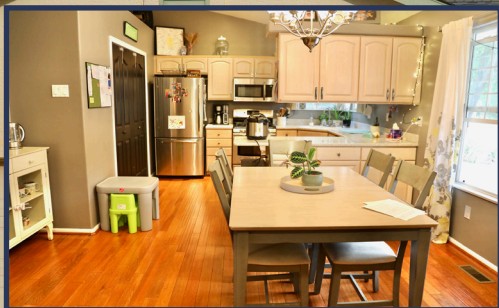
Lydia wakes up early most days, either to go to the gym or spend some quiet time with God (or both). Aaron is up shortly after for his own quiet time in the sunroom, and we both enjoy a good cup of black coffee. Cadence will wake about 7:00, then is full-steam ahead into play-mode most mornings. Of course, our days change and adjust based on the season of life Cadence is in. She and one or both of us play in our backyard nearly every day – blowing lots of bubbles, running, and riding her balance bike.

As Aaron's schedule allows, he'll go for a run before work while Lydia gets Cadence's breakfast ready, gets her dressed, and usually plans one activity for the day. The library, playgrounds, the grocery store, and play dates with little friends are typical outings. We'll throw in a little screen time, but we don't want the TV to dominate our lives. We often have music on – helping Cadence to love a variety.

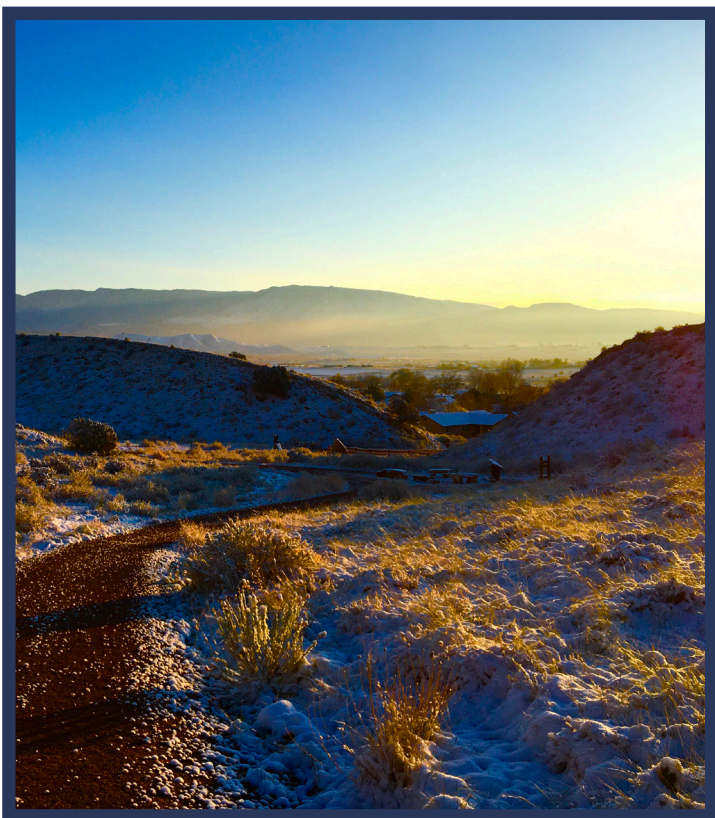
We really value family dinner time all together, and try to protect that. One of us will pray over the meal, and typically Cadence will want to pray as well. Once she goes to bed, we'll often watch a show and just take a breath from the day before going to bed ourselves.

Our days sometimes feel simple, sometimes a little too busy, but we do try to appreciate slowness, reflection, and refreshment where we can.





We bought our current (and first) home nearly eight years ago, specifically in order to grow into it. We love it, and have room for another child easily. We wouldn't necessarily call it our dream home, but we do love that we can see the mountains out the front windows and out the back, can host our friends and enjoy meals together, and feel comfortable in our quiet neighborhood. We recently leveled our backyard and put grass in it and a fence around it, so that Cadence can run and play outside and blow bubbles, which she loves to do. We are a five-minute walk from our front door to hiking trails, and just a few minutes' drive from our little town's Main Street and lots of playgrounds. Our favorite spot in our home is easily the sunroom, which was the reason we bought it. Most mornings, when it's not too cold, you'll find either one or both of us out there enjoying the sunshine and reading our Bibles or good books. Cadence also has a little play area out there that she loves.



Our Community

is a summer tourism town but still thrives during the winter months (just in a quieter way). It is known as a rafting and mountain biking destination, but offers a lot for families who live here as well. We live in an excellent climate and average 330 days of sun per year. While it has a lot of amenities of a larger town, it is technically rural.

The main gift of our community is the people that we do regular life with from our church. It is amazing to see that God has placed it on so many families' hearts to adopt or love kids through foster care. We can quickly count 26 children in our circle who have been adopted or been in foster care, and our church loves them well. Lydia is also a co-leader of a support group for adoptive and foster moms, reaching families outside of our church. We're thankful to live in a community that sees, loves, and values adopted children, and supports adoptive families in incredible and tangible ways. In our day-to-day lives, we see and spend time with these adoptive families regularly.

We have no doubt that whatever child joins our family will be loved, encouraged, and cherished by both of us, by our families, and by our community.






ADVENTURE
AWAITS



Meet Our Families

Aaron's family is in Iowa. Jeff (his dad), and Adam and Lily (his older brother and his wife) live in the same city. Aaron's mom died from COVID in 2021. We often feel her loss—she would have poured so much love on Cadence and any child the Lord puts into our family. Aaron's older sister Amanda and her husband Erik have two college-aged kids, Sean and Mackenzie. We are close with Aaron's younger sister Abby and her husband Joe, who have two elementary-aged boys, Greyson and Easton. Both of Aaron's sisters live within two hours of his dad and brother.

We are also close with Lydia's family, who are in the Midwest as well. Her parents, Bob & Helen, live in a Chicago suburb about a mile down the road from her older brother Ben and his wife Jenny, and their elementary-aged sons Ronen and Caleb. Lydia's sister Emily and her husband Karl live about an hour away in southern Wisconsin.

Cadence's birth mom is an important member of our extended family as well. She lives 2.5 hours north of us, parenting Cadence's half-sisters (ages 5 and 4). We are happy to maintain her open adoption with communication and visits.

Everyone is very supportive and enthusiastic about our adoption journey, and love Cadence well.



Holidays & Traditions

We believe life is a gift from God and, therefore, worth celebrating.



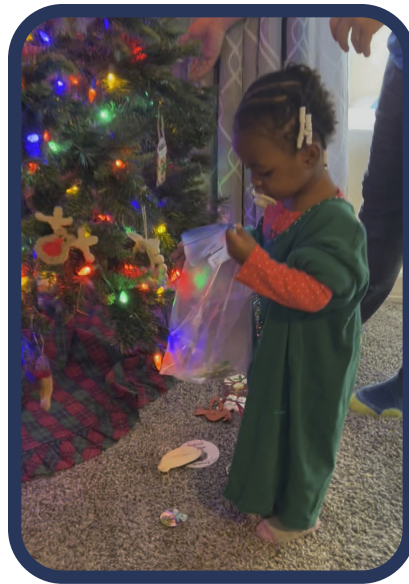
That means, in addition to more “normal” holidays and traditions, we attempt a sabbath rhythm on Saturdays, which mostly means practicing habits of rest and re-creation, enjoying the day as a gift to receive.

Birthdays are special in our house – we love to celebrate each other. In busy adulthood, that sometimes looked pretty simple (a card, a gift, some chocolate, a cake) but we go big for kids. Cadence’s second birthday was Bluey-themed and included a ton of her little friends and their families. We also celebrate the day we met her (February 17), as well as the day her adoption was finalized. She will likely go through seasons where these days may bring more pain than joy, but for now, we celebrate and always frame her adoption in positive ways.



For Thanksgiving, our main tradition is making “turkey cookies” (with fudge stripe cookies, chocolate truffles, candy corn, frosting) like Aaron did as a kid. Sometimes we’ll spend the day feasting at friends’ houses.





Most of our holidays and traditions are centered around Jesus.

Advent—the weeks leading up to Christmas—is so important as we look forward to Christmas. A tradition we plan to continue is driving around town to look at Christmas lights (celebrating that Jesus is the Light of the World). Christmas ornaments and decorating the tree as a family are special to us, and we want to instill it in our children. We'll throw on the Mariah Carey Christmas album from the 90s, pull out our bags of varied ornaments, and put them all over the tree. On Christmas Eve, we celebrate Jesus' birth with our church family, and Christmas Day is about us celebrating as a family (or, sometimes, travel to see extended families, since Aaron always leads services on Christmas Eve). We love to give gifts, feast, enjoy, relax, laugh.

Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter) is another important time when we celebrate and reflect on Jesus' death and resurrection. We celebrate with the gathered church, then return home and enjoy a good meal (with or without additional people at our table), and give Cadence an Easter basket.



Our Family Values



The gospel of Jesus is our daily fuel.

We know there's power in the gospel which we received, in which we stand, and by which we are being saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). So we want to live in it and be living examples for our children. God's grace is sufficient in our weakness.

We deeply value time as a family.

Practicing honest and healthy interpersonal communication, and weekly worship in our local church. We long to instill in any children in our home a confidence in God's love and care for them that transcends the difficulties that the world will throw at them.

We value experiencing God's incredibly beautiful creation.

We love going to zoos, camping, and hiking to explore new places. We especially love National Parks (having been to 13 so far) and are excited to bring our kids to experience them. We've also had the privilege of being in more than 25 countries, which has shaped our perspective of people and the world. Truly valuing multi-cultural experiences, we believe they grow empathy, understanding, and appreciation of others. We are excited to travel as a family.

We also value minimalism.

Which simply means we want to be intentional with our possessions, to "have the stuff we use, and use the stuff we have." We value being generous to others, from giving anonymous gifts when a financial need arises within our church, to dropping off food at the local teen moms' support organization, to removing things from our schedule so that we can be available to help and care for others.

NATIONAL PARKS



Why Adoption

Three years into our marriage, we moved to our small town in Colorado, where we were blessed with a wonderful church community filled with adoptive families. Adoption had been in our minds, but in a “maybe, someday” kind of place. Moving here, we wondered, “Is this what God is asking us to enter into, too?” We had always viewed adoption as something that echoes God’s heart of love, but had never seen families actually affected by it in such tangible ways until this new community.

It was here, over time, that it became clear that God’s story was different from what we would have assumed or written ourselves. Perhaps you have experienced that yourself. Fast-forward to 14 years of marriage and childlessness, we couldn’t have known that we were waiting for our daughter to be born and join our family. Throughout this journey, both before and after our daughter joined our family, we have pressed into God more and more in prayer, educated ourselves about adoption, and strengthened our relationships with other adoptive families.

Being chosen by Cadence’s birth mom launched our journey into parenting transracially. We’re committed to continue learning, growing, and changing in our lifelong navigation of transracial adoption. We have always valued and loved diversity in our friendships and community; it is a gift now to experience precious diversity in our own home. Truly, the diversity of the Kingdom of God is utterly beautiful! As a result of becoming transracial parents, we have added to what we read, listen to, what churches we visit, and what places we go as a family, and much more.

We have now been married 17 years, and are seeking to adopt transracially again, because that’s the story God is writing in our home. We are absolutely honored to walk this path. We know there is goodness in our kids being racial mirrors of one another as they grow, for the sake of support, shared experience, understanding, and love of one another.



Thank you

for taking some time with us, through this glimpse into our story. Whatever you decide for yourself and your child, we pray for you to have wisdom and peace.

For the child God brings to our family, we can commit to:

- Honor his or her history and origins, story, and larger family beyond just us and to talk about who they are
- Seek to speak well of and show honor to all birth parents
- Nurture their unique personality and development
- Teach them about Jesus, in our home and within the local church setting
- Try to instill in them a love for other people beyond themselves, and a desire and skills to be kind and compassionate
- Help them in their goals in life, the best we can
- Pursue our own growth and action in parenting transracially

Since we understand the value of a child knowing their birth parent, we are consistent in honoring our daughter's open adoption. We send updates via text, or Facebook Messenger, or other secure means as her birth mom is able. Inasmuch as we are able, our goal is to maintain and value open adoption for any other children in our home.

You surely have all kinds of thoughts, questions, and emotions in this process. We're praying that you go to the Lord with all of them, trusting that he's big enough to handle it. Your times are in his hands (Psalm 31:15).

Lydia, Aaron, and Cadence



*Cradled
in
Grace*
ADOPTION CONSULTANTS