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Delhi. Sonali means “Golden,” and indeed Sonali was a golden child. She was beautiful and healthy, although tiny. The people in the orphanage were very kind, but they had so many children to take care of that there was not much time to nurture each child individually. All the little cots were lined up in a row in a big room, and the babies (mostly girls) had to fend for themselves.

I had given birth to my second child three weeks before Esther was born. We now had two children, a girl, Hannah, who was three, and a newborn baby boy, Luke. I was more than ready to adopt. I had been dreaming and praying for years! We did our paperwork; in those days, international adoptions were a lot easier than they are now, and lo and behold, within three months, Esther was in our home! I had two six-months olds and a three-year-old, and we were also told that very week that we were going to be leading all of the Indian churches in our fellowship!

As people do in such situations, we took it in our stride and proceeded to build our family. Esther’s first few years of life with us were tough. She was a very unhappy, sad, and angry little girl. Esther, to this day, is a very sensitive soul, and she knew something was not right. We found out later that the reason we were able to adopt her so fast was that the orphanage did not know what to do with her. She would scream all the time. She was mad, and rightly so! She protested against this most unnatural setup. I will never forget the first time I met Esther. She was brought to us in the orphanage; she took one look at me and started yelling. It was almost as if she said, “Who are you? You are not the one! This is not right!”

One other sad fact about Esther’s adoption is that she was considered a hard to place baby due to her dark skin tone. She was extremely pretty, and perfectly healthy, but dark. In India, unfortunately, there is a lot of prejudice against dark skin. That in itself would have made it hard for Esther to be adopted locally. Her only hope was an international adoption.

For the next six years of her life, Esther proceeded to have multiple temper tantrums every day, raging constantly against the injustice that was done to her. As parents, we struggled to understand, but we plodded on. I learned about patience, tolerance, and compassion in a way I never did before. By the time Esther was six, she was able to verbalize her pain. We had daily talks, crying sessions, we prayed... and Esther calmed down. She was finally able to talk about what was bothering her so deeply. Esther did very well in school, sports, music. She became a Christian on Mother’s Day (no coincidence, I believe) at the age of 13, and has done very well spiritually. She is a very sensitive, empathetic person. She is now a leader, and one of the most effective counselors I know. Her deep personal pain has made her able to connect with others on an unusual level.

The most encouraging thing about Esther’s life is how she is a giver. She gives back. I remember, when we lived in India, Esther would always feel the pain of the children who begged on the street corners, the orphans in the care homes, the children in the slums. In high school, she was president of a foundation where students, parents, and teachers would go and volunteer in our HOPE worldwide school. To this day (10 years later) that foundation is still strong and thriving. Through the grace of God, Esther was able to not just help, but to make her efforts sustainable.

Editor’s note: Please visit www.DisciplesToday.org for the entire story, this version was edited for space.

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“A Beautiful Story of Redemption”

Nadine Templer — Dubai, UAE

All over India and the surrounding countries, hundreds of thousands of little girls are killed or abandoned every year just because they are girls. It was always my dream to adopt one of those little girls. I remember praying for years, begging God to let me be a mother to a little child who needed a family.



Working in India for so many years, serving at orphanages and witnessing firsthand the mistreatment of women, made me acutely aware of the need for social justice. Women need champions; they need advocates, empowerment. I have been blessed enough to be part of that endeavor.

As I witnessed my daughter Esther’s beautiful wedding three months ago, I thanked God for her life, for the way God rescued her, and for the way God is using her right now to bring so many young women to him. It is a story of gratitude, giving back, redemption. It is a beautiful story.

Esther Sonali was born on September 12, 1992, in Patna, Bihar, in the East of India. Bihar is a desperately poor part of India. People struggle to survive. Corruption is rampant. Life is harsh. We may never know the exact conditions that led to Esther’s relinquishment, but we have been told she was supposed to be a victim of infanticide. Having a girl in India is still viewed as a curse by the vast majority of the population. The dowry system means a family will spend 10 years of their income on one wedding. One daughter is costly. More than one makes life extremely challenging.

People who can afford it have ultrasounds, and even though sex determination is illegal, it is extremely easy to find a doctor more than willing to reveal the sex of the unborn child for a fee. If the fetus is female, there is a good chance it will be aborted. The US-based NGO Invisible Girl Project estimates that five to seven million sex-selective abortions are carried out in India every year. And that is not counting infanticide (killing a baby after birth).

Esther had a different destiny. Apparently, some Catholic nuns heard about Esther’s mother and offered to take the baby at birth. Esther was whisked away to an orphanage. She never knew the love of a mother, the subconscious feeling of being wanted and nurtured. Like so many baby girls, she was rejected right from the start.

Esther Sonali spent the first six months of her life in an orphanage in New

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- **Another OYC Baptism!**
One Year Challenge — Monday, 03 April 2017
Last week, an Oregon State University student was baptized in the Willamette River on by OYC participants in Corvallis, Oregon! Are you making a difference...
- **Orlando Church Hires New Lead Couple**
Orlando Church of Christ Elders — Monday, 03 April 2017
After multiple meetings with the elders, staff, Board of Directors, and members of the Orlando Church, the elders and evangelists are excited to announce the hiring of Marshall and Shawn Mead as the new...
- **Egypt Church Hosts “God is Able” Middle Eastern Conference**
Egypt Church of Christ — Friday, 31 March 2017
This August, “God is Able” will be the theme for a Middle East Conference. It will be hosted by the Egypt Church of Christ. We live in an age of unprecedented power; still nothing compares to our omnipotent God! Come and meet the God who is able in the land...

- **Good News from New Orleans’ Singles Retreat**
Mary Bullock, New Orleans, LA, USA — Saturday, 01 April 2017
The singles’ ministry of the New Orleans Church held its very first “Singles Retreat” and Masquerade Mardi Gras Ball. The big event took place March 17-19, 2017! Disciples came from as far away as Hawaii as well from 18 different states! Friday evening kicked off the event with a “meet and greet” affair...

• UPCOMING EVENTS

- DT Singles Cruise**
Galveston, Texas USA
April 23-30, 2017
- ICMC US West**
Austin, Texas USA
June 29-July 1, 2017
- Middle East Conference**
Cairo, Egypt
July 2017
- ICMC US East**
Asheville, North Carolina USA
August 4-6, 2017
- 2017 Family Ministry Conference**
Denver, Colorado USA
September 1-3, 2017
- ICOC Worship Conference**
Dallas, Texas USA
October 13-15, 2017
- 2020 World Discipleship Summit**
Orlando, Florida USA
July 2-5, 2020

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN
CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD



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