

## **Odum Family Adoption Story National Adoption Month, November 2014**

CURTIS: BEING PARENTS OF YOUR GRANDCHILDREN, IT'S KIND OF HARD. I DON'T THINK I'D HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.

This is the story of the Odum family  
Topeka, Kansas

CURTIS AND MELANIE ODUM WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO AN EMPTY NEST, BUT WHEN THEY LEARNED THEIR THREE GRANDCHILDREN WERE IN A DANGEROUS SITUATION, THEY QUICKLY STEPPED UP TO HELP.

CURTIS: IT WAS KIND OF TRAUMATIC, BECAUSE YOU HOPE THAT YOUR CHILDREN, IN THIS CASE OUR SON, WOULD BE A GOOD PARENT TO YOUR GRANDCHILDREN. THAT'S WHAT WE WANTED.

ALLOWING THEIR GRANDCHILDREN TO GO INTO FOSTER CARE WITH ANOTHER FAMILY WASN'T AN OPTION FOR THEM, SO THEY OFFERED TO CARE FOR THE THREE YOUNG CHILDREN...AND EVENTUALLY ADOPTED THEM AS THEIR OWN.

CURTIS: EVEN THOUGH WE DIDN'T PLAN TO ADOPT, WHEN IT WAS ALL SAID AND DONE, THE CHILDREN HAD A PLACE SAFE TO LIVE, PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM AND CARE FOR THEM ENDED UP BEING THEIR PARENTS, ALTHOUGH WE'RE GRANDPARENTS TOO.

OF THE MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE, NEARLY TWO THOUSAND OF THEM ARE PLACED WITH A RELATIVE. ALTHOUGH THE GOAL IS REUNIFICATION, WHEN THAT ISN'T A SAFE OPTION, GRANDPARENTS MAY BECOME THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS.

CURTIS: YOU JUST HAVE TO READJUST AND THINK OF IT AS THESE ARE OUR CHILDREN. JUST LIKE THE JUDGE SAID, THEY'RE ENTITLED TO ALL THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF YOUR BIRTH CHILDREN, SO YOU HAVE TO CHANGE YOUR MINDSET IN THIS AREA, AND THAT'S A PROCESS. IT DON'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT, BUT WE'RE KIND OF GETTING THERE. IT'S TAKING A WHILE.

THE ODUMS SAY KINSHIP ADOPTIONS CAN BE TOUGH—BECAUSE THE BIOLOGICAL PARENTS MAY STILL BE IN THE PICTURE.

CURTIS: PEOPLE WHO ARE CONSIDERING KINSHIP ADOPTION NEED TO CONSIDER THAT. ARE THEY STRONG ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH THAT.

BUT CURTIS SAYS KINSHIP ADOPTION HAS ITS REWARDS.

CURTIS: I STILL BELIEVE THAT IT'S SOMETHING THAT'S VERY NEEDED. WHEN YOU HAVE KIN IN THE GAME, YOU HAVE MORE OF A LOVE, BOND EVEN BEFORE THE PAPERS ARE SIGNED, BECAUSE THIS IS MY BLOOD. THE LOVE AND COMPASSION IS THERE EVENT BEFORE YOU BUILD A RELATIONSHIP. SOMETIMES WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW A KID, YOU HAVE TO GROW A BOND. THERE ARE KIN, IT'S ALREADY IN THE

CARDS. A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO TAKE ON THAT RESPONSIBILITY. THERE'S ONE THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT. AND THAT' IS THE CHILD.

THE ODUMS SAY AS THEY DON'T HAVE THE PATIENCE OR ENERGY THEY USED TO, BUT THEY SAY THEY MAKE UP FOR THAT WITH EMMENSE LOVE FOR THEIR GRANDCHILDREN WHO ARE NOW THEY'RE CHILDREN.

CURTIS: IF YOU THINK ABOUT THE LIFE THAT'S AT STAKE AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THIS CHILD IS GOING TO END UP EITHER ON DRUGS, DEAD OR IN A PENITENTIARY, THEN YOU'LL TAKE A STAND AND YOU'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

If you're interested in adoption, call 877-457-5430.

We'll help you begin the process.

Who will love me?

I will love you.