

Call or conversion

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I've been trying to put my finger on why I've felt some angst about Ellen Painter Dollar's post ["Why Don't You Just Adopt?"](#) over on Thin Places. Dollar writes about the difficulty of offering this pat answer to couples experiencing infertility or facing other decisions that may restrict biological children (both parents being cystic fibrosis carriers comes to mind). As I read through her list of reasons adoption isn't always the answer I agreed with everything she said. Adoption is difficult and complicated. For one, it takes a lot more effort to enter into adoption than when you just happen to get pregnant. Adoptions also involve children who have experienced tremendous loss and the repercussions of this loss can be traumatic for everyone involved.

So what's my deal? While I think it is very important to be aware of the full gamut of issues involved in adoption, and that there is ridiculous naivety about adoption, I worry when I get the sense that adoption is so difficult it has to be a "call" on a particular couples' life.

I recognize that my sensitivity to call-language is grounded in a life in evangelicalism where "call" was misused to get in or out of whatever you felt like. I never had a clear sense that those who used this language knew where God-inspired discernment began and unmitigated desire ended.

It is also strange to me that there are things to which we are called that have very little to do with an actual decision. Take motherhood. I've noticed this [John Piper post](#) has been circulating the internet about the calling to motherhood. But this is a calling I've received not because of a process of discernment and response but because, to be quite honest, I accidentally got knocked up. While I take parenting seriously I'm not ready to label that a call.

I reached out to a friend of mine with three adopted children to see if any of my angst was founded (and knowing she would set me straight if need be). I loved her response. She told me how she avoids the language of call by thinking in terms of conversion. You don't sit around and pray for a call to parenthood. You start opening up your life to the possibility of this radical vulnerability of your time, finances, love, and emotions. You pray for conversion to welcome any kind of life because we have absolutely no idea what we are getting ourselves into. You work to make a life of welcome.

I don't know that this will lead every Christian to adoption, or even parenthood for that matter. As much as I see adoption in our future I look down the long path of my husband's impending journey to medical school and wonder how on earth that's going to happen. As the parent of one, soon two biological children I have no judgment for those who desire parenthood in this way. But I do want us all to hesitate when we use the language of "call" when it comes to adoption. Maybe we should be praying more for a conversion of our hearts when it comes to the task of parenting adopted children. I know I'll be praying for conversion in my heart and life as fear around finances and the future creep into my life. I hope you will, too.

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