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## Reflections...

*Thoughts from the Editor...*

As I was driving home from Colin's music lesson recently, I heard a broadcast on the radio in which a Christian music writer/composer was discussing the motivation for his writing. He explained, in paraphrased form, that music was worship or, more to the point, worship was music. This got me to thinking a little about the whole question of worship. I've written before about what it means to glorify God, and how we try to glorify God in this ministry. But it would seem at first blush that the question of worship were a bit irrelevant to this forum; stick with me.

As the father of fourteen children, ten of whom are under the age of ten, I routinely receive hand-made gifts of various descriptions. These gifts range from colored pictures torn from coloring books, to hand-written drawings or notes on virtually any sort of paper, to original sculptures in modeling clay. And though there are times when the particular subject or object of the artwork eludes me, I am always appreciative of the effort that went into its creation because it was done as an act of love from a child to her father. The child at some point thought about her father and how much she loved him, and she decided that she wanted to do something nice for her father—to give him something beautiful, something of her own creation. And so, often with painstaking deliberation, the child labors to produce a work of art, a gift for her parent given out of sheer love and affection.

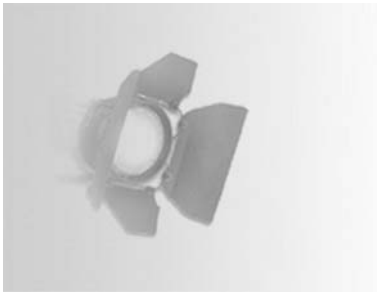
That I think, analogizes an act of worship. Not that I think the child is worshipping her father or that earthly fathers are worthy of worship, but that it forms a picture of true worship. It is when the creature gives from his own heart a gift to his Creator, a gift of his own imagination and industry. The precise nature of the gift is less important than the heart that went into its

creation. It is when the creature knows in his mind and in his heart that he loves his Creator, and he thus desires to express that love in tangible form. ((Of course, true worship involves more than just giving out of a spirit of love; it involves ascribing to the One worshipped the honor, adoration, subjection, and service to which the One worshipped is entitled by right. In what follows, I'll take it as a given that these characteristics accompany the aspects of worship discussed.))

Now, going back to the subject of my children and their manifold gifts to me. If I were to be honest, I would have to say that there are times when I know that the gift my child has just given me did not proceed out of love, but out of some other motivation. It may be that one or all of the other children were crafting gifts for me and this child did not want to be the odd man out. Or it may be that the giving of the gift was actually an attempt to inveigle some benefit from me, or to induce me to forbear in some course of action (e.g., punishment) I had determined to follow. The point is, not all such gifts proceed from the heart; or, as the poet said, "all that glitters is not gold." And I think the same can be true of what we call our worship. There are times when the gift we bring to the altar is more an act of mechanical compliance—or worse, selfish manipulation—than heart-felt worship. And such "gifts" cannot and should not be called worship.

So, back to the question of music as worship. There is a disturbing and widespread trend in the church today to refer intentionally to one particular portion of the "church service," exclusively, as worship. We have developed a whole type or classification of music that we call "worship music," implying that other types of music, while they may be pleasant or entertaining, or even uplifting,

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## Family Spotlight

# The Blairs

By Deb Amend



Left to right: Chris, Joshua (4), Courtney (12), Danny (2½), Pam, & Cailey (10)

After being asked by many people to describe her experience with raising a child with a disability, Emily Perl Kingsley, wrote the following essay:

When you're going to have a baby, it is like planning a fabulous vacation trip—to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. Michelangelo's David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very interesting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland," you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But, there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place than you thought you were going.

It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills... and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things.... about Holland.

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Chris and Pam Blair, along with their daughters, Courtney and Cailey (ages twelve and ten) made the decision to receive the blessing of "traveling to Holland" when they adopted their son Josh. Not because of Josh's special need, which is unilateral microtia (meaning he has no outer ear on one side), but because of the way he entered their family. For them the surprise came in that God had them change direction while in the process of

their adoption—not from Italy to Holland, but from a province in extreme northern China to the eastern-central province of Anhui. And from a beautiful little girl, worthy of a family, to a little boy, just as valuable and just as worthy.

Sometimes, as we follow God's leading, we are surprised where we end up. However, the Blair family can testify to the fact that although something may be different than we originally thought it would be, it is still good.

"Before we were even married we talked about adoption. It was...in our plan all along. We wanted to have biological children first and then adopt," says Pam.

So, after the birth of their daughters, Chris and Pam began to pray about growing their family through adoption. As they prayed, they talked with families that had adopted, and they began to learn about the various types of adoption.

In time, God began to urge them to move forward, and they decided, for practical reasons, to pursue foster-to-adopt. As they were looking into that option, though, God showed them a different plan.

Gabriel Mitchell—son of family friends Kevin and Ginger Mitchell, and one of The Shepherd's Crook's first adoptions—brought a new perspective for the Blair family. They were able to watch the Mitchells work against the odds to bring Gabriel home, and they saw how well he fit into their family. Gabriel's special need, bilateral microtia and the subsequent hearing loss, became a part of the Blairs' lives and prepared them for what God was about to present to them through the Mitchell family.

One day in 2002, Ginger Mitchell received an email from Kathy Rosenow with a picture of a baby girl in China. The baby girl, named Dou Dou, had the same special need as Gabriel—bilateral microtia. The Mitchells prayed about what God wanted their role to be in the life of Dou Dou, and they began to show the picture to families they thought might be interested in adopting her.

A typical adoption from China follows their referral system: a family completes a home study and dossier and indicates the profile of a child that they would like to adopt. The China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA) then refers a child to them. The family can either accept that referral or reject it in favor of receiving a different one. A family would never have been allowed to adopt a healthy Chinese child that they had heard about and chosen ahead of time. Dou Dou's picture, however, came to Kathy at a time when the CCAA was unofficially waiving such prohibitions for special-needs adoptions. (This is no longer the case.) An adoption agency representative had

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“I will seek **what was lost** and bring back what was driven away.”

Ezekiel 34:16

**The following Shepherd’s Crook children have come home to their families since our last newsletter was published.**

### Peter



*Before, in a Russian orphanage*



*After, in his Harrold, SD home*

### Luke



*Before, in a Chinese orphanage*



*After, in his Merritt Island, FL home*

### Levi



*Before, in a Korean foster home*

(‘After’ picture  
not available)

*After, in his DeMotte, IN home*

### Connie



*Before, in a Bulgarian orphanage*



*After, in her Lomita, CA home*

### Reflections *(Continued from page 1)*

are somehow “other than” worship music. We have both amateur and professional worship leaders, and some churches even have worship pastors—i.e., those whose vocation is to lead the congregation in corporate worship. This situation is to some extent the result of and to some extent responsible for the thinking in the minds of many today that “worship” consists in the singing of certain songs in certain ways that tend to evoke certain emotions from the participants. Sadly, then, if the emotions do not come, the participant may believe that, for whatever reason, he or she is not actually worshipping; conversely, he or she may believe that if the emotions do come, then he or she actually is worshipping. Still worse, he or she may believe that simply singing the songs constitutes worship. How sad this is for the church. I will step out on a limb here and say that this mindset, this tacit teaching on the part of many church leaders, amounts to a modern-day heresy; or, as Steve Brown (Key Life) is fond of saying, “it is a lie straight from the pit of hell, and it smells like smoke.” I’m not saying that what we call worship music cannot be true worship—I believe it often is—but that true worship is not limited to such music or activities.

Why on earth am I making such potentially inflammatory statements? What could be my purpose in apparently trying to alienate many devout Believers? I believe one of the primary responsibilities of the church is to root out heresy where it is found, and to protect the truth of our holy faith from the lies of the Enemy. To relegate worship to such a specific, limited definition and activity is to welcome into our thinking a lie with which the devil is undoubtedly pleased. Worship, rightly understood, is an act of adoration and love directed toward the One who is worthy of *all* of our adoration, *all* our devotion, *all* our love. This principle is, of course, the basis of the first Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before Me.” When Jesus summed up the first Table of the Decalogue, He said, “You shall love the Lord your

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“I will bring them **out from the nations** and ... into their own land.”

Ezekiel 34:13

**Adoptions have been started on the following children since our last newsletter was published.**



**Maria**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage  
Will soon be with her Cincinnati, OH family*



**Chloe**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with her Cincinnati, OH family*



**Eduard**

*Currently waiting in a Russian orphanage  
Will soon be with his Kelso, WA family*



**Caleb**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Lakeland, FL family*



**Edward**

*Currently waiting in a Russian orphanage  
Will soon be with his Acworth, GA family*



**Leann**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with her Bakersfield, CA family*



**Angelica**

*Currently waiting in a Russian orphanage  
Will soon be with her Acworth, GA family*



**Kimberly**

*Currently waiting in a Korean foster home  
Will soon be with her Troy, OH family*



**Victoria**

*Currently waiting in a Russian orphanage  
Will soon be with her Acworth, GA family*



**Jude**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan foster home  
Will soon be with his Amelia, VA family*



**Dang Ji**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Windham, ME family*



**Ruthie**

*Currently waiting in a Guatemalan foster home  
Will soon be with her Pickton, TX family*



### **Dillan**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Staunton, VA family*



### **Shadrach**

*Currently waiting in a Chinese orphanage  
Will soon be with his Polk City, FL family*

### **Reflections** *(Continued from page 3)*

God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30) And the Apostle Paul said to us, “Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.” (Rom. 12:1) (Note that music is not mentioned here.) I believe worship is the act of giving of ourselves to our God in love and devotion. That might be in the form of creating beautiful and inspiring music, or it might be in the writing of profound and thought-provoking insights, or in the painting of a beautiful landscape. But it might also be in the form of teaching third-graders about the wonders of creation, or holding a friend close during a time of crisis, or truly enjoying a beautiful spring day, or holding the basin while a cancer victim vomits convulsively. What should characterize our worship is the attitude of our heart toward our God, and not any other consideration. Please don’t misunderstand me. None of the activities I mentioned is intrinsically worshipful. It is, as I said, a matter of the attitude of one’s heart, not one’s hands or lips or tongue. When God is the object of our giving, and when our hearts are giving out of love and devotion, we are worshipping.

Another point I want to make, drawing again from the analogy of my own relationship with my children, is that my children sometimes exhibit their love toward me simply by listening. Though I have said it myself, I would suggest that this thought may be profound. My child can actually express his love and devotion toward me by listening with his whole heart to what I’m saying. This is another way we can worship our God: by listening to His words. And thus the trend to segment our morning church services into periods of worship and periods of “other stuff,” such as the sermon, etc., is misleading and damaging. When God’s word is spoken, and when we listen to what He is saying with a spirit of love and devotion and attention, we may be said to be worshipping in that moment. And we should, indeed we must, cultivate such an attitude toward worship. All aspects of the Sunday service should be characterized by worship, whether the singing or the praying or the sermon or the offering—all of it should be our act of worship to our God. And of course, we should not limit this attitude to Sunday services; our very lives should be characterized by periods of intentional worship.

So, what does all this have to do with The Shepherd’s Crook? I often think about our many volunteer staff members, all those who work diligently to make this ministry function. In particular, at this moment, I am thinking about our Family Coordinators. These women work hand-in-hand with the families who are pursuing adoptions, counseling, advising, and praying throughout the process. I know these women, and to varying extents I know their hearts. The work they do in caring for God’s orphans is truly, at least some of the time, worship. They express their love to God by caring for His flock, and the attitude of their hearts, at least much of the time, is devotion and love for their Master. And I know this is true of the many other volunteers of The Shepherd’s Crook. And so, I thank God for them, for their hard work and diligence, and for their tangible and consistent worship of our Father through the ministry of The Shepherd’s Crook. Let us all do away with false and unscriptural definitions of what it means to worship God, and let us strive to find ways every day to express our love to God through meaningful and concrete acts of worship.

Thank you, Father.  
Amen

discovered Dou Dou in an orphanage while he was there visiting, and he brought back pictures and information on her. Her photo was being sent to families willing to consider adoption of special-needs children.

As soon as Pam saw Dou Dou's picture, she was instantly in love and knew that she wanted to have her as her own little girl. She knew, though, that Chris would be the deciding factor in whether they would pursue the adoption.

"When I first saw her picture, I thought... this is it!" Pam said, "Usually Chris is very logical and I am the emotional, reactive one... I can see a million pictures and every one of those kids tugs at my heart."

So, she waited to see what the reaction of Chris would be. Imagine her surprise when, upon seeing the picture, Chris told her that they needed to look into adopting Dou Dou. Their relationship with the Mitchells, combined with other experiences they had had with special-needs children, had moved Chris's heart to believe that he could parent a child who was, more than likely, deaf. Soon, the decision was made to make Dou Dou a part of their family.

At the time that they made the decision, though, the family was already in transition. Knowing that God was calling them to adopt at least one child, they had decided to put their small, two-bedroom house up on the market. Several days after deciding to adopt Dou Dou, the house sold. Not long after that, while they were in the process of moving, they got their next surprise: Pam was expecting a baby.

The ensuing months were hectic, but the Blair family was excited about all the changes: a new home and two new family members. The home study moved along, and things seemed to be going well, until they received their first bad news from China.

The CCAA was not willing to grant permission for the adoption of Dou Dou. It was at this time that China implemented and began to enforce their current policy of only allowing the adoptions of special-needs children who had been placed on one of CCAA's lists. Dou Dou was not on one of these lists. Further complicating things was the fact that, for reasons unknown to anyone, Dou Dou's province was completely shut down for all adoptions. Dou Dou, of course, was not the only child affected by this, and many other families felt the shock of this impulsive decision.

From the Blair's perspective, Dou Dou was their child. From the CCAA's perspective, she was not even promised to them. As the "list" method was now the normal procedure for Chinese special needs adoptions, the CCAA felt no obligation to honor the unofficial system that had previously helped so many special-needs waiting children find homes.

Chris and Pam were shocked by the news. The calling to adopt Dou Dou had been so clear. However, the voice from China was equally clear: no adoptions from Dou Dou's province. As they processed this information, they decided to pray and wait. So, for the next several months, as adoption paperwork was completed, they prayed for the CCAA to change its mind.

After a time, they asked again. The answer was no. They wrote letters. The answer remained no. But still they waited and prayed. Finally, their agency told them the final answer had arrived from China.

The answer that time was, in essence, "No, and don't ask again." Unwilling to give up on Dou Dou's future, they asked one more time. That time, they knew, would have to be the final request, as the careers of those professionals asking on their behalf would be in jeopardy (and thus all the future children they served) if they continued to press the issue.

The final answer remained the same: no. It was time to let go of Dou Dou and trust that God had a different plan for her.

"It was a time that was really a hard time for me," notes Chris, "as I felt like I had lost a child. I had to grieve it, and it was really confusing."

Pam's grief was enough that she felt she couldn't even look at other available children.

"I felt like I was abandoning Dou Dou all over again."

But God did heal their hearts and allow them to move on. Soon, the CCAA issued a new list of special-needs children that were available for adoption. On that list was a little boy with unilateral microtia who would soon become Joshua Blair.

The work of God was easy to see in the adoption of Josh. Not only was he the same age as Dou Dou, but he had the same medical needs, although there was a chance his hearing loss was not as profound. More importantly, though, with the recent birth of their son, Danny, the Blairs could see how perfect it would be for the two brothers to grow up together.

Despite other obstacles, such as finances and the outbreak of SARS in China, the time came for the Blair family to bring Josh home. As Pam was occupied caring for their new infant son, the decision was made for their eldest daughter, Courtney, to accompany Chris on the trip to China.

On October 2, 2003, Chris and Courtney arrived home in Cincinnati, Ohio with the newest addition to the Blair family: Joshua Tyler Blair.

The joy that Josh brought to the Blair family was great, but the transition from two to four children in such a short time was a very difficult one. With their girls being so much older than the boys, they had long since left the days of car seats, diapers, potty training, and highly dependent young children. It took some time for everyone to re-

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## Family Spotlight *(Continued from page 6)*

adjust and find their new place in the family.

However, there have been blessings in it all. Josh is now a happy healthy four-year-old boy who loves the Lone Ranger, playing outside, and being in his family. His hearing is normal, and he is very communicative—a complete opposite of the shy, unattached, insecure little boy he was while in the orphanage.

Chris and Pam believe that one of the greatest blessings that has come from this journey was what it taught Courtney and Cailey. They have learned not only to love and care for their new brothers, but to delight in them. Like most children, their perspectives had centered on themselves, but the arrival of both Danny and Josh has matured them into two loving big sisters.

Through Dou Dou, too, they have grown. They learned how to pray for another person—consistently, for an extended period of time. "Cailey," notes Chris, "is now ten years old, and for the past two and a half years she has daily prayed for Dou Dou. A quarter of her life has been spent praying for one person. I have never had that kind of endurance in my prayer life, so I could not model that for her. She has learned that through this experience."

Dou Dou is still living at an orphanage in China. Although some restrictions on adoption have since been lifted in her region, she is still unavailable for adoption. The prayers of the Blair family remain with her, for her comfort, for her care, and for a family to adopt her.

"Our hope," says Chris, "is that the family God provides will be ours, but we know that that is not necessary. Our prayer is that she will be adopted by a family that will teach her about God."

Now, though, daily, the Blair family takes joy in teaching Josh about the God who loves him, who sacrificed for him, redeemed his life, and brought him home.



The Scott Family



Amanda and Ruthie Scott  
(soon to be with the Scott family)

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