

THIS MEANS WAR

THIS MEANS WAR:

EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN FAMILIES
FOR FOSTER CARE OR ADOPTION

Second Edition—Revised and Updated

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Notice: This book shares personal experiences as well as insight and biblical encouragement with families who have adopted or are considering foster care or adoption. It's not our purpose to reprint all of the information otherwise available. Parents are encouraged to read other material and learn as much as they can. Every effort has been made to make this book as accurate as possible, nevertheless *there may be mistakes*, both typographical and in content. Also, information may become outdated. The author and publisher do not claim to know what's best for your family. Only God knows where He's called you.

Disclaimer: Gossip hurts people; *This Means War* isn't meant to be a tell-all, therefore some names and identifying details have been changed.

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“**T**here was a little girl, who had a little curl,
Right in the middle of her forehead.
When she was good, she was very good indeed,
But when she was bad she was horrid.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow





About the Photographs:

When you choose to adopt, your decision affects everyone around you: your immediate family, relatives, friends, neighbors and even strangers who see you in the grocery store. Everyone's watching; everyone's talking. You're an inspiration to some or an oddity to others, but you impact them all.

Therefore, the photos in *This Means War* are not just our adopted children. They're here, but so are the biological children and even some friends and relatives. When you see their faces, suddenly adoption—even a difficult adoption—seems worth it. Suddenly putting on the full armor of Christ, so you will continue to stand and protect the children, makes more sense.

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Coming to book stores July 10, 2016:

VICTORY IN JESUS:

EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

FOR FOSTER CARE OR ADOPTION

BY CHERYL SASAI ELLICOTT

For ordering information and an excerpt, please see the
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INTRODUCTION



This book is meant to educate, equip and strengthen Christian families, so they can protect the neglected children of the world. The writing is geared toward Christian parents, but I pray it'll also bring encouragement and understanding to those who were adopted or who spent time in the foster care system, homeless or without the protection of loving, nurturing parents.

Parents, to be victorious, you'll need information and preparation. You deserve to hear from Christian parents who've gone before you—and you need the whole story, not only the happy highlights. That's why *This Means War: Equipping Christian Families for Foster Care or Adoption* was written. If you're not yet a believer in Jesus, you're welcome to glean what you can. For a fuller understanding of this message, ask God to explain it. Most of what I write is only discerned with the Holy Spirit's assistance, when our spirit is in union with Christ.

Since the first edition of *This Means War* was released in 2010, Christian orphan-advocates have done an admirable job of increasing awareness regarding the challenges of raising the world's neediest children. Churches across America have also embraced the plight of the fatherless child. The landscape has changed since I penned this book the first time, mostly for the better. The chances that a family will be completely blind sided are now less than they used to be. Nevertheless, I frequently hear from families who entered foster care or adoption ill-prepared. This message is still needed.

This book is a compilation of things I've learned and also stories shared with me by other families. Since 1989, I worked with approximately fifty children in need. Together my husband and I were house-parents to about twenty-five teens or pre-teens in crisis (at a long-term shelter). In subsequent years we were foster parents to an additional twenty-five infants and toddlers in our own home. We already had three biological children, in addition to a daughter lost to cancer, before we adopted through the foster care system. We've also experienced the anguish of the unmentionable: adoption-dissolution (not a simple disruption). In 2001 I founded a support group for foster and adoptive mothers; these women were a blessing to me and to each other. I hope you also find a supportive group to hold you up in prayer and encourage you. My husband also spent over fifteen-years working with adults with disabilities and together we did in-home care for that population as well. In the years since our children became adults, we've begun to reach out globally, supporting ministry to orphans and street children wherever the Lord leads and provides.

However, even parents (like us) who entered this arena with healthy support-systems, have—in wonderful, idealistic zeal—waltzed in over their heads and seen their families damaged. If the focus of this book seems negative, that's on purpose. Rose-colored glasses are beautiful—I admire those who wear them; the world is often a very dark place, but the Lord warns us not to be conformed to the image of this world. Nevertheless, we all need to drop the glasses from time to time and examine the landscape ahead of us, if we wish to avoid the pitfalls. Yes, you're envisioning the joy of making a difference, loving an unloved child. And you should be! You believe it's more blessed to give than to receive. You're correct! You believe God's version of love

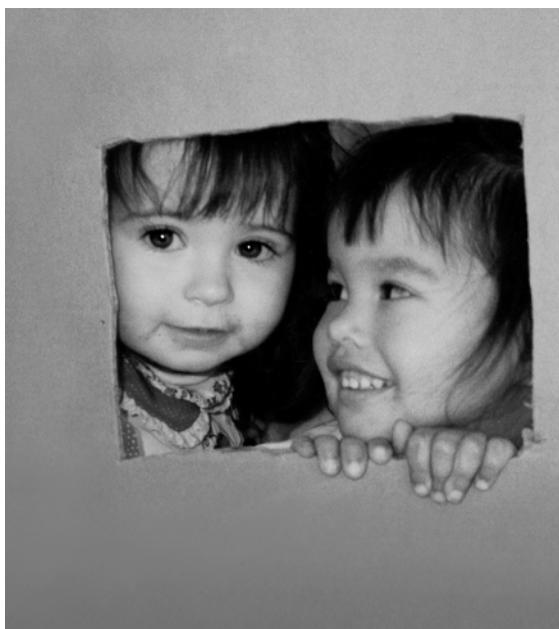
never fails (correct again). You know you'll reap a harvest if you continue to do good and do not give up. God bless you; I love your heart. Really, I do! You inspire and encourage me.

But allow me to remind you that there's an unseen battle to fight. I want you to persevere long enough to see the victory and the harvest. Your enemy is invisible, but he's very, very real. When you reach out to these children, their enemies become *your enemies*. Oh, certainly, your God is stronger—*He's Almighty*. But He's a jealous God! Were you aware of that? He tolerates no rivals in your heart or your home.

"You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." (Rev 2:3-4)

If you learn only one thing from this book, let it be this: it's easy to get caught up in the work of a humanitarian and forget the *Lover of your soul*. But you were created to love God—with all of your heart, mind, body and soul. And the only way to succeed is to remain as a branch connected to the vine [Jesus]. Good works cannot take the place of adoring your Savior. They aren't an adequate substitute. Keep your relationship with God, through Jesus, as the most important thing—the *only* thing that matters—and He will pour out His spirit on the children... in His time.

"Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:30-31 NIV)



Part One:
The Parents







First, the Bad News

"So put on God's armor now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground.

So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace.

At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. And accept salvation as a helmet, and the word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you." Eph. 6:13-17 (GNB)

Just like ministry in any other form, (if you're really sharing the gospel) Christian adoption is a declaration of war in the spirit realm; you're challenging an unseen enemy who is stronger and smarter than you.

If you're going to succeed in helping orphans and at-risk children, you must realize the significance of your actions in light of eternity. By meddling in broken lives, in the name of Jesus and with the power of His love, you are storming the gates of hell. Lives don't get broken on accident—this is Satan's handiwork. Now you're attempting to undo his work, to rescue these lost souls and to bring them to safety, healing and the light of the truth. Your only weapons are prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of God and His Word. (If this doesn't make sense to you, go to the back of the book and work through the Basics Bible Study first, praying that God will indwell you and explain it to you.)

If you've never thought much about "spiritual warfare," you're destined to learn the hard way. I'm not talking about the common myths and misconceptions called spiritual warfare, but the real thing as seen in the Bible—in the life of Jesus, the apostles and other believers. Study the Scriptures as if your life depends upon knowing them!

Pray and ask God to help you see the unseen battles you're in!

If you haven't been actively fighting a spiritual battle, then you've been losing. And if you haven't even noticed the battle, maybe you're no longer in a spiritual battle (prisoners of war do not engage in battle, nor do dead people).

Parents who've read what I'm about to tell you suggest that you stop and pray right now; ask God to help you make it past the diversions and finish reading this information. Similar to when they read their Bibles, each time they picked this book up to read, they were distracted. Just like clockwork: the phone rang, there was a knock at the door, their spouse suddenly needed to talk, the dogs started barking or the kids threw up. Some parents became suspicious and started reading just to see what would go wrong next! I'm not exaggerating. You should have seen my life while I was working on this book for you.

Satan doesn't fight fairly and this battle is serious!

Your faith is powerful because the One you've placed your faith in is powerful. If you follow the Holy Spirit toward orphans, foster children or street kids, sowing the seeds of God's Word as you go, He'll make His seeds grow—He promises His Word won't return void, but it will accomplish His purposes (Isa. 55:11). There will be a harvest of souls! People will be saved, set free from their sins, delivered from

the power of darkness and brought into His glorious light; they'll enter the kingdom of heaven and live forever in paradise, instead of burning in hell! *Just because you bothered!*

Think about that.

But when you go out to sow these seeds, there'll be someone waiting for you. He'll be disguised as an angel of light; he'll oppose you and try to destroy you. Therefore, you need to be fully equipped. Read the gospel accounts in the Bible and you'll see that each time Jesus went in to a town or region, He did the same two things—regardless of where He was. Do you know what they were?

One: He healed sick people.

Two: He freed people from harassment, oppression, and possession by evil spirits.

Have you ever known anyone who was sick? That's a ridiculous question; we must realize that harassment, oppression and possession by evil spirits are just as common as physical sickness. And if Satan went after even Jesus, he won't leave *little old you* alone. Once you see this, you'll be ready for the attacks you and your family are already experiencing.

Regarding abused, neglected or otherwise needy children, understand that (usually) Satan has blinded and captured their biological parents. This is why these children ended up on the streets, in foster care or needing an adoptive family. Satan blinded these parents with lies and enslaved them to destructive sins, devastating what should have protected and nurtured helpless children—their families. Now he intends to destroy the children as well. *Enter you!* Joyful little you, wearing your cross, *Jesus-Loves-You* T-shirt and your rose-colored glasses, bringing gifts—with your smiling, idealistic family in tow. *What are you doing here?* These children

aren't your responsibility. Why have you come!?! (Remember your answer; hold on to it!) You're in a dangerous spot, and you're meddling. Not only are you meddling in the physical realm, but in the spiritual. You're attempting to enter Satan's territory and walk away with (what he views as) his property—you're starting this fight, and *you didn't even know it*. Don't think he'll let you take them without a battle. You may be trying to help a child whose biological family has experienced centuries of darkness and possession. Satan will attack you individually, as a family or even as a church. Be prepared (put on the full armor of God) and you can stand; be caught off-guard and he'll damage your family, your church, your witness and your threat to his kingdom-of-destruction. (Hint: Jesus is the armor!) The rest of this chapter will supply you with practical tips before we get into the issues and challenges typical with orphans and otherwise neglected children.