

A painting depicting a baby wrapped in a white cloth, held gently by hands. The baby is positioned horizontally across the upper half of the frame. Below the baby, two hands are shown reaching upwards, palms facing up, as if in prayer or longing. The background is a warm, reddish-brown color. The painting is framed by ornate, golden-brown scrollwork on the left and right sides.

How Could She Let Him Go?

*I learned a surprising lesson when
my sister placed her baby for adoption.*

When my younger sister, Lauren,* told me she was pregnant, I couldn't have been more upset for her. She had just come from telling the baby's father, who had abdicated any responsibility, and she was devastated. All I could do was hold her while she cried.

Lauren's Decision

After talking to our mother, Lauren decided to see a counselor at LDS Family Services and begin procedures to place her baby for adoption. I was appalled. How could she think about giving up her baby? He had a family! Her decision split our family down the middle. My parents and one sister supported the adoption, and my other two sisters were as opposed as I was. I was so angry that most days I stayed away from our apartment. How could she possibly feel good about abandoning her baby to strangers?

My mother and sister Jennifer arrived to be with Lauren the day before her due date. There was no one else to take them to the hospital the next morning, so despite my resolve not to participate, I found myself walking down the long, sterile corridors of the maternity ward.

The doctor looked somber as he came out of the operating room. He said, "Lauren will be back to her room in about half an hour, but the baby was sent to the intensive care unit. He is having difficulty breathing."

My mother and I headed to the intensive care unit while Jennifer waited for Lauren to come out of recovery. A nurse motioned us to an incubator where I looked into the face of my new nephew. He looked just like Lauren. I had been praying that she would change her mind and keep him, but now I just prayed he would live.

As my mother and I stood vigil the third morning, the nurse said, "You know it's not too late to back out of the adoption." I saw a steady stream of tears falling down my mother's cheeks. For the first time I realized I wasn't the only one hurting. "I don't know how we'll be able to do this," she said.



A GREATER OPPORTUNITY

"When marriage is not possible, experience has shown that adoption, difficult though this may be for the young mother, may afford a greater opportunity for the child to live a life of happiness. Wise and experienced professional counselors and prayerful bishops can assist in these circumstances."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Save the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 53.

One Day with Ryan

Ryan—that was what Lauren had decided to call him. We would get only one day with him before his adoptive parents took custody.

It was almost noon by the time we got everything situated at the hospital the day Lauren and Ryan were released, and we only had him until six o'clock that evening. We had decided to pack a picnic lunch and take him to the park. It was a lovely day, and we enjoyed watching him eat and stretch and sleep. He was so contented and sweet. I kept thinking there was no way I could go through with this. I had never known love like I felt for that tiny baby. He wasn't even mine, but how could I let him go?

When we arrived at LDS Family Services, I lifted Ryan out of his car seat and eased him into Lauren's lap, and she cuddled him. We sat there drinking in these last precious moments that would have to last a lifetime.

Lauren handed him to me so she could get out of the car. I had the impulse to run, but before I could, the door to the office opened and a social worker came to greet us. Then something amazing happened. I stepped out of my dark world, over the building threshold, and into the warmth of what I imagine heaven will be like. That's the only way I can explain it. The room was enveloped in the sweetest, warmest spirit I have ever felt. The adoptive parents had an aura about them that melted my heart. I knew they were meant to be Ryan's parents.

My sister made the right choice. She would have struggled just to put food on the table if she had kept Ryan. She loved him but could not have given him the choicest gift—that of a temple sealing to his parents. I'm thankful my sister's vision saw beyond her loss, that her ears heeded a prophet's counsel, and that the healing power of the Atonement can comfort us in our deepest sorrows. ■

For additional information about adoption services, contact LDS Family Services at 800-537-2229, or visit www.ldsfamilyservices.org.

**All names have been changed.*