

How I Met My Son By Richard Irwin



My wife Rachel and I had been talking about fostering and adoption for years. Whenever we talked about it I was always on board mentally but honestly I was still apprehensive when we approached the subject with any seriousness. I remember we had talked about going to the foster care orientation class and to my surprise I heard the words coming out of my mouth that Rachel should sign us up. Her feet were in the starting blocks and that was all she needed, Rachel had all the information about the next class and made sure our schedules were clear. So with full hearts we set off on our journey into caring for more children.

The funny thing was every time we tried to make it to the orientation our world would just fall apart. The kids would get sick, our baby sitter would fall through, an emergency at work would come up. It began to feel like we were never going to get there. In some small way I began to feel relieved, thinking that all these road blocks were obvious signs that this wasn't for us. However, Rachel asked me if we could try one more time. I agreed and we made a plan for the most reliable babysitter to be available. We left for the class 2 hours early, we were determined that if this was our last ditch effort it was going to be a good one. So, with nervous determination we set out to get to orientation.

On the way there the weather turned foul, traffic got slow, we got into a car accident and we had trouble getting to the sitter. By the time we dropped off our kids we only had minutes to get to the orientation and from where we were it felt impossible. We were frustrated, deflated and I was not feeling particularly talkative. I told Rachel maybe that's it, we really aren't supposed to do this. I watched as a physical change came over her and a fight rose up inside of her. She simply said I don't think we should give up, let's pray and we'll get there. After some amazing traffic maneuvering and miraculous green lights we arrived at class on time!

All through the class it became clear that becoming licensed was a long process and I started to think, we have months to prepare before they'll call with a child. We had already filled out our application paperwork ahead of time, so we handed it in that Friday night. To our great surprise that Monday we were called about an emergency placement. A baby who was in the NICU was not thriving and needed a home.

After a team decision meeting we said yes and got emergency licensed that day. I didn't know what to expect when I walked in to the hospital room to see Baby A for the first time. When I saw him there I don't know what else to say except that it was a spiritual experience and for me all my fears were confronted and put at rest as a deep sense of love washed over me. I couldn't wait to care for this amazing resilient baby boy.

We began to meet with his nurses, caseworker and birth parents. In our experience with the foster care system we met people with huge hearts, a real genuine concern to do what's right

for children in need. It's not secret that where we live our Office of Children's Services employees are overworked but I have a great respect for those who are giving their lives to serve others. We genuinely felt partnered with our caseworker and guardian ad litem. They helped us prepare for the special needs Baby A had and resourced us with classes and literature. When they had time they checked in with us and responded to us with competency, professionalism and friendship.

We fostered Baby A for almost a year and a half, developing a bond with him and learning his family, creating relationship with his birth parents and other relatives. We came to a place where adoption was a possibility for him and after all the necessary preparations we were made we were able to officially adopt him as our son! We love our son and couldn't imagine our family without him. We continue to foster other children and wouldn't trade our crazy, busy, child filled, love fed life for anything. When I look back at my apprehension now, I understand it, but I almost smirk at it from a distance thinking that I almost traded the love of my son for my fear. I am grateful for our foster care experience and I'm grateful for a wife that wanted to give getting to orientation one more try.

