

Benefits of toddler adoption: Why I'm so happy we adopted our children as toddlers

On Aug. 22, 2011, my husband and I stood in an office in Guangzhou, China, as our younger son was placed in our arms. He was hot, tired, absolutely precious, and 20 months old.

When we adopted his big brother two years earlier, he had just turned 2.

I often hear couples say that they want to adopt a newborn so they can have that experience. Even though that wasn't important to us, I can understand that. But even though toddler adoption brings its challenges, we loved adopting our children as toddlers. (And no, we didn't miss out on toilet training or sleepless nights.)



Here, purely from a parent's perspective and not from a child's perspective because I can't speak for our children, are five reasons I'm so glad we adopted our children as toddlers:

- 1. Toddlers are so much fun.** In those first days together our children grieved, but they also laughed and played. We loved watching them walk and run and climb and play with other children. Every day was exciting as their personalities emerged a little more. And when we were home, our days were full of playing and reading and library visits and train rides. When we told our older son he would be able to play with his little brother, we didn't mean a few years down the road. We meant the day our plane lands in the U.S.
- 2. Toddlers know what they want—and they can tell you.** For us it didn't matter that they were speaking in Mandarin and Cantonese. We never had trouble figuring out what our boys wanted to eat or play or do. That didn't mean they didn't get upset when the answer was no. But I loved not having to guess what was going on.
- 3. They were able to choose what they called us.** I always thought we would be Mommy and Daddy. But our older son started calling us "Mama" and "Baba"—the Chinese equivalents, and we were thrilled. I love being Mama and my husband is so much of a "Baba." Even our nieces and nephews call him "Baba"—at least when they aren't calling him "Uncle Baba John, Sir."



4. They have memories that precede us. Do I wish we had met our children as newborns? Not really. I love that they both spent the first parts of their lives in China. I love that they had the chance to experience some aspects of Chinese culture before we met them. I love that when we pray for all the people who love them all over the world, that's such a wonderful group of people who cared for them before we met them.

5. Toddlers still have many "firsts" to experience. The baptism. The first lost tooth. The first (American?) ice cream cone. The first day of school. The first day of kindergarten. The first ER visit. The first birthday as a member of your family.



We may have missed those first couple years, but I don't feel I've missed out on anything. Instead, I feel we climbed onto a train for the adventure of a lifetime. And we're certainly enjoying the ride.

Joining Jenna at Call Her Happy for Five Favorites this week.