

Keeping our children's stories safe until the day they are ready to share

Even before we adopted our children, we knew we would protect the stories of the first part of their lives—long before they met us.

In our pre-adoptive parent training the social workers told us that you never want your child to learn about his or her origins from someone other than you. The story of their birth and how they came into their orphanage or foster home should be theirs to hear, to make their own, and to share when they want to.



John and I have protected our sons' stories and kept them close. We share and re-share them within our own family of four. Each of the boys has a photo book I made with pictures that predate their lives with us, explaining details of their lives before meeting our family.

But we don't share that information outside our family. Even our closest relatives don't know about our sons' first days. They don't need to. Those stories belong to our sons.

Then one recent afternoon Leo came home and told us he had been selected as "God's Special Child." He was allowed to bring items to school to share—and he knew what he would bring.

"I'm going to take my book to school," he said.

I knew immediately which book he meant. I was surprised—and pleased.

I was also a little nervous. No one outside our immediate family had seen that book—or heard the information inside. Would the children ask difficult questions? Would our son feel comfortable talking about himself and his origins? Had we prepared him well enough to share

his story in public?

I couldn't answer those questions. But they weren't my questions to answer.



So I found a bag and asked him what else he wanted to take. He packed his baptismal outfit, a Chinese silk outfit he wore as a toddler, a blanket his aunt knitted for him even before we met him, pictures of him with his brother and us, and the photo album we sent to him months before we met him in China. And he took his book, the book that had never left our house.

As he left for school the morning of his big day, I was nervous for him, but I was also so very proud.

Throughout the day, I kept thinking about our baby boy, marching so bravely into his classroom, ready to talk about his life. What an amazing thing for a first grader to be able to do. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that this was what we were preparing for all this time.



This is why we haven't shared his information, why we have kept it close, why we made sure it was his and his alone.

We kept it safe so that if and when he decided to share it, he could. I didn't know whether he was ready—but he knew, and he was.

And this is, after all, his story.