

When our son asked us to call him by his Chinese name

I'm tucking our younger son into bed and he's grinning up at me.

"Mama," he says. "I want you to call me" and he says his Chinese nickname. "Because that was my name first."

"OK," I say.

As I tuck him in, I think back to the woman I was six or seven years ago—before we adopted our children. I wonder whether that version of myself might have balked at the idea that our sons might one day ask us to call them by their Chinese names.



A younger me might have worried about what that said about my role as his mother, and our bond as a family.

A less-secure me might have worried that one day our children would want to track down their biological roots.

A me who hadn't become a mother yet might not have fully appreciated the value of our children's lives and stories before meeting us.

Thanks to all the pre-adoptive training we received and all the prayer and conversation John and I went through prior to meeting our children, I was prepared. But something happens when you actually meet your children and consider their individual, personal stories in a new way. You realize just how much their stories are to be treasured, valued, and protected. You come to understand just how important those stories are to them—and how much they will become part of your family's story.

There's a reason we guard those stories so closely.



I never considered how at peace I was with our role as our children's second and forever parents until the day our older son used the term "my real mother" to refer to his biological birth mother.

He wasn't belittling my role or trying to hurt my feelings. He was using the words he had available to him to make sense of a situation that can be difficult to get your mind around. As I searched my mind for an answer, I was cheering inside that he had found the words to ask the question. He trusted me. He believed in me. He sought me out for help.

In that moment, a woman on the other side of the world was his real mother—and so was I.



Tonight as our little boy asks me to call him by a name he doesn't remember hearing as a toddler in China, I feel nothing but gratitude and pride.

He is hearing and absorbing his story. He's making it his own. And he knows we love him and his heritage and his story that predates our family's.

As I turn out the light, I think of the people on the other side of the world who love him.

I kiss our son's smiling face, smile back, and say, "Good night." And I use his Chinese name.

