



Keeping Kyrie: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Foster Care

Emily Christensen

Nathan Christensen, Editor

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Honest, strong, and bold, Emily Christensen writes from the heart to point out how the system can fail to protect those in its care.

Keeping Kyrie: A True Story of Faith, Family and Foster Care, is the story of Emily Christensen's roller-coaster life from her conflicted teen years to her conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to marrying the man of her dreams and together becoming the foster parents of over seventy children and the adoptive parents of six with special needs. Though that life hasn't always been easy, Christensen shares how deeply it's been blessed.

Central to the story is Kyrie, a tiny baby girl with huge shining eyes, curly dark hair, and a congenital breathing difficulty that puts her survival in jeopardy. Terrified, Christensen learns how a forty-five-minute drive can feel like eons when you're trying to get a baby who can't breathe to the hospital in time. She learns about health care bureaucracy and how lack of attention to the whole child on the part of doctors and convoluted foster care rules can put a child's life at risk.

The story becomes even more gripping as Christensen, who is deaf and has cochlear implants, deals with grief over the loss of both her parents; several miscarriages; her cancer diagnosis, surgery and treatment; and her study and work as a chaplain. Somehow, the love between her and the baby struggling for life, the new family she and her husband were creating together, and the strong teachings of their faith pull her through.

"Fostering was never an effort to replace having children of our own," writes Christensen. "It was something consciously and specifically chosen by the two of us in response to spiritual promptings we had received individually, even before we were married." As they opened their hearts and home to children in need, the sure knowledge that they were making a difference in the children's lives brought them deep and abiding joy.

The emotions Christensen evokes are wide-ranging as she tells the harrowing, tragic, and joyful stories of all that's involved in their calling to nurture fragile, troubled, and often damaged beings; the intensity of her writing makes it hard to put the book down. The dialogue is natural, and the emotional content is rich and varied. The pacing is brisk, and while there are sometimes bumpy transitions as the time line jumps from past to present and back, this fracturing of the time line also serves to relieve tension.

Keeping Kyrie is a beautiful testament to what love can do in the lives of children in need. It's an amazing resource for anyone considering fostering or adopting a child, as well as for counselors, health care professionals, pastors, and hospital chaplains. Honest, strong, and bold, Emily Christensen writes from the heart to point out how the system can fail to protect those in its care. But most of all, the book shines with joy for small miracles. "A simple contract changed our lives forever," she writes. "Nothing has ever been so hard as that fostering contract, but nothing has ever blessed our lives so much."

KRISTINE MORRIS (October 4, 2016)

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