

Why Couples in Their 50s Should Consider Adopting a Teenager

By Art King

A Quiz for Couples in their 50s {answer Yes or No}

- *You have gained wisdom and skills in the school of real-world parenting*
- *You have maturity and stability in your life that you didn't have at 35*
- *You have more financial and job security than when you were younger*
- *You have prayed "Lord, what can we do at this stage of life to make a real difference in the world for Your Kingdom?"*

If you answered "Yes" to even one of these questions, you should consider adopting a teenager. If you answered "Yes" to most or all of these questions, then please keep reading!

The need Millions of children worldwide are without families to love and care for them. In The Ukraine, over 70% of the orphans available for adoption are teenagers.¹ Each year, millions of these children "age out" of orphanages and are thrust into society to sink or swim. Many sink. Follow-up tracking show that many of them spiral down into desperate, lonely lives often cut short. Many end up in prison or choose suicide. After leaving orphanages, many teen girls end up in prostitution as a matter of survival.

Are you Nuts? You may be asked this question when you tell family and friends you are considering adopting a teenager. As adoptive mom Kristean Thompson says:

*"Teenagers get a bad rap. They get categorized. They get treated like thieves and liars. But the truth is, not all teens are bad. Not all teens are rebellious, angry, lazy and shifty. In fact, most orphaned teens WANT a home. They want a family, and dinner at 6 p.m., a part-time job, trips to the mall with a mom, and fishing trips with a dad. They want to be part of a real family with chores, and homework, and Christmas dinner."*²

Don't forget the Rewards Adopting a teen from an orphanage or foster care entails risks to be sure. These children may have grown up in chaotic family situations or institutions. They may have learned survival skills that won't work very well in your family. But along with risks come rewards. You will have the incomparable opportunity to fall in love with a teenager just as they blossom into adulthood. You can be that mother they never had, or that father they desperately need during their adult-launching years. You can introduce them to Jesus. You can teach them to drive a car. You can give them the

chance of a college education. You are not so much raising a child; you are providing them a few short years of stability to get on their feet and make a successful life launch.

Hosting Surveys show that most couples consider adoption at some point in their lives. Many people “talk” about it, but very few, less than 3%, actually put the talk into action. Adopting older children is rarer still. It doesn't have to be this way. In the last decade many adoption agencies and other groups have found a new formula for connecting international orphans with potential families. It's called Hosting and it works like this: You agree to host the child for a month or a summer in your home. There is no commitment on your part past the hosting period.

The agency escorts the child to your city and usually provides some structure and activities while they are in your home. Once the hosting period is over, the child returns to their home country and orphanage. At this point, much of the fear and emotional uncertainty for you is over. This isn't a theoretical person anymore, but a real living, breathing child. If you decide, you can then start the adoption process for the child you hosted, or for another child you met or heard about through the hosting program. Thousands of children, especially older children, have gained families through hosting. There are agencies and churches all over the country active in hosting programs.

US law prohibits international adoption of children older than 16. This means you must have started the paperwork before they reach their 16th birthday.

Act Now As a mature, experienced parent, you are more prepared than most to deal with the challenges. In your 50s you have more of the job security and financial reserves you need for this leap of faith. Don't wait. Take a deep breath and pray. There will never a better time than today. Your time window will soon close. Don't let the months slip by and your chance to make a difference disappear forever.

In October, 2008 fiftysomethings Art and Ronda King adopted Ian at age 16 from an orphanage in the Ukraine. Ian recently earned his driver's license and learned to snow-board.



Sources:

1 Official Ukraine “SDA” annual adoption statistics for 2008

2 <http://www.howtodothings.com/family-relationships/how-to-adopt-a-teenager>