

Bulgaria Family Testimony

The Gunter Family

In the early days of our marriage, we quickly realized that our hearts beat for the nations. We actively sought out opportunities to serve God in long-term missions, but to our disappointment, in each situation, He closed the door. What God did instead was bless us with a beautiful baby girl, born to us not long after our first anniversary. Soon after her first birthday, we began to feel God nudging us to pursue international adoption. Adoption was something we had always thought would be a part of our lives, but we expected it to happen later in our marriage. His nudge quickly became a loud call and we began to look into adoption agencies. Lifeline immediately rose to the top of our list of agencies we were considering and one night God confirmed that we should move forward in partnering with them to bring our next child home. We were accepted into the Bulgaria program soon after that. Our relationship with our social workers quickly felt less like business and more like friendship; we could clearly see that they were praying for God to lead us to the specific child He had in mind for our family and for all of the other children who were waiting for families as well.

When we started the process, we determined that we would pursue a traditional referral, which means that we would wait for Bulgaria to match us with a child. We knew that this could take several years, but we thought it would be better to wait for a child who was younger than our little girl. But, yet again, God had even better plans! One day several months later, we stumbled across a picture on the waiting child list that stopped us in our tracks: a little boy who was only a few weeks older than our daughter. We knew immediately that we were looking at the face of our son. We like to think that God smiled with us when we later discovered that we found him on his actual birthday. Little did we know then that God would ordain it so that exactly one year later, we would pick him up from the orphanage.

We are so grateful for the support and professionalism that we experienced with Lifeline. After we found C.J. on the waiting child list, there was still a first trip and year of paperwork to complete. While we focused on preparing our hearts and home for our little boy, Lifeline worked tirelessly to make the paperwork as painless as possible and to support us emotionally, as our hearts ached for a little boy on the other side of the world.

On our first trip, our little family of three was ushered into a small room and we were told that a nanny would bring C.J. to us. As soon as he came into the room, he pointed and yelled, "Daddy!" In that moment, C.J. was fatherless no more. We spent a wonderful week getting to play with him in the orphanage and learning more about his special needs. It was absolutely heartbreaking to say goodbye at the end of that week, but we trusted that God would finish what He started for C.J.

364 days after we first found C.J. on the waiting list, we were again standing on the orphanage steps, this time ready to bring him home forever. In the months that he has been home, we have witnessed God heal some of the emotional hurt that comes from being orphaned and bring forth a happy, rambunctious little boy who loves life (and pizza!). It has been a comfort to know that Lifeline continues to offer support as we transition from a family navigating international adoption to simply a family. We are forever grateful for the love and support they provided for C.J. and us as we merged into a new family.