

What Happens When Birth Parents Want Their Child Back?

Adoptive parents tend to live in denial.

We yearn long and hard for a child. When it appears that we're finally being given the opportunity to adopt one, we're prepared to move mountains to assure that happens. Sometimes, that means ignoring the obvious. When biological parents challenge the adoption early on, we continue parenting "our" child in the desperate hope that the court system will miraculously change and grant us custody. After all, we've already jumped through so many hoops to bring "our" beloved child home. We are convinced that we will be better parents than the birth parents, and that once the child comes to live in our home, he is ours, *period*. Our emotions and our love for the child overcome our common sense.

It doesn't matter whether the adoptive parents believe they're better parents. It doesn't matter what's in "the best interests" of the child. It doesn't matter whether the birth mother decides she needs to parent her child because she hates the birth father and can't stand the thought of him regaining custody. It doesn't matter whether the birth parents acted as if they could care less about their child when he was born, and suddenly, they decide they love him dearly. Adoption laws almost always favour the biological parents.

No matter how heart-wrenching it would be to return the child to his birth parents at the first sign of a court challenge, I believe it is in the best interest of the child to do so.

I often hear about adoptive parents who are embroiled in court battles for years in the desperate hope that they'll be able to retain custody of their child. And it rarely happens. Everyone ends up heartbroken, especially the child who is ripped from the only home he has known. The media, of course, makes a big splash about the event, and fears about adoption continue to be perpetuated.

These scenarios remind me of the Bible story from 1 Kings 3:16-28, in which two prostitutes testify before King Solomon.

The two women give birth (in the same house) within three days of one another. During the night one of the newborns dies. The mother of the dead baby switches the two babies, but in the morning, the other mother recognizes that the dead baby isn't hers. The two women argue before King Solomon about whose baby is whose. He asks for a sword and orders that the baby be cut in two. "Give half to one and half to the other," he proclaims.

While the woman whose son died is content to see the baby cut in two, the woman whose son is alive has compassion for her son and cries out, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!"

While I certainly don't advocate cutting a child in half in order to resolve a custody battle, that's often what happens to a child, figuratively speaking. I'm so grateful for the parents who truly did consider the best interests of their child and decided to implement what is essentially an open adoption. The adoptive parents and birth mother put selfishness aside and let love and compassion guide them.