

[00:00:01.390] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast, where we offer resources to equip you and stories to inspire you on your adoption journey. I'm Lisa Qualls,

[00:00:10.270] - Melissa Corkum

and this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it, and we're here for you.

[00:00:18.510] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, friends. Welcome to episode 190 of the Adoption Connection podcast. This is Lisa Qualls. Today I want to share a few thoughts about keeping hope alive, even in hard circumstances. But first, I need to ask you a question. Is your experience of parenting children with early trauma turning out the way you expected, or is it vastly different from what you imagined? If you're experiencing a gap between what you imagined and your reality, I've been right where you are. We became adoptive and foster parents because we loved kids. We were already in the thick of parenting, and we thought we were pretty good at it. And we believed it was what God wanted us to do. I imagined what life would be like with four Ethiopian children in our family, and I created an image in my mind that was just a slightly messier version of my current reality. Of course the kids would struggle. They'd been through so much. But we were great parents. We'd done lots of training, and we had God as our source of strength. Our reality was much harder than I ever dreamed. We had God, to be sure, but the rest of it was just so very different.

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Our days were filled with chaos and our nights with tears. There were happy times in laughter, too. But most of our energy was taken up trying to help our kids who had experienced so much adversity. When it's all gone wrong and life looks nothing like you imagined, when all that you've done with good hearts and intentions doesn't seem to have made a difference, you may find yourself asking, if it's turning out so badly did I even hear God? Could this have been a mistake? Even worse, other people may confirm your fears by asking you the same question. Some of you listening have kids who are making choices you don't want them to make. They're not following the path you laid out for them, and you may fear for them. And to be honest, you may even fear for yourself or your other kids. You find yourself in a place that you didn't expect. When you're broken and hopeless, you can trust that the source of all hope is still with you. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I have seven things I want to share with you about keeping hope alive.

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Number one: understand what you can control and what you can't. The truth is, the older your children get, the less you can actually control them. When they're little, you can pick them up and carry them where you want them to go. You can feed them what you want them to eat, and choose what they watch on TV. But when they're teens and young adults, your ability to control them rapidly decreases. You may still be able to hem in their actions by putting safeguards in place, and we should. But you can't control their hearts. There's only one who can truly heal the heart of your child.

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One of the best tools I've found to calm myself in the face of this reality is the Serenity Prayer. And this is just the very beginning of it. But this is the part that I speak to myself over and over. God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. We need wisdom to know what we can control and what we can't, acceptance of what we can't, encourage to change what we can.

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Number two: remember who IS in control. The one who created the heavens and earth, the one who died and rose again. He is in control of every detail. Nothing comes to us without first passing through his hands. I know that's so hard to grasp, but a life of following Jesus is a life of obedience to Him. Elizabeth Elliott wrote, fear arises when we imagine that everything depends on us. In a strange way, when your kids aren't doing well, it may feel like worry is the right thing to do. You may find yourself thinking, if I really love my kids and I really love Jesus, then I should worry. I mean, you may not actually say that to yourself, but something deep inside me, at least sometimes, has that belief.

Somehow worrying feels effectual. But the truth is, worry is useless, and it's actually harmful to us and to all the people around us. I am not a better mother when I worry, because fear never leads to good things, and I'm more consumed with my own thoughts. Psalm 16:5-8 says, lord, you alone are my portion and my cup. You make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord who counsels me. Even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

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Number three: pray more, talk less. John Piper says, god can do more in 5 seconds than we can do in 5 hours or months or years. A needy heart is a praying heart. The more desperate we are for Jesus to capture our children and their hearts, the more we should pray. Once I fully admitted that I couldn't change my children's hearts, I began to trust them more deeply to the Holy Spirit. He can move in their hearts. He can stir their souls when we're tempted to give up. Sometimes I think of how Jesus encountered the Apostle Paul on the road to Emmaus. And Paul was profoundly changed. I pray that my children will have an encounter with the living God. I pray that for other people too, because I know that there is so much power in God's presence.

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Number four: grieve. Adoption begins with loss. Our children grieve those losses in different ways and different times in their lives. What I found is that often parents are not grieving their own losses. The life you had, the dreams you had, even the family you had, may be so changed, they may seem to have disappeared. If we don't recognize these losses, and you don't name them as grief, it's easy to project all of the sadness, which often looks like anger, onto other people, like your spouse and your children. So it's important to consider grief.

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Number five: choose to trust. You can choose fear and strive for control, or you can choose trust and surrender. Parents who choose control often drive the people they love away. They make themselves miserable, and they lose sight of what they want most with their children: a relationship. In my book *The Connected Parent*, Dr. Purvis and I wrote about keeping connection at the center of every interaction. If you feel desperate for control, pray and ask the Lord, what is mine to do in this situation? Seek God's will for you and your relationship with your child.

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Number six: what the enemy means for evil, God uses for good. What may appear to be a disaster is just a moment in God's great plan for your child's life. He is the author of their story, and he is working for their good and for his glory. Sometimes it's almost impossible to see this, I know, but God's eye is on your children, and he is watching over them.

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Number seven: look back to look forward. One of the Hebrew words for hope is kava. Kava means to wait, but it's a particular kind of waiting. It's related to the word kav, which means cord. So the word kava has the sense of pulling a cord tight and waiting for it to release. It's a hope that is actively waiting with a sense of tension or anticipation. Even in the face of dark circumstances, we can pray and hope. Why do we do this? Because despite what you see before you, you can count on the character and the promises of God. You've seen Him working for the good of his people throughout the Bible, throughout history, and probably in your own life. You've seen Him show up when people were giving up. Your circumstances may be really hard. You may have a child in residential treatment, a child in jail, a child with addiction, or a child who says they don't believe in God. Or even a child who's run away or separated themselves from the family.

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I faced some of these things, and I know parents who have faced all of them. God doesn't change. He doesn't move. He never lets go of you. Even when you don't have the strength to hold on to Him. He is our place of security and our one and only hope in this broken world. So we look back at what God has done in order to look forward in anticipation with hope. Psalm 62:1-2 says, Truly my soul finds rest in God. My salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress.

When everything around us looks like a painful failure, when obedience has led to suffering, god is still on the throne and you can put your hope in Him. You can choose fear and strive for control, or you can choose to trust your life and your children to Jesus. We know that when we're in a fearful state, it's impossible to keep connection and the relationship at the center of our interactions. It's so much better to choose the peace of trusting Jesus. I became a Christian as a young teen in a really hard and desperate time of my life. There were many churches in my small hometown, so I chose one where I knew one other kid from my high school. In that little white church on the corner, I met Ross, my husband, which is a story for another day. I also began learning about the Bible and about worship. One of the hymns I learned way back then was written in 1882, 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus. And that hymn has always spoken to me. And here are a few of my favorite lines: I'm so glad I learned to trust Him, precious Jesus, savior, friend. And I know that he is with me, will be with me to the end. Jesus. Jesus. How I trust Him how I've proved Him o'er and o'er Jesus. Jesus. Precious Jesus. O for grace to trust Him more.

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Thank you for letting me share these thoughts with you today. These are the kinds of things we grapple with together in our membership community, the Village. If you don't know about the Village, we invite you to check it out at the AdoptionConnection.com/Village. We would love to give you a discount on your first month as a valued podcast listener, so make sure to use the Code podcast when you join.

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Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our new Instagram handle is @postadoptionresources. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community at theadoptionconnection.com/Facebook.

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Thanks so much for listening. We love having you and remember you're a good parent doing good work.

[00:12:17.010] - Melissa Corkum

The music for the podcast is called New Day and was created by Lee Rosevere.