

[00:00:03.780] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to episode number 203 of the Adoption Connection podcast. Today we're talking about the experience of being a single adoptive mom. And I have two friends from our community, The Village, who agreed to hop in here with me and talk about their experience of being single adoptive parents. Okay, why don't we start by you just briefly introducing yourselves to our listeners. So Susan, will you start us off?

[00:00:31.280] - Susan

Absolutely. My name is Susan and I have adopted two kids from China and we live in the Midwest. And it's been highs and lows, but overall best thing I ever did.

[00:00:46.810] - Lisa Qualls

I'm happy to hear that. OK, Britani, will you introduce yourself?

[00:00:50.750] - Britani

Yes. My name is Britani. I have three kiddos that have come to me through adoption, foster care, sort of our story is a little different. But I have a daughter that's 21, a son that's 20, and a son that is 16.

[00:01:05.470] - Lisa Qualls

Great. Thank you so much. I would just love to hear you talk a little bit about how you chose adoption and then maybe the path you took. There a lot of different ways to become an adoptive parent, so why you chose it and why you chose the path you did. So Britani, do you want to start us off?

[00:01:25.030] - Britani

Sure. So I did not choose adoption really. It was just dropped into my lap. So just completely a God thing. My two kiddos came to me together and then my youngest came to me later, and neither time was I like, oh, I really want to be a mom or an adoptive mom. So my story is just really about the Lord. In 2017, I had recently been saved, I had grown up in church, but just really didn't have a true relationship with the Lord. And so I was kind of new into this real relationship with the Lord and was growing, but definitely wasn't where I needed to be and still very much lived for myself. I loved to travel, I loved to spend money however I wanted. I wasn't very others-focused, and met my son through my dance studio, I own a dance studio, and the entire thing is a God story. I needed a nutcracker prince. I didn't have a teenage boy in the studio that year, connected up with a local high school drama teacher, said, can you please, do you have anybody that would be my nutcracker prince? And she introduced me to my son, and he started coming to classes at the studio.

[00:02:48.130] - Britani

He actually lived right just a few streets down from the studio. He had always wanted to dance and not really had the opportunity, so he just started taking classes. And on Thanksgiving of that year, I found out that he and his sister were in need of a home. And there weren't any homes in our county that were open to a teenage boy and a teenage girl. It was one or the other. So they were going to have to move to a different county to stay together or stay here in our county and be separated. And so I had invited my son to Thanksgiving dinner because we do it at my dance studio. And he had come and he was talking to my sister about their situation and needing a home. And there was a new law in Kentucky called Fictive kinship care, where a teacher, a coach, a neighbor, somebody with a prior relationship with the child, that child could be placed with them without them having done any of the foster care preparation. And so as he's telling my sister that, I'm thinking like, oh my goodness, that's awful. And then he said that he had to give to his social worker a list of names of people and they were kind of waiting to hear if any of those people would say yes to them.

[00:04:08.410] - Britani

And I just pierced my heart and I texted my friend and said, how crazy do you think it would be if I move in two teenagers? And she texted back, It will be crazy, but you've done crazier things. And so from that moment, my mom called me after Thanksgiving dinner and said, do you think this couple at our church would be a good fit for them? And I said, Mum, I think God wants me to do it. And that happened on Thursday and they moved in with me on Monday. So instant mom of two teenagers, they're doing great. They're launched. One Lives on her own here in town. My son is at college. And so

I was just adjusting to empty nest and sort of getting back into all the things that I thought I wanted to do. And the Lord brought my youngest son into my life. His story is a little different. I knew him for a year or more before he moved in with me. I had been praying for him. We actually just celebrated a year. And I found in my journal where a year before he moved in with me, I had written down that I felt the Lord say that he was supposed to be in my home. And so I just waited. He actually came to me through emergency custody and so I have permanent custody of him now. But neither of my stories were that I really wanted to do a great thing. It's just that the Lord said, this is what you're going to do. And I said, yes.

[00:05:40.400] - Lisa Qualls

I love that story because I think it just demonstrates that there are many paths to becoming an adoptive parent. It's not all the same. And your story is different from Susan's and different from mine. Where my story sort of aligns with yours is that after we adopted our four kids, we had the experience of having a fictive kin placement of a young teen girl who stayed with us for, I want to say, three years, where we ended up fostering her and the same thing. We had no foster parent licensing. We had to do all the training afterward. But that was an amazing experience for us too. Well, thank you for sharing that. Susan, you took a completely different path to becoming an adoptive mom. Do you want to tell us about that?

[00:06:27.940] - Susan

Yeah, I had thought about adoption starting in my early thirtys. I had met another woman at work and she worked for a different company, but she was going through the process of adopting a child from China. And we just kind of talked about it and I was like, wow, I was kind of wishy washy. I'm like, I wish I was that brave to do something like that. And then I was like, oh, you know, I'm still young enough, I'll probably get married and I'll have my kids. Well, the marriage thing never just seemed to work out. I had a few serious relationships, but just it was, I knew that I could never marry either one of them and stay married. I had been thinking about it a lot, and then my brother was tragically killed in an accident. And I just started thinking about it and I'm like, you know, I have no idea if I'll ever get married or not, but I can control whether or not I'm a mom. And so that's when I really started looking into it. And I had another friend that was a single mom. She was an attorney and she had adopted through an agency in the US. And did a private adoption for stateside adoption.

[00:07:52.320] - Susan

And so I just always felt, I don't know if it was the other mom's influence or what, I just felt like my kids were in China. And so I walked into an agency and said, I just want to figure this out. And so they're like, oh, that's great. We don't have any single slots for Chinese adoption this year left. And I'm like, oh, I didn't know there was anything like that. So then I called my friend, the attorney, and I said, I want to start adopting. You told me if I ever got to this point to call you, so I did. And I worked with her agency and I made what I called my marketing package that they showed the birth moms. And at this time I was like 40, I think it was 42. I had been single, had a successful career, also very self-absorbed and interested, kind of only in my own things. I was like the perfect aunt, and I loved all my nieces and nephews, but I just really felt like I wanted that deep relationship with my own children. And so my friend and I got accepted and I started getting the do you want to give your packet to this birth mom?

[00:09:12.530] - Susan

And I did that for about six months, and after the last one, I was like, you know, I could try this for ten years. And if nobody picks me, nobody's going to pick me, and I'll never be a mom. And when I had been dating the last guy, I said, you know what, I just want to know that you think there's a possibility that we could be married. And I said, Because I don't want to waste the next five years and then have you decide you don't want to get married, which is the five years is a really important number. After I was kind of disappointed with the US adoption, I thought, you know what, I'm going to call that agency again. And so I called. When she answered the phone, she goes, oh, you are not going to believe this. I just got two single slots this morning. Do you want one? And I'm like, yes. Sign me up. So then I went through the whole paperwork case for Chinese adoption, and I really do think that they give you all the paperwork. I think that's our labor, because it's miserable and there's a lot of it, and it has to be perfect and there's always mistakes.

[00:10:23.160] - Susan

So that was a lot of work. And then I got accepted and they're like, you will probably get a healthy twelve month old girl in nine to twelve months. And I was like, whoa, I'm not sure I'm ready that fast. So anyway, I waited and I waited, and I waited, and China shut down adoptions. And I waited and I looked, and it was like, oh my gosh, it's going to be five or six years. And it was almost I think it was six years to the day that I walked into the agency the first time. And it was five years from when I filed my paperwork. So I was like, isn't that interesting that it's five years? And I kept waiting, and a lot of my friends are like, wow, you're getting a little long in the tooth now. And so anyway, it was like, well, you know what? I'm going to go. So I ended up going on a medical mission trip to China the year before, my daughter was placed with me, or I got her referral. And as I was in the airport to leave for China on a mission trip, the agency called me and said, we have good news.

[00:11:41.990] - Susan

We think you'll be getting your baby in six months. Well, it was really twelve months, a little over twelve months, but it was perfect. The day that it happened, my family had spread out, and we were all in Arizona for a wedding of my nephew. And that morning I got the referral package that had a picture of my sweet baby girl. And so I got to show it to my parents and my brothers. Everybody was there and it was wonderful. My son is another story.

[00:12:14.750] - Lisa Qualls

Well, let's hear it. Let's go ahead and tell us about that too. I think everybody listening is enjoying this too. I'm assuming because I think it's great hearing these stories. Tell us about your son as well.

[00:12:25.180] - Susan

So the way that I got my son was after my daughter had been home for about two years, I started thinking about it because I turned 52 weeks after my daughter was home. And I'm like, you know, I really, really want a sibling for my daughter. I grew up with brothers, and I just felt like, especially since I'm an older mom, I really wanted her to have someone when I'm gone. And so I thought I better start looking. And so when I started looking, I was too old, my daughter was too young. And so I was like, oh, this isn't good. And then I talked to someone on one of the boards, and they're like, Well, I've heard they make exceptions. And I'm like, oh, what are exceptions? And so they told me if I go to these specific sites that they had kids with higher special needs that needed to be adopted, and they would sometimes make exceptions for you. So I got on the site, and I was looking, and there was this one girl. I wanted her, I wanted her, I wanted her. And the agency just didn't respond to me. And so I started and I applied at a couple of other agencies because you had to apply in order to look at the pictures and see who is available to be adopted.

[00:13:48.970] - Susan

So I finally emailed the one agency and said, hey, I said I was available and willing three weeks ago, yet I still see her photo. Is there a reason? Are other people interested? Can you let me know what's going on? And they're like, we're sorry, but we can't help your family adopt. We can't ask for another exception. And so I said, does that mean that you can't help me or no one can help me? And they said, we have asked for so many exceptions this year, we can't ask for any more. So maybe another agency can help you. Meanwhile, I get a phone call from one of the agencies that I had applied to. She goes, I'm from this agency, and I love your application. And I'm like that's good. And so she said, But I have a couple of questions for you. Are you heart set on a girl? She said, do you like boys? And I'm like, yeah, I like little boys. I have nephews. I love them a lot. But this is China. It's girls. And she goes, well, actually, right now, in China, it's kind of considered a special need to be a boy because everybody wants girls.

[00:15:07.710] - Susan

And I was like, really? And she said yep. If you would look at boys, you will get a child that is younger than your daughter and has a much more minor special need. And I said, Right. So she sends me the picture of two boys. She says, I have two boys in mind for you. I think they'd be perfect. And I opened up the first one and that was my son.

[00:15:31.030] - Lisa Qualls

Did you have a sense in your gut? Did you feel like the Lord spoke to you? How did you know he was your son?

[00:15:37.780] - Susan

I just was very... They had a little video of him and a picture and a video. And I was like, oh, he is just adorable. And I did, I opened up the next one and it was just like, nope. It was just my heart just jumped when I saw the first picture. And so it was like, no, that's him. It's going to be him. And so I started, I had to get home study done like in a week. And I had to have all my financials, everything set up. And so I thought, well, here's going to be the wait again. We're going to wait like months. And within a week and a half they called me back and they said, we're going to make an exception for you. And oh, by the way, his major, minor hearing loss. So he doesn't have a hearing loss at all. And I'm like, huh? Okay. And so after that, everything just went through really fast. And after I got approved to adopt him, they said, we don't really do this, but there is another mom who really, really wants to talk to you. And I'm like, okay.

[00:16:50.930] - Susan

So they connected two of us and she was getting ready to leave for China to adopt her son. And he was in the video of my son's video, and she was getting ready to leave for China in the next week. And she said, I am so glad you agreed to meet me because I was going to adopt your son first. And then she saw the pictures and heard the story of first time and she said, I just knew I had to adopt Ben. That's the name of her son. So anyway, long story short, after we got home, they came to visit for a weekend and it was amazing to see the two little boys together because they hadn't seen each other in nine months, but they still remembered each other. So that was really fun. Also, it only took nine, it was probably less than nine months from paperwork to adoption for my son. So completely different than the other.

[00:18:02.230] - Lisa Qualls

OK, so Susan, what year did your daughter come home?

[00:18:05.600] - Susan

My daughter came home in 2011.

[00:18:08.050] - Lisa Qualls

And your son?

[00:18:08.930] - Susan

And my son came home in 2014.

[00:18:12.050] - Lisa Qualls

Okay. And Brittany, how many years ago did your oldest kids join your family?

[00:18:18.050] - Britani

In 2017. So we'll celebrate five years at the end of this month.

[00:18:23.180] - Lisa Qualls

Okay. Okay. Alright. So I am wondering if you could talk a little bit about apart from the obvious that you're a single parent. What do you think is different about that experience? It's a unique path. There are some things that are probably harder. I don't know. I want to hear from you. So, Brittany, starting with you, what do you feel is sort of unique about being a single adoptive parent? What's hard? Maybe what's good?

[00:18:57.050] - Britani

Well, I've never been a coupled parent, so I was raised in a two parent home, and so I had that model. But there's a lot of that model, you know, that doesn't work for my kids. Like, early on, talking to my mom, she would say, no, this is what I did, but you're in a different boat. So that might have helped because it wasn't - I really couldn't do much of anything that my parents did for me besides just love my kiddos. But I do think that is probably one of the obvious hard thing, is there's no way to tap out. I

mean, you can plan for that, right? You can plan respite. You can plan to have a weekend to get away or something like that. But I was listening to a podcast this week, and they were talking about the mom and the dad have a code word, and when one of them is super triggered, they say, I think it's something about like, go get the milk. And that means that the other one tags in. Well, I don't have anybody to tag in, so that part I would say is hard. But on the flip side of that, I don't have to argue with a spouse about how we're going to parent these kids. I have the final say on that. And so I do try to get wisdom from other people, but I'm not having to battle that part. So I guess that would be maybe a good side of it.

[00:20:29.600] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. Okay. Because I know people listening are thinking, yeah, that is complicated. When we're parenting really complex kids in unique situations and you've got two parents, there's a lot to navigate. Plus there's a lot of energy that has to go into that marriage relationship in addition to the parent-child relationship. And you are able to focus your energy more directly into that parenting relationship. Of course, you have friendships and all kinds of other things, but it is a different dynamic.

[00:21:04.260] - Britani

Yeah, absolutely. As a single mom, even with the thought of dating, there's been seasons where I feel like I have more capacity for that, maybe. But then there's other seasons where I just know, like, my job right now in life is to take care of this kid, and I don't have time to take care of anybody else. You do have a little more energy to channel into them, I think.

[00:21:33.500] - Lisa Qualls

Now, your kids came to older. Susan, yours were pretty little, and you were doing it on your own. What do you think is I mean, they're the obvious unique things, but talk a little bit about that.

[00:21:46.330] - Susan

I didn't give enough credit to the fact of a dad being important in just the relationship. My daughter and my son... I call it dad shop. My son, probably more so than my daughter. When we used to go to playgrounds when we were little, he would try and steal everybody's dad and hang out with them. That was one thing that I wish I could have done differently for my kids, was give them that relationship, the self esteem, I think, that sometimes you can get from your dad that may be different from what you get from your mom. Just things like that. Also, I agree with Britani about the fact that I think the hardest thing for me was I don't have any family in town. I did have some incredible other friends that were single moms and other friends that were regular moms. But in particular, I had two friends that showed up for me a couple of times when I really needed it, and just came and took care of the kids when I had to be on a work call. And so that was especially hard. And also, I think I realized there is nobody else but me that can take care of them right now.

[00:23:04.630] - Susan

And it's interesting people that have showed up in my life that have kind of filled that bill for me, just that I would have never expected that our relationship was one where they would be. I mean, I had friends tell me not too long ago that I have bad knees and so her husband has bad knees. I went to high school with the husband, and the wife and I worked together, and so she said, now, don't hold us to this. But he just said that, you're going to need to get your knees replaced sooner rather than later. And I want you to know when you're ready, we will take the kids. And I was like, wow, that is a big offer. They're empty nesters now. I believe they're very sincere about it. So it did help a lot because I don't have family close, and we just moved my mom down and she's got dementia. And I used to run marathons, and I thought, you know what? I can do anything. If you run a marathon, you can do anything. And I think I might have overestimated my ability to do everything because it's exhausting.

[00:24:23.850] - Susan

My mom called last night, 10:00 very confused. Can you come over? And so it is definitely hard. And there are times when I absolutely agree with Britani. You know, what if I had to ask somebody's permission or advice or consider their thoughts or feelings? I don't think I'd like it very much because I get to make all those decisions, which sometimes it's hard if you have somebody coming from a completely different angle and you have to agree on it. But there are times when I'm like, I really wish I

had somebody to bounce this off against and see what they think because they're hard decisions. And sometimes I feel like my decision cup is empty.

[00:25:07.180] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, decision making is so exhausting, and you're making them all, which is a lot. So I'm curious. And Susan, you touched on this a little bit. I'm going to switch back over to Britani for a minute. But where have you found support, and have you been surprised by any of your sources of support? Because right, we cannot do this alone, for sure. So where have you found support, Britani?

[00:25:36.880] - Britani

Well, I would say, like, first of all, it has made me just incredibly aware of my need for the Lord. Not just like once a week or a once a day, but an everyday thing. So, I mean, my kids, all three of them in different ways, have been the greatest tools that the Lord has used in my life to make me more like Him and bring me into a closer relationship with Him. So that would be the one huge, huge source. And I have to fight for my for me, it's in the morning. I have to fight for my morning quiet time, to have time to read the Bible and pray. And it's really easy to let the To-do list take over, but I've found that that is just huge. And then I would say just as far as support from tangible people, I do have the luxury of having close family here in town. And so my family helped out a ton with my first two kiddos. I had two really close single women who just jumped on board. One we called the Monday mom. She picked my kids up from school on Monday. So, like I said, own a dance studio. My schedule is the opposite of a family. When my kids get out of school, I go to work. So she was the Monday Mom, and she picked the kids up and hung out with them on Monday. And I would come home from Monday at work to fully cooked meal, and then she would stay and do the dishes. So that was awesome. My other friend, my kids call her the dad. And she would do all of the stuff that I didn't really want to do much, like go see scary movies and haunted houses and those sorts of things. So both of them really stepped in. In this scenario where I am now, one huge surprise of support has been our church has a really close connection that was developed through the pandemic with a women's inpatient drug rehab facility. And through the pandemic, I got to know these women. I got to see a different side of addiction. And some of those women have been my greatest support. They know grief. They know struggle. The stuff that I tell them is not they're not shocked. They're like, okay, how that happens? And so those women have just been I call them the place is called Sky Hope. I call them the Sky Hope aunts. I would have never thought that that would be one of my greatest groups of support.

[00:28:15.650] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, sometimes God surprises us, right? That's so good. Susan, how about you? Where have you found support? Have you had any surprising places? I know you just mentioned your friends and a high school friend at that, that was a few years ago, that you were

[00:28:33.060] - Susan

oh, just a couple

[00:28:34.000] - Lisa Qualls

Just a few. So where have you found support?

[00:28:38.000] - Susan

The thing is the hardest for me, I'm also on I work with a group of women, and we run a kind of a social group for everybody. And for specifically well, it's not specifically for Chinese adoptees, but most of the kids that have been adopted are Chinese. And so they've been a little bit of support. But also sometimes I'm like, oh my gosh, I can't believe you asked a single mom to help plan these events, set up for the events, tear down the events. But they've been a good group when I can get them to be real. A couple of moms are very real, and then a few moms, and you know what, maybe their kids just are perfect. And that's something that I'll have to deal with that I can be a little envious of how easy from the outside it appears, but I know it's not because they've had a lot of grief and sad things happen to them too. But they've been just a group of encouragement and to help our kids get to know their culture, things like that. So that's been a great group. I had amazing neighbors that I lived next door to, and they were always we'd play and I talked to the mom sometimes, and it was hard because she's like, oh, they're going to be fine.

[00:30:05.230] - Susan

So sometimes that was like, okay, and just let it go. And then we moved so my kids could go to a different school. And our next door neighbors were great. And mainly their kids, their kids played with my kids all the time. And that was I mean, I hate to say it's a huge relief because they go outside and they play, and I didn't have to be minding them all the time, so that was a huge relief to have them. And then the kids had a preschool teacher who became our babysitter, and she frequently said, you need to use me more often. And she was great. She did. She helped a lot. And so those were kind of the primary areas that I've had help from. I was also moving in the middle of it of the last ten years, eleven years since my daughter's been home. That was hard. I underestimated how hard it would be for me and how hard it would be for the kids to move. And we only moved 25 minutes across town, but it was big. We kept our church because we have some really good friends that still go to our church, and that was great.

[00:31:28.160] - Susan

And interestingly enough, my church was probably the least supportive people, and I shouldn't say that. Because there were some people who were very, very supportive. But our church as a whole, they want to talk about adoption, but they don't necessarily do anything to support it. And we had a ministry for adoptive families and there was a woman and she was a phenomenal leader, she was great, but when she moved, it fell to the hands of the Co-leaders and it was too much for us. Our kids were younger and it was hard and we just didn't have the... I mean, it was hard to try and lead two groups and work and have kids. It was more than I could do. So I kind of had to wave the red flag.

[00:32:25.210] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, it's a lot. When you are in a position of quite a bit of need yourself, it's pretty hard to head up a ministry. Apart from your local people, where else have you found support?

[00:32:41.680] - Susan

Oh, this group, if I would not have found the Village, I don't think I could have made it through the pandemic. There's no way. And I found you before the pandemic and I'm so glad you were in place so that I felt very comfortable with the group. But, yeah, I could not have survived the pandemic without this group. And it's actually I always tell people, these are my people, they understand when I talk about stuff. Nobody's judging, they're all nodding their heads. And that is, I think probably for me, just to know that there are other people who walk similar paths. And sometimes I look and I say, wow, I could not do what these other women have to do. Because my kids can be hard occasionally, but most of the time they're pretty good kids. When I do have the hard, I get the support. Even when I don't have the hard, I still get the support. So I would say the Village group has been a lifesaver. And also you and Lisa-Melissa, I call you the opposite because I met you at the same time, but just a support.

[00:34:01.180] - Susan

And I think, more than anything, the hard thing for me is like, I just want a plan. If somebody could tell me the plan, I could work the plan. But there's no plan, there's no steps. And I struggle all the time with, how do I find someone to help us with what we need help with? And that this group has been a very good resource for coming up with ideas. And truly, yeah, you guys were my lifeline.

[00:34:36.070] - Lisa Qualls

COVID was rough, that is for sure. I'm so glad you found us. Britani, how about you? How has that been for you?

[00:34:44.900] - Britani

I'm a part of the Village also, and I particularly am a little bit more involved in well, not Lisa, Susan is in it too, but the Hope Circle for Moms. And so that was kind of my first in to kind of the online support group, which was so helpful because I was just in a season where I had people here that could listen, and even other foster and adoptive moms that I'm close to that could listen. But, you know, sometimes people, sometimes it's hard to share everything with people close. Sometimes you almost know each other too well. You know, when I'm kind of having that hard... I don't know, just the Hope Circle, being able to share what I was going through and hear the stories of other women just was so

encouraging because there is a lot of hard going on in that group, but there's also always a lot to celebrate. It's not just a doom and gloom kind of we all just get on there and sit in our sorrows. I loved when I got into the Hope Circle there would be a woman sharing and that I would be like, find out that she's a single mom.

[00:35:57.850] - Britani

Like, oh, my goodness. I think locally I know more coupled adoptive parents. So that was really great. There's a single foster and adoptive mom at my church that is like my family that I'm super close to. But she's done this forever and she's always done it, and I just thought she was, like, the only one. So other people that's been great.

[00:36:27.880] - Lisa Qualls

I'm so happy to hear that. Yeah. I think I did not realize when I started the Hope Circle, which was even before we started the Village, I didn't even anticipate how many wonderful single moms would end up in our group. And I'm so, so glad because we can support you and we can encourage each other, and it's so beautiful. And just recently in the Hope Circle, we've started adding members of the Circle, leading little online gatherings. And Susan, you are hosting a gathering for single moms, I think a couple times a month, is that right?

[00:37:03.440] - Susan

Yeah, we're going to do a couple of times a month, and if we feel like there's more need, we'll try and amp it up. And it's been great. The one thing that I love about Hope Circle is everybody is just very authentic. And I feel sometimes, especially with the moms I know locally, kind of Britani mentioned, that it's mostly couples. And there's also, I feel like, a need to act like our family's perfect, everything is fine. And I just like one of my friends and I saw another friend that I have, she's a therapist now, and she and I used to call each other and I say, are our kids the only ones that have problems? It's like everybody else's family just seems perfect and, you know, maybe they were, I don't know. But we were like, yeah, ours aren't perfect. And I have no problem sharing that. And the one thing that I absolutely see as a god thing is that one of my best friends from college, which was a few years ago, we were friends, really good friends when we were freshman in college. She is also a member of the Hope Circle and it has been phenomenal catching up with her again. And so we even have an offline connection where we will message each other and every once in a while we'll get on just a little chat and we'll talk for like 3 hours and then we'll be like, oh, I got to go get kids. So that has been huge blessing.

[00:38:49.930] - Lisa Qualls

I love that so much. So we have a couple of people who are hosting gatherings for single moms. Kristi, who you just mentioned, does a weekly prayer time. And then Britani, you're also facilitating one of our groups. Do you want to talk about that for a minute?

[00:39:07.240] - Britani

Yes, I'm leading a book club. *A Love Stretched Life* by Jillana Goble. I hope I said her name right. So we meet once a month on Wednesday nights, Eastern Standard Time at 9. And we've only had one meeting. Our second one is actually tomorrow. And so I'm really excited about that. There's so many as I was reading back through, even just this morning, there's just so many phrases through that book that I think we can all relate to and so I'm excited to be able to connect. And it's a little bit smaller group than the normal Hope Circle. So that was kind of cool to have kind of conversations with people back and forth.

[00:39:53.620] - Lisa Qualls

Yes. You get to know people in a richer, deeper way when you're in a small group of a small group, sort of, right?

[00:40:01.090] - Britani

Yes.

[00:40:02.750] - Lisa Qualls

Well, if you are listening to this and you want to know more about the Village, we have a lot of information you can find at the adoptionconnection.com/village. Within the Village, we have a group for... We have gatherings for Dads, we have the Hope Circle gatherings for moms, we have Behavior Q and A's, we have Enneagram gatherings, we have Overcoming Blocked Care. So we have a lot of different gatherings happening. The Hope Circle is a little bit well, I was going to say special, but I do think it's special because it is so dear to my heart. But we also have an active Facebook group where we're interacting every day about different things. Not only gathering live, we do both. We'll also have all this information in the show notes for today's episode. But as we wrap up, what would you like to say to other single parents or someone who's thinking about becoming a single adoptive parent? Susan, do you have something you want to share?

[00:40:58.850] - Susan

Even though it's hard, it's very worth it. And things that sometimes I'm like, I should have planned more, I should have done this more. Until you get in the middle of it, you're just not going to know. And I do believe that God will provide us with what we need. And it comes from sometimes it can come from a stranger at Walmart just saying something nice to you. I've had people just walk up to me and say things and I'm like, where did that come from? Oh, that came from God. Because truly, why did the stranger in Walmart come up and say, well, you look like you're having a hard day today. I just want you to know you're worth it. And so, I mean, just things like that happen all the time. And I love my kids. I always say from infinity and beyond. Sometimes I'm like, why did I wait so long to know that I could do this? I know that God's timing is perfect. And my daughter came home right after my dad had been diagnosed with cancer. And just his death was easier for me because of her. She connected to my dad faster than anybody else in my family and she still talks about him. And he's been gone twelve years. It's amazing the amount of love that you can give. And sometimes love isn't enough. You need help. Yes. I mean, just for me, it's like I wish I would have thought I was capable sooner.

[00:42:40.780] - Lisa Qualls

That's good. Britani, how about you? What would you want to say to other single adoptive parents or somebody considering it?

[00:42:47.830] - Britani

I think I would say similar. It is hard. It is hard, but I think parenting kids in general is hard. But for me, it's the best thing I've ever done. And I never would have chosen for myself. The Lord knew what I needed. I think single parents have something special to offer. I think there might be some kids I mean, the Lord does what he does because he has a reason. I think there's some kids that may thrive in that single parent set up. And so I think that if it's something that you're interested in, don't let your singleness cross it off your list. Your singleness may be the very thing that makes you the kind of mom that your kids need. And the Lord will fill in all the gaps.

[00:43:36.510] - Lisa Qualls

Thank you for spending this time with me. I've just enjoyed it. I always love getting together with my Hope Circle sisters. I just appreciate both of you. Thanks for being here.

[00:43:46.630] - Susan

You're welcome. I appreciate you more than you know, Lisa.

[00:43:51.560] - Lisa Qualls

Thank you, Susan.