

[00:00:01.270] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast, where we share resources by and for adoptive and foster moms. I'm Lisa Qualls,

[00:00:09.050] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:14.930] - Lisa Qualls

Hi, friends. Welcome to episode number 105 of the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:00:20.810] - Melissa Corkum

Lisa, we talk a lot here on the podcast about how, between the two of us, we make up all three sides of the adoption triad. I'm an adoptee and an adoptive mom, and you're a birth mom and an adoptive mom. And I feel like I run into folks, not a ton, but there are other people out there who are adoptees who have adopted. But I feel like it's more unusual to run into folks who are birth moms, who then have also gone on to adopt. But we actually connected with someone who has both of those things in common with you.

[00:00:57.770] - Lisa Qualls

Yes. It was so interesting talking with her and you'll hear that in the interview. We just were like, wow, we had so much in common. But Adrian Collins is our guest today, and she writes about the real life complexities of being both a birth mom and an adoptive mom. Adrian is married to her high school sweetheart, and they have five kids. They currently live in Denver, Colorado, and her message is that she believes our stories have meaning. We can choose grace over guilt and shame, and we can make peace with choices that have resulted in heartache.

[00:01:31.190] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, because I think you're really going to find the story fascinating. So here's your interview with Adrian.

[00:01:41.670] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, Adrian. Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:01:45.810] - Adrian Collins

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

[00:01:47.650] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I'm really glad you're here, and we were just chatting for the last few minutes. You just had a really big event in your family. Do you want to tell us about it?

[00:01:56.240] - Adrian Collins

So this past weekend, my daughter got married, and so we were able to have this beautiful wedding up in the mountains in Colorado, and it was her. And I walked down the aisle with all four of my sons, and then my husband walked down the aisle. It was just a gorgeous, beautiful day. And so we were so excited to just be all together as a family and celebrate that.

[00:02:20.500] - Lisa Qualls

That's so wonderful. And this is not something you probably ever really expected would happen. Would you say that?

[00:02:27.690] - Adrian Collins

No, that would happen. Absolutely.

[00:02:31.290] - Lisa Qualls

Kind of a dream. A dream come true. So why don't we go back to the beginning? Your relationship with your daughter is very special. All of our relationships with our kids are special, but it's unique and there's a lot of unexpected involved in it. So why don't we go back and you tell us a bit of your story?

[00:02:50.670] - Adrian Collins

I'm a birth mom, and the daughter that we just celebrated her wedding, I'm also her birth mom and placed her for adoption at birth. And so there was no way for me to know that one day I would be in a chapel with her, watching her say her vows. And at the time, I was 20 years old when I found out I was pregnant. I was a junior in college. And I just remember, I mean, really just panicking. I always wanted to be a mom. It was like something I dreamed about, and I just wasn't in the right space and time to do it. And I remember just wrestling for months and months and months about what I was going to do. And I was so terrified of being pregnant. At the time, I was attending a private Christian school, and I was so terrified of anyone finding out or a rejection from family and peers that I went to have an abortion. And I found myself in this abortion clinic. I remember just thinking, okay, I can do this. I'm just going to get this over with. Everything will be back to normal. No one will find out anything. And I just remember, like, laying on this table, and they wanted to make sure I was exactly how many weeks I was. And so they brought an ultrasound machine. And I remember turning my head to it and just seeing life. I mean, there was moving arms and legs and just this rapid heartbeat, and it was like the veil was lifted all of a sudden. And I was like, no, no, I'm going to give her life. I'm going to give her life, and I'm going to figure out plan B, whatever it is, but I'm going to give her that chance. And so I remember running out of the office and not knowing what to do. But I called my boyfriend who was long distance, and just said, you know what? I'm going to stay pregnant. I'm going to give birth. I don't know what's going to happen afterwards, but I'm going to move forward.

[00:04:53.380] - Adrian Collins

And so I actually hid my pregnancy for probably five months at the time, just because I was so terrified of being kicked out of school. And it was a really lonely time in my life. But I just remember that God had a plan for her and that he was going to walk us through that journey together. And so in the end, I chose adoption. I just realized I couldn't provide the kind of life that I wanted to for her. All these dreams and aspirations and goals for her that I really felt that I couldn't do at the time, but that God had someone else in mind to do that and step in my place when I couldn't.

[00:05:35.580] - Lisa Qualls

So you said that after you decided not to have the abortion, you called your boyfriend at the time, and I'm a little bit curious about how you two worked through that, about having the baby and what you were going to do. And I think what's really interesting is you two did end up getting married he is your husband. You had more children together. So I don't know, it's just a unique part of your story. Do you want to share anything about that, how you decided together or if you decided together?

[00:06:06.630] - Adrian Collins

It was really difficult, I will say. It was a joint decision, but I struggled way more than I think he did. And I think the reason was when I was carrying the baby and I had always wanted to be a mom, I connected to that dream. And he was from a home of poverty. And so for him, he was terrified that he couldn't provide what he wanted to if we had a child together at the time. And I think there are all these fears that played into his decision. And so he felt way more confident in placing for adoption than I did. And that's just the reality of it and the truth of it. And we did move forward together. Even though I was hesitant, it was just in my mind, I knew it was the right thing to do. It just didn't make it easy, and it didn't make it any less heartbreaking for me. Even though it's like a logical decision, it still was very emotional. And so we went through that journey together, and we were long distance for most of the pregnancy. And it was only in the summertime when he got back from college, and I came back to college in the same city that we went to an adoption agency together and started making a plan.

[00:07:28.330] - Adrian Collins

So I did feel like he was there for me those last couple of months, and of course, there for me the entire step of the way. But I felt like our healing process was very different. We got married probably about a year right after that, and so I went back to school right after giving birth, like maybe three days. And so I was long distance again. And so I had that journey to heal all by myself, which was very lonely, and he was healing in a totally different way. And so it really took us years to really come back together and understand where each other was in that process. And I think that's just the hard thing

about adoption, is that healing process for two parties can look so different, and we heal in different time frames, in different ways. And so it was hard, and I'm glad we went through it, but it wasn't easy.

[00:08:31.030] - Lisa Qualls

I wonder if he experienced more relief and you experienced more grief.

[00:08:37.690] - Adrian Collins

Yes. That's such a good way of putting it. And it was for me, it was this grieving, this loss. I have given a piece of myself away. I am never going to be healed. My heart is breaking. And I think you're right. For him, at the time, it was a sense of, okay, we made this decision, let's move forward. I'm going to go ahead and start my career. We're going to start our marriage. And so he was able to do that. But years later, when our daughter came back in our life, I think that's when he had to process all the feelings that he didn't get to process early on. And so I was there for him when he went through that. It's fascinating how that healing can just look so different for different people. I have also realized there's not one that is better than another. His doesn't have to look like mine and vice versa, but I had to realize that and understand that.

[00:09:34.390] - Lisa Qualls

So it sounds like in terms of timing, you made it to the end of the semester, is that right? Like spring semester. And then where was home? Did you go home for the summer?

[00:09:45.550] - Adrian Collins

So home was in Colorado. So I did. I went back home for summer break, and my boyfriend, my husband, he went back for summer break as well. And so we joined together and went through the adoption process together. And when it was his 21st birthday was the day that I went to labor. She was actually born on his birthday. And so my husband and daughter share birthday, and it was just such a surreal day. All of a sudden, you give birth and you just start watching a clock. You're just watching minutes and just counting down, but just wishing God would just stop time for just a little bit, because it just starts going. And we had 48 hours with our daughter, and I just cherish every second I could, and I just plan to have the adoptive parents come in my room and last minute I just said, I don't want anyone here. This is all I get? They're going to have thousands and thousands of minutes and I'm going to have a short time. And so I really held on to that. And it was heartbreaking to watch my husband hold his daughter and watch them together and all these what ifs are in my mind, and what could this look like if we were to keep her?

[00:11:18.720] - Adrian Collins

And it was just with this wrestling moment, even in the last second, it wasn't like I walked in there with this plan and like, okay, here we go. I was just all over the place. I was looking at the door, waiting for a savior to come in and just rescue me and just make it all work and that I could just be a mom and provide everything I wanted and the white ticket fence and everything would just come together. So it was really hard. I was devastated. And I think at the end, I just couldn't give her directly to the parents. I couldn't do it. And so I remember asking my dad if he would come and do that for me. And all the time I didn't really think of what I was asking, like I was breaking his heart too, but he did that for me. He took her in his arms and said goodbye to his granddaughter. And I just felt like somebody carried me out of the hospital. I don't know how I got out, I just did. And it was really hard Couple of days that followed and years, really years.

[00:12:22.960] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. Well, and just in case there's someone listening who doesn't know my story, we share this experience, this heartbreaking experience of being birth moms. And I understand about the clock ticking and just the desperate feeling of hoping someone would come and say, I will help you. Because in Mike's situation, I didn't have that. Okay, tell us a little bit, if you want to, about how both of your parents, his parents, your parents, were they supportive? Was there anybody saying, no, don't do that? What was the feeling?

[00:12:57.550] - Adrian Collins

That's a great question. My parents were very supportive. And when I mean supportive, I mean, they

didn't try to coerce me into one decision or another. Although I knew they were supportive of adoption. And I do think that they thought that was the best. There were times, I'll admit that I wish they would have said or swooped in and rescued me, right? They would have said, we'll take care of her for a couple of years until you get on your feet. And I just selfishly wanting that. Looking back, I'm glad they didn't offer that because I know that would have been really heartbreaking and really hard for everybody. But at that time, I just remember I knew they supported me. There wasn't a lot of conversation, so I felt pretty alone in it. And we've had conversations since. And I think at the time it was just they didn't know what to say or how to help. And then my husband's parents were out of the picture. He didn't have a really good relationship with them at the time. And so we didn't have a lot of emotional support on either side. And so I think that was hard. It just felt lonely. And again, I don't think my parents meant to be isolating. I just think we didn't know how to talk about it.

[00:14:18.830] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I mean, these things are so painful that it is hard to talk about. Tell us a little bit about the agency and what that experience was like.

[00:14:27.850] - Adrian Collins

You know, the agency, we had an amazing social worker. She was great. She put together a plan, our adoption plan for us. I just remember being in an office and just having them very welcoming to us. They provided probably the most emotional support that we were given. But I had chosen a couple who was not going through an agency, but they were going through a private lawyer. And so all of those home studies and everything was very different. And looking back, I wish there would have been more maybe investigation into background and more home studies given, more information given. At the time, I didn't know a lot about that I was pretty naive about what that process was like. And I think today the requirements and processes changed. But at the time I don't felt like I had one visit with the adoptive parents. You're given a couple of hours to get to know someone and make a decision if they're going to be these forever family parents for your child. And so it's a really hard process, it's very strange. It's just hard to even make that kind of decision. You just do the best you can with what you know at that time and that's all you do.

[00:15:54.340] - Lisa Qualls

How did you find them or they find you in the first place? How did that connection happen?

[00:15:59.350] - Adrian Collins

I remember telling a girl that I was pregnant. And for some reason I told her not to tell anybody, but she told her mother. And then her mother knew a couple that was looking to adopt. And so she said, can this couple send you a letter? And I said, sure they can send me a letter. And so I received this letter at college and I remember just looking at it, and they just look like my boyfriend and I like 20 years from now, and their desire to have kids and all that they could provide and offer, it just connected with me. But it still made me really sad. I remember just crying reading the letter because I was like, these people can parent but I can't. So that was really hard for me. And I did not call them, did not pursue it until probably the last month, like eight and a half months pregnant, where I was forced to make that choice. If I'm going to choose adoption, I actually have to choose parents. And since they were the ones I connected to, that was what I chose to pursue.

[00:17:01.280] - Lisa Qualls

Okay, so you came to the agency already with adoptive parents picked out and they were willing to facilitate that.

[00:17:08.550] - Adrian Collins

They were willing. They worked with the adoption lawyer, to work together and make that plan and process and have it all come together. So that's how it works. So I guess it would be more of a designated adoption at that point.

[00:17:22.560] - Lisa Qualls

Can you even describe what the weeks and months after that were like? Can you go there? That's a hard thing for me to go to sometimes.

[00:17:31.670] - Adrian Collins

It's so hard to go there, because I almost like I have to numb myself just to function, to survive, during survival. And I remember you have all these outward symptoms of being a mother, right? Like your milk comes in and you're supposed to be breastfeeding, but you're not. And you have this stomach, you're supposed to have the baby in your arms and you don't. And it's just so traumatic. It's so devastating at that time just to process that you have really given up something that you cherish so deeply. And so those days following a month was so difficult I remember just kind of walking in like a trance. I wasn't even really there. My boyfriend wasn't with me, and so he was starting his career, his job, and so I felt really alone in that grief. There was no way to just fill it with distractions. It was just there constantly. And I think I remember just having a goal, like something I needed, something that I could look forward to, and that was my degree in college. I just needed something tangible to have at the end of a journey. And so getting that degree was really important to me.

[00:18:53.930] - Adrian Collins

And then I married shortly after, and over time, I would say the wound is less raw. It doesn't ever go away, it's still there, but I think it got less raw and raw over time. And I think it really helped me just to continue believing that God had a plan for her. He has a plan for me, and he has a plan on this journey, and I think that kind of kept me going.

[00:19:22.770] - Lisa Qualls

So you graduated from college, you got married, and then how soon after did you and your husband have another baby?

[00:19:31.030] - Adrian Collins

So we had another baby about three years after we got married. And so I was so excited. As I said, I always wanted to be a mom. It was just something in my heart from the very beginning. I was a kid, I could not wait. So we gave birth to a just a healthy baby boy. We were so excited. It was just beautiful experience, so night and day from what I experienced before, and so it was a beautiful time. And then we ended up having two more boys pretty close together after that. And I just really cherished my time as a mom. I think when you go through an experience where you have to place a child, I think you cherish it so much more in a way, because you realize what you sacrificed in order to give a child the best life possible. And so I just remember just being so excited just to hold a child in my arms and knowing that I had come to this point. And so it was great. We moved around a lot, but I just loved being at home. I stayed at home, I home schooled, and then I decided to become a mentor for birth moms during that time. And I think I just always wanted to come alongside a birth mom during her walk because I remember feeling so lonely in mine and I didn't really know what the process was going to be like. No one really held my hand and told me, this is what you're going to feel in the hospital. Your healing process, what it's going to look like afterwards. And so I really started to feel like I was being called to just come alongside birth moms and walk along with them and hold their hand and talk to them and just kind of be a support system for them. And so I did that for a couple of years. And I remember there was a family friend that we had that encountered an unexpected pregnancy. And so we met for coffee a couple of times and she was such a joy and I just loved her so much. And so when she was about six months, she turned to me this little coffee shop and she just said, will you be the adoptive mom for my son?

[00:22:08.270] - Lisa Qualls

We're interrupting this interview to ask you to do us a favor. Really, it's not for us, but for adoptive and foster parents just like you.

[00:22:16.430] - Melissa Corkum

If you find our podcast helpful, pause this episode and revisit your podcast app where you can rate and review the show. Honestly, this isn't about making us feel good. This is about other parents finding confidence, hope, and friend to understand.

[00:22:31.490] - Lisa Qualls

Thanks so much for helping us get the word out. We really appreciate you.

[00:22:35.480] - Melissa Corkum  
Now back to the conversation.

[00:22:42.030] - Adrian Collins

And she just said, would you be the adoptive mom for my son? I never thought adoption would be in my story ever again. It wasn't anything I just imagined for myself, but I just felt right there called to just be an adoptive mom. And I said yes right away. I didn't even ask my husband at the time if that was something that he was in agreement with. He was. So that was amazing. And then we started this journey to be adoptive parents and it was really interesting because I thought, okay, since I'm a birth mom, I'm going to know everything there is to know about being an adoptive mom. And that wasn't the case. There's a whole new set of fears that came with that. I started thinking things like, what if I disappoint her? What if I don't love her son the same as I love my three biological sons? What would that look like? How do I manage this? How do I manage a relationship with her? And so a lot of these fears started coming up in the process. But she invited us to her ultrasound and doctors appointments and so she was just she really wanted an open adoption and it was just a new experience for me. So I went through that naively but just with heart open.

[00:24:04.530] - Lisa Qualls

Well, and that's an interesting thing that we also share, is that I'm also an adoptive mom. So we are both birth moms and adoptive moms. And truly, I'm not sure I've ever met another woman who is both. Listeners, you can't see this, but we can see each other's faces on the screen. And I'm just like, wow, I just want to sit and have coffee for about 4 hours. Okay, so I want to go back a little bit. What was the relationship like with your daughter's adoptive parents? How much openness was there?

[00:24:37.420] - Adrian Collins

We plan for a semi open adoption and at that time, open wasn't prominent in the adoption...

[00:24:48.390] - Lisa Qualls

Well, let me jump in and ask what year was your daughter born?

[00:24:51.420] - Adrian Collins

She was born in 96. Yeah. So semi open for us meant that we had agreed upon a certain amount of letters and pictures for three years and after that there was no obligation to communicate or anything like that. That was what was presented to me. Not knowing there was any other way of doing adoption besides closed, I was excited to do that. And excited meaning I was hesitantly anticipating that those letters and pictures would be something that would help my healing. And I think at first every single one of those letters and pictures just stung. I mean it's like reopening a wound every single time. It was really hard for me to even hear how she was doing because not that I didn't love her, it was just that I just wanted to be her mom so bad, and then it was like a realization that I couldn't. And so it was really hard for me. But over time, of course I appreciate the letters. I couldn't wait to read it. It was just a bittersweet. And after those letters and pictures were done and they did fulfill their obligation as they were asked, we kind of went silent for many years. And for me I went silent for about ten years and it wasn't again because I didn't care or love her, it was just I had to take a step back for my own healing and know that that was what was best for me. And I really felt that she was in good hands and being taken care of. And so we were silent for many year.

[00:26:33.100] - Lisa Qualls

But somewhere along the line, that silence came to an end. How did that happen and was it on your daughter's side? Your side, the adoptive parents, how did you reconnect?

[00:26:42.950] - Adrian Collins

We reconnected about two weeks after I brought home our newly adopted son. And so here I am holding this sweet little infant boy my arms and just adjusting to being a mom before and an adoptive mom, and the phone rings and it was our twelve year old daughter. And so she was on the line with her adoptive parents and just said, she has some questions she would love to just get to know you guys if that's something you'd be willing to do. And knowing developmentally, like she was at a stage

where she was wanting to know more about her family background and history and that whole identity. And so I felt at the time that my heart was just open and ready to navigate more of an open relationship with her. And I was so excited to arrange that visit with her and her adoptive parents. Interestingly, I had never told my boys that they had a sister.

[00:27:46.550] - Lisa Qualls  
Oh wow.

[00:27:48.160] - Adrian Collins  
They had no idea what they were in for. But the lot of guilt and shame was there. And which is probably one of the reasons that I stayed silent for so many years. It was a reason why I didn't tell my kids. I wanted them to have this idea of perfection of me, and I was terrified that they would just reject me. Which is so interesting, how that just clouds your judgment to shame and guilt, openness and vulnerability. And so I remember just working up the courage to tell my boys they had a sister, and they were all playing a video game or something, and came down the stairs and I had a picture of my daughter in my hands. And I want you guys to know you have his sister. She's going to come visit. And the reaction was so subtle and subdued. It was like, Cool, mom, can we go back to our video game now? I mean, they were so just nonchalant about it. And I bring that up only to say, I spent years of just hiding this secret because I was so afraid they were going to reject me. And they're just easy laidback responses, like they have such an easy time accepting me and their story. Why am I having such a hard time accepting it for myself? And what am I teaching my boys if I'm trying to be perfect and not giving myself any grace? And so when she came to the door, we all just embraced her and hugged her and they fought over who would sit next to her at the table. They just connected right away. So it was beautiful.

[00:29:25.170] - Lisa Qualls  
That's so wonderful. So you had a relationship with her parents as well. Were they involved in this meeting and reunion?

[00:29:34.050] - Adrian Collins  
They were involved and they were very supportive and did bring her to visit with us. I could tell there was just a little bit of just some awkwardness and I didn't know what that was. I think it was just probably, and if I'm just reading into it, I think it was difficult for them as well, to have to watch her with her birth family. And so I think that was just a really awkward, different situation that we were all in. And since we didn't have an open relationship from the beginning, it was just hard. So at the end of that, we had a great connection with her. We decided to continue that relationship with letters and phone calls. And so over the years, she would come alone to our house and just spend time with us as she got older and older and older. And I think that was just an amazing time we got to have with her and spend one on one with her, and it worked out really well.

[00:30:31.150] - Lisa Qualls  
Now, what state did she live in and where did you live at that time?

[00:30:34.800] - Adrian Collins  
She lived in California. At the time we were in Oklahoma and then we also moved to Texas. And so she got to visit us in different places.

[00:30:47.500] - Lisa Qualls  
So she would fly in and visit you without her parents, and you would just have time for a visit. That's pretty unique, really, that it happened that way. Her parents must have felt like you were really good, solid people.

[00:31:00.750] - Adrian Collins  
I think they wanted what was best for her, but I don't think they were prepared and educated to have an open relationship with a set of birth parents and adoptive parents working side by side. And so when she turned 18 and was a freshman in college, I mean, everything just changed. And we didn't realize how hard things were at home for her. We didn't realize that there are some issues that we just

couldn't foresee, really, and promises that were broken. And they asked her to choose between her birth family and them. And I can't imagine what that would feel like or to put someone in that situation. And so it was heartbreaking to watch as a birth mom. Because you really go through this, I guess, feelings of betrayal. That you wanted them to be completely supportive and unconditional love and provide ongoing support for years and years and years. And to know that that's not there is really difficult, as a response to just even swallow. Because you really felt like you sacrificed everything hoping that she would have those things. And when it wasn't that way, it was really hard. So they decided to remove all emotional support and financial support from her and essentially just not be her parents.

[00:32:35.190] - Adrian Collins

I just remember my husband and I just devastated and trying to come up with a way that we could provide for her the way that we had wanted to. We found a way that we could readopt her into our family. And since she was an adult, she just needs to give her consent to choose her parents. And so it wasn't easy. It was very hard. But we also wanted to give her the best life that she could at that point and still help her into a healthy adulthood and support her through college. And so we went before a judge, and we adopted our birth daughter as part of the family.

[00:33:22.470] - Lisa Qualls

Wow. I mean, I'm thinking about all of the adoptive parents who are listening to this right now, and what you listeners might be feeling as you're hearing this story. There's a lot of emotion here, and Adrian and I both really understand this because we're also both adoptive moms. So I hope you had a good therapist during this time of trying to be a birth mom, reuniting, bringing your daughter back into your family. Being an adoptive mom, this is emotionally very complex and probably not super easy on your marriage or anything else. I mean, there must have been a lot of intense emotion.

[00:34:03.510] - Adrian Collins

Oh, my gosh, and thank you for bringing up needing outside support, like a therapist. I did not have that. And I wish, looking back, that I had taken the time for myself to really go through that. And for my husband and I, it was extremely emotional, it was extremely heartbreaking. Because, again, for my husband, he started processing all these emotions that he hadn't felt, and that he finally could provide and finally could give, also dealing with the guilt on his side. And I was dealing with guilt not knowing that all the people that I chose had now rejected her and me. And so there was so much going on, and it was hard to even wrap my brain around it. I remember calling my son's birth mom during this time, and I remember saying to her, I want you to know that I want you and I to have the best relationship we possibly can. I don't want to fight over our son. The son is our son together, and we are going to do this adoption together. And I don't want you to ever feel like it's you against me. I think there were so many lessons in there, just being an adoptive mom and knowing that there was enough room to share and there was enough love to go around, but it didn't have to be one against the other.

[00:35:27.660] - Adrian Collins

And so that idea just going through that, really was formulated in my mind that, no, that's not how adoption is supposed to look. If we can have a relationship, we do the best we can for the sake of our child. Why that may be awkward for me or may feel threatening in a way which it shouldn't. But that's what's best for a child, is to have both sets of parents, if you can, in a healthy relationship. And so that was just really difficult for me to walk through. And still today, I still don't understand the choice there, and I still struggle with it. Like, that hasn't completely healed. It's still going to be a question in my mind, but I also know that God can use a story and turn it around, and that story isn't done. And so there may be redemption and restoration down the road, and I really hope for that, and I really would support that. And I think that's best for my daughter, honestly.

[00:36:32.970] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I would agree with that. And I was thinking the same thing as you were talking. It's not over. We cannot even imagine sometimes what God is going to do, because his ways are so much higher and his thoughts are so much wiser than ours. And I was thinking about when my son came into my life again. He was 16, and it was a shock, a wonderful, wonderful thing I had longed for, but it was a shock. And Russ and I, looking back, both agree I desperately needed a therapist because I had so



much PTSD. Like, serious kind of breaking down, because after my son contacted me, his parents cut off contact again. And so I felt like I was just going through the grief process all over again, and it was extremely difficult. And it kind of nearly broke me. It really did. I feel choked up just talking about it, but we lived through it. But his parents never did accept me. I don't really understand that either, because I felt like I cared so much for them. I prayed for them and prayed for them, all those years, and to find out that they did not feel toward me what I felt toward them was very heartbreaking.

[00:38:06.030] - Lisa Qualls

It challenged my faith and just really was confusing for me. But as an adoptive mom, I also understand it was not what they were expecting. My son was born long before your daughter, and it was closed adoption through Catholic Charities, and this was not on their radar. This was not what they were expecting. It was not what they'd agreed to. And I think it was just not something that they could accept, especially at that time, but really ever. So it's been sad, and I think these conversations are so important because you're right. You've got birth family and adopted family who fiercely love this child and want the very best. Nobody would choose adoption if they didn't really want the best, I think, for their child if they didn't love them. Okay, I shouldn't say nobody would. There's certainly, like, in my case, there was a lot of coercion, so I didn't choose it. But, like, you chose it because you wanted something for your daughter, and it's heartbreaking when it doesn't turn out the way we imagine.

[00:39:21.870] - Adrian Collins

It's devastating. And you're right about the PTSD. I mean, you relive this grief when these people that you completely trust and love and pray for reject you, and you don't even really know why other than you're a birth mom. I think those misconceptions about birth parents are just things that we need to work through with adoptive parents too, to know that things change all the time. And so even if there was a birth mom that was struggling with an addiction or something, that's not her story forever. I mean, that could be her story for right now. But that doesn't mean ten years down the road or 20 years down the road, she's going to be a healthy adult. And we adjust our plans, as adoptive parents, to be able to connect their birth child with their birth parents, if possible, because that is the best thing for them, to have those relationships outside of just adoptive parents. And I feel like the more education and awareness that we give and learn from each other, that we can provide the most ability for an adopted child as they grow older, because I don't want my son. I want him to be getting ready to go on a little backpacking trip with his first family, and I'm like, packing his backpack for him.

[00:40:51.840] - Adrian Collins

I'm like, go, that's what I want for you. And they're beautiful people, and she's beautiful parent, amazing. And I'm, like, of course I want you to spend time with him because he's both of ours. And that's what's best for him. And so not having that on the other side with my daughter's adoptive parents, and I will say the hardest thing about the wedding this weekend for me was that they weren't there. That was so emotional for me. And I was like, they needed to be here. Both dads needed to walk her down the aisle. There was room for both. And that's devastating for me to know that you are with someone for 18 years and then walk away. There's room for all of us in her life, and you're missing these key moments by causing a division. There's no room for division. We don't need that. And there's room for healing. And so for me, I could keep praying and keep holding on to hope, because like you said, God can change or his story continues and our journey continues and things can change in a moment's notice. But for adoptive parents, too, we need to adjust as things change and be flexible and open our homes when birth parents go through seasons of silence or go through seasons of communication, like, no, there's both sides of that. And to be open to both sides of that.

[00:42:27.850] - Lisa Qualls

That's really well said. There is room. There's enough love. There really is. And I think our children can accept it. I don't think children find it super complicated, even multiple sets of parents. I mean, there are a lot of kids that live with that because of divorce and remarriage and all kinds of things. And I think it's we parents who are the ones that struggle. And the openness that you have in your adoption with your son is a beautiful example of why it does not have to be that way. It just doesn't. Well, I love your story. I could talk to you for hours and I hope that we're going to get to do that sometime. We need to figure out a way to spend some time together because it is rare for me to get to talk to

another birth mom, and one who's also an adoptive mom. I don't know. I know there are probably some other ones out there, but not a lot of us. So is there any final thing you'd want to share with our listeners?

[00:43:31.030] - Adrian Collins

Just remembering that we don't need to hold on to perfect, that we need to choose grace always over guilt and shame for ourselves and know that God has a purpose in our journey, a purpose in our story. There is meaning in every story. And I think the more we're open and vulnerable with each other, the more we gain wisdom from one another. And another thing is when we go through these hardships and trials, I've learned so much about love and grace and forgiveness and God's peace. And so just to be aware that when we go through circumstances that are hard to know that God is going to walk us through it and that he has something for us on the other side and he's teaching us to be more like Him in the process. And so I just remember that when I encounter hardships and to know that our story is not done and that he's still with us.

[00:44:30.770] - Lisa Qualls

Well, thank you so much for being on our podcast today. I really appreciate getting to know you.

[00:44:37.080] - Adrian Collins

Me too. It's such a pleasure getting to know you. And thank you for having me.

[00:44:45.750] - Melissa Corkum

Wow, Lisa, what a fascinating story. I kind of feel like I was listening to a recap of a Lifetime or a Hallmark movie. It's almost surreal.

[00:44:55.530] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, it was such an interesting conversation, and I know that there's so much more to the story. The good news is that Adrian has written a memoir about her decision to relinquish her daughter at birth and the journey to rediscover herself in the following years. And it's slated to be released spring of 2021. So if you want to know more about that, you can follow Adrian on her website, which is just [Adriancollins.com](http://Adriancollins.com), and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. She is Adrian Collins, and for the exact spelling of her name, it will all be in the show notes for this episode, which you can find at [theadoptionconnection.com/105](http://theadoptionconnection.com/105). Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as The Adoption Connection.

[00:45:48.360] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a quick review over on iTunes. It will help us reach more moms who may be feeling alone.

[00:45:58.470] - Lisa Qualls

And remember, until next week, you're a good mom doing good work and we're here for you.

[00:46:05.610] - Melissa Corkum

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