

[00:00:00.550] - Melissa Corkum

Is your parenting journey turning out differently than you imagined? It's never too late to begin your family's transformation journey.

[00:00:09.510] - Lisa C. Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Wise podcast, where you'll rediscover the confident and connected parent you long to be. I'm Lisa C. Qualls.

[00:00:18.220] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:24.600] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, hello, friends. I'm so happy you're here listening. And I have a really special guest for you today, who is a friend of mine. And we met, it's funny thinking back now, we met in March 2020. And if you take a moment and think about it, there was a lot happening in March 2020. And in fact, Melissa and I were both scheduled to speak at a conference in Seattle, a large conference for foster adoptive kinship parents. And Rebekah was attending the conference, and we all arrived. And the night before the conference began, the governor of Washington State shut down all gatherings over a small number of people. I can't remember the number now. And the conference was canceled. Well, a bunch of us were there. We'd flown in. And so we ended up spending a few days together, all the speakers and some of the participants, and we just got to know each other. So today I've invited my friend Rebekah Cook to be a guest because her fostering story is really interesting and one that has captivated me, and I want her to share it with you. So, Rebekah, first of all, will you just introduce yourself and tell us about your family?

[00:01:40.680] - Rebekah Cook

Sure. Thank you, first of all, Lisa, for having me. I have loved this podcast since it began, so it's really a joy for me to be here with you today. So I'm Rebekah Cook. My husband and I, with our children, live in Franklin, Tennessee, south of Nashville. We've been here for the better part of 20 years. Josh and I have seven children through birth and adoption and foster care. We currently have a little one with us through foster care. She will be two soon. She's been with us since birth. We have four children. Biologically, our oldest son is married with a grand baby and another one on the way. Then we have a 19-year-old, 17-year-old, 15-year-old. Then we have a son who's 11, came to us through adoption at birth. Then we have our little one, Journey, is four. She came to us originally through foster care and later adopted. Then our baby who's with us.

[00:02:37.900] - Lisa C. Qualls

You have experienced foster care in a way that's different from really the vast majority of foster parents I know. You and I were together again recently at a retreat for Adoptive Foster Kinship Moms, and you were telling your story. I remember listening to you and just leaning in and wanting to hear more. I'm actually going to get to hear more of your story that I have not heard before and share it with all of you listeners at the very same time. Tell us a little bit about how you got involved in fostering, especially in the way that you're doing it right now. I don't know if you fostered before.

[00:03:18.790] - Rebekah Cook

We did not foster before. Our son, that's 11, came to us at birth through a traditional domestic infant adoption situation. We weren't involved in foster care at that time. But I would say, honestly, I grew up with friends, as a little girl, I grew up with family friends who provided foster care in our community. Something about that really did draw me in as a elementary school-aged kid. Nothing else happened with that for several years. My husband and I were newlyweds, and we moved to Denver and became friends with a couple at our church who became dear friends of ours, and they were a foster family. It's like it got rekindled something in me at that time through them. Although nothing came to pass for many, many years after that, it's like that seed was started again. After our son, who's now 11, came home, maybe he was five, and I had just felt over and over like God just kept whispering something to me about fostering. I would bring it up with my husband every once in a while, and he always said, No, it's not the right time. The house is full, the calendar is full, the car is full. It's not the right time.

[00:04:39.320] - Rebekah Cook

I really did trust my husband in that. His response had been similar about adoption with our son. I just trusted that he was listening to the Holy spirit as well. And if there was a time that was right, that he would be on board. Then there was a really distinct moment for me. It was in our church's Good Friday service. We have a really beautiful Good Friday service. Our pastor was encouraging a time of prayer, and it was a time of reflection and listening to God. And I felt the Holy spirit prompt me so clearly. I remember exactly where I was seated in our sanctuary. And he just said so clearly to me, literally, Put your hands out before me and say, not my will, but yours be done. And I did that. And I knew in the moment, it had something to do with adoption or foster care. But I did not know any more than that. It was distinctly about that, though. And that was still a few years before we ended up getting licensed to foster, and so I just continued to pray and say, Lord, if this is something you're asking us to do, help us to be on the same page and let us know when we're ready as a family to do this.

[00:05:58.060] - Rebekah Cook

I had heard about Jonah's Journey, which is the ministry that we foster through, that works just solely, really, with incarcerated women. I'd heard it probably, I think, just originally through social media. I know our church hosted something, an information gathering platform at one time for Jonah's Journey. It was on my radar. I didn't know anyone from the ministry. I didn't know any other foster families with Jonah's Journey. But I had mentioned that to my husband, and he said, No, it's not the time. Then we were out for our wedding anniversary in June of 2018. I had seen a post on Instagram from Jonah's Journey that day saying that they were looking for respite care families. I decided, once again, my usual every six months check-in with my husband to bring it up that night and just say, Putting it out there, what do you think? He said, I remember you mentioning Jonah's Journey. I don't really remember a whole lot else about the specifics of the organization. I filled him in a little bit, and then I read him the post that had been posted that day on Instagram.

[00:07:20.240] - Rebekah Cook

When I say he stunned me, He really stunned me when he said, I think it's time. I think we can do this now. And that is not the response, honestly, that I was expecting. I was expecting it. No, not right now. So he really shocked me. But once my husband's on board with something, he's all in. He's like, Go ahead and touch base with them and let's see what we need to do to get the ball rolling. It ended up taking a little time to hear back from Jonah's Journey, and that was okay. I think we heard back from him in August. And met with the case worker who gets families licensed, and that's when we really started our process.

[00:07:53.670] - Lisa C. Qualls

So did they do your training for you to become licensed in the state?

[00:07:58.140] - Rebekah Cook

They did. They did an extensive home study, and we had had a home study done once before for our son's adoption. That was our one experience. I will say that Jonah's Journey, home study process was even more extensive, which I appreciated. I felt like it was really a quality look into a family to see what this family is about and how the kids are feeling about the potential of fostering in their family. We really got to know Jackie, who was our case worker. At the time doing the home study process, she came into our home many times and spent time with our kids and spent time with us and did all the usual things, but also some more relational building kinds of things. Like I mentioned, Jonah's Journey is working. I I say, almost exclusively with incarcerated women. Once in a while, there's a different situation that comes to them that they might be involved in. But the roots go back to serving incarcerated women who are hoping to keep their children out of state custody so that at the end of a mom's sentence, she's able to bring her children home with her more quickly.

[00:09:07.650] - Rebekah Cook

So that's really the heart of Jonah's Journey. I have had a long-standing love for just women and moms that are in vulnerable positions. And so, was already working in some very organic ways in our community, serving moms and getting items into the hands of moms, baby items for moms to bring their children home, from the hospital to safe environments and things like that. I was already working

with some moms, just very unofficially. And knew that I personally have a passion for these moms. Really, the moms that are served through Jonah's Journey are similar demographically to the moms that I was already getting to know in our community. It felt like a natural leap into this type of care.

[00:10:00.980] - Lisa C. Qualls

As you began to engage with incarcerated women, and probably as part of your training, was there anything that surprised you? I mean, did you have any experience with incarcerated people prior to this?

[00:10:13.880] - Rebekah Cook

Basically, no. Other than maybe a few moms that I had met in getting baby supplies into the hands of moms that needed them. But not in a sense. I had never been in a jail or a prison before Jonah's Journey. One thing I think is special about the is that as soon as you're matched with a mom, an expectant mom, who's hoping to place her child through Jonah's Journey for the duration of her sentence, the intent is to immediately start building a relationship between the caregiving mom and the expectant mom. I got to go to our very first placement, I met her case worker at a county jail and went in to meet the expectant mom. And that was a very new experience for me. I do remember, it's funny, I grew up in a Christian home, very straightforward, very... I had an easy, solid, stable childhood. So nothing about that scene was familiar to me, but it also did not feel particularly eerie or intimidating. It felt like just a green light, really, from God saying, This is the thing that I have for you. And so I'm right here with you. It's going to be good.

[00:11:30.140] - Rebekah Cook

So walked in, ended up meeting with that mom. They let me stay for about two hours, which really surprised me. And it was just eye-opening. This was a county jail, so it has half men's, half women's. I was only on the women's side, seeing this mom, very pregnant mom, walk in in her jumpsuit, was just something new for me. I had not experienced that kind of a moment before, but we had a great connection, and I think it was It's helpful for mom to know this is who my baby is going to be going home with. For me, the relationship building is so important, and we get to do that before a baby is even born. That was new. Our next placement, as it turned out that this mom was in the Tennessee Prison for Women. I had also never been in a prison before, which is different than a county jail. A little more intimidating, honestly, in some ways, in terms of security and things like that. It's just been a process of learning as we go. The reality is, once you're inside the doors, you're just interacting with a woman who has a lot of the same needs that I do. And so it's very humanizing, I think, to spend time with moms face-to-face and get to know more about them before you begin caring for their children.

[00:12:57.950] - Lisa C. Qualls

I imagine it must be very comforting for the moms, too, because how extremely painful and difficult to send your baby home with someone that you hardly know, but at least they know you. Can you imagine sending your baby to a stranger and how difficult that would be?

[00:13:17.720] - Rebekah Cook

I think as a mom, what I say to myself over and over and over again, different experiences that we've encountered along the way is the lens I try to keep at the forefront is, How would this make me feel as a mom? Sometimes we have to put aside. In foster care, we have to do this a lot. We have to put aside the things that are frustrating or messy or unfair or unwise and just say, Let me just look at this mom through the lens of a fellow mom. And how might this mom be feeling about this situation, that situation? Like you said, very, very hard to think about sending your newborn home with a person you hardly know. But I think that initial connection is really helpful. If I put myself in the shoes of being that mom, to at least have, I know what their voice sounds like. I know what their family structure is. We get to talk a little bit about what they're anticipating when the baby comes, that kind of thing. So I hope that that goes a long ways towards settling a mom's heart. Just the relationship building part is a piece that I think is outside the realm of a traditional foster-care relationship, oftentimes. And that's the piece that I appreciate so much about Jonah's Journey.

[00:14:41.480] - Lisa C. Qualls

so I don't know if it has been different every time, but when a mom who's incarcerated goes into labor,

she's transferred to a local hospital, I imagine. Then does she get to have someone with her as a support person? How long does she get to keep her baby in the hospital? How does that process happen?

[00:15:03.500] - Rebekah Cook

For me, just learning more about that, that holds a lot of sadness for me. There was a lot about that I didn't know, and I obviously certainly don't know everything today, but I have learned a lot. An incarcerated mom who is delivering does not get to have a... At least in the state of Tennessee. Now, I'm sure every state is different, and I don't know any other state's rules. But in the state of Tennessee, they do not get to have a support person there. And so there's going to be a correctional officer there present with the mom. But as far as I've been told all along, that person is not supposed to really be in dialoging with mom at all. They're just there for security. Culturally, let's say, I don't think these moms are necessarily valued or respected the way a different mom might be when she goes in to deliver her baby. I think we can know that there's always going to be exceptions. There's going to be a tender-hearted, Jesus-loving nurse that might do that differently. But I think in general, the reception that this mom is going to receive when she's in labor and delivery is different than you or I probably experienced in a hospital setting. And that makes me feel upset. That makes me long to be able to be there with a mom who's delivering and be that support person. But currently, that's not something that's allowed.

[00:16:30.790] - Rebekah Cook

Then mom is usually allowed to stay for the normal duration, that 24 to 48-hour window, a little bit longer if there's a C-section. It's expected that we will start drying up her milk immediately when it comes in. So there's not an option in our state for breastfeeding moms to continue pumping. With one of our moms, we actually, mom was interested, and we did look into that, but there's not a great way for collection and storage, realistically. So, as a mom who did breastfeed some of my children, that makes me sad to think about. Just that poignant reminder for a mom that I don't have my baby with me. Now I have this other thing I have to take care of following the birth. With our little one who's with us right now, I did love this. I wasn't allowed to talk with her mom while her mom was in the hospital. I call and speak with nurses to hear how mom and baby were doing. I couldn't speak with mom until she was back at the women's prison. Of course, knowing that baby had arrived, I have lots of questions. I want to hear how mom's doing and hear how baby's doing and all that. Didn't get those answered, like I said, until mom was back at the prison, and then we could have a phone call again. She said, Well, the doctor was so kind that he wrote into his report that mom needed to be observed for an additional 12 hours. And she said, I didn't really have anything that needed to be observed, but he was trying to allow me to have a little bit more time with her. And I appreciated that because she did not let that baby out of her sight. She kept her with her nonstop for the 50 something hour she had before she was returned to the prison.

[00:18:23.980] - Melissa Corkum

Many parents who deal with big behaviors are looking for practical solutions and may also be struggling blocked care. Private coaching or group programs that require regular Zoom meetings place even more burden on your already busy lives.

[00:18:38.230] - Lisa C. Qualls

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[00:19:04.080] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:19:20.070] - Lisa C. Qualls

You've never witnessed the mom leaving. There's not a transition between you and mom at all. Mom has to leave her baby at the hospital, and then you arrive.

[00:19:30.190] - Rebekah Cook

Yeah. So then our, and in this case, was staying for a few additional days. Like I said, I was able to check in with the nursing staff a few times a day to hear how she was doing. Then as a caregiving family, then you have to get clearance from the hospital to be approved to come into the hospital, obviously, to visit the baby. So that's a couple day process. And so it was four days before I was able to go into the nursery and see our little one who's with us now. But then once I was allowed to come in, the nurses treated me the same way that they would if I was her mom, and I got to rock her and just spend several hours with her. And as it turned out, then I got the call the very next day that she was being released and I could come pick her up.

[00:20:20.050] - Lisa C. Qualls

She's been with you now for two years?

[00:20:23.210] - Rebekah Cook

Almost two years. Her birthday is in December. In about a month, it'll be her second birthday. In her particular case, I did go directly to the hospital, and it was very surreal. I went up to the NICU and had to do all these training videos. I did giggle because this is my seventh baby to bring home, and I had more training to do with her than I had ever been required to do before, but in the grand scheme, I think that's a good thing. So lots of videos, lots of training, nursing training, sign lots of papers. And then one of the nurses said, go down to the parking garage and your vehicle up and we'll walk her down. And so I pulled my truck up to the circle drive, and they had one of those AV carts like we had in school, and they wheeled her out in her little car seat, and I picked her up and took her home.

[00:21:14.450] - Lisa C. Qualls

And then How soon after you took her home, were you able to let her mom know that she was with you and how she was doing?

[00:21:22.890] - Rebekah Cook

Yeah. So we aren't able to call into a jail or prison to speak with mom, so we have to wait until she's able to call us. At any location, that's going to be a different rule. So you basically load a phone card. We put money on a card each month and reload that so that mom's able to make phone calls to us. We get a little message saying, Do you want to accept this call from this person? And then you have so many minutes. I think different moms we've had is different rules, but you might have a 10-minute phone call or a 15-minute phone call. Some places it might be mom can make that call once a week. Sometimes it might be as long as mom has money, she can call a couple of times a week. And so as soon as our little one's mom knew that she was being picked up with us, we got a call from her that evening, and she was so relieved, so relieved to know that her baby was at home with us. It was really painful for her to know that her baby was sitting at the hospital without a caregiver there with her around the clock. She was very clear about that being a big relief to her to know that baby was now at home with a family, not birth family, but a family. Then mom called regularly to check in during the rest of her sentence. Mom's no longer incarcerated, and we do still have baby in our care, and that's just a situational case by case.

[00:22:58.140] - Lisa C. Qualls

How many children have you fostered through Jonah's Journey now?

[00:23:02.820] - Rebekah Cook

We've actually only had two babies come home to us through Jonah's Journey. But our first placement, who ended up becoming our daughter, eventually, we did end up adopting, which was a distinct change in plans from the original plan. Two months after we adopted Journey, and she was 14 months, we ended up getting a call from mom that she was needing care for her other daughters as she was incarcerated again. So we ended up bringing home four biological siblings to our one-year-old. We cared for them during mom's incarceration and for a period of time afterwards. We had six kids in our home, but only two came directly through Jonah's Journey as newborn placements.

[00:23:50.370] - Lisa C. Qualls

And with Fostering Through Jonah's Journey, have you met other parents? I mean, do you all know each other, the other foster parents?

[00:23:58.060] - Rebekah Cook

Well, I know some of them. I don't know all of them. Our ministry is based north of Nashville, quite a ways from where we actually live. And so, historically, there's been more of a cluster of families in that direction, and some that have fostered through Jonah's Journey for a very long time much longer than us, and some that are new in the last year. But we do have... They'll have events a couple of times a year, so that families, caregiving families, and sometimes it's an event where biological family is also invited to be present. That's a place where we can cross paths. We happen to have another family at our school and right in our town who's another Jonah's Journey family. There's crossover. We do have a Facebook group for, you know, sometimes it's practical questions, like I'm having trouble getting a visit scheduled at the prison. Can anybody help me with the code that seems to change every time I call? Things like that. Sometimes it's a place for support or resources or continuing education credits and things like that. We aren't in a place where we have a lot of overlap with other Jonah's Journey families, but more out of proximity than anything else.

[00:25:13.100] - Lisa C. Qualls

I was curious when you were talking about the relationship with the mom while she's still incarcerated. Do you ever get to take the baby for a visit to see the mom?

[00:25:23.050] - Rebekah Cook

We do. Again, that depends on county jails versus a prison, is oftentimes going to have different visiting rules. We've learned about that through the few situations that we've been a part of. With our four-year-old, in a county jail situation, we were able to take her weekly. We had, there's visiting hours, and so we would go every Saturday morning. You would go into a little room where other families are also going to visit their loved one. Then you would dial in on a phone and they would go get mom, and she would come over to a screen. It would actually be a lot like this Zoom call, but we'd be on an old-school telephone. A little tricky because you're trying to hold baby up to the screen, and I'm trying to show mom her little feet are growing, and her little hands are so cute. I'm trying to let mom see baby, but you're also holding the phone and trying to keep baby happy. That was our first experience.

[00:26:27.530] - Rebekah Cook

Then with our little one who's with us now in the women's prison, we actually can go into the prison. Again, you have to get security clearance. I don't even remember the whole process. It was a blur with a newborn, but we got approved to go for visits there. She was a few weeks old, I think, when we found out that our request had been approved. Then you call in and you schedule during the certain visiting hours. You have to be on the schedule, you can't just show up. And you can come for two-hour visit. That for me, was a big learning curve because it was different than our original situation. You can bring a clear backpack, like a small diaper bag, but clear like you'd bring to a stadium. Then there are just a few specific things you can put in. You can put in two diapers and a few wipes. You can put in a bottle of water and an empty baby bottle, and then the powdered formula. There is very specific what you can and can't bring in. What you can wear is very specific and can't wear. You go through security like you would at an airport. But once you go in, we sit in a big room and just can pull up chairs, specifically to our little cluster of mom and myself and baby. Mom can hold baby, and we just talk and get to know each other more. Of course, I'm going in trying to think of everything that has happened since we were visiting last, so I can tell mom all the details about doctor appointments and developmental things and fun things. That, for me, is a piece I really look forward to. Just, again, building that relationship with mom. We're really wanting mom to know where her baby is, and really know who we are and what we do in our family and what her baby is experiencing. And those visits help allow us for that.

[00:28:26.470] - Lisa C. Qualls

It's really beautiful. It feels very much like the gospel. I was in prison and you visited me. And even better, you're caring for this baby, for this mom who cannot. Yeah, it's a really beautiful situation. Do

you know, and this may be outside of the scope, but do you know if there are other organizations that do this in the US?

[00:28:47.860] - Rebekah Cook

I have been asked that many times, and I can't say that I have put any time into looking into that. I don't know. I wish that this type organization was present in every city. I mean, of course, there's a need for it in any community, larger community. A few of the pieces that I love about Jonah's Journey that are distinct and different than our experiences with DCS in Tennessee, it's called DCS, and we have overlapped with TCS in one of our other cases and have a lot of friends and connections in the foster care world. I definitely hear the differences between what we're accustomed to and what other families might be accustomed to fostering through the state or other larger organization. The real emphasis on relationship building and getting to know a mom and a dad. In our case, with our little one who's with us now, we actually get to know dad, and we've also gotten to know his whole family, which is a first for us. But I love that. That is the heart of what we want to do and provide for these little ones as foster parents. I think anyone who might be listening who is a foster parent has probably had to march themselves down the road of pride. I'm able to do this for this baby. We're able to provide this kind of home and this kind of family, and this kind of structure, and this kind of food, and this kind of whatever. I just encourage myself and encourage anyone who's listening who's in those shoes to just to really humanize the families that we're getting to work with and say, They're people just like you and I are people. Through Jonah's journey, we get to have a lot more of those touch points than we might if we were fostering in a different capacity. And it's really a gift. It just is. It is for me and for us as a family. It's been a gift for our kids. It's a stretching thing. It's not an always easy or pretty or neat, tied up with a boat a thing, but it's so good. And it is, like you said, it is the heart of the gospel. I really count it as a privilege to get to do this with moms to get to know. We get to know their other children. We get to know their extended family. The more we have those touch points and that we see moms face to face, both literally and figuratively, about where they are in life. It really knocks down the barriers that say, I'm over here in my nice little house with my husband and my kids taking care of your kid while you get things figured out because you got things to get figured out.

[00:31:44.890] - Rebekah Cook

I think it's easy to do that in foster care. I don't think that's the heart of what God has in the center of the unfortunate need for foster care. As a caregiver in this ministry, a place that I come back to over and over and over and over is saying, God, help me to see this mom the way that you see her. Help me to see where she is broken-hearted and where she is sad and where she is struggling. And help bring a distinct tenderness to my heart for her because I want to love her like you do. I can't do that perfectly, right? Because I am human and fleshly. But bring about real heart change in me, Lord, so that I can see her how you do. One scripture that comes to my mind a lot when we might be struggling in a scenario with a mom that is messy. The reality is God created each and every one of these moms and dads and their families, and he sings over them with love, and he delights in them the same way that he delights in me. And so reframing over and over, it's not a one-time thing, reframing over and over and over my thoughts to say, God, let me love her like you do. Let me see her like you do. Let me appreciate her for everything you put in her that maybe is covered up or buried right now, but it's there. And because you netted her together, you know those things. So help me to see those things, too. And because we get to have these relationships with moms, we do have the opportunity to see that on the front line more than if her name was just a name on paper to me and I'm caring for her child.

[00:33:53.270] - Lisa C. Qualls

I love that. That is so, so, so beautiful. Well, I want to make a little bit of a shift Because so much of our work, and especially this year, we're spending a lot of time talking about blocked care. I know, because I know you personally, that you have experienced blocked care. In the interest of time, I know we have to keep it a little short because you have to go to something for one of your children, but I would love to hear from you just a little bit about your experience of blocked care, and then what has helped you the most in overcoming blocked care.

[00:34:31.740] - Rebekah Cook

My personal experience with blocked care has revolved around pretty significant needs with one of

our older children, and needs that honestly were completely new to us and very humbling as parents. Things we didn't see coming and we had never seen before. I certainly didn't know anything about blocked care early on. Really, even the terminology was new to in the last few years in following you and Melissa and your work with that. You put a name to something I had, at that point, been experiencing for years, but didn't know what it was called or exactly what all was happening in my body and my brain around that. I think when we're caring for a child whose needs are significant and the levels of stress in our home can go through seasons and cycles that are through the roof, that's definitely been our experience. And honestly, it's still our experience. We're not out of those. Our bodies really take a big hit. I went through an experience when this child of ours was about three, and I all of a sudden, for the very first time, honestly, in my life, felt this all-encompassing, drowning anxiety that I had never... I didn't really know what anxiety felt like. It just wasn't a part of who I am. It's not a part of my natural baseline.

[00:36:00.460] - Rebekah Cook

But, wow, my brain was wrecked by it. I didn't sleep for five days, and my heart pounded, and my stomach churned, and I had to spend time in the bathroom. It was like, wow, what is going on? I just realized I've got to get some help, and I need help with anxiety, and I need medication to help mitigate the symptoms of this some. I need help to be able to support myself in this. And so for me, that was probably a pretty significant turning point and going, wow, in order to do this mothering that God has appointed for us, I need a lot of support. And I've walked through many seasons with this particular child where I just go, Lord, I don't know how to do this. We do this day in and day out. And that is hard on a nervous system. I didn't know that wording until much more recently from you and Melissa either. But in terms of thinking it, I thought about my child's nervous system. I didn't think about my own nervous system and the hits that it was taking and needing to go, wow, I have to study this for myself as well in order to be able to have the longevity to keep going in this parenting.

[00:37:33.140] - Rebekah Cook

So I am very much in the learning process. I have your book. I started your book while we were on that last retreat together. And so I've been listening to the podcast and doing some more listening things, but I had not read the book yet. And so I am just early on in the book. It is resonating with me 110% because I need, I need the wisdom and guidance that's coming from the material in your book. I can't serve my family well if I'm not well, right? I don't think I anticipated that before adoption. It wasn't a part of my daily need to understand when I was parenting my biological children, initially. So that was eye-opening to go. It's not just about meeting the needs of my child, which I have had a huge learning curve with, but also meeting the needs in myself. And I don't do that perfectly. I'm very much on the learning journey of realizing what I need to sustain this, parts in me that are broken, that needs some attention and needs some healing. And I have future steps that I have to take with that in order to keep walking out the road that I believe so clearly God has chosen this road for us, and he has, He knew the hard parts that were coming before we did. I believe that with my whole heart. But learning how to practically do that has been definitely a journey for me.

[00:39:12.680] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, it's a good word for all of us since this level of parenting requires so much, so much from us, and we really do have to care for ourselves. I think that is one of the things I love about the book and about the process that we work with parents on is the small, simple steps we can take, the simple practices we can bring into our lives that help our nervous systems heal and give us renewed hope and renewed compassion for ourselves and for our kids.

[00:39:47.820] - Rebekah Cook

Yes, absolutely.

[00:39:50.110] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, Rebekah, thank you so much. This has been such a wonderful conversation, and I am sure that our listeners are very interested, and we will have a link for Jonah's Journey or for its umbrella organization. I don't know which, but we will have a link in the show notes of this episode. If you are in another area and this is something that interests you, you may have to do a little research, but maybe you can serve incarcerated women in the same way that Rebekah and her family are. So, Rebekah,



thank you.

[00:40:23.210] - Rebekah Cook

Thank you, Lisa.

[00:40:24.230] - Melissa Corkum

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our Instagram handle is @adoptionwise. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community @adoptionwise.org/facebook.

[00:40:38.050] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:40:47.510] - Melissa Corkum

Music for the podcast is composed by Oleksandr Oleksandrov.