

[00:00:00.470] - Lisa Qualls

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[00:00:07.220] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:00:32.540] - Lisa Qualls

This devotional has contributions from 30 authors, all foster and adoptive parents who offer a window into their own lives and families. You're going to recognize yourself time and time again in their words. Faith, hope and connection, a 30 day devotional for adoptive and foster parents is truly a treasure trove of wisdom and grace for foster and adoptive families.

[00:00:53.420] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:01:04.680] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:01:12.570] - Melissa Corkum

And this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it and we're here for you. Hey, friends, welcome to Episode 134 of the Adoption Connection podcast. In honor of Father's Day, we're devoting the month of June to a series we're calling Dad Connection. For each of the five Tuesdays this month, we're featuring a different foster or adoptive dad. Here at the adoption connection, we really value hearing from a wide range of voice. And we are so excited to bring this special dad conversations to you.

[00:01:42.950] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, I enjoyed sitting down with Alan Finn recently for a really great conversation. Many of you are familiar with Jamie Finn of Foster the family whose ministry reaches thousands of foster and adoptive parents. Jamie would be the first to say her ministry would not be possible without the support of her husband, Alan. So in this episode, Alan shares the story of how they became foster parents, how their lives have been changed, and he offers words of wisdom for other foster and adoptive dads. I hope you enjoy this conversation. Hello Alan, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:02:24.670] - Alan Finn

Hi, Lisa. Nice to be here.

[00:02:26.680] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, it's great to have you here. I would love it if you would start by just telling us who makes up your family.

[00:02:34.540] - Alan Finn

Absolutely. So I'm married to my wife, Jamie. We've been married for 16 years, 17 years, 16, 17, something like that. We have right now five kids. So our two oldest, 12 year old daughter and nine year old son are biological kids. We have six and seven year old daughters who we adopted through foster care. And right now we have a six month old foster son who we are in the process over on track to to adopt. You know, foster care has been a rollercoaster and our family has expanded and contracted lots of times over the years, but we recently went through a really hard reunification. It's it's awesome in that it's a reunification. But it was our she was our foster daughter for almost two and a half years for for majority of her life. So that was really hard. So when I say five, it's it's almost it's

hard and painful to say five because a month ago it was six.

[00:03:34.330] - Lisa Qualls

I understand that. A totally different story, but we lost a daughter and it was the hardest thing to not. I still count her. I just can't not. I know it's different, but I understand that feeling where the words come out, but your spirit says it's not true.

[00:03:51.670] - Alan Finn

Yeah, right. That's right.

[00:03:53.320] - Lisa Qualls

So, how did you decide to even embark on this journey of foster care and adoption?

[00:04:01.220] - Alan Finn

A lot of nagging from my wife, Jamie. No, in all seriousness, though, we had a son and a daughter and life was good and felt very content just having my two kids and being very happy with life. And I should say that adoption runs in our family. I actually have two sisters who are adopted from China. We have two nieces who were adopted through foster care as well. So I'm very familiar with adoption and really didn't have any necessarily interest myself, though, in going through adoption. And certainly growing up had many stigmas in my mind of what foster care was was all about just ignorance on my part. But we had a son and a daughter and my wife Jamie was continued to impress upon me. She had a burden that we had room in our hearts room in our home to care for vulnerable children. It looked a lot like her bringing it it up time and time again and me trying to put it off and avoid the conversation and say, OK, and sort of humor, Jamie, by thinking about it, but really not giving it a whole lot of thought and I end up having a really good conversation with a really close friend of mine at the time. And he gave me some great advice and he said, well, if your wife has this burden and you're not sure, why not explore her burden, test it out and see if that is where maybe God's calling you. And he also challenged me. If you're not sort of living on mission to care for vulnerable families and children, this may be a way to do that, right. The Bible calls us to care for the orphan and the widow. How are you doing that? So so I took that to heart and I essentially said to Jamie, well, listen, here are my parameters here are my guidelines, kids younger than our kids and only one and we'll see how it goes. Sort of stepping into into the pool, right. Dipping my toe in, but essentially in my mind thinking this won't work out right. We'll have a kid for a month or two. It won't work out. It will disrupt our kids lives and that'll be that. And I will have been able to say, hey, I did it, babe. And obviously, God had different plans. And we've been going seven year strong now, but that's how we sort of got started. It was me stepping out in faith based on a burden that Jamie had and exploring what it would look like to to care for vulnerable children.

[00:06:37.270] - Lisa Qualls

Now, did Jamie have a background in with foster care and adoption?

[00:06:42.550] - Alan Finn

Not at all. And she knew obviously my sisters who were adopted. She has a cousin who was adopted and and her brother adopted two girls, but not, nothing beyond that. Nothing super in depth. Their family hadn't fostered growing up or anything like that.

[00:07:03.130] - Lisa Qualls

In the last seven years, how many children have come through your home? Do you know? I bet Jamie could tell us.

[00:07:10.460] - Alan Finn

She could tell you and she could tell you the names of everyone. Twenty four, twenty five kids, I think. Some of these short term placements a few days as far as the states working out a longer term placement and some have been much longer. We had really good friends of ours adopt our foster son who was with us for the first year of his life. So that was a year that was that was a harder goodbye. But it's a celebration because one of my wife's best friends ended up ended up adopting him and that was awesome. And then more recently, our our daughter, who was with us for the better part of two,

almost two and a half years and that was really hard. So so from a few days to almost two and a half years and everything in between and then forever, obviously, our two daughters who we've adopted and we adopted them four years ago at this point, five years ago, four or five years ago. I lose track and they're obviously in our family forever.

[00:08:09.770] - Lisa Qualls

So you've already touched on this a little bit, but foster care can be really unpredictable and you have very little control. How do you, as a dad and a husband, just roll with that? How is that for you?

[00:08:24.890] - Alan Finn

It's challenging. It really is. I mean, I think one of the things is to I try to not ride the roller coaster of foster care because it is a roller coaster. It is, you know, you get information that isn't always accurate from from different parties. One one minute you're on an adoption track, the next it's a reunification track and it can go all over the place. And I think one of the things is to try not to ride that rollercoaster roller coaster to understand that at the end of the day, God sovereign and he's in control and he ordains our steps down the steps of the children that we care for as well, so to me, that's the biggest thing, is having a peace and an understanding that God's sovereignty rules at the end of the day and nothing's going to for his plan. And the plan that we want most is his plan. And so I think that's the thing that helps keep me sane. It's not easy, though. I'll tell you, there have been certain placements that have been easier to navigate, but to two girls that we adopted, it was back and forth multiple times before that happened and and the daughter we just said goodbye to pre-covid, it was an adoption case and we were all set to adopt her and wanted to adopt her and were thrilled about that and as things have gone along, it's provided an opportunity and I think God ordained that opportunity for mom to get her life on track, right. And to be in a place where she's healthy enough to take care of her child. So while that's utterly devastating and painful for us, we can see the redemptive value in that and so I think that's that's the key is understanding that God controls all and resting in that that sovereignty is the way that I take peace and comfort going through this process, which is really at the end of the day, very challenging.

[00:10:19.430] - Lisa Qualls

Do you ever feel like you need to just take a break to recover?

[00:10:23.930] - Alan Finn

I think I felt that way at times. But to be honest with you, the little guy that we have right now who, you know, we're we're hoping to adopt, he was a godsend. Right. And so if we didn't have him in our lives, it would have made the goodbye that we just had even that much more painful. And I think that I wouldn't encourage anybody to take another child to fill a void or a need. That's not the right motivation at all. I will say that I think God can use those children to help in that process. So, yeah, I don't I don't know if we'll be taking breaks any time soon necessarily. I don't know what that's going to look like going forward, but there's definitely, I think, times where we need to recharge and refocus as a family. And I think a big part of why we do foster foster care is to help our children understand what it looks like to be on a mission as a family, right. And to care for for those that are less fortunate than ourselves and vulnerable children and families. I relish the opportunity to teach my kids about that through this process. So even though it can be really hard and I can see the pain in their faces and the challenges that they go through, just like Jamie and I do, it's a great opportunity to continue to reinforce that with them and things that I hope will stick with them throughout their life.

[00:11:50.780] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, foster care and adoption change our lives so much. How do you feel adoption and foster care have really shaped your life?

[00:12:02.030] - Alan Finn

Well, it's changed my life in general. I mean, I would say adoption has changed my life just, I had one sister growing up for most of my life and then my parents adopted when I was heading, heading to college, adopted two little girls who are one's 20 years younger, the other maybe 18 years younger than me, so adoption has been a big part of my life and it's changed my life in general, but for our immediate family, I think the commitment to being there for somebody and committed to their

healing and restoration is what speaks volumes to me about foster care and then adoption when you commit to doing it for the rest of their lives, right. But foster care specifically, we have a great opportunity to be involved in helping kids heal, helping them get off to the right start when they have gone through trauma and loss and whether that's for a short period of time and just providing a safe, loving space where they can experience that healing or whether it's for a more extended period of time or potentially for forever. I think that's what's so important and it's changed my life is just being able to be part of that and being part of the solution when trauma and hard things have taken place.

[00:13:23.760] - Lisa Qualls

I am guessing, too, that your life has been very impacted by this call, this ministry call that has been put on Jamie's life. She, of course, has touched the lives of many of us in the world of foster care and adoption. And I've heard her say she absolutely could not do that if you are not 100 percent behind her. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:13:46.230] - Alan Finn

Yeah, I mean, it's funny. I mean, my wife is extremely gifted. She's a gifted writer and speaker, and she has incredible passion and vision, much more so than than than I do. But it's it's been incredible to see the journey. She started to write because she had a burden for that and she wanted to share and help equip other people going through the same challenges that we were going through, not knowing that it would become what it has become, right. Just, hey, if a few people read what I write and it helps one person, then then I should do that. And so that's how she started, started a blog and not knowing where it would take us. But it's pretty awesome to be able to partner with her and I'm like the silent partner behind the scenes. And just it's been awesome for me to be able to take more responsibility with our kids. I think early in our marriage and early when we had kids, I was I was a typical dad who got home from work and played with the kids and did all that right and coached sports teams and stuff like that. But it's been awesome to be able to get more involved in taking on things so that I can free her up to do what she does so well and what she's so passionate about and what she's having an impact with. And it's interesting, with covid and a pandemic that we've been going through, right, I have now been working from home for the last year and I didn't do that before. I was in an office every day. And that honestly helped free me up to do even more and take the kids to school and free her up to do to do even more things. I'm really grateful for that. It's the small silver lining in this global pandemic, right, it's the way that it's changed how we work and my availability. And so I'm excited to to be able to to partner with Jamie and to at the end of the day, my partnership is just supporting freeing her up to do what she does so well.

[00:15:41.580] - Lisa Qualls

It's very special. I mean, there aren't, not every dad would do that or could do that. So it's really a wonderful thing the way that you really are such an important part of her ministry, because it allows her to step into so many things.

[00:15:56.370] - Alan Finn

Right. And if you told me a few years ago that I would be doing this, I would have said, no way. I mean, if you told me seven years ago what our lives would look like now, I would have thought you were absolutely crazy. Right? I have been definitely stretched beyond my comfort zone and stepping into foster care was stepping out of my comfort zone, moving forward with something that I felt was important. I felt that God was calling us to, but really was uncomfortable for me. And I'm a guy that I like to stay within the confines of things that make me feel comfortable and I'm OK. And stepping out of that is something that Jamie is much more apt to do and I am much more fearful of. But it's provided that opportunity and I think it's helped me grow and stretch me as as a person, as a husband and as a dad at the end of the day.

[00:16:45.060] - Lisa Qualls

What do you love about being a foster and adoptive dad? Something that just comes to your mind.

[00:16:52.650] - Alan Finn

I think I love, primarily, I love the way it's helped our family and my kids grow in their love and experience of loving on others. So if I hadn't stepped into this, I don't know if my kids would

understand sacrifice and love in the same way. And it's awesome for me to see my kids, when we get a new placement, they just grab it, they're so excited. It's like Christmas morning times 10 with us getting a new placement, like just knowing that a child is coming, they are on pins and needles in anticipation and then to see the way that they welcome that child with open arms and love that child, it's it's incredible. I mean, the little guy, the little six month old we have now, my six year old, she's a, we joke that, you know, this little guy is going to know her to be his mom and not Jamie because she is just constantly as soon as she hears him cry, she's running to to to take care of him. As soon as she hears him wake up from his nap, she's running to take care. And it's awesome to see the way that they have embraced this kind of calling. And it's not just Jamie and I, it's a family calling. And so that's probably the thing that I love the most is the way that my kids have been able to understand and walk through sacrifice and loving unconditionally.

[00:18:20.650] - Lisa Qualls

That is really great. I love hearing that, that what you love most is seeing how your children are growing through all of this as well. I think for my kids, we've been through a lot of really, really hard in our journey. But I do love the people that they've become because of it, you know, and most of my kids are adults now. Like I said, a few teenagers. Everybody else is they're young adults and gosh, I guess I have a couple over 30 now. So but really, I don't think, I think it was very hard for them, but I think their world is so much bigger and they see people so differently because they understand brokenness. It's not like there are those people who don't do life well and then there are all of us who do. You know, they see underneath it all. Like, you know, parents who maybe taking care of their kids the way they need to, but not because they don't want to or they're not trying, they just need help, you know, and sometimes foster care, what it does is it gives parents a chance to to do the work they need to do and their kids are safe in the meantime. And, you know, we hope that parents will be able to reunify, but, yeah, I love, love hearing that. OK, I want you to share sort of some final thoughts, a message for dads. But I think it would be great if you could speak first to the dads who maybe his wife is all gung ho, all in wants to do it, and he's listening because she asked him to. And he's feeling like, I don't know, I don't know if I can do this or I don't know if we should do this. Is there something you want to say to those dads first?

[00:20:09.520] - Alan Finn

Absolutely. First, I'll say I've been in your shoes and it's a scary place to be, right? You want to support your wife, you want to understand their passions and their burdens and support them, and yet you're very fearful. And I was very fearful. I was fearful of the unknown. I feel like as as dads, we feel this extra level of responsibility to protect our wives and our kids, and so I felt that. I I felt like I need to, above all else, protect my son and my daughter and my wife from that unknown. And I think what I would say is I would challenge anybody who's in that situation to evaluate, how am I, how are we as a family and how am I on a mission to care for the vulnerable. And that doesn't necessarily always look the same, right. It doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be a foster parent or an adoptive parent. Sometimes that means coming alongside those who are doing that work and supporting them. But I would challenge anybody who's in that situation where your wife is encouraging you to consider and asking you to consider this. And I would encourage you to consider is God calling me to step outside my comfort zone and explore something? And it doesn't mean that this is going to be a permanent change, but it is, all right, I need to be involved. God calls us to care for the widow and the orphan, so how am I leading my family to care for those who are less vulnerable or more vulnerable excuse me than me. And so I would encourage you in that way. And it's going to look different for every person, but I've been there and I think that's what helped me navigate through. And I didn't know that I would end up here seven years later. Actually, if you told me that, I would have said not a chance. You're absolutely wrong. Right. But that's where God ordains our steps and works things out for for a reason.

[00:22:14.620] - Lisa Qualls

And what would you say to the dads who are in the thick of it? They're fostering. They're adopting. Maybe it's hard. Maybe, I mean, you guys just went through something really hard. What would you say to them?

[00:22:27.550] - Alan Finn

I would say it is hard. It is really hard. And I'm there with you and lots of people are there with you. And

we just went through the hardest experience of my entire life. I mean, hands down. I've never, never experienced anything harder than that. I've been a newlywed with a wife who is chronically ill and walk through that and that was really challenging, but saying goodbye to my daughter, it just there's just nothing like it. And so having walked through those really hard times, I can tell you it is going to be challenging. Maybe it won't be challenging like that, but there will be significant challenges along the way and it is hard. And I think the key for me is God is sovereign, right. God meets us in those hard times. I think he allows hard things to happen for us to understand we are weak and that we need his strength to get us through, right. Because otherwise I'm self-sufficient. I can sustain myself or I can trick myself into believing that I can sustain myself and I think that's why God allows hard things to happen. He allows those things to happen to teach us to help us be dependent on him in those situations. So I would say to those that are in the thick of it, fostering and adopting, it's going to be hard. There's going to be ups, there's going to be downs, but at the end of the day, God controls all those steps. He ordains all of those challenges, all the all the victories, all the challenges to happen. Right. And I think just trusting in that and relying on that is where I find my peace. And I think that's the the biggest thing I would say. Don't ride the roller coaster. Understand that that God ordained it.

[00:24:16.180] - Lisa Qualls

Well, thank you so much. I know so many dads are going to be encouraged by this interview and and the moms too, but, you know, we really wanted this series of episodes to really be a gift to all the dads listening and you have just spoken such life giving words. And I thank you so much.

[00:24:34.720] - Alan Finn

Well, it's my pleasure. Thanks for having me on.

[00:24:40.940] - Melissa Corkum

Well, it's always so great to meet the dads behind some of the voices that we get to see all the time in public places like Instagram, and I love that he is able to intentionally support Jamie in the work that she's doing because it takes a village, right. That we can't do all the things. And it just reminded me that I am also super thankful for my husband, who does a lot of similar things in terms of taking over some of the things that have been more traditionally my role so that I could continue to support the adoptive and foster parents. So I'm really just thankful that he is so 100 percent behind supporting families kind of indirectly through this. Like it's just like the support that Jamie gives to families would one hundred percent not be possible without Alan. He's such a big part of what they do.

[00:25:34.670] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. And she and I have talked about that before, that it's really because of his support that she's been able to serve people the way she does serve families. And, yeah, I just thoroughly enjoyed getting to visit with him. So if you would like to know more about Alan and in particular really more about Jamie and her work with Foster the family, you can find more information of how to follow them in the show notes which are theadoptionconnection.com/134. Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @the adoptionconnection.

[00:26:16.310] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:26:26.480] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:26:33.670] - Melissa Corkum

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