

[00:00:01.390] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:10.320] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:18.810] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, friends. Welcome to episode 155 of The Adoption Connection Podcast. Today we're very happy to be sharing an interview that Melissa did with our friend Sandeep Thomas. And you probably know that November is National Adoption Awareness Month, and so during this month of November, we are featuring the voices of adoptees and first or birth moms. And we always value hearing from the less heard voices in the adoption triad, or sometimes we say adoption constellation. So we're really happy to have Sandeep here today talking about his experience as an adoptee.

[00:00:59.550] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Sandeep's story is amazing. I didn't know him very well before I was able to sit down with him, but he faced horrible tragedy and trauma as a young child in India and in the Providence of God was adopted by a couple here in the States. And his story just weaves his passion to help other adoptees to see purpose and hope through Christ in their lives. He lives with his wife in Washington, near Seattle. And before we jump into this interview, we do want to say because he does share so openly and vulnerably about his young childhood in India, this might be hard to listen to and or might not be appropriate for young ears, so we wanted to give you a heads up before jumping in. But here's my conversation with Sandeep.

[00:01:51.190] - Melissa Corkum

Well, Sandeep, welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

[00:01:55.270] - Sandeep Thomas

Thank you. Thank you for having me here.

[00:01:57.670] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So maybe about last month, I interviewed another adoptee who I was more familiar with their story. And so this is like a whole new kind of exciting because we've been kind of introduced to each other briefly, but I don't know a ton about your story. So this is literally folks are going to listen to me, getting to just dig in to what you're all about. And I know you have a lot of amazing things to share, so I'm excited to jump in.

[00:02:23.950] - Sandeep Thomas

Yeah, that's great. Thank you for having me here. It's truly an honor, and I'm excited to share my journey and adopted life that I've had for over 20 years now and just what the Lord has been doing in my life, so I'm really excited to share.

[00:02:40.160] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, could you tell us just a little bit about your adoption story? Like, just kind of the bare facts, like where you adopted as a five year old or an infant, and where were you born, and all of those little details.

[00:02:52.650] - Sandeep Thomas

So I was born in India, and I stayed in India until I was about five and a half years old. When I was five and a half, my mother in India, now in India, there is a cast system and my family we were on the lower end of the cast system, so we weren't well to do. We were pretty poor, so we lived in Bangalore in a very small house. My father and mother had menial jobs. My mother was a maid, my father was a simple gate maker, and I had two older sisters as well. And when I was five and a half, we had a very tragic incident happened where my mother committed suicide unfortunately. In about six months from that point onwards, my life completely changed and God was working on the hearts of a couple here in the US, and I was adopted within six months and brought to the US. So completely different

world, completely different language, completely different family. And so ever since then, my life just turned upside down. And that's kind of just the bird's eye view of my story there, so.

[00:04:14.530] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And how much of that do you actually remember? Like, I don't remember a ton from when I was five, but I also didn't have such a significant life event happened when I was five. Is that you kind of telling what people have told you, or do you have really vivid memories of that season?

[00:04:30.970] - Sandeep Thomas

Yeah, great question. Unfortunately, as a five year old, my brain was severely damaged and now we have information on RAD and PTSD of how kids, especially when they are affected with the traumatic events, part of their brain actually stops working. But unfortunately for me, all I remember was the really bad negative things that happened and probably the incident that sticks out to me the most was the time that I lost my mother. So unfortunately, I was the only one, like I said, I was five and a half and I think in our culture it's almost excellence is really key and to come up in life and to do well in the Indian culture and my family wasn't there. We weren't well to do like I mentioned, but my mother was very encouraging and wanting me to go to school and do well. I think my birth father didn't see how important it was, so he was an alcoholic and he really wasn't doing much with his life, and I think I was always gravitating towards him and my mother out of desperation and just wanted to make sure that my father was helping his children get a better life to do better in life, right. But my father didn't see it that way, and I think there was always constant clashes between my mom and my dad, unfortunately. And like I said when I was five and a half, this one conversation I think my mother, out of desperation, wanted to shake some reality into my father's life and threatened to take her life if he didn't change his ways. I think that threat became a reality. You know, in a five year old mind, I could say they don't remember much from their younger years, but this was probably the most vivid thing in a five year old's life because I remember we're walking away from the house, and it was just an unsettling feeling in my heart that day, and I felt like something was wrong at home. So I was like begging my father to go back and check on my mother. As we approached the house, I saw smoke pouring out of the door. The door was locked, we kicked open the door, my father did. And on the ground, my mom had, out of sheer desperation, she had poured kerosene oil on herself and set herself on fire. You can just imagine in a five year old's mind, like what is going on, right? So we put out the fire, we rushed her to the hospital in an open auto because we didn't have money for an ambulance. We leave her at the hospital, and then a few days later, I hear that she's dead. Again, I don't know what that means. I'm just waiting for my mom to come back, and then life goes on. I think the family's kind of shaken up by this, and we're trying to figure out what to do with my sister, my two older sisters and myself. And then my father makes a decision that he just can't take care of us anymore, and he leaves us. And so you have this family of five just suddenly torn apart and everything is in chaos, and I never heard from him. And then all I was told by my family was that somebody was coming to take me to America, and my siblings were also ripped away from me. They were sent to boarding school. I still don't know why no one wanted to take care of me. It could have been, like I said, Karma is a huge part in Indian culture, and I had witnessed death. So it could have been something around that I had bad Karma inflicted on me because I witnessed my own mother's death, unfortunately. But I don't know, I really don't know, but separating us siblings at that time probably wasn't the best. But nobody in my family was willing to take care of all us three. So in my confused state of mind, at least to me, my whole family was ripped to shreds. I had no home or connection with my siblings, my mom passed away, my dad is gone, and I'm coming here six months later to the US. So that's really all I can remember from that year or so of my life, I don't remember too much of my memories when I was younger or when I came here to the States, really just because I was just hurting from the trauma that I've gone through and just so confused, right? I didn't even know English when I came here either. So it's just a very confusing time.

[00:09:24.640] - Melissa Corkum

Well, first of all, I'm so sorry that that happened to you, and second of all, thank you for being willing to share such a hard part of your story, but I think it helps just put into perspective some of the things that adoptees are carrying with them through their lives. We all come to the adoption part of our story differently. But it is not unusual for really young children to have witnessed or been a part of or experienced really just unspeakable tragedy. And I think sometimes it's in the midst of the day to day,

it's easy as parents, as adoptive parents to lose sight of that, and to remember that besides the big change and trauma of changing cultures and changing primary caregivers and families and all of these things, but there are also a lot of these other events that lead up to that. So thank you. And I have, like, 100 million questions, as I'm sure a lot of listeners do, but I guess my first one is, were you adopted by a white family? Was it someone that your family knew? Can you tell us a little bit about what your family make? Your adoptive family makeup is?

[00:10:47.300] - Sandeep Thomas

So it is interesting, I was adopted by an Indian couple. The connection is kind of interesting. So my uncle in India, he is married to, his wife rather, his wife was the sister to my adopted father, so if that makes sense. So my soon to be adopted parents at that time, they were living in New Jersey. They had, unfortunately, just lost a child in their pregnancy, and so they were dealing with their own thing here in New Jersey, kind of wrestling with God and struggling with that process. But they had heard through the family that there was this young child that they didn't really know what was going to happen to him and they heard about the tragic incident. I think in my parents' life, and this I came to know afterwards, my mom always had a heart for adoption, always had a heart to take care of children. She used to go to Mother Teresa's orphanage when she was younger and just wait and beg her parents to even take some of the kids there home with them, so she always had a heart for adoption. And I think when they got married, one of the first questions she even asked my dad was, "are you willing to adopt?" And I think my dad, he read a book, I think it was Knowing God by J.I. Packer and there he talked about the relationship, how God has adopted us into his family, and I think it was just unanimous, yes, in both of their perspectives that they would one day want to adopt if God led them in that direction. And so when they heard about my plight and just they responded to God's prompting just to adopt this young, unwanted child. And they thought that just giving me love and affection and just this huge amount of care would really help this broken six year old and honestly, at that time, I think they were even told by many family and friends that they were foolish to take me in that this is an older kid, he's gone through these things already, how do you know what's going to happen? I think for them, too, it was a completely new experience, right? They're new parents and they weren't even parents before, and suddenly they get thrust into this environment where they're adopting a six year old boy with tons of baggage and tons of trauma. And back then, there wasn't much education, there weren't any resources, not many families they knew that were adopting, especially not from India. And adopting older children was not even the norm back then. So it was very new, very different experience for them. And I think they didn't get a lot of support, even from family and friends back then, either. I think, I remember, and my mom, obviously she was the closest to me at that time or was trying to get the closest to me, but I think because I had lost my own mother in such tragic way, it was just difficult for me to even relate to them or love them, right. And I think I ended up taking most of my anger and frustration out on my mom, who was there continually to love me, my adopted mom, which is also sad, but more to come on that.

[00:14:16.860] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So you referenced some of this anger, which is completely understandable. What else do you remember about those growing up years? Once you are here in America? Did you struggle with a sense of belonging with your other classmates? Obviously feelings of maybe rejection or self protectiveness for your adoptive parents. Kind of, how did that play out as you grew up?

[00:14:49.750] - Sandeep Thomas

Man, it was just a rollercoaster of emotions, roller coaster of just various situations that would always impact us. I can't remember a single year that was like, good in any way or was stable at some point. I think there was always something going on at school, at home, and relationships with the family. And I think like I said, it was very different and difficult for my parents to also comprehend what was going on, too. And I forgot to mention around this time they had also adopted my younger sister, and she was a ten month old baby that came from India as well. So when they met her in India at a hospital there, suddenly you have these two new parents, one with a six year old child who had gone through trauma and then this ten month old baby that has just been given to them, and obviously they love this both, but man, it was a confusing time for sure. I think in my younger years, like I said, I really couldn't love my parents, and I was trying to figure a whole bunch of things out too, right? Who are these two new people suddenly claiming to be my parents now. Obviously language barrier was there

and just school is very difficult, I think, just learning just because of the damage to my brain was extremely hard. And I thrived on creating chaos at home. I think there was a lot of passive aggressiveness and disobedience. Lying was just constantly there. At home, I tended to be this aggressive, disobedient child, but on the outside to other people, I appeared to be like this good, quiet little child that obeyed his parents and everybody got a different perspective. So one of my parents even shared the little times that they did to other people like, oh, my gosh, we're struggling at home, this is going on and our child is behaving, they don't know what to do. People saw me as a great quiet child, so they never got the true perspective of what was actually happening at home. I think because of the trauma and PTSD, my conscience was dulled and there wasn't an understanding between cause and effect, and I made food a point of control. I think that's there for a lot of adoptees growing up. My logical thinking was dulled and there was an ability I didn't have an ability to learn new things and so academically I was behind and I constantly felt like a loser and I navigated towards the troubled kids in school. I think negative attention is something I thrived on wherever it was right at home at school, always getting in trouble with the principal, I remember that. I also at home triangulated my parents against each other. My dad worked long hours in New York and my mom, she was actually a computer engineer. She gave up her job and chose to stay at home to help me and bore that responsibility to help me cope with life, just loving and teaching and coaxing and disciplining me. But my dad wasn't there for the majority of the day, so when he came home it was constant thing of like, oh, mom did this or this happened at home and I was giving a very different picture and that would usually put them against each other too, right? And trying to do what's best for me. And I would just often try my best to hurt my Mom, honestly. Like I said, RAD and PTSD, it causes rewiring in the brain of children. And honestly, my parents were just distraught, wounded and my mom was breaking down on the stress of caring from me and my sister, and she was misunderstood and criticized by others for how she was taking care of us children. Obviously without the knowledge that we have today.

[00:18:47.450] - Lisa Qualls

We want to jump into this interview for a moment to remind you that we have a community called the Village that we invite you to join. As I was listening to Sandeep talk about what his parents went through and the struggles his mom faced, it moved me because I remember that feeling of feeling so judged and so able to bring my kids to this amazing healing that I was supposed to be able to do. So anyhow, if that is how you felt hearing it too, we just want to invite you to join us in the Village where we support one another. It is a place where we all understand the unique challenges faced by adoptive and foster parents because we want you to know that you are not alone. So if that is something that interests you, you can find information on our website at the [adoptionconnection.com/village](http://adoptionconnection.com/village). It is a month to month membership, \$27 a month. You can join for one month or you can join for ten years. We're just happy to have you there and offer the support that you might need. Now, back to the interview.

[00:19:55.590] - Sandeep Thomas

Through it all though, my parents just continually pressed on. They did struggle, but they faithfully prayed, they loved, and God tenaciously held on for them and even me when they couldn't. And that's how the journey continued on for many years, from five and well into the teenage years.

[00:20:17.490] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I know there's a lot of families listening who are going, wow, are you in my house? This is our story. And clearly there's a gap between who you were as a child who thrived on chaos, and who you are as an adult now. So parents are probably wondering, like, how did that happen? And is there anything we can do to help precipitate that? So, if you were speaking to families who are kind of in the thick of it right now with their children, they're wondering, I don't know if my kids are going to make it to adulthood or are they going to end up in jail or worse, what was that transition like for you, the growing up, the transitioning to kind of functional adult Sandeep.

[00:21:08.130] - Sandeep Thomas

It was a journey. I'll be honest, I think it was extremely difficult, painful walk for our family. And honestly, it's not like I was this kid and this way I am today, it's still a struggle, so it's ongoing. That's the unfortunate thing about it. Deep down, as an adopted kid, I had certain desires to and this might

be helpful for some parents out here today. As an adopted kid, I had a deep desire just to be a part of a family, a loving family, right. And I wanted to be normal. I wanted to have a stable life in the future. I wanted to be seen who I was to be valued and treasured for who I am as a person. And honestly, I think throughout the years, there was like I said, there was just utter rebellion and I'd broken this. But one thing my family always did was my parents, specifically, they were my parents just throughout the entire process. And they loved me and cared for me no matter what. And they made that very known, and they would pray with me day and night. They would just persevere with me through all the difficult situations and they would protect me and fight for me. And they'd make that known to me, right. And they navigate life. Obviously this was new to them, too. And without the education that we have today, I can't blame them for some of the mistakes that they made back then. A lot of older adoptees tend to regret, and they kind of blame the parents for a lot of the things that they did or said, but I'll be honest, parents are people, too. They're just trying to figure out life. Not all of the blame can be put on them, right? I think they're trying to figure out how best to love a child with all of these things happening and all the chaos ensuing around them. And I think they're just doing the best that they can. So parents, as an encouragement, you have the Lord. And I think your relationship with the Lord is the most important and adoption reflects the gospel. So you taking that bold step, it immediately places a target on your back and you're always going to be attacked by the enemy. And this is spiritual warfare, so we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil. And I think my mom, she struggled with that. And today she continues to say that more than anything, I think the importance is to find your significance in the Lord. So focus on being faithful, not on the results of your child, because that can go anyway, right. And you can't be the director of your child saying that this is how my child's future is going to be. And if things go wrong, we can feel like failures, but Satan can use anything to turn us away from Jesus. And I think you making the decision as parents to adopt or take care of your child, this is a Covenant relationship between you and God and not you and your child, right. So this is something that you're doing for God. Just remember that, and that's something that my parents really struggled with, but they held on to just that relationship with God. And what more can parents do? Honestly, they can pray for your child and just hope and pray that the steps that they take and the boundaries that they put and the teachings that they give their children will somehow make an impact in the future. And to be very honest, I think late into my, I think when I was 17, 17 and a half or so, that's when I made a conscious decision to, not me really, I think God touched my heart and opened my eyes through the power of His gospel. And keep in mind, I was a child who grew up with going to Sunday school every week, going to Church, we did family devotions, my mom prayed with us and did devotions before we went to school, in the evenings, and so we were just surrounded by Christian teaching and the gospel and reading the Bible. That was constantly there, but I remember myself faking Christianity just so that my parents would get off my back and stop hounding me with the Bible and this relationship with God, and that was really difficult for me. I'm sure others can relate to this out here with their children suddenly being told that God is a loving father. First of all, I can't even see this guy right, as a young child, this is probably going to be very confusing, but God is a loving father in heaven and who really loves and cares for you and you can have this relationship with him. And that's really confusing. I had an alcoholic abuse father, I'm sorry, a birth father, and he was not there for my family, he broke up our family, I blamed him a lot, was very angry. And suddenly to hear that this unseen God is my heavenly Father is just very confusing. And my anger was really towards God for a certain period of my life as well, because I was like, man, if God is this loving and this caring, why would he allow brokenness to be there? And so it just didn't make sense with me. But I think through all of that confusion, I think my parents were there walking me through, constantly encouraging me to not have this relationship with God and they didn't have answers, right? And as much as I wanted those answers, I had to face the reality that I'm never going to get these answers. But I think now looking back that relationship with God really changed my life. And honestly, I think I was really tired of just running away from God and rebelling against my own adoption. So I remember when I was 17 and a half or so just calling my parents into my room and asking Jesus into my heart, and that really changed my life. I don't want to say it was a day and night picture or day and night change, but I think now looking back, it really was. I think not in my attitude, not in my day to day life, but I think just overall, my appreciation for my parents, my love for God, and just the fact that if you look at my life and I was chosen out of over, how many, like maybe 1.2 billion people in India to hear and experience this life changing power of the gospel. And sin had broken all of these connections for me, but God redeemed them and restored me for His glory. This tremendous freedom I experienced in this new relationship with God, I think it really gave me the power to forgive all those

who have wronged me in my past and present life. And I think God developed this deep sense of love and gratitude for my adoptive family, especially towards my adoptive mom, who had unfortunately been the target of my hatred up until that point. And then there's the suppressed memories that I hear a lot of adopted kids talk about. And I think God really released the burden of those memories and just freed my mind to learn and to just be who I was. And I talked about this constant anger that I had. The big question is, why me? Why did I, as a five year old, have to experience my mother's death? No one wants that, but it hit me all of a sudden. Obviously, I had this chance to know God. There was a reason to that as well. And I only came to understand this after I accepted Christ into my heart, that God allowed these things to happen for a reason, and he brought me through it, gave me a new understanding. I think he allowed me to see that those experiences happen for a reason. And I'm here today to really share and encourage other children, other adopted kids, other families to press on, and that there is hope that there is hope in the cross and we have something to look forward to. I truly believe that through the instances of my throughout the journey of my adoption and my birth mother passing away and my family splitting up into shreds, God was there. He was there throughout the entire process. He was there through every year of my life, all the situations in school, all the situations at home. He was there, but he allowed me to overcome some of those things just so that I could be here today. Honestly, just to share with families, just to share with adopted kids out there, that God is there and you may not have all the answers. I don't have all the answers to my questions, but there is hope in the Lord, and he can handle all brokenness.

[00:30:13.770] - Melissa Corkum

Well, it's a beautiful story of redemption and God's faithfulness. And I think also just a good reminder of God sees the big picture. Sometimes as parents or adoptees, it's so easy to get caught up in the here and the now and we lose hope if we got stuck in your story when you were six or ten or 15, we miss the kind of arcing sweep of what God had planned for you. So thank you for sharing.

[00:30:51.390] - Sandeep Thomas

Thank you for mentioning that. I think that's a huge encouragement to families not to get stuck on the broken, just unbearable years and that's difficult. Families are in the trenches, and I can totally empathize with all of that. But there is more to come. All we can do is just focus on God and Him guiding our future. My parents literally had to give up control of their life, right? They had plans, they had visions for what their children were going to do in their life, and how they were going to be these great parents raising up their children, to do well in life, and just as they had done or do even better. But, man, we don't have control over what our children are going to do, what situations are going to come towards them and how they are going to deal with things and how we're all going to deal with things as a family. I think the control factor has to be given up, and only through that, I think God can do His marvelous work.

[00:31:55.860] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, we've experienced that on the parent side of things. We're raising older teens and young adults. And let me tell you, there's nothing that has tested my face like that letting go. And we say we know that God is in control, he loves our kids more than we do, but it is a huge test of faith to put that into practice.

[00:32:15.970] - Sandeep Thomas

It really is.

[00:32:17.530] - Melissa Corkum

So Sandeep, through all of this, you had this vision for a blog and to share the stories of adoptees and kind of the redemption half of that. Can you tell us a little bit more about Unfolding Adoptees?

[00:32:32.710] - Sandeep Thomas

Yeah, so this has been truly just an amazing work in progress for a number of years now. I had the opportunity to attend a few conferences where I was able to share with other adopted families. And I think God showed me that this was really needed to also speak out to the adopted kids community. There are a lot of adoptees out there who have, and I'll be honest, who've gone through much worse situations than myself, have seen way more trauma in their life. I don't know how some of you are

where you are today. I feel like my situations don't even compare to some kids that have had a really bad out there. And I totally want to acknowledge that, but at the same time, I have gone through my own set of experiences, but I've also know that there is hope, there is joy in the Lord, despite what has gone on in life. And getting this new perspective in life, seeing life with a different set of eyes, right, once you know the Lord, really changes your perspective. Like I said, you don't have all the answers, but you learn to appreciate some things more in life. You learn to just have gratitude, right. And so what I was seeing in this community of adoptive, even older children and younger children kids as well was there was constant anger and frustration. And there were just these unanswered questions about their life. And I think being adopted, I mean, that is a deep desire and wish for thousands and thousands and thousands of orphans out there in the world. I'm speaking to the adopted kids right now, you and I, we've got that opportunity, right. There were loving parents who stepped out in faith, wanted to honor the Lord, and take in this child. Good and bad things happen all across the board, right. No one is saying that they're perfect and the parents are just stepping forward in faith and trying to do this for the Lord, but the community of adopted kids, I think what we were seeing was just as they were growing up, there was still huge anger and frustration at their adoption or even their adoptive parents for not doing the right things, or not allowing life to take course in the way that the adopt kids deemed. We saw that as a huge concern, and then there was groups here and there popping up of just how angry this community was at adoption and adoptive parents and how they regret their own adoption, and that hurts. I can't speak to all that you've gone through in your life, and I'm sure there are painful things, but I think knowing Christ and knowing what God has done in my life and where I am today, that anger and frustration of life and adoption, for me personally, it's not there anymore. And truly because I think I've reconciled the past and I'm moving forward with what God has planned for in my life, and so I teamed up with a few other people in this Unfolding Adoptees group. And we wanted to launch something where adopted people, young adults are able to share about their brokenness, about the painful struggles that they've endured in life, about the unanswered questions about their pain and really relate with almost across the board, every adoption out there. And that's the common ground. But these adopted young people, young adults and older adults are able to also share about their relationship with Christ and where they are today as a result of knowing God. So we wanted to get both ends of the spectrum, and that's really where we weren't seeing too much of that anywhere, actually, Facebook groups or the Internet, other blogs. It was a constant venting that we saw from adoptees. Just wallowing in, like, self pity at just the difficulty in their life. We've experienced hope in Christ, and that's what we want us to talk about, right to give both on the spectrum to say yes, it is difficult, yes, there are unanswered questions, yes, life is painful, and we've gone through X number of scenarios, X number of situations that have constantly beating us down as adopted kids and young adults, but here's where we are today. Here's the hope that we have and it's still a struggle, right. The journey is not over, the story is not over, but we want to talk today and encourage other people out there, other adopted people, that there is hope in the Lord. And so that's really where Unfolding Adoptees started from just realizing the need in the community and to just give encouragement to other adopted people out there.

[00:37:47.110] - Melissa Corkum

So it sounds like your audience is other adoptees, maybe specifically young adult adoptees who are kind of really kind of figuring out what life is all about and their identity. I know you all have a blog where you shared some incredible stories. I've had the honor of sharing a piece there as well. Is there anything else going on there for community space meetings or other ways for adoptees to connect with you?

[00:38:17.430] - Sandeep Thomas

Yeah, I think the best way connecting with us, the blog name is UnfoldingAdoptees.org. And we love to hear your story, your adoption story, and just the redemption that God has done in your life, and it's a work in progress, right. And we want to be honest and open about that as much as we can. I think again, we want to find that common ground with other adoptees out there in the world, but to also encourage. So we'd love to hear from you. Please subscribe to our newsletter, it's right there on the homepage. With that, we do have a bi weekly post that we make. So just hearing from adoptees all over the world to be honest. And then we are also starting something new this year. We kind of did a trial a couple of months ago, so we're having Zoom conversations and it'll be various topics, but we'll have just one of our leaders go through just some topics that are very relevant to our community, and

we will have that probably every, we're hoping to do at least once a month, if not twice a month, of these online community and gatherings we can't meet in person, obviously because of COVID, and that kind of also was a huge roadblock for us because we really wanted to do something in person, but we're making the most of what we have right now. I think God has opened up doors in many ways to this larger community of people online, and we're making the most of it. So we're having Zoom community discussions on various topics. If you subscribe to our newsletter, you'll get more information about those conversations happening as well. We have a news and resources page as well on our site, so if you wanted to just hop in there and see articles and encouraging stories out there on the web about birth family, or topics on identity and mental health and other podcasts, please hop in there and see those resources as well. I think this is a great starting point for Unfolding Adoptees as we build our presence on the Web and reach out to this larger community where there's clearly a need.

[00:40:38.630] - Melissa Corkum

Well, and what age would you say? I know there are parents out there, maybe with, like, 17 or 16 year olds. What age are those community discussions kind of geared towards or who's invited?

[00:40:52.950] - Sandeep Thomas

Yeah, great question. We've had a large, broad range of young adults and adults on there. I'd say typically maybe 18 and older is who we're kind of targeting, so that's for the Zoom community discussions, but honestly, the blog is not just for adoptees. I was very encouraged by some adoptive parents that hopped on there, and they were just reading about different adoptee perspectives, right. Maybe they can glean some information as to some of the questions or struggles that their own kids are going through based off of somebody else who has overcome those things and overcome those hurdles in their life. So it's honestly for parents out here, too, just to see different perspectives from other adoptees, what was life like for them when they were younger? What did they have? What didn't they have? How could you adjust maybe how you take care of your children? So we're really hoping that there's some beneficial information for not only the adoptive community, but the adoptive parents out here, as well as you hear from adoptee voices.

[00:42:08.070] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, an amazing resource for sure, and I think adopted parents should definitely check it out. We talk a lot here at the Adoption Connection about just following your child's lead in terms of the story and not projecting a particular experience onto them. And I do understand some of the loudest voices in the space in the recent past have been some of the more angry or hurt voices, and that will for sure be the experience of some adoptees, but it is not the story of every adoptee. I think it's important to just leave room for all of the perspectives and stories of our kids. Real quick as my final question, because I know some listeners are probably going to ask and maybe wondering, were you able to ever reconnect with any birth family back in India and close that loop at all for yourself?

[00:42:57.690] - Sandeep Thomas

My two older siblings had an opportunity to connect with them. I wasn't connected with them over my growing years here. I just didn't have that connection, unfortunately. And as I got older, it felt more like friends rather than siblings, unfortunately. And I took that step because with my new family here, I had not only my younger adopted sister, but my parents had a biological child of their own. And so these two sisters were really my sisters here because I grew up with them, I lived life with them. Unfortunately, my birth sisters, I did not have an opportunity to do that, but I think God is working in that also, and I'm continually praying for them, hoping that they come to know the Lord. Almost no connection now just because that sibling relationship was broken for so many years. I do continue to pray for them and hope that they come to know the Lord.

[00:44:01.870] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, again, Sandeep, thank you so much for your vulnerability, your honesty, your willingness to sit down and just share so much of your story with our listeners. I'm honored to have spent this time with you and to continue here at the Adoption Connection to support Unfolding Adoptees. We're really excited for the work that you're doing, so thank you for the time, passion that you're putting into that project as well.

[00:44:30.750] - Sandeep Thomas

Thank you thank you, Melissa. It's truly an honor to be here and speak to this community as well, so thank you so much for having me on this podcast.

[00:44:42.190] - Lisa Qualls

I appreciate Sandeep so much and his honesty in sharing his story the way he did. I, as an adoptive mom, when I was previewing this interview, I was so moved. And I hope those of you listening feel the same that his story gives you some hope that even if you are struggling with your children or if you're just having a hard time and dealing with all the complexities of adoption, that his story will give you hope. The way he shared about coming into a relationship with God and how that brought such deep healing for him was really beautiful. I know in my own experience as a birth or first mom, it's my relationship with God that brought healing to me, so I love hearing that from his perspective as well.

[00:45:30.190] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, there was so much I appreciated about the way that he shared, and I think it's an important reminder to us that our adoptees' stories aren't over until they're over. I think we look a couple of years down the road and we think, oh, my gosh, are we ever going to make it? Are we getting out of it? And it's so beautiful to hear from adoptees who are so much further down the road than our kids. I know I can look back at my story and my siblings' stories and realize that some of our biggest seasons of healing happened, like in our 30s. And so just to have that marathon view, I think of parenting can be really hard. Also, we know a lot of you listening are parenting teens are young adult adoptees, and we have support for teens here at the Adoption Connection through a support group, but for those of you young adult adoptees, I think Sandeep's group that meets through the Unfolding Adoptive website would be a great place for young adult adoptees to connect, have positive influence, have a safe place for conversation. I'm excited to kind of maybe drop in and just connect. I do a lot more connecting in the adoptive parent community than I do in the adoptee community, so he talked a little bit about that, but the website is [unfoldingadoptives.org](http://unfoldingadoptives.org). So if you get on his newsletter, you'll get an email when they get ready to start meeting again on Zoom, so we'd encourage you to do that. All the other places to find Sandeep and Unfolding Adoptees will be in the show notes for this episode, which you can find at [theadoptionconnection.com/155](http://theadoptionconnection.com/155).

[00:47:17.830] - Melissa Corkum

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our new Instagram handle is @postadoptionresources, or better yet, join our free Facebook community at the [theadoptionconnection.com/facebook](http://theadoptionconnection.com/facebook).

[00:47:32.830] - Lisa Qualls

Thanks so much for listening, we love having you. And remember, you're a good parent doing good work.

[00:47:41.110] - Melissa Corkum

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