

[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.

[00:00:10.290] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:19.050] - Lisa Qualls

Hi, friends. Today I'm chatting with Shannan Martin. And we met each other last spring when we were both speaking at the same event, and I had the chance to listen to her story and let me tell you, it is powerful and it's kind of fascinating, and I related to it in many ways. Shannan began writing way back in the early blogging days of 2006, and I was following her back then. She was writing about her beautiful life that she had in the country, and living in her dream home, she was an adoptive mom. Since those years, god has taken her family on really a quite remarkable journey. So I know you're going to enjoy hearing from her. She is an author and a speaker. She says she found her voice in the country and her story in the city. Her husband, Corey, is a jail chaplain and they live with their family in Goshen, Indiana. So I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did.

[00:01:26.830] - Lisa Qualls

Hi, Shannan. Welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

[00:01:29.960] - Shannan Martin

Hi, Lisa. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:31.860] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. I'm so glad to get to talk with you. I have been following you for many years way back from the early blogging days, and I know way back in the day, I think I started my blog in 2006. Wow, that's a really long time ago, and I know some of the people listening today probably also followed you way back. When can you talk just a little bit about the beginning of that blog. Why you started it? What it was called way back then.

[00:01:59.220] - Shannan Martin

I would love to.

[00:02:00.650] - Lisa Qualls

Let's reminisce a little.

[00:02:02.040] - Shannan Martin

Yes, let's do that. I don't remember exactly what year I started my blog, but I'm guessing it was around, you said yours was 06? Yeah, I'm guessing mine was somewhere around between 06 and 08. So a long, long time ago, I had a point and shoot camera. This was before we had cameras that went with us everywhere we go. And my husband is kind of a photography nerd, and so he had, like, a big, fancy camera, and we had just moved into a new house. It was what we thought was going to be our dream house, where we were going to live forever out in the country on a beautiful piece of land. And we moved into that home with two babies who were 16 months apart. And I would get them down for their nap time, like getting them to nap at the same time was my absolute ultimate goal every day. And if that happened, I would take my little point and shoot camera outside and just kind of explore this property and take pictures of flowers that were growing and take pictures of my babies that were growing. And I started this little blog as a way to keep in touch with family, my family's out of state. It was sort of like that typical visual digital scrapbook. That's why I started my blog. And I actually started on Xanga. Do you remember Xanga?

[00:03:22.430] - Lisa Qualls

I do.

[00:03:24.430] - Shannan Martin

So that was kind of the thought behind my Xanga site. At some point, I thought, well, I might do this a

little more professionally and stayed up late and typed into the tittle blogger search engine. A couple of different names that I had in mind, they were both taken. And then I typed in Flower Patch Farm Girl, and it was not taken, and that was my name for the next quite a few years I was Flower Patch Farm Girl, and I was living out in the country. And I mean taking pictures of how I decorated my home and what I was cooking for dinner. And I don't even know if the language of a lifestyle blogger was happening. I think it probably was, but I by no means saw myself is that I was just kind of documenting my life.

[00:04:14.470] - Lisa Qualls

And you had two young children at that point.

[00:04:16.900] - Shannan Martin

That's right.

[00:04:18.370] - Lisa Qualls

Tell us a little bit how they joined your family.

[00:04:21.120] - Shannan Martin

Yes, so at that time, we had Calvin, so all of our children were adopted. Calvin was born in South Korea and came home when he was about five months old. And then Ruby was a domestic adoption, and she came home just under a year later. So within one year, technically, we brought both of them home. And like I said before, they're 16 months apart, so they're close in age. Yeah, and at that time, that was our little family. And then since then, Silas came home from South Korea when he was about 18 months old. And then Robert, our oldest, came into our family when he was 19 years old. So he's by far the oldest and came to us most recently, it's been coming up on ten years now that he's been a part of our family. And so just to run through, because I like to keep I like to kind of think of these details now, Robert is 26, Calvin is 16, Ruby is 15, Silas is 13. So we're officially, like, household house full of teenagers. Robert, of course, is off on his own, but we've got three teenagers here at home.

[00:05:35.480] - Lisa Qualls

That's great. Yeah, my youngest is a teenager. Also, in fact, he'll be 15 next week. I cannot believe it.

[00:05:41.720] - Shannan Martin

It's wild.

[00:05:42.620] - Lisa Qualls

This year, it's like the baby of the family went to high school. We were all like, okay, wow, that is a change.

[00:05:48.500] - Shannan Martin

It is.

[00:05:49.820] - Lisa Qualls

It's a big change, it's very different. And now, remind me, does Robert have children? Are you a grandma?

[00:05:54.560] - Shannan Martin

He does have children. He does, he's got boys. So, yeah, I am a grandma, and I have been for a while. His oldest boys are twins, and they're nine years old.

[00:06:06.270] - Lisa Qualls

Oh, wow.

[00:06:07.750] - Shannan Martin

By the time he came into our family, we knew him for a while before he became part of us, and we became part of him. But, yeah, he came ready, made like he came into my life. I became his mom and a grandma in one fell swoop.

[00:06:25.120] - Lisa Qualls
That was very efficient of you.

[00:06:26.840] - Shannan Martin
It was, right.

[00:06:29.050] - Lisa Qualls
So way back, you're living in the country, you're living in your dream farmhouse, you're gardening, you're taking photographs. And then God did something big in your life, like things began to change.

[00:06:42.910] - Shannan Martin
My husband and I, we both grew up, I grew up in Ohio, he grew up in this area in Indiana. So we didn't grow up near each other, but we had very similar upbringings. We both had been raised in evangelical churches our entire lives, and in a way that was very central to our childhood and even to our identities. And we lived, both of us, separately and then together, in pretty, exclusively white, rural, small town spaces. And so through a chain of events, we just had our eyes opened to the heart of the gospel, which is God's heart for the poor, caring for the poor and the people at the margins and loving our neighbor. And those things were kind of a ball of twine, and it's difficult to separate them, and I don't know that we need to separate them. But it was a wild thing for both of us to realize if you've grown up in an evangelical Church in particular, you're very familiar with love your neighbor as yourself, love God, and love your neighbor. And so that was certainly not new to us, but it did very much feel like to sound very Bible, the blinders or the scales kind of fell off. And we suddenly realized, okay, we've always heard this before, but suddenly it means something different to us. Suddenly we are kind of captured by the fact that this is really the theme of the gospel and the beating of God's heart. And so what are we going to do about it? And it thrust us into a time of a lot of questioning. And we started to even grapple with global poverty and our own abundance, what we have versus what others had did not have. And all these questions started to really create a lot of tension within us. And those questions, looking back in hindsight, it feels like it happened pretty quickly, but at the time, it felt like a very slow moving train that was picking up steam and picking up speed as it went along. But it was just a slow process of trying to figure out, here we are. We live out in the middle of nowhere, out in the country on this beautiful property outside of a very small white evangelical town. We don't meaningfully know, people who do not remind us of ourselves, and suddenly it seems important. It seems important for us to get to know meaningful people who might be unfamiliar in different ways. The story continues, and we did end up selling that farm and moving into our neighborhood, maybe 15 to 20 minutes away. We didn't move very far away, but though it wasn't far in distance, it was a very different experience. And we landed in a low income neighborhood in a small city where it's a very immigrant rich neighborhood. It's very diverse in all different kinds of ways. And we've been here now for ten years.

[00:10:06.290] - Lisa Qualls
You knew the Lord was leading you. You knew you were going to be making this big change. Was there any part of you that was sad to say goodbye to what had been your dream before God gave you a new dream? Was it hard?

[00:10:26.250] - Melissa Corkum
Hey, friends, just jumping in to invite you to our new Enneagram study in our membership community, the Village. Beginning February 1, we'll be working through Suzanne Stabil's new book, The Journey Toward Wholeness, to help us get a better understanding of ourselves and the people we love.

[00:10:42.990] - Lisa Qualls
You can join The Village at theadoptionconnection.com/village. Use the Code PODCAST to get 50% off your first month. We would love to see you there.

[00:10:57.850] - Lisa Qualls
Was there any part of you that was sad to say goodbye to what had been your dream before God gave you a new dream? Was it hard?

[00:11:07.570] - Shannan Martin

I get that question a lot, and I feel like the answer should be yes. And it really for me wasn't, and that is just a virtue of my personality, I think. There are aspects of my life that I miss. And I will say the first time I've written about this, and it remains a funny story to me. My husband and I bring this up pretty frequently and laugh about it. The first time, I was with my youngest, who was in pre-school at the time, we drove out here into this neighborhood where we now live, just to kind of scope it out. My husband, it came onto his radar and he sent us out to check it out. And I remember driving through the neighborhood. It was very different from anything I had ever imagined for myself or my children. That was a big part of it for me. And then we drove down the back alley and I saw the backyard where if we were to buy this home, which of course we did. But I saw what was going to be our backyard, and I burst into tears. And I just remember thinking like there's just like I was very dramatic about it. And I just thought, this is terribly unfair. There's no way we can do this. There's no way this is God's best to use that language that I very much used at the time, but there's no way this could be God's best for me or for my children. And so mostly I felt a lot of enthusiasm and excitement, and like, we're just moving forward. I'm a very moving forward kind of person, but there were moments. There were bumps along the road where more than being sad, I think there were times I felt scared. It felt scary, it felt very unknown, it felt risky. A lot of people around us were reminding us that it was very risky. People struggled to understand our choices at that time, especially around our young children. So when we moved here, Calvin was in second grade, ruby was just starting kindergarten, and Silas was in preschool. So they were very young. They were at what we would call very impressionable ages. So, yeah, there were times those kinds of things got in my head, for sure.

[00:13:15.550] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I can imagine. And were they in public school where you originally lived? And then were they going into the new public schools in the city?

[00:13:24.450] - Shannan Martin

Yeah. Well, we only had one. Calvin was the only one who was in the school. He was the only one old enough in our previous community. And it was a public school, but it was also the public school that many people said, oh, if I lived there, I would homeschool. It's a pretty insular, what people would consider a safe community in a very ideal high ranking public school. And so we moved public school to public school, but it was night and day. So we ended up there's an elementary school just two blocks away at the end of our street. That's where we sent Calvin and Ruby. And we knew loosely, this is another one of those things that I'm like, this is so interesting to me that we didn't even look into this, but we didn't realize at the time. We knew it was a title one school, so it's a low income public school. It has the highest level of income need within the whole school system, so it's a high poverty school. But we didn't realize it had an F grade. It was a failing school, and I have a lot of feelings around that now. Like, I think that's really unfair and even an unjust system that we impose upon public schools, but it was a surprise to us to land here and realize, oh, we weren't aware of that. And that was another level of learning for us. What does it mean to be a failing school? And should parents be afraid of that? And does that mean we should not send our kids to those schools? And, you know, we just started learning. We've learned a lot through that experience. And we had a wonderful experience with our Chamberlain elementary school.

[00:15:26.210] - Lisa Qualls

And now what did Corey do for work before you moved, and then what did he do when you moved? What was his change of location?

[00:15:36.050] - Shannan Martin

So when we lived on the farm, and prior to that event, both Corey, my husband and myself, worked in politics, and Corey worked in federal politics for about ten years, so we actually lived in Washington, DC, for a short time before we had kids. My husband worked for, he was on staff for a United States congressman, and then we moved back to the district in Indiana, and he continued working for him and then eventually worked for another congressman. I got wrapped up into political work from living in DC, so that was the bulk of our earlier life. That was the work we did. My husband ended up very briefly transitioning into a role as an administrator at an alternative high school. So for kids who, for

whatever reason, traditional education does not work for them, that's where we initially met Robert, was through that school. And so when we moved into this home, Corey was still working in that role, but within a year or so, he became the fulltime chaplain of the county jail, and he's been doing that work ever since. And so that was a big surprise to everyone involved. And it's his passion, and it's his life's work, and it's what he was wired to do, but we never could have imagined. Prior to, so I guess I'll back up a tiny bit and say, when Robert came into our family, he was incarcerated at that same county jail. And so visiting Robert at the jail was our first, that was our first touch point to jail or the criminal system of any kind. And so it was interesting just to watch things unfold from having this first encounter and then it becomes a pretty big part of our life because it's a part of our son's life. And then to see Corey end up over time, that's where he goes every day now he goes to jail everyday.

[00:17:52.370] - Lisa Qualls

Wow, okay. So I'm curious. This is a very big life transition, transition in the way you really saw your life, saw the world, so many things. Did this affect your relationships, your friendships, your family relationships when you made such a big shift in your life?

[00:18:17.330] - Shannan Martin

100%. Definitely there was fall out. There were people who, you know, there were a few categories of people I think the people closest to us really wanted to understand, they wanted to be with us, they wanted to support us, but for some of them, it was very much a struggle. And I think there was another category of people who just felt like, you're crazy. So some of our relationships ultimately survived all of this change in our lives, and some of them didn't. When we first landed in this neighborhood, we were in a time of really trying to hold on to some of these close relationships and hoping that we could and hoping that there would be understanding. But not long after we had the move and we had all of these things that were happening and the hits sort of kept coming. So when Robert came into our family, that was a hard thing. As much as I hate saying that, that was a hard thing for some people. It was a really difficult thing for some people to understand. And they were already struggling to understand why we were here in the first place, and so that was another layer. And then Cory, beginning to work in the jail as the chaplain, that was another layer. And so it seems like there was this looming sense of, you all have lost your mind. But when we got here, I just remember being kind of relieved in some ways to have space to start over and to hope for new friendships and new connections. But also, it was a lonely time for us because there was so much tension around some of our other relationships. And the sense of some of these friendships are just they're gone and we're not going to get them back. And it takes time, when we moved here, I didn't know anybody. I didn't have a single friend in this community. Corey knew a couple of people through work, but it took time. It is and was slow work to build those connections and those relationships, but it happened. These things take time, but they do. New friendships bloom and some relationships repaired, and you continue to move forward. But I think upsetting the status quo in any way is asking for some complexity in your relationships. That's been our experience.

[00:20:52.770] - Lisa Qualls

So what do you think have been some of the benefits to your children? I mean, it's probably so much it's your whole world, your whole life. But what are the things that you see even early on were benefits to your kids of the move?

[00:21:09.720] - Shannan Martin

Yeah, it's funny because my kids were so young and they were so central to the conversations happening around all of these changes we were making. And now, especially my youngest, too, they really don't remember much before this. This is really all they know, and so that's an interesting thing to think about. This was not central to some of the decisions we made, but somewhere along the line, we did thankfully realize that it was going to be a good thing for our non-white children. So we are white parents of four non-white children. We realized it was going to be to their benefit to be in a community and in a school where they were not the only non-white kids. It's one of those things that it's hard for me to imagine that I didn't always kind of understand that, but being completely honest, there was a time I didn't completely understand that. And so it became another reason to be thankful for this opportunity. And so I would say that's the biggest thing is just allowing my kids the opportunity to be part of a diverse community and a diverse school. I have to add the caveat because

I think about this more and more. We live our school in our community, the school in particular is majority Latino. My kids are not Latino, and so there is still this layer of it is much more diverse, but especially my two Asian sons do not have a lot of representation. And that's something I still regret for them, and that's something even now, though, I'm so grateful for this community, and they're happy and they're thriving in their schools and in their friend groups, but again, I don't know that I would do that exactly the same way, now. I think I would work harder to find not just diversity, but to find representation for my kids. And so that was a long answer, and more than you asked for, but I would say that's being raised outside of an exclusively white space has been tremendously beneficial to all of us and being raised in a community and in a place that is even socioeconomically diverse and even diverse in religion and in all the ways has been a really beautiful thing for our family.

[00:23:44.430] - Lisa Qualls

One thing I see that happens, what happened for me, and I see it with some other moms is that when we add children to our families, well, through all different means, but in particular for me through foster care and through adoption, that my world became in some ways it became much bigger because all of a sudden, I was thinking about the world in a different way, but in other ways, in very practical ways, it became kind of smaller because the needs of my kids were just so consuming. And I feel like my world got very small, and then it began to kind of open up again as our family stabilized, as my kids grew, as we found a lot of healing and things. But when I read the Ministry of Ordinary Places, which I loved, by the way, we'll be sure to talk to all your books so people know. I was just so both sort of encouraged, but also a little bit in awe of this incredible calling to hospitality that you have like to being a true neighbor. Can you talk about that a little bit? Was that just something that came naturally to you, or was it something that God just grew in you?

[00:25:01.530] - Shannan Martin

It still does not come naturally to me, if I'm being honest, and I try to really be honest about that because I think so many of us who are wired as I am, I'm very introverted, as is my husband, and two of our kids are very introverted. But I think when we're wired that way, we tend to think like, oh, that's not being asked of me, I'm an introvert. So I like to let people know that doesn't actually let us off the hook. It just means that it might look a little different, and it might require a little bit more of us, it might be a little harder. For us, I think when we came into this neighborhood, everything was unfamiliar, everything was new, and I was really drawn to that. I was drawn to begin to understand people and to get to know people, and in a way that really surprised me. I was not expecting that necessarily, but that certainly happened. And then at the point that Robert came into our life and some of his friends came into our lives who had most of them had been kind of entwined at some point with the criminal legal system. And then Cory's work at the jail, we ended up really surrounding ourselves just like de facto, surrounding ourselves with people who struggled in ways we had not struggled. And those became some of the most important relationships in our lives and the people that we found ourselves spending the most time with. One of the things you might remember from the Ministry of ordinary places, and it's a story that sounds maybe a little overwhelming, but one of the things we did for a time was we began inviting people from our Church. So we attend Church just down the street here. It's a little tiny, at the time, it's always kind of hovering near death. It's just a small Dwindling United Methodist congregation, but the Church, in a lot of ways, sort of began to have new life breathed into it when a lot of the people from the Worker Lease Center began attending. And so for people who don't know, Worker Lease is sort of like you live there. It's incarceration, but you can leave to go to work into Church and to do some personal things. So it's a little bit like transitional, maybe. But what we knew when a lot of these people started showing up at our Church, we knew that a lot of them had a personal path that they could take on Sunday afternoon, but they didn't necessarily have anywhere to spend it. They didn't have anywhere to go, and they might not have had somewhere safe to go. So if you're dealing with addiction and recovery and those things you might know of people that you could go hang out with, but it might not be quite the right thing for you to do. And so we started an open invitation come over after Church on Sunday, and we'll eat lunch together, and a lot of them would do jail calls to relatives or loved ones who are incarcerated. And that was just the kind of I guess I don't even want to say our vision, but we just started to kind of fall into these opportunities for connection with people based on ask for what you need, offer what you can.

[00:28:26.720] - Shannan Martin

And so we knew this was a need for people, and we knew we live two blocks away, it's walkable, it was easy, it was convenient, and I can make soup for a lot of people. But to bring that conversation back around to kids, there have certainly been times that we have been consumed by the needs of our children. And for us, I think that reality made us very open to for lack of a better word, chaos. In some ways, we felt like we were always sort of surviving a certain level of chaos, and so what might have seemed chaotic to other people or to some of the people around us for us just felt like, why not? So it in some ways probably did make some things harder. Here's what I'll say, when I think back to some of the hardest times and the hardest seasons in our lives, in particular, our kiddo, who struggled the most, what was hard for me then was having close connection with people who seem to have it all together. And that's what we probably really scaled back on for a lot of different reasons. But being in community and in connection with other people whose lives for different reasons felt kind of out of control and who I didn't fear judgment from, that got a lot easier. And so it's interesting, I don't know that I've ever even thought about it that way until you ask that question, but I think that was very much at play. And I think that was even to our kiddo who had the hardest time, I think that was a comfort to that child. I mean, I think it was just that particular child is an extrovert and likes a lot of activity and has a high capacity for sort of chaos. I think it kind of worked well, even as it might seem counterintuitive.

[00:30:40.650] - Lisa Qualls

Actually, it's so interesting because you're saying you've never thought of it that way. I don't think I have either. And as you were talking, I was thinking there was a time when my life was very tidy and it looked very pretty, that ended. That seemed like it came to an abrupt end, and my life became much more complicated. Not very pretty sometimes, and it was too difficult to really just have all the relationships I had before because I could no longer come anywhere near reaching, even coming to seeing the bar that I was supposed to be getting over. I couldn't, it was so far below. And I think you're right, there's something beautiful about being with other people who have some brokenness, like we can relate to each other, even if it's very different. The struggles you might have been experiencing were very different from people coming from the work release program. But there's a compassion I think that we have for each other when we know it's not even that maybe we're a little broken, like we know. We know we are., and there's some beautiful community that's built from that.

[00:32:01.790] - Shannan Martin

Yeah, I mean, there's real shared empathy there. And I think it kind of goes both ways, I think some of, I was the same way. Like even in the early years of my Flower Patch Farm Girl days, my persona, if I thought of having people into my home, it was going to be like the Martha Stewart experience, and that was shattered pretty quickly when life got more complicated. And so by the time we were here and the struggles were very real, I also think there were people who didn't, like, we were too much for them. And yet the people around us who just like I said, we're struggling through life in their own ways, it was nothing to them. I just remember just such a clear and open, you know, my child could just rage, and sometimes that happened and it could get very messy. My house was messy because this is survival mode and nobody cared. And I started to see the difference in different kind of mentalities around this and even to grapple with my own perceptions and my own reality and recognizing the friend I wanted to be. And so it really lowered the bar.

[00:33:26.720] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah.

[00:33:27.360] - Shannan Martin

It really lowered the bar on this idea of hospitality. I talk a lot about hospitality, and I always wish there was a different word because it sounds so fancy. Just the word sounds fancy. But to invite people into our home and to do that freely and to do that quickly without a lot of second guessing, but I'm telling you what, it's a whole lot easier to live like this when you know that the people you're inviting in just hold no judgment and that they have a lot of capacity for a lot, they can handle it, they can roll with it and they will, and they'll laugh it off. And a lot of times they had stories about their own kids or when their kids were young or their own selves and really kind of messy, some trauma related. There was just this sense of solidarity and understanding of, I remember it being such a comfort to me when particularly some of the women who were moms, they knew it was no secret to anybody what

we were going through, and they would share their own stories, and I remember just being so comforted by this real sense of number one, they weren't judging me or my child or anything about my home, the whole experience. And number two, they were telling me it was going to be okay and they had lived some life. Their kids had been through some things, too, and none of us can see the future, but I just remember that being such a relief to me to have people in my life, and they were unexpected people who became the biggest source of comfort to me through that time.

[00:35:06.880] - Lisa Qualls

I love that. I got to spend a little time with you last spring when we were both in California, which was just a wonderful time. And I know we have limited time left, but I want you to touch upon something that has become, well, a couple of things that I learned from you that become really important to you. One, is really understanding the prison system or jail, I don't even have the right words. And then really your understanding of race and how that all plays in, and I know time is short. Is there anything that you'd love to just take a moment to share with our listeners?

[00:35:44.970] - Shannan Martin

As you know, I could talk about this for hours and I'm in such a place of being a learner myself. I'm 45 years old, I've got teenagers and a grown son, and I am ever aware of how poorly I was taught, particularly around race. But as you said, even I mean, I was once I would have said the same thing you did. What's the difference between jail and prison? And I don't even know. So we found ourselves on just a fast learning curve with a lot of this. What was the big line in the sand was Robert, and at the time he was 19 years old incarcerated, as I mentioned, he was a young black man. Around that time that he came into our family was when a lot of tragedies started coming into the news and we started to become more aware of these things and young black men in particular and the risks they're up against with police and just with the culture at large and just the risks they face were nothing new, but they were new to me. And I always want to be really honest about this. I did not know I never had a reason to know, and I don't want to waste a lot of time feeling guilty about that, I just want to say this is day one and we all have our day one and we realize that we have a lot to learn. And so parenting Robert, during that time in our culture, when thankfully these encounters started to be recorded and they started to come into our public line of vision more, but going through that as his mom and just as our relationship has grown since then and watching him trying to extract himself from the legal system and it's so hard and there's so much to it, it was impossible for me to not be moved towards the possibility of a better way towards a more just society, and so it has transformed me into being an ongoing learner, but also in some ways to be an activist. And I know that's a scary word for some people, but I'm at a place now where I cannot, this can't just be head knowledge for me. Meanwhile, my younger kids were getting older and there's something different. I don't think this is necessarily ideal, but I think when our kids are babies, I remember having the awareness. Of course, I knew that their experience was going to be different from mine, but when they're babies, they're just still kind of almost sort of extensions of us, and they require a lot of us, they need a lot from us. As they get older and move out into the world, that reality blooms before us. And we start to see every single one of my kids has faced racism on more than one occasion, and sometimes in really horrible ways. And so we can't experience these things. We can't witness them up close and not be moved by that. And then you add the layer for me of my neighborhood and the fact that the majority of my neighbors are Latino, and that again, has changed my perspective. I say all the time my kids and my neighbors have changed my life because they have, I mean, that's what happens when we find meaningful connection in proximity with people whose experiences are different from our own if we're willing to see those experiences and bear that tension and believe the experiences, it will change us, and it will change us in ways that are uncomfortable to ourselves and to some of the people around us. Again, that's been another flood of people struggling to understand my perspective on this sometimes, but I just want this world to be safe for Robert, and it's not. And I want this world to be safe for my younger kids, and it's not. And I want to be a safer person than I have been and even than I am right now, and so we just journey.

[00:40:14.990] - Lisa Qualls

We could talk so much more about all of this, and I hope we'll get another opportunity to do that. I would love for you to just tell people about your books, because if they haven't read what you've written, they really need to.

[00:40:28.020] - Shannan Martin

Yeah, I'd love to. So my first book is called *Falling Free, Rescued from the Life I Always Wanted*. And that tells the story of, it tells all the details of that first question you asked me like, how did this happen? How did you get from there to here? That's that book. My second book is *The Ministry of Ordinary Places, Waking Up to God's Goodness Around You*. And that is sort of my, I wrote that book in this house in this neighborhood, and it was sort of my, as the dust settled, and all the changes that were happening, me wrestling with the now what question? Like why here why me now what? And just beginning to find my place and to figure out what it means to endure in a place and to seek God's goodness, even in places that might seem like hard places. And then I just turned in my manuscript for my third book. It does not have a title yet. It will be releasing in October of 22, so about a year from now. And it is a very practical bread and butter field guide to how do we connect with the people near us? And how do we find connection with people who do not remind us of ourselves? And what does it look like to just live kind of in this fabric? What does that mean? So that's the one coming next.

[00:42:01.250] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I will definitely be reading that one because just in my own immediate family, my kids just have made my world explode in so many ways. We are touching on cultures and countries and so many different people, and I just want to get better and better at loving.

[00:42:16.760] - Shannan Martin

Yes, me too. I think ideally, we do that work together. We don't do it alone and we grab hands or we link arms and we do this work together. I think that's the goal. So I love doing this work with you, Lisa

[00:42:34.630] - Lisa Qualls

Thank you, and I love learning from you. I really do. Well, thank you, Shannan, so much. I am very, very grateful that you spent this time with us.

[00:42:42.930] - Shannan Martin

Yeah, thanks for having me on. And I'll just mention in passing, if people want to keep up with me, they can find me on Instagram is probably the best place to find me @ShannanWrites. And there's a link if you want to sign up to receive my emails because I really don't blog anymore.

[00:42:59.710] - Lisa Qualls

I know, I don't either.

[00:43:02.230] - Shannan Martin

That's my version of blogging now is join my email list if you want to stay in touch.

[00:43:06.630] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, me too. Well, thank you once again.

[00:43:14.870] - Lisa Qualls

Well, as you can imagine, I could have kept talking to Shannan for a very long time. I said this in the interview, but I truly could learn so much from her, and I do learn so much from her. I cannot wait for her next book to come out. And as she said, probably the best way to follow her is on Instagram. She's @ShannanWrites. She may not have mentioned this, but her name is spelled S-H-A-N-N-A-N.

[00:43:40.610] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, Lisa, I know I'm really excited to connect with Shannan. You can find the links to her Instagram and all of her books in the show notes at theadoptionconnection.com/159. 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 theadoptionconnection.com/facebook.

[00:44:07.850] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:44:16.070] - Melissa Corkum

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