

[00:00:00.990] - Lisa Qualls

This episode is sponsored by the Adoption Connection Village, a place where you can connect with other adoptive moms who get it and be surrounded with support so you know you're not alone.

[00:00:11.110] - Melissa Corkum

We are really excited about the Village because adoptive and foster parenting really brings unique challenges to families and a lot of people around us don't understand. And so we need to be surrounded by people who get us.

[00:00:24.210] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, that isolation is really the breeding ground for shame and guilt. And, you know, both of us have been to these dark places. I mean, I don't think either of us could have anticipated what this journey would cost us in our relationships, sometimes even with friends and family. It's very hard for people to understand what we're going through.

[00:00:45.240] - Melissa Corkum

Absolutely. But we do get it and we want to have a special place where we can really connect in a much deeper way, as close as we can to actually be in person. So obviously we can't all gather around Lisa's kitchen island, but we have created something called Virtual Coffee chats and these happen over video chat and it's a whole group of us and it's been really, really fun to see your faces, get to know your stories and connect with you on a much deeper level. We do these coffee chats in the Village three to four times a month and we focus at least one of them a month on specifically the challenges of teens and young adults, because we have heard from you guys that that is a space that needs a little extra TLC and support.

[00:01:33.710] - Lisa Qualls

So the Village is for you if you feel like you need more people in your life who understand you. You crave authentic and intimate community and especially if you don't have Facebook or you want to limit your time there. So you don't want to be in a group maybe that's based on Facebook. And I think the thing that's so important is that we know you are pouring your hearts and your souls into your kids and maybe nobody is pouring back into you, but we want to do that.

[00:02:03.120] - Melissa Corkum

Besides the coffee chats, we have a discussion forum that's kind of like a Facebook group on steroids that really helps connect you with topics that are relevant to your story and folks who are local to you. We also release monthly premium content such as Deeper Dives into what connected parenting really looks like in real life. And there's even a monthly Enneagram Connection video where we help you better understand yourself and your family's dynamics. The Village really is your one stop shop for personalized support. We want this to be accessible to as many parents as possible. So it's just \$24.99 a month. There's no commitment. You can cancel at any time. Go to theAdoptionconnection.com/Village to find out more or get started.

[00:02:45.040] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:02:52.990] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:02:58.390] - Lisa Qualls

Today is a Mentor Moments episode where we answer a listener question. These episodes give you a chance to join the conversation and guarantee we're providing the most helpful tools and resources for exactly where you are. This week's question is, should I adopt out of birth order? This is a very important and big question to answer and we both have different experiences and thoughts. So Melissa, why don't you jump in first?

[00:03:25.610] - Melissa Corkum

So this is a really big topic and I feel like kind of a controversial topic. And so we will say every once in a while this question comes up in our Facebook community. And I will say that I don't think that there's a black or white answer, and that if you were to ask a diverse group of families what their experiences were with out of birth order adoption, that you could get just as many answers as you asked questions. And some would say, sure, it worked out great for us, I think you should do it, and others would say we would never do it again. So chat a little bit about why that might be.

[00:04:07.930] - Lisa Qualls

Yes. Well, one of the things we were talking about as we were looking at this question is that for people who feel compelled to adopt sibling groups or for whom a sibling group is just all of a sudden presented to you, you may not have as many choices about whether you're going to adopt out of birth or not, because now you're adopting maybe multiple children. So the sibling group has an age range. So at that point you have to decide what is more important to me? Do I want to be open to adopting a sibling group or do I want to maintain my personal ideal of not adopting out of birth order? Because you may have to make a choice.

[00:04:50.110] - Melissa Corkum

Yes. And for more on adopting big sibling groups and why that might be important, we did chat about that just a couple episodes ago with Sue Badeau, in episode 102, which we will link in the show notes. So one of the things that surprised us about adopting out of birth order, we had given it all this thought and talked to our kids about it, specifically our oldest son at the time, who had always been the oldest in the family, about him being kind of unseated as the alpha male. But what we didn't expect was that in our family, adopting out of birth order was actually not so hard on our existing kids, but it was actually really tough on our older adopted kids. And some of that had to do with dismaturity, right, that they, because of their past experiences, their survival age, like their kind of life experience age, and their academic age and their emotional age and their chronological age, were all over the map. So we talk about this like birth order, thinking about our kids chronological age probably, but not thinking about all of the other different kind of "ages" that kids have.

[00:06:07.560] - Melissa Corkum

And so it's tricky to find your place in a new family. It is exponentially trickier to find your place in a new family when there's already kind of a pecking order in kids. And then usually dismaturity means that your chronological age is the oldest, and then all of the other maybe academic, emotional, social ages typically lag behind the chronological age. But then that life experience age, what kids have been exposed to, maybe they've had to survive on their own in the streets or whatever, that might exceed what a typical eleven or twelve year old has experienced. So I think there's just a lot more complexity to this issue than we ever thought going in.

[00:06:58.110] - Lisa Qualls

Both for the children already in the family and then for the children who are new to the family. It was complexity. Well, I presented this question to several of my kids when I was doing a live panel with them at a conference. The first couple of my kids who answered, I said, what do you think about whether or not parents should adopt out of birth order? And they gave kind of tactful answers. And then I got to one of my sons and asked the question. He said, I don't think people should ever adopt out of birth order. And I was sort of like, whoa. I was not quite expecting that answer. This was unscripted. And I thought, oh boy, how are people going to receive this? But I also wanted my kids to give an honest perspective. And his perspective was, and continues to be, that it was harmful to the youngest children in the family. And I know that for my kids, the experience of siblings is one of my most passionate topics that I like to teach and speak on. And hopefully, you know, my book is coming along on that topic. I think we have to be really wise for the sake of our younger children, both for their actual physical safety and also for their emotional safety.

[00:08:22.990] - Lisa Qualls

When we bring older children into our families, like you said, they're going to have experienced a lot of the world potentially, and if they've lived in an orphanage, they may have experienced a lot of different things. And so by bringing older kids in, you know, you may have children who are very settled in your family, whether they were born to you, whether they were also adopted, but who are young and are

vulnerable and still have a lot of needs. So when you bring older kids in, you're potentially putting them at risk both physically and emotionally. So I think it requires a great deal of thought and sensitivity and wisdom.

[00:09:04.310] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I'll add to that, that in our experience, we didn't have any reason to believe that our older kids were going to be unsafe with our younger kids. And our younger kids weren't like infants, right? They were eight and ten or something like that, old enough to talk, tell us about things. And still our experience was, years and years later, we found out there were things happening behind closed doors that our kids by birth were protecting us from. Like that's, their instinct was that we already had so much stress in our lives and we're already dealing with such big things that they kind of shouldered some of the things that happened in shared bedrooms without telling us, because they didn't want us to worry about one more thing. And in our case, it wasn't overt sexual or physical abuse, but it was stuff that we wish we had known about and wouldn't have happened probably if we had adopted younger than our youngest, rather than bringing in teenagers on top of three other kids.

[00:10:14.590] - Lisa Qualls

That's so interesting, Melissa, because my kids have said the exact same thing, that they knew that Russ and I were really overwhelmed with the incredible needs of some of our kids, and they didn't want to put one more thing on our plate, one more thing we would worry about. So they tried to handle a lot on their own, and that still gosh, it just breaks my heart when I think of my eight or nine year old trying to shield me from things that were happening because she didn't want to overwhelm me with one more thing. And yet they were things that scared her and kept her awake at night because a sibling was threatening physical violence or things like that. Yes, I have experienced the same thing, and I think for my youngest. So when we brought our kids home, we brought home three kids at once, and a year later, one more. My youngest children were four and eight. My four year old had been the baby of the family, you know, for four years, and then there was a gap between her and the next one, and so she had a very sweet spot in the family. I did not anticipate how her world would blow up when we brought home two siblings who were older than her, who had experienced so much adversity already. And it really shredded her life for a long time. And, you know, that was in 2007 and 2008, and she is still working through some of that. I don't think I counted. I know I didn't really count the cost for her.

[00:11:51.640] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I think something else that's interesting, even with adopting in birth order, bringing kids home younger than your youngest, if your youngest still need you on a day to day basis, I would think and count the costs very carefully about even adopting and bringing in children who have experienced trauma. And honestly, all children who are changing primary caregivers experience this sense of stress because it's different than just having a new baby by birth. Because I think there's something about the way a family can rally around this sweet little baby who came into the world with the same primary attachment figure that they experienced, prenatally experienced, this wanting, this love, versus even bringing in a one year old or two year old. Sometimes they're a little prickly. Like when we adopted a toddler, it wasn't the same as toddlers we've had in our family from birth. And so it disrupts all of the normal relationship expectations that we have as humans and that our children have as humans. And so I think it's easier for kids to, and it still can be tricky, right, to welcome a baby into your life. But there's something about yielding your needs to the needs of this little baby.

[00:13:26.850] - Melissa Corkum

It's who you also can cuddle and love, right, versus having to yield your needs all the time to someone who might hit and kick you or break your toys or not treat your parents nicely. So I think this isn't even just an out of birth order conversation, but even just the impact on the kids who are already in your house conversation.

[00:13:50.590] - Lisa Qualls

When I think about even my older kids, the impact was so significant. Now, obviously somebody asked us in episode 100, who let Lisa adopt four kids at once? Or something like that. And I was like, I don't know. They must have had some strange confidence in us. But the truth is, when you add

children to your family who have significant needs, and you will not know, you won't know what those needs are. You might know about some physical needs or diagnoses, but you will not know your kids needs until they're really in your family, most likely. And the impact of that, like, if you have a lot of kids who still need a lot from you, they will not get that when you are meeting the needs of the new children who joined the family. I think we just have to be wise. When I talk to younger parents who are eager to adopt, I just want to tell them, okay, but pace yourself. What we did, I would not recommend. Now, am I thankful we did it because we got all our amazing four children? Yes, I am. But I wouldn't recommend it because if we had paced ourselves more slowly, if those hadn't been the children I think that the Lord had for us, if we had, by our own wisdom, paced ourselves more slowly, that would have been to the good of our older kids and our younger kids.

[00:15:10.840] - Melissa Corkum

All that being said, right, we want you to count the cost. But we do understand that some of you listening feel a very specific calling to an age of a child or maybe a specific child or a specific sibling group. So we don't want to come down and say, never should you ever.

[00:15:33.240] - Lisa Qualls

That's right.

[00:15:34.910] - Melissa Corkum

But we would say, gather a team around you and know what the costs are. And know that this might not be a single family undertaking. It might need to be a village undertaking with you and the people around you that love and support your family and your kids. Because we can't do this in a vacuum or alone.

[00:15:55.240] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. And when I talk to people about this, I say, this is the wisdom I have to offer you. But nothing I say trumps Holy Spirit, trumps God. If God has compelled you, you feel compelled in your hearts to adopt a specific child that the Lord's put in front of you, or specific sibling group or whatever it is. Well, you have to listen to that voice. Just know that sometimes he calls us to things that are really hard and be ready. Be ready for that.

[00:16:27.210] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. There are no promises that it will go easy just because you're called, and I think both of us could attest to, it will challenge your faith in ways that you never thought possible.

[00:16:41.590] - Lisa Qualls

But we're here for you. Whatever you choose to do. We are here for you and want to support you in your adoption journey.

[00:16:48.460] - Melissa Corkum

We are. So if you have a question for a future mentor moment, we invite you to either post in our Facebook group at theadoptionconnection.com/FACEBOOK, type your question with Mentor Moment or you can call to our Listener hotline. It doesn't ring anywhere, so you can call day or night, no matter where you are in the world. And the number to leave us a question is 208-741-3880.

[00:17:17.510] - Lisa Qualls

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as The Adoption Connection.

[00:17:25.270] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:17:35.360] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:17:42.490] - Speaker 3

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