

# Lisa

**Rick:** [00:00:00] All right. Welcome again, to the Think Orphan Podcast. This is Rick Morton, along with Phil Darke. Excited for another day to come talk to you a little bit about orphaned and vulnerable children and some of the things that are happening in the world today. Phil, how are you today, buddy?

**Phil:** [00:00:14] I'm doing real well and I'm doing even better because I have no doubt that we're going to have a great conversation today with our guest. And I know you've been excited about this guest as well. Yeah.

**Rick:** [00:00:26] Absolutely man, this is one of those that I have, been anticipating since the season started and, just really, really excited about this author and this book and just her experiences and so really excited to get into the conversation.

**Phil:** [00:00:40] So without anymore. Cause, Rick and I, we could, as, you know, folks we could talk on and on and we can laugh and we could talk about all kinds of different things right now, which we won't get into because we want to get right to our guests. Who's Lisa Qualls and, Lisa has been writing a blog for a few years, called "One Thankful Mom."

She is a mom of a lot of kids. just kinda like Rick and I have a lot of kids as well, but she has more than us. She might have more than us combined. But, she wrote a book also with, the one and only Karyn Purvis and it's called *The Connected Parent: Real Life Strategies for Building Trust and Attachment*.

We're going to have the pleasure of being able to talk with her about that in a couple minutes. But before we get into the interview, I want to make sure that you, remember to, join the Facebook group. If you haven't already think orphan Facebook group, you can. Have deeper conversations with us, you can get a sneak, peeks at some different things and get opportunities, maybe to get some different, things that our guests have offered.

Like Robert Glover did, in his interview. Also make sure to rate, review the show and subscribe, it's just to share it with whoever you think will be able to, benefit from this show, which, really is anybody as, if you're listening. So with those things, I just, I just. Thank you for being a part of the show.

Thank you for downloading this. Thank you for engaging this conversation, which is really making a difference in the lives of orphan and vulnerable children around the world. And for that, we are grateful and we are excited to see how you are using this. So let us know. Some of those ways that, God is using this podcast in your life to help you to love the orphaned and the vulnerable in your midst, better and better.

So with that, let's get to this interview where we're going to learn some more of those things to help us to love the children better. So without any more for me and Rick here's Lisa.

Lisa Qualls. Welcome to the Think Orphan podcast.

**Lisa:** [00:02:39] Thank you so much for having me.

**Phil:** [00:02:41] Yeah, both Rick and I are so excited, as we talked a little bit beforehand, we've been looking forward to this, interview for a really, really long time and, very blessed to have the book that you and, Karyn were able to write together.

And we're going to get the chance to talk a little bit about it. So, The first thing that we ask, most of our guests is actually usually one of the favorite responses that I get every time. Cause I love story, but can you just briefly share your story and your passion for orphaned and vulnerable children and how you ended up writing a book with Karyn Purvis?

**Lisa:** [00:03:13] Well, that is actually a very big question. So I'll try to condense it down. I always had a very, empathetic heart. I was always really interested in caring for children. When I was in college, I worked at a group home for kids who needed a higher level of care than regular foster care could provide.

So that was always something that I was interested in. And actually I am a former foster youth. And so I thought that at some time in my life, I would want to do for someone would have been done for me and maybe foster, but we went on to have a large family by birth. And I was very busy with all of my children, homeschooling and everything.

And then in 2006, some friends of ours call to tell us that they were adopting two little boys from Ethiopia. And I remember that conversation so well because I feel. Like God moved on my heart, And just something sort of broke open in me. And I thought, maybe this is something that we should do.

Maybe, we need to learn about this. And so of course we started reading, we started learning, we started talking to people and praying a lot and we decided to adopt as well. And we decided to adopt from Ethiopia and that. Changed our lives completely forever. We started out with a plan of adopting two little boys younger than our youngest daughter.

We were also sponsoring a little girl at an orphanage where all of the children were living with HIV. We found out that her orphanage was hoping that we would adopt her as well, which completely stunned us. We had no idea. Anybody was thinking that, and in 2006, we really did not know very much about HIV.

We had a lot to learn, but we were. I would say it was one of the more powerful experiences of my life, of being compelled by the Holy Spirit. And we really believed that we were meant to adopt her as well. So we decided to adopt her. So in 2007, we traveled to Ethiopia to meet our children and bring them home.

And we met another little girl while we were there and brought her home the following year. And so really in a very short time, we adopted four unrelated children through two different agencies. So it was very complex, but it was, it was good. It was what we were meant to do. And there's a lot to the story of how I ended up writing the book with Dr. Purvis, but really the reason I even found Dr. Purvis is because we were very quickly plunged into the deep with our children. one of our kids in particular had experienced just such

extreme adversity and her behaviors were very, very difficult. And because I had begun writing a blog, I started blogging before we brought our kids home.

So in 2006, I started writing a blog and for a long time, I did not share the hard, because at that point, I think in the church, we were all like, everybody should adopt, And I didn't want just because we were having a difficult time, I didn't want to discourage anybody. But when I finally started to get a little bit honest, people just became, flooding forward.

Yes, we're struggling. We need help. And through a lot of writing, One of my readers actually introduced me to Dr. Purvis and the connected child. So that is how I found her.

**Phil:** [00:06:44] That's great. And so you found Dr. Purvis, and you were just blown away by her work. I I'm assuming. Cause we all are. And so then.

Yeah, but that doesn't most people that are blown away by Dr. Purvis's work don't end up on a book cover with her though. So I'm just, so how did that, there's probably a little bit more to the story than it just happened. Right? Well,

**Lisa:** [00:07:10] this is true. This is true. I wasn't sure him how much you wanted me to go.

**Phil:** [00:07:13] I want to hear it. I want to hear it. Okay. If I want to hear it. Yeah.

I think others want to hear it too. So when you think Rick, you want to hear it.

**Rick:** [00:07:20] Absolutely.

**Lisa:** [00:07:21] Okay. Well, I will tell you, so this blog of mine, when I read the connected child, I began learning all of this stuff and I'm, I'm a person who is, I am going to suffer something.

Or if I'm going to learn something, I want to share it with other people, And so. I began writing about everything. I was learning. Like I would write a blog post about the ideal response and a blog post about scripts. And I just mentioned her over and over. And I mentioned the book over and over because the book is actually still quite new.

The book I think was published in 2007, maybe. And so I was just writing what I was learning and writing and writing. And then I had an opportunity to go to a CAFO conference and. Dr. Purvis and Michael Monroe were speaking, Michael and Amy, Dr. Purvis founded Empowered to Connect. And after they gave a talk, I went up to talk to Michael and we're chatting and he said, wait a minute.

And I must assist something about having a blog. You said, wait a minute, what's your name? And I tell them, he said, we've been following you. We've been wondering who you are, because they were seeing all my posts. So through that, I began writing for them for empowered to connect. And I wrote a number well, quite a number of posts for them.

And as we got to know each other more. they invited me to begin speaking with them. And so there was a season where I was speaking at the Empowered to Connect conferences, mostly as my experience. As a parent and learning all of these new things about connected

parenting trust-based parenting. And so I spoke with him for a time and it was during that time that I got to know Dr. Purvis, and I was able to tell her my idea for this book. And she thought it was a great idea. And that was the beginning. And that was probably in 2011.

**Phil:** [00:09:17] that's really cool. And that's what I love. that's, what's so great folks. Rick and I have both written books and we know that it's kind of funny and you probably know this as well now, cause you you've written a book and you've written it with Dr. Purvis, but people think that authors are not really approachable and and they're like, Oh, they're an author or they're this or they're that right? And the reality is that, most anyway, the ones you want to work with, the ones that you actually want to hang out with are very approachable.

And it's people put, we like, we have a celebrity culture and people put people on pedestals and it's kind of ridiculous. And Rick and I talk about that all the time. Not kinda, it's totally ridiculous, but that's, what's so awesome about this is Dr. Purvis, who wrote this amazing book.

That's probably the best seller of all adoption or foster care books ever written. Is one of the most was one of those approachable people you'll ever meet. Just an amazing woman. I just remember the conversations that I had with her over the years at CAFO and just what an amazing, just a model servant leader for us.

And, so you know that as well with your nodding, I can tell. but you know, the book is so special too. And folks, if you haven't grabbed it out there, grab it, *The Connected Parent*. If you're listening to this, it's something you need to, you need to check out because, and even if you don't parent children from hard places, people who do.

And so I think it's so helpful to be able to, to see this. And one of the things that I love about the book and I talk about this all the time in the show, I talk about this with anybody who will listen really is the need to bridge theory and practice. And this book is such a blend of that. It's a blend of the theory practice gap, or, I mean, it bridges that theory practice gap, really.

So can you discuss that aspect of the book and why you thought it was so important to have a solid dose of both.

**Lisa:** [00:11:00] Yes. I am very, very thankful for all the experts. I have learned so much and their books fill my shelves. But when we were in hard, hard moments, I can literally remember a time where I was kneeling in front of my bookcase.

Well, my daughter was screaming and out of control and I'm pulling the books off, trying to find the right one, the one that's going to have an answer for me, and what I found with a lot of the books that I read was that they were written by people who are not living my life. And I have so much respect for all of them because they've brought something that I can't, but I wanted to know what does it really, really look like?

Like what does it, what does a redo really look like when your child is struggling and what, what actually happens if you say to your kid, try that again with respect, like, like I wanted to

know how do you really do it and how do you really do it when you have a bunch of kids with a bunch of needs? It's not like I had one child that I could just laser-focus on that one child and apply to everything. I was learning. I had all of these children who had needs and I had dinner to cook and homeschooling to do. And so I wanted to know how it really, really worked, but I didn't know anybody that I could ask, because I think we were all learning this. A lot at the same time, it was all new.

And so I thought, wouldn't it be great if we could take my life as a real mom who messes up all the time. This morning, I had to have a redo of my own with my son because I'm missing handle something. And, so I needed the redo. So, what would it be like to take that the real life and combine it with really the brilliance and the giftedness of Dr. Purvis and put it side by side. And so, the way we wrote the book is every single chapter starts with stories about my family. And then we get the information from Dr. Purvis and then we close with another story. And so I think it, it really brings it all together for people to see what it really looks like in a family.

**Phil:** [00:13:15] Absolutely. I felt like I was in your house. I mean, I was like, I, I feel like I could come hang out and know you guys, which is, which is so cool. And what's so cool. And I talk about this, this as well, all the time, and Rick's heard it over and over, and people who've listened to the show, know this, that, I have not adopted, I have never fostered, but I can tell you that these principles also apply in my home too.

Right. And I, I talked to my wife, I'm like, did you have a difficult pregnancy with a certain child? I'm not going to name names. And because, I mean, you were seeing things that, when you have a difficult with these, these things manifest and they come out and, and I, I see these things and I'd imagine that you probably see it in your adopted children and your biological children the same.

Am I right there?

**Lisa:** [00:13:57] Oh yeah. I mean, when we really learned. TBRI. We were extremely fortunate because Russ and I both were able to go to TCU and do the TBRI training together. And I just remember looking at each other and thinking, wow, we wish we'd parented all of our kids this way. Because there's just something so beautiful about it.

About really connecting deeply with your child's heart and building trust and attachment. And yeah, I think it applies to everyone. And honestly, even my children, they apply it to their friends. like we talked about looking beyond the behaviors and things, and my kids are really pretty perceptive because they've learned so much.

**Phil:** [00:14:36] Yeah. And that's one of the things that I could, I could tell just from reading, just from, or in my case, as folks, I say reading, I mean listening to the book, which was actually great in this instance, because Lisa does read the book and I love it when authors read the book because you hear the intonations, you hear what they really meant when they were writing and it takes it, the words off the page.

But, one of the things that you talk about, and, and it's, it's so critical and I love as you talk about the concept of being a detective and you really kind of just got into it there too. It's

you know, why is it, what is that concept being at a detective as a parent and why is it so important in our parenting of our children?

**Lisa:** [00:15:16] I think most of us will, many of us in the church. Have been taught to parent our children based on looking at their behavior and managing their behavior. I mean, definitely in the tradition we came from, you wanted your children. I mean, first time obedience, perfectly respectful, and, and it was really important to me, sadly that my children not only looked good themselves, but they made me look kind of good. Like I looked like a good mom, but what I began to learn is that behavior, what we can see on the outside is really just a small reflection of what's really going in, going on inside our children. And that we have to look at that behavior, but then we have to look beyond that behavior and figure out what is the real need here?

What is it that my child is expressing to me? I tell parents, our children are always speaking to us and sometimes they use words, but a lot of times they're using their behavior to show us something and they won't even necessarily know what their real need is. They may know they feel mad, but they may not even realize where, where is that mad feeling coming from?

So we have to get really good I think at being curious about our children and being curious about their behaviors. And I could share a little story with you if you'd like, okay. A moment with my daughter, she was probably about. I'd say maybe nine or so. And it was Christmas time and some really dear friends, like family had invited her to go to a Christmas performance with them.

And I thought she'd be really excited about it. But the, as the evening, as the time was approaching, we put on her pretty dress. She didn't like the dress and we got all, we were getting ready and she was just getting really argumentative. And really every, all her movements were getting really, really quick.

And I thought, wow, what is going on? And I was finally able to realize that she was afraid. She was afraid of something. I didn't know what it was, but I could tell there was some fear driving this kind of frantic behavior. And finally, I was able to pull her close and say, tell me what you need. And she said, will there be food there?

And I said, well, no, it's a concert. There won't be food. Do you need food with you? And she said, yes. And she had been through such severe, food scarcity and malnutrition. And so we got a little bag out and I packed snacks for her to take to this concert, because what would have been easy to think and say is something like, you are really not behaving well, I'm not sure you can really handle going to this concert.

I'm not sure you're really a big enough girl to go out in the evening for this. Like I could have gone down that road of looking at that behavior and maybe even shaming her a little bit. The truth was that behavior was really about her fear of hunger.

**Rick:** [00:18:20] Yeah. That's awesome. Lisa, I have been so excited to have this conversation and for us to, to dig into this.

And I think it's because of, one, because I think this book is something that a whole lot of us have hoped for, for a long time. And, and have really felt like there's, there's the need for, for that, kind of bringing it down to the practical parenting level, but, but one of the things I want to do is I just wanted to talk through a little bit with you because I like to Phil said.

I think sometimes there are, there are impressions of people who, you know, who write books and people who, kind of are out there and, and, notable to people. And, and I think a great part of, of your story is the fact that it's, that it's pretty conventional for somebody who, kind of adopted along the time.

And, we, we brought our first child home in 2003. And so we kind of were in that same, in that same season of time when pre-adoptive education was a social worker, hand me a few books and hoping you read them and, and, and there just wasn't a lot to it. And, and so, and I think there, there are a lot of us, and maybe there are still people that are out there today, depending on, what their adoption experience looks like that, th that, maybe went into their adoption a little naive.

And, and, and maybe stepped in thinking that the hard part was the home study and the, the stuff to get to a child. And, and then, they had that experience like we all did of coming home and closing the door behind us and all the social workers were, were, were out of her lives as much as they had been and the trips were over and all those kinds of things were done.

And now we had, now we had to be a family. And, and so I'd love for you just to kind of talk about that about in that season. When, when you first brought your children home, practically, what were some of the challenges you face? What was the. Yeah. What was the, what was the thing that you experienced during that time?

And, just kind of helping people relate a little bit to the, to the place where you were.

**Lisa:** [00:20:26] Well, first of all, I think we went into this knowing it would be hard, but having really no idea of what that meant. And not only that. Having no idea how long it was going to be. Like, I mean, I remember thinking, of course, they're going to have a hard time, of course it's going to take time for them to trust us.

Of course, it's going to take time for them to know that they're safe. The reality is for us, that children who've experienced so much adversity and broken attachments. I think sometimes it's a lifetime of healing. I have kids who are young adults now, and we are still building trust and we're still making mistakes and having to forgive and reconnect and just keep going, building trust.

But yeah. The hardest part for us was that our, our one daughter was just so aggressive and so volatile and more extreme than a lot of families will experience. However, I meet many, many adoptive parents who are dealing with very difficult behaviors and her behavior took so much attention and so much time that it was very hard to take care of the other children.

I have a, I have a 20 year, age span among my kids. Yeah. And so I had been a mom a really long time. First of all, I'd been a mom for 20 years and I thought I was really good at it, but I

will say that the experience of not knowing how to turn the ship around that we were, we felt like all of a sudden our life had been on a certain path and now it was completely derailed and we did not know how to pull it back together. And we didn't know what to do when she was screaming and head budding and scratching. I mean, it was really, really scary for us. And it took a while for me to admit to anybody how bad it was. I didn't want anybody to know, because I felt like such a terrible failure.

I think we felt very ashamed.

**Rick:** [00:22:32] And I, and I think there's a, I think there's a spiritual piece to that. I think there's a spiritual fair piece to that. And that sometimes the church can be the most difficult environment for that because, because we, we sometimes have gone through really public, journeys to adoption and there's a, and I think there's a tendency to almost live behind a facade.

Because we don't want to, we don't want to disappoint not only our church community, but people see it as letting God down, like it, like, there's a, like, like we've like we've done something and, and we can't tell the truth now because, because somehow that's going to dishonor God when, when we talk about how difficult it is and, and the journey that we're on.

**Lisa:** [00:23:12] Well, and I didn't want to discourage anybody, I didn't want anybody to be like, Oh, that's looking really bad. Maybe we should. I mean, I really believed that the need was so great. And there were so many children who needed families. And so I didn't want to discourage anyone. And, our church had come together so many beautiful people, donated money to help us bring our children home.

I didn't want to let them down, I didn't want them to know that I was feeling like an utter failure, and this went so deep to my core. I'd always believed I was a good mom and I began to really doubt that I was who I thought I was. I, it still chokes me up just talking about it.

I remember writing a post years, 10. I don't know how many years ago, a long time ago titled "I used to be a good mom" because I felt like a good mom. And then all of a sudden it was like, it was all pulled up from under me and I felt almost helpless and I felt afraid. And we finally got to the point where we reached out for help and we were some of the fortunate people who actually found good help, it is not easy to find.

**Rick:** [00:24:18] And I was curious about that just to kind of dig in a little more because I, because I do think that's kind of common to the journey that you know, that a lot of us have been on and, and it's, it's sort of hit or miss, there are, there are those folks that, that reach out and find helpful resources. And then there are others that are in communities where those things are few and far between if they're there at all. And so your experience was that as you reached out, you, you kind of found some things that were, that were helpful. Is that, would that be the way you would?

Yes and no?

**Lisa:** [00:24:48] Yes and no. Well, we live in a smallish town, I mean, we've got lots of professionals here and things, but we don't have a lot of specialists and things. We have to go a couple hours, but, At the point where I realized that we needed help, I just went for the big guns. I called the U.Niversity of Washington, which is about 300 miles away.

And we have an adoption medicine clinic. Like I was not going to mess around. Once I was, I was like looking at where we are falling apart in such a big way that we need serious help. So I called the adoption medicine clinic. I got an appointment and I'll never forget taking my daughter and the doctor, the specialist was an adoptive mom. I mean, how beautiful is that? And my daughter was so challenging that the, the doctor came out to the children's play area in their waiting area to talk with me so that we wouldn't even have to deal with trying to bring her back right away, but I remember telling her, I don't know if I can go on, but I don't want to miss what God is going to do in my daughter's life.

And that doctor, she gave us hope. And she gave us medication. She gave us, she knew all the tests that needed to be done. Like she thought of things that a regular doctor wouldn't have thought of. And she gave us a referral to one of the best therapists in the country who was also in Seattle. It took awhile, it took awhile to get in, but she changed.

She changed our lives.

**Rick:** [00:26:14] Sure. And I, and I think, I hope, I hope our listeners hear that as, as they're, as they're processing that, sometimes I think there is a, there's a bit of a, well, I could never get in and see those people. I could never interact with those people. I mean, even your story about Karyn and kind of the initial connection and, and many times perceiving that those people are at a distance and they're not accessible to us.

but I think the thing we've learned over the years is that, that they, they are in the places where they are doing the things that they do because they want to help. And, and they, and they want to be accessible and we need to be persistent sometimes in order to get into the right places. And, and, and those are, those are not easy things to do sometimes, but, but in incredibly, incredibly worth it. You, you talked a little bit about your church and, and one thing I would, I would put a plug in here for as well is I know the book is written to parents.

This is a great book for churches to pick up as well. And I think, as, as we've kind of grown in this and grown through it over the years, I mean, one of the things that as a pastor, that's really kind of been a, a passion piece of this for me is to say, we've, we've called a generation of families out to foster and adopt, and we've seen, we've seen God move in amazing ways.

And, in bringing the church to, to bear in, in this space, but church is sometimes one of the hardest places to go. And one of the hardest places to be, because it just, there's so many, there's so many triggers. There's so many things that are, and it's just really hard to understand and to explain some of the things that we're trying to do and connected parenting and, and, and those things.

And so I would, I would say, and I just want to put a plug in to say, if you're out there and you're a church leader or a pastor, Lisa's book is, is full of stuff that is useful to your, the

people that are working and volunteering in your church and useful to families and useful to extended family.

And, and, and some of it is it's. It's good to be able to connect and hear why families are doing what they're doing. And so that you can begin to kind of learn the, learn the ways that you can support them. And, and sometimes not derail the things you know, that are going on. Obviously you guys.

And, and sometimes people get a little nervous when I, when I use this terminology, but you, but, but being an adopted family, a lot of times means being a blended family, right? Like, you've like, you've got a, biological family that you then are, introducing kids to, and there's, there's that, that need for, for blending.

And it changes the dynamics kind of for everybody. like how did, how did your bio kids experience your adoption?

**Lisa:** [00:29:00] It's so interesting that you asked me that because I'm actually my, my next book then I'm working on is about the sibling experience of, and it's not really just bio versus adopted. It's like, you've got this, this crew of kids and your family, everything's kind of stable.

And then you bring in children with such severe needs. And so. I have spent a lot of time talking with my kids and we actually have been able to speak together at some different events about what that experience was like for them. Honestly, their lives were entirely changed, entirely changed the family that we were really was broken and we had to rebuild into a new family. And I, I have to believe it's beautiful to the glory of God. It's a whole lot messier, a whole lot. we looked very neat and tidy before. I mean, we were normal, but you know, it all looked pretty good. And then it looked like a train wreck. And so we really had to become a new family and

I think for my kids, one of my daughters once said, my mom and dad wanted to help children who didn't have parents and as a result, I lost mine. Yeah. Because it felt like they lost us. I mean, as thankful as I am for the therapy that we did with our daughter, we traveled every other weekend, 300 miles each way for therapy and all that time, we were away from all our other kids. And just my attention, my energy so much was focused on the kids with the biggest needs.

And so. Our other kids got lost in the shuffle a lot. And we had to do a lot of repair work with them, but thankfully they're really wonderful, amazing people. And I think that they've, they know that we were doing our best and I think that's, that's one thing that happens with kids a lot is they know their parents are having such a hard time that they don't want to pile on any more needs. And so thankfully our kids know now that we were doing our best, but that we did make some mistakes and that they needed a lot more support than what they had. I wish we'd prioritize them more from the beginning. I wish it would have been more proactive to make sure there was enough support in place for them.

**Rick:** [00:31:19] Well, thanks for sharing that though. I think that's, and I think that's such a powerful word for people that are, that are in it now and are in, are working through those

issues. And I would, I would also throw in that, Giving space for grief and loss and all of that is so huge. And I think, I think sometimes we're, so we're so caught up in captivated in the, in the, in the trauma conversation and, and about the, about the need for attachment and, and the results of trauma that we, we fail to recognize some things that are just plain old grief and loss.

And, and it's, and, and I, like, I have a very tangible memory of sitting down with one of our kids and, in the, in the aftermath of one of our adoptions and like the two of us just weeping and it was like, he, he confessed and said like, I, I miss our old wife, and, and just to be able to kind of sit in that song and to say, you know what, I miss it too.

**Lisa:** [00:32:17] Yeah.

**Rick:** [00:32:18] Like, and that doesn't, that doesn't say anything negative. What about, about, about where we are, who we are today, but I think to like wall that off and not, and not go there, that, that there are a lot of families that are, that are kind of experiencing some of those, pent up emotions and unsaid things that, It's hard and God, but yeah, God brings incredible, incredible beauty out of that.

And so I, I really, I thank you because, because I think that you have, you've really put out an honest book and, and you've, and you've really led out into an honest conversation. And so one adoptive parents who another, it's just. it, it, it's, it's a book that I can not recommend highly enough.

And, just thanks for coming in and, being a part of this today, we were, incredibly privileged.

**Lisa:** [00:33:07] Well, thank you. This has been, it's you can imagine what an honor it is to have written this book and what a responsibility it is. And, I want to carry forward my understanding of Dr.

Purvis's work and just encourage other parents and help us all to press on, this is a, this is a lifetime journey for sure.

**Rick:** [00:33:28] Absolutely. Well, and I think you've done great honor to that work, so, thanks.

**Phil:** [00:33:33] Yeah. And, and to kind of piggyback on that, Not so much the adoptive parent to adoptive parent conversation because I can't do that with the, idea of yeah.

just really carrying on the legacy of, of Dr. Purvis and the TBRI, training the principles, just the amazing work that she was able to do in her time here on earth. And, and, you, you talked earlier about learning and being able to go to those and, and. Get the privilege of going to TCU and learning those principles to help you really, when you were just going that period that you just talked about.

Right? I mean, a lot of that time to just go, please, Lord, give us something. And so with that, what were just a few of the principles? Maybe, maybe not a few, maybe one or two of the principles that were like that you really needed at the time. And, and what were really the

difficult cycles habits to break as a, as a parent, that those principles taught you to, to be able to do.

**Lisa:** [00:34:36] Well, for sure. One of the hardest things for me to break was seeing my children's behaviors as choices that they were making, and realizing that a lot of times they, they were actually doing their best. It didn't look like it, it didn't feel like it, but they were often so flooded with all of the dysregulation in their brains that it'd be, it becomes a, not that they won't do what we need them to do, but that they can't. And I think it, it helped me to see my children with more compassionate eyes to not, be so quick to assume that they don't want to do what I want them to do. And so I think that helped me a lot.

Probably one of the best principles for me. And I mentioned earlier is really trying to ask my children, tell me what you need. Karen used to say it in this beautiful way. accent, she'd say, tell me what you need and I'll move heaven and earth to meet that need. But I'll tell you that question.

If a child can calm enough to answer that question, it's just so powerful. So I think that was one of the more important things. gosh, learning about sensory things from her. I had no idea about sensory and how much, one of my children, I thought for sure, had a really significant attachment problem because of resistance to touch and affection and everything.

And it. It opened my eyes to consider the fact that, Oh, actually, maybe there's a sensory issue here, which turned out to be the case. So, I mean, I could go on and on and on. I think learning to use scripts. Such an efficient way to parent kids, using really simple, short phrases that the children understand and know what they mean.

So all of those things

**Rick:** [00:36:27] I'm going to duck in and just kind of one specific thing that I, that I love that you really kind of dig into in the book. And I'll, I'll kind of approach it maybe from a little more of a clinical way of saying it, but you talk about like adult attachment styles. You talk about our attachment styles as parents and how, how that influences and like how, how much of a, of a powerful thing was that to, to realize that it's not just about, it's not just about our kids and it's not just about the way that they attach, but it's, it's our expectation and, and what we're craving and what we're. the way that we think is, is normal. like was that a, like what, talk a little bit about the journey of kind of discovering that and, and maybe when the light bulb went on and, and, and ways that you've, you found to be aware of that personally.

**Lisa:** [00:37:15] Well, I'll be honest. When I first started hearing a lot of talk about how we bring our attachment styles and our, our stuff into the relationship and we share responsibility. I was like, are you kidding me? I am already feeling like a horrible, horrible mother. I cannot handle anything. And now you're telling me maybe it's all my fault.

Thank you.

**Rick:** [00:37:38] Thank you. Thank you. But no, it's, you're like you're dead on. That is so true.

**Lisa:** [00:37:44] I just felt like someone was kicking me when I was already down. And, then once I began to hear about it from a more compassionate perspective, where I didn't feel like someone was pointing fingers at me, but someone was saying, wow, we can, we can actually learn some things about ourselves that will help us meet our kids' needs, but then I was able to have some compassion for myself and really start exploring, reading. What's the book I'm trying to think of *Parenting From the Inside Out* hopeful, like what is it, why do I feel this when this happens? Yep. He can explore back. We have to be curious about ourselves too, but yeah, it's everything.

**Rick:** [00:38:24] I just, I just wanted to get that out on the table because I think it's so important for our listeners to hear that. And that sometimes we, when we get into this and we're so focused on our kids there, this, this journey sort of like it. It stirs stuff up in us. It brings, you know, I tell, I tell the story often with Russell Moore, that when Russ and I were teaching together I was kinda having a whiny you know time in moving toward our adoption, and I made the comment at some point, he asked me how I was doing. I said I'm terrible, I don't know if I can do this. And it was home study stuff.

And, and he, he kind of backed me up in a corner. I don't put his finger in my face a little bit and said, you know what? You're going to hear things about, about God through this process that you would have no other way of knowing. And, and, and what he didn't go on to say at that point. And I don't think he knew it at that time.

Maybe as much either is a lot of the ways that you figure out about a lot of things you figure out about guys is figuring out how you're not like it. And, and about how we're not that perfect parent and we're, we don't have, that perspective. And I think, I just, I just love the way you deal with that in, in the book and kind of talk through that.

And, and I think it's just a really, it's a really healthy way to approach something that for a lot of us, honestly, is a really uncomfortable conversation.

**Lisa:** [00:39:45] Well, I remember when we talked about putting that chapter in the book and I was like, okay, the only way I can do it is if we do it with a ton of compassion, because I know what this brought up in me, and it was judgment and failure.

So, so I think we, I think we handle it really beautifully. And of course we're just touching on it. It's one chapter. But I think it will hopefully help other parents just begin to explore and think about it.

**Rick:** [00:40:09] Well from some of the rest of us out here. Thank you. Because it was, that was a, that was, that was very definitely well handled and, and something I really, I'm excited for our listeners to, to jump in and to, to see in the book if they haven't already picked up a copy.

**Phil:** [00:40:24] Yeah. And, and I think to, just, to, just to take that a little bit further, you talk about that in that attachments and all that, that you guys just discussed, but really they're beyond that. It goes deeper, too. A lot of times parents struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, because their adoption experiences are hard. As you talked about that fairy tale, I remember

earlier in this season we had Karen Springs and she wrote the book, *Adoption Through the Rear View Mirror*, about how it's beyond the happily ever after.

But you don't hear that story. I know you didn't a lot of times beforehand. And as you said, you started writing about it. You got floods of information, but what would you say if people haven't read the book? If people haven't read your blog, what would you say right now? You not, what would you say. You have the opportunity to talk with those people right now, who feel that shame and guilt and just saying, you know what, this isn't what we imagined.

This isn't that fairy tale that we heard about. and what would you say to them who are struggling and really feeling defeated and alone in their adoption?

**Lisa:** [00:41:26] Well, first of all right there, you are not alone. I work with so many families and parents who are experiencing this, where they're, they're giving it their all.

And their all does not seem to be enough, And I think. What we have to fight back against is the shame that comes up in so many of us. And I very quickly went to shame because shame tends to cause us to withdraw and leads to isolation, and it can lead us down some really dark roads with our own mental health, with depression, with all kinds of things, marriages fall apart, and sometimes it can even get dangerous if families will not reach out for help, if they will not admit

how deep the struggle is it can become really harmful for everybody. So even if a parent doesn't know someone in their real life, in their community, who they can be really honest with, you need to find somebody because, and there are Facebook communities. I even have a small membership group just for moms where we get real with each other.

And, but you've got to have at least one person who you can be honest with who can be your safe person so that when you feel like you are losing it and you don't know if you can go on, they will tell you remember, remember why you did this. Remember who God says, you are, remember who God says your child is?

we need people who will point us back to Jesus, because it's easy to find communities where the people will tear their children down. And kind of band together against how rotten their kids are. That will not help. It will not help. We need to be surround ourselves with people that are going to call us up, who are going to be like, yeah, this is so hard.

And. God is here. He has not left you. He's not left your children. And I can remember one night Russ and I literally lying in bed, holding hands and crying. And just, I just kept saying, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever over and over. He's like, we need people to remind us of that and that we're, we are laying down our lives and the people who say things like, are you sure you heard God?

Oh, my word. I mean, I've had, I had a pastor's wife tell me they were adopting from foster care and someone said, if it's this hard, maybe you weren't supposed to do this. And I told her, you need to tell that person to read the Bible, because think about, I think about the apostle Paul being shipwrecked.

That's the one that every time comes to my mind, like, I'm pretty sure he was doing what God called him to do. And it looked literally like a ship wreck. We need to encourage one another and, and it would always be this way,

**Phil:** [00:44:09] In the word, but when things get hard, you really wonder whether people believe what they say they believe, because it's all throughout scripture, as you said, Paul. I mean, a lot of the problem is people don't read those parts. They stay away from them because sermons don't get preached about those parts, And, and that is, I think it's a detriment to all of us. And I think what you talked about there is so critical. One of the things you said there is to have that person who you can not only take refuge in, With that person in the Lord, but they will speak truth in your life and remind you of the truth and not all this other junk that is out there.

And, yeah, so that's, that's beautiful. Love it.

**Rick:** [00:44:51] That's incredible. Well, so Lisa, if you were to, if you were to kind of boil it all down and say like, what's the, what's the one most important thing that, that you think you have learned as an adoptive parent?

**Lisa:** [00:45:07] Well, I would say. this has been an incredibly humbling experience and the most, the deepest growth for me that I could ever imagine. But probably the thing I've learned is that at the end of the day, my goal, my aim, is to trust and obey the Lord. And it is actually not my job to heal my children. My job is to serve and love to the very best of my ability and to trust the great healer to do all that I can't do because I can't, I'm, I'm very flawed and very human. And so I, I just have to cast myself on the Lord a lot, even now. I mean, yes, I wrote this book, but I am still in the thick of it. I'm still parenting middle-schoolers, that'll take you to your knees.

**Phil:** [00:45:59] That will definitely bring you to your knees. I can relate. Yeah. so, wow. Yeah. So you mentioned that book that you just held up, which we know about we've talked about, but, what, what, what are, what's something you else you've read, watched or listened to recently that has impacted your thinking on how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children with excellence?

**Lisa:** [00:46:21] Well, a book I read, not too long ago that I found really interesting and really helpful was *Beyond Behaviors* by Mona Delahooke. Really, really interesting about the brain and behaviors. And I found that book to be really encouraging. It's not a spiritual book in any way, but I, it, it just gave me some more information that I found helpful.

The other book that I received recently, that is just wonderful. Is a book actually for children, but it's great for parents called *Riley the Brave* by Jessica Sinarski. It is so, so good because it's intended what it does is it talks about little Riley who has, has had a very hard things happen.

They never say what and how heW Has developed these behaviors to protect himself. And those behaviors were made him brave. Like he could be like a tiger and he could be like a turtle and, and then some safe adults for safe critters come into his life. And the brave thing he has to learn to do is to trust them.

So it's really beautiful. I've been talking about it a lot and telling people to buy it because I think it's so great.

**Phil:** [00:47:31] Well, now you've told some more people to buy it, so I have to go check that out too. That's a book I might be able to actually read. So,

**Lisa:** [00:47:50] There's some great illustrations. Very colorful

**Rick:** [00:47:51] There's probably not an audio book version.

**Phil:** [00:47:51] Yeah, I know. I'm bummed

**Lisa:** [00:47:51] There's a whole section in the back for the adults. For every teacher. I just think it is a fantastic resource.

**Phil:** [00:47:51] Well, that's fantastic. Well, Rick, maybe you can buy it and you can read it to me.

**Rick:** [00:47:56] That's right. On our next episode,

**Phil:** [00:47:58] I would love that

**Rick:** [00:47:59] read it, me reading the children's book to Phil.

**Phil:** [00:48:01] That'd be great. that might be the most downloaded. so the last question we, we ask our guests is, is I think I may know the answer, but it may be something that surprises us.

What person has most impacted your thinking on how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children with excellence.

**Lisa:** [00:48:18] Well clearly Dr. Purvis. I mean, she changed so many things. She taught me so much and the Institute continues to just have such an amazing influence and it's so helpful for all of us. The other person I would say is Deborah Gray.

She wrote attaching and adoption and a number of other books. And we had the great privilege of her being our family's therapist for a period of time. And she was a very powerful force for healing in all of our lives.

**Phil:** [00:48:50] Well, Lisa, thank you so much. it's been such a pleasure and an honor, and a privilege to be able to spend this time with you. I'm very humbled by your life by, just listening to the book and hearing your, just what God has done in and through you through over this last, several

years. And I have no doubt, as you said, you're still in the thick of it. And I look forward to meeting you someday in person, when all this COVID stuff has gone and we can actually go and meet people in person again, I'm very much look forward to that. And, yeah, it's just thanks again for being a part of this.

**Lisa:** [00:49:25] Well, thank you so much. Yeah, it's been, it's been an honor. I love, I could talk about this all day long, so thank you for having me.

**Phil:** [00:49:33] Yup. Absolutely.

Thanks again, Lisa, such a great interview. I absolutely loved it. I know Rick. I know you did as well. Just, just listening to you throughout the interview, let alone, even before the interview, I had no doubt you're going to love it.

And then to, boy, did she deliver and then, so talk to me, man. What'd you think?

**Rick:** [00:49:54] Well, I just think, and I, I didn't, I didn't say this to her but I think she does such a great job of putting the cookies on the bottom shelf for parents. not to say that it's a simple book, but I think it's so accessible and, have heard so many times people that have have engaged, TBRI and, and even have done training. And then the scary moment when you began to try to figure out how to like, apply that in your own family, what do you do when it doesn't look like, kind of the theory in the book and, and she, she just cuts through that. And, and I think, obviously great expert pieces of the book from, from Dr. Purvis. And, and we're all thankful for that, but, but I think the real gold, honestly, in this book is, is then the, the stories and the, and the practical application. And, just, there are, there are people that are blessed to have great pre-adoptive and pre foster care education and to be ready to engage, their kids, in the hard things and from the past.

And, and there are some folks that kind of found their way into this, and they really haven't been prepared very well. and this is a book that's great for both of them. And so I just, I think, just love Lisa, her humility, her the way that she approaches this, And, and, and really, her heart.

I think one of the things to take away is, to not be caught up in, in like trying to manage our kids' behavior. Right, but that's, that's not our job. And, and, and, and not the outcome that we, that we really truly desire. And so anyway, big fan and I would, I would encourage, anybody that's out there, even if, if your role is more serving in, in, in the lives of, of vulnerable children. this is a book, there's something in it for you. So go grab a copy.

**Phil:** [00:51:51] I agree. And we are going to keep it short this because this a commentary time, because the interview did go a bit longer, but we wanted you to have that goodness from Lisa, rather than us, kinda ruin it afterwards, I mean, let's be honest. but, I, I do agree. I mean, the, one of the things that really sticks out to me and every time I hear it, I agree more and more, the more I, my kids get older and older because you can't make anyone do anything and you can't change anyone's behavior. That's the Holy Spirit's job in the heart of our children, our hearts of our children, the hearts of our friends, hearts of others.

And so I just wanna encourage you with that. Hopefully that word will, will encourage you and not frustrate you and not make you feel helpless. It's not helpless at all. You can do what you can encourage. You can love, you can, you can, discipline if that's your role as a parent, but do it in a way out of love, knowing that it's not your job to change the person.

It's your job to love really, really well. And God will mold them and shape them into the person that he wants them to be. So that's my encouragement to you right now. That's my takeaway from this time and, uh, the, be a detective. Don't don't think, you know, all the answers. That's the other thing that really stuck out to me.

So with that folks, I just want to encourage you to take everything that you learned, in this episode, everything that you're learning from, the different resources we're able to bring to you on this show. And I encourage you strongly to go grab the book, *The Connected Parent*, and you use it to help you to, to know how you can love orphaned and vulnerable children better and better each and every day.

Thanks a lot. Have a great week.