

**Go and Equip
Episode 213
Loving Little Biscuits**

00;00;20;20 - 00;00;21;29

Chandalee

Welcome to the podcast today.

00;00;21;29 - 00;00;31;16

Chandalee

We are super excited to introduce you guys to some friends of ours. This is Zeke and Shanda Arter with Little Biscuit Adoption Fund. Welcome, guys.

00;00;32;18 - 00;00;33;12

Jenn

Yes, thank you.

00;00;33;18 - 00;00;54;16

Chandalee

Well, we're going to be talking today about AHAVA, which is love in action and their lives exemplify love in action. Yes. So before we get started and having you guys tell us a little bit about your story of adoption and then what Little Biscuit is and how people can plug in with that and serve and give. I've got a very, very important question to ask.

00;00;54;20 - 00;01;07;04

Chandalee

Okay. It's gotten cold. We talked about that earlier. That it is it was like way in the fifties today for 49, I think this morning. This morning. So it's gotten cold. The important question might divide us.

00;01;07;16 - 00;01;08;08

Jenn

But that's okay.

00;01;09;15 - 00;01;11;10

Chandalee

Pumpkin spice or apple cinnamon?

00;01;12;07 - 00;01;14;24

Jenn

Mm hmm.

00;01;15;13 - 00;01;17;17

Shanda

I'm an apple spice girl. Yeah.

00;01;18;03 - 00;01;19;02

Chandalee

Yeah, me too.

00;01;19;11 - 00;01;19;27

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Zeke
I have.

00;01;19;27 - 00;01;37;02

Chandalee

To. Okay. Well, no division here today. Well, good. What about you, Sally? Apples. Really? You know what? I love? Both. Yeah, I enjoy both. And I think if you're talking about something to eat and something to smell, I might pick something different for each one of those, but.

00;01;37;13 - 00;01;41;29

Shanda

But, yeah, I like them both. I mean, if you're going to offer anything, I'll take either one, right?

00;01;42;06 - 00;01;43;16

Chandalee

Right. For sure.

00;01;43;27 - 00;01;44;10

Shanda

I won't be.

00;01;44;10 - 00;01;46;18

Jenn

Stingy.

00;01;47;05 - 00;01;58;08

Chandalee

Well, good. We're going to get to know a little bit about you guys and your story of adoption and how little biscuit was founded. So tell us a little bit about how you got Caleb and a little bit about that story.

00;01;59;16 - 00;01;59;20

Jenn

Yeah.

00;02;00;04 - 00;02;28;00

Shanda

I'll start. Yeah. So the adoption journey for us actually started a couple of years before we started our own adoption journey when we were going through a Bible study with our church. The Stuart Heights Baptist Church was doing a study in small group called It All Goes Back in the Box and know. Yes. And we were we were hosting our own small group at the restaurant that we were running at the time.

00;02;36;25 - 00;03;11;29

Shanda

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Then. Yes, there's a part of that Bible study that talks about the dash between your date of birth and your date of death and what that dash represents. And for us, at the time, we had three daughters. We had a successful business. We were comfortable all well with our life and busy, very busy, but comfortable to the point where we were talking about investing in what our investments would look like financially.

00;03;11;29 - 00;03;41;17

Shanda

And we were looking at maybe some property to invest in. And then I had witnessed and got to be a part of other families in our church who were going through an adoption journey themselves. And it kind of dawned on me that their investments were eternal investments through adopting children that needed homes and families. And so it sort of started to, I don't know, tug at my heart a little bit.

00;03;41;17 - 00;04;06;24

Shanda

And I was just like, Oh, that's really cool. I love that. I love their ministry. I love their ideas of just wanting to bring in children into their homes in all of that. And I think God started just tugging at my heartstrings. And then we had a family. We had, like I said, three daughters. We weren't looking to add to our family.

00;04;06;24 - 00;04;07;18

Zeke

We were done.

00;04;07;22 - 00;04;39;07

Shanda

We were done. We had made arrangements to be done. And we we didn't need to really investor and look into adding to our family at that time. And we and we were comfortable with that. And again, I go back to that word being comfortable just because, you know, even though we were busy, I think God was saying there's more, there's more, there's more, there's more in the investment that you really need to look at is something more eternal.

00;04;40;02 - 00;05;03;29

Shanda

And so that came on to me a couple of years before he and I actually talked about it. And I prayed about it because I thought, Oh, this is how do I bring this out? You know? And I mean, you know, we had a lot going on right now and we had never talked about adopting when we were dating or earlier.

00;05;04;02 - 00;05;36;00

Shanda

And we we we had children right away. We never even really ever discussed it. So when God started calling me to pray about it, I was really praying for him to be open to that discussion and that idea of opening our home. And it was a it was a

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fear for me to talk about because I don't know if I was afraid of getting the know or the.

00;05;36;00 - 00;05;37;11

Shanda

Yes, exactly.

00;05;37;11 - 00;05;38;28

Jenn

What if he says yes?

00;05;39;15 - 00;05;56;16

Shanda

What does that look like or or no? And it it just kind of becomes a sadness in my heart. But God is so good. And he knew exactly what he was doing because he opened that door. And I guess I'll let you take it from here where where that conversation came in.

00;05;56;22 - 00;06;00;09

Zeke

Yes, I remember. It all goes back in the box very differently than early.

00;06;01;17 - 00;06;03;25

Chandalee

Isn't that typical between men? It's true.

00;06;03;26 - 00;06;04;09

Jenn

Yes.

00;06;04;27 - 00;06;36;01

Zeke

Because like she said, we had just opened up the restaurant and, you know, just pouring ourselves into that. And that ultimately became a ministry as well. And I enjoyed it, loved it and at times missed that part. But it hit me at a different time. Then Chanda. And I would say probably a lot of that has to do with her prayer, just kind of softening my heart or my expectation for what that looked like.

00;06;37;15 - 00;07;01;26

Zeke

I had always wanted a son. My my dad and I have an amazing bond, an amazing relationship ever since I can remember. I mean, it's part of my life was growing up with him and and just him showing me teaching me so much. And he was my but he was my my person that I could always depend on.

00;07;01;26 - 00;07;39;25

Zeke

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And he was always there for me. And I just desire that. I craved that growing up to have a son of my own, that I could replicate that. And, you know, we had three girls and, you know, I wrestled with that for about 5 seconds after we found out that Brooklyn was our our final daughter. I wrestled with that for about 5 seconds, and it was kind of a oh, and then it was like, okay, God had given me such a peace about being a girl dad.

00;07;39;25 - 00;08;04;16

Zeke

And there's it's a beautiful thing. I love my girls and they are phenomenal. I'm so blessed to have three daughters, so amazing as as we do. And I had given up that that part of of wanting a son and it's funny because people would always joke with me like you're going to try for a boy. And I always point to Brooklyn.

00;08;04;16 - 00;08;46;12

Zeke

I said, That's my try for it. And, you know, deep down inside, it hurt a little bit because, you know, I had that desire and I didn't think that it would it would come to fruition here. And so in the spring of 2016, Shana was in the kitchen with the refrigerator door open, and I'm sitting down on the couch and it was master's time during the year, I think I was watching the Masters on TV and just sitting down and Shanda had called in from the kitchen and she just said, You know, you need a little buddy to play golf with.

00;08;46;12 - 00;09;13;16

Zeke

And I it it just all of a sudden hit me like, like I had seen like several of our church family members adopt in, in different ways, international domestic fostering and then fostering to adopt. And we knew adoption like my mother was adopted by her stepdad. I have a cousin who is adopted and have known about adoption my entire life and becoming a believer.

00;09;13;16 - 00;09;40;06

Zeke

You know that adoption is God's idea and you know that it is the gospel lived out, you know all these things. But then it hits you between the eyes. And her comment. To me it was for whatever reason, but God right. It just stuck with me and I was silent for probably what felt like 30 seconds or so.

00;09;40;28 - 00;09;53;16

Zeke

And I just looked at her and I said, Yeah, you know what I do? And she slammed the refrigerator door and she looked at me just as big odd as possible. And she said, What?

00;09;54;04 - 00;09;59;04

Shanda

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Because this was the door I was praying for. This was the opportunity to talk to him about it.

00;09;59;14 - 00;10;36;12

Zeke

Yeah. And so I said, Yeah, I think I do need a little buddy to. And that was in April of 16 and we just surfaced, talked it for a couple months. We didn't really put a whole lot of depth into our conversations. We just, you know, I that we did a pretty neat and very cool and yeah, I mean and there were days that, you know, that I would come home from the restaurant and I just didn't have a thing left to give.

00;10;36;12 - 00;10;49;14

Zeke

And I would just talk to her and I would say, Honey, I don't know that we can do this. Like, physically, I'm like, I am spent. I don't have anything left. How if we had a child, another child in here.

00;10;50;07 - 00;10;51;23

Jenn

How would I be able.

00;10;51;23 - 00;11;15;23

Zeke

To do that? And then there were days I would come home and I would just be like gung ho, like, yeah, let's do this, let's rock and roll. And it was that battle kind of between the those moments of, yeah, I think we could do this and there's no way. Yeah. And so we wrestled with that and then we started looking at cost and it was like, Oh my gosh, this is insane.

00;11;15;23 - 00;11;30;01

Zeke

Like I'm seeing some of these figures and it's a deterrent. It's, it causes you to go. There's no way there's I'm looking at my bank account and I don't have enough zeros in there. I mean, I'm on the other side.

00;11;31;04 - 00;11;32;12

Jenn

I got plenty of zeros.

00;11;33;01 - 00;11;57;24

Zeke

On the back and and that was a real cause. It was a conversation. Yeah, we would have to have. And but you know, again, we've, we've seen some of our church family members do this and we actually were able to participate through the restaurant in helping facilitate this for at least one, maybe two of the adoptions in our church here.

00;11;58;19 - 00;12;17;00

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Zeke

So we knew that if we decided to do it, we would have to fundraise. We would. And and for me, personally speaking as a as a man, it's difficult for me to ask for help. And it's difficult for me to ask for money from anybody because I got this. I can do this on my own. I don't need anybody's help.

00;12;17;20 - 00;12;53;06

Zeke

And in from a selfish point of view, that was a that was my own little hurdle that I had to overcome during this process as well. So it was a it was a time that God used to reshape my thought process in who he is and what he does for us, how big he really is in the love that he has for his children.

00;12;53;06 - 00;12;53;21

Jenn

Mm hmm.

00;12;53;28 - 00;12;55;29

Zeke

Mm hmm. So that was the start for me.

00;12;55;29 - 00;12;57;01

Jenn

Mm hmm.

00;12;57;27 - 00;13;09;18

Chandalee

So how long from that moment of realization when she was at the refrigerator to when you started taking the next steps and actively pursuing that.

00;13;09;18 - 00;13;32;11

Shanda

We went to an informational meeting at Bethany Christian Services downtown, and they have they had them at the time, I think, quarterly. And we had scheduled to go to one. And we, for some reason, we couldn't make it to that one. And then we decided to try to make it to the next one. And we walked away from that meeting, I think, with more questions than we.

00;13;32;11 - 00;14;02;19

Shanda

And, and yeah, we were really concerned because there's just so much to adopting. There's so many different avenues, so many different agencies, different you know, and it just was overwhelming for us. So we just continue to be like, Oh, I don't know if this is for us or not. This is overwhelming. So we had taken a trip the two of us went down to Jacksonville, Florida, and on our way back from that trip, I think we were having that conversation again of, you know, what does this look like for us?

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00;14;02;20 - 00;14;13;16

Shanda

And I don't know if we can do this or not. And so I texted a friend of mine of ours and I just said and we hadn't told anyone. I don't I don't think we had really mentioned it to anyone. It did mention.

00;14;13;22 - 00;14;14;12

Zeke

One person.

00;14;14;12 - 00;14;14;24

Shanda

Maybe.

00;14;14;24 - 00;14;17;12

Zeke

That recommended us to talk with this person. Yeah.

00;14;18;24 - 00;14;44;24

Shanda

Nobody else. Right. And so I sent her message and I said, Can you guys pray for us? We are prayerfully considering adopting and we'd like to talk to you and your husband about what your journey looked like. How did you guys go about it? Because it was just so overwhelming with all the different information. And her response back was just amazing because it took me a second after I read the first sentence, it said, First of all, your answers yes.

00;14;46;06 - 00;14;47;12

Zeke

Prayerfully considering.

00;14;47;29 - 00;14;48;20

Jenn

Means yes.

00;14;49;06 - 00;15;08;20

Shanda

She's like, Yes, you're already there. And it was just so over like, I'm still I get overwhelmed with emotion thinking about that text and I read it to him or I tried to as he's driving and he's crying and I'm crying and we're like, okay, we're going to we're doing this. This is, you know, this is God's confirming that this is what we need to do.

00;15;08;20 - 00;15;36;06

Shanda

And do it together and do it with our church and our community. And that's where we started our process of, okay, what, how do we start? You know? And I think from then on I was up at night on Googling and researching and learning as much

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as I could about different agencies and different avenues. And we have a connection in Jacksonville, Florida, with some friends of ours that go to a church there.

00;15;36;06 - 00;16;01;00

Shanda

And I emailed them and I emailed the church and they sent some information back. And the next thing we know that November of that same year, we were talking to an agency in Jacksonville, Florida, and they decided they we had decided to meet with them in December. And we told her, you know, this is where we're at. This is this is our situation.

00;16;01;22 - 00;16;22;04

Shanda

And, you know, there's so much paperwork to fill out. And we started our home study about that time. We got our home study completed. And she said, you know, we we were a family that already had children. We were a little bit older. We did our book and we were thinking I was thinking, wow, this is going to be a while.

00;16;22;04 - 00;16;42;01

Shanda

We're we're in this for a few years because you hear stories of of couples who who start the adoption process and it's several years before, you know, they they find out anything. And so I'm thinking, okay, we're in this for the long haul. And he's like, now it'll be any day. He's like, I just got a feeling eternal optimist.

00;16;42;01 - 00;16;59;14

Shanda

So, yeah. So that was in December when we when we met with the, the agency of 2016. And then in April of 2017, just four months later, we get a call. And so that's how long it took. It just.

00;16;59;14 - 00;17;00;03

Chandalee

Happened and.

00;17;00;11 - 00;17;08;14

Shanda

It just happened. Yeah, it was one year from the refrigerator. Aha. Moment.

00;17;08;14 - 00;17;41;08

Zeke

Yeah. So interesting little side story. Not to get too far off track, but the day after we had kind of surrendered in the car on our way to pick up our kids from from her parents house. The next day, I'm in the restaurant and it's in the middle of the summer. It's like at the end of June. And normally downtown Chattanooga, in our restaurant at 11:00 in the morning, it's usually just boom and like bam, bam, bam, you know, tons of people in and out.

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00;17;41;21 - 00;18;01;21

Zeke

And on this particular day, 11:00 rolls around and two people left the restaurant, and the entire restaurant is empty. Like there was not a single person there. And I looked at my team with my with Morag in my hand, and I'm just my hands are up. And I said, what just happened? Like the wind has been sucked out of our cells.

00;18;02;09 - 00;18;12;29

Zeke

And everybody's looking at me like, I don't know. And right then the doors open and 30 people walked in, all at the same time. Only six of them were adults.

00;18;13;28 - 00;18;15;07

Jenn

All the research.

00;18;16;14 - 00;18;37;04

Zeke

And the kids running in and they're screaming and hollering and running around the tables and I'm like, Whoa, I wasn't expecting that. And one of the guys had walked in with this little baby carrier of this little baby boy in it, and he walks over to the big round table at the front. He sets it down. And I walked over to him and I said, Hey, are you guys here for a birthday?

00;18;37;18 - 00;18;45;02

Zeke

And he put his arm around a little girl that was standing seven or eight year old little girl. And he said, no, we just came from the courthouse where we just adopted her. And all.

00;18;45;13 - 00;18;46;01

Jenn

Of.

00;18;47;07 - 00;19;04;28

Zeke

This is the day after my surrender. This right? And I was like, oh, my gosh, that's amazing. You know, my wife and I were just talking about adoption yesterday. I walked over to the little baby and again, you know, visions of having a son. And I'm looking at this little boy in the carrier, and I said this, this.

00;19;05;02 - 00;19;19;18

Zeke

He's he's beautiful. He's adorable. He said, Yeah, that's where we're fostering him right now or hoping that we can adopt him soon. I said, Oh, what's his name? He said, His name is Zeke.

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00;19;19;18 - 00;19;22;10

Jenn

Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. All right. Yeah.

00;19;22;17 - 00;19;28;17

Zeke

All I could do was just turn around. I didn't say a word. I just turned around. I walked back into the kitchen, and I just fell to my knees.

00;19;30;02 - 00;19;45;14

Chandalee

Thanks for joining us today to hear the first half of the story with Zeke and Shana and the Little Biscuit Fund. See you next time as we continue the conversation with the Arters. For more information or to connect with them, you can find them over at littlebiscuitfund.com. Have a great day.