

## **Episode 170: Justin found his mother on Facebook**

Have you ever had one of those moments in your life where your life just changed dramatically?

Like, your life is suddenly divided into two chapters – before that moment, and after that moment.

Well, that's the kind of moment Justin had.

Justin was adopted the day after he was born. So he never knew his birth mother. He was adopted immediately into a loving family who gave him a wonderful childhood and a great start in life.

He always wondered about his birth mother, and he searched and searched for her. And at the same time, she was wondering about him, and hoping they would eventually connect again.

Then, they finally found each other. This is the story of how that happened.

And partway through our conversation, I surprised Justin with something. I love that part.

This is a Flashback episode, and Justin told this story here on the podcast way back in episode #4. A LOT has happened with Justin since then, and you'll hear him talk all about that right after our conversation.

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### **Scott**

You're 26 years old when you just met the woman who gave birth to you for the first time. How does that feel?

### **Justin**

Honestly, there's really no one way to describe how it feels. It's an emotion that I've never experienced. You have to be in that situation to understand what that's like. One of the interesting things, to me, is most people who were raised by their biological parents don't even think twice about it - looking at their mom and be like, "That's my mom. Yeah, whatever. I see her every day." But it's something that's so sacred to people who are adopted because they never knew that. It's so crazy because it's so special to me, but it's so common to most people who were raised by their biological parents. So, when I met her, I was seeing everything that I wanted to see my whole life. When I looked at her face, I saw bits and pieces of my face. When I looked at my sister's face and other other members of my family, it was unreal because most people just look like their parents. I look like my mom or whatever. When I looked at her, it moved me to tears because this is, like, my bloodline, this is where I come from, and it's so incredible to me to bear witness to that - to see where I actually come from.

### **Scott**

That's just unbelievable. Yeah, you're right - most people take it for granted.

### **Justin**

Yeah, it's just something that you don't think about especially if you're raised by them because, "It's my mom. She's nothing new." But to me, it's just, like, a whole world opening up to me that I've never seen before.

### **Scott**

Right. That's awesome! All right. Let's just go back a little bit and, kind of, get the backstory on what led up to this. What age were you adopted as a baby?

**Justin**

I was adopted when I was about 1-day old, actually.

**Scott**

Wow, okay, one day old.

**Justin**

Yeah.

**Scott**

Do you know why? What were the circumstances that she decided to give you up for adoption?

**Justin**

Well, that's interesting because-- I've always known that I'm adopted - that's never been a secret. One of the things that my adoptive mom always made sure of is that she never wanted me to think that Heather didn't want me, and I grew up knowing that. When I finally met her, she explained to me, "Giving you up was the most painful thing that I've ever done in my life. It was so difficult. It was the longest drive home ever after I had to give you up." The only reason she did that was because, at the time in her life, she wasn't able to provide everything that she wanted to for me. So, as hard as it was, she said she would rather let another family raise me just so that I could have those opportunities which she wasn't able to provide for me at the time. She wanted the best for me, so she had to sacrifice raising me just to give me that - which I think is beyond heroic.

**Scott**

Oh, it takes so much courage to make such a decision that is so difficult, but it was also a right decision.

**Justin**

Yeah, that's the thing. It's a mountainous decision - I can't even imagine - to pass on raising me just so that I can have what she wanted me to have. That's just mind blowing to me.

**Scott**

It sounds like Sandy, your adoptive mom, was very much aware of that and wanted you to understand.

**Justin**

Yes, absolutely.

**Scott**

What was behind that decision?

**Justin**

She never wanted me to think that she didn't want me, I was an accident, or I was never meant to be. She wanted me to think that the only reason that she didn't keep me was because she wanted to make sure that I had the best life that I could have.

**Scott**

Do you remember how old you were when she first told you?

**Justin**

Honestly, I really can't. If I had to ballpark it, I guess I was probably around maybe 5 years old or so. I was kind of around the age where a child can, kind of, start to understand that concept. I know that she told me as early as possible. She didn't want me growing up and being a surprise - honestly, I think that's where the bad stigma of adoption comes from. The funny thing is, when I was growing up and telling people that I'm adopted, they'd be, like, "Oh my God! I'm so sorry!" But I don't really understand where that stigma comes from? I'm like, "No, it's fine! I like that. I embraced that about myself." It was always out in the open and something that I've always known - I think that's how it should be for any adopted child. I don't think it should ever be a secret and, then, suddenly, revealed at a later age,

**Scott**

Right. As soon as you're old enough to understand--

**Justin**

Yeah.

**Scott**

As a child interacting with other kids and with your friends, did you ever feel different?

**Justin**

Actually, no. I mean, for the most part, the fact that I was adopted never really, kind of, stepped into my everyday life. I did have a really good childhood friend - his name is Luke. We were best friends when we're really young and he was also adopted - I think those are some of the reasons that brought us closer together as friends. It was really cool because we talked about it a lot - it was just really neat. He was the only friend who shared that with me - I think that's what brought us close. For the most part, it was just kind of something that I told people when I first met them and, then, that just kind of came as a special fact that they knew about me.

**Scott**

Do you have any siblings in your adoptive family?

**Justin**

Yes, I did. I have a sister. Her name is Brooke. When they adopted me, she was 12 years old. I believe she's 36 or 37 years old now. I've only had one sister and she's always been much older. So, I've never had, like, a sibling who is close to my age. I mean, I've been friends with my sister, but it's different when they're 12 years older than you because of the age gap and you don't get along as well as somebody closer to your age.

**Scott**

Right. They're hanging out with other friends at their own age.

**Justin**

Exactly.

**Scott**

All right. Well, let's talk about your search. First of all, how old were you when you decided that you wanted to find Heather - your biological mom?

**Justin**

Well, it started out as kind of like something, like, "Yeah, I might want to find them one day because I know some people do and others like TV shows about that kind of stuff. That seems pretty cool." When I was younger, I wasn't really adamant about it, but I was definitely open to the idea. I was probably around, maybe, 12 or 13 years old when I started to really like using computers and stuff. I was, like, "Well, I could probably use the web to do some searching." So, fast forward over the years, I would go on these deep searches and I would try to find, like, any kind of Heather that would match up with the name. I had sent so many messages to so many Heather who I thought might be my mom. Many of them were, like, "Oh, no, sorry! But best of luck to you! I wish I was your mom." I've searched a lot. What kinda made me a little bit hopeless, sometimes, about finding them is that this was a closed adoption. So, there were very little information was exchanged between between the adoption agency.

**Scott**

That is one of the questions I wanted to ask - what information did you have to start with or go by?

**Justin**

Yeah. I had two things. I had my biological mother's name - Heather. That's just that's all I had. I knew that my mother's father was a preacher. That's all I knew. All I knew was the general area where they lived. It wasn't much to start with - just a lot of failed messages here and there. It's been a long search for sure. I mean, there's been a lot of effort going into this.

**Scott**

Okay, just based on that information, how did you end up coming across the details that you needed and putting it all together?

**Justin**

So basically, what happened was Sandy sent me this link - I don't remember where I was when she sent it to me - to an article about a preacher. She texted the link to me for the article. She said, "I think this might be your grandfather. You might want to look into it." I was like, "Oh? Okay! Well, that's cool!" It was an article from 2014 about some sort of event that they were having. It was, like, a promotional article if I remember it correctly.

**Scott**

This event was held here in Florida. Is that right?

**Justin**

Yes. It was held here in Florida. So, I googled the name and came across an obituary. So, I clicked the link and I found it. It was my grandpa and he had passed away. The crazy thing is he passed away about two weeks before I found out about this. I was so close to meeting him! I was thinking, like, "This really happened? Did he really die? What kind of timing is this?" I was mind-blown. So as I was reading the obituary, I looked at his wife and the 'survived by' section, and it said, "He is survived by this, that, and his daughter, Heather." I was, like, "No way! This has to be it! This has to be the first solid lead I've ever had!" There were so many coincidences there. I was like, "There's no way that this is a coincidence. I think this has to be her." So, I tried searching her up on Facebook and Google but I still, kind of, came up empty-handed. Then, I

searched his wife's name and, then, I found her on Facebook. After I found her on Facebook, I compared her to the picture on the obituary and I was, like, "Oh, yeah. That's his wife." So, I sent a Facebook message to my grandma, and I said, "Hey, my name is Justin. Do you have a daughter named Heather?" I never got a response from her. When I looked at her friends list, I was able to find Heather on her friends list. When I was looking through, I just started crying. I was, like, "This is her! This is my mother because I started seeing my own features on her face and seeing her doing stuff." It was truly bizarre to witness that for the first time ever, when you've never had before.

**Scott**

The only thing I can compare it to is when you buy a lottery ticket and read the numbers, it says that you have just won \$50 million.

**Justin**

Yeah!

**Scott**

It's almost like you're outside of your own body thinking, "Is this really happening?!"

**Justin**

Yeah, that's exactly what I felt. I was, like, "This is actually happening!" I mean, so many people went on this chase that I've been going on but many of them came up empty-handed all the time. I found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow - I mean, it's just so sought after.

**Scott**

All right. So, when you found her on Facebook, you contacted her by sending a Facebook message?

**Justin**

Yes.

**Scott**

And she replied to that message. Can you just read the exchange of messages between you and your biological mom, Heather?

**Justin**

Yeah, sure. Hold on. Let me get it up here. Here it is. Let me scroll to the top of our messages here.

**Scott**

And this happened only like 8 weeks ago?

**Justin**

Yeah, this happened, like, at the tail-end of May. So yeah, it was that long ago. Okay, here it is. So, I said, "Hello, Miss Davis. My name is Justin. I was born on March 8, 1992. Did you give a child up for adoption during that time? I understand that there's a chance that this might be a sensitive subject." A few days went by because I know Facebook's a little finicky - if you're not friends with somebody that you know, they won't get the message or whatever. Then, one day, when I was wrapping up at work, before I got off work at 5 o'clock, it was 4.30 PM when I got a Facebook notification. Then, I just started shaking. I mean, it's truly unbelievable. She said, "Oh

my gosh, Justin! Yes, Yes!! Are you my son?" And that hit me like a brick wall. She said, "I have prayed that this day would come. When I saw your birthdate on the message, I cannot even put into words the joy that came over me. Are you in Florida?" And I mean, it felt 10 times better than winning the lottery.

**Scott**

That's amazing. So, how did you respond to that?

**Justin**

I said, "I absolutely don't even have words to say right now. Yes, I'm definitely your son. I am in Florida. I'm currently staying in Lakeland for the summer because I have an internship here. I've wondered about you my whole life. It's just indescribable to put a face with a name that always meant so much to me." Then, to that, she replied, "Our whole family is beyond thrilled that you have found us! You have no idea! Justin, we live in Florida, about 30 minutes away from where you are. I knew that your adoptive parents lived in Florida at the time of your birth, but I didn't know where. I'm so happy that we're close. God is good. Do your parents know that you reached out to me? We looked at your photo on Facebook and there's no doubt that you are my biological son. There's so much resemblance. You are such a handsome young man. I'm sure you have a lot of questions, which I'm happy to answer. We want to hear all about your life. If you are okay with it, we would love to see you. We're going on a trip on Friday, but we'll be back." She started asking me, like, what do I major in college and, then, it just kind of goes into stuff from there.

**Scott**

So, what was going through your head as you're reading this?

**Justin**

Well, when she sent me the message, I didn't know if I should respond right away. So, I started calling my mom, my girlfriend - like, I started calling everyone. I was, like, "This is really happening..." So, I was sitting in my car when I sent my reply. My heart was just about to jump out of my chest. I still couldn't believe this. It didn't feel real, honestly. It felt like I was in a dream or something. I mean, I get the shakes just by talking about it. It was just unbelievable how I was actually talking to her like this - the person who gave birth to me 26 years ago - now on Facebook Messenger. If you told me that I would be doing that, like, a week ago, I would've told you that I'd lost my mind.

**Scott**

Right. You've been searching so long and hitting so many dead ends. Now, all of a sudden, here it is.

**Justin**

Yeah.

**Scott**

Alright, so you guys decided to meet. Where did you actually meet each other?

**Justin**

So, at first, we were talking about, like, maybe, meeting in a park or at a restaurant or something. We ultimately came to the conclusion that a restaurant might be a little too loud and, also, I don't want to cry in a restaurant with, like, a bunch of people. A park might not be the

best idea because it might be really, really hot. So, she was, like, "You're more than welcome to come to our house." I was, like, "Okay, sure." So, we scheduled it for that following Friday. Then, me and my girlfriend traveled up to meet Sandy in the town that they were in. We stayed in a hotel that night. Then, we got up in the morning and went straight to the house. So, I got out of the car. I told them that I wanted the first moment to only be just me and her because that's what this is all about - not out of selfishness - I felt like I had a right to that. You know what I mean?

**Scott**

I think everyone understands that.

**Justin**

Yeah. So I did that. As I was walking up, they were recording me. I walked up to the door and was about to knock on the door. I remembered that my hands had just started shaking. I felt like I was starting to lose control of everything. I told myself, "Once this door opens, my life changes forever." That just felt like lots of pressure. Another thing that led up to this was because I knew that it wasn't gonna be disappointing. I felt like anybody in this situation has some sort of pressure to be what they wanted you to be - you know what I mean? I know they would love me regardless of how it turned out, but this so-- anyway, I knocked on the door and they opened up the door. Then, my mother opened up the door. My mom, my dad, my two sisters, and my grandma were all there, and they're all in tears. I was looking into another dimension through that threshold. I mean, I just hugged her as tight as I could and, obviously, we both just broke down and started sobbing.

**Scott**

I'm sure everyone there was, too.

**Justin**

Oh, yeah, everybody did. We were just swimming in tears. It was everywhere.

**Scott**

It's overwhelming enough just to meet your actual birth mom for the first time. But then to have a whole new family??

**Justin**

Yeah, that's the thing. Like, my family has expanded largely now - that was one of the most interesting things. Another cool thing that I thought was amazing was the fact that my birth parents are still together because they were young when they had me. Statistically, the vast majority of couples who went through that usually don't stay together later on. In our Facebook conversation, when she told me that, "I'm still with your father and I'm married to him. You have two full-blood biological sisters. One of them is 16 and one of them is 19," I felt like I was flying, and I was, like, "Are you kidding me?! That is nuts!" Because I always thought that if I do meet her someday, she would probably be remarried and I'd have, maybe, like, a half sibling or something, but everything's exactly how it was, which is cool.

**Scott**

If you could have scripted this, it couldn't have turned out any better than what you would have wanted.

**Justin**

Yeah. We did talk about that when we first met after we stopped crying, calmed down, and sat down. We talked about how this literally could not have gone any better. I'm so grateful for how it is because I've heard lots of horror stories of people who went after their biological parents and, then, it turned out to be disastrous and ended up just scarring them. Then, they're like, "I don't want to have anything to do with you!" I feel like everyone, kind of, worries just a little bit about that in the back of their head when doing this search, because it's a very real possibility and you have to prepare for that. So, I'm just so grateful that everything just worked out perfectly in unison. Another thing that I thought was really neat was that my sisters grew up knowing about me, which I thought was so cool. I wasn't a surprise to them. As soon as they could understand things, she told them that they had a brother that was out there somewhere. They knew about my whole life. So, it was equally special for them to meet me, as it was for me to meet them. It was powerful.

**Scott**

Once you've met them, were you surprised by anything unexpected?

**Justin**

I don't think so. It all felt kind of natural, to be honest. When I went there, we just immediately started having a conversation that flowed really easily - there were no awkward moments. I just felt like I got along with them. Another thing I noticed was their mannerisms are similar to mine, which I thought was really cool. Because there were no awkward moments, it was a very smooth transition and it couldn't have gone any better. There were no surprises for the most part.

**Scott**

What were some of the stories that you wanted to share with each other?

**Justin**

Oh, gosh. One of the things that we talked about is, like, "What's been going on in your life?" Well, at first, I don't think we shared a lot of stories but I do know that Sandy brought my baby book and it had, like, all these pictures of me doing things throughout my childhood and growing up. So, we kind of looked at pictures and told stories of what's going on in those pictures. I don't think there's any really big-hitting stories. I just told him about how I went to high school, where I'm currently studying in college, and me majoring in graphic design. Story-wise, I think that's really the only thing we touched on. Mostly, we just talked about the photos, like, "Here's me doing this, etc." Then, I would elaborate on that.

**Scott**

Right. Because that's your whole childhood that she hasn't seen you gone through.

**Justin**

Yeah. I think that's what she was most interested in. She wanted to see how I was developing because she wasn't able to do that. Well, she said that she's always wondering her whole life, like, "What's he doing?" Every time March 8 would roll around, she'd be like, "I wonder what he is doing for his birthday?" It was even a thing for their family. Before my grandpa passed away, he would send a text to Heather and say, "It's March 8. I wonder what he's doing. I wonder what he's up to nowadays." I was always present in their minds, which is something that I really hold dear.

**Scott**

Are there any particular stories that she wanted you to know?

**Justin**

I'm trying to think. Um... One of the stories that she wanted me to know was - I thought this is really cool, I didn't know this - my grandfather actually baptized me when I was a day-old before I had to be separated from Heather. That's another thing that I hold super close, because I never knew that. I know that Heather wanted me to be raised in a Christian home - I was and I'm still Christian to this day. I just thought that it was beautiful that they did that. It just amplifies the fact of how much they cared about me and how much they didn't want to let me go. That just means the world to me.

**Scott**

I can imagine. Well, Justin, since we're talking about some things that your birth mother wanted to tell you after all these years, I've got something here for you to listen to.

**Justin**

Okay.

**Scott**

It's a recorded message from someone. Even though you just met this person recently, you might recognize her voice.

**Justin**

Okay.

**Heather**

Dear Justin,

At the time of your birth, I wanted to be able to take you home and raise you as I had fallen in love with you. During the nine months when you were in my belly, all your kicks and movements were so exciting to me. I loved talking to you and wondered what you would look like. You were such a blessing to me through those nine months. Although there was never a doubt that placing you up for adoption was the right choice for you. I did grieve the loss of coming home without you from the hospital - our whole family did. However, I felt peace from God who had you in his hand since the beginning and always felt like you were okay. Every birthday that passed, I wondered, "What does he look like? What is his name? What is he doing on this special day?" I always hoped and prayed that we would find each other someday, although I would slowly lose that hope after so many years had passed since we had not connected. You were always in my heart - as well as your father's and your grandparents who were there at your birth as well. The time I spent with you in the hospital was priceless and painful as I knew that I would have to say goodbye soon, and your new family would be coming to take you home. A few months ago when I received your text message, I nearly fell out of my chair. There are no words to explain the complete euphoria I felt when I read your message. I was almost frozen for about 5 minutes in disbelief. This was a dream come true. The first time we met was so surreal. I could not wrap my mind around the fact that this precious baby that I had given birth to - whom I held and said goodbye to 26 years ago - was standing face-to-face with me, finally. Meeting your adoptive mother was so precious to me as well. She was this wonderful woman whom I entrusted your life with, who fulfilled every promise about how she would raise you at the time when I was pregnant. I owe her everything. You have grown into such an incredible, handsome, smart, and loving young man. I can never be more proud and thankful that I am the one blessed

to give you life. You are and always will be precious to us. We have always loved you more than you can ever conceive.

Love,  
Mom.

**Justin**

Oh, man. Even listening to that, kind of, choked me off a little. Oh God... It's such a complete feeling to know that she's proud of me and she's proud to see what I've become. Honestly, it feels like the ultimate accomplishment.. That's just so fulfilling.

**Scott**

On the first day you met, how long did you talk?

**Justin**

We talked pretty much all day. When I got there, I thought it was around 10AM or 11AM. We cried for about 30 minutes, and then we sat down. I remember Sandy had the baby book, so we looked through those. Then, another thing that I thought was amazing was I found out that Heather actually has a baby book of her own - I thought it was so cool because it had pictures of me. Even though she only had me for about 24 hours, she took as many photos of happy moments as she could so that she could have that. She had my wrist strap from when I was an infant in there. She had photos of her holding me and stuff. It meant so much because she wanted to make the absolute most of that 24 hours with as little time with me as she had, because as far as she knew, that would be the last time that she would ever see me. That made me cry, but it made me smile. When I look at those pictures, those are now the earliest photos of myself that I've seen. There's just a sense of origin to see those and it was beautiful. So, I remember that we talked for about 3 hours. Then, Sandy had to leave because she had to go to New York with my sister because they had, like, a trip planned already. So, she had to go back to where I'm from and they had to catch a plane after that. Brandi & I stayed behind and we talked with them more and more. We just, kind of, started talking about little things that you would normally find out over the years, naturally. We started talking, like, "What are your hobbies? Do you like spicy food? What's your favorite thing about this or that?" We started talking about all kinds of stuff. I remember at one particular time when it was just me and my girlfriend, Brandi, all of us were just standing in the kitchen when I kind of had this - not to sound exaggerating - out-of-body experience real quick which I kind of felt disconnected from myself, but not in a bad way. The sense of this happening was so profound. I just still couldn't believe it. I don't think my mind was truly wrapped around what was happening and was culminating all this time. I was casually standing in a kitchen talking with my biological family. I never thought that would happen in a million years, but it was beautiful.

**Scott**

When you were first born, did Heather and Sandy meet each other face-to-face at that time?

**Justin**

No. They had actually never seen each other because they got me through an adoption agency. Heather had to leave me at the hospital. Then, one of the attorneys from the adoption agency came, got me, and then brought me outside to Sandy and my family. So, they've never met. One of the most fascinating things was a photo of the attorney carrying me out to Sandy. Heather thought that photo was just so cool, and I did too, because that was the connecting

point that she never got to see. I mean, that photo was taken, maybe, 20 minutes after she said "Goodbye" and she got to see what happened. I can't imagine the closure that has to bring

**Scott**

So now, they've also met for the first time.

**Justin**

Yeah. Sandy hugging Heather was also crazy to see - I mean, my adoptive and biological mom were hugging. That was another thing I never thought would happen. So, that was just crazy. They met, they both just sobbed and hugged each other. They're both so special in different ways. But I mean,

**Scott**

There's a whole lot of good crying going on in this whole situation.

**Justin**

Yeah, it was nuts!

**Scott**

Going forward, how many times have you met since that initial meeting?

**Justin**

So, we met for the first time, and then we met another time after that. I believe that time was Father's Day and I was, like, "This is a perfect opportunity! I'm gonna get to spend my first Father's Day with my biological dad!" I'll elaborate on my dad a little bit. My adoptive parents have been divorced since I was around 10 years old or so. So, it's been a very, very long time since I said the word 'Dad' or called someone 'Dad'. As I was growing up, I taught myself how to shave, how to talk to girls, this and that and stuff. So I kind of forgot what it was like to have that father figure. So when I met him, we immediately hit it off. One of the things that I love so much about him is that he's a real jokey. There's a lot of reciprocity between us. We really just like to joke around. He's just really easy-going. Honestly, I just see myself when I look at him, and that's what makes me so happy. I have a lot in common with this guy. I know we get along, and I can't wait for the memories to follow.

**Scott**

You got 26 years of corny dad jokes to catch up.

**Justin**

Exactly, yeah! That's for sure.

**Scott**

Do you feel like you really 'know each other yet'? Or is there just a whole lot still left to explore?

**Justin**

Honestly, I think a little bit of both. Let me rewind a little bit because I forgot to mention this earlier. Before I met them for the first time, Heather was like, "I'd love to talk to you on the phone." I was like, "Whoa, boy." I was nervous. I'm like, "Yeah, absolutely!" I remember that I was so nervous to make that phone call because I was about to hear her voice. The craziest thing happened when she picked up the phone and said, "Hello." it. I know this sounds dumb but I swear her voice sounded familiar - I don't know why. I feel like I'd heard her voice before

and I felt a sense of comfort when I heard it. They say you can hear your mother's voice when you're in the womb so I don't know if there was, like, some circuit way in the back of my head that got lit up after all these years. I just felt like I knew it. I felt like there was an instant connection. I feel like I've learned a ton about them. At the same time, one of the beautiful things about it is I feel like there's still so much that we have left to learn about each other, and that's what makes it so exciting because there's so much uncharted territory. We don't know everything about each other. So, I think that's amazing. As time goes on, the more I meet them, the more opportunities I have to learn more about them and to spend more time with them. That's what makes it so exciting.

**Scott**

What are your plans now for regularly connecting with each other in the future?

**Justin**

As for right now, I have one more semester. My college is about 7 hours away from where they live. So right now, I'll go back to school and finish my last semester at my college. Then, after I graduate from there, I want to see if I can find a place close to down here because I want to live somewhere near them so that I can keep this up regularly. So, after I graduate, I definitely want to find a place where they are accessible and just a drive away.

**Scott**

I was thinking, when you go back to school, if any of your classes has an essay to write about what you did this last summer, I think you're gonna have the greatest story of all of them.

**Justin**

Oh, yeah. For sure. Every person that I've told this story to, they were like, "You're gonna remember this summer for the rest of your life!"

**Scott**

Yeah. I was thinking, "Why not plan to go on a cruise together?"

**Justin**

Yeah, that would be pretty cool. Yeah, I think we actually did talk about, maybe, going on a vacation sometime. I think that'd be really cool - just, kind of, like, a family vacation. I think that'd be pretty cool. Another thing that I thought was so cool - I think this is another crazy coincidence - is she told me that I have an aunt and uncle and some extended family that live about an hour from where my college is. So, whenever I go back in the next couple of weeks to finish up my last semester, I can go visit and meet them for the first time and they would just be as excited as everyone else. I mean, like I said, this whole thing has just caused an earthquake reaction on both sides.

**Scott**

A good earthquake.

**Justin**

Yeah, for sure. Yeah.

**Scott**

Is there any aspect of this story that we haven't talked about that you want to talk about?

**Justin**

Yeah. I guess I can elaborate on my sisters a little bit. It has also been just super cool to see them. Like I stated before, I had a sister as I was growing up. I love her and we got along, but she was much older than me. So, it's better to get along with someone who's closer to your age just because you tend to have more stuff in common. I thought it was so cool that I had sisters that were closer to my age, and I was, like, "Oh, that's awesome! We're gonna get along great!" And we do. I texted them every day. We have each other's Snapchat and whatever and we just, like, chat here and there. We would just check up on each other. When we meet in person, when we'd just talk, the conversation just flows in. I mean, it feels so natural. That's just the natural beauty of all this - everything just feels absolutely perfect. I just get along so well with my sisters and everybody as well.

**Scott**

Justin, I know, some people who are listening to this are people that have been adopted, and they haven't found their biological mother or father yet, but they're looking. They might be nervous, or unsure about how this might turn out. What would you say to someone like that?

**Justin**

Well, I'm really glad that you asked me that because I do have a strong opinion on that sort of thing. I think anybody who wants to find out where they come from, I know that it might be scary going into it because this is a world that you don't know anything about and it could go any way. But I think, ultimately, I think it's best to go for it because, honestly, you never know what could be in store. Even if it doesn't work out, at least, you'll have closure. I think it's such an important thing to know where you come from and to see your own blood. When you look at people and you see them in you, I think that's something that anybody who can experience should experience. So, I think, absolutely, just give it a chance, do everything you can to, at least, just meet them. If you meet them, if it doesn't work out, at least, that kind of closure is just so fulfilling, either way, right? So, if there's anybody out there who's wondering, please just absolutely go for it. You'll feel full circle, either way. It's very important to just see and experience that.

**Scott**

To see if their family might be looking for them as well and want to connect with them, right?

**Justin**

Yeah. If they are, then your family would be huge. Even if you already have a big family, you would gain more members. And it's amazing for me to know that they're going to be at my wedding when I get married, they're going to be at my college graduation, they're gonna be this and that. I'll always have them in my life no matter what and that is just a blessing. It's amazing just to know that. I mean, even if it's scary, at least find out for yourself - you'll be glad that you did either.

**Scott**

Well, Justin, this is such an awesome story. And I'm really, really glad that you took the initiative and you guys were able to connect. I think it's going to help a lot of people when they hear this too. I know people who are adoptees and families that gave up their children for adoption. They'd be glad to know that there's a possibility for you to connect and be a blessing to each other. For people who want to contact you in some way - you gave me your email address - I'll put that in the show notes. So, if somebody wants to send you an email, they can do that.

**Justin**

Absolutely, yeah!

**Scott**

Once again, Justin, great story! Thank you so much for sharing with us.

**Justin**

Absolutely, Scott. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to get it out there because that's one of the biggest-- I just want this story to be shared as much as possible because it means so much to me. Posting on different websites and seeing people's reactions - I just love to see how it moves people. I thank you for this opportunity to get it out a bit further. I really do.

**Scott**

Justin, it's great to have you back here on the podcast!

**Justin**

Absolutely, man. Thank you so much. I'm really happy to be back. It's great hearing from you again.

**Scott**

I know you've had a lot of things happen since we last spoke and we're going to talk about that, but I want to ask you first, how often do you get to see your birth mother, Heather?

**Justin**

So we see each other probably-- we like to make an effort to see each other probably around once every couple of months. She lives about an hour away still in Seminole, so it's not like we have too many opportunities to see each other since I work from home and we're just pretty busy overall when it comes to the weekends. I would probably say, like, once every month or once every two months, but we talk regularly.

**Scott**

Like I said, you had a lot of stuff happen. I mean, it's been more than 5.5 years since you've been on the show. You graduated college. You were in college when we spoke, right?

**Justin**

Yeah, when we spoke, that was during my last semester, and that was right before I graduated.

**Scott**

Am I correct in saying what you graduated in is not the work you're doing now?

**Justin**

About that, when I took on graphic design as a whole when it came as a major, it's kind of tricky because the whole idea of it was that I loved creating and I enjoyed using the software, but when it comes to real-world application, one thing that I've learned is, like, the practical use of it in the field. When it comes to big companies, it's mostly just kind of churning out the same thing. It's not so much about the design itself as it is about, like, the measurements and metrics and machinery. There's a lot of big machinery involved with a lot of companies now. I don't know. As I went on, I didn't really feel like it fit what I needed to. I didn't really feel like I was making any sort of a difference.

Now, I work for Humana. I help manage people's policies with insurance, and I go over the information with them. I reached out to doctors. I'm pretty much a jack of all trades when it comes to insurance as a whole now. I've learned lots of different things about it, and it's extremely fulfilling. I love what I do and the people I work with. I have a fantastic superior. She's great. So yeah, I definitely just feel like things are just kind of on track and how they need to be now. I mean, I did enjoy college, for sure, but I definitely feel like I'm where I need to be now.

**Scott**

Yeah. It's great to have work that you love, for sure.

**Justin**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Scott**

And you have also since gotten married.

**Justin**

Yeah. It was a couple of years after I met Heather and my family. My wife now, Brandy, we got married here in Florida in this little country club and it was just absolutely beautiful. We searched high and low for some good venues and it was just a grand slam. We all had such a blast with our friends and family and got just a bunch of beautiful photos and it was just an absolute 10-out-of-10 experience. It was a lot of fun. And yeah, we've been married now for— it is 2024, so this November will be four years together.

**Scott**

Yeah. You better keep track of that time there.

**Justin**

I was going to say that.

**Scott**

That's a date you want to keep in mind.

**Justin**

Yeah.

**Scott**

And you've got another date— a birthday date of your youngest one now. When did that happen?

**Justin**

Yeah. So that was the 30th of December. We always - me and Brandy - made jokes about, like, "Oh, hopefully, it happens before the new year so he can be a tax baby." So yeah, the 30th of December is when he was finally born. We went to the hospital on the 29th because she was scheduled for a C-section and everything went swimmingly. It was a great experience. We had great doctors there and it was just insane to see him there. It was just really beautiful. But yeah, we'd been trying for a long time and the Good Lord blessed us - thought it was time.

**Scott**

You're a husband, a dad, and an insurance specialist. You've had a lot of stuff happening.

**Justin**

Yeah. When you reached out to me, that was the first thing I actually thought of. I was like, "There are a lot of things that have happened since." And that's one of the reasons that I was like, "Yeah, absolutely." Cause I love to fill you in. And yeah, there's definitely a lot of big milestones and a lot of great things that have transpired. Absolutely.

**Scott**

Yeah. Now there's another thing I want to ask you about that you mentioned when we spoke - you have had a pretty substantial weight loss. Tell us about that.

**Justin**

It's actually kind of inspirational to myself - I don't know about anyone else. I'd been pretty overweight for probably, like, the past 9-10 years or so. I'm like a bigger guy. So I never really thought about it that much - like, I have broad shoulders and stuff - but after Ash was born, something just kind of clicked in me. It was like this new awakened sense of duty, I guess, to kind of be the best version of myself. I started thinking about it. I don't want to be running around and playing with him and be out of breath. I don't want to be out of breath when I'm teaching him how to tie shoes. I wanted to be at my full capacity for him, especially when he gets to the age of running around, which he's already doing. So I better kick it into high gear.

**Scott**

That takes some energy, yep.

**Justin**

Yeah. And I started, I want to say, March of last year and, right now, just clocking in at 50 pounds and got about 30 to go. Then, after that, I'll just maintain from there. But I feel great. I have new clothes. It's been a fantastic experience.

**Scott**

It's got to feel amazing. And what was your method of doing that?

**Justin**

Yeah. When I tried weight loss in the past, one of the things that I had always tried or that I had always focused on was working out. I was like, "Oh, I see what I want, but I'll just work out." I tried that with no results. I finally kind of came to a point where I was like, I kind of learned and started understanding that what you're putting into your body is more important than— because the truth is you cannot run your fork. I mean, the thing is, once I've actually started putting an effort on my nutrition and staying in a calorie deficit, then my body has responded so much better that way. It just comes off as long as I'm consistent. So just calorie deficit - that's the biggest thing that I can tell anyone who's serious about weight loss. Working out is great. It's a great way to supplement your weight loss, but that calorie deficit has really helped me.

**Scott**

Yeah, I've heard the phrase, "Diet for weight loss, exercise for fitness."

**Justin**

Yep, exactly.

**Scott**

Well, that's kind of disappointing. You didn't take a magic pill or something that just fell right off.

**Justin**

No, but you would be shocked at the amount of people who want those kinds of pills. They're just like, "I just want to eat whatever." I mean, there are studies that show people who take those weight loss pills and then, when they stop, they just gain it right back because they didn't develop any sort of healthy eating habits.

**Scott**

There is no magic pill. I'm so happy to hear about all these amazing things that are happening for you. And you're getting ready to move again.

**Justin**

Yeah. My wife, Brandy, we've lived in central Florida. She moved here roughly about six years ago because she moved with her parents. She lived in a small town called Hartford in Alabama. She's lived here since. Ever since we got married, we found a place down here. We lived in Zephyrhills for about two years, which was great - just a beautiful little town, very slow-moving, very friendly people. And then after that, we bought a house here in Lakeland, which we've lived in for about, I'll say, two and a half or maybe three years at this point. So now, we are going to be moving upstate to North Florida where I'm actually originally from. A lot of Brandy's friends and her close social circle are up in that area as well.

Another thing that we took into consideration was Ash and his future with, like, going to preschool because, up in North Florida, there's a lot, a lot more quality choices for him. We just want the best for him. So really, just on all fronts, it's the right move and things have just been working out. We've been very blessed the way things have been panning out for us. So, absolutely.

**Scott**

Seems like the right thing to do although North Florida gets kind of cold sometimes.

**Justin**

That's true though. But see, I love the cold-

**Scott**

Ahh, you're one of those people.

**Justin**

Oh yeah. And it's so funny because I was born and raised in Florida, but I just can't take the heat. I'm just not used to it. I don't know what it is. I mean, yeah, we're definitely looking forward to that. We're thinking either North Florida or maybe South Alabama or somewhere in that range is where we'll land.

**Scott**

Well, Justin, it's great to hear from you again. I'm really happy for you and your new wife and your new son, and I really hope things keep going well for you.

**Justin**

Absolutely, man. Thank you so much. It was great reaching out to you. Absolutely, I appreciate it. It's been a pleasure to share the experience initially when I first spoke with you and I'm happy to follow up. So it was great talking with you.

### **Scott**

I'm so happy for Justin. He's living the life that makes him happy. You can see pictures of him and his family in the episode notes at [WhatWasThatLike.com/170](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/170).

All right, I'm gonna get kind of personal here for a minute. And this is not an ad, I'm not being paid to say this, I just want to tell you what's happened with me over the last year.

For years, I've been trying to lose like 20 pounds or so, just to get down to what I consider my "correct" weight, which is around 170-175. I'd lose a little bit, then my stupid brain would go "hey, good job, now you can go back to your old habits!" and then I'm back where I started. I've been tracking my weight every day for more than 5 years, and I could look back and see that I've been doing that stupid up and down cycle that whole time. How ridiculous is that?

I finally figured out that I needed a coach to help me break that pattern. That's when I started working with Marcus. I met Marcus through a podcasting mastermind that we were both in, because he has a podcast too. He said he could help, and he has a long track record of helping hundreds of other people just like me. So about a year ago, we got started. Fast forward to today, I have not only lost the weight and I'm down in my goal range – but I also know how to stay there. It's no longer a cycle. Marcus gave me the tools to make that happen.

Like I said, this is not a paid ad. I don't get any money or anything from Marcus for talking about him here. I just like to promote people who are really good at what they do, because I know a lot of people who are listening to this podcast can benefit by hiring him. If that's you, talk to Marcus. His website is [ThrivingLivesFitness.com](http://ThrivingLivesFitness.com). He's a real person, and he loves helping people like you and me. Send him a message through the site and set up a time to talk about what you need. And then let me know what happens!

Graphics for this episode were created by Bob Bretz. Full episode transcription was created by James Lai.

And now – the Listener Story! Every episode ends with a story sent in by a listener, just like you. Do you have a story of something interesting or unusual? Of course you do. Just record it on your phone and email it to me – [Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com](mailto:Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com).

This listener discovered how awkward it can be to fire someone – but that's not the whole story.

Stay safe! Back in a week with a brand new episode.

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(Listener story)

I had just been promoted to a management position at a job I've been at for a little over a year and was about to take on a team of about 20 people. The manager of the training found out that– the team was actually going to be cut down in half. We were about to have to fire 10 people. She decided that's not how she wanted to leave the company. She was not going to do that. She went ahead and left earlier than she had originally anticipated and made it my

problem. So my first active manager was supposed to be to 5-10 people that I had never really interacted with at all before.

That was pretty anxiety-inducing and nauseating, but went ahead - this was during COVID, so we were all virtual - and the 1st gentleman that I called was very upset. It was completely out of the blue. He was very angry, very sad. He was also very worried because his wife and son also worked at the company in different departments - they were not impacted but, unfortunately, he was. It was a big mess. He kind of let other people know what was going on. It was not really the way that I wanted to start my career in management.

A couple of months later, I inherited another team from the same company and his wife was on that team. I was very worried it was going to be awkward. I had fired her husband. It only got more awkward when I got a message from 23andMe. Somebody was looking to put pieces together for their family member who had been adopted, trying to track down relatives and things of that nature, and she gave me the last name of the relative she was working into - the connection that she thought she had made to that last name - and I said, "Well, I don't think I have any family members with that last name but, oddly enough, I do have an employee with that last name."

So I went back and forth, talked to my employee, and found out that my first act of being a manager was to fire my third cousin. So that was just fantastic. Just got to love those coincidences.

Hope you have a great day, Scott.