

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

You are listening to episode 14 of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. Welcome back! Have you ever wondered why I talk about encouragement so much? After all, it's in the title of this podcast, and it's central to most of what I do. Maybe you've even thought, "Man, Julie talks about encouragement all the time!" And if you have, well, you're right. I do. Maybe not all the time, but often. In this episode I address why that is. (In case you're wondering.) Today we are also expanding from last week's episode. If you remember, we discussed the help and hope that's available to us when we experience discouragement. Today we're looking at the heart of discouragement and why encouragement is so vitally important in our everyday lives. So, without further ado, let's get to it and find some important encouragement (yes, encouragement!) along the way.

It's no secret as we live our real, everyday lives, we experience discouragement. Well, what is discouragement, anyway? Dictionary.com defines it as: an act or instance of discouraging; the state of being discouraged. Okay. So what's the definition of discourage? It means: to deprive of courage, hope, or confidence; dishearten; dispirit. It also means to take someone's courage or enthusiasm away. And we each know how that feels, don't we? Discouragement can take the wind right out of our sails, and it can make us feel depleted and disheartened.

We can't avoid discouragement, even though we'd like to. We aren't immune to it, no matter how much we'd like to be. And we certainly can't ignore it, even if we desire to. Unfortunately, it is a part of this life. In fact, when was the last time you felt discouraged? Or maybe you're finding yourself in a place of discouragement today? I'm sorry if you are, and I pray this episode will help. If you haven't listened to last week's episode, episode 13, Help and Hope for Discouraging Days, that might fill your heart with hope as well.

I'll start off by saying this truth:

Discouragement does not come from God.

It doesn't. Scripture is full of examples of hope and encouragement. And as I mentioned in episode 13, hope is the cure for discouragement. Hope encourages us, because when we have hope, we believe the best. God desires for each of us, you and me, to remain hopeful and encouraged.

In fact, God is the source of encouragement. It says in Romans 15:5 in the NLT,

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.

True encouragement comes from God. He is the ultimate source.

The enemy of our souls, on the other hand, is the master of discouragement. He will do all he can to dishearten, demoralize, and depress us. And not only that, but he wants to keep us that way. Because if he can discourage us, he can deplete us. If he can discourage us, he can devastate us. And the more

discouraged we are, the less of a threat we will be to him and the more he can control us and have his way with us. Ewww. I don't like that thought, do you? I don't like thinking about him having his way with me. No thank you. And get this! He desires not only to discourage us, but to devour us. Now, I know this isn't fun to think about, but hang with me here. 1 Peter 5:8 NLT reads,

"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."

When he succeeds at discouraging you and me, we stop making a difference in this world. We begin to wonder, "What's the use?" We halt stepping out of our comfort zones, we stop following the call God has placed on our lives, we no longer try new things, and we begin to doubt our purpose and place in this life. You and I would rather avoid the discouragement than to step out in faith some days, right? I get it.

In fact, when was the last time you and I stepped out of our comfort zones, or tried something new? When was the last time we took a chance on something God called us to do? Has discouragement impacted how we see God, ourselves, or others?

Discouragement is one of the enemy's tools, and he is good at using it against us.

Friend, this enemy of ours is a great deceiver, and he is the father of lies. Jesus described him in John 8:44 NLT in this way, "He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies."

He will do everything in his power to stop us from believing truth and to fill our minds with lies. He will do all he can to discourage us and frustrate us. And he doesn't want us to succeed in any good thing, nor to make an impact for God in this world, let alone believe in the God who created you and me.

But we know God is more powerful than this enemy of ours, right? But sometimes we forget. Sometimes we try to combat discouragement on our own with positive words or affirmations. We try to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. (What does that even mean, anyway? I guess it means to achieve success with your own efforts.) However, no amount of our words or affirmations or efforts can compare to God and the Words He offers us. His Words give you and me hope. That's why it's so important to spend time with God and to read His Words in the Bible daily. This is the key to staying and living encouraged. Because the more we do that, the less discouraged we will be. When our hearts are set on His truth, we are less likely to be affected by the enemy's tool of discouragement.

That's not to say we won't be, because like I said a minute ago, we all feel the weight of discouragement from time to time. But when we know the hope God offers us and accept and internalize that hope, this greatly diminishes discouragement. After all, it says in Romans 8:37 NRSV, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." So, not in our strength but His, no matter how we feel or what we face in this world, through Him we are more than conquerors!

So, the big deal about encouragement isn't just some fluffy words that make us feel good. Encouragement isn't just to keep us positive or motivated or even happy. No. Living encouraged is much more than we may think it is. And this is why I'm all about it.

The big deal about living encouraged is this: God wants us to remain encouraged and to encourage others.

How do I know? Because the Bible tells me so. Let's look together.

Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing. In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning. Hebrews 10:24-25 TPT

Let each of us please our neighbors for their good, to help them be stronger in faith. Romans 15:2 NCV

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV

If God is a God of encouragement, His followers are to be people of encouragement too! These verses show living encouraged is how God desires us to live, not only for ourselves, but to bless and influence others around us.

Because we are encouraged, we are to encourage others.

And if we look it up, encourage means to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence, and encouragement is the act of encouraging or the state of being encouraged. Whew! There's a lot of word about encouraging there! So, not only are we to live encouraged, but we are to encourage others and build them up in the faith. We are to help others be strong in the Lord. We are to point others to our Source, Jesus. And to do what we can to help others along the way.

So, it starts with us first. Drawing near to God throughout our day is the key to staying encouraged. Because how can God encourage us if we never spend any time with Him? I pray you and I take some time, even after this episode is over, to talk to God and ask for Him to encourage us, right where we are.

Then, let's think about who we can bless with encouragement today. What's one thing you can do--in word or action--to encourage and spur another on?

In your current circumstances, how does it help you to remember who discouragement comes from? And how are you inspired to draw near to God daily to plug into the hope and encouragement He offers you?

Living encouraged is important. Living encouraged is a big deal. And living encouraged is a choice we receive from the God of encouragement. Every single person on this planet needs encouragement. You, me, our neighbor down the street. May you and I scatter encouragement in the hearts of everyone we meet, everywhere we go. Today and every day.

We're sharing ideas and talking about this subject all week long over in our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. I invite you over there to join in the conversation. The link is in the show notes.

If you haven't checked it out yet, I invite you over to my free Resources page on my site. There you will find numerous resources to encourage your heart and put a lift in your step. The link is in the show notes as well.

As we go about our days, I pray you and I are living encouraged. I pray God encourages our hearts and infuses us with hope so we can turn around and encourage the hearts of others. Remember in the days to come you are more than a conqueror through Him! Thank you for joining me here today. Your presence encourages me! God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre