

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

15. Now Is Not the Time to Give Up

You are listening to episode 15 of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. Welcome to today's episode! Thanks for tuning in! I saw a post on Facebook last week which proved the validity of my hunch. This person's post asked for feedback about how her friends and followers were currently feeling, and what I saw was interesting and confirming. According to that post and to my assumptions as of late, many of us are feeling like we are a bit worn out and weary. Like we want to throw our hands up in the air while exclaiming, "I quit! I give up!" To give up on the way the world is right now, on this pandemic, on those who are full of hate and evil. To give up on caring, on trying so hard, on keeping the faith, on looking for the good. Maybe even to give up on dreams, on our goals, on trying to make a difference in this life.

Some of us may feel like we're hanging on by a thread, nearing burnout or breakdown. If any of these describes you or someone you know, I'm thankful you're tuning in today. Because in this episode, we are pausing for a few short minutes in our day to spur one another on with some timely encouragement for our real lives right now. Sound good? Let's jump in.

Life isn't easy right now, is it? We each are walking through unique issues and situations, and some are really burdensome. Some are getting too heavy to carry any longer. And some have completely stopped us in our tracks. Many of us are ready to give up on something or someone. Or we are pondering quitting midstream with something we're working on or working for. Or we are feeling we just don't have the strength to take one more step forward. Friend, if this describes you at all, I get it.

Or maybe you're just sick and tired of being sick and tired. You're weary with the way of the world is right now, with the way your life is right now. Not to mention this pandemic and its effects, mandates and masks (no matter how you feel about them), supply chain issues, job uncertainties, what's true and what's not, divisions, hatred, stress, and hard times.

No wonder we feel like giving up or giving in!

If you're like me, eighteen months ago I never dreamt we'd still be dealing with this pandemic today. (Remember when we heard it would last for a couple weeks, maybe a month? At least that's what reports told us initially.) But here we are, still today trying to find our way through it. Some of us doing well navigating it, and some of us are not. Some of us are moving on the best we can despite it all, and some of us just can't yet, for one reason or another. We each have our ways of dealing with life's uncertainties and troubles. But no matter what we're walking through or experiencing, we can continue to live encouraged. Why? Because we have a God, the God of the Bible, Who is walking through all of it with us. As His followers, He equips us to live encouraged. We discussed this more detail in episodes 13 and 14 of this podcast. Feel free to go back to those and give them a listen. Bottom line: God is the god

of encouragement and hope. So, those who love and follow Him are to be people of encouragement and hope.

That's you and me. We are people of encouragement and hope.

I ran across a familiar story recently, and you, like me, may have heard it already a time or two. But I think today is a great day to hear it again. I pray it encourages your heart.

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway-it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all of his neighbors to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up.

As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off, and take a step up.

Friend, now is not the time to give up.

No matter what kind of dirt is landing on you today, now is the time to shake it off and take a step up. Is it dirt of discouragement? Dirt of disappointment? Dirt of unrealized dreams and future hopes? Shake it off and take a step up. Is it dirt from others, from your past, or from fear? Shake it off and take a step up. Or is it the dirt that's a byproduct of tiredness, weariness, or hopelessness? Friend, shake it off and take a step up.

God has good plans for your life, and no matter how you feel right now or how grim your circumstances appear, God hasn't left you. He is with you and will bring good from this season. That's who He is. Has always been and always will be. Now is not the time to quit. He has encouraging, hope-filled truths you and I can cling to. And I found a few of them:

2 Chronicles 15:7 CEV So you must be brave. Don't give up! God will honor you for obeying him. NIV But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.

1 Corinthians 15:58 NLT So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

Galatians 6:9 MSG So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit.

These verses tell us to keep on keeping on. To continue doing good, to continue doing what God has called you to do. That the harvest is coming, and our work will be rewarded. Rest if you must, but don't quit. Don't you dare give up now. Giving up is what the enemy of our souls wants. He wants you and I to give up and just quit, and the sooner the better. He wants us to stop doing good, to halt making a difference in this world, and He would love nothing more than for us to quit following the calling God has for us and our lives. This enemy wants to discourage us, to defeat us, and even to devour us. We discussed this in last week's episode, episode 14.

God, on the other hand, encourages us right when we need that encouragement. A Bible verse, someone's words or actions, a glimmer of hope, a message in a devotional or in a sermon. Maybe God is encouraging you through these very verses of scripture today.

This isn't to say God will never ask you to change directions or give something up. If you listened to episode 7, you know that recently happened to me. So, if God is prompting you to change directions or take a new path, then by all means, follow His guidance. His plans are best for you. But if you're desiring to quit or to give up because everything feels against you right now, please don't. Please seek God first. Seek His wisdom and His direction. Then follow His leading.

But don't give up just yet.

And if life is really hard right now and you want to run from it all, I offer you this from the book of James:

James 1:2-4 VOICE

Don't run from tests and hardships, brothers and sisters. *As difficult as they are, you will ultimately find joy in them; if you embrace them, your faith will blossom under pressure and teach you true patience as you endure. And true patience brought on by endurance will equip you to complete the long journey and cross the finish line*—mature, complete, and wanting nothing.

Sometimes it's the difficult things in life that mature us the most, right? Just because it's hard right now, doesn't mean you aren't to keep going. It doesn't mean you are to give up and throw in the towel. God is working in your current circumstances for your growth, for the good of others, and for His glory. Again, shake it off and take a step up.

Looking back through different scenarios in my own life, the moments I was the most discouraged, or the times I was the most tempted to give up where when I felt like nothing was happening. That my efforts didn't matter. Questioning if I had missed something from God or I made the wrong decision or if my breakthrough would never come. It's easy to give up when we begin to question. But the thing is, the breakthrough did finally come. All the little efforts did matter. Little did I know that God was working behind the scenes, and in His perfect timing, He made it come to pass. He was so faithful when I was so doubtful. Sometimes the breakthrough is just around the corner, and all too often, we give up too soon.

What if the donkey in today's story had given up? What if he allowed the dirt to bury him? Well, we know what the end result would have been. But think about this, the dirt thrown on him was the very reason for his breakthrough! Maybe the same goes for us in that the dirt isn't what's going to bury us. Maybe it's what God will use to save us, to grow us, to help us step out of the well we are in.

Friend, now is not the time to give up.

Now is the time to seek God, to take a break if needed, to shake off the dirt, and to take a step forward. Just one step. Not twelve or one hundred. Just one. One step up. With God on your side, you can do this. With Him on your side, you can do anything!

You can quit tomorrow, but not today. Then when tomorrow comes, give yourself that same advice.

I also believe this is a good spot to share if you're in a place where you can't see any hope and you're questioning your life, you can find a listening ear and a helpful resource at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255, or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. Help and hope are available for you. Please know I am praying for you.

In our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook we encourage one another and spur each other on as we live our real lives right now. We're discussing this subject all week long over there, and I invite you over. The link is in the show notes.

Also, visit my website at julielefebure.com. There you will find free resources that will encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. Full of lock screens, printables, social images, and even fun things to do to live encouraged. You'll find this link in the show notes too.

In closing, I pray God fills your heart to overflowing with His wisdom, discernment, and hope today. His plans for your life are good, please remember that. He loves you and cares about you and what you care about. Let Him fill you up today and encourage your heart. Don't give up just yet, my friend. Your breakthrough may be just around the corner. Thank you for joining me here. God bless you.

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