

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

59. A Simple Way to Positively Impact Another

You are listening to episode 59 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled A Simple Way to Positively Impact Another. Welcome back to the podcast today! I am so glad you are here, friend. You know? I believe we each desire to not only positively impact the world, but also the lives of those around us. Am I right? Maybe some days we don't set out to do that or we don't think about it as often as we could (at least I don't, and I could do better at keeping this at the forefront of my mind). But we want to make a difference. We want to make this world better. Right? Because who of us ever want to make this world or the lives of others around us worse? Uh, nobody.

But how do we tangibly positively impact another?

How do we make a difference in the world when we feel like we don't have much influence in it? Is it even possible? Well, I say it is. Even with all the negativity and divisiveness and hate in this world. Even when our schedules are full and our minds are preoccupied. We can make a difference and positively impact another. In this episode I share my first-hand account of witnessing such an example from this past weekend. I share a story about my adult son and a little boy named Blake. Get ready to be inspired, friend, because this greatly inspired me. Let's get into this episode to find encouragement for our real lives right now.

Our favorite baseball team is the St. Louis Cardinals. We've been fans of the Red Birds for years, thanks to our children. They became fans in their middle school and high school years before we ever were. I'm not sure why or how, but I'm glad today that's the case. Even though we cannot watch their games on t.v. where we live without paying \$100/mo. That's another subject for another day, however. But each year we try to make it to a home game in St. Louis, just four and a half hours south of us. This past weekend we took in two back-to-back games, Friday night and Saturday afternoon. St. Louis is one of our favorite cities!

Bill, our son, Zach, his girlfriend, Paige, and I immediately immersed ourselves in the baseball and St. Louis culture after arriving, and had time to take in the Arch, Ballpark Village, and the Pre-game Party at Cardinals Nation before the game Friday night. Zach chose our seats on the third base side near the foul pole, and those seats did not disappoint! Third row up with a clear view of everything! (In all of the games we've attended, we never sat on the third base side before!) It was a beautiful night... for baseball and for making memories on that side of the stadium.

I just had no idea how memorable it was going to be.

Would Albert Pujols hit another home run (or three to make it to 700) during the game? Would we catch a foul ball? (We caught a homerun ball last summer!) And would the Cardinals win? I was hoping to answer yes to all three questions!

Five minutes into the game I heard a small voice behind me ask, "Mom, is the game almost over?" A woman's voice replied, "The game literally just started. It'll be over in awhile." I wasn't trying to eavesdrop. Really, I wasn't. But I smiled thinking about our kids being at that age many moons ago, and asking the same question or something similar like, "Are we there yet?"

As the game progressed, our section (and our faces) at one point made it on the jumbotron. I wasn't fast enough to catch it on my camera, however, but the same boy who wondered when the game would get over and who was sitting behind Paige was elated. He tapped Zach on the shoulder and exclaimed, "I was on the jumbotron!" And Zach shared his excitement, "That's awesome!" The little boy then asked Zach his name, and Zach asked the little boy's name. "My name is Blake." Blake looked about six years old.

Blake asked Zach all sorts of questions.

Good questions! Like if Zach was a Cards or Reds fan, if he wanted the Cardinals to win, and if he played any sports. When Zach said he played soccer, Blake got excited because he was a soccer player too. "Are you a professional player?" Zach humbly replied he played in high school. "Could I score a goal off you?," Blake inquired. With a smile, Zach said maybe he could. Blake's questions continued sporadically through the game.

Blake thought Zach should go visit the Build-a-Bear shop to get a Cardinals bear or other animal. Blake had done that before the game and had with him a stuffed bright yellow video game character. This character also made the jumbotron, so surely if Zach got a Build-a-Bear, it and Zach would make the jumbotron too. Makes sense! But Zach decided to watch the game instead of making a trip to build a bear somewhere inside Busch Stadium. I'm sure Blake was questioning Zach's decision.

Zach, at one point, went to the restroom. Blake tapped Paige on the shoulder and asked, "Hey you (he didn't know her name), where did Zach go?" She explained he went to the bathroom. "When will he be back?" Paige said he'd be back soon. And when Zach returned, Blake was all smiles. It was the cutest exchange, one I wish I could have recorded.

At this point I began to pay more attention to Blake and Zach's conversation. He asked questions, Zach would answer, and Zach would ask Blake a question back. All the while, the Cardinals were busy winning the game we came to watch.

Pujols hit homerun 698, and the crowd roared on its feet. Complete with fireworks and flashing stadium lights. It was an electric moment! It was great to see Jack Flaherty back on the mound, and I had never experienced an immaculate inning before, as Ryan Helsley pitched nine pitches with nine strikes! Plus great hitting and fielding by the entire Cardinals team. It truly was a game to remember with a 6-5 win over the Cincinnati Reds!

All of that was great! Don't get me wrong. It was one for the record books!

But what I will remember about this game the most didn't happen on the field in front of me.

What I will likely remember the most happened right next to me. In Section 168. Between a little boy and my adult son.

As the game came to a close, so did Blake's questions.

And what he said with watery eyes at the end grabbed Zach by the heart. "Thanks, Zach. I'll never forget you!"

Cue the tears!

Blake, I don't think Zach will ever forget you either.

I think we all wish we would have taken a photo with Blake and his family. And I wish there was a way we could find that little boy so Zach and he could remain long-distance friends. Because it was clear Zach made a positive impact on Blake, and Blake made a positive impact on Zach.

And when that happens, hearts are touched and people are transformed.

I know I'm partial, but I'm proud of how Zach handled this entire situation. He could have been annoyed about a little boy asking him questions. He could have been so focused on the game to not pay any attention to Blake. Or he could have ignored him all together. After all, this was going to be his only Cardinals' game this year!

But no. He treated Blake the way Zach would have wanted to be treated at that age (at any age!). Zach engaged him, he invested time in him, and he gave Blake his undivided attention.

He gave Blake the one thing he wanted.

Zach's attention.

Something so simple, yet so profound can make such a difference, can't it? Giving someone our attention is such a simple way to positively impact another.

When was the last time you and I did that? When was the last time you and I were with another and we gave him or her our undivided attention? Or when was the last time you or I were talking with someone and we were completely focused on what that person was saying, not what was going on in our heads or around us?

These are good questions to ask ourselves, and giving our undivided attention is a good effort to focus on. To build others up and to build relationships with others.

I wonder, would I have treated Blake the way Zach did? Would I have given him my attention? I pray I would. I pray often for God to help me be present and live in the moment. And to be sensitive to what others around me need. May I remember this example in future exchanges with others.

May I always give my full attention.

What a difference it would make in this world if we all did this!! The next time we get the opportunity to do so, let's practice giving our undivided attention to someone. Let's practice shutting off the voices in our head and preparing our response to just listen instead. Let's practice listening more and talking less. The more we practice the better we'll do at giving our full attention.

This reminds me of Romans 12:9-10 MSG. "Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle."

Showing our undivided attention is a form of loving others. It shows respect and kindness. It's a simple way we can invest in others and show them they are valued. And it not only blesses the receiver, but it blesses us too! It truly is a gift!

In all the ways that try to distract us from what's important in this world, may we be the ones to live undistracted, to stay present, and to give our attention to the ones right in front of us. Whether that is our children, our spouse, our co-worker, or the boy in section 168. How will you give your full attention today? This week?

The thing is, you and I may never know what an impact we are making in the lives of others.

Every single conversation, every single kind word or deed, every single smile or gesture, every single thing we do can positively impact another. What we do makes a difference. Let's make everything we do count, and let's be sure to live in every single moment God gives us.

So, how will you invest in another? What difference can you make to positively impact another?

We're carrying this conversation over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. I invite you to come on over and join in the discussion. You'll find this to be an uplifting space, full of encouragement and hope. The link to this group is in the show notes.

You'll find additional free encouragement resources, like bookmarks and other printables, lock screens, and social posts for your personal use in the Resources area on my site. They are designed to encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. The link to access this is also in the show notes.

And if you found encouragement and hope in this episode, would you consider rating it and/or reviewing it so others can find it too? Be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss an episode.

In closing, what we do matters. I was blessed to witness an example of that Friday night. I pray you and I continue to partner with God to be blessings in this world and in the lives of those around us. And if you know a little boy named Blake, who attended the Cardinals game Friday night and sat in section 168, would you tell him Zach would love to play soccer with him. Thanks for being here. Have a great week and God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre