

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

73. How to Set Ourselves Up for the New Year

You are listening to episode 73 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "How to Set Ourselves Up for the New Year." Welcome back this week to the podcast. I'm grateful you are here! Well, here we are, the week between Christmas and New Year's. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas holiday, filled with joy, peace, and a whole lot of Jesus. Even though it was just a couple days ago, I pray the hope of Christmas will linger long in your life, and into the new year. May we not rush past the miracle of Christmas and what we just experienced celebrating Jesus' birth. But as our hearts and minds tend to turn to what's next, that being New Year's and welcoming 2023. In this episode we discuss how to set ourselves up for the New Year. I think we will each find some hope and encouragement as we go. Let's get into this episode!

Can you even believe we are in the last week of 2022?

I can't. I truly don't know where this year went. To me it feels like we should be somewhere in August yet. I can now agree with what my parents used to say. *Time moves faster as we grow older.* I may not like it, but I can't do anything about it. Except control what I do and how I perceive life and live it out. You know? Maybe the pace of time matches the pace of our lives? (We talked about hurry in episode 71.) But if this is the case, I want to do all I can to slow things down and appreciate the moments I'm given.

Maybe you do, too.

Have you thought much about 2023 yet?

Because ready or not, it's on its way.

Or maybe you're focusing on getting through 2022 first. Because, well, it's been a struggle. I get it. I understand when life hasn't been a stroll down easy street. Some days one day at a time is enough. (And that's scriptural, by the way.) One day at a time, because today is enough for today.

But there's something about a new year, isn't there? There's something about flipping the calendar to that first month of the brand new year. For me it's exhilarating and exciting as I see the calendar pages before me. It's like we get a fresh start, a clean slate, a new beginning. It's as if we're given a brand new chalkboard to write on, or an empty book inviting us to fill in the pages. Or a fresh, untraveled path to journey upon.

We look ahead with wonder, with anticipation, with hopeful expectancy. Maybe even a little apprehension and a few questions. *Will this year be better than last year? What will transpire this year? What lies ahead for me and my loved ones? Will this be the year my hopes, dreams, goals come true?*

We don't know the answers to many of these kinds of questions today, but one thing we know for sure is this. No matter what 2023 holds, we will not be walking through it alone.

God is with us.

And that's the hope we just celebrated two days ago.

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Matthew 1:23 NIV

Immanuel means God with us. That's the whole point of Christmas, and not just for Christmas. It's for every single day of our lives. So, no matter what comes our way in the new year, what we consider good or bad, you and I will never, ever experience it alone.

And this is the first, most important step to set ourselves up for the new year.

Realizing and remembering God is with us. No matter what.

This gives us peace, hope, and a whole lot of joy. And everything else hinges on this truth in our new year. Every goal we set, every plan we make, every thing we do now and throughout the year. Knowing God is with us makes all the difference in our thoughts, our attitudes, our words, and our actions.

Remembering this today will set ourselves up for the year ahead and will give us a foundation to stand on.

And I recall a couple verses that remind us of just how God is with us.

This is My command: be strong and courageous. Never be afraid or discouraged because I am your God, the Eternal One, and I will remain with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9 VOICE

Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 NIRV, "*Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.*"

God is most definitely with us, friend!

As I'm pondering the new year, I came up with some ideas to help me start off the new year strong. So I thought I would share them on the podcast today.

These five ideas may help to set ourselves up for the new year.

1 - Remember God is with us.

(Which we just talked about.) No matter what we experience on any given day in 2023, God will be with us in it.

2 - Reflect and pray.

What do I mean by this? Typically, this is the week I find some time alone. To think, ponder, and pray about the new year. I seek God and search what's in my heart. I also take a look back at the year at what went well, I celebrate accomplishments, and I look long at when and where and how Jesus showed Himself in my life and in my circumstances in the last 12 months. It doesn't have to take long, but set some time aside to do this. It's one of the most powerful and practical things we can do to set ourselves up for the new year. Have a notebook or journal handy to capture and document anything that feels important and/or necessary.

3 - Set goals, craft a plan, choose a one word.

This is also the week I set some goals, make a few plans, and choose my one word for the year. Now, I've not always been the best at setting goals. In fact, I at one point stopped setting them all together. Because I was tired of not achieving them. But the thing is, I was setting them all wrong. I was setting them on what I wanted, and didn't invite God into them. I didn't seek Him first. These were selfish goals, and I know now they would have negatively affected me spiritually had I achieved them. I know ask myself the question, "Does this goal please myself or glorify God?"

Sometimes it helps to have categories for goals. Dave Ramsey suggests seven categories: spiritual, financial, career, intellectual, fitness, family, social. Choose categories that make sense to you.

A goal is like a GPS. They help guide us to where we are going. I don't know about you, but without my GPS, I can get lost often. Same goes when I don't set goals.

Also, do you typically select a "one word" for the year? We'll discuss this concept more in next week's episode.

4 - Start the year rested.

God is teaching me much about rest. Friend, we can't pour from an empty pitcher. We pour ourselves out at work, at home, as we volunteer, as we show up for our friends and family. We continue to pour out more and more. But if we don't stop to fill ourselves back up, the pitcher never gets fill. Eventually it dries up and we have no more to pour out. I invite you this week to rest. Find time to sit and do nothing. To do something you enjoy that's relaxing. To do whatever it takes to get a decent night's sleep. We aren't our best if we're not rested. It's just not physically possible. Love yourself enough to begin the year rested. This will set ourselves up for a great start to 2023!

5. Begin with grace.

We aren't going to start the new year perfectly, so let's start it with accepting God's grace right out of the gate. God might change our goals or our plans, so let's hold them loosely while pursuing them. We will likely mess up and make mistakes, and when we do, we will ask for forgiveness where needed, pick ourselves back up, and begin again. All the while we focus on God's leading, guiding and prompting. As we accept God's grace, may we also extend that same grace to others. Grace makes all the difference, doesn't it?

So let us step boldly to the throne of grace, where we can find mercy and grace to help when we need it most. Hebrews 4:16

VOICE

Out of the fullness of his grace he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another. John 1:16 GNT

Operating in God's grace is a beautiful way to live.

I pray these five ideas help set us up for the new year.

Grab hold of any that make sense to you and throw the rest out. But I pray they help set ourselves up for a closer walk with Jesus, for a growth-filled year in becoming more like Him, for loving and serving God and others in tangible ways, and for creating wonderful memories with those we love. May they

help us live more encouraged and less distracted. And may we end next year with even greater hope than we have today.

We are taking this conversation over to our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. We are discussing this throughout the week as we close out 2022 and prepare for 2023. Come on over and join us. You'll find this an encouraging and uplifting space. The link to this private group is in the show notes.

I pray this episode encouraged your heart and helped you in some way. If it did, would you consider leaving a rating and/or review wherever you're listing from today? This helps others find this encouragement too. Thank you so much.

As we begin to close out this year and look ahead to the new one, I am praying for each of us today. May you experience good health, abundant hope, and bountiful happiness today and all year long in 2023. I look forward to journeying through it with you. Happy New Year and God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre