

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

75. How to Look Back to Move Forward

You're listening to episode 75 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, "How to Look Back to Move Forward." Welcome back to the podcast! Thanks for joining me today! As of the airing of this episode, we are ten days in to 2023. How has the new year began for you? Is it all you expected it to be so far? Well, in today's episode we are choosing to pause one more time before heading any further into 2023, to consciously and intentionally ask ourselves some questions about last year. Because truly, sometimes we look back to move forward. This is something I believe is vitally important in our growth, in our present lives, and where we head from here, that I'm devoting an entire episode to this subject. Whether you've done some reflecting on 2022 already or not, this episode will help you live abundantly in these remaining 355 days of 2023. Are you ready? Let's get to it!

I'll say it one more time.

Happy New Year!

That may seem like old news, right? Because to me it feels as if 2023 began a few weeks ago, but in reality, it's only been 10 days. But I don't need to tell you time goes by quickly these days, do I? So, I won't.

In last week's episode, we discussed ways to begin the new year, and I shared how I was stepping into 2023. But how is your 2023 gone so far? What steps have you taken toward your goals and how are you doing with any resolutions you've set? If your year hasn't started off with a bang, may it help to know you're not alone. As for my goals, I set a goal to exercise five times each week, and well, last week (the first week of 2023) I already missed that goal. I exercised only twice last week. But I figure twice is better than none, right? And it's likely more than if I wouldn't have set the goal in the first place, correct? So, I'm not getting down on myself. I'm just starting fresh this week, and yes, I have exercised twice so far this week! Yay! I invite you to begin again today, no matter how the last ten days have gone for you.

But before we get too far into 2023, I think it's wise to pause today and ask ourselves a few reflecting questions about last year. You may have already done a similar exercise, but no matter, I invite you to join me in pausing for just a few moments today, and asking yourself a handful of pointed questions regarding your life in 2022. Because when we ask these questions, and answer them with complete honesty, this can impact how we live and function in 2023. Because I think it's easy to just turn the calendar page to the new year and not think one more thought about the year we're leaving behind.

But you and I have each learned some important lessons from the last 365 days. You and I have lived in moments we will never live again. Some of these moments have shaped us, have changed us, have impacted our lives in monumental ways. You and I did some amazing things last year, and right now we might not be able to think of one of them. But they are worth celebrating and building upon. And yet some of these moments we don't care of ever live them again. We want to put them in the past and leave them there.

Asking ourselves these questions is vital and healthy and impacting, not only for today, but for how we live the rest of this year. And doing so now, even after the year has begun, adds an extra dimension to the direction where you and I are headed.

It's important to look back to move forward.

And that's what we're pausing to do today.

Not to rehash old problems, or to return to our mistakes. Not to go back to the past to live there or to dig up old issues. No. We are looking back to learn, to appreciate, to celebrate, and to use last year to help us move forward.

Because we're embracing the new before us. We're believing God has good things ahead for us, right? We are believing God is going ahead of us in 2023, just like He was with us in 2022. So, no matter how last year played out, we can recall it with contentment because God was there, too.

This points me to instances where God, in His Word, prompts us to remember.

Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Isaiah 46:9 NLT

Once again I'll go over what God has done, lay out on the table the ancient wonders; I'll ponder all the things you've accomplished, and give a long, loving look at your acts. Psalm 77:11 MSG

I remember the days gone by; I think about all that you have done, I bring to mind all your deeds. Psalm 143:5 GNT

God has been so faithful, hasn't He?

So as we look back to move forward, here are eight questions to ask ourselves today.

Take your time with them, and feel free to write them down if you want.

1. **What is something you did in 2022 that you never thought you could do?**
2. **What's one thing you accomplished in 2022 that you are proud of?**
3. **What went well last year?**
4. **What did not go well last year?**
5. **What's the biggest lesson you learned in 2022?**
6. **Is there anything you would do differently last year, knowing what you know now?**
7. **How did you impact the lives of others last year?**
8. **What are you celebrating today from 2022?**

Now, just for fun, I'm going to answer each of these questions from my personal perspective in this episode today. I hope doing so prompts you to answer them as well.

1. **What's something you did in 2022 that you never thought you could do?**

My husband and I ride a tandem bicycle, and on RAGBRAI (the annual week-long bicycle ride across Iowa) in July, Wednesday's route was a total of 100 miles. I had never bicycled 100 miles in one day before. Ever. So, understandably, I was nervous about that day's route. But we started at 5 AM that day, we hydrated and ate wisely along the way, and we took many breaks on the route. But we did it in about seven hours! I can now say I bicycled 100 miles in one day!

2. **What's one thing you accomplished in 2022 that you are proud of?**

I had a publisher appointment with author and acquisitions editor, Jennifer Dukes Lee, in July. I desired to be prepared for that appointment with a full completed book proposal, just in case she liked my book idea and wanted me to send it to her. I had never written a full book proposal before, so I learned what I needed to finish it, had a professional editor edit the proposal, and had a great appointment with Jennifer. She loved my idea and helped me change my focus a little. That appointment helped me in more ways than just getting my book out there in the world. It truly changed my writing life!

3. **What went well last year?**

I got back into the routine of starting my day with God and journaling my prayers. Oh, I would always begin my day with God, but not intentionally with my Bible and prayer and not being rushed. This transformed my daily life, and I can't imagine not beginning my day in this way ever again.

4. **What did not go well?**

I learned the hard way to keep my mouth shut. Sometimes my mouth just spews out what I'm thinking, and that's not always a good thing. Sometimes I say things that I mean in a certain way, but it comes out differently. Last year I asked for forgiveness often when my words weren't great and when they hurt or offended others. I'm still learning!

5. **What's the biggest lesson you learned in 2022?**

To take a step forward every day. Because the days fly by and before I know it, one day turns into two, and two into a week, and a week into a month. Taking one step to move forward every day, in no matter what area of life it's in, makes a compounding difference.

6. **Is there anything you would do differently last year, knowing what you know now?**

I would be more bold and take more chances. I wouldn't be afraid to fail so much, and I would tell others more how much they mean to me.

7. **How did you impact the lives of others last year?**

I think I impacted others by showing up here on the podcast, in my writing, speaking at events, and on social media with a consistent message of encouragement and hope. I also impacted my grandchildren by caring for them on a weekly basis a day or two a week.

8. **What are you celebrating today from 2022?**

I am celebrating how God has grown me, how He continues to lead me, and how I was able to live a little less distracted in 2022.

Answering these questions and writing them down took me approximately fifteen minutes. So, it doesn't have to take long to do. And if I couldn't quite answer one right away, I skipped it and when on

to the next and returned to it when I could answer it. Please know, this doesn't have to be perfect, because you are the only one who sees it.

And the cool thing is, you and I can ask ourselves these same questions at the ending of/beginning of each month this year by just changing a few words. This will help us grow through each month and will help us remember well the lessons we're learning and the moments we want to celebrate!

And I made it easy for you! In case you weren't able to write these down, these eight questions are found as a printable in the new year section of my Free Resources on my site. You can access them there and print them off if you'd like as a reminder to ask yourself these questions every month to help you reflect and ponder. The link to my Free Resources is in the show notes.

Personally, after answering these questions, I felt I was ready to begin the new year. I was ready to apply what I've learned and to rejoice in the good.

It's important to reflect and remember.

I pray you take a few moments to do this today.

We are discussing this over in our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook this week. We are looking at ways to reflect and remember, whether that's at the end of the day, the end of the week, or the end of the month. Come on over and join in the conversation over there. You'll find it to be an encouraging and uplifting space! The link to this group is in the show notes.

And if you found some hope and encouragement in this episode, please consider leaving a rating and or review where you're tuning in from today so others can find this encouragement too.

In closing, as you reflect and remember, I pray God reminds you of His love and His presence in your life. May looking back to move forward become a habit we each do on a regular basis! Thank you for being here today. Have a great week and God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre