

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

78. 7 Ways How to Begin Your Day Encouraged

You are listening to episode 78 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "7 Ways How to Begin Your Day Encouraged." Welcome to the podcast! This may be your first time here or your 78th or somewhere in between. But no matter, I thank you for joining me and I pray God uses this episode to encourage your heart today. Because we each need encouragement every now and then, right? In this episode we pause to ponder how we begin our days, because how we begin each day has a direct effect on the rest of the day. So, this matters, maybe more than we think it does. Because each day matters. So, I invite you to hang with me here for the next short while and together we'll find some help and hope as we consider how to begin our day encouraged.

I love mornings.

I think I always have, at least for as long as I can remember. Except for maybe my first semester in college when I worked in the cafeteria, clocking in by 6 a.m., to help pay for my tuition. I did not love mornings then as I was cracking eggs and making donuts, donning a white paper hat.

But other than that season, I do like my mornings. In fact (this will label me in the "strange" category), I get almost giddy when I wake at 5 a.m. and think about the new day ahead of me. Great anticipation and hope fill me as I ponder how God might show up in my life and for the possible opportunities I may get to partner with Him. It's as if I wake up to a blank page, and I can't wait to see how God and I will fill that page. (I know, I'm strange, because who else gets giddy at 5 a.m.?)

Isn't it cool how God wired us each differently? You may like to stay up late at night and sleep in in the morning. Or you may be in a season of life where mornings just aren't your favorite. Or you might be chronically low on sleep and you and mornings aren't friends right now. (Listen to episode 77, last week's episode, for more on that subject.)

No matter how God wired us, however, we each experience mornings. Right? Because we each wake up at some point during the day. But morning comes at some point. Even for third shift workers. Mornings may just be at a different time of day than for those who work during the daylight hours.

What I'm saying here is, we each experience mornings. And we have a choice in how we will react to each morning. Will we embrace it or dread it? Will we make the most of it or will we complain about it? Do we typically bound out of bed or slink under the covers to attempt to avoid it a few more minutes? You and I have choices to make, right out of the gate each day. We have the choice to welcome the day or wish it away. We can choose a good attitude or a bad one. And we have a choice to begin each day encouraged, or to begin each day discouraged.

Because the tone of the morning sets the tone of the day.

What will you and I choose?

I learned this the hard way while my children were still living under our roof. In their younger years, the tone of my day also set the tone for their days, and let me tell you, that felt like a lot of pressure. So, how I began my day not only impacted me, it impacted my family. I chose back then get up early, to begin my day in a positive, uplifting, God-filled way, and to do all I could to help my family have a good start to their day, too.

As my mom did for me when I was young.

I think I've shared this on the podcast before, but I think it's worth sharing again. For as far back as I can remember, my mom woke me up every morning. I never woke to an alarm clock. *She* was my alarm clock. She was cups of coffee into the day and was already moving mountains in the morning before she made her way up to my bedroom with her, "Good morning, Julie Ann" greeting.

I'd much rather wake up to her sweet voice than an annoying alarm clock. She didn't mind and I certainly loved it.

Then she'd go back downstairs and leave me to get ready for my day. But, I vividly remember, at least through my final years of high school, the familiar aroma of sizzling bacon as it crept up the stairs and into the bathroom as I was doing my hair or washing my face. When I made my way downstairs to the kitchen, there in my spot at the table would be a plate holding two over-easy eggs, two pieces of white toast, and two slices of bacon, covered by a lid to keep it warm. She had it timed perfectly.

Now, talk about setting the tone for the day!

My mom had it down. She knew the impact of a positive morning routine. Little did I know, I was the only one in my Senior class of 27 who began her morning that way. I assumed everyone did, until I found out they didn't. Can I just tell you again how amazing my mom was? She was incredible. No wonder I miss her so much.

So, you see what kind of mom I wanted to be for my kids. You see the kind of standard my mom set for me to follow. Yes, I was the one to wake my children every morning. And until our son became too big to carry and until he thought it wasn't cool anymore, I would carry him by piggyback to the kitchen table each morning. Our daughter would always wake up with a smile and she'd make her own way to the kitchen table. This was our morning ritual. No, I didn't make my kids bacon and eggs every morning of their youth, but you can bet I made sure they ate a good breakfast before they left for the day. And they chose what kind of breakfast that would be (within reason).

Then, with full backpacks and bellies, we would all head out the door as I would drive them to school 20 minutes away (this was before they could drive) and we would pray together and talk about the day ahead of us.

I did everything I could to help them begin the day encouraged.

And I pray that foundation still impacts them as adults today.

How we begin each day matters.

So how do you typically begin yours? Do you have a certain routine or certain things you do each morning or most mornings?

Over the years my morning routines have adapted based on my season of life. It looked a bit different when the kids were home than it does today. It was different when I was working outside of our home than it is today. But what I do today, in this current season, is my favorite routine so far. It still may change a little day by day, depending on my schedule, but for the most part it remains the same.

It matters to begin the day encouraged.

If God cares about us and every part of our lives, then I believe He cares how we begin each day.

Now, I'm not the expert on morning routines, but my current routine works for me and helps me to begin my day encouraged. Maybe it'll spur you on in your morning routine, as well. My day may not always begin in this particular order, but here's generally what I do to begin my day encouraged:

1 - Say good morning to God.

It may sound silly, but each morning when I wake, I desire my first conscious thought to be directed to my Creator. So, I usually whisper these profound words, "Good morning, God." I sometimes, silently in my head, then follow that with a children's song that contains those words. But here, I silently offer whatever's on my heart, and I have a conversation with God right there before I get out of bed. I absolutely love this moment.

Remind me each morning of your constant love, for I put my trust in you. My prayers go up to you; show me the way I should go. Psalm 143:8 GNT

2 - Drink lemon water.

Then I make my way to the kitchen where I make a cup of warm lemon water. Do you drink lemon water in the mornings? I began doing this a year ago, and the benefits of doing so are incredible. It aids in hydration and digestion, it boots the immune system, and it naturally detoxes and deacidifies the body, plus adding a pinch of cayenne pepper also can boost metabolism. Any sort of boating from dinner from the night before completely disappears. If you want to give this a try, I suggest drinking it with a straw and rinse your mouth after drinking or follow it with another glass of water to protect the enamel on your teeth. But this simple drink helps me and my health, and that is always encouraging.

3 - Spend time with God.

I then dedicate the next while to God. I journal, pray, read my Bible, and spend some quiet moments with Him. Some days it's an hour or so, and some days it's less. But this is the most important part of my day, and I treat it like an appointment with God. It's one I don't ever desire to miss. During this time, I praise and thank Him, I pray for the needs on my heart, and I seek His direction and guidance.

In the morning, O Eternal One, listen for my voice; in the day's first light, I will offer my prayer to You and watch expectantly *for Your answer*. Psalm 5:3 VOICE

"If you desire to do your life's greatest work, it needs to start with prayer. God has uniquely designed you to serve Him in your gifts and abilities that He has given you. But if you simply wake up each morning and start being busy, you are likely going to miss out on the blessings and opportunities from God that day." -Chris McClure

4 - Make the bed.

Some people do this right away, but I make my bed whenever I get dressed and ready for the day. Do you make your bed? Now, this is one thing I wish I would have insisted my children did each morning, but I didn't. There's value in making our bed each morning, even if we will crawl back into it later. It offers a sense of accomplishment right away in the morning, and it creates a peaceful environment when the bedroom is neat and tidy with the bed made. If you typically don't make your bed, I challenge you to try it for a week and see what you think. You may become hooked! It's a positive way to begin your day encouraged.

5 - Move.

Some days I do better at this than others, but moving in the morning helps me the rest of the day. Whether I get on the treadmill or walk outdoors, or lift weights or even do stretches, moving my body in the morning gets me going in the right direction and helps me eat better throughout the day. And, I've found, if I don't exercise in the morning, well, I likely won't do it later. Plus, exercise helps boost our moods, and that's always a great way to begin the day encouraged.

6 - Eat a healthy breakfast with protein.

I continue seeing the benefits of eating breakfast with some protein. Sometimes I'll make eggs and uncured bacon without nitrates or nitrites (yes, I still love bacon and eggs for breakfast!), or a smoothie with my go-to ingredients of protein powder, spinach, fruit, coconut milk, and chia seeds. Some mornings I'll make a bowl of oatmeal with protein powder, raisins, cinnamon, and coconut milk. But making sure I have protein in my first meal helps me eat better and more balanced throughout the rest of the day. Plus, I feel full longer than if I don't have protein. It makes a big difference for me. The "experts" say this is a wise way to begin eating each day.

7 - Look for the sunrise.

Another strange quirk about me is I love sunrises and sunsets, but if you follow me on social media, you already know that about me, right? One thing I do each morning is I look for the sunrise. I'll pay attention to what time the sun is rising for the day, and I'll keep scanning the eastern horizon from my kitchen window as much as I possibly can. And often I'm running outside to capture the sunrise with my camera. But did you know there are benefits to watching the sunrise? It helps the immune system and decreases inflammation, it decreases stress and increases positive feelings and mood, it's important for a healthy circadian rhythm, and it can reduce mental fatigue (we discussed fatigue in episode 77) and increase concentration. Interesting, huh?

What do you do to begin your day encouraged?

What should I add to my routine? Is there anything you desire to add to yours?

Because how we begin our day matters. And if your mornings have been a struggle lately, maybe shaking things up and trying something new might help. Feel free to adapt any of these to your own life and see how they might help. And I'm always a big fan of rising early! If your mornings are typically harried and hurried, that might help.

We're discussing this more in our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook this week. Come on over there to be encouraged and uplifted. You'll find this space to be hope and joy-filled! The link to this group is in the show notes.

Also, I've created a section in my Free Resources on my website called Begin the Day Encouraged. You'll find a few helpful resources there--all for free. A social post I'm sharing this week, a lockscreen for your phone to remind you to live encouraged, a printable bookmark to inspire you as you begin your day, and a 4 x 6 printable which highlights the 7 Ways How to Begin Your Day Encouraged that we just discussed here. Feel free to access these to encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. The link to access these free resources is also in the show notes. I pray they bless you.

And if you found some encouragement and hope in this episode, would you please leave a rating and/or review from wherever you're tuning in today? This will help others find this encouragement too. Make it easy on yourself and subscribe to the podcast so you never miss a new episode.

To close today, how we begin the day matters. Not only for us, but for those around us. I pray this episode prompts you to think about your morning routine and inspires you to make any adjustments where necessary. May what you do each morning not only assist you in beginning the day encouraged, but may it beautifully impact every moment of your day. Thank you for tuning in. I'm grateful for you! God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre