

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

91. How to Avoid Living Life on Empty

You are listening to episode 91 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, "How to Avoid Living Life on Empty." Hello and welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad we get to share a few moments together today! Believe it or not, at the airing of this episode, we are venturing into one of the most hectic seasons of the year. For a number of reasons, late spring, namely the month of May, can be a bustling time for many of us. Spring activities, the school year ending, graduations and grad parties, Mother's Day, deadlines and commitments. You name it. We seem to have it going on, don't we? Not to mention those of us who are in charge of organizing some of these things! If we're not careful, we can get just as overwhelmed this month as many of us do during the Christmas season. So, we're discussing this in today's episode, because this is important. We want to embrace life in this season, not live life on empty, right? We'll find some encouragement and hope in this next short while together. So, let's get to it!

May and June are my favorite months of the year. But it's also the time of year where we can begin to live life on empty, without even knowing it. We can begin to go and go and go, without ever pausing to replenish ourselves or giving ourselves a break. Simply because we think we have too much to do. Who can possibly take a break now?? In this season?

Well, I have a new thought for us. Now is the time to take more breaks than we think we can afford. Not monetarily afford, but with our time. Planning our breaks now before we get immersed in the season will help us in the long run.

What do I mean?

Well, just for a moment, imagine you are a pitcher full of water.

We use one in our home. Maybe you do, too. Imagine you are a full pitcher. Full to the brim. Not one more drop could fit in. If you tried to add more, you would overflow. You feel great when you're filled to the top. You are flourishing and thriving as you are chock-full. And that's a good thing!

But you weren't made to just stay filled up, right? No. Water pitchers not only hold water, but they are designed to pour water out. They are designed to fill up other containers with water. And that's what you do in life. You pour out what's inside into the lives of others and in what you do daily.

You pour out to your family, to your children, and to your spouse. Too your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors. You pour out in your jobs, your school, your volunteer positions. You pour out to your church, your business, the organizations you belong to. You're good at pouring out! But what happens to a water pitcher when it keeps pouring and pouring and pouring? Well, soon it becomes empty. The pitcher runs dry. And the thing is, a water pitcher doesn't do much good when it's empty. It's not doing what it's designed to do sitting empty.

Consequently, the same goes with us. All the pouring we do into the lives of others and in what we do daily leads us to be an empty pitcher. We only have so much to give before we run dry. You and I aren't who we are designed to be if we're empty. We aren't functioning at full capacity when we're empty. And when we're empty, well, we know what happens then, right? We get stressed out, burned out, overwhelmed, sick, weary, and even depressed. And a whole lot of other things. You and I can't function on empty. We can't give on empty. We can't serve on empty.

Life on empty is just that. Empty.

We must fill ourselves back up.

Just like we refill a water pitcher to continue to use it in the way it was designed to be used, we also must refill ourselves. And the best time to do that is before we get to empty!

Do you regularly refill yourself? When was the last time you took some time for yourself? Now, I'll be the first to admit I'm terrible at this. So much so, last week I worked so much and thought about so many deep subjects that I had a difficult time sleeping. I knew I needed to pause and care for myself. I needed to refill. So, I decided after my weekend commitments were over, I would take a break. So, I didn't work at all on Sunday. Not at all, except for my speaking engagement that morning. That's strange for me. But I remember my former pastor once saying to me, "Sometimes the most holy thing we can do is take a nap." And Sunday afternoon after arriving home, I did just that. I took a 30-minute nap on our couch, and that refilled me. I was a new person after snoozing for 30 minutes!

What fills you up?

What refills your pitcher? Maybe you're not sure. If you're not, think about your answers to these questions. What brings you joy? What helps you feel complete and rejuvenated? Because what fills you up is likely different than what fills me up. For example, certain activities refill me, like tandem bicycling with my husband, writing, walking outdoors, and spending time with my family. You might think, "Those sound awful. There's no way those would refill me." And that's okay. Only you and God know what refills you.

Right now, however, please do yourself a favor and pause this episode to think about what is it that fills you up. What refills you and refuels you? Is it a nap? A bubble bath? Meeting a friend for coffee? Sleeping in? Baking or cooking something special? Curling up with a good book? Soaking up the sun at the beach? What is it for you? This is important, because we're going to talk about this more in just a minute.

The key to avoiding living life on empty is to refill before you get empty.

My friend, Patty, shared an observation with me some time ago. She noticed in our conversations when I would leave town or any given amount of time, I would come back refreshed and rejuvenated. She suggested I schedule time away every quarter. This would allow me to refill myself before I became empty. She's so smart! For the record, I haven't always done a great job of applying her suggestion, but I aim to do that this year. I went away in March and last weekend. I have a getaway planned in July and hopefully October. They may not be spaced exactly twelve weeks apart, but knowing I have something planned keeps me from living life on empty.

So, whatever it is that fills you up, however you answered that question from a few minutes ago, I encourage you to schedule some time for you to do it. Schedule it this week, if possible, then again in a few days, weeks, or months, or whatever works well for you. But schedule it. Otherwise, I know how it goes. Life will take over, and without it scheduled, you'll end up living life on empty.

Some other ways we can avoid living life on empty:

We can refill ourselves spiritually.

The most important way I refill myself daily is spending time with God and beginning my day with Him. By reading His Word, praying, listening, and sitting quietly. By journaling my thoughts, prayers, concerns on paper and giving them all to God. I allow God to fill me so I can pour out throughout my day. Because if I don't, I end up living life on empty. Spending time with God is the single most important thing I can do to pour out into the lives of others and into the activities I'm called to do.

But those who trust in the Lord will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak. Isaiah 40:31 NIRV

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 NIV

We can refill ourselves physically.

Taking care of our physical bodies can refill us. Getting enough rest, eating healthy foods, staying hydrated and supplementing where needed. Adding in exercise and staying active. Making our physical health a priority is a great way to stay filled.

We can refill ourselves mentally.

What thoughts do we think? Are our thoughts positive or are they mostly negative? What we think and how we think matters. The thing is, what we read, say, watch, hear, and experience affects what we think. The more we fill our minds with good things, the better our thoughts will be. The more we fill our minds with not-so-good things, the worse our thoughts will be. And sometimes we don't realize what we're thinking at all. We just believe every thought we think. But the thing is, we don't have to believe every single thought that comes through our minds. We just don't. You and I can change our thoughts by renewing our minds (Romans 12:2) and taking every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). We can actively choose our thoughts.

We can refill ourselves emotionally.

I've mentioned this before. I take my emotional health seriously and have for a number of years now. Emotionally I refill myself by seeing a Christian therapist. Just like I see a doctor for my physical health, I see a Christian therapist for my emotional and mental health. I consider this practice a gift to myself and I'm grateful for having this tool in my life. Every day, ordinary kind of people see therapists, and there's no shame in it. It's a healthy step towards refilling ourselves.

Of course, there are other ways to refill us, too. But when we fill ourselves up and keep ourselves full as we pour into the lives of others, we remove a large portion of distractions such as burnout, sickness, health issues, energy issues, and we are more able to serve God and others in the ways He calls us to.

And that's the whole point, isn't it? We want to be ready and filled to serve God and serve others. We can't do that when we're living life on empty. If you found encouragement in this episode, would you

please leave a rating and review from wherever you're listening today? It will help others find this encouragement too. Be sure to subscribe so you never miss a new episode.

Take time today to refill yourself, or at least schedule it in the days to come. You are too important to live life on empty. I'm cheering you on today, friend. God bless you!

[Isaiah 40:31](#) NIRV

[Matthew 11:28](#) NIV

[Romans 12:2](#) NIV

[2 Corinthians 10:5](#) NIV

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