

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

107. The Unexpected Gift of Starting Over

You are listening to episode 107 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, The Unexpected Gift of Starting Over. Welcome to the podcast! I'm glad we get to spend some time together here to find help and hope for our real lives today. How do you view starting over? Do you see it as a failure or a new beginning? Is it something positive or negative in your mind? Well, this is a season in which I believe many of us might find ourselves starting over or we might know someone who is. This is the subject of today's episode as we ponder what it means, what good can be found in it, and what God has to say about starting over. Stick with me for this next short while and we'll find some encouragement together. Let's get to it.

I have some extremely wise friends. One I met for dinner last week and she said something profound recounting a story from her workday. The words she said to someone keep repeating in my head still today.

"May we never stop starting over."

At first the sentence didn't sit well with me. I fought with it for a few minutes in my brain. Because sometimes, I guess, I have a negative connotation of starting over. It's what I did after I failed at something or what I do when something doesn't go as planned. It reminded me of what I had to do after my mom and dad passed away. I mean, come on, how do you start life over after someone so instrumental in your life is now gone? It's what we face after a divorce, a job loss, an illness, or whatever has laid us flat. It's in those instances where starting over seems way too daunting. Am I right?

Starting over means beginning again. And as she talked, she said, "No one should ever live with the pressure of not being able to start over."

I realized then starting over is actually an unexpected gift! What about the person who struggles with an addiction and falls off the wagon or gives in to the temptation of the addiction? What if he or she didn't have the option to or chose not to start over? Would he or she just be stuck in that addiction? Or what about the child who is learning how to walk, but falls time and time again? What if he didn't start over? Would that child ever be able to walk? Same goes with us. What if we didn't have the gift of starting over? Where would we be today? We might still be like a baby who never learned to walk.

The following day after our dinner, I thought about the numerous times I've started over in my life. Such as:

- at a new school
- a new school year
- eating healthy and exercising (again)

- scraping an idea for a better one
- making my favorite recipe again that I just made last month
- laundry
- dishes
- vacuuming
- finding my identity again after losing it while focusing on what the world focuses on
- a new routine after our kids left home

I know laundry is a gift, but some days it feels like I would rather not have to start that over.

In all seriousness, though, starting over isn't always a bad thing.

Starting over can be an unexpected gift.

Sure, after a devastating loss, starting over can be extremely difficult and even down-right scary. Starting over may be the last thing we want to or feel like doing. And I don't want to make like of these kinds of situations. Yet, starting over can be a new beginning, a fresh opportunity, or a chance to experience something you've not experienced before. Even if it's something like laundry that you've started over time and time again. Each time of starting over brings new blessings. Because God may do something totally new and unexpected when we start over.

I found a few Bible verses to encourage us here.

Now it's time to change your ways! Turn to face God so he can wipe away your sins, pour out showers of blessing to refresh you, and send you the Messiah he prepared for you, namely, Jesus. Acts 3:19-20 MSG

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. Lamentations 3:22-23 NLT

For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5 NIV

Rejoicing comes in the morning. Rejoicing comes when we are blessed to have the opportunity to start over. These verses remind us it can be a good thing, and not such a bad thing. I'm grateful for this, aren't you?

I also think of the many times I've started over with God.

Sadly at different times in my life I set God on the back burner. I chose to either ignore Him or chose to go down a different path. I have been known to have gone days without conversing with Him, or reading His Word for blessing and direction in my life. But every time I returned, and started over with Him, He has welcomed me with open arms. I can't tell you how grateful I am that God continues to love me unconditionally and He doesn't give me what I deserve. Where would I be if He didn't allow me to start over with Him? If He didn't give me second, third, fourth chances?? God grows us through the starting over, and each time He matures us and helps us become more like His son, Jesus.

You know? He loves you unconditionally, too, friend. If you've ever messed up or ignored Him like I have, His arms are wide open for you to start over with Him, too.

And what about today?

We get to start over today.

As that Lamentations verse we just read reminds us, God's mercies are new every morning. With every new sunrise we get to begin again. It's a new day with new opportunities and new chances to partner with God, to serve Him and to serve others. Every single day when we open our eyes in the morning, we awake with the reality we get the blessing of starting over.

Each new year we get to start over. Some of us set goals, resolutions, or plans as we start over. There's something exciting about turning the calendar to a new year, isn't there? Maybe this new year will be the year we achieve that goal we've talked about forever. Maybe this new year will be the year for a breakthrough. Or maybe this new year will be the year we will face that fear and do it afraid.

Starting over can be a beautiful, unexpected gift.

I'm thinking of and praying for you as many of us are starting over in this season.

For you who is facing life on your own.

For you who is starting off to college.

And for you, Momma, who is facing an empty nest or your baby is starting or returning to school.

For you who is confronting fears as you start over.

For you who doesn't know how to start over.

And for you who is dealing with disaster, difficulty, disappointment, or a debilitating diagnosis and doesn't want to start over.

Also for you who is excited about the opportunity to start over.

Or for any of us who are trying to walk through this starting-over season in our own strength.

I'm praying for you. For God to give you His comfort, His guidance, His strength, and His mercy. For God to guide you in every way, and for His good plans for your life to come to pass.

God is with us in the starting over.

And that right there gives us hope and encouragement. We aren't in this alone. No matter what we face in this season, God will face it with us and will give us the strength to stand and move forward in it. Aren't you so glad for this truth? I sure am.

We're taking this conversation over to our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. I invite you over there to join us as we discuss this further and how seasons of starting over can be seasons of unexpected gifts. The link to this group is in the show notes.

Also, if you found encouragement for your real life today, would you consider leaving a rating and/or review where you're listening from today? This will help others find this encouragement too. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss a new episode.

In closing, as we face starting over seasons in life. may we remember, no matter how we feel about them--apprehensive or excited--that God will be with us every step of the way. As my friend said, "May we never stop starting over." Amen? Amen. Thanks for tuning in. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[Acts 3:19-20](#) MSG

[Lamentations 3:22-23](#) NLT

[Psalm 30:5](#) NIV

[Encouragement for Real Life Community](#)

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