

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

122. 5 Ways to Stay Present This Holiday Season

You are listening to episode 122 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled 5 Ways to Stay Present This Season. Welcome to the podcast today. Thank you for joining me! Here we are. The holiday season is upon us, and let me tell you, I'm here for it! Some of us love this season, and some of us don't. Either way, in this episode today we're going to find some encouragement because not only can this be the most wonderful time of the year, but also the most distracting time of year. Hang out with me here for this next short while, and together we'll learn how to stay present this holiday season. Ready? Let's get to it.

Merry Christmas!

I'll be wishing you this all month long, because Christmas is hands-down my favorite holiday. It is. I love everything about it. Especially the heart of Christmas--Jesus. There's a special joy in the air and the twinkling lights add a beautiful touch to the spirit of Christmas. Just last night, looking out our north windows I could see for miles numerous clusters of Christmas lights from people's homes and farms scattered over the horizon against the dark backdrop of a moonlight sky. The sight made me nearly gasp. Over there years I've noticed a few, but nothing like I beheld last night. It truly is the most wonderful time of the year for this girl.

Now I know, I don't represent every single person's feelings on this holiday, because some of us don't care for it. Some of us believe it's too commercialized, too depressing, too exhausting, or too over-the-top. I can certainly appreciate and understand all of these views. I understand how this season can be difficult and stressful and discouraging. The year my mom passed away nine days before Christmas was difficult to say the least.

So, please know, however you feel about this holiday season, you have space here with me. I'm with you and I am praying for you--I'm praying for each of us! No matter how we feel about it, one very important point is to stay present in it.

Because who wants to miss one moment of what God has for us in this season?

Not me, and I'm guessing not you, either. The thing is, if we don't stay present, that's exactly what happens. We miss what God is doing in our lives, in the lives of those around us, and in the world around us. When we live distracted, we miss what's truly special in this season.

Truly, even though it's a special season, it can be a distracting one. What do I mean? Well, we have our typical distractions such as interruptions, our devices, our thoughts, and our filled schedules, but during this season, everything is amped up or magnified. We seem to have more events to attend, presents to purchase, homes to decorate, cookies to bake, family gatherings to schedule, not to mention the mental and physical lists we try to work from. We have deadlines to meet and appointments to make before the end of the year. And the pressure to have or create the "perfect holiday" can be overwhelming!

No wonder we get distracted in this season. No wonder we can easily miss what's most important at Christmastime. But it doesn't have to be this way, does it? It doesn't. There's got to be more to Christmas than all of this. Friend, there is. Let's get back to the heart of this holiday and center ourselves on truly what's important. Let's take a stand to do things differently than the rest of the world. How about we live undistracted and stay present this holiday season?

Here are 5 ways to stay present this holiday season:

1 - Ask God to help us.

Friend, we cannot stay present this holiday season on our own. But we can with God's help. Starting our day with God can help us begin the day with hope and encouragement. In His power and with His presence, we can stay present, alert, and ready for whatever God has for us. And if at any point during the day we start to get distracted, we can again turn to Him and ask Him to help align our thoughts with His and to assist us to stay in the moment. This isn't a "one and done" type of thing, but it's something we can partner with God throughout the day. How will you go about asking God for help today?

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track" (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG).

2 - Put people before our to-do lists.

This can be a challenge for me, because it seems I always have a long to-do list. You, too? I sometimes have a tendency to put my nose down and focus on my work and forget about the people around me. But God is teaching me that people are more important than my plans. They were for Jesus, so why wouldn't they be for me, too? Jesus was always about putting people before His plans. I can't find an instance in Scripture where that's not true. He's a perfect example to follow. Our lists will always be there, but the people in our lives may not be. Plus, the people in our lives deserve us to be present and receive our undivided attention. How will you put people before your plans and to-do lists this season?

3 - Focus on making memories.

I love this one because it has completely changed my focus this season. It's helping me make positive choices and it's forcing me to not be so selfish with my time. Looking back over our lives, what we carry with us are memories. I can't help recall fond memories of past Christmases with my loved ones, and goodness, I desire to make more. Think about your past Christmases. What special memories stand out to you? How will you make more memories this season that some day you'll look back on and cherish. If our focus is on making memories with others, we'll be better able to stay present and live in the moment.

4 - Prepare what we can in advance.

Sometimes preparing ahead makes all the difference. What are some things we can do in advance? This will differ for each one of us, but if there's anything we can do now, to save some time, energy, or stress later, let's do it! If we bake, can we bake our goodies ahead of time and freeze them? If we send out Christmas cards, can we write them out early this year? Or if we're hosting or entertaining, what can we do in advance now so we can be fully present when guests arrive? Along with this, who can we ask to

help us? Sometimes people are willing to help, they just need to be asked. This is a helpful way to stay present this holiday season.

5 - Keep it simple.

Let's simplify this year. Do we have to buy all the gifts we normally buy? Do we have to do all we normally do? Can we lighten our loads a little this year? When we have less on our schedules and less to filling our thoughts, we are better able to stay present and live in the moment. What's one way you can simplify this year? Think about the thing that stresses you out the most. If you can, eliminate that or enlist someone to help you. One thing I enjoy but I usually don't put as a priority anymore is baking sweets like I used to. Number one, I don't need them in this house, because if they're here, I'll eat them. And number two, it's not a make or break thing for me each Christmas. I've had to learn to let some of the less important things--like baking sweets--go. And I'm okay with that. What is less important to you that you can let go this year?

These five ways not only help us stay present this holiday season, but they'll enable us to enjoy this season a little more!

Because why do we celebrate Christmas anyway? We celebrate the birth of our Savior--Jesus. Because without Him, where would we be? What hope would we have? But because of Him, we have every reason to celebrate. He is all we need--not just for today, but for all eternity. And friend, that's the best gift ever.

So, will you join me in doing all you can in keeping this as you focus this year? The world tells us Christmas is all about the other stuff, but really, it's not. Let's turn our hearts to the reason for this season and let's focus on Jesus' coming. Let's invite Him into every moment of every day. And let's live undistracted for His sake this season.

Will you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this season of hope and promise. We praise You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus. We are so grateful we are given the opportunity to celebrate His birth this Christmas and for the hope we have in Him. Yet, Father, so many things try to distract us from this celebration. It's easier to give into all of the other stuff some days than to keep our focus on Jesus. But this year, will You help us do that? Will You help us keep Jesus at the center of all we do this season? Please guide our thoughts, our words, our actions to align with Yours and Your perfect plans and purposes. Help us to live undistracted for You this season. We don't want to miss one thing You might have for us. Help us to shine Your light into this world, and to make a difference for You. Help us to be present this holiday season for our growth, for the good of others, and for Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You know? Staying present is a gift--for us and for others! Let's do all we can live in the right now.

I invite you, if you haven't already, to check out my book, Right Now Matters. It's all about living in the moment and living undistracted. I wrote it for any of us who struggle with distractions, and it's the book I wish I had years ago. You can find more about it in the link in the show notes. It'll make a great Christmas gift for any woman in your life!

Also, be sure to check out the Free Resources on my site. I have a special section just for Christmas. These resources are designed to encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. The link to these Free Resources is in the show notes as well.

And if you found encouragement in this episode, would you leave a rating and/or review? Be sure to subscribe so you never miss a new episode.

Friend, I pray your holiday season is filled with everything of Jesus. I pray you are able to stay present this holiday season and to live in and soak up every moment. As I mention in my book, Right Now Matters, God is with us right now, and this is the reason right now does matter. May you feel His presence, His peace, and see His provision this season in your life. Thanks for being here today. Merry Christmas and God bless you!

[Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG](#)

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