

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

139. What? A Quarter of the Year Is Behind Us!

You are listening to episode 139 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, "What? A Quarter of the Year Is Behind Us!" Well, welcome to the podcast today! I'm thrilled you are here! I've heard a number of people say in the last few days, "Where did March go? It went by so fast!" Maybe you're feeling the same. Over the weekend I intentionally paused and asked myself that same question. And now that we've flipped the calendar to April, it has dawned on me that a quarter of 2024 is behind us! That doesn't seem possible, but it's our reality. So, in today's episode we're pausing to ponder and ask ourselves some important questions about our time, our focus, our lives, and even our distractions. I invite you to hang with me here for this next short while and we'll find encouragement and hope, not just for now, but for the rest of 2024. Let's get to it.

How can it be April 2? I mean, didn't we just begin 2024? Yet, here we are, with a quarter of the year behind us already. It doesn't appear that life will slow down anytime soon, yet I don't want the remaining three quarters of the year to speed by this quickly. I'm assuming you're feeling the same!

Recently I took some time to reflect on my life.

I asked God to realign my life according to His plans and purposes, and to refocus my attention accordingly. In this episode I'm sharing what I did in that process, because it was extremely helpful for me. Maybe it will be helpful for you, too.

I shared in detail this process at my quarterly evening last week, and me and the attendees experienced a lively discussion on this subject. Every quarter I host locally a women's evening of encouragement where we gather together to draw near to God corporately and individually. I teach on various subjects during the event, and we focus on learning what God might have to teach us on those subjects. It's a fun, uplifting evening. I've titled these events Real Encouragement *LIVE!* We held our twenty-third last Thursday evening. The subject was the lost art of reflecting, realigning, and refocusing. Because I don't think we do enough of reflecting, realigning, and refocusing. At least I know I don't.

So, incorporating some of what I taught at last Thursday's Real Encouragement *LIVE!*, let's intentionally pause to reflect on our lives, to realign them where needed, and to refocus on what matters. It's a perfect time to do so since a quarter of the year is behind us! Sound good?

We each want to live an abundant life, right?

The kind of life Jesus came to give us. I know first-hand how good intentions to live that kind of life can get buried in our day-to-day circumstances and real-life experiences. So day after day, we become familiar with what we do and we tend to operate in routines. So much so, we can begin to simply go

through the motions of life. We just do what we do because that's what we've always done. Or that's what's comfortable to do--what we know to do.

As we do so, however, are we making the most of these abundant lives Jesus came to give us? Are we honoring God with our lives? Are our lives bearing fruit?

These are three questions I asked myself when I paused to reflect on my life. I invite you to take some time to answer them, too. The attendees at Thursday night's event did this, and their eyes were opened to their actual real lives. Here are the questions again. Feel free to pause this and write them down if you're in a place to do so.

1. Am I making the most of this life--the abundant life Jesus came to give me?
2. Am I honoring God with my life?
3. Is my life bearing fruit?

Now, before we can truly answer these, I suggest we look at the questions through spiritual eyes--the eyes of Jesus. Because what the world considers abundant and what Jesus considers abundant are vastly two different things. If we are focused on doing what we want, and not considering God's will for our lives, is that the abundance we're referring to here? No. Or if we have lots of abundant physical possessions, but we lack the fruits of the Spirit, is that true abundance? No, it's not.

So it matters in what context we ask these questions.

These questions pointed me in the direction of what truly matters in my life.

It's not the stuff or the trivial things I sometimes focus on that matters. It's not how I believe I'm living my life or what the world thinks. I desire to honor God with my life and to bear fruit in this life for Him. Am I really doing that?

Colossians 1:10 ESV says, "So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." This verse right here is the blueprint for an abundant life. To walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. To be fully pleasing to Him, to bear fruit in every good work, and to increase in the knowledge of God. This is a verse I'm now committing to memory. I want it to be the focus for the rest of this year.

With this I also pondered the goals I set three months ago, at the beginning of 2024. I looked at my word for the year and contemplated how God is using it in my life. I asked more questions like: where am I? What's working? What's not working? And what's pulling me off track?

I don't know about you, but some years I have forgotten my word a few months into the year.

Last year I certainly didn't because it was UNCOMFORTABLE. And I was tangibly living that word out all year long. This year it's WALK, and I'm intentionally living that word out, too. In fact, I noticed it's in that Colossians 1:10 passage. That's no accident in my book. God is using this word to keep me walking in His ways and in His truths.

How about you? Where are you regarding your goals for 2024? If you chose a word this year, how is it showing up in your life? What's working right now? What's not working? And what's pulling you off track?

Speaking of that, you likely already know I wrote a book about overcoming distractions in our lives. And this book and its message continues to impact my life every single day. Right Now Matters exposes the distractions that pull us off track, and because we live in this culture of distraction, it's no wonder many of us get thrown off course. Even just three months after setting our goals and intentions of the year. There's no shame in this, it's just reality.

But I want to remind you and me today just how serious these distractions are. In Right Now Matters I share a quote from Craig Groeshel of Life.Church. Part of this quote reads (he's talking about our spiritual enemy here), "If he can't distract you by doing something bad, he'll distract you by doing anything to keep you out of what God has created you to do."

Isn't that the truth? It takes much more intention to follow God's call on our lives than it does to live life just going through the motions. But you and I both know following God's call and will for our lives is the most fulfilling way to live! It's no wonder this spiritual enemy wants to keep us away from that. And that's one reason why it's so important to pause every now and then and reflect on how we are living these lives we are given. Are we living them distracted or on purpose?

Once we identify where we are in life and how we're living, we can take the next step.

Realignment.

There's a great story in Luke 10:38-42 (NIV). We see how Jesus realigns Martha. It reads,

"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!'

'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'"

Jesus realigned Martha.

I'm thankful He realigns me, too. In my time of pausing and pondering, God revealed to me I need to be better at taking time off from work. I love what I do so much, that I can work every single day. But I'm seeing that's not God's best for me. So, I'm seeking Him and His ways on how to do this better.

So, is God realigning you? Is He calling you to do something different, to adjust something in your life? What next step is God leading you to take? What's the heaviest on your heart right now? Sometimes that's an indication of one of God's realignments.

Proverbs 16:9 NLT says, "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps."

We can make all the plans we want, but God's will is always better than ours.

Then comes Refocus.

After realignment comes refocus. Where will we set our intention? On our old habits and ways and just going through the motions of life? Or intentionally following and focusing on God and His will for our lives?

God helped others refocus in the Bible: Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, David, Paul, Peter, and many more. One of my favorites is Hagar in Genesis 16. She was Abraham's wife, Sarah's, slave, and she ran away from Sarah to the desert to escape her mistreatment. Pregnant and all alone, the angel of the Lord stopped her and realigned her plans. He refocused her after speaking prophecy over her and foretold details about the son she would bear, his name, and his future. In verse 13, I am drawn to her words. "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

God sees us too, and one thing we can know for sure is God will realign us and refocus us on His perfect plans and purposes for our lives. He won't let us stray too far, just like He did with Hagar. Let's allow Him to realign us and refocus us. He knows us, He sees us, and He knows what's best for us. We can trust Him.

God is refocusing me on what matters in this life and what doesn't in this season. Sure, a quarter of the year is behind us, but walking with God, the best of the year can be ahead of us!

Even though a quarter of the year is behind us, reflecting, realigning, and refocusing can help us stay on track.

I pray this process that I recently walked through of reflecting, realigning, and refocusing helps bring you back to what's important in your life, like it did for me. May we each stay in the center of God's will. Pausing every now and then like this to examine our lives and where God may be leading us will help us keep on track.

We're discussing this in our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook this week. I invite you to come over and join in the conversation. The link to this group is in the show notes. Also, if you found some encouragement and hope in this episode, would you consider rating it and or reviewing it so others can find it too? Be sure to subscribe so you never miss a new episode.

I'm cheering you on today, friend. Thanks for being here. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[Colossians 1:10](#) ESV

[Luke 10:38-42](#) NIV

[Proverbs 16:9](#) NLT

[Genesis 16](#) NIV

[Encouragement for Real Life Community](#)

[My books: Right Now Matters and the Right Now Matters Bible Study](#)

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