

# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

## **165. Who Do You Go to First?**

When something, either good or not-so-good, pops up in your life, who do you go to first with it? If it's something wonderful and worthy of celebration, who do you celebrate with first? Your spouse? Do you call a friend? Do you post it on social media so others can share in your wonderful news, too? And if it's something that's not so great--something difficult that arises in your life--who do you go to first to either ask for help or to share your troubles? Maybe you turn to the internet first for help, or you ask for advice from a friend or your spouse, or you don't do anything but worry about the said troubles. Or do you tend to take everything to God first? We're digging into this question of who we go to first in today's episode because it's something that matters and makes a difference in our everyday lives. I share a personal story that drives this home. If you could use some encouragement in your life today, you've come to the right place. Let's get into this episode.

### **God reminded me of an important truth this summer.**

I find it fascinating how God can use anything He wants to get our attention and to teach us. In this particular case, He chose for me, bugs. Now my friend, Deb, and I chuckle how when we're communicating with each other through Voxer (it's a walkie talkie kind of app), we often find we are discussing something that has to do with bugs. Either a fly is dive-bombing one of us or a fruit fly is flying in one of our kitchens, or we get bitten by a mosquito or some other weird bug thing. It's quite comical!

But this story involved a different kind of bug, and this time, Deb was not involved. To give you a little backstory, our two grandsons spend two days a week with me, usually back-to-back days and they spend the night in between those days. (Can I just tell you how much I love this time with them??) It's the best!

For three or four weeks through the summer, after they returned home from our house, what appeared to be two or three bug bites surfaced in their diaper/underwear area on their skin. Every single time. At first, we didn't think much about them. Maybe they were a rash from the heat. But with it happening week after week, this was more than a rash.

My mind then fixated on something I have prayed against, sprayed against, and have taken great precautions to avoid. The pests I'm referring to are bed bugs. Now, we've never had bed bugs in our home, thank the Lord. That would be a nightmare for me, and it's actually been a fear of mine for years. This extends from the five years of my life when I spent my days working at a local mission, and numerous people we served (the formerly incarcerated, the poor, the lost, the broken) were living in spaces with bed bug infestations. Alarmingly, some even had them on their person when they'd come in to the mission. The local exterminator came in and trained us staff very well on bed bugs and what to do when we spotted them. Through him, I learned more about bed bugs than I ever really wanted to. Thankfully, I never took any home with me after working there all day for years.

So naturally, after seeing the bug bites on our grandsons, I assumed those bites were bed bug bites. Why wouldn't I? Like I said, they've been a fear of mine for like forever. I had my mind made up that's what they were, and I also knew the work that was ahead of us to get rid of them.

### **But how?**

How in the world did we get them? We hadn't vacationed anywhere since March, and the only time I went to a movie theater this summer I made sure to dust myself off after leaving. (Movie theatres are a known place to pick up bed bugs, by the way.) Bill and I could not figure out how we would have gotten them, and after talking to the same local exterminator this time, we realized we could have picked them up anywhere.

So we sprayed, washed and dried clothes and bedding. We did all we knew to do.

Until one afternoon our daughter came to pick up the boys after their stay with us and there were fresh bites on our littlest grandson, underneath his diaper! What?? Still?? How?? We were both frustrated and confused.

To shorten this story, after they left, in my frustration, I went out to our garden area and raised my voice to God. "God, please show us what these bugs are! I know You know what they are. I do not. I'm at my end here. Please show us!" Good thing my neighbors don't live close to us, but maybe they heard me for as loud as I was yelling.

I went back inside and took to my online search engine and typed in, "bug bites under diaper." It led me to a bunch of options. One I hadn't considered was chiggers. The more I read the more I began to think that's what the bites were. Because chiggers like to bite in tight, constricted places like leg bands and waist bands. That's it! Thank you, God, for showing me!

Texting back and forth with my daughter and sharing with her what I found, she let me know she found a live chigger on our youngest grandson, still in the bite area that we saw earlier. So get this! Not only did God point us to what was biting they boys, He confirmed it with one still on my grandson's body!

It made complete sense. When the boys are here, we spend the majority of our time outdoors, and this summer we spent lot of days in our garden area that may have spots where chiggers like to live. I can't tell you how relieved I was to have this clarification! I thanked God for revealing it to me.

He gently reminded me if I would have gone to God first, I would have avoided weeks of wondering, fretting, washing and drying, spraying, frustration, and most of all more bug bites on the boys.

### **Why didn't I go to God first?**

Why did I think I knew what the bites were? And why did I try to solve it all on my own? God knew the entire time, and it wasn't until I paused in my frustration to raise my voice at Him and ask Him that He gently revealed it to me. After weeks of trying to figure it out on my own. I repented of my ways and asked God to forgive me.

One thing I love about God so much is that He is quick to forgive when we repent. Another thing I love about Him is that He won't force Himself on us. I sometimes wish He would, though. He'll wait until we go to Him, until we seek Him, until we turn to Him. Then He will act and show up in our lives in the beautiful ways He does. He'll show us what we need to know, and He will do it so we know it's Him.

### **So, who do you go to first?**

Do you, unlike I did, go straight to God first when you need help? Do you go to Him first with good news out of thanksgiving and praise? Is He the one you turn to first for everything? I hope He is. I pray He's your first choice for everything in this life. I'm still learning this lesson. I love God so much, and yet I still find myself looking to other places for what only He can provide me. That's just plain crazy. If I just would have gone to Him first, I would have avoided all that heartache and headache. Nothing on the internet, no friend or spouse, no wise person or expert, not even our own experiences can help us like God can. He's our source for everything.

I pray I go to Him first next time. In fact, maybe I need to write in big letters on my bathroom mirror the words, "Go to God first." Then put it on the fridge, in my car, on my phone. Everywhere I go to remind me. I'm grateful God is patient with me. I'm grateful He doesn't get frustrated with me and wipe His hands clean of me. Because certainly, He has every right to. But instead, He loves me and offers me grace and mercy every single time I fall short. I'm so grateful for His extravagant love (and I'm also grateful we didn't have bed bugs)!

### **Today, let's go to God for everything.**

Not just because it sounds like a good idea, not even because of my own experience, but because God invites us to. He desired for us to go to Him, especially first before anything or anyone else. Let's seek Him regarding all things. Every good and every not-so-good thing. Every joy and every sorrow. Every celebration and every need. He provides all we need in this life. We don't need to look elsewhere.

1 Chronicles 16:11 ESV encourages us, "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!" Another translation, the NCV says it this way, "Depend on the Lord and his strength; always go to him for help." Friend let's depend on Him wholeheartedly and go to Him first for help.

Psalm 9:10 TLB also reminds us of this: "All those who know your mercy, Lord, will count on you for help. For you have never yet forsaken those who trust in you." He will never forsake us when we come to Him.

And one more. Psalm 54:4 ESV says, "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life." Yes, He is the upholder of our lives. Goodness, these verses encourage me today. I hope they do you, as well.

### **Going to God first is always the wise choice.**

Let's do that today--and every day.

Here's a way to go to God first in living the abundant life Jesus came to give you. I invite you to join me for our next *Right Now Matters Bible Study* group sessions. They begin in two weeks from the airing of this episode. The online session begins on Zoom Monday evening, October 7, and the in-person session begins Friday afternoons in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on October 11. These are free to attend, but you will

want to purchase the book and Bible study to get the most out of your study. Even if you've walked through the study before, you are welcome to join us for a refresher! I can't wait to study God's Word with you! The link for additional details and registration can be found in the show notes.

Have you checked out my free Resource Library lately? You'll find new additions to help you live an encouraged and undistracted life. One of my newest favorites is the section on going to God first. The link for my Resource Library is also in the show notes.

Rating and reviewing this episode would be a gift to me if you found some encouragement in it. If you haven't already, I invite you to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss an episode. Thanks so much.

In closing, after God revealed to us what the bugs were, our days in the garden became much fewer. And when we did venture over there, we washed their little legs well after coming inside. They've not had a bite since. Thanks be to God.

Friend, no matter what you experience today--good or not-so-good--take it to God first. I will do the same. Then let's continue to do it again tomorrow. I can't help but think doing so must give God great joy, when His children come to Him. I'm guessing it gives Him great delight. And it does the same for us, too. You are loved, friend. Thanks for tuning in. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[1 Chronicles 16:11](#) ESV

[Psalm 9:10](#) TLB

[Psalm 54:4](#) ESV

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*Julie Lefebvre*