

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

201. Summer of Abundance Week 1: You Are Who He Says You Are

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, your host. Life is remarkable, sometimes raw and always real. And some days we could use a little extra encouragement for our real lives. Here you'll find that. Along with personal life impacting stories, helpful life hacks, timely inspiration, biblical insight, and a fresh perspective. The Encouragement for Real Life Podcast equips you to be a light in this world and to shine bright wherever God has you. I'm glad you're here today.

Julie Lefebure: Welcome to the first episode of the Summer of Abundance Series. I am so glad that you're here. We are going to have a great summer together. Yes, this summer we are stepping into a 12 week journey toward living the full and [00:01:00] joy-filled life that God has for you and for me. Each week we'll look at one key element of abundant living, rooted in God's Word and relevant to our real lives today. We're talking about things like joyful gratitude, which means practicing thankfulness that transforms our hearts. And courageous obedience, which is discovering how, maybe doing it afraid can really be a superpower. And yes, even physical wellness, caring for our bodies, the bodies that God gave us as, as an act of worship.

Each Tuesday we'll explore this abundant life a little bit further through a focused message, Biblical insight and practical applications. Plus, I've created helpful companion pages to enhance your journey this summer. These pages can help you journal [00:02:00] your reflections and prayers and even your action steps. You can access and download them right now. Yes, they are in my free resource library on my website. So pause this episode, scroll down to the show notes and click the link to access them for this very first episode and beyond.

And if you're a lover of music like I am and would love to have some uplifting accompaniment throughout your days this summer, I've created an Abundant Life playlist over on Spotify. So that's also in the show notes as well.

See, it's gonna be a great summer together. Are you ready? Well, let's get started.

Julie Lefebure: Right out of the gate today. Let's [00:03:00] clarify what abundant life is. Are you ready? The abundant life that Jesus refers to in John 10:10 when He says, excuse me, "The thief approaches with malicious intent

looking to steal, slaughter and destroy. I came to give life with joy and abundance." And that's in The Voice Translation.

It's also been described, abundant life, it's also been described as a life filled with meaning and purpose and joy and strength for the spirit, soul, and body. It's a life lived in close relationship with God, characterized by love and joy and peace, and other spiritual fruits, which we will get into later in the series.

This abundant life is a promise from Jesus, offering more than just physical existence. Thankfully, yes. It's the life available to each [00:04:00] one of us, you and me, through Jesus Christ. So I ask you today, are you living this abundant life?

I have a story to share. For one of her college classes recently, my niece put together a genealogy timeline of her family, which was really cool. Next to each person's name, she wrote, a descriptive word or two. And interestingly, next to her, aunt Julie, she wrote the word author, which of course made me smile. You know, for years I desired for that very word to describe me. I dreamt about it. I so wanted to be an author. And yet some days now it still doesn't seem real that I'm an author.

You know, it was pretty special to me when she shared that with me in that moment, and it's even more special, it even means [00:05:00] more to me that, that she, my niece included it in her project. But really it's just one word used to describe who I am. I also say that I am a wife, a mother, a grandmother, or mana as my grandsons lovingly call me. A sister. I'm a friend. An entrepreneur, abundant life mentor, and an enjoyer of sunrises and sunsets. If you know me and you've read my books, you already know that about me. Oh, and I also love summer, my favorite season.

So who do you say you are? You know, I think that we tend to label ourselves by our positions in life or our work, don't we? I mean, that's, that's kind of common. But friend, we are so much more than these labels, than words such as these. [00:06:00] A word or a group of words really can't adequately define who you and I are, can they? But that's what we try to do. We try to do with some sort of words that define us. But I would say the bigger, more important question is this, is who does God say I am?

Does He describe me as an author or a wife or any other of the names that I just listed or mentioned? I, I don't know. Maybe He does. But I'm guessing that He might say of me that I am His and He is mine. That I am His daughter, His redeemed child. Gosh, it just makes me teary thinking about this. You know,

I'm, I'm His unique creation, His forgiven one. I was once lost, but now I'm [00:07:00] found. I'm created in His image and magnificently and wonderfully made. I, I, I say those words and I, it just, it just gets me choked up that that's maybe who God says I am.

And the thing is, what God says about me is likely different than what I say or what the world says about me. You know, friend, and this matters, because no one knows me better than He does, and no one knows you better than He does. So I am who He says I am, and you are who He says you are. And this is the truth that we begin with in this series, and it's the first element of abundant life. Our identity in Christ. Every other [00:08:00] abundant life element hinges on this very one, because our identity matters.

Before we, we talk about how to live abundantly, we really have to know who we are and whose we are. Our true identity isn't found in what we do or what we look like or even what others say about us. Our true identity is found in Jesus Christ. Plain and simple, bottom line. The thing is, if, if it's caught up in anything else, something or someone else, it's, it's impossible to live the abundant and joy-filled life that Jesus came to give us.

But when our identity is found in Jesus , and we have placed our hope and trust in Him, abundant life is ours. It's that simple. Sometimes I think we make it more complicated, don't we? [00:09:00] Yet this truth often gets buried and missed in this world. I mean, many women are chasing what I'd say full lives. Some would say busy. I don't say that word as you know. Um, full lives filled with filled calendars, filled closets, filled Instagram feeds. But still they feel empty.

Yet Jesus offers us something deeper. A life that is full of Him, not just full of stuff. The abundant life isn't about ease or success or getting everything we want, like some people say it is. It's getting wholeness in Him. That's the difference.

Jesus doesn't promise us a perfect life. No, we don't find that anywhere in scripture. But He does promise a full one, and that fullness starts with Him, not with a change in our circumstances or anything else. Abundant life doesn't mean [00:10:00] an abundance of possessions or promotions or popularity. Nor does it have anything to do with a piece of cake, perfect, monetarily prosperous kind of life. Now, I remind you and me today that, that those things, they aren't necessarily bad. But they don't lead us to true abundant life. They don't. Only Jesus can do that.

Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17 in the New Living Translation says, "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone. A new life has begun." When we are in Christ, we are made new. That's, it's not just a, a spiritual lingo that we say. But it truly means that we are no longer defined by our past. We are not who the world says, or even what our own inner critics say [00:11:00] that we are. We're, we're not any of that. We are daughters of God, deeply loved, completely forgiven and filled with purpose. You are not too much. You are not too broken, nor are you a mess. You are not behind. You are not forgotten. You are made new in Him, and I am too.

We can't live from a place of abundance if we don't know who we are. And that's why we're starting here today. Not with what we do or how we live, but who we are and whose we are.

So every week going forward, we're going to unpack a piece of what it means to live fully, relationally, emotionally, spiritually, and practically. But none of that matters if we miss this - abundant life begins in Christ.[00:12:00]

Now to take it a step further and to truly live, this abundant life element out of we are who He says we are and this, this abundant life begins with Christ, we must learn to see ourselves the way God sees us - created with purpose and full of value.

So, two key scriptures that I found, help us center our minds on how God sees us. And the first one is Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, in the New Living Translation. It says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago."

This scripture reminds us of three points. I would say, the first one is that we're not here by accident, right? You and I are God's masterpieces. His intentional, beautiful creation. The second I would [00:13:00] say is that He didn't just save us from something, He saved us for something. And the third point is abundant life includes walking in the purpose that He planned uniquely for you and me long ago.

So often we, we chase more, don't we? More success, more affirmation, more food, and uh, even more stuff. But what if the more that we're looking for is actually tied to who God created us to be? When you and I embrace our identity as his masterpiece, we, we see abundant life for what it really is - all about Him.

And the second key scripture is one of my favorites. It's Psalm, chapter 139, verse 14. In the New International Version, it says, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your [00:14:00] works are wonderful. I know that full well."

This, this isn't a feel good kind of bumper sticker kind of saying. It's, it's a deep truth about your value and mine. We were made with care and intention. We aren't too much, too little or unimportant. You know that saying that God doesn't make junk. We are not junk. You and I are wonderfully made. And that worth doesn't come from what we achieve or, or anything. It comes from our Creator, plain and simple. We are worthy because He is worthy.

Sometimes I'd say that we disqualify ourselves from living an abundant life because, we believe lies about our identity. Or we've been told lies about our identity. But what if this season that we replaced those lies with God's truth? What if we live like we [00:15:00] actually believed we are wonderfully made. Do you think it would make a difference? It absolutely will. And you and I have a choice every day to walk in that belief and in that truth.

So some questions to ponder and maybe to journal on today. Now, I wanna encourage you not to rush through these questions, but just to get us thinking about really our identity in Christ. A first question could be, what are some ways that, that I've been chasing more, that leave me feeling empty? That's a, that's a good one to stop and ponder.

A second one might be, do I truly believe that I am God's masterpiece? Why or why not?

And a third one would be, what's one lie that I've believed about who I am and what is God's truth to replace that? I'll, I'll [00:16:00] say that again. What's one lie that I've believed about who I am and what is God's truth that replaces it?

Feel free to to write your answers in the companion pages . That's what they're there for. Or in a journal. Because when we ask ourselves these questions, and then we write 'em out, we see black and white, really what we do believe and really the changes that we can make if we're not believing the way God is asking us to believe.

And here's one way that you can apply truth, that you are who He says you are. Take the truth from Psalm chapter 139 verse 14 that we just shared and insert your name. So I would say, "I, Julie am God's masterpiece. I am fearfully and

wonderfully made." Insert your name there. "I, your [00:17:00] name, am God's masterpiece. I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Repeat it often today and all week long. Because the more you repeat it, the more that you're gonna believe it. Write it on a sticky note and put it somewhere where you're gonna see it often. Maybe, I don't know, wherever you spend a lot of time. Or make more than one sticky note and put it everywhere. And a fun thing to do is to write on, write a sticky note, put it so your husband can see it and insert his name or your kids, or a neighbor. Or send it to a friend in the mail. We can, we can impact lives of others with this very truth, not just ourselves too. So believe it, friend. Believe it because it's true.

Before we close in prayer, you know, I just, I, I wanna say something that, that maybe you're listening today and you're just not sure if you've really ever, truly put your trust in Jesus. [00:18:00] You've heard about Him. You've heard me talk about Him. You've heard me talk about putting Him first in your life. Or you've heard me say, you know, that really abundant life begins in Him, which is what we're talking about today. Or maybe you've, you've heard my story or you've read my story. Um, maybe you've even gone to church. But deep down you wonder, do I really know Him? Have I received this new life that He offers that we looked at in that previous verse?

You know, I remember questioning the same. And in that very season, I recall how my life was far from abundant. I was living the worldly abundant life, not God's abundant life. And I share in chapter 6 of my book Right Now Matters how in the very moment that I chose to believe in Jesus, everything changed, including my identity. And that sounds really [00:19:00] cheesy, I know. But it's true.

So if you're questioning today and you want to begin this journey with Jesus and live the abundant life that He offers, right now is the perfect time to talk to Him. You, you don't need fancy words. Nope. Just a willing heart. And I remember the, that moment, my heart was so willing and so open. But I didn't have the fancy words. You don't need them. You could say just something simple like Jesus, I believe that You are the son of God. I believe that You died for my sins and that You rose again, so someday I will too. I want to follow You and receive the life that You promise. So I give You my heart today. Make me new. Amen.

Friend, if you prayed that prayer or something similar or made a decision to trust Jesus today, I would love to hear from you [00:20:00] and I would love to encourage you today. Will you join me in prayer?

Oh, heavenly Father, thank You for this, this moment. Thank You for the truth that our identity is in Jesus. It's not in anything else. It's, it's in Jesus. And Lord, what You say about us is the most important truth. Not what we say, not what others say. And Lord, Your, Your Word backs this up. Your Word is filled with truth of who we are in You and how we can choose to live in that truth every single day. So Father, as we embark on this new series, this new, um, just time together of learning about what it means to live an abundant life, I pray Father, that You will transform us from the inside out. That You will help us to live this abundant life that You are calling us to live and that Jesus came to give us. Thank you. [00:21:00] And for the one who just prayed that prayer and accepted You, accepted Jesus as her Savior, I pray Father, that You'll plant those seeds deep in her heart and she will know that she is loved by You. Thank You Lord. In Your name we pray, amen.

Remember, friend, that our true identity is found in Jesus and Jesus alone. I am here to support you on your abundant life journey, and I offer various ways to do that. And I invite you to check them out on my website by visiting the links in the show notes.

Share this episode with someone maybe who you know, who could use some encouragement on her own abundant life journey today.

And come back next week. It's gonna be another fun time together as we look at week two as we train our thoughts [00:22:00] for truth. It's gonna be a powerful one. So come back next Tuesday. You are who He says you are. Praise God for that. God bless you friend.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at julielefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.