

## Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

### Episode 207 Summer of Abundance Week 6: Gratitude Changes Everything

[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 week six of the Summer of Abundance Series here on the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I thank you for journeying these 12 weeks with me this summer as we explore how we can live a full and abundant life, the life that Jesus came to give us. [00:01:00] And so far we've explored the first five elements of abundant living. We've looked at identity in Christ was the first one. Renewed mindset is the second. Intimacy with God is the third. The fourth is spiritual surrender. The fifth, last week's, was purposeful presence.

And then today we are focusing on something that might seem really simple, but it's actually deeply transformative. And that is joyful gratitude. Because gratitude doesn't just change our perspective, it changes our entire experience of life. Gratitude is so important. No wonder it's our sixth element of abundant life. And no wonder God instructs us to have grateful hearts.

So I believe by the end of this episode, both you and I will embrace a more grateful [00:02:00] attitude as we open our eyes to the blessings God has given us in our everyday lives. So if you're ready for this gratefulness boost today, then I say, let's get right into this episode. I'm so glad you're here.

**Julie Lefebure:** My husband, Bill tends to see the glass half full. For as long as I've known him, he's been that way. He generally has a positive outlook on life, and he rarely ever complains. I sometimes wish I could be a little more like him in this way. Along with his uplifting attitude though, he, he has a grateful heart. They just kind of go together. And he wakes up grateful. He just lives in that all throughout the day and [00:03:00] he's still grateful when he goes to bed at night. Grateful isn't something that he reserves for a season like Thanksgiving or the month of November, like many of us do. But it's just a part of who he is

and how he lives his life every day. And I don't even think he tries to be. He, he just is. That's just Bill Lefebure.

There's probably someone in your life who's like this too. He or she doesn't take anything or anyone for granted, and, instead, I guess gratitude probably permeates every part of his or her life, right? We can think of someone who fits that bill. This person's words and actions, and the way he or she lives every single day displays gratefulness.

Maybe that person is you. Maybe you are the one who lives in gratitude and sees life through the goodness of [00:04:00] God, even when life doesn't go as planned or as expected. I hope you are. I hope you are that person. And I want to be more like this. Some days I do really well and some days I don't do so well.

But you know, it's, it's easy to go through our days focused on what's missing or what's hard or frustrating. And I catch myself doing it more than I care to admit. But in our culture it sometimes seems as if gratitude often gets reduced to something seasonal, like Thanksgiving or the month of November. Or something superficial, like just be thankful. Or a t-shirt that I saw recently that read, grateful, thankful, and blessed.

But true, joyful gratitude is a spiritual practice. It's, it's a way of seeing life through the lens of God's goodness, even in [00:05:00] the hard places. Eckhart Tolle once said, "Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance." Let me say that again. "Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance." And I couldn't agree more.

Joyful gratitude is our fifth element of abundant life. Gratitude doesn't ignore reality. It reframes it. It reminds us who God is, what He's done, and that He is still good no matter what. This is abundant life.

And this leads us to our two key scriptures for today. I love reading each week what God's Word has to say about these, these elements of abundant life. They just speak to my soul and I hope that they do that for you too.

The [00:06:00] first one is First Thessalonians 5, 16 through 18 in the New Living Translation. It reads, "Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances. For this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." I love that verse. Those verses I should say. There's more than one there.

This convicts me right to right from the start, right to my core with always be joyful. Hmm. Am I always joyful? Are you always joyful? I'm not. But I wanna be. Then the next one, never stop praying. Uh, I would say that I could do a little bit better at this because I do stop praying. And then this last one is the biggie that gets me, be thankful in all circumstances. That's a tall order because am I [00:07:00] thankful in all circumstances? No, I'm not.

But let's notice here, it doesn't read thankful for all circumstances. It reads thankful in all circumstances. There's a difference. It's not about just pretending that everything is perfect. Because we, we definitely know that's not true. But it's practicing gratitude within whatever is happening, in the midst of our current circumstances. Gratitude, prayer, and joy are all connected. And as this verse states, this is God's will for you and for me. So how is gratitude, prayer, and joy displayed in our hearts and in our lives today? That's a good question to ask.

And the second scripture is Psalm 100. I love this [00:08:00] Psalm. It's just five verses long and in the New International Version, this is what it says. "Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his. We are His people. The sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good, and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations." Amen and amen.

I once read that gratitude unlocks the fullness of life, and this scripture encapsulates this truth. It's full of thanksgiving to God and praise to God from a grateful heart. All of that comes from a grateful heart. We can't praise and thank [00:09:00] God out of a cold, stony heart. No. We, we must have a grateful heart when we praise and thank God. It's impossible not to. We have to have that kind of heart in order to praise and thank.

So when we enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, I just love that. Because it, it's like it opens a door for a deeper connection with God and for a more wonderful opportunity to worship Him. We are able to view who God is and who we aren't through gratitude. It puts us in our rightful place and it puts God in His rightful place. Our eyes not only see God, but how He cares about every single detail of our lives. That's gratitude. How can we not be grateful when we read "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations." [00:10:00] How can we not be filled with gratitude when we read that? Hmm. Those are such great, great verses to read. I love that Psalm.

Maybe we're, we're not so great at living grateful, but we can learn. If it's what some call a spiritual practice, then I say it means that we can continue to practice it, right? We can continue to get better at it. So what does joyful gratitude look like and how can we have it in our lives? How can we live this way?

Well, I've come up with three rhythms. I like the word rhythm. 'Cause it's just, it's like a, a day in and day out type of activity. It's a rhythm. It's what we do. So here are three rhythms of practicing joyful gratitude.

And the first one starts with the moment, gratitude in the moment. We can choose gratefulness in any moment of the day. Not just during [00:11:00] Thanksgiving, like I said, or through the month of November, but we can choose it at any point. And I'd say this moment is as good as any to begin with. So look around you. Notice the little, almost insignificant things. Maybe it's the sunlight streaming through the trees, or a cool breeze that's hitting your face or the food that you're preparing for dinner. Right now I'm noticing that you know, my desk is pretty clean. And I'm noticing pictures on the wall ahead of me, of my family. I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for my water that I have sitting here next to me. We can say out loud, Lord, thank You for this. Just a simple thank You for this. Do this throughout the day, and it will become a habit. I promise you. You'll soon become the most grateful person you know. Try it. See how it works for you.[00:12:00]

The second is to grab gratitude in the mess. And sometimes it's gonna be really hard. But we each have a mess somewhere in our life. In your life and in my life, we each have a mess. And maybe not a literal mess, like on the floor, but maybe we do. But something is difficult. Something in life is difficult. We can choose to give thanks, even in the hard places. Not thankful for the mess necessarily, but thankful in the middle of it. And if that mess is on your floor, it's full of a pile of children's toys, then you can be thankful for the kids who made that mess, who put the mess there. It's a joyful mess. Or maybe you just received some bad news. It's hard to find joy in that. But you can be thankful that God is with you in it. This [00:13:00] choice of gratitude will not only impact your life, but it will be a testimony for the lives of those around you. They will see what gratitude looks like on display. And you'll be a good example for them to follow.

And the third is gratitude in the matter of life. Making gratitude a part of everyday life. We can do this by building habits of gratitude. Maybe with a gratitude journal. You know how I love journals. Or offering some dinnertime

thankfulness when you sit down for dinner as a family .Or recalling at the end of the day just three things that you're thankful for.

At the beginning of this year, I started a gratitude jar and each week we write on little separate slips of paper what we're grateful for. So at the end of the year we can pull out all those slips of [00:14:00] paper and we can read them and we can give God glory for them. You know, you don't have to wait till the beginning of the year to do this. You could, you could start it today. Just grab a jar and make some pieces of paper and you can start it today. And by the end of the year, you could have that jar filled with things that you're grateful for. And pulling them out and reading them maybe on December 31st. Wow. Our hearts will just be grateful. Our hearts will be filled with gratitude for all God has done. That could be just a really simple way just to incorporate some gratefulness in your life.

A couple weeks ago, um, I found myself stressed and concerned from a situation that was beyond my control. And in the big scheme of things, it really wasn't that big. But it really felt big at the time. And you know how stress can rise up and you just, you feel it in almost every part of your [00:15:00] body. You know that feeling right? I assume you do. I don't like it. Well, well, that was me that night. I mean, even the hairs on my head were feeling tingly and I don't like feeling that way. But my mind took me to all sorts of horrible places and worst case scenarios, and it was just awful. It was awful. I wouldn't wish it on anybody. But earlier that day, I had been preparing for this episode and I remembered the truth in those verses that we just looked at and the truth about how gratitude, how it unlocks the fullness of life. So I paused and I said to myself, I am choosing to be grateful. I think I even said it out loud now that I think about it. And I began to thank God in that moment. I thanked Him for everything I could think of. Everything. [00:16:00] Everything. I don't remember exactly what, but it was everything.

And do you know what happened? You're not gonna believe it. Or maybe you will. I don't know. But this wave, this wave of peace just washed over me. I mean, I could literally feel it like from the top of my head all the way down to my feet. And my hair stopped tingling, my mind calmed down, and joy actually replaced the panic. I don't know if I would've believed it, if I wouldn't have experienced it. But it was amazing. It was amazing what gratefulness, what gratitude did in that moment.

Friend, gratitude changes everything. So if you're living in something stressful and worrisome right now, I invite you to do what I did that evening. Thank God. Just pause and thank God for everything you can think of and [00:17:00] watch what happens. Not only to to your mind, but to your physical body and to your

emotions and, and just even spiritually. Watch what happens. It's amazing what a little gratitude can do.

Choosing joy and thankfulness doesn't mean that everything is easy because we know that's not the case. It means that you're choosing to see God in all of it. And that my friend is abundant life. That is a secret that many people miss out on.

I have an optional little declaration for you, a little Biblical declaration. We've been doing these in each episode of this series. And today's is, you could say something like, today I choose joy. I choose to notice, to name, and to give thanks. My gratitude honors God and transforms me. Let me say that again. [00:18:00] Today I choose joy. I choose to notice, name and to give thanks. My gratitude honors God and transforms me. That feels really good saying that. Write it somewhere. Maybe even in your, your companion pages. Hit pause and and write this down right now so you don't miss it. Go back if you need to and, and write it somewhere. Like I said, in your companion pages of the Summer of Abundance series. You can find the link for those in the show notes if you haven't printed those off or if you don't have those available online. They come in two different ways, but check the show notes for those.

And I always like to give some reflection questions too, because I think we can hear a podcast, we can hear the words of God, but if we don't ever reflect where we are, how are we going to learn to be able to apply those to our lives? So a reflection question today could be, when was the last time I truly paused to give thanks? [00:19:00] Or, what are three small things that I've overlooked lately that I could be grateful for? Maybe they're even big things. Or in what circumstance do I need to choose gratitude today, even if I don't feel like it? Sometimes we don't feel like it. But when we do, it changes everything.

So let's put this into action. Let's, let's have some action steps here. What we're gonna do. How we can incorporate this into our lives. This, this time of just gratefulness, this joyful gratitude. One could be to start or restart a gratitude list. You could write down three things that you're thankful for each day this week. You could practice thank you prayers in real time. You could pause throughout your day to say thank you aloud to God. [00:20:00] And you could read Psalm 100 each morning this week as a declaration of joyful gratitude. There's so many things we could do to invite more gratitude into our lives and to begin living with a grateful heart every single day.

So let's pray. Heavenly Father, I just thank You, Father, that You instruct us to be grateful. Oh, I just, we all want grateful hearts, Lord, and sometimes we don't

live that way. We don't live out of gratefulness. Sometimes we see what's wrong and what's not right. And we, we see what's missing and what's lacking and, and we sometimes miss the good things. Lord, there are good things all around us that You've given us, that You have provided for us. Lord, help us to be grateful. Help us to be grateful for You, for all the many things that You do for us, for the blessings. But even not all those things, but just grateful for Your presence in our lives. Father, help us [00:21:00] in the days to come and the hours to come to just live in Your gratefulness to live how You want us to live in this abundant life. And we know when we become grateful for everything we know that we will be living in the way that You want us to.

So, Lord, help us. We can't do this without You. We won't even try. Thank You for Your truth. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for who You are. Thank You for loving us like You do. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oh, friend, it's been good to be together today. Remember that gratitude changes everything. Gratitude doesn't change just your circumstances. It changes you in the midst of them. Gratitude may not fix the hard thing, but it will reframe it. And gratitude is how we live abundantly. Even when life feels anything but abundant. Yes, gratitude is a choice. We can choose it [00:22:00] or we cannot choose it. It's not just an extra, but it's a must for abundant life.

And if this episode encouraged you, would you consider just sharing it with a friend who needs a fresh perspective today? Gratitude multiplies when it's shared. So maybe text someone or email someone about this episode that might encourage them.

And if you're ready to go deeper in learning how to truly live an abundant life, one full of presence and peace, and purpose and joy and gratefulness, abundant life mentoring might be a great next step for you. And you can learn more about that in the show notes.

I hope that you are enjoying the Summer of Abundance Playlist on Spotify. It's simply titled Abundant Life, and I created it just for you. You can find the link in the show notes. It's a great way to just worship God and, and have song in your life to accompany your summer.

Next week you will [00:23:00] not wanna miss our guest episode. I am sharing a wonderful conversation with another one of my lifelong friends since fifth grade. We have walked through much together and this guest's words will speak life straight to your heart. I can't wait to share it with you. So come back next Tuesday to be encouraged and inspired.

Friend, thanks for being here. Just know that I'm praying for you and I am cheering you on today. God bless you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at [julielefebure.com](http://julielefebure.com). And until next time, stay encouraged.