

# Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

## 224 Just Say No to People Pleasing

[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:** Today we are continuing in our Just Say No series after last week's subject of Just Say No to Rushing. In today's episode, we are looking at something that I believe many of us rarely talk about, but we quietly live under, [00:01:00] and that is the weight of people pleasing.

Have you ever felt that subtle pressure just to try to keep everyone happy? Or to say yes when you really needed and wanted to say no? Or maybe you keep trying to hold everything together so no one feels disappointed in you or in what you're in charge of. I get it. My goodness.

We are exploring why this pressure of pleasing others shows up in our lives and in our hearts and how God invites us into freedom from it. We are not designed to carry this kind of weight. And we're also gonna look at what it looks like to live loved instead of living to be liked.

Friend, you don't have to carry the burden of keeping everyone pleased and happy anymore. So let's take a collective deep breath today and just say no to people [00:02:00] pleasing. It's time to walk into this freedom that Jesus offers us together. So let's get into this episode.

**Julie Lefebure:** Sometimes we aren't worn out because of the work we do, but because of the weight we carry, trying to keep everyone around us happy. Have you ever felt like your worth was hanging on someone else's opinion of you and what you do? You know, I think that's more common than we realize and it's, it's like I said, not something that we talk about. But God never asked you and me to be impressive, right? He hasn't. He asks us to just be His, plain and simple. People pleasing might have once been your survival language, but [00:03:00] friend, it is not your abundant life language.

Let me tell you a story. I remember a season when my kids were very little, just, just babies, just toddlers. When diaper bags and, and fruit snacks just seemed to fill our days. And play dates were fun for them, but they were also almost like lifelines to other moms who could understand what season of life I was in. There was a particular friend in that season who, in many ways, she was so wonderful. But she also had a very strong sense of how we should spend our time together. And she would, uh, in her own way, let me know what we would be doing together when we would get together. Um, every time she suggested a, a play date or an outing or something that we should do together or something that you should join us for this, whatever it [00:04:00] might be. Every time she invited, I said yes. Even when I was exhausted. Even when I needed to stay home and clean my house and fold my laundry. Because goodness, I remember piles of laundry. And I remember back then that I really had a hard time keeping up with the housework because my priority was my children. And even when I craved a quiet afternoon with my kids at home, I would say yes. Inside though I felt this pressure, this little tug in my stomach, that if I didn't say yes, she'd be disappointed or think I didn't care, or goodness, she might never ask me again.

And back then as a young mom, the fear of disappointing her really felt big. The fear of disappointing anyone back then really felt big, bigger than I wanted to [00:05:00] admit. So I would pack the diaper bag. I would load the stroller. I would secure the snacks and off we'd go. More than once. Not from joy or desire, but from pressure and fear. And I'll be honest, many of those days I came home even more drained, not filled, and my patience was running thin. I, I remember that. And my joy was smaller, and I remember asking and thinking, why am I doing this? I wasn't living led by peace. I was living pulled by expectation. And looking back, I can see, see it so clearly that it wasn't that I wanted the play date. No. It was that I didn't want to disappoint someone.

And maybe you can relate. You know this wasn't living out love. It was, it was not freedom. [00:06:00] That was people pleasing, plain and simple. And it robbed me of presence. Of presence with my kids, presence with God, and even presence with myself. Because peace doesn't come from keeping everyone else happy. And we know that we can't keep everyone else happy, right?

But peace is really what comes from living aligned with God's will, even when the answer is no. And that season taught me so much. And it taught me something that I needed desperately then and I still need today, that sometimes obedience looks like disappointing people. And sometimes the most holy thing that you and I can say is no.

God has something to say about this subject, though, this subject of people pleasing. Let's take a look. I found a couple scriptures that really speak to this. The first one is Galatians 1: 10, and in the New Living Translation Paul says this, [00:07:00] "Obviously I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant." Yeah. If people pleasing, like he says, was his goal, then he would not be Christ's servant. He would be the servant of the people he was trying to please. And that's what we become when we please people. We become their servants, not God's servant.

Also another good one is Romans chapter 8, verse 15 in the New Living Translation, and it says, "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him Abba Father."

You know this people pleasing is slavery. Really plain and simple. It, it keeps us in bondage. But living loved is freedom. When we can [00:08:00] operate out of God's love, we live in this freedom that it's a beautiful thing. But when we switch that around and we operate out of, uh, out of expectation of other people, that's slavery. We can't follow Jesus fully and be ruled by the approval of others. And think about this, you cannot carry out ministry and carry everyone else's expectations at the same time.

I would love to share this with you, why people pleasing is not just exhausting, but it's spiritually harmful. Can I share these ways with you? There's five of them. Because if we don't understand the cost of people pleasing, we'll just keep living in it. But once we understand the cost, then we're motivated to make some changes and we can see in our lives how destructive this, this people pleasing is.

[00:09:00] So why people pleasing is so destructive. This is the first reason that it removes God from first place in our lives. This people pleasing isn't simply what I would call a personality trait. It's more of a worship disorder. And as we look at that Galatians 1:10 passage, that part where it says, am I seeking the approval of people or of God?, that's the question that we need to ask ourselves. When we make decisions, primarily based on what will she think of me? Or will he be upset if I do this? Or what will this make me look like? We are letting human opinion sit where only God's voice should be, and this is spiritual interference. Anytime we put man's opinion above [00:10:00] God's opinion, we are not living in the way God has designed us to. We cannot live an abundant life when we do this.

The second reason why, , people pleasing is so destructive is that it creates inner bondage, not peace. People pleasing it, it feels like peace, right? It feels like peacemaking. Like we're being peacemakers because we're trying to keep the peace. But it actually creates anxiety and hyper vigilance. Yeah, and emotional exhaustion. That also creates double mindedness. We're thinking from one thing to another. Loss of identity. That's probably the most important one, is the loss of identity. We start monitoring others' moods and reactions and, and, and their silence, and we question. Why? Why are they acting this way? What can I have done to make it have been different? We become [00:11:00] managers of perception, not followers of Jesus.

People pleasing promises peace, but it delivers so much pressure. Jesus offers us rest from this, but people pleasing offers us tension. And that's the opposite. Rest and tension cannot be combined in the same space.

And the third way that, people pleasing is so destructive is that it silences the voice that God put inside of us. When we live to be liked, we often will hesitate to speak truth. Or we water down the conviction that we, we have inside of us. We, we make our voice small. Or we say yes when God, clearly said no. Excuse me, or we say nothing when God asked us to speak. [00:12:00] I've done that so many times where I know God has wanted me to say something, but I cowered in fear because I didn't want to go against the crowd, or I didn't want to say something that might offend someone even though He was prompting me to. Have you ever done that?

But our calling becomes filtered, not filtered through the Holy Spirit, but filtered by the fear of human reaction. And that, that fear of man, you know, scripture says in Proverbs 29:25 that the fear of man is a snare. It's always gonna trip us up. It traps us, it muffles us. It, it steals our courage every single time. And it sometimes causes us to delay our obedience.

The fourth way that people pleasing is so destructive is that it damages relationships. It does not protect them. And I think this is where the light bulb will go off in many of our, our brains for [00:13:00] us as women. You know, people pleasing, feels like it's kindness and it's love, and it's peace and it's harmony, right? But it actually produces terrible things like resentment and false peace, one-sided relationships, unspoken bitterness, lack of trust, um, passive aggressive behavior, and even emotional distance. Why? Well, because it's not real connection. It's actually performance. We're performing based on what we think someone's expectation is. And performance cannot build intimacy in relationships. Pretending is not loving. And avoiding honest boundaries quietly erodes the trust in relationships. It's really interesting, isn't it? How it's just the

opposite of what we [00:14:00] think it is. People pleasing it may look as like it's protecting relationships on the surface but it's actually , poisoning them underneath. And it's no wonder why this friend that I had back then that we really aren't in a relationship anymore. Yeah. That really is a true testament of what people pleasing does.

And the fifth is, it trains our hearts to believe that my value is in others' approval, or that God's voice is just not enough. That I need to look somewhere else. Or disagreement equals rejection and love must be earned.

You know, these type of statements this type of thinking is really against the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus didn't live for applause or to please people or to, do things to [00:15:00] and to be afraid of offending someone. No, He didn't do any of that. But He invites us to follow Him into that same freedom that He lived. To follow God at all costs, not people.

Yeah, people pleasing feels Godly because it, it looks like serving, but many times it's actually self-protection, dressed up as love, a false kind of love. True service that flows from love, not people pleasing. People pleasing will always flow from fear. And friend here's the hope that we have, people pleasing is not solved by willpower. We can try as hard as we want to, but it's not. It's healed by our true identity, intimacy, and trust in God. When we believe that I am safe in Jesus and I am already loved and obedience is my success [00:16:00] not pleasing someone else, then we stop chasing approval and start living the abundant lives that Jesus came to give us.

You know, this isn't about calling us out and for us to be embarrassed by maybe people pleasing in the past. But it's about calling us up, lifting our, our, our sights up higher towards God because He isn't scolding us for people pleasing, but He's rescuing us from it. Thank you Lord. Thank you Lord. He's saying, daughter, your freedom is here in me. You don't have to fear the opinions of others anymore. You don't have to please them. You can live loved, not live to be liked. Oh, thank you Lord. Thank you Lord.

You see people pleasing grows in the soil of lies, right? You know the, the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy is what it [00:17:00] says in John 10:10. But Jesus came to give us life and life to the full. And one way the enemy does try to steal, kill, and destroy is through lies. These lies about who we are and, and that our value depends on, other people and that, you know, we're responsible for how other people, um, what they, what they think of us. But freedom grows from where truth is planted.

So let's just take a moment and just look at a handful of these lies and speak truth, instead. Speak the truth that sets us free. So one of the first lies that I thought of was that we think if they are pleased, then I am loved. That's a lie. The truth is that I am loved, you are loved by God no matter what.

Another lie is that I must manage how others feel about me. Nope, that's a lie. The truth is I am responsible for obedience, not for [00:18:00] outcomes. That is so freeing, isn't it? Say that. I am responsible for obedience, not outcomes. That is so freeing. Oh my goodness.

Another lie is it's selfish to say no. I've heard women say that. Oh my goodness. But the truth is saying no can be obedience and stewardship.

So ask yourself today if you struggle with this people pleasing thing, what are you afraid will happen if someone is disappointed in you? The answer to this will expose fear as the idol that we're following, not the people themselves. It's fear. Disappointment friend is not danger. It's not death. Disapproval is not rejection. But in Jesus, you are unrejectable. He will never [00:19:00] reject you. Never.

And the thing is, we don't break the habit of people pleasing by trying harder. But we're transformed as we practice living from our identity in Christ.

I have another story, that happened many years later, and actually it was just three years ago, but I faced a very different moment and, a moment where the old me would've instantly said yes, but the Holy Spirit led me hesitated. Not from fear, but from discernment. I guess God had grown something in me over the years, and I didn't realize it until this. But it was an invitation that from the outside it looked wonderful. It was something meaningful, um, ministry related, and honestly, it was the kind of the opportunity that people would assume you'd be crazy to turn down. It aligned with my gifts. It would've been a [00:20:00] challenge, but it would've been fun. I think I would've really liked it. And it certainly would've made a lot of people happy if I would've said yes. But right away I felt that unmistakable nudge in my spirit that it was almost like a, a wall. And that gentle whisper from God that said, this isn't for you.

It, it didn't really make sense to me at the time, you know? Sure, I did have a lot going on, but I could have made this work. Especially if God was calling me to do it, of course I would've made it work. And part of me did wanna say yes. Saying yes can feel good, right? I mean, think about it. It can feel like we are impressive and kind of prideful and we're productive and we're, we're, we're being obedient. But deeper than that, I knew I wasn't gonna be obedient. I

wanted to obey God more than I wanted to appear like I had this [00:21:00] prestigious offer to say yes to. So with a little nervousness and, and a man, a whole lot of trust, whew, I said, no. A simple gracious no.

And do you know what happened next? Someone looked at me and said, wow, what an opportunity you missed. Seriously, those words. And for a split second, that old familiar pull tugged on my heart again, and that little voice that whispered, you know, maybe you should have said yes. Maybe she's right. Maybe you did miss this big opportunity that you're never gonna get again. But immediately the Lord settled something within my heart. I didn't miss anything. I didn't miss an opportunity. I wasn't saying no to just a simple opportunity. I was saying yes to obedience. Yes to God's peace. Yes to [00:22:00] His voice over human approval.

You know, and to this day, I am so grateful, so deeply grateful that I listened to Him. Because opportunities they come and go, right? But obedience, obedience bears fruit that lasts. And when God says no, or maybe not now, His no is never punishment. It's, it's protection for us, it's purpose. It's alignment with His will.

Sometimes the victory isn't in, in the yes that we say, it's in the courage to say no when He asks us to. That day, no, I didn't miss an opportunity. I honored God. And I honored the season that He had me in. I'm still thankful today for that no. Because His peace will always follow obedience, even when people don't understand it.

So friend, if you're learning [00:23:00] this too right along with me and you're still practicing courage and obedience and boundaries, you are in great company. Let's continue to walk this out together.

Here are a few gentle practices that help me when I feel that pull to please others. When that shows up again, these are the things that I, I tend to do.

The first one is, they're in no particular order, but it's a holy pause. I call it a holy pause. Where I just stop before I would say yes. I've learned this. Instead of just saying, yes, I need to pause first and and sit in silence. I just pause and then I pray. And maybe just a little breath prayer, something like, Father God, lead me and I will follow You. And then I always have to ask Him, is this for me right now? Is this for me? If it's not, shut the door, Lord.

The second thing, the second practice [00:24:00] is confessing dependency on approval. I am probably one of the people that struggle with this the most. Yeah. So when we confess our dependency on approval, we can say, Lord, I, I

just lay down this idol of approval. Because it really is an idol. You alone tell me who I am, not the opinions of others. Confessing that can make all the difference in the world. It'll totally change our mindset.

And the third practice is what I call bless, release, and surrender. When someone is disappointed in my decision or something I've said, or something I've done, I bless them. I bless them, bless them. I release their opinions to God, and I surrender the need to fix it. Bless. It's so important. Bless, release and surrender. Yeah.

Spiritual maturity is, is not [00:25:00] rescuing others from their emotions. No, it's not. Spiritual maturity is following Jesus. There's a powerful truth. I've been sharing these. I'm gonna continue to share these little nuggets or these truths or these tools that I, I've shared in my book Right Now Matters. And, the one I wanna share today is from chapter 10 of Right Now Matters. And it's a truth which can help us live not only undistracted lives, but it'll help us free ourselves from this people pleasing practice. It goes perfectly well with today's subject. It's all about focusing on the things above, the heavenly things, the Godly things in our lives.

And this comes from Colossians chapter 3, verse 2. And people pleasing, my friend is not one of the heavenly things. It's not. It's not one of the Godly things. God does not want us to, to please people. He wants us to please Him. It's an earthly thing. [00:26:00] The things that we are supposed to avoid. The things that, that God encourages us to stay away from because it's not good for us. It's all about asking God for His wisdom to follow His will in pleasing Him instead of pleasing people. And this will always lead us when we follow after Him, always lead us to focus on the heavenly things in this life. That's where the abundance comes from.

And I share in chapter 10 biblical examples of women who relied on God in this area of their lives. And these people such as Esther and Ruth and Anna the Prophetess and Mary. These are just accounts, real life accounts that we can pull encouragement from, that we can actually see how these women did it and what they do to align themselves with God's will and not their own. It will surely encourage you and inspire you in every part of your life, including people pleasing.[00:27:00]

Let's speak some truth in our life today. Friend, you do not have to earn your belonging anymore. You are not called to carry everyone's feelings. You are not defined by applause or by those who walk away. You are the beloved daughter of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Your yes, belongs to Him first.



Would you pause with me and we'll pray for just a second. Oh, heavenly Father, I thank You that You are pulling us, You are drawing us away from the things that are harmful. This thing of people pleasing. Lord, thank You for reminding us that our obedience to please You to focus on You is so much more important and it's, it's crucial to live an abundant life, Lord, more than it is to please people. Yes, we wanna be kind and generous to people, but our identity is not locked into what they think of us. It's locked into what You think of [00:28:00] us and who You created us to be. So Father, help us to break these, these chains of, of living with this idol of people pleasing, but instead that we would just focus on following You and saying yes to You when You call us to, saying no to the things that You're telling us to say no to, no matter what anyone else might say.

Thank You, Father for Your truth. Thank You for teaching us. Thank You for transforming us. We love You. In Jesus name, amen.

Oh, it's good to just pause and pray together, and I'm so glad that we get to do this. Yes. If you've been carrying the weight of making everyone happy around you, friend, you can set that weight down now. You don't have to earn a connection. You don't have to earn their approval. You don't have to earn belonging. You don't have to manage what others think. Let that all just fall by the wayside. Jesus already calls you His beloved daughter. May you walk in His freedom this week, [00:29:00] every day this week, choosing obedience over approval, peace over pressure, and grace over performing. You are safe in His love and safe in His care. And friend, you are free.

If today encouraged you, would you just take a moment and share this episode with a friend who might need it too? Your shares will truly help more women find hope here and hope in the Lord.

And one more thing that I'm very excited about, i'm hosting our next women's event. I do these quarterly, and the next one is November 17th. But this time I heard you loud and clear. You have asked me for an online event. I always do these in person. But you've asked if I could do an online event. So this is it. I am offering this online. It'll be on Zoom, November 17th in the evening. You can find all the details. I would love for you to join me. You'll find all the details in the show notes. But it's an evening of life-giving encouragement and practical [00:30:00] tools for how to avoid the five mistakes that women make daily, especially during the holidays. So the details and registration yes, are in the show notes. You will find all of it there. I would love for you to join me for this fun evening and check all that out. It's \$15 to attend and the replay is included in case you can't watch it live.

And next week we will continue with our Just say No series in this November. But of course , this series , is appropriate for any time of year. We're gonna be talking about perfectionism. We're gonna learn how to let go of striving and to live from a point of grace. So I think that it will feel like a deep exhale next week. So come back here next week and I look forward to seeing you then.

And I just pray that uh, you are staying encouraged and you are staying hopeful and you are staying connected to the Lord. God bless you.

[00:31:00] 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.