

Encouragement for Real Life

234 What if God Is Using the Life You Did Not Plan?

[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 back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am so glad that you're here today. Have you ever looked at your life and thought this life is not what I planned? This is far from what I thought it was gonna be. Maybe not in a dramatic, intense way. [00:01:00] Not because everything is falling apart, but maybe because somewhere along the way, life took a turn that you just didn't expect, and now you're living a story that you really never planned on.

Maybe it's the season you're in or the responsibilities, the heavy responsibilities that you carry that you never expected, or the losses that you didn't choose, or the quiet routines, the mundane routines that fill your days. And if you're honest, you wonder, is God really at work here or am I just taking up space?

Over the past few weeks through this series of the stories I come back to, we've talked about being seen in the wilderness, in the story of Hagar and being positioned for a moment that matters in the story of Esther. And you can go back [00:02:00] to those, those are linked in the show notes if you want to. But today I wanna talk about something completely different. But not really different, but a little different. But it's just as holy. What happens when God meets us, not in a crisis or a calling, but in the long, ordinary middle?

Well, there's a woman in scripture that I come back to when life feels like this for me. When obedience looks quiet and obedience isn't fun. When faithfulness feels unseen and invisible. When the story just doesn't feel finished and will it ever get finished? But it also doesn't feel exciting.

Well, this person whose story we're gonna talk about today, her name is Ruth. Ruth didn't live the life that she planned, but God was still very much at work in her story. [00:03:00] And her life, it, it's, it's a beautiful story. It invites us to ask a gentle but hope filled question today. Which is what if God is using the life that you and I didn't plan?

Well, let's talk about our story today and what it might mean for you and for me, right where we are. So let's get into this episode.

Julie Lefebure: Throughout the Book of Ruth in the Bible, we read of her story. Maybe it's one you're familiar with and maybe it's not. But Ruth's story, it actually begins with Naomi. Naomi was an Israelite woman who had left her homeland because of famine, and while living away, she experienced dramatic and deep [00:04:00] loss. Her husband died and then both of her sons died. Can you imagine? Suddenly Naomi found herself grieving and displaced and empty without the family or the future that she once imagined? I can't even imagine that.

But Ruth, she comes, well, she was already in the picture, but Ruth was Naomi's daughter-in-law, married to one of her sons. And so of course, Ruth had just lost her husband. And when Naomi decided to return home to her homeland, she urged Ruth to stay behind, to stay where she was. To start over. To choose an entire and maybe easier path for her.

But Ruth, she refused to leave Naomi. She refused to stay. She wanted to go where Naomi [00:05:00] was. She chose loyalty over comfort and presence over certainty. She says, where you go, I will go. By going with Naomi, Ruth was choosing a life without any sort of guarantees. She was leaving her life, the life that she knew, her people and everything familiar. She was choosing possibly poverty and uncertainty and definitely obscurity. And she was doing it not because she, she knew it would turn out great, but because of love and faith. That's what compelled her to go with Naomi. And I firmly believe the Lord was directing her to go in that direction.

So when they arrive in Bethlehem, there's no celebration, no hoopla, no rescue, just two widows trying to make it, [00:06:00] trying to survive. So in order to survive, they needed food. And so Ruth, she begins gleaning in the fields, harvesting what was left in the fields off the ground. Can you even imagine? Not as a, a grand act of faith, oh, look at me. But as a, a necessary one of just providing food for herself and Naomi, day after day. And Ruth doesn't know

yet, that God is quietly at work, aligning His perfect provision and protection for Ruth and Naomi. All she knows is that she's just showing up, caring for her mother-in-law and doing the next step, doing what's right in front of her.

You know, Ruth's story isn't just about faith. It's about choosing to love, to stay, to trust God in a life that feels smaller than the one that you imagined.

[00:07:00] Just to be obedient in that life. That life that's different than what you thought it was gonna be.

You know, there was a season in my, my life when everything looked just fine on the outside. But inside I just kept thinking, this isn't how I thought things would look like by now. This isn't what I expected by now. I wasn't unhappy. I wasn't miserable. I was just, I guess you, you could say disappointed and a bit discouraged in ways that I really didn't know how to name at the time. Nothing was wrong. I was just, I guess, living a life that I hadn't planned and wondering if it even mattered. Because since my plans didn't come to fruition, how was God using me?

It was a time of growth for me. And the time that I really realized that [00:08:00] God was still using me, was still in the life that I was living, even if it wasn't the life that I expected to be living. And this is one of the reasons I come back to Ruth's story. When I start to get that feeling again of just does my life even matter? Because I get those, those moments. And, and I'm assuming you do too. Does my life, even if it's not what I expected it to be, does it, does it matter? Is God working?

But Ruth's story reminds me that God doesn't only work in the lives that we dreamed of when we were young or dreamed of even the possibilities of the lives that were ahead of us. But He works in the lives that were actually living. And there's such hope in this.

I love Ruth's story. When I look at her story and when I, I look at the seasons of my own life, uh, that are similar to this, [00:09:00] there are a few things that I believe God wants us to remember. And I pray that these encourage you today maybe if you're going through this or you know, someone who is.

Truth number one is Ruth chose to go when it could have been easier to stay. Going with Naomi wasn't glamorous. It had to have been hard. Going didn't promise positive results. She didn't know what to expect. Going, required endurance and patience and trust. And sometimes obedience is that trusting even when the future is unknown to us. We wanna see the path. We wanna

know what's ahead. But sometimes it's just in that obedience of just taking the next step and just going with where God is calling us.

The second truth is God worked through ordinary faithfulness. Without the spotlight. [00:10:00] I, I, I can't help but think how humbling that must have been for Ruth to, to glean the fields that she worked day after day just for food for them. There was no big moments. But she just showed up consistently. And isn't that how God works though? He often works quietly before He works visibly. And that encourages us too. To just keep on keeping on. Keep on with what He's calling us to do, even if it's not in the spotlight.

Truth number three is that Ruth couldn't see the whole story, but God could. I'm so thankful He sees the whole story. I'm so thankful that He sees, you know, I think about a puzzle and we see the little pieces of the puzzle, but God sees the box top. He knows how it's gonna look, and He's helping us to fit the pieces together of our lives. He knows the whole story.

[00:11:00] Ruth didn't know what was to come yet. She didn't know that Boaz, that this man Boaz was gonna enter her life. She didn't know that her story would be redeemed. She didn't know that her obedience would impact generations. You know, just because we can't see how God is working, it doesn't mean that He isn't. And I love that hope that we have, that God is working even when we don't see Him working.

The fourth truth is that God honors what feels small and unnoticed, and I love that about Him. He honors what feels small and unnoticed. Maybe that's showing up daily at a job that you're wondering, am I even making any sort of difference? Maybe it's caring for others, for a family member, and you're tired and you're weary, and you don't know if you can keep doing it. It's [00:12:00] doing just what's in front of you, what God has called you to, even if it feels monotonous or ordinary, or unexciting. Living faithfully in the middle. That is what it's all about. It's just in the middle. We're not at the beginning. We're not at the end. We're just in the middle. The middle of the season, the middle of the job, the middle of the, the hard place or the, the uneventful place that we're in. The life that you and I didn't plan may still be the life that God is using - for our growth, for the good of others and for His glory.

And we can easily, we can easily get caught up in the fear of living in the life that we didn't plan. It's kind of fearful, or it can be. Sometimes the fear isn't that God won't show up. It's that maybe nothing will ever change. Or sometimes we're afraid that this season is permanent. [00:13:00] Sometimes we wonder if this quiet life even matters. Those are all wrapped in fear.

When have you lived a life that you didn't plan? Is it now? I get it. I've been there and we can learn from Ruth's story. And I'm encouraged by her story, and I pray that you are too. Trusting God in routines and repetition can just be something that, it's, it's a full trust. We fully have to trust. We don't see any results yet, but we just trust God in the middle, in the process. And Ruth's story reminds us that abundance is often built slowly and it's not built by us. We just keep showing up and God does the behind the scenes work.

A question for us to ponder, just to think about today, where might God be at work in the life that I didn't plan? [00:14:00] Think about that and ask yourself, where might God be at work in the life that I didn't plan? Just sit with this question. You don't have to have the answer, but just sit with it. Notice any resistance that comes up, or any hope that surfaces.

Ruth didn't live the life that she planned. Can you imagine the life that she thought she was gonna live. But she lived a life that God used and used in a mighty way. Now we're gonna talk about that here in just a second. And what if God is doing the same with yours and with mine?

And the good news is that Ruth's story doesn't stay in the fields forever. As Ruth keeps just showing up, God begins to do something that, that she doesn't even see yet. The field that she's working in belongs to a man named Boaz, a [00:15:00] relative of Naomi's late husband. Hmm. Get that? I love how God does this kind of stuff. You just see, you see evidence of Him. Well, Boaz notices Ruth, and not because she's impressive, but because of her loyalty and her character, and the way that she cared for her mother-in-law, Naomi. That's noticeable. That's commendable. And over time, Boaz becomes God's instrument of redemption. He provides protection and provision, and eventually a future that Ruth never could have imagined.

So Ruth ends up marrying Boaz and her life is restored. Naomi's emptiness is filled and their story, it just keeps getting better. Her story, it becomes a part of God's bigger story. Ruth [00:16:00] becomes the great-grandmother of King David and part of the lineage of Jesus himself. Isn't that amazing? It just brings me such hope, and it's just a smile to my face and just a joy to my heart, and I pray it does it for you today too.

Ruth never knew that her obedience would echo through generations, but we're still talking about Ruth today. Would she have ever thought that a woman is talking about her on a podcast in January of 2026? It's just so encouraging to me. She knew that she knew to go with Naomi. She just knew it. To work hard, to trust God in the life that she didn't plan and, and God used it all.

Be encouraged today, friend, you may not see redemption yet. You may still be in the field showing up, doing what's in front of you. Not enjoying [00:17:00] it, but trusting God one day at a time.

This story, the story of Ruth reminds us that God is always working toward restoration even when you, and I can't see it yet. Be encouraged today, friend. I'm encouraged. I pray that you are too.

And before we close today, I want to leave you with this, this gentle reminder that I pray that you carry this with you all week. That Ruth didn't live the life that she planned, but she lived the life that God used and He used it for good. He brought so much good from it that we're still talking about her today.

And if you're in a seasoned friend that that feels quiet or ordinary, or mundane, or far from what you imagined, I hope that you'll carry this truth with you all week long, all month long that God is not done with you. He is [00:18:00] with you and guiding you. He is present, attentive, and still at work in your life.

If this episode stirred something in you, if you're sensing that this season deserves more attention, or you're just longing for something, you're longing for more, maybe some prayer, discernment, just some clarity or confidence or some courage, I want you to know that you don't have to walk through this season alone. Through my abundant life mentoring, I come alongside of women who, who want to slow down, to listen to God's voice, to really understand that there's more to life than this. They're not just going through the motions. And to live with more peace and intention right where they are. And maybe this is you. Maybe this is you today. And for a limited time this January when you schedule a mentoring session to be held any time, I'm gonna send you a copy of one of my [00:19:00] books to support the work that we will begin together. Either Right Now Matters or the Right Now Matters Bible study. You can learn more about abundant life mentoring and schedule a session by visiting the link in the show notes. I would truly be honored to walk alongside of you in this season.

And if this podcast does encourage you in any way, I would love for you to subscribe, to follow, to share, uh, so that way this podcast can, can even touch other lives, that this encouragement can move beyond the spaces of where it is now. And so you don't miss any future episodes. And if you haven't found us on YouTube, check us out on YouTube. We're there too.

And share this with a friend. Especially someone who might be just living the life that she didn't plan, and she could use a little bit of encouragement in this right now.

Next week is our exciting, well, they're all [00:20:00] exciting, but, um, next week is our guest episode for the month. And joining me next week is someone whose, uh, faith and life have deeply impacted my own. And it's, let me just tell you, it's just gonna be, you're gonna enjoy it. We'll be sharing a, a thoughtful, honest conversation that we had together about walking with God through different seasons and trusting Him and what it looks like to live a life faithfully when the spotlight isn't what you're after. It's, it's a great conversation. I can't wait for you to, to listen and be encouraged and inspired. So, come back next week and you'll be blessed with that.

But until then, remember, you are seen, you are loved, and your story is still being written. God is still using you. He is writing the pages of your heart on your heart. So thanks for being here with me today. I'm [00:21:00] honored that you would join me, and I look forward to gathering here again. Thank you. I'll see you next time. God bless you.

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