

# Encouragement for Real Life

## 249. 5 Simple Shifts That Actually Make a Difference

[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.

Have you ever had one of those days where nothing terrible happened, thankfully, but somehow everything just felt hard? Like you were behind before the day even got going. Or you were a little more irritated than usual. Or you were just distracted all day [00:01:00] long. Maybe you were exhausted by noon and by the end of the day you wondered why did today feel like so much?

I had one of these days, not that long ago, and I really thought, what is wrong with me? Why did this day go like this? I started it off well, but it didn't end well. And sometimes when we have these kind of experiences, I think that we, we think that we need to change everything. I, I kind of wanna get my notebook out and I just wanna write down everything, what I need to change. When really what we need is one simple shift.

We are talking about this in this episode today, so I'm glad you're here. Let's get into it.

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life [00:02:00] podcast. We are starting a brand new series for this month of May. Welcome to May, and this series is called Simple Shifts for Everyday Life. And I'm really excited about this series because I think so many of us are carrying this pressure that if life just feels off or challenging or, um, just a struggle that, that something's wrong with us. That we need to do a major overhaul either on ourselves or on our lives. Like maybe we need a brand new routine or more discipline, or more energy, or a better attitude or a different schedule. Yeah.

While sometimes, you know, bigger changes are needed in our lives, often what helps most is the much smaller things. Sometimes it's not about changing our whole lives. [00:03:00] Sometimes it's simply about making one simple shift. And that's what we're talking about this month.

Sometimes, in this episode, we're gonna get in this deeper, sometimes we overlook the small beginnings. But, scripture reminds us in Zechariah 4:10 to not despise the day of small things. I love that verse. Because it encourages us in the small things, even in the simple things that we think, is this really gonna make a difference? We are not to despise the days of small things.

I know for me that there have been days where I thought something was deeply wrong because I felt off. Or the day just didn't go the way I hoped, even though I had planned it out and partnered with God and you know, the day just didn't go well. And maybe you've had those too. I assume you have. I don't think I'm the only one. You know, it's [00:04:00] those days where nothing major happens, but I just felt rushed and reactive all the time. Not, not, not in a good way. I felt distracted and and definitely disconnected from me, from others and from God. And those days are hard.

And then what I would do is I would start mentally listing everything that I needed to fix. Like I need to get more organized. I need to get more rest. I need a better routine. I need to be more disciplined. Or I need to get my life together. But oftentimes what I actually need in these instances, it's not to fix everything. What I really need is to pause, to breathe, to stop picking up my phone first thing, and to come back to what [00:05:00] truly matters and what's most important. One small shift. One small thing. When I choose one small shift, it makes a bigger difference than trying to reinvent my life ever could.

We're gonna talk about this today, and maybe you need this reminder today too. I don't know where you are in your life, but maybe if, even if you don't need it now, you're go, you might need it in a day or two. You do not need to fix your whole life this week. Let me say that again. You do not need to fix your whole life this week. And you certainly do not need to become a different person by Friday. Mm-hmm. You may just need one small shift that helps you feel more grounded, more peaceful and maybe, yeah, more connected to God, right where you are. Right in your real life [00:06:00] today.

So today, yeah I'm gonna give you five simple shifts that actually make a difference in your life. They're not complicated. They're not overwhelming. They're not a big to-do list. It's not one more thing to struggle with or to check off on your list. These are just practical, meaningful shifts for your everyday life

that you can apply right away. You could do 'em all. You could do one. You'll know. You'll know which one speaks to you.

But let's start with the first one. Shift number one is to start before the scroll. Yeah, start before the scroll. Before you pick up your phone, before you look at the notifications, before everyone else's needs, before reading or just trying to comprehend the news, before comparison has a chance to start [00:07:00] screaming, start with God. Start with God. Now let me be clear here. You do not need an hour long morning routine with candles and journaling and color coded devotion tabs if that is not your season right now. I know that there are, are women that I talk to that say, I can't do, I can't spend time with God in the morning because I don't have X. I don't have the X might be, I don't have enough time. I don't have a quiet space. I don't have the right tools. I don't have, whatever. The thing is, we can spend time with God because He's right with us. He's right there with us always. He doesn't want us to have a full, uh, what I wanna say, toolbox of things to connect with Him. He just wants us to be with Him. That's it. He just wants us [00:08:00] to be with Him.

We just need a starting place. We don't have to have a full routine. And this might change day to day. We just need a starting place. Even 60 seconds can shift the tone of a morning. Sit on the edge of your bed right when you wake in the morning, or I do this while I'm laying down and I, you know, I've just, maybe I've come just to the awareness or my alarm has gone off or something, and I'll just say, thank you, Lord, for this day. Lead me today. Guide me today. Help me to notice you today. What a difference those little sentences can make. You'll find one that that is near and dear to your heart that you can just say to God right away in the morning.

Read one verse. Read one Bible verse. Get an app on your phone that gives you a Bible verse every day. Take one deep breath with [00:09:00] Him. Breathe Him in. Breathe Him out. Invite God into the ordinary moments before the world starts pulling at you. That's how you can start with God. It doesn't have to be elaborate. It doesn't have to be fancy. Before the world starts speaking it's so important that we let God speak first.

Psalm chapter 5, verse 3 says, "In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice." Yes. Isn't that beautiful? In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice. Because the first voice, voice that we often hear shapes the tone of the day. And if all you do tomorrow is to begin to start before the scroll, start with God before the scroll, that alone can make more difference than you think. Watch and see what happens.

Let's talk about shift number two, which is choose three priorities. [00:10:00]  
One reason so many women feel overwhelmed is not always because they have too much to do, even though many of us do. Sometimes it's because everything feels equally important and equally urgent.

Like let's say the laundry. The laundry matters. The email matters. The errands matter. The people we love matter. That thing that we've been putting off, you know what that is? That matters. The house matters. Our health matters. Our spiritual life matters. And when everything feels this important, all of it together, it can become hard to know where to begin. So we carry this weight, this weight of, of it all at once and it gets heavy. Maybe you know that feeling? I do [00:11:00] every single day. I do. You wake up already mentally holding 12 tabs opened in your mind and before the day has even started, you feel behind.

You know, I've shared this, that March was really a challenging month for me. But April, April was a challenging month. It was the the month that I released my third book Made for More, and there were weeks, days that I would wake up and think, I have so much to do today to get ready for this book launch, to get ready to release this book into the world. Every single day I had a list. And yeah, 12 tabs were open in my mind, and I needed to do them all right away. I finally just, I, I did the, this, this, the three, the three priorities, which we're gonna get into here.

But I found a scripture that talks about this. Instead of being pulled in every direction, which our [00:12:00] tasks and our thoughts do, Proverbs gives us some hope. It's Proverbs 16, verse 3, and it says, "Commit to the Lord, whatever you do, and he will establish your plans." Oh, amen to that. Oh, amen.

That's why one simple shift can make a real difference. And that difference is this, this one little tip is to choose three priorities. Three. When I did that, when I came to the reality that I can't do 12 things at once, but I can handle three. Maybe not at once, but I can handle three. Not 30, 3. 3 things that matter most today. Not everything that could be done, because we know we have a lot to do. Not everything everyone else wants done. And not the endless running list in your head or my head, but just simply asking what would make today meaningful and [00:13:00] purposeful and peaceful and productive in ways that matter most? I'll say that again. What would make today meaningful and purposeful and peaceful and productive in the ways that matter most? And then choose three priorities from that place.

One may be practical. Like, return the phone call, finish the project, or schedule the appointment. Maybe one is personal. Take a walk, drink water, rest for 20 minutes. And maybe one could be spiritual. Spend time with God. Journal what you're, what you're carrying today, or just sit in gratitude. Three priorities. That's it. These can help bring clarity to the chaos and help us [00:14:00] to release this pressure that we don't need to carry. Because when you know what matters most, everything else stops yelling quite so loudly. It makes all the difference.

But I wanna say this, this is not about becoming hyper-productive. No, this is, this is not about squeezing more into your day because we know where that lands. To burn out, to weariness, to exhaustion. This is about releasing the pressure to do everything and focusing on what matters most right now. Not tomorrow, but right now.

And sometimes your three priorities may look very simple. Like feed your family. Show up for work. Take care of yourself. These aren't simple. They're huge, and they count. Your three priorities, no matter what they are, they [00:15:00] matter.

There are seasons where faithfulness might look small. And maybe they might look smaller than normal and more ordinary than normal. And God is in those seasons just as much as the big ones. So before your day runs away with you, pause and ask, Lord, what matters most today? Then choose three priorities. Just three. Not to earn peace, but to walk in it. I believe that you're going to have such peace from just choosing three. And once you've named what matters, what, what matters most in your life and what, once you've had that conversation with God, the next battle often happens in our minds.

Which brings us to shift number three, which is catch one negative thought. Yeah. Sometimes the [00:16:00] hardest part of our day isn't what is happening around us. It's sometimes what's happening inside of us. The conversation in our own minds. The thoughts that we, we think without even noticing. The stories that we continue to tell ourselves. The assumptions that we make. And many of these types of thoughts come so quickly and so automatically that we begin to believe them without ever questioning them.

You know, I, I led two talks at a recent conference that I spoke at a recent women's conference. One was for teenagers and one was for adult women. Uh, it was a women's conference. And I asked in one of the sessions how the, how women see themselves in so many words. What do they tell [00:17:00] themselves? And , it broke my heart to hear what women were, were telling

themselves. That they are behind. That they don't matter. That they will always be alone. That they failed God. That they, what was the last one I wanted to remember? It was, oh, that, um, they're unworthy of love. I heard women actually say these things and um, I was so saddened, so saddened by those words that these women were, were saying. Um, I just, it that's the stuff that we're telling ourselves. That's the stuff that we believe. And we talked about replacing those words, replacing those thoughts with God's truth. [00:18:00] Because God does not want us to think negative thoughts about ourselves.

Some, some things maybe you're telling yourself today is that I'm already behind. . I'll never catch up. I'm failing at everything. Nothing is changing. I can't handle this. I always mess things up. I pray that you aren't saying these things to yourself. But your words might be something else. But we do say negative things about ourselves, things that we would never say about our friends.

And when thoughts, like these go unchecked, they can shape the tone of an entire day. They can shape the tone of our entire lives. Not because they're true, but because they were believed. And that's why one simple shift that can make a real difference is this [00:19:00] to catch one negative thought. Not every thought. Not every mental battle. Just one. Catch one. One thought that keeps dragging you down. One thought that steals your peace. One thought that just keeps repeating itself over and over and over in your mind. And instead of automatically agreeing with it, pause and ask, is this true? Is this helpful? Is this what God would say to me right now?

2 Corinthians 10:5 talks about taking thoughts captive. Friend, we don't have to let every thought lead us down the road. We don't have to let every thought affect us. Because not every thought deserves our agreement. [00:20:00] Some thoughts, they need to be challenged. Some need to be replaced. Some need to be surrendered. So maybe I'm already behind, it becomes I can begin again from right here. Or I'm failing at everything. It becomes, I'm learning, growing, and taking one step at a time today. Or nothing is changing. That becomes God may be working in ways that I cannot yet see. This day is ruined, becomes this moment is a challenge, but the day is not over.

But let me be clear here. This is not pretending that hard things aren't hard, or that troubles don't exist. This is not burying our heads in the sand and just forgetting about [00:21:00] real life. This is not denying reality. But it's choosing truth in the middle of the reality. And this matters friend, because your thoughts shape your perspective, your perspective influences your choices, and your choices affect how you live.

So if you and I want a simple place to begin, just listen for one negative thought today. Catch it, hold it up to truth, then choose what gets to stay. You and I do not have to believe every thought we think. We don't. And once you and I begin noticing our thoughts, we may also begin noticing our reactions.

Which brings us to shift number four. Are you ready? Shift number four is pause before you react. [00:22:00] Sometimes what changes a day is not what happens to us, it's how we respond to what happens. I'll say that again. Sometimes what changes a day is not what happens to us, but it's how we respond to what happens.

Like the unexpected inconvenience. The frustrating text. The child melting down when you are already exhausted. The rude comment. The long line, oh. The plan that fell through. The email, that hits wrong. Mm-hmm. I think we can all relate to those. So often our first reaction comes so quick, doesn't it? We snap, we shut down, we spiral, we get sharp. We assume the worst. We carry the frustration [00:23:00] into the next hour and sometimes the rest of the day. And maybe you've been there. I know I have.

And I've been there recently. Uh, yeah, recently I went to lunch with some friends and my two grandsons. And the server, the waitress was just really, um, kind of rude, really cold and rude. And the food wasn't right. Um, some things happened during the lunch that just kind of set me off. I'm even embarrassed to say it. But one of my friends said, are you okay? I said, no, I'm really not. I'm not really happy with this lunch at all. I said, I'm not, it's not that it's with all of you. I love being with all of you. But it's the server. And I just wanted to start the whole meal over [00:24:00] again. But I couldn't. It was outta my hands. I could have reacted entirely different. I could have. And from her asking that question, another friend then said, you know, she probably doesn't know Jesus. You are right. She probably doesn't. Or maybe she's dealing with something that I will never know. I don't know, but I had to change my attitude. I didn't have to, but I chose to. And instead of leaving the measly tip that my flesh wanted to leave, I gave an extra, extra tip.

I don't know. Sometimes I still struggle with this. And if you do too, I want you to know that it's not because we're bad people. It's because we're tired or we're stretched thin, or we're already carrying too much. We're running on empty.

And , that's [00:25:00] why this one simple shift can make a real difference. It's to pause before you react. Just pause. My two friends helped me pause. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't have. Just to pause. Not forever. Not perfectly.

Just long enough to create a little space between what happened and what comes next.

And I appreciate what James chapter 1 verse 19 says to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Because a lot can change in one breath. One moment to slow down. One second to notice what is rising within us. One quiet prayer. One choice to respond instead of react.

Maybe that sounds like Lord, help me here. Or give me Your wisdom.  
[00:26:00] Or help me respond with grace. Sometimes this pause is just breathing before speaking. Sometimes it's waiting to send that text. Sometimes it's stepping into the other room just for a minute. And sometimes it's deciding not to match someone else's energy. And that's what I did not do. I was matching her energy that day at that restaurant. I'm still a work in progress. Goodness gracious.

And let me say this too. Pausing is not weakness. Pausing is strength under control. Anyone can react, right? But it takes maturity to pause. It takes wisdom to slow down. It takes self just self-awareness to choose a different [00:27:00] response.

And no, we won't, you and I will not get it right every time. I'm, I'm proof of that. None of us do. But even one paused moment can change the tone of an entire conversation or an entire relationship or the rest of the day. It could change the tone for someone's life. So the next time something rises quickly within you, maybe it's today, maybe it's tomorrow, maybe it's another day, I invite you to pause, to take one breath, to invite God into that moment. Then choose your next step from there.

And after a full day of thoughts and priorities and responsibilities and reactions, there's one final shift that just can help us choose, to help us to, to close the day, well, to choose a different way to end the day.

[00:28:00] Which brings us to shift number five, which is end with reflection, not escape. At the end of the day, many of us are so tired. We are tired in more ways than one. We have given out this day. We have poured out into the lives of others. We've just done a lot. We could be physically tired, mentally tired, emotionally tired, sometimes even soul tired. You know what that feels like, right? Soul tired. And when we feel that way, it's natural to wanna check out. Yeah, to numb out, to scroll, to snack, to watch something, to disappear into distraction for a while. There's nothing like it, is there? At least we tell ourselves that.

But let me say this clearly, that [00:29:00] needing rest is not wrong. Wanting to decompress is I think part of us being human. This is not about guilt for how you unwind. Not at all. This is simply an invitation to pause for just say two minutes before you escape. Because one simple shift that can make a real difference, is this very simple thing - Just end with reflection, not with distraction. End with reflection. Before the screen. Before the episode. Before the mindless scroll. Before checking out completely. Check in. Check in with yourself. Check in about your day. Check in with God.

I think some of us can get so weary at the end of the day that we just [00:30:00] don't even think to check in with God. We don't look back over the day. We just immerse ourselves into what's in front of us and we just eventually climb in bed and fall asleep.

But instead, let's ask some simple questions like, where did I see God's grace today? Where did God show up today? What went well that I almost missed, or what felt heavy that I need to release before calling it a day? Or what am I carrying in tomorrow that that doesn't belong there?

Sometimes this reflection reminds us that the day held more good than we realized. Sometimes it helps us notice God and His presence in ways that we didn't notice at the time. [00:31:00] And sometimes it shows us what needs attention. Other times it helps us let go of what was never ours to carry in the first place. And sometimes it simply helps our hearts to catch up with our bodies before we go to sleep. And if we don't check in at the end of the day, we miss these opportunities.

We don't need a journal and a candle and a perfect nighttime routine with quiet music in the background. We might just need 60 seconds of honesty. A whispered prayer or a deep breath, or a thank you. A surrender. Maybe something like, God, thank You for carrying me today. Thank You for what went well and I trust You with what didn't. Or I release what I [00:32:00] cannot control. Or, Lord, give me Your rest tonight. And then rest. Because ending your day grounded feels different than ending your day drained. I'm gonna say that again. Ending your day grounded feels different than ending your day drained.

One thing that I'm doing, I think I've mentioned this before, that I'm reading through the Bible this year. And I'm behind because, uh, when I was sick I got behind in February, no, March. February, February. And I, uh, am behind. But every night I'm reading my Bible. And let me tell you, that has been life changing for me in how I sleep. Uh, I, it's not on my, it's not electronically. It's

with a real paper [00:33:00] Bible. And I have it by my bed, and I just read a few chapters of what, whatever my next, I'm just, again, I'm doing it just from the beginning of Genesis to Revelation. I'm doing that this year. And that has really helped me to end my day grounded. So I don't know what will help you, but that might be a suggestion just to as an idea. So before we check out tonight, let's take a moment to check in. This can matter more than we think it does.

It reminds me of Psalm chapter 4, verse 8, which says, "In peace I will lie down and sleep for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety." Yeah, in peace we lie down and sleep.

So here we are. These are five simple shifts that can make a real difference in our lives. Not because they are monumental, not because they are [00:34:00] secret, but because they're small, intentional choices. These types of, these small intentional choices, they often shape our days more than we realize.

But I want to stress here, remember, you and I do not need to change everything. We may just need one simple shift. So I encourage you to ask the Lord what that one simple shift could be that would help you most right now. And then begin there. You don't have to do all five. Ask the Lord, which one.

And as we close today, let me say this again. You do not need to change everything. You do not need to overhaul your whole life this week. Alright? Promise me you're not gonna try to do that. Because if you're anything like me, that might be what you're used to. You do not need to become a different person overnight. Sometimes what makes the biggest difference is not a huge [00:35:00] change. It's one small intentional shift. One better beginning. One clearer priority. One thought caught and replaced. One pause before reacting. And one moment of reflection before bed.

So don't leave this episode feeling like you need to do all five like I said. Just ask, Lord, what's one shift that would help me most right now? And then start there. Because small steps taken consistently can change more than we realize.

Would you pray with me just for a quick second? I guess more than a second. But would you pray with me?

God, I thank You that You meet us in the ordinary moments of life. That, that You, You don't want us to make big changes with big leaps often. You just want [00:36:00] us to notice the small things. The small, faithful decisions. The small choices. Lord, sometimes it's in those instances where you work through the greatest. I ask that you would show each one watching or listening today, what

would bring them more peace and clarity and connection with You this week? What's that shift? Lord, give her the grace to begin today. We love You in Jesus' name. Amen.

And if you're looking for a simple, daily way to stay grounded in truth and and live with intention, I'd love to invite you to check out my new devotional titled Made For More. It just released last month. It is created to encourage you right in the middle of your real life. You can find it wherever, wherever books are [00:37:00] sold - online, on Amazon on my website. But I think it's really going to make a difference in your life. It's also, the link is in the show notes.

Next week, our Simple Shifts for Everyday Life series, in this series, we are gonna be talking about the 10 minute reset that you can use anytime. Because when life does feel off, things aren't going the way we think we should, or if life is overwhelming or, or heavy, you don't have to stay stuck there. Sometimes 10 intentional minutes can change the direction of the whole day. So I can't wait to talk about that with you here next week, bright and early on Tuesday next week.

So until next time, remember, you were made for more than just going through the motions of life and just getting through your days. Take one simple shift today and keep walking forward. [00:38:00] God loves you so much. I'll see you next week. 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.