

251 4 Small Choices that Shape Your Life

[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.

Most of us don't end up in a place that we don't want to be in overnight, right? It happens slowly, silently, almost without noticing. And this is not because of one big decision necessarily, but often it's because of the many small [00:01:00] patterns that we repeat every single day. What you do once doesn't shape your life most often. But what you return to over and over again does.

And if this is true, which I believe it is, then the small choices you and I make every single day matter and they matter more than we think. So we are talking about these choices today, so let's get into it.

Well, welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure and I am thrilled that you're here today. Thank you for joining me. We are wrapping up this month's series of simple shifts for everyday life, and I pray that these have encouraged your heart, these episodes.

In the first one, we [00:02:00] talked about small shifts that can make a real difference in our everyday lives. The second week, which was last week, we talked about how to reset when your day starts to spiral. And how you can really just return to peace in the middle of your real life no matter what time of day it is.

And today we're gonna zoom out a little bit because if we only focus on specific moments, we never look at patterns, the patterns of our lives, and we can miss what's actually shaping our everyday lives. And so we're looking at this today, and I believe it's going to be an episode that will bring some awareness to our lives. And really how we're living our lives.

But let's rewind back about six years. It was six years ago this summer when I just remember [00:03:00] I realized that something in my life needed to change. Nothing was terrible or, or falling apart or failing at that point, but I felt more rushed than I wanted to be. I felt distracted. More distracted than I normally was. I felt less present. I felt like I was just moving through my days instead of really living them. Can you relate? And that was, yeah it's, you know, you know, when you start feeling that. And I, I kept thinking that I needed to fix something big. Maybe a better routine or a different schedule, or more discipline.

But when I finally just paused and slowed down enough to really look at my life and invited God in to show me what needed, changing, it wasn't one big thing. Even though I did change some things that summer. It was what I was doing every [00:04:00] day. And that's some of the things I changed. What I was giving my time to, what I kept returning to, what I started calling my normal, quote and unquote.

And I realized that something had shifted everything for me. That my life wasn't being shaped by one moment or one thing. I wasn't being shaped by one big, monumental experience. It was being shaped by what I was repeating.

And this is what we're talking about today. This is what we're discussing. Because not big life changes. No, we're not talking about that. We're talking about small choices that just simply can shape the direction of our lives.

Today's episode isn't about giving you something to do. I know you have enough to do, right? It's about helping you see something that you might not have noticed before. And so I'm really [00:05:00] glad you're here today. And sometimes what happens when we notice some things, we become aware of them, that's when we realize the choices that we're making. And that's when we can maybe change some things if we need to. Or we just become aware, then we can, we can decide, okay, what do I do with this now that I'm aware of this?

So here are four choices that can shape our lives. Are you ready? Four simple choices.

Here's the first one, is what you give your time to. That's our very first one. Not what you say matters, but what your time actually reflects. Because time is honest. Time is brutally honest. Time reveals what our lives are actually built around. Not our intentions or our hopes or even our values, but our actual lived [00:06:00] out reality.

So for example, you might value rest, but you never make space for it. Or you might value connection, but you always feel too on the go for any kind of connection. Or maybe you appreciate your relationship with God, and I assume that you do, but you never slow down long enough to be with Him. I get it. I so get it.

And what time does it, it just reveals really what's most important to us because we will spend time doing the things that are most important to us. Now, this isn't about guilt. It's just simply about awareness. And you know, I'm big on this, that when we become aware of something, then we can do something about it if God leads us to. Because your life is not built by what you hope [00:07:00] to prioritize, but by what you consistently make time for.

And if you and I are completely honest, most of us are not choosing our time as intentionally as we think we are. We're reacting more. We're filling every gap. We're moving from one thing to the next and living in a constant state of what's next. That's really a hard place to live. And I've been there and I get it. I understand. And over time, that becomes the way that we experience our lives.

So let me ask you this question, just a simple question today. Where has most of your time been going lately? Not where you wish it was, or not where you think it is, but where it actually is. Where, where are you spending your time? And I invite you to take a few moments - If you can do it now, pause right now and take a few [00:08:00] moments to honestly look at, at your time and how you've been using it. If you can't do it now, please do it at some point. Uh, you might be surprised and get some answers that you didn't expect. It would be a great time to just pause with God and say, God, show me, where have I been spending my time? Help me be aware of what I give my time to.

And now that we've done that, let's go on to the second choice is what you return to daily. Not what you do occasionally, but what you go back to automatically. Because the thing is when life feels hard or difficult or complicated, or when we're tired or when we're overwhelmed, we don't rise to our best intentions. In those moments, we return to what's familiar. Maybe that's our [00:09:00] phones. That's familiar. Maybe it's worry. Maybe it's keeping our schedules so full that we just don't have time to feel anything or feel something specific. We want to avoid that thing altogether. Maybe it's distraction or control or shutting down, withdrawing.

My natural reaction, my natural thing that I return to, if I could be totally honest, is withdrawal. I will withdraw just so I don't have to deal with

something. Gosh, that is my go-to. And you know, becoming aware of it has helped me to do something about it.

So again, this isn't about shame. We're not shaming ourselves today, because that's not what God does, and that's not what I'm here to do. But it's just about , noticing what's going on. Because the question becomes what are you training [00:10:00] yourself to return to over and over and over again?

Scripture says, in James chapter 4, verse 8, that to draw near to God and He will draw near to you. But this drawing near doesn't happen automatically. It happens in small, repeated returns. So instead of withdrawing, I can draw to God. I can return to Him. I can put Him in the center of my, my thoughts and the center of my heart. Because I know when I draw near to God, He's gonna draw near to me. That's what I can do instead of withdrawing. Not once, not occasionally, but daily.

So I ask you, what have you been returning to lately? What's your go-to thing? Maybe it's not withdrawing, maybe it's something else. But I invite you to [00:11:00] pause and just be honest with yourself and be honest with God and ask Him, Lord, what have I been returning to lately?

And so the next choice that we can make is, is the third one, which is, uh, what, what you normalize. What we feel is normal, quote unquote. What you started calling just the way it is, just the way life is. This is just the way it is. Maybe it's constant stress that's normal for you. Or always feeling rushed. That's me. My hand is raised. Or never having space to breathe in your life - and some people call it margin. Or maybe your normal is being distracted in every single moment, and that was my life for many years. Or maybe it's feeling emotionally worn down. And at some point something subtle [00:12:00] happens. We stop questioning it. We stop noticing it. We start building our lives around it.

But I wanna say this, just because something is common doesn't mean it's how we are meant to live. I'm gonna say that again. Just because something is common doesn't mean that's how we're meant to live. What you and I normalize, we stop questioning. And , when we stop questioning, we stop changing.

So I wanna ask you, what have you started calling normal that really might not actually be life giving?

So mine is that tendency to rush. I feel like I'm always rushing. And I see my daughter rushing .And she made a post about it on social media the other day,

and I just responded, [00:13:00] stop rushing with a smiley face. Because I know what can happen. I know the effects of rushing.

But you know, you only got so much time to do what you have to do. And so if it's this amount of time and you have a lot to do, you rush through it. So I get it. There's no shame in that. But that's my tendency. And so I know that's not life giving. And so I'm working on surrendering that to God and saying, I'm not gonna rush anymore, Lord. I am not gonna rush.

And you know, the more I think about it, I think that's gonna be my thing this summer. I always try to have a theme, like last, summer's theme was Summer of Abundance, which was really good for me, um, by the way. And I think this, this summer, I might be gearing towards just leaning towards an unrushed summer. I don't know. Thinking about that. So I know God's gonna [00:14:00] do do some work in me still through that, and who knows, maybe that'll be something of my next book. I don't know.

But let's move on to choice number four, and this is what you hold onto. The fourth choice is what you hold on to. Because, not everything that we experience is meant to stay with us. But yet we as women can hold onto things that we were never meant to hold onto.

Sometimes we hold onto things longer than we need to. Maybe it was just for a lesson in a season, but we're still holding onto it from five seasons ago. Or we hold onto pressure. The pressure of, uh, just everything to do in, in our lives. The pressure of raising kids. The pressure of holding down a job. The pressure of managing everything in our home. You name it, we have lots of pressure. Or maybe it's the expectations that we hold onto. Expectations of ourselves, of others, of, of how things maybe [00:15:00] we think they should be. Or we hold on to disappointment when something didn't go the way we hoped. Or we hold on to words that were said. Or things that weren't said. We hold onto the feeling that we should be doing more, we should be farther along in life, or we're running out of time, we're getting older. Or we're holding onto, to the thoughts of we just need to do better. Or we're holding onto unforgiveness. Either, not forgiving ourselves or not forgiving others from mistakes that were made in the past.

And over time, these kind of things don't just sit quietly in the background like we think they do. They begin to shape how we experience our lives. They affect how we show up for other people, how we show up with God and how we show up for ourselves. They affect [00:16:00] how we respond. They affect how we feel even when nothing new is going on in our lives. Nothing has happened that

has changed anything. But it's just what we're feeling. Because those are laying in the background. Not because these things are still happening necessarily, but because we're still holding onto them.

And here's what I've noticed in my own life. Yeah. That sometimes I don't even realize I'm holding onto something until I slow down long enough to notice how heavy it is. Like this tension or the pressure, like we just talked about. Just the, the heaviness. It's silent, but it's heavy that I've just got used to carrying around with me, kind of like a backpack. Backpack full of rocks that I'm just used to carrying it, but I'm starting to get slumped over [00:17:00] because it's getting so heavy.

Something like that. I can, I can relate to that feeling and maybe you can too. But just because something has been with you for a while doesn't mean that it's meant to stay forever.

And I, I look at scripture and one verse that just pops out to me is, is 1 Peter 5:7 when he says, "cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." And I think I've shared this before, my, uh, actually LuEllyn Rozeboom, she was my guest earlier this year, um, she said in a teaching one time that this casting means to hurl, like you're hurling something. You're, you're, you're moving it with force. You are really just casting it. And I think of casting, you know, like a fishing line. But hurling, lifting something heavy and throwing it. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. Not to manage it. [00:18:00] Not to carry it indefinitely. But to release it. Just to give it to God. Say this is Yours. It's not mine anymore.

And that doesn't always happen in one big moment, does it? No it, it sometimes look like just a daily silent, quiet choice. To loosen your grip on what you've been holding to so hard. What's been holding on for, for dear life. To surrender once more and to say, God, I don't wanna keep carrying this one minute longer. I don't wanna carry this the way I have been carrying it. Because part of living differently is learning what to hold onto and what to let go of. Yeah. Learning what to hold onto and what to let go of.

But let me say this, this is not about pressure for you. This is not about trying harder. [00:19:00] Please, we do not need to try harder. We don't need to add any more stress to our already full lives. This is not about fixing everything at once. This is just about awareness. It's becoming aware of how we're living and the choices that we're making. Because once you see the patterns, then you can begin to shift them. Right?

So I want to invite you into something really simple this week. Okay. It's just to notice. Just notice. What is one pattern that you're seeing in your life right now? Just one. What's one small choice that you have been repeating? That might be shaping more than you realize right now? Please don't rush past this. This is life changing if you allow it to be. And I know that you, you want it to be because you're here. So let that sit and just be with it and just learn [00:20:00] from it. Learn from your awareness, and then give it to God. He'll show you what to do with it.

And I just say, if you'd like some practical encouragement with this, I invite you to pick up a copy of Made For More, 365 Devotions for the Woman Who Refuses to Settle. I wrote this book for you and it will help you come back to truth in the middle of your everyday life one day at a time.

Friend, don't try to change all, all four of these. Don't try to do all four. Just, just notice one. That's it. Just one. And begin there. And begin with God. He's gonna show you. He's gonna reveal things to you that you may not have ever noticed in your entire life. And I love it when He does that. Because awareness is where change begins. And He uses that for good.

So this month we've talked about simple shifts, resting when, when life feels off, and [00:21:00] now the patterns of shaping your life. You don't need to change everything. God doesn't want you to change everything and neither do I. But just begin with one small, simple shift.

Will you pray with me? Let's do that.

Oh, heavenly Father, thank You Lord that You are with us. Thank You, Father that we can make simple shifts in our life. You don't expect us to make these dramatic big changes, these big moments. But You invite us to make small, faithful choices. And today we talked about four.

Father, help us to notice the patterns that we're living in. Give us Your wisdom to, to choose what leads to true life. And remind us that goodness, we don't, we don't have to change everything. Help us to just take the next step with You. That's it. We just wanna walk with You. Lead us, guide us, Lord. We are so thankful that You're [00:22:00] always with us and You never are gonna leave us, ever. There's never a moment in the day that You're not with us. We're so thankful that You are with us, Lord. So grateful. And we love You. In Jesus name. Amen.

I invite you back next week, goodness, yes, it is our guest episode already for the month, and, uh, yeah, it's gonna be a good one. Each month I've been inviting people on who have just impacted my life in wonderful ways. And so you won't want to miss next week's episode and this next week's guest. I believe it will directly impact your life and inspire you.

So friend, let me remind you one more time, you don't need a different life. You may just need a different pattern. And you may just need a simple shift. So thanks for being here. I look forward to seeing you next week, and God bless you.

[00:23:00] Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at julielefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged