

# Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

## 253 How Did I Get Here?

[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. A woman asked me a question recently after I spoke at a conference that I haven't been able to stop thinking about. She asked me this: "How did you get started doing what you do?" And honestly, I had no idea how to answer her.[00:01:00]

In that moment, nothing really came to me, not because I was trying to come up with something meaningful or significant to say, but because I guess when I look back on my life, there wasn't one big moment where everything just suddenly clicked or suddenly changed or suddenly just presented itself to be this is gonna be my path for the rest of my life. I didn't set out to start a ministry. I wasn't chasing a platform. I was just, I guess, living my life. And somehow, over time, God used a lot of ordinary moments to shape something that I really never saw coming.

So we're discussing this today in today's episode, and we're sharing a little more personal today. So if this sounds encouraging to you, let's get into this episode.

[00:02:00]

Well, welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, and I am grateful that you're here today. Today, we are beginning a brand-new series called The Stories I Don't Always Tell. And this month is going to be a little, I guess you could say, more personal and conversational than usual. Because I wanna share some of the stories and the thoughts and experiences and moments that have shaped my life and my faith over the years. The parts that don't always make it into the message.

And quite honestly, this first episode is kind of where it all began. The subject of this episode is where this series all began. Because it came from a question

that I was asked recently [00:03:00] that has stayed with me -- I just keep thinking about it.

And so here's how it went down. After speaking at a woman's conference, um, last month, two months ago, sorry, a young woman came up to me and asked... She was probably my daughter's age, you know, a young adult. She's probably, I don't know, in her upper 20s, young 30s. And she asked me this question, "How did you get started doing what you do?"

And I remember standing there thinking I have no idea. I just kinda like, "Oh, yeah, this is something that I don't really talk about very often, and I don't really think about. But how did I get here? Where did it all begin?"

In that moment, it, it was just-- it was actually harder to answer than I thought it should be because I thought, "I should know this. I've lived this. [00:04:00] I should, I should know where it all began and when it all began." But when I look back, there wasn't one defining moment where everything suddenly became clear in my life, that I just knew this was the path for me. There, there wasn't a grand plan. There wasn't a moment where I thought, "Yeah, I'm gonna have a podcast someday," or, "Yep, I'm going to write some books." I kinda had a desire to, but never really thought I would do it.

And, I I also didn't think, "Well, I'm gonna go speak at events." Honestly, I was just living my life trying to keep-- I was just trying to hold onto Jesus as I was-- as He was leading me. I had no idea where we were going. But yeah, I was just trying to live my life, plain and simple.

And I think that's why this question has stayed with me so much. Because looking back [00:05:00] now, I, I can see that God was using things that I didn't think were significant at the time. Isn't that just like God, though? He uses the things that we don't expect, that we don't think are important. You know, God's ways are not our ways, and scripture reminds us of that.

But I, I think of the conversations I had, the small opportunities I was given, the hard seasons of life that really challenged me. Ordinary faithfulness day after day, and sometimes not faithfulness in my life. But learning to encourage women right where I was. And none of it felt big in the moment when I was living it. But now I can see how God was weaving things together in ways that, goodness, I never could have planned or orchestrated on my own.

Looking into that young woman's eyes, it [00:06:00] felt like a million thoughts in that, just in that brief moment - they just flooded through my mind, and a

million memories just passed through. And, and it, it was just a matter of seconds, but you know how that goes, right? When you have these thoughts run through your mind, it seems like you're there for minutes when it was really just seconds.

But I thought, what am I gonna tell her? What am I gonna say? Do I tell her about the paper? The little paper I wrote when I was seven years old about that maybe someday I would become a teacher when I grew up. Was that where it all began, when I was seven? Or did it begin when my faith in Jesus became real and I started following Him? Is that where it began? Did it begin at, at church? Did it begin at home? You know, I, I don't know. Maybe it was during my early Mary Kay years when my confidence [00:07:00] grew and I realized how deeply I enjoyed encouraging and leading women.

Or maybe it was during my years of working at a local mission where I watched God show up faithfully day after day in ways that I just could not explain, and I couldn't get enough of it. Couldn't get enough of His presence.

Or maybe it was in the early blogging days on Blogspot. Have you ever heard of Blogspot? Oh, that was so long ago. Where I wrote words late at night that I never imagined would matter to anyone else. I was basically doing it just for myself, and I'll share more about that in a minute.

Or maybe it was the first time I shared my testimony at church and realized how powerful it can be when someone simply shares what God has done in her life.

Honestly, I still don't know [00:08:00] exactly how to answer her question. I don't. When I think about it, though, it's, it's overwhelming to me to think, gosh, where did it all begin?

I found this little thing, um, and I don't know if you'll be able to, to really see it or not, but I found this. I think you'll be able to see it. It might be backwards to you. But I found this a number of years ago, I think after my mom passed away, and we, um, went through her things in her house, and I found this. And it, of course, it says all about me. And, um, it was, um, October 22nd, 1976. That'll tell you how old I am maybe. I, uh, it was a long time ago.

But in here, um, it's in my handwriting. Talk about my home. I talk about, uh, my pets. Didn't really have a pet, my dad had a, a [00:09:00] watchdog at his garage. I talk about my toys. I talk about, uh, what makes me happy. I talk about what makes me sad. And the last page is when I grow up. And I spelled, uh,

might wrong. I think I spelled it M-I-T-E. I mite be a teacher. And my, my teacher corrected it with M-I-G-H-T. I might be a teacher.

Um, so if you're listening to this, you're not seeing this, but if you're watching it on YouTube, you're able to see what I'm talking about. But, or I might be a cheerleader. Hmm. Or I might be a singer. I might take my kids to Six Flags. Uh, I haven't done that. I guess maybe I should do that. I might go to Hawaii. Yeah, I might someday. Haven't done that yet. When I grow up, it is going to be fun. All right. That just blesses me.

So -- Is that [00:10:00] where it all started? That God was planting seeds in me back when I was seven years old? Maybe. I don't know.

Or maybe it was when my faith became real in Jesus the night that I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior. I, uh, it was with my best friend, Tina, and her mom, and we talked over the phone because I was preparing to sing. Yeah, see, one day I'm gonna be a singer. I was preparing to sing at, um, a, a, at a wedding the very next weekend, and I was panicked. And, uh, Barb said, Barb Furman, um, she's the one that, that introduced me to Jesus that night, and her daughter, Tina. Um, Barb said that, "You know, when you accept Jesus, you're gonna have this joy in your heart that'll never leave." And she was absolutely right. That joy has never left. Maybe it was then. I don't know.[00:11:00]

Maybe it was when my confidence grew and when I was leading women in Mary Kay. I had a very successful Mary Kay business. I even drove one of those pink Cadillacs. Um, very successful Mary Kay business. But I, um, I loved the most leading and teaching women and encouraging them. Maybe it was then. Maybe it was then that it all began.

I would teach Bible studies and lead Bible studies even through my, the women that I led through Mary Kay, and it was such a gift. I loved it. I loved doing that. Or maybe it was at that local mission. Maybe that's where it started, where I would see God show up daily.

My goodness, can I tell you this story? I would document the things that God did on my Blogspot back then, my Blogspot, um, little blog and I called them Mission Tuesdays. [00:12:00] And I, uh, there was this one day I remember writing about, 'cause it happened right in front of me. Um, sometimes we would get in donations. I worked at the, a mission where it had a day center, um, and that's where I, I was mainly involved, and people would donate things.

One day in the summer, we got a whole bunch of ice cream cones in, just ice cream cones. Um, you know, with the flat bottoms, and they have a little wrapper around the bottom of the cone. And, uh, I thought, "What in the world are we ever gonna do with ice cream cones?"

You know what someone brought in later in the afternoon? I kid you not. Someone brought in two gallon buckets of ice cream. So the patrons that we served that day got ice cream as treats in the afternoon, ice cream cones. So we got the cones in the morning and the ice cream in the afternoon by two separate people that had no idea that we had the other. Oh, my goodness. You can't tell [00:13:00] me that God's not at work. I saw stuff like that every single day at that mission. Is that when it all began? Maybe.

Or maybe it was when I started writing on my Blogspot. Um, Blogspot was kind of, it was just a website that you can, you could write and, um, a friend had actually encouraged me to do it. My mom had just passed away in 2006, and in 2007, early that, that spring or that early winter, I started blogging about my mom. I wanted to capture the memories. I wanted to keep the memories that I had of her in my mind, that I wanted to, I wanted to be able to have, have them for my family someday.

And so is that where it all began? Where, where, where my writing became such a joy? I loved writing, and often I would do it late at night after the kids went down, after they were asleep. That's when I found time just to get my thoughts on, [00:14:00] on paper, so to speak.

And I remember the time that I, I shared my testimony at church. Is that when it began? When I was able to just share what God has done in my life and try to connect to people and how God, if God has done it for me, maybe, you know, we can trust that He's gonna do it for you too, because He's faithful.

Is that where it began? I don't know. I really don't know. It was just one ordinary moment after another. These ordinary moments mattered. I just didn't know it at the time. I was just taking one step after another, after another, and sometimes it would feel like it was overwhelming, but it wasn't anything planned. It was just the things that I was presented to do.

So I wonder how many ordinary things in your own life may matter more than you realize right now. [00:15:00] What is God doing in your life that may just-- it might just seem so ordinary and so boring and so just part of your routine? Could God be doing something behind the scenes that you have no idea? Could He? I think He can.

And I go back to that ice cream story so often in my life. I think if God can bring ice cream cones in the morning and then provide ice cream in the afternoon, what can't He do? He can do anything. Not only was it almost like a miracle for me to see that happen, but it, it was a blessing to me and it was a blessing to the people who received it. The patrons that we served, they, they rarely got ice cream cones. It's something so simple, so ordinary, but it made such a difference.

And that's, I believe, how God works. He works in the ordinary things in our lives. So where is He working in your [00:16:00] ordinary life? I'm not saying your life is ordinary, but if it's anything like mine, it, it might be ordinary. And ordinary is okay, right? Doesn't have to be spectacular to be meaningful, and it doesn't have to be just over the top happy all the time. Sometimes life is hard and challenging, but God still works in those challenging moments too.

And I, I thought of this verse in Romans. It's chapter 12 verse 1, and actually, it blipped across my screen when I was preparing for this episode. And I don't even remember what I was looking at at the time, but I almost felt as if God was saying, "Use this verse. I want you to use this verse." And in this translation, it's in the Message paraphrase. And here's what it says. You're gonna love this. Ready? Here it goes: "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you, Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going [00:17:00] to work, and walking around life—and place it before God as an offering."

That's so good, isn't it? You know, I didn't place my life really as an offering. I didn't consciously do that. But I just tried to follow what I felt God was leading me to do. And at the end of verse 2, it says, "Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it." Hmm.

You know, God works in our lives even when we think that we're just living it, and I love that about Him. You know, there's not any neon sign that says, "This is gonna be your path for the rest of your life," or, uh, there's not a you know, a, a cloud in the sky that lights up and says, "Follow this way because your life is gonna be whatever," you know, in the future. He just [00:18:00] takes the ordinary lives and ordinary moments and builds them into something that someday we'll look back on and we'll like, "What? I hardly even remember that moment."

And the more I thought about this woman's question, and I'm so glad she asked me that, and I really believe God had meaning and purpose, not only for her, but for me when she asked that question. But the more I've realized maybe the answer isn't found in one specific moment in our lives. We always think of, uh,

we want a defining moment or we want this moment that's gonna stand out in our lives where we just know this is where it happened.

Now, I know there's, there's defining moments in our lives, yes. Like the day I did accept Jesus as my Savior, and, uh, I don't remember the day I wrote the little seven-year-old thing, um, about me being a teacher or a cheerleader or a singer. Um, but - I remember, you know, all these other moments where God showed up. [00:19:00] Where God, I didn't realize how big they were at the time. But the defining moments, yes, we will have those, but our lives are, are filled, I think, much more of ordinary moments.

So after the, the million thoughts and memories passed through my mind in that moment, I, I pleaded to God, you know, "God, what do you want me to say to her? Give me the words." And His answer was, after I stuttered and stammered, the words came to me, I just said that I began where God had me. And our, our conversation kinda carried on and, and she, she belonged to a group, and she said, "Well, maybe I'll start there." And I'm like, "That's great."

I, I'm so thankful for that conversation. Again, it's one of those ordinary moments that you don't think much about at the time.

But I wanna ask you today, where does God have you? [00:20:00] You know, maybe you've wondered, "Does my life even matter? It just feels so insignificant. I feel like I'm doing all the right things, but nothing is happening and I just feel stuck. Does it even all matter?" Maybe you're feeling that way. Or maybe you feel like, you know, everyone else has a clearer calling than you do.

But I, I just- I want to encourage you and say that God is at work in your circumstances. Even if they're challenging, even if it feels like if nothing's happening, even if it feels as if God's forgotten about you, I want you to know He hasn't forgotten about you. He hasn't, and He's not going to forget. You are His daughter. You are His.

And if I could go back and answer that woman now, I, I would probably tell her more details now that I've thought about it. You know how we have time to think about things and we say, "Oh, I wish I would've said that," or, "Oh, I should've said this better." [00:21:00] Now I, I would say to her, "You know, I didn't set out to build a ministry. I wasn't chasing a platform or a promotion or trying to, to become something. I just kept showing up in the life that God had given me." Wasn't always easy. It wasn't always pretty.

Man, I remember our kids went to school, um, 20 minutes away from here, and the bus wouldn't come pick 'em up because we lived outside the, of the, the school district. And, uh, so I would drive them to school every day, 20, 20-some minutes, 22 minutes maybe. So 20 minutes there, 20 minutes back. And then in the afternoon, 20 minutes there and 20 minutes back. And some days it would be, uh, three or four times I would make that round trip. Those were not easy days. But still, God was using those moments, those ordinary moments, to build me up, to, to have time with Him, even in the car. I remember the [00:22:00] kids and I would pray together in the car.

I mean, all these moments, they just add up. You know? And I, I just, I kept encouraging women where God had me. It wasn't out of duty or feeling like I have to encourage women. It wasn't like that. It just was where I, I knew I had joy. I just, I loved encouraging women, and I still do. That's, that's me. God knitted me that way. I kept serving where I was, not out of obligation, but just wherever God had me. I just wanted to keep serving.

And I, I kept ta- taking small opportunities when they came. And I kept growing in my faith. And some days I would backslide and, you know, some days I wouldn't do very well in my faith. I would falter, and I would feel like I disappointed God. But I never did. I never disappointed Him. But there were times that were, were hard in my [00:23:00] faith. Mistakes I made, things I did that I wish I could redo.

But over time, God used all of these ordinary moments just in ways that I never could have planned myself.

And I think if there's anything that I'm realizing as I look back over my life is that God was doing much more than I understood. You know, I, I, I didn't understand at the time. So many moments I thought were small or insignificant, they weren't small or insignificant at all. Those conversations, those seasons, those opportunities, and yeah, even the ugly parts.

And maybe that's where you are right now too. Maybe your life feels ordinary or you're questioning if what you're doing matters. If it does, I, I just, I wanna encourage you again to say God is with [00:24:00] you. He is doing something in this season in your life. I believe God uses these everyday moments in our, in our, in our everyday lives.

He uses everyday women in everyday life more than we realize. We are everyday women. We aren't, you know, we're not queens. We're n- we are queens. We are God's daughters. I should say that. You know, we are, we are

special in God's eyes. But if you're feeling very ordinary today, God's using you right where He has you.

And honestly, I just have to say that's a huge reason why I love mentoring women so much. I love helping women recognize that God may be already doing something in their lives behind the scenes that we can't see yet. Sometimes we just need someone to walk alongside of us, to encourage us, to help us process where we are, and to remind us that God is still at work in the middle of our everyday ordinary [00:25:00] lives.

So if you've been craving that kind of encouragement or support in your own life, in your own journey, I'd love to connect with you through My Abundant Life Mentoring. I'll leave the information in the show notes so you can find it there. And as we close today, I wanna encourage you to make sure that you're subscribed to the podcast so you don't miss anything.

And if today's episode encouraged you, would you take a quick second to just share it with a friend or, or leave a rating or review of the podcast? That truly helps women find these conversations and encouragement.

And next week, I'm excited about next week. We're continuing this series with a, um, conversation that, uh, honestly feels a little vulnerable to me to share. I'm gonna be talking about some of the thoughts that I still struggle with even now, and what it looks like [00:26:00] to work through those thoughts in everyday life and faith.

And as always, I just thank you for being here and for letting me share a little more personally this month. I think these conversations are going to be very special. One more thing. I want you to know that my life is not perfect. It never will be perfect, this side of eternity. But with God, my life is good. I can't wait to see what God's gonna do in my life in the next days, months, years. And I can't wait to see what God's gonna do in your life too. So embrace these ordinary moments.

Friend, God is with you. God bless you.

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