

Encouragement for Real Life

254 The Thoughts I Still Struggle With (Even Now)

[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. Sometimes I think we assume that growth in our lives means that certain thoughts will disappear. That once we mature in our faith or step into what God has called us to do, that we'll just suddenly stop struggling with, oh, say, insecurity or comparison [00:01:00] or pressure or overthinking.

But honestly, that hasn't been my experience at all. There are still thoughts that I have to catch all the time. Thoughts that tell me that I'm behind. Thoughts that scream that I'm not doing enough. Thoughts that take my mind from right now and place it on how fast time is going and where I am headed in the future.

And so this week we're discussing all of this, and the thoughts that I still struggle with. So let's get into this episode.

Well, welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie Lefebure, and it's a joy to be with you today. And we are continuing our personal series [00:02:00] uh, it's called The Stories I Don't Always Tell. And, uh, today we're getting personal again, kinda like we did last week. Um, and this episode just feels a little vulnerable to share because I'm talking about some of the thoughts that I still struggle with on a regular basis even after all these years.

And I think one of the reasons I really wanted to offer this episode is because sometimes, especially in Christian circles and spaces, I think we unintentionally give the impression that when we grow, that it just means that we're no longer gonna wrestle with the stuff like we used to wrestle with or struggle with the things that we used to struggle with. Like if you love God enough and trust Him

enough and grow enough and heal enough, then eventually all the difficult thoughts are [00:03:00] gonna disappear.

But I've found that while growth absolutely does change us, it doesn't necessarily mean that all the bad things are gonna stop. That certain thoughts aren't gonna stop showing up altogether. Because some of our thoughts aren't great. At least some of mine aren't. But it does mean that we start learning what to do with them when they do show up and how to handle them.

And honestly, there are still days when my mind gets too full and too loud. Days where I just feel incredibly behind. Days where I look around and think, "Everyone else is doing more and doing it better than me." And days where I just wonder if I'm doing enough. Am I reaching enough people? Am I managing my time well enough? Or am I becoming really who I'm supposed to be, who God wants me to be?[00:04:00]

And maybe all of this sounds surprising to you coming from someone who has a podcast, and writes books, and speaks at events, and mentors women. But it's true. Because at the end of the day, I'm still a person walking through real life trying to follow God in it just like everyone else is. And I, I think the danger comes when we assume that just because a thought shows up, well, it must be true. And that's where we slowly start letting our thoughts shape us in ways that God never intended to lead us.

And so today we are having an honest conversation about some of those thoughts and the thoughts that I deal with and, and what they sound like for me and when they tend to show up and what I'm learning to do with them instead of just [00:05:00] automatically believing them. So I pray that we all walk away, you and me walk away from today's episode encouraged and hopeful, remembering that we don't need to believe every thought that we think. And there's power when we don't.

Well, a thought, uh, consumed me the other day as I was preparing um, ... if you listened to episode 250, I think it was 2, when I interviewed, uh, Reverend John Louk, uh, on the podcast, , um, it was my last week on the job. I was in the process of letting go of that job and, um, saying goodbye to that position. And it was the last week, and it was, uh ... I had a lot to do. I had a lot on my plate. To finish everything up, and plus my normal responsibilities of what I do for the podcast and, um, preparing all the other things that I do. And so this thought, though, was [00:06:00] triggered by me not accomplishing as much in my day as I had wanted to that particular day in a very stressful week.

What was that thought? Well, it was that I'm behind. Behind in work. Behind in life, behind in where I should be by now. It just kind of all started to snowball. I'm behind in this, and I'm behind in this, and I'm behind in this. And, you know, once you get some of that going, it just grows, and grows, and grows.

And then surprisingly, this led me down another path of thinking that I'm not doing enough. I'm not doing enough in my ministry. I'm not doing enough l- l- leaving the church where I was working at. I am not doing enough in my family. I am not doing enough caring for my grandsons. I am not... It just, again, it began to [00:07:00] snowball, and I could feel the pressure slowly building within me. You know that pressure, don't you? I hope you don't.

But this, this led me to feel panic, and I felt this adrenaline rushing through me, which I also don't like. And the pace of my heart was kind of picking up. I could feel it and... But the thing is, instead of recognizing this thought, that very first thought in that first moment, I followed it, and I picked up my pace to match what my heart was beating. And I tried to pick back up on my to-do list with what I had left to do for the day at a frenzied pace.

And as I mentioned in episode 251 last month, I think it was 250... Yeah, 251, my tendency is to rush when I feel behind or when I feel like I'm not doing enough. My tendency is to rush anyway. But when those thoughts [00:08:00] come, yeah, it, my pace picks up. And you know, you know what rushing does? It robs me of my joy and my peace. And I don't like it. And I, I can always feel when I, when I get to that point.

And then this led me to a place and a thought much deeper. And being very vulnerable and honest here with you, this thought was, "I'm running out of time." Do you see the spiral? Do you see it? I, I looked at-- Here's how it started. I looked at everything I hadn't gotten done yet, which made me feel behind, which made me feel pressure to do more, and then suddenly I felt like time was moving way too fast. And I've, I guess I've felt [00:09:00] that a lot lately, like time is moving too fast.

And, you know, I don't even think it's really about the to-do list if I'm truly being honest. And again, I've come to this realization as I prepared for this episode. Underneath all of this, I believe that this is the fear that, um, that life is moving quickly, and I don't wanna miss it. I don't wanna rush through my days trying to keep up, only to realize that I never really lived them. And I don't wanna spend my life constantly chasing the next thing while missing the people and the moments and the gifts that God has placed right in front of me. I talked about that in my book, *Right Now Matters*. That's really how-- I was living that

way, and that's how I wrote. That's how I had the experience [00:10:00] to write that book about not missing what's in front of us.

And maybe all of this is why these thoughts get loud sometimes. I don't know. Because they tap into something deeper than work. They tap into something deeper than my to-do list. They tap into the fear that we're wasting time, we're missing moments, we're falling behind, or we're not fully becoming who we were meant to be, who God wants us to be.

After all, my friend, the clock is ticking. I'm becoming glaringly aware that the majority of my life is behind me. Of course, unless God equips me and gives me the grace to live to be to, to be a 114. But I don't think that's gonna happen. And year after year, this becomes more of an underlying [00:11:00] realization than the year prior.

I only have so much time on this earth, And I, I wanna use it wisely. I don't wanna waste it. I want, I want to make a difference in the world. A difference for God, to glorify Him with my time, and to do every single thing that He's calling me to do with excellence. I don't wanna do it half-heartedly. I know how that feels. No, thank you. And I don't want to miss one single thing that He has for me. I want to have zero regrets at the end of my life when my time on Earth is done.

What if there isn't enough time left for what matters most? I sometimes get myself caught up in thinking that. But this is where I am. Yeah, I'm realizing that time is short. But boy, this is a lot, isn't it? This is a big thought. [00:12:00] I'm not laughing to, 'cause it to be jokeful, but I'm laughing because this is huge and it's, it's, it's overwhelming sometimes. And I realize more and more how it affects what I do on a daily basis. I don't wanna run out of time to do all the things that God has for me.

Now, I know, I know God will call me home when it's my time. But I also know that I need to be responsible for the time that He gives me, and that can get me stuck. That thought can get me stuck like I'm not doing enough for Him. I'm not doing enough for others. I'm behind and I'm running out of time. Have you ever felt any of this at all?

If you're at a age that you're not, not, that those thoughts haven't crossed your mind that you're running out of time, I'm really grateful that, that you are, and that you're not thinking about that. But I also want to encourage you to make the most of your time in whatever age that you [00:13:00] are in right now.

And if you're around my age or even, you know, even more mature, then you've probably had these thoughts. And I'm assuming you can relate that, yeah, time is going too fast. But it's good to pay attention and become aware of our thoughts, isn't it? We talked about that also in episode 251 last month.

But what's a thought that has consumed you lately? What's a thought that just keeps circling in your brain maybe day after day after day? The thing is, I found it very interesting while I was preparing for this episode, I realized not only that that underlying fear of me running out of time, that that was present, but I also realized that there are thoughts that I used to wrestle with constantly that really don't hold the same power over me anymore. And I got very [00:14:00] excited about it. I thought, "What? I don't deal with this thought anymore."

Some of the thoughts were, were just centered on seasons where I constantly questioned my worth. Yeah. And seasons where comparison consumed me more than I ever would've admitted to anybody. And also the daunting times where fear of stepping out into something new nearly paralyzed me. Those were some real fears back then. Thoughts that used to feel loud all the time, honestly, are much quieter now. And I'm grateful. I'm so grateful. Not because I'm not - dealing with these thoughts, not because I suddenly became confident overnight or because life became easier. Goodness no, not at all. But because over time, I [00:15:00] stopped believing every thought that showed up in my mind, and I replaced them with truth.

And I wanna direct you to my free resource library right now. I have a resource on there that will help you, um, replace lies with biblical truth. And I think that's what it's , called, Lies Versus Biblical Truth. And, uh, I did not realize until preparing for this episode how much that tool has really helped me transform my thinking. And so it's free. It's , in my resource library. I'll link it in the show notes.

Uh, so I'm just excited that we can tangibly see growth when we look back and think, "Hey, I don't struggle with that thought as much as I used to."

But all of this reminds me of the scripture that I shared in last week's episode, and then we're gonna revisit again, namely in the second part. It's Romans 12. Uh, we looked at , chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. [00:16:00] But today, I'm gonna look more so on verse 2. Um, and this is in the New Living Translation, and it reads this: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Amen to that.

That, that part that said, "Let God transform you by changing the way you think," that's what got me when I reread that again today. I just... Let God transform you by changing the way you think. Oh my goodness. That's the key here, isn't it? We struggle to change our own thoughts. I, I used to try to do it on my own. But I learned that when we invite God into the equation, that He equips us to do it. [00:17:00] He helps us change our thoughts gradually, patiently, intentionally. Just how God works in every other area of our lives. Gradually, patiently, and intentionally.

And specifically, God prompts us to bring our thoughts to Him. To catch our thoughts sooner, to notice thoughts and the thought spirals quicker. , To choose truth more intentionally and, and throw away the lies. To not feeding every thought with emotions. He changes the way we think as we spend time with Him and in His Word, in His truth.

As Romans 12:2 indicates, He transforms us into new people. I love that. I love that truth. Every time we spend time with Him, every time we dig into His Word, every time we [00:18:00] learn His truth, He's changing us into new people, which gives us such hope, doesn't it?

I I- I just, I'm just so hopeful when I read this scripture today. The thoughts that we struggle with today aren't what we'll struggle with forever if we allow God to change the way we think. He grows us. He matures us. He transforms us. Friend, this is life-changing. This is life-altering.

You know, maybe there are thoughts in your life that have gotten loud, too. I assume that there is because if I have them, I assume you have them, too. I know my friends have them. I, i- It's just common for all of us. Or maybe you, you're just becoming aware of them today or you're becoming aware of one today. And maybe there are also thoughts [00:19:00] that used to control you that no longer do. We can trust God with our thoughts and our growth in them.

And I invite you to pause today and think about your thoughts. Think about what have you been thinking lately. What has really kinda worn you down in, in your thoughts? And then also think, "How can I give those to God?" Invite God into the equation and say, "I don't wanna think this thought anymore, Lord. Help me replace it with truth." Grab my free resource.

And then also think, "What are the thoughts that I used to struggle with that I don't struggle with anymore?" I think you're gonna be amazed. I think you're gonna see some growth, kinda like the growth that I saw in preparing for this episode. 'Cause if we don't pause to recognize the growth, we might not ever

recognize it, and that's the beauty of this. When [00:20:00] we pause, then we can see what maybe God is up to.

And I think what I'm learning is that growth doesn't always mean, you know, certain thoughts disappear completely. I wish they did. But sometimes the growth looks more like recognizing the spiral sooner and capturing those thoughts and allowing God to transform our thoughts, to transform our lives through changing our thoughts. And also catching the thought before it carries me somewhere that I was never meant to go. And I don't have to believe or agree with every anxious, fearful, pressure-filled thought that I think. And that is so freeing.

When you go back to think about your thoughts recently, that you've had recently, I also wanna invite you just to say, "Is this, is this really true? Do I [00:21:00] need to believe this thought that I'm thinking right now?" Because if it's not true, you don't need to believe it. I know we've talked about this in the last month or so. But growth isn't the absence of difficult thoughts. Growth is learning which thoughts no longer deserve your attention or your agreement.

And I think this is one of the reasons that I care so deeply about mentoring and helping women because I know what it feels like when thoughts get loud. And when they constantly run in the background of our minds. And the pressure and the comparison and feeling like you're, you're falling behind and feeling like you're not enough or not doing enough. Boy, do I get it. Yeah.

And sometimes what we really need isn't another perfect answer or solution. Sometimes we need someone to walk alongside us, to help us slow down, to [00:22:00] process what's actually going on underneath the surface, and to connect with truth again, with God's truth.

That's really the heart behind my Abundant Life Mentoring. And it's a space for women who feel overwhelmed, stuck, stretched thin, disconnected, or just simply ready for something deeper and healthier in their lives and in their faith. Women who just want to stop surviving their days and to start living more intentionally and fully. So if this episode resonated with you and you've been craving this kind of support or encouragement in your own life and in your own journey, I'd love to connect with you through mentoring. And I'll leave the, the link in the show notes so you can check it out.

And , if this episode encouraged you, I invite you to share it with a friend, share it on social media. I invite you [00:23:00] to subscribe, maybe leave a rating or review 'cause this will really help others find this encouragement too.

And Next week, I'm excited about next week as we continue in this series, The Stories I Don't Always Tell, that's the series title. And, uh, next week's episode is another ho-honest conversation about the stories that I don't tell. And it's about expectations and pressure and how easy it is to slowly become who we think everyone else needs us to become. Not necessarily who God wants us to become, but everybody else.

So join me next Tuesday. The episode will be up bright and early, and I invite you to come back then. Until then, friend, I am so glad that you're here today. Thanks for joining me. I appreciate you. Stay encouraged. God bless you.

[00:24:00] Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at julielefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.