

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

258. How Is Your Heart? A Mid-Year Check-In

[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. Well, here we are. Can you even believe it? We are in the second half of 2026. I don't even know how we've got here. How do, how did we get here? Oh, my goodness. You know, - as I look back over the last six months, a lot has happened in my life, and I assume a lot has happened in your life. And, uh, I don't know about you, [00:01:00] but I could use like a midyear check-in. But it's gonna be a different midyear check-in than maybe what we normally do.

So if you could use some encouragement in your real life today, right where you are, right here, right now, then I invite you to stay, stick around for the next few minutes. We're gonna find some hope and encouragement together. So let's get into this episode.

So yes, here we are. We are in July of 2026. And friend, I, I don't even know how we've got... H- like I said, how have we gotten here? Um, it feels like the year just began a few, a few months ago. It feels like we should be in March to me.

But, you know, as you know as well as I do that we've lived six months. Maybe the six months didn't go as [00:02:00] planned. Maybe these six months have gone better than planned. And, uh, but no matter what, we can pause right here today and be encouraged.

And I wanna share, in the past what I've done at this kind of mid-mark of the year, I was taught, I think, uh, in my early Mary Kay days, and you've heard me talk about my Mary Kay days. Uh, in my early Mary Kay days, I learned, you

know, it's really important to set your goals and track your goals and to measure your goals and, and to, uh, strive towards those goals and all of those things. And none of those things are bad. So the end of June, uh, would be the time that I would set new goals or I would, um, just kinda analyze where I was in the year. And I've stopped doing that because more often than not, I've found that doing that made me feel [00:03:00] terrible. Because often I had big goals. I still have a tendency to wanna set big goals, and when I wouldn't meet them, then I would feel depleted and defeated and discouraged and, and that just was never a fun feeling. And so I have stopped doing that.

But I think it's really important at this time of the year to just pause and maybe just take a look at what is going on in our lives. Where is God showing up in our lives? What is He teaching us? What are we enjoying? What are we not enjoying? And just to pause and do a heart check.

How is your heart? And how is my heart? I don't think we do this well enough or often enough because if you're anything like me, time does not slow down. After all, like I said, here we are. [00:04:00] We are at the last six months of 2026. And some of us get really tired of all the tracking and all the striving and all of the doing that, that we just can't do one more thing. And so we don't pause and just do a heart check.

I think this is something that's very important to do every day. Just to do a heart check. How is my heart? Where is God in my heart? Where, you know, where is He in my life? And do it weekly and do it monthly and do it as often as possible. But I don't do that. And I'm guessing if you're anything like me, you don't do that either. But it's really a wise thing to do, isn't it? Wouldn't you say?

So recently I did do this little kind of mini heart check and I found some things that were really important that I thought, "My goodness, I didn't realize that I was feeling this way or that I [00:05:00] was, um, looking at life in this manner." And I learned some things.

And so I think it's very important that we do pause every now and then just to do this. And there might be that some things that maybe God will show us when we do it that, you know, He's trying to, to teach us or trying to lead us in a certain way. But if we never stop long enough to pause and do it, we may never know and we may just keep going on doing the same things we've always done. And that can get pretty, uh, monotonous and we may be missing out on what God has for us.

So I invite you today just to take a heart check. Not to measure goals, not to say I'm behind, not to compare yourself, not to say that, uh, you're failing in any sort of situation. That's not what this is about. This is just to draw near to God and just open up your heart to Him.

And I wanna share this scripture with you because there's a gnat, [00:06:00] sorry.

Um, there's a gnat flying around here and I'm sorry. I do have a couple plants behind me and it seems like every summer these gnats try to, uh, either resurrect themselves. I don't know what they do. They're probably a new batch. But every now and then I get, get a gnat flying around me. So we'll just take care of that as the time comes.

But what I was saying is that I, uh, found this scripture that I just think is so important just to meditate on. Now, meditate, I'm not meaning in a new age kind of way. I'm just meditating as in thinking about and pondering and looking at. And this is Lamentations chapter 3, verse 40. Now, I don't know about you, but Lamentations is not one of my favorite books of the Bible, so it's not one that I normally just go to and say, "Let's just find some hope in this today."

But Lamentations is in the Bible for a reason. God left it in there for a reason. So this is in the Message translation, and it's so good. [00:07:00] This is what it says. "Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God." I'm gonna say it again because it's short and it's sweet and it's just so good.

It says... "let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God." I, I love that verse. And I love that translation because it helps, it helps me to think, "Okay, why am I taking this, this little pause?" But that's why is, is to be able to take a good look at the way that I'm living and to reorder my life under God. Am I doing what God wants me to do? Or am I doing what I think I should be doing?

And so when I took, did this little, just this pause, I, I came to some things that, like I said, I maybe didn't realize. And I, I found some hope in them because I, [00:08:00] I believe that God will reveal to us what we need when we need it. And I, last month you know that I did this series, titled, uh, The Stories I Don't Always Tell. And I shared some, some real life stories of my, my life that I don't always talk about. I talked about, you know, how did I get here doing what I'm doing. I talked about the thoughts that I still struggle with. I talked about the season where I really had a hard time forgiving myself and the, the shame that I

lived in for too long. And I also talked about the thing that not many people know about me and how that has totally impacted my life. And so I invite you to go, um, listen or watch all of those, um, when you have a moment.

But as I was saying that, you know, when we, um when we just get real and honest, not only with ourselves, like I was with those stories last month, those real-life [00:09:00] stories, but we also get honest with God. He, He can do things that we just can't even expect or, or imagine.

And so as I sat and just pondered, and I got my journal out, and I, I, I really just took a good look at my life. A lot of things have changed in my life in six months. Uh, let me just share a couple of them. First of all, I wanna tell you, too, that I have very little notes today, and I'm just-- I just wanted to talk to you, talk with you as a friend, not as someone that's presenting anything. And so I'm trying a different format today because I just felt this, this episode needed to be a little more conversational, like last month's was.

But I, I, I just wanna come across as my heart is genuine. 'Cause I'm walking through this, too, that we are, we are all just looking at -- ourselves and our lives, and we want to live this abundant life that God has for us, that Jesus came to give us.

And He talks about this in John 10:10, [00:10:00] that the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But He said, "I came to give life, and life with abundance," or life with joy and abundance, or life to the full, depending on the translation that you read. And so we are-- we want to live this abundant life.

And as we sit with God and as I, as I... when I did that and as I was journaling, I just-- And I was thinking about the last six months, I began the year, uh, very hopeful, very excited, and, 'cause I was getting ready to-- I was putting the final touches on releasing, uh, my, my new book. And then, uh, February, um, end of January, beginning of February, I got very sick. Uh, sick for 10 days. That it was, uh... No, not 10 days. It was two weeks. Exactly two weeks. And , it was like June, July-- Sorry, January 30th to, um, February 14th And I, uh, [00:11:00] life just turned upside down for me because I was so ill I couldn't really do much. And, um, it was a virus of some sort. And, uh, then we went on vacation in March, and I still felt very, very, uh, , frail almost. I felt very weak.

-- We took our tandem bike, and I didn't know if I could even bike. Uh, but that vacation was so needed for me. And I remember my friend Patty, she, she was on the podcast last year, and I talked about her, um, when I, uh, in, I don't know what, what episode it was. When I talked about what most people don't know

about me, I talked about her. But, um, Patty said that she kinda noticed something about me that, you know, it would be really good for me to go away about four times a year. I remember her saying that, and that stuck with me. That was years ago that she said that. But, um, it does, it... God just does a lot in me when I go away on vacation.

And so He did in March. [00:12:00] And that was right before, uh, the book was to launch in April. And I don't know if that was really smart of me to go on vacation then, but I, we did. And it was much needed. And God impressed upon my heart to leave my job. And, uh, for about the fourth time He did that, and I listened this time.

And I came back with a fresh sense of my purpose and a fresh sense of not trying to live in a way that's exhausting.

And I did really well for a week or two coming back from vacation that I just refused to live exhausted. And then my book launch came. And, uh, God worked all the details out. I wasn't sure that I was gonna be able to get everything done in the time that it needed to be done. And my books arrived days before I needed them, which was a blessing. [00:13:00] Um, I spoke at a big conference in April. And, uh, it was a It, it was a trying time, um, especially coming off... I mean, it took me a long time to feel like myself again after that virus.

But then May came, and May was, uh, the month that I quit my job. And, uh, I, I really struggled with that because I wanted the control of a steady paycheck, just to be honest with you. And I wanted the, um, just the security in that. And, uh, God just really, yeah, just said for me to let it all go. And I can't get over the, the relief that I have, the, the pressure that's gone now that I don't have that job. It was a great job. It was... I worked for great people. It was for a church, and it was wonderful. But I, I now am in a season that looks different. A lot of transitions. [00:14:00] A lot has happened in six months for me.

And now I am watching, uh, which I've done for, for, for since they were born, been born. I watch my grandsons two days a week, and now I watch our granddaughter oftentimes on the weekends. And my life is very full still. But I don't want to live this life. I don't wanna live exhausted. And I'm thinking you're the same way as me. I'm thinking that you don't want to live exhausted either

And so this is part of when I sat down with my journal and, and was just kind of s- opening myself up to, to God and saying, "I don't wanna live exhausted." I've lived exhausted for so many years of my life, so many moments of my life. And

my-- all my books came out of that. Exhausted was part of being distracted. And my, um... that was my Right Now Matters book, and then the Bible study that went with that. And now my Made for More book [00:15:00] was out of that too, of living the abundant life, not the exhausted life.

So this mid-year heart check for me was like, "Okay, I do not want to - lift, live an exhausted life." And I-- Time, it-- Time just feels like it's moving so fast, doesn't it? I remember my parents saying that, that time just was going fast for them too, and I just thought, well, maybe they were just not managing their time very well. I wish my mom and dad were here so I could say that to them and they'd get a chuckle out of it too. Um, it's nothing, it's not anything about managing our time well. The w- the pace of this world is fast. And the, the, the more that we try to keep up with the pace of this world, the more exhausted we're gonna be. And so that was one of my realizations too, that I am feeling like time is moving so quickly and I want to do everything I can to [00:16:00] slow it down.

I feel like - too that, that, um, which I talked about in the episode about, um, you know, the , thoughts that I still, still struggle with, was that because time is moving so quickly, I feel like I'm running out of time. That I only have certain amount of, you know, years left on this earth, and that freaks me out. I, I, I can't even believe that I'm the age that I am. But here I am. And I, I want to make the best use of the rest of my life. I don't want to be the exhausted mom, grandma, um, podcaster, uh, author, um, woman in ministry.

I do not wanna be that woman. I wanna be the one that is supplied and filled through the Holy Spirit. I wanna be the one that's, that gives life, not sucks life out of somebody. I wanna be the woman that just follows after God and His will for my life. And I'm guessing you wanna be that too.

So if - [00:17:00] time is moving quickly for you too and you feel like you're running out of time -- I, I encourage you to give that to God. I've had to do that and say, "Lord, I can't control the time, but I can control what I do in this moment. I can control what I do today." And I, I've asked Him and pleaded with Him just to show me what that is. What am I supposed to do this very day?

And so that has come from doing this heart check, is that I just wanna do what God wants me to do every single day. And I don't do it perfectly. I'll lay my head on the pillow at night and like, "Okay, Lord, I see that, whatever, you wanted me to do this and I did it in my own strength. I didn't do it in your strength," or, "I didn't do what you wanted me to do today," and how I feel about that. And it just-- He doesn't ever condemn me, but He just prods me on

to say, "Okay, let's look at it this way next time," or, "Let's do it my way next time instead of your way." Yes, God, - your ways are so much better than mine.

Um, [00:18:00] I also realized as I sat down -- with this little heart check and checking how's, how my heart is, that, that life doesn't look the way I expected it to. I thought, I guess at this point in my life, that I would be some career woman, that I would be, you know, wearing a three... well, not three-piece suit, but, um, a, a, you know, a, a suit. I would be a businesswoman. I would be, um, doing all the things that successful businesswomen do. I don't even know what that is. Because I feel like I have a lot of success in my life. I'm not-- I am a businesswoman in a different kinda way. But it just doesn't look like I expected.

I, I love being a grandma to these three little ones, and I, I love the fact that I can be with them as much as I can be. And I didn't expect that, though. I didn't expect it, but it brings me such joy, so I know that it's part of God's will for my life.

Sometimes I think [00:19:00] our will looks differently than when we get into God's will. Then it becomes even more than we can ask or imagine. And I love that verse that says, you know, God gives us that peace beyond, um, understanding, and He gives us, you know, more than we can ask or imagine. And I don't, I don't have that right in front of me. And like I said, I don't have a whole lot of notes today. I'm just sharing from my heart.

But life does not look like I expected it to, and that's in a good way. That's in a really good way. -- So I started to list the things that I really enjoy that, uh, life doesn't look like the way I expected., Um... And some of those things are, you know, just time with my family. I am really focused this summer on connecting with friends. And I, as I do this, I'm finding that I have missed a lot of what's going on in my friends' lives. Yet, I feel like [00:20:00] I have been the one, you know, praying behind the scenes for them, and it's been a, a gift to be able to do that, to be more of a prayerful person than maybe a hands-on person, and that's been a gift to do that.

But now it's, now I'm, I'm able to see how I can better serve even my friends and family around me as I seek God in that. And as, you know, their lives aren't as what they expected either. So I assume that your life isn't exactly the way you expected it to be. But I think probably, you're looking at it in a way that if you pause and look, that it's a really good life. It may not be what you expected, but because God is in it, it's very good. So I wanna encourage you in that today that maybe if you're feeling that way too, life isn't what you expected, but it's very good because God is in it.

Um, I've also found myself trying to, what I wanna say, be in control of things that I don't need to be in control [00:21:00] of. That was another thing when I checked my heart. I'm trying to manage things. We, um, I, I-- There was a recent thing that, that came across, um, my life I should say, that I all of a sudden tried to manage every part of it. And I was driving la- uh, two weeks, three weeks ago from, uh, a hair appointment. God speaks to me, I think, when I'm driving. And He, um, well, He speaks to me in different places. But when I'm in the shower and when I'm driving are-- 'cause I'm in, behind my wheel a lot in the car. And God just gently in my spirit said that, uh, what I was trying to manage was not mine to manage. It was His to manage, and I was just to trust Him. And so I stopped fretting. I stopped worrying. I stopped trying to, you know, fit in all the pieces into this big puzzle, and I let it go. [00:22:00] And, uh, I really haven't thought about it much since, even though it's a big thing, and I, I-- it was out of my control. And it feels good just to let God be in control. So I don't need to manage all that stuff.

And friend, I wanna encourage you today, if you feel like you have to manage all of this or maybe a big heavy thing that came across your path that you just feel like, "Okay, if I don't manage it, then no one else will, so I have to," we don't have to do that. We can let God do that.

And, uh, you know, the thing is, I wasn't praying about it at the time when I was driving in the car. It was just a moment that I had with God, and I love how He does that. He just meets us in these moments where we don't expect Him. But He's there. He's with us always. And when we are quiet enough to hear, hear His voice or hear what He's speaking to our, our spirit, our soul, uh, it's, it's, it's a wonderful, almost surprising thing.

Uh, I love how [00:23:00] God does that. Yes, it's important, um, to spend time with Him every single day. And I love reading out of His Word. Um, you know, my goal this year is just to read through the Bible in a year, and I'm, I'm, I'm doing well at that. And I love reading His Word. But it's in those moments where I don't expect Him just to speak to me or just show me who He is, I, I love that. I love that.

Um, at the beginning of the year, um, also I wanted to share this. I should have brought it down here. But I have this jar. Um, it's a, it's a big, uh, is it a qu- uh, gallon jar? I think it's a gallon jar. Half gallon jar. -- And I, at the beginning of the year, I put slips of paper in there and a pen, and we write on there anything that, that comes up that we see God at work or anything special that we wanna remember throughout the year. We've written, um, not as many s- on as many slips of paper as possible or as we could have, 'cause there's still a lot of, lot of

paper in there, and [00:24:00] my goal is to get through all the little slips of paper. I wrapped a rubber band around them, and then when I take one out and I write it and I put it loose in the jar.

So at the end of the year, I want to open up this jar and see all the ways God has worked in our lives, all the things that that God has done. 'Cause day to day we might remember it, but a week goes by, two weeks go by, and we can kind of forget what, what we saw God do.

And so maybe that's something that you can do at the second half of this year, is to pull out a jar, pull in some, put in some slips of paper, um, wrap them up with a rubber band, put a pen in, and every time you see God doing something in your life, like even speaking, speaking to me in that moment, write it down on a piece of paper. Date it, put it in the jar. Fold it, put it in the jar. And then come, you know, maybe on New Year's Eve of this year, you can open up that jar and just rejoice all that God has done. I can't wait [00:25:00] to do that. So anyway, I wanted to share that with you, too, that that's one thing that we did. And you could, you could start it right now. And, uh, it's just something way, a tangible way that we can just praise God and thank Him for, for what He's doing in our lives.

And then I've also realized in this time of just checking my heart, that I've realized how easy it is to rush from one thing to the next without ever stopping to pay attention. And I I do that. I do that.

There was, um, a couple days in June where I, um, I had one thing after another, after another. And they were back-to-back days, and I planned them that way. But after those days were done, I thought, "I don't ever wanna do that again." I like to squeeze in as much as I can in a day, but running from one thing to another to another was not the best for me, and I was exhausted at the end of those two days.

But [00:26:00] when we just go on from rushing from one thing to another, we-- that's, that's part of this exhausted living that I believe that, that God has designed our lives , to have space in between things.

You know, I know God could have created in, in Genesis, He could have created the whole world with a snap of His finger or with one word. - And all in one day, He could've, right? God can do anything. He could speak anything He wanted to in existence, and we see how He did that in the creation story. But He, He did one, one thing a day at a time. And not that we need to take that as a, a, as a abs-absolute example in our lives to do only one thing at, at a day at a

time. But it's an example of how we can do something important in the day. We don't have to rush and do things piling on top, on top, on top.

Where if we just follow God's example [00:27:00] of doing what's important and then again the next day, doing what's important, and the next day, doing what's important, and then taking some rest. Taking some rest, that is so important. And I know God is still... That's part of my heart, that I just need to rest more in Him. I, I know that that's, that's one of the things that He still tries to get my attention, "Julie, you need to rest more. You need to do, uh, don't need to do more. You just need to rest more with me." I know what God's, I know He's saying that to me. And so that's something that I have battled with all my life, but I am getting better at it, and maybe, maybe someday I'll get it perfect. I doubt it.

But I love these times with Him where I can just draw close to Him and just be with Him. Whether that's sitting outside on my front steps, whether that's just soaking up the sun while I'm sitting out eating my lunch outside, whether that's I watch my grandson do something amazing or [00:28:00] my granddaughter laugh for the first time or, uh, you know, watching my husband from afar just being in his element. I mean, all these things. It's just God is showing up in our lives. I don't wanna miss anything that God has for me. And friend, I'm guessing you don't wanna miss anything God has for you either.

So I encourage you today to take some time. How is your heart? My heart, it's full. Yet, it's kind of exhausted. My heart is, is ready for what God has. I feel like He's been preparing me for this season, and I'm, I'm excited to see what it is. I always say that life is one big adventure with God, and I'm excited to see what He has for these next six months with Him.

How is your heart? I, um, I want to invite you to, [00:29:00] instead of doing all of the things, like I said at the beginning, the measuring of your goals and the, the word of the year. Do you even remember what word that was? Um, doesn't matter. Uh, your scripture verse, if you picked one for the year, or, uh, don't do any of that measuring. Just check your heart. Just check your heart today.

And let me go back to that verse again, um, in Lamentations. I wanna read it one more time because it's so It's just perfect for this. I love it. Okay, it's Lamentations chapter 3, verse 40 in the Message translation, and it says, "Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God."

Is there anything that does need to be reordered under God? You know, mine is rest. Mine is I don't wanna live exhausted. I don't wanna be burned out. I just

wanna live the life that God has for me, this abundant life [00:30:00] that we continue to talk about here. This real life that no one else can live but you. No one else can live your life, and no one else can live my life.

And isn't that a beautiful thing? That God has designed our lives personally. Yours is for you, and mine is for me. And when we are living this abundant life in Him- What a, what a blessing it is, what a joy it is. It's not gonna be a perfect life. It's not about the abundance of the world. It's about the abundant things of God that He has given to us as we step out and live the lives that He has called us to.

And I wanna encourage you today, too, that as you spend time with, with Him or, or just do this heart check, might just be five minutes. It might just be in the car. It might be in the morning. It might, you know, when you have your Bible open, or it might just be in between things. You know, I get it. Life is full. We have a [00:31:00] lot going on. But take some time and do a heart check.

And when you do, I want to extend an invitation to you. For years, I desired to just have someone come alongside of me to, to just encourage me, to walk, to walk beside me, to... not physically, you know, not literally, but figuratively, to walk beside me in my life. And that I could be the one to email or call or whatever and say, "Hey, I, I went through this today. Can, can you help me sort this out?" I wish I would've had someone like that, but I didn't.

And so that's one reason that I began Abundant Life Mentoring, is because I wanted to be able to be that person for you or for someone that you know, that maybe could use just a little bit of extra support, a little extra encouragement, maybe to find clarity or courage or confidence in, in life or [00:32:00] in, in faith. I would've loved to have had someone like that. And so I -- I would love to be that person for you. If this is something that, you know, maybe you're just thinking, "I, I just would really like to talk to someone." I'm not a counselor, but I am a mentor, and I've been through a lot of different circumstances in my life. I've studied the Bible for, for decades, and I'm not perfect in this, but I would love, and I would have m-- I'd love to have the honor to just be that support person for you.

So if this sounds something that would, sounds like something that would be of encouragement to you, check out the link in the show notes for Abundant Life Mentoring, and you can book a 20-minute, a free 20-minute connection call to see if it's something for you in this season.

And before we wrap up, uh, this, this episode, I wanted to share another thing that's really been on my heart. And over the years, I, I have had women reach out to me asking for [00:33:00] more of an ongoing encouragement and support. Um You know, not just through this podcast or, or through my books, but in every day, living out their everyday lives. And so I've been exploring a new idea of, um, creating a small group mentoring experience for women who, who just want, I guess, more intentional rhythm of ongoing encouragement and support.

And so I'm still working through the details, but if you would like to be among the first to hear more, um, it's gonna probably open in the fall. I've created an interest list. And, uh, you can find the link in the show notes as if this, if this is something that you would maybe just like to hear more about. Uh, it doesn't - commit you to anything, but you'll be just the first to, to hear about it, to understand what, what it is, and to learn of the enrollment dates. So, uh, that's in [00:34:00] the link in the show notes too.

And if you found encouragement or hope in this episode, I really ... I just invite you to subscribe to the podcast, uh, whether it's on YouTube or your favorite listening app, and to like this, because it does make a difference. Believe it or not, every episode that you like or comment or share, it does make a difference. It helps other women find this encouragement too.

And so thank you for being here today. I so appreciate this opportunity just to spend time together, and it's been a wonderful, um, it's been a wonderful time of just, um, connecting with you. So I'm really glad that you're here today.

And I do invite you to take some time, do a little check-in with God, and just answer that question: How's my heart today?

Thanks for being here. We'll see you next time. God bless you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find [00:35:00] more at juliefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.