

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

260 Life Does Not Have to Be Perfect to Be Good

[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 caught yourself thinking, maybe you've even done this recently, that I'll be happier when my life slows down, or when I lose the weight, or when my kids get older. Or I'll be happier when my marriage improves, or when I retire, [00:01:00] or when my finances are better, or when I'm healthier. You know, I think we all do this, and I think this is something that we don't realize we do.

I've caught myself recently on a couple of those thinking, "Oh, wow, I look forward to the day, my life is gonna be so much better when blank." And lately, I have been wondering, as I've caught myself in these, could we be accidentally and unintentionally postponing the joy that God wants to give us in our everyday lives because we're focused on something else? We're focused on the future. We think we're gonna be happier later down the road when happiness might be happening right in front of us, but maybe we're missing it.

Well, I think this is a timely message for us today, and I'm so glad you're here. If you could use some encouragement, let's get into this episode.

[00:02:00]

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie, and I am really happy that you're here today because I think this message is something that's, that's hitting my heart, and I believe it's going to be a blessing for you today, too. And I think it's gonna impact our lives in a way that maybe we don't even realize right now.

But there's this thing, I'm gonna call it a lie, that I think that we can easily believe without us even intentionally I don't like these subtle kind of beliefs that

all of a sudden we, we just, we hold onto and we make them a part of our lives. So I'm calling this a lie because it's not true. It's the lie that life has to be perfect before it can be good. And I know that's not true. And I know that you [00:03:00] know consciously that that's not true. Life can be good when it's not perfect, right?

You know, I've never found any place in the Bible where God has said that life is perfect, that life should be perfect. There are lots of other examples of persevering, of taking heart, of staying encouraged when life does not go as planned. But I've never found any instance where God says, "Now that you believe in Jesus, your life will be perfect." I know because I love God, and I assume you love God, we want God's best for us. And somewhere along the way, we've started to believe that a perfect life is God's best for us, when actually that's not true at all.

In John 10:10, and I've said this scripture before, it's, it's kind of the one that, it's really the one that my latest book, Made For More, is based [00:04:00] on. It's the, the one where Jesus says, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy." But this part is what I wanna talk about. "But I have come to give life, and life with abundance," or life to the full, or life, a joyfill- a joy-filled and abundant life. Depends on what your translation says. But Jesus came to give us an abundant life. Not a perfect life, but an abundant life.

And so I sta- have been starting to pay attention a little bit, just every day, of this abundant life that Jesus gave me. Now, there was one day that I, I just kinda clocked in my head. This day included errands. I had lots of errands to do. I did groceries. I did, returned a few things. I, I had a lot of stuff to do. Got the car washed, you know, all of those kind of things. Uh, laundry. My goodness, I think I could do laundry every day, even though it's just Bill and I here. I don't know why we have so much laundry, but we have, we have a lot of [00:05:00] laundry. Um, I was answering emails that day. I had a couple mentoring appointments with clients. I remember laughing with my husband that evening, which is always a joy, of course. And I had been talking with, um, one of our kids when, you know, that's always a joy, too.

But in this particular day, there wasn't anything extraordinary about that day. But what I caught, what I grasped was that there was so much goodness in it. You know, sometimes I think we wait for the big monumental days, like the vacation days and the, the days that we have a holiday or we're gonna be all together to celebrate or whatever it might be.

But I think God often shows up in the little moments, running errands, doing laundry, laughing with our spouse. That's so much goodness, and that goodness comes from God. We're gonna talk about that here too.[00:06:00]

You know, I think we can, we, we can believe. I remember when our kids were little, I would think, "Oh, I just can't wait till she can walk," or, "I can't wait till he can crawl," or, "I can't wait till," I do remember this one, "when they can feed themselves." Or when my kids could buckle themselves in their car seats, phew, that was a big one. Um, then I also remember, I can't wait till the kids can drive themselves to school, so I wouldn't have to be traipsing to and from school four times a day.

Now, there was some, also some, some heartbreak in that too, because I knew once they started driving to school that, uh, life would be different. But I was, I was-- I caught myself. I look back now and I can see myself doing those things, saying, "Oh, I look forward to the time of this." And I did everything I could. I really tried hard [00:07:00] to stay in the present and live in the moment, and I'm doing that today, but I know that I did that. And I still do that today.

I c- I, I remember thinking when I was writing Made for More, my last book, which launched in, um, April of this year. I was thinking, you know, life is gonna be good when this book is released. I don't know if I actually said it that way, but that's what I was thinking, that life is gonna be really good when this book is done, when I'm done writing this book.

Yeah, I knew better. After I launched it, I realized that life suddenly didn't become perfect. It didn't with my other two books that I had written, so why would I think it'd be perfect after this book? I still had ordinary days. I still had dishes to do and laundry, unanswered questions - and new challenges in my life. The book was wonderful, and I loved partnering with God through it, but it wasn't, it wasn't what made life good. [00:08:00] God's presence is what made life good

And I wanna stop here and pause for a moment. And I found this verse. I read it before, but it hit me when I was preparing for this episode. It's, it's Psalm 16:11, and it says, "You make known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Did you catch that? I'm gonna say that again. "You make known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

You will fill me with joy in your presence. You and I know that God is with us every moment of every day. That verse right there says, "You will fill me with

joy in Your presence." God [00:09:00] will fill us with joy when we are present with Him. He is always with us, so we can always have the joy of the Lord in us.

And you know, that can't-- I just thought of that, that, that verse, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." I don't have that pulled up right now as to where that is, what the address is - in the Bible where that belongs. But the joy of the Lord is our strength, and He gives us this joy in His presence, when we are in His presence.

And He's with us all day long, so we can have this joy. We don't need to be postponing it, looking forward to the next thing or the next perfect thing. You know, life has to be perfect for it to be good. That's not true. Life is to be lived right now for it to be good.

You know, real life. I am so big on living a real life, a real authentic life. [00:10:00] On social media, sometimes you're gonna see me posting as I'm walking outdoors. I have no makeup on. My hair is a mess. But lately I've been thinking there's so much falseness in this world. And sometimes we can look at an image or something, uh, or even a person and say, "Is this real or is it artificially generated?" And there's something about being real and authentic and transparent. -

Years ago, I would never leave my house without makeup on. Never. I laugh at myself now because it's really quite silly. But now I don't care so much because I wanna be that real person. I don't want ever, ever someone to say to me, "Are you real or are you, are you not? Um, is how you're coming across real or is it coming across fake?" I never wanna come across fake.

And so as we look at this, our real lives are [00:11:00] beautiful and they are messy, aren't they? Real life includes unanswered prayers. It includes messy kitchens. My goodness, you should have seen my messy kitchen a couple days ago. I'm a messy cook and I just make a mess and then I have to clean it up. But it took me some motivation to get to the point of cleaning it up. But I cannot stand a messy kitchen. But -- real life is full of messy kitchens.

Real life is full of, um, hard conversations, conversations that we don't wanna have. Real life is filled with doctor's appointments, sometimes really hard doctor's appointments, and uncertainty, and days of laundry, and grief, and joy and laughter. Real life is filled with answered prayers, and we rejoice at those answered prayers. [00:12:00] Sunsets, grandchildren, quiet moments.

You know, yes, life is beautiful and messy. It's never one or the other. It's both. And we know not everything is good, right? But God is. And so we know that if God is good, life that He has given us is going to be good. It is good.

And I think this is where gratitude comes in just beautifully because, not to force our gratitude, but just to be honest in our gratitude. To notice the things that God has right in front of us that we can just appreciate and see His goodness. You know, when was the last time you looked out the window and saw a flower, and you just said, "Thank you, God, for this, this flower"?

[00:13:00] Or you sat outside and just soaked up a minute of the sun, and you thanked God for how that felt just warming your skin.

Or what's another idea? What's another way that we can see His goodness? Um, an answered prayer. Jot them down. Jot those prayers down. Watch Him answer them in His perfect timing. You see His goodness. You see a fluffy cl- fluffy cl- cloud in the sky. I can't say fluffy, fluffy and cloud in the same sentence, evidently. But you see that in the sky, and you just thank God for it or a sunset. We can't help but be grateful when we start to notice the goodness of God.

I, uh, was reminded of this story, um, in Luke chapter 10 this week as I was preparing for this episode. It's the story of Mary and Martha. And you probably know it. I'm not gonna go ahead and read it, but it's chapter 10, verses 38 through 42, and I'll link it in the show notes so you can find it. But [00:14:00] the story goes that, you know, Jesus was teaching, and Mary ... Sorry, Martha was so focused on what wasn't getting done. She was serving. She was focused on all the details of the meal and the prep and all of that, which I would fall into that category so easily. I would be so concerned about all the details. But she missed the joy of simply just being with Jesus.

And Mary, Mary chose to sit at His feet, to be present. She wanted presence over perfection. Yes, serving did matter, but Jesus reminded Martha that something more, something else was more important. It was who was right in front of her, Jesus. And He said that Mary chose the one thing that was important, that it will not be taken away from her. [00:15:00]

That presence is so important. It is. That one thing is just right in front of us, and that moment is God's goodness right in front of us. But I think we miss it. I know I miss it until I pause to notice.

So life doesn't have to be perfect for it to be good. And here's how we can tell. I, I just jotted down three things.

The first one is to notice one good thing today. One good thing. If we got in the habit of noticing one good thing every day, I think it would totally change our lives. If you started collecting just little moments all week long, like, ask yourself at the end of the day, "What made me smile today?" Or, "Where did I see God's hand today? Where did I see His goodness today?" If you did that every day and jotted it down, [00:16:00] think of what that would do. Think what that would do for your heart. Think what that would do for the, the realization that God is such a part of your life, that He has such goodness for you every single day.

Maybe you could jot things down like a text from a friend. Or, um, a child or grandchild's funny little comment. Or coffee on the porch in the morning. Or that beautiful sunrise from today. Or a moment you had with a, a coworker that really made you smile. Or a prayer that brought you peace. Or a laugh with your, your husband.

Jotting these things down, noticing this goodness, you're gonna start to be aware of God's presence, His powerful presence, even when life doesn't feel so perfect. But you know it's-- that life is good.[00:17:00]

Another one is to stop waiting for life to begin. Your real life is happening today. It's happening right now. We don't get a do-over in this life. We don't. When God calls us home, - we're done on this Earth. We get to spend eternity with Him. But our real lives are happening right now. Right now. Every moment that we live today, it's our real lives that we get to either glorify God or we get to glorify ourselves. We get to serve others or serve ourselves. We get to notice God's goodness or we get to miss God's goodness. It's our choice. But let's not wait for real life to begin. It's happening right now. Don't wait for the next big thing. Just enjoy the moment that you're in while you're maybe working towards that next thing.

And the third thing is to thank God for this chapter in your life, [00:18:00] even if it's not the chapter that you would have written. Maybe life looks totally different than you expected right now. Maybe it's filled with sorrow and pain and heartache, and you wanna get out of this chapter as fast as possible. But thank God. Just thank God for this chapter, even in the hard days.

You know, what's that verse? Matthew 16:33 or 34, "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world." I'm not sure that that's that verse. It just came to me. I'm not sure. But it, it-- I know it, "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world."

Jesus has overcome all of these things that we go through. And even if this hard chapter maybe that you're walking through right now, thank Him for the things that He's doing in your life. Because once you start noticing [00:19:00] them, you're gonna start noticing more. And I think that's the key. Once we start doing it, we're gonna continue to see more and more of His goodness. It becomes a habit.

Friend, I am, um, firmly in belief that God has good things right in front of us in every moment of every day. And if we're stuck on our phones, if we're stuck in our heads, if we're stuck in our schedules, we're gonna miss those things. So let's lift our eyes. Let's look this week. Let's look today and find His goodness, 'cause it's everywhere.

I am doing this right along with you. I don't have this mastered, I'm telling you. I, I still struggle with this. There's days that I think, "Ugh, if I was only farther, then I'd be happier." Or, "If I had this, I'd be happier." But we're missing the joy that God has for us when we say those things, and we just say instead, [00:20:00] "God, show me Your goodness right now. Show me where You are. I know that life doesn't have to be perfect for it to be good, because You are good, and You are in my life."

Would you pray with me just for a moment? Let's do that.

Heavenly Father, I just thank You for this day. I thank You for this moment that we get to share together. Lord, You are with us in every moment of every day. There's nothing that went by today or will go by today that isn't sifted through Your hands first. But Lord, You are in our days. You are in our lives. And yet, Lord, we miss You so often because we're focused on other things.

Open our eyes to Your goodness today. Help us remember that life doesn't have to be perfect for it to be good, because You are good. You are the ultimate good. Thank You for never leaving us as we were or as we are, but You continue to draw us close to You. We are so grateful. Help us to express that [00:21:00] gratefulness to You today. We love You so much, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oh, yes, life is good because God is good. You know, maybe your life doesn't look exactly like you imagined it, it to look like. And maybe there are prayers that you're still praying that they haven't been answered yet. Maybe there are things that you wish were different. I have things in my life that I wish were different, too. But , what if life doesn't have to be perfect for it to still be deeply, wonderfully, specially, amazingly good? What if abundant life isn't found in

perfect circumstances, but it's found in walking with a perfect Savior through imperfect ones? What if?

And I believe that's it. We have a perfect savior walking with us through the imperfect [00:22:00] circumstances of life, and I wouldn't want it any other way. So friend, give yourself permission today. Permission to enjoy your life even before the prayer is answered. Permission to laugh while you're still waiting. Permission to see God's goodness without pretending that everything is perfect.

As we wrap up today, I just wanna thank you for joining me. And, you know, maybe you found yourself thinking that you know God, , has been good to you. You've seen it in your life. You, you've seen the evidence of His goodness. But maybe you feel it's been hard to see it lately. Well, I've been there, too. I get it.

And I think sometimes we're so close to our own lives that it's hard for us to recognize where God is working and what He's been teaching us or even the [00:23:00] good that He has placed right in front of our very eyes. Sometimes we miss it because we're too close to our lives.

This is one of the reasons that I truly believe in Abundant Life Mentoring. Abundant Life Mentoring is not about fixing your life or fixing you or pretending that everything has to be perfect in life. It's actually about having someone walk alongside of you to ask good questions, to point you back to God's truth, and to help you recognize that God's faithfulness is in the middle of your real life right here, right now. And if you've been wishing for that kind of encouragement, maybe even in an ongoing community, well, I'm also getting ready to launch what I'm assuming, I haven't titled it yet, but an, an Abundant Life Mentoring Group where enrollment it's not open yet, but it [00:24:00] will be soon. But I'm gathering an interest list of women who would just like to learn more about it before it launches, and who just want some details. Of course, there's no commitment. Not at all. It's simply a way to just get to be the first person to hear all the details. So you'll find the information in the show notes both about , Abundant Life Mentoring one-on-one mentoring, and our Abundant Life Group, which we'll be launching soon. I would love to walk alongside of you. Absolutely, I would.

And one last thing before you go. If today's episode encouraged you, would you just do me a favor? Think of one woman who might need this reminder today. Maybe she's just holding onto a lot. Maybe she's waiting for life to get easier, or she's struggling to see the good in the middle of her imperfect season or her imperfect life. Would you text this episode to [00:25:00] her or share it on

social media? You know, you never know how God might just use a simple act of encouragement to remind another that her life doesn't have to be perfect to be wonderfully good.

And if today's conversation resonated with you, I would love to hear from you. I would absolutely love to hear it. Send me a message, or you can even leave a review if you're feeling extra generous, and tell me what spoke to your heart. You know, I read every one, and they encourage me more than you know. So thank you. Thank you for being here each week. It truly means so much to me.

Next week is our guest episode. You're not gonna wanna miss that. So come back next Tuesday. And until then, thanks for being here, and God bless you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at [00:26:00] julielefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.