

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

264 Live Your Life: Come, Follow, Remain

[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.

One thing I continue to hear from women is that they feel like they are missing their lives, and they can't understand why. They love God, they're doing all the, quote, "right things," yet life seems to be just passing them. They, they, they can't keep up with life. And if [00:01:00] you're in this place today, well, you're in good company. You've come to the right place.

We have been talking this month about this very subject. In the past two weeks, we've asked some difficult questions. We maybe have realized for the very first time that we might be missing the life that God has given us. And last week, we talked about some of the things that may be pulling us away from this life.

So there's a natural next step here. And this is to answer the question: Well, now what? Now that we have looked at those two things, that, you know, life maybe is passing us by, that it's, we're missing the life that's happening right in front of us, and what is it that's pulling us away from this life? Now we get to look at, what do we do next? So if you're ready for some encouragement today, I'm [00:02:00] glad you're here. Let's get into this episode.

Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie, and I'm just so grateful that we get to spend a little bit of time together today. So many of us are feeling, yes, like we are missing our lives. And we talked about that in the first episode of this month. And we went into details about not necessarily the answers to that, but just noticing. Noticing where we are missing our lives and

what is happening in those moments. And last week we talked about what is pulling us away.

When we recognize a problem ... I don't know if you do this, but when I recognize a problem, I usually try to fix myself. Do you do [00:03:00] this, too? So last week when we were talking about, you know, what is it that's pulling us away from this life, I had the natural tendency to wanna just empty my calendar. To, uh, really just slow down, do the things that are most important. And I also was tempted to just say, "You know what? I'm gonna say no to everything." Well, that's not realistic.

Some of us might say, "You know what? Since I am struggling with feeling like I'm missing my life, I'm just gonna be more disciplined." Or, "I'm gonna spend less time on my phone." These phones, I tell ya, they are the, uh, they can be a big distraction for us. Or - maybe we tell ourselves, "I'm gonna slow down," or, "I'm gonna say no more often," or, "I'm going to just, you know, just do all I have to do just to get by, and that's it."

And these are all good steps. They are. But they're [00:04:00] temporary fixes. They don't really get to the heart of the issue. We do not want to miss our lives, right? God does not want to miss our lives. He didn't design us to miss our lives. But instead, He sent Jesus to come and give us an abundant life. But we can't live this abundant life if we're missing it, right?

Well, I've been thinking about this and pondering this in preparation for this, this episode and I was drawn to my first book, uh, Right Now Matters. And in chapter six of this book, -- this book's all about living - an undistracted life and how to go about doing that. But I share in this book, in chapter six, the answer. We love the answers, don't we? We want quick fixes. We wanna fix things right away. We want the answers. And so I share one key [00:05:00] secret. And I think this is the only secret of how not to miss our lives. You ready? It's partnering with God. Partnering with God. That's the only way that we won't miss our lives.

So I'm gonna read just a little excerpt here. It's the first par-- not the first paragraph. It's, oh, I don't know, the fourth paragraph in this chapter. Here it goes. Ready? This is the biggest secret to overcoming - life's distractions. We cannot fight these distractions, on our own. We just can't. We may think we can and believe we can, and self-help books, may even say we can. Sure, we're capable, strong, and steadfast women. We are smart, talented, and skillful. You and I know how to get things done and how to make things happen, right?

Common sense tells us we [00:06:00] should be able to fight these distractions on our own. At least that's what we think, and that's likely what we desire.

And I'm gonna fast-forward to the next page. Here's the foundation to living an abundant life and overcoming distractions. We must partner with God. We must let Him lead, guide, and teach us what we need to know. Even if we're the independent, self-sufficient women that we think we are and that we probably live like we are, that doesn't matter. We need God's help to equip us in living undistracted.

Amen to that. We cannot do this on our own. And I have... I shared so many examples in that book of how I tried to do it on my own. We can't. We will miss our lives if we do not partner with [00:07:00] God. Bottom line, right?

But what usually happens is, like I, I said a minute ago, we tend to look within ourselves, not to look outside of ourselves when we feel like we start to miss our lives, right? We don't look, we don't look anywhere - but within, thinking that we need to fix something.

But we don't end there, right? We don't just say, "Yeah, we're gonna partner with God." And that book doesn't end there. In, in the book, I, I... We take a look at w- what to focus on, that our focus does matter, and I give you tools on how to help you refocus and to truly how not to miss your life.

But today, we're gonna simplify it all. All of it boils down to three - statements of Jesus. And I think that, boiling these down to three simple statements, they're not just statements, but they're life, life-giving words. Boiling them, these, this down to three simple [00:08:00] statements, we're gonna remember it. The thing is, Jesus never says that we need to try harder, that we need to strive, we need to move faster, we need to do whatever. He doesn't say any of that, that we need to, to physically take charge and do it ourselves, right? But what He does say are invitations to partner with Him. He knows that we can't do this on our own. And it's a good thing that we remember this today. We can't do this on our own. But with Jesus' help, we can.

Here are these three statements. Are you ready? These three statements are come, follow, and remain. Let's look at them in detail. The first one, I love how Jesus says this. "Come to me." It's the very first thing. The very first step. "Come to me." And where does He say this? He says it in Matthew [00:09:00] chapter 11. And the full context is verses 28 through 30.

I'm just gonna read verse 28 in the New Living Translation which reads, "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'" This is for us, for us women who are weary. We are weary from constantly being pulled in different directions all at the same time.

And I'm picturing this, this toy. I don't know if one of my brothers had it or a friend of mine had it. Uh, but it was a, a toy that was very stretchy, and I can't even remember what that toy was. I remember Stretch Armstrong, and he was very stretchy. But I was thinking it was something else. As a little kid, this toy that would, shaped like a character and it would stretch so far. And on some days I feel like I'm that, that stretchy [00:10:00] toy. That I'm just, you know, my arms go stretched out too wide and my legs go too wide and my head goes too tall. We're being stretched in all different ways in all sorts of directions.

But Jesus first doesn't tell us to change or, you know, to clean up your act or, you know, get it figured out or get it organized. He invites us to come to Him

Where have we been running? Where have you been running? Where have I been running? What have we been carrying? What are all the things that we try to hold onto and just manage? Am I trying to fix myself before I come to Jesus? Or are you? "Come to me," is what Jesus says. That's it. Come to me.

The second, the second one that Jesus says that I found is, "Follow me."

[00:11:00] Where does He say this? In Matthew 4:19 in the New Living Translation. , This is what it says. "Jesus called out to them, 'Come follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people.'" Now, Jesus was talking about, in context, about, you know, being a disciple of His. And we can't be a disciple if we don't follow.

Now, today we're talking about not necessarily being a disciple, but what we're, we're having this focus of not missing our lives. Well, that's, I think it's part of discipleship, is not - missing our lives because we're following Jesus. But when we follow Jesus, we have direction. This is all about direction. And following Jesus means that we are learning from Him. We're learning His way of living. We're learning how to operate in life. We're learning how to [00:12:00] maybe have a slower pace in life, maybe a pace that matches His. We're learning the words He says. We're learning how to treat people. Um, so many things.

Not just believing the right things, but actually living them out, following His example. I love that. Can you just picture Him saying, "Follow me. Come on, follow me"? I just, I love, I love those two words, follow me. Yeah. Following

Jesus is a beautiful daily invitation to let Him set the direction of our hearts. Not us, but His direction. To let Him set the direction of our hearts. Follow me.

So we have come to me, and we have follow me. And the third one is remain or abide in me. And where does He say this? [00:13:00] In J- uh, in John 15, excuse me, chapter, excuse me, chapter 15, verses 4 and 5. In the New Living Translation, it says this. ... My, my translation says remain. Yours might say abide. But here it goes. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine. And you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

We talked about this verse not that long ago, maybe two months ago. But friend, this is where peace comes from, remaining in Jesus. I, uh, have been talking a lot about my tendency to hurry, to just [00:14:00] rush through the day. And this has, this has really convicted me that, you know, my peace comes from remaining in Jesus, not from what I get done in a day, and certainly not the pace of my life through the day. But I s- I, I constantly have to consistently every day say, "I am not gonna rush through this day. I am going to remain in Jesus."

Because when I think about the pace of Jesus, never saw Him rushing, ever. Ever in the Bible have I seen Him rushing. If you have, please let me know. But it doesn't come from a rushed pace or hurrying through life. It doesn't come from an empty calendar or perfect circumstances. And peace certainly doesn't come by feeling caught up, even though that is a great feeling. We may have a little tiny sliver of peace, but it's fleeting. But peace comes from remaining connected to Jesus always, [00:15:00] always.

I also share in, in the, somewhere in the book, I don't remember what chapter, about how, uh, my marigolds, and my marigolds are in full bloom right now. They're beautiful. But there was a day I walked by a marigold, and there was a, a branch had broken off, and the leaves were brown and dried up. And that was a perfect picture for me of what happens when I don't remain in Jesus. I get brown and dried up because I'm not connected to the vine anymore.

But it's three simple things. Come to me, follow me, and remain in me. Remain in me. That's key. All of them are key, but that remain in me has really just been the, in the forefront of my mind for the last few weeks.

So what does, what does a woman who lives close to Jesus look like? What does she look like? Does she have [00:16:00] her life all perfect and organized and color-coded tabs on her Bible? She never raises her voice at her kids or gets frustrated with her spouse, her husband. -- Does she live in a perfect home, in a clean home that's all always just Pinterest perfect? No, she doesn't.

This kind of woman who lives close to Jesus, she's not perfect. But she still has full days. She still has interruptions. She still has unfinished work. She still has things that are weighing on her. She still has responsibilities. She still may feel behind. She still feel, may feel like she's racing the clock. But what she's becoming is more present. She's quicker to [00:17:00] trust, quicker to trust the Lord, slower to panic, and she's, um, she's more aware of God's presence. She's more able to receive today with her arms open wide, "Lord, what do you have for me today?"

So let's apply this to our own lives. What does this actually look like on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon? Well, some examples might be when your mind starts racing ahead to tomorrow, you quietly return your attention back to Jesus. Or when you feel the, I don't know, the pressure to prove yourself in a situation, you remember whose voice matters most. It's His. Or before you reach for your phone, you just take a moment to pray. When you feel -- pulled in [00:18:00] 10 different directions, you may whisper, "Jesus, help me stay with you in this moment. Or when you realize your heart has drifted, because each of our hearts, they drift. Y- you don't beat yourself up. You simply return again and again.

Do you see the difference? These kind of things aren't techniques or tools. They're just ways of returning your attention to Jesus throughout an ordinary day. And what a beautiful way to just continue to remain in Jesus. The answer isn't trying harder to be more present. It's becoming more present with Jesus.

Let me say that again. The answer isn't trying harder to be more present. [00:19:00] It's becoming more present with Jesus. Because the thing is, I guess that the more we walk with Him, the more present we become to the life that He's already given us. We get less distracted when we're following Jesus, when we're spending time with Him because our focus is on what's most important. We miss less blessings in the day because we're remaining with Jesus. Yes, we still have stresses and strife, but they don't last when we hand them over to Jesus and we walk with Him. We give them to Him. We remain in Him.

So some ways that we can tangibly do this too are just to begin your day. Begin your day with Jesus before the world starts pulling at you. Return to Him whenever you, you notice that your heart has wandered. Mine wanders every

single [00:20:00] day. Multiple times a day. And then end your day by noticing where He was present. Not just what you accomplished, but where was He present? What a shift that will make in your day and in my day. We start with Him, we remain with Him throughout the day, and we end the day with Him. We'll stay more present when we focus on Jesus' presence.

Yes, we may drift, we may get sidetracked, but the key is to returning to Jesus again and again. He is our hope. He is our strength. He is all we need in this life. So if you are feeling pulled and stretched thin and feeling very empty, you feel like you're missing your life today, draw near to Jesus.

Let's [00:21:00] pray. Let's just pause right now to pray. Let's do that.

Oh, Heavenly Father, I just thank You for this opportunity that we can come to You. You are with us every part of every day, and what a, what a j- joy it is and a gift it is. ... Lord, I am feeling like my days are, are full, and I know that- the one listening here right now, she's feeling the same way. She's probably feeling as I do that some days I'm just missing the life that You've given me. But Lord, after we've looked at, um, examined, yeah, maybe we are missing our lives, and we're noticing the things that are pulling us from it. Lord, we are returning to You today. And we ask You to help us to release the things that pull us away from the life that You've given us.

We ask You to -- hel- help us to notice the things that are pulling us away, to notice -- how we are missing the life You've given us, and to [00:22:00] draw near to You, not just in the morning, but all day long. To return to You when we start to feel like we're losing our slipping, when we're, when we're drifting, when we're being sidetracked.

And help us to end the day with You. Lord, help us to keep You front and center in our mind and in our lives all day long. We can't, we can't do this on our own. Many of us have tried. I've tried. Many of my friends have tried. And we know, Lord, that we can't do this without You. So help us to live arm in arm, holding Your hand, being carried by You some days. Whatever it might be, Lord, I pray that You will just continue to, to lift our eyes to You. I can just picture You lifting our chins up to see Your face, to keep our eyes focused on You and truly what's most important. Help us to stay present with You [00:23:00] today, dear Lord. We love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friend, you're not alone in this. You're not alone at all. Jesus is with you, and I am praying for you today. I cannot even say how grateful I am that Jesus is walking with you and with me today. And He's gonna help us. He's gonna help

us stay in step with Him. We don't have to rush ahead. We don't have to fall behind. And He's gonna help us stay present with the things that matter most. So let's draw near to Him today, and let's ask Him for help all along the way.

Before we wrap up today, I wanna share something that's really on my heart and I'm very excited about. Over the past few weeks, we have been talking about not missing the life God has given us, right? And recognizing [00:24:00] what's been pulling us away from it, and now responding to Jesus' invitation to come and follow and remain in Him. Maybe as you have been listening, you have found yourself thinking, "I don't wanna keep living the way I've been living," or, "I want to grow. I want to be more intentional in my life. I want to keep walking toward the abundant life that Jesus promises."

If this is you, I personally, right now, invite you into Abundant Life Together. This isn't another thing to add to your calendar. It's simply a beautiful monthly mentoring community for women who want to keep growing in their faith, uh, who want - to encourage one another and to learn to live the abundant life Jesus came to give us [00:25:00] right in the middle of our everyday lives.

Each month, we'll gather online. We'll open God's Word. We're gonna do this together. Have honest conversations about real life, encourage one another, and take practical next steps as we follow Jesus together. My hope is that it becomes a place where you can take a deep breath and be reminded that you're not alone and continue becoming the woman that God is calling you to be.

Enrollment is open right now, but it closes on August 31st, and we'll begin together in September, and I can't wait. If your heart has been just even stirred during this little series that we're doing this month, I wonder if this might be your next step. I would truly welcome the [00:26:00] privilege of walking alongside you. All the details are at the link in the show notes.

And come back next week for our monthly guest episode. You'll find hope and promise from this guest's encouraging words. You do not wanna miss this episode. So come back next Tuesday.

And friend, if you've been feeling like you've been missing your life, please don't leave today determined to try harder. No, don't do that. Leave looking to Jesus. Come to Him. Follow Him. Remain in Him. As you do, I believe you'll find yourself becoming more present to the life that He's given you and more aware of His presence in it.

Until next time, keep living encouraged and keep looking to Jesus. God bless
[00:27:00] you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at
JulieLefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.