

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

266 What Does It Mean to Be Well?

[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.

What does it actually mean to be well? What do you think? Is it eating healthy food? Is it exercising regularly? Maybe it's getting enough sleep. Or maybe we think healthy is a number on the scale. All of these things [00:01:00] matter, yes, but I have learned, and I'm still learning, that being well is so much more than what we eat or how often we exercise. We can take care of our bodies and still be exhausted on the inside. We can eat organic foods and still be stressed mentally. We can do all the, quote, "right things" and still not be well. And maybe you know what I'm talking about.

So today, we are discussing what it really means to be healthy, whole, and well. I'm so glad you're here today, so let's get into it.

Welcome back to the Encouragement for a Real Life podcast. I [00:02:00] am so happy that you are here, and we are venturing into a new series this month. I've kinda taken a, a couple months off of doing some series and maybe just doing some more just, uh, free-flowing type of episodes. But this month of September, we are talking about healthy, whole, and well. That is the series for this month.

And I have to tell you that I am so passionate about this subject. I didn't intentionally start out this way, but over years of just wanting a better health for myself, I have kind of evolved, I guess you could say. And this is something that I could talk about daily, all day long. And if I-- I've even been tempted to do this. If I would ever choose to pivot my message, walking away [00:03:00] from encouraging women, which I don't feel God is calling me to do. But if I've

ever been tempted to change my message, it would be about healthy living. And especially in this season in my life. I am learning so much.

And I have come to understand that my health affects my everyday, everyday life. It affects my abundant life. It even affects the people around me. My health affects everything I do. It affects, uh, the energy I have, it affects my sleep, it affects... My health just affects everything, every single part of my life. And it affects yours, too. Your health affects every part of your life. It affects the people around you. It affects, it just affects everything.

And I believe that our health is not about this being, you know, healthy and whole and well. Um, it's not [00:04:00] about dieting or weight loss or achieving some magazine version of ourselves. I used to want that. Honestly, I did. I wanted to be the skinniest girl. I wanted to have the flattest stomach. I wanted to have the smallest rear end if I could say. Oh, how s- oh, how silly I was back then. I used to desire those things, but I understand as I've gotten older and as I've learned more, it's more about caring for the whole person that God created you and me to be. This is what healthy and whole and well is all about.

It's, it's also - seeing that what's healthy to one person may not be healthy to another. And that was hard for me to grasp - at, at one point in my life 'cause I just thought there was a bottom line. This is what it takes to be healthy.

But I think we're all tempted [00:05:00] to define health way too narrowly. 'Cause when we hear the word healthy, our minds, they just naturally go to a few things, such as food. How much food do we eat? What we eat? How often we eat? Oh my goodness. So much with the food.

Exercise is another one. How much we exercise? What we do to exercise? And do we do it, uh, multiple times a day? Do we do it just once a day? Do we do cardio? Do we do weights? I mean, there's so many things.

Another one is our weight. What is the healthiest weight? Is it BMI, the body mass index? Is it, um ... Are, are we just focused on the scale, the number on the scale? Are we focused on, uh, the, how our weight can fluctuate with, uh, the, the time of the month it might be? Oh my goodness, our weight is a huge one.

Another one, um, what our doctor [00:06:00] says. What our doctor says is healthy. Is that what our minds go to when it comes to health? Yeah, sometimes it is. We, we, we rely on what our doctors say if we're healthy.

Or the results we get from lab tests. Those are also, that's, our mind goes to that too. What it says that our actual blood is saying and the other tests that we get done, what are they saying? Are they saying we're healthy?

But the thing is, these are only part of the picture. And there's a gnat flying around me. And I think it's because I have these plants behind me. But I love the plants so much that I'm willing to, uh, every summer I get a gnat or two. So bear with me if you see me going at, you know, swatting a gnat away.

Anyway, we're talking about this is only part of the picture. All of those things, only a part of the picture of our health. Could you and I be physically healthy, just physically fit and still not be [00:07:00] well? Absolutely we could.

Maybe you're eating nutritious food and you're exercising really well, but you're living under tremendous stress. You're never resting. You're speaking too harshly to yourself. You're neglecting your relationships or you're feeling spiritually dry. I don't think that's probably you, but maybe it is. But it, it used to be me. I used to be physically fit, so physically fit. Oh my word, I was so physically fit. I think my body mass index, uh, I think it was down... I don't remember. It's either 18 or 21. 18. I think it was 18. I don't know what it was, but it was very low. Too low. , But I was not well. I let my physical, my physical part of my health dictate the rest of my life, and that was not a good place to [00:08:00] be in. Um, yeah, I would do all sorts of things to just make the scale say something that I wanted it to say.

So I understand how we can be doing all the right things for our physical body, yet neglect all of the other parts of us. Yet physical training does have value, yes, and I think that that's worth noting and emphasizing because if we aren't physically well, um, it's, it's really hard to be well in other areas.

And I understand, too, that sometimes in Christian circles, uh, caring about, deeply caring about things that are, are important like nutrition and exercise or sleep or physical health, it can almost feel superficial when we talk about those things. But I understand the importance of being physically well. Our physical wellness matters.[00:09:00]

And, um, godliness has value for all things. And here's the, the bigger picture. We aren't just bodies, and we're not just souls walking around in the bodies that, that we should ignore either, right? We're, we're whole people. And this is hard to grasp sometimes. But we are whole people. All of it's connected.

And this series this month is a natural place that gives us that we can just talk about healthy, whole, and well and what it means to each one of us. Um, so healthy can be caring for your physical body. Wholeness is recognizing that your physical, emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual health are all connected. And well could be living from a place where you and I are tending to all who God created you and me to be. We're tending to it all because we know it's all, it all [00:10:00] matters and it's all connected.

Because I don't wanna go back to who I used to be, to be physically healthy and spiritually depleted. That was me. I don't wanna eat all the, quote, "right foods" while my thoughts are unhealthy. That was me. I don't wanna return to the person who I was exercising my body but neglecting my relationship with others. Putting my body first before my relationship with my husband, my kids. I don't wanna be that person. I want to be well, not just in one area, , but as a whole person. I want to be well And I assume you do too. I assume you do too.

And it gets me to, to ask some questions of myself, of myself and what I'm doing. Am I giving attention to my physical health while neglecting another part of me, my wellbeing, my whole wellbeing? Or have I been [00:11:00] neglecting my physical health because I'm convinced, I've convinced myself that it doesn't really matter. That it's more important to be spiritual, that it's more important to be emotional, that it's more important to be mentally strong than it is to be physically strong.

We can tell ourselves all sorts of stories, can't we? We can tell ourselves all sorts of things to, to convince ourselves to, uh, do certain things and to live a certain way. But I think the most important thing is we can align our thoughts with scripture in line to what, what does God say about this?

And so let's look at 1 Timothy 4:8. I found this in the Voice translation, and I think it's just really important just to give us this perspective about, um, it's all connected, but yet, you know, our, our physical health does matter. But anyway, let's just get into it. Um, this is what it says. "Although training your body [00:12:00] has certain payoffs, godliness benefits all things. Holding promise for life here and now and promise for the life that is coming."

Did you get that? I wanna read that again. Excuse me. "Although training your body has certain payoffs." Yes, it does. Thank you, Lord. But... Sorry, there's no but there. Uh, let me just start that over again. "Although training your body has certain payoffs, godliness benefits all things, holding promise for life here and now, and promise for the life that is coming."

Oh, that's so good. Holding promise for life here and now, and for life that is coming. Godliness. There will always be another thing we could do for our health, right? Another food someone says that we shouldn't eat, another [00:13:00] supplement someone says we should take, another exercise someone says we should do, another morning routine someone suggests. And wellness can become another area in life in which we can either make it to be an idol or we can, we can totally feel like we're failing in.

And according to this verse, I don't believe that God is asking us to obsess over our health. But I do believe He's inviting us to care for what He has given us. And those two-- those are very different things, obsessing and caring. Obsessing is fear-based. It's appearance-based. It's comparison-based. Where, um, caring for ourselves is stewardship. Stewardship. It's taking care of what God has given us.

You know, I, I have to say too that even [00:14:00] though I've made mistakes in the past regarding my health, I haven't always thought about health the way I do today. My choices, you know, even the last five years didn't... The last five years I've made some big choices in my life. I started really in two, two, 2021. And I'll, I'll link a few episodes I've talked about that in the past. But, um, my choices didn't change overnight. I've, I've learned and I've changed and I've adjusted and I'm still learning. I don't have it mastered. I don't. But I'm learning. I'm growing. I want to be as healthy as I can be. And I, based on that verse that we just read in, in 1 Timothy. As I, um As I apply that to my life, I, I wanna be the wh- the whole person that's healthy. Um, I want to be, [00:15:00] I wanna be balanced, and I know that balanced isn't the right word to use, but I want to consider it all for my health. What does well look like for me? And what does well look like for you right now?

I sometimes just take into account, how does my body feel most days? How does your body feel most days? What's your energy like? What's my energy like? How am I sleeping? What am I regularly putting into my body? What am I putting into my brain? How often am I scrolling on my phone? What has been my stress level lately? Has it been a lot or has it been, you know, pretty manageable? And how are my thoughts? What am I saying to myself? How are my closest relationships? How do-- how connected do I feel to God?

Sometimes those answers to those questions, they will tell me exactly how I, how [00:16:00] well I am. Because I know when I'm tired, I-- physically tired, I don't function well. And I might snap at my husband too fast. I may just feel depleted. I may, um, avoid people and, and avoid relationships. I may just feel off. I may start thinking terrible thoughts, negative thoughts. So if one thing gets

off or say I'm spiritually dry and I haven't spent time with God in a day or two, you know, maybe I've just done it in passing, that affects everything else. That affects what I eat, it affects my attitude, it affects my sleep, it affects, it affects everything. So you see it's all connected.

And I think some of us do just focus on one, one area. Is it just the, the physical thing that we're focused on when really if we focus on it all and just, "Lord, how you want me to be healthy [00:17:00] today?" There's the answer. We're g-- we're-- I'm jumping way ahead. We're gonna be talking about that in a, a week or two to come.

But maybe the most important question we can ask ourselves is, is there an area of my life... Or let me back up. Is there an area of my health that I've been ignoring? What is that area of health that you've been ignoring?

For a long time, I thought what I put in my body to eat really didn't affect me. I just thought I could exercise it off. So for example, say, you know, one of my favorite foods is french fries. I, I kinda like onion rings too. But fried foods, I really like fried foods. And I just thought, you know what? If I would just do, um, you know, an extra run or an extra walk or lift more weights that, you know, that would just offset the, the stuff, the negative, uh, effects [00:18:00] of what my french fries were putting into my body. But as I researched and, and, and walked through this more, I began to understand that no matter what I do to exercise, the effects of those french fries, they're gonna stay in my body and for a whole ... a whole lot of reasons. The seed oils, the, the carbs, the, um, just the, the, what it does to my mitochondria, what it does to my, my lining of my gut, all of that stuff. I may be talking gibberish to you. Don't mean to do that. But just from the, the, the things that I've learned and now I understand, I know that it does matter what I eat. And I, I have changed how I've eaten in the last five years. And I, I see that being well is, also has to do with the foods that I keep in my house and the foods that we have [00:19:00] for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

So - This answer, you know, what is, what is the area of my health that I've been ignoring? That's gonna be - different for each one of us. So we just have to, in my opinion, is to pause and just look at and say, "Okay, what is it that I've been ignoring?"

I just gave an example there with, with the food, but yours might be totally different. Yours might be sleep. Maybe you know you've been just running on empty. You've been getting five hours of sleep, four hours of sleep, six hours of

sleep, and you are just exhausted. You think you can keep going at that pace, but you need more sleep. You know you do. That might be it.

Or maybe it's something else. Maybe it's you just don't have time to exercise. Maybe that's it. Maybe you are feeling like you just don't know where to begin with God. You feel so distant from Him, but you know that that's the, the part of your health that you've been ignoring, your spiritual health. [00:20:00] Maybe that's it. I don't know what it is

And I would love to-- Again, I say this often, I wish we could sit across from the table from each other and have this conversation. I would absolutely love that. So we could kind of encourage each other in this area of our health. I have very few people in my life that I can talk to about my health. Very few. And it, it does make a difference to have someone in your corner, uh, to be able to say, "Yeah, you know, keep doing it. Keep, keep doing it. You're doing the good thing. You're doing the best thing for your body, your best thing for your mind, best thing for your emotional state."

I would love to encourage you this week to just notice, just pay attention. For one week, that's it. Just pay attention to how you're doing physically, mentally, emotionally, rationally, relationally, spiritually. Just pay attention. Now, [00:21:00] if you're like me, you're gonna start judging yourself. Don't do that. Do not judge yourself. Do not try to overhaul your life this week. Just notice. That's it.

Because you know as well as I do, it's difficult to care for something when we're unwilling to pay attention to it. If we're too busy, I don't like that word, you know that. If we're just too preoccupied with other things, it's really hard. It's really hard to, to care for something that we don't even notice. So just notice.

Being healthy doesn't mean perfect. Whole doesn't mean that we never struggle. And being well doesn't mean that everything in our lives is just going well. It's, it's, doesn't mean any of that. But being healthy, whole, and well, it's an ongoing practice of just caring for life, the life that God has entrusted to us. Mind, [00:22:00] body, heart, relationships, soul, all of it. You and I don't have to change everything today. We're just gonna notice And just by, just by paying attention to that one area, we're gonna know what it is that God's inviting us to care for us, just care for ourselves a little differently. We're gonna know it.

Because we're, first of all, we're gonna ask God to, to reveal it to us. So let's do that now. Let's stop and just pause here for a moment and pray. Are you ready? Let's do this.

Oh, Heavenly Father, I just thank You for this opportunity that we get to just pause today and talk about healthy, whole, and well. Lord, I know what it's like to be out of sync in one of these areas of our lives where it's, maybe it's physical or emotional or mental or relational or rational or spiritual. Lord, I, I [00:23:00] know what it's like to just be out of sync. To have one maybe be depleted or one that we are just hyper-focused on. And Lord, I thank You for, um, rescuing me from the place I was in, uh, regarding my health and how I... my physical health and how I led that to be such a big idol in my life all those years ago. But Lord, You have healed that area and You have continued to show me that health is important, that it's all connected. All of these areas are connected. You formed us in such a marvelous way, Lord. You knew what You were doing when You were forming us in our, the wombs of our moms.

And Lord, I, um, am just in awe of how connected we are, um, in all of these areas of our lives. That it's not just one area. That You care about it all. And Father, that, that word in that verse of 1 Timothy about [00:24:00] godliness. Lord, You want us to live a godly life. That's not a perfect life. We know that. It's a godly life.

So Lord, I just ask that You would show us. Show us individually what it is. What, what area is it in our lives that You want us to notice? That You want us to just pay attention to? That maybe we've neglected or even the area that we've just been hyper-focused on. Bring us back into more of a healthy balance. I know there's, balance probably isn't the right word. But Lord, bring us back into, um, a space where we can just give it all to You and trust You with it all and allow You to lead us in these ways of being healthy, whole, and well. We desire that. We desire to be well, Lord. And I, I believe that You desire for that for us too.

So thank You for this time together, Lord. Help us this week to just [00:25:00] notice, to pay attention to what You're showing us. Oh, we love You so much, Lord. Thank You for the one listening today. Bless her. Or the one watching. Encourage her. We love You, Lord. Thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thanks for praying with me. My goodness. As we wrap up today, I just, I wanna thank you for joining me. I know the subject of health and wholeness can bring up all kinds of emotions and feelings. And the last thing I want is for you to feel less than today. I pray that, that this conversation just opens up a more healthy, all-around, uh, wellness type of, attitude instead of, uh, of fingers pointing at ourselves type of attitude. We don't want that. I hope that this conversation helps us all to understand the importance of our health and

wholeness and, and how it's all connected to living the abundant life that Jesus came to give you [00:26:00] and me.

And this is one of the ways that, that women find hope again through Abundant Life mentoring. Abundant Life mentoring is, it's not about fixing your life or fixing, um, fixing it to be perfect. It's, it's just really about having someone to walk alongside of you, to ask good questions, to, to point you back to God's truth and to help you realize the kind of life that God has for you right here, right now.

And sometimes that does have to do with our health and our wholeness and our wellness. And this subject - rises up often in, uh, sessions with clients where we end up do sometimes talking about our health and what does that look like to be well in the Lord's eyes. I would love to be able to just encourage you in this area or any other area in life. You can find confidence, clarity, and, um, the, the hope that you have [00:27:00] in Jesus. We just talk about, a lot about all these things, um, depending on what you wanna talk about, depending on your circumstances. And so you can find more about Abundant Life mentoring in the show notes. You can find the link there.

And one last thing before you go. If today's episode encouraged you, would you just do me a quick favor? Think of one woman who might just need this reminder today about health and wholeness and wellness. Maybe she's just holding onto a lot right now and, um, she's just waiting for, for life to get easier, or she's struggling to see the good right now in her health and she wants to be whole, but she doesn't know where to begin. Or she wants to be well, but she doesn't really understand how to go about doing that. Would you text this, text this episode to her or - even share it on social media? You never know how God might use just [00:28:00] a simple act of encouragement to remind another that her life is important and what she does is important.

And if today's conversation resonated with you, I would love to hear from you. I would absolutely love to hear from you. Send me a message or you can even leave a review or if you're feeling extra generous, tell me what spoke to your heart about this episode or maybe what is that area of your health that you know God is wanting you to, to look at. I read every comment. Even if it's on social media, I read every one and I try to respond even every email. They encourage me more than you know. So thank you. Thank you for being here each week. It truly means so much to me.

And next week, we're going to talk about something that I think many of us have experienced. When did taking care of ourselves get so complicated?

Because, you know, maybe living healthier doesn't have to be nearly as [00:29:00] complicated as we've made it to be. So come back next week. I look forward to seeing you then.

Until next time, stay encouraged and stay focused on the life that Jesus came to give you. Stay focused on Him. I look forward to seeing you soon. God bless you.

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