

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

271 Who Said You Should?

[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.

Today we are thinking about the word should. Should, S-H-O-U-L-D. How often does this word run through our minds or cross our lips without us even noticing? How often do we think about should or say the word should?

[00:01:00] Well, I think it's a lot.

We might say or think such things like, "I should probably be waking up earlier," or, "I should go work out," or, "I should probably call her or text her." And if my kids are listening, "I should probably call my mom." Yes, you should call your mom. I love it when my kids call me. Or, "I should probably be further along by now," or, "I should probably have this all figured out by now," or, "I should probably be doing more or doing something different." There's a lot of shoulds, and I think that we say or think them more than we realize. Do any of those sound familiar to you?

Well, interestingly, I have started to pay attention to this word in my life and in my vocabulary, and I [00:02:00] say it more than I realized I did. And so it's causing me to ask, who said I should?

If this sounds like something that you could use today, some encouragement, some hope, and how the expectations in our lives form us and what we can do about them, then you have come to the right place today. Let's get into this episode.

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie Lefebure, and I am so happy you're here today. So happy you're here. Last month, we talked about being healthy, whole, and well, and all month long, we

talked, uh, just, just things about health and wellness. And last week, uh, my functional doctor, Dr. Tanya [00:03:00] Tegatz, joined me as my guest on the podcast, and I wanna make sure you didn't miss that. So if you haven't listened to it yet, I linked it in the show notes. You can find it there. It was a, a great episode, and I think that you're gonna be blessed by it. So it was a good series. And, uh, this month we are starting a new series and it's titled "The Shoulds We Live By". Shoulds. We are talking about shoulds. S-H-O-U-L-D-S. Yes.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Don't should on yourself"? I have, and it's kinda funny, but it's... there's some truth to it. We're gonna be talking about some of this today. And the thing is, - you and I have something in common. We have shoulds. We do. We think about or say what we should be doing, how we should spend more time with a person, or how we [00:04:00] should spend our time, period. What we should eat, or how we should take care of ourselves, or what our home should look like, or what our car should look like, or where we should be at this point in life, or how we should be handling a certain situation, or who we think we should be.

There's a lot of shoulds. More than we realize. But the thing is, should isn't necessarily the problem. I mean, there are really things, there are things that we should do, right? There are things we should do in life. We have responsibilities and commitments and things that, that God asks of us, right?

So the, the point isn't to get rid of should. The point here is that we can live by a should without ever questioning where it came from. [00:05:00] And these shoulds become expectations, and they can become habits, and they can be the thing that we live by without even realizing it.

But a should can-- they sound completely reasonable, right? I mean, we don't question shoulds often. Like we, I should volunteer, I should say yes to this, I should make homemade food because it's better for me. I should make myself available. I should exercise six days a week. I should read my Bible X amount of minutes a day. None of those shoulds are necessarily bad or wrong, right? But good, quote, "good," and quote, "what I'm called to do right now" aren't always the same thing. And sometimes should, [00:06:00] the shoulds in our life, lives make them feel like they are the same thing.

And so it's interesting, the more that we think about and, and ponder these shoulds in our lives, we just really start to, to pay attention to 'em, and we wonder where did all these shoulds come from?

Well, as I go through some of these, I made a list. As I go through some of these, I'm gonna be sharing some of my own shoulds in my own, in my own life, from my own life.

So for example, um, a should could come from other people. Like, a good mom should blank, or a, a woman your age should blank. And I have a really good one for this. Um, it was 11 years ago. I remember it. I remember the moment that, um, this person said this, and it was... This again, this is from other, another person, [00:07:00] so this falls into this category. We were on a trip, and this, this woman who I know, um, said to another woman that a woman her/our age should never be wearing a two-piece swimsuit. And guess who was wearing a two-piece swimsuit 11 years ago? It was me. And I, um, I heard it, and I thought, "Is she saying that for my sake?" 'Cause I was the only one in the group wearing a two-piece swimsuit. And I, um, it, it, it just made me w- it, it made me wonder, and it made me think any, any time after that I put that swimsuit on, I thought about that. A woman my age should not be wearing a two-piece swimsuit.[00:08:00]

So that's a should. Yeah, that is a should. And you know what? I don't know if I've worn a two-piece like that much since. So that's a should. Yeah, so shoulds can come from other people.

Shoulds can also come from culture, like the, uh, like what success and beauty and productivity and health and marriage and church life and motherhood and aging are supposed to look like. I have a lot of these. I have a lot of these. So success, uh, if I wanted to be successful, then I should work a lot of hours. I just remember that. I don't, I don't remember exact where, you know, but that's, that's what I, I... the culture taught me. Especially the culture of the business I was in years ago, that if I wanted to be successful, I really needed to pull out all the stops and, and work harder.[00:09:00]

Uh, the beauty, you know, if you wanna be beautiful, you should do this. If you wanna be productive, you should do this. If you wanna be healthy, you need to eat this way.

Uh, motherhood, if you're gonna be a good m- if you wanna be a good mom, then you need to do this.

And aging There's so many things out there that I read and hear that say, you know, "If you wanna age gracefully, then you should use this product or do this or, or lift heavy or get this amount of sleep or..." You know, it's, it's a lot. So culture can drive some of these shoulds.

Another big one is comparison. "Well, if she's doing that, maybe I should be doing it too." Now, I Can fall into this very quickly. I can fall into comparison really quickly. -- 'Cause I, I, I, I, I have a lot of friends that are writers, [00:10:00] business owners, and if I see someone doing something and they're being s- very successful in whatever they're doing, I can easily think, "Gosh, well, if she's doing that, I should do that, and then maybe I'll be successful in that area."

Last month, uh, four, four of us in a, my Monday morning prayer group met in St. Louis, and we had a, um, fabulous time. It was a girls' weekend. And the thing I loved about being with these other three women is that there was no comparison. We shared ideas. We, um... But we kept kind of saying this thing, "Well, m- what's working for me may not work for you." And it was just, it was good to get away from that should kinda thing. Uh, it, it was just, it was refreshing. And so comparison can be a big one in our shoulds.

Another one is our past, the things that we learned growing up [00:11:00] that we never questioned. Now, I kinda have a silly one for this, kinda silly, but when I had little babies, my mom taught me to put onesies on , my babies underneath their clothing. And if you know what a onesie is, you know, it's like a one-piece thing and it snaps in the, the crotch area. And, uh, you pull it, of course, over the, over the baby's, um, diapers. But that was because my mom was taught, I think, that babies are colder than adults. And so I did that with my kids. I put onesies on them because that's what my mom taught me.

Well, when my kids started having kids the onesie thing got lost because I remember when my daughter, I'm like, she was dressing her, her baby at the time, and I said, "Aren't you gonna put a onesie on him?" And she's like, "Why?" I'm like, "I don't know why. [00:12:00] Who said I should?" I learned this from my past. I watched my mom do it, so I did it. Well, evidently my, um... I guess I didn't watch my mom do it, but that's what my mom had taught me. That's what I should say. And I guess I never taught that to my daughter 'cause she didn't do it. And now our son and daughter-in-law, they don't put onesies on babies either, or on their little babies. So that's just, it's, it's an example, but it's, it's something that I thought I had, I should do, was what my mom taught me to do. Something I learned from my past that I never questioned.

I don't know why. When my daughter asked me why, I'm like, "I don't know. It's just what you should do." Silly, but it's true, the things from our past that we don't even realize, and that's just one example.

And of course, the one that, that we may be most familiar with is ourselves. These are the standards that we've created for ourselves that no one is actually [00:13:00] requiring of us. It's just us that are doing it, and I have a few of these. A few of them, um, I'll share a couple. That one is that I should walk 10,000 steps a day, and when I don't do it, I feel... I really get down on myself. So that's a standard I set for myself that no one's really requiring it of me, but I get down on myself when I don't do the should.

Or, um, I should go to bed earlier at night. I like to stay up till 10:00 . That feels late for me. Um, it would be much better if I went to bed at 9:00 or 9:30. And I sometimes I feel like that should weighs over me come 9:00 at night.

I also, uh, have a should regarding my phone, that I should not be on my phone as much as I tend to be close to the end of the day. So there's a lot of [00:14:00] shoulds that I put on myself that maybe, really, I don't know. Just something to think about.

And then I think the most important one is some shoulds come from God. They are more framed as like commands and moral instructions and guidelines for us to live a faithful, abundant life. When God gives us shoulds, they are to benefit us because God knows what's best for us, right? And so these shoulds are, are formed by Him that we live in our-- we carry out in our own lives and we live out.

Um, you know, sometimes the things that we're sensing that we need to do or feeling like God's nudge that we need to do, it, it just-- they line up with God's Word and His direction for our lives. So the goal here is not to eliminate every [00:15:00] should, but it's, it's learning to recognize whose voice that we're responding to.

So like I'm thinking about a few verses in the Bible where, you know, it says, um, "Pray continually," and I don't remember the exact verse. But pray continually. Yeah, I should pray continually because it would benefit me.

Um, another one is trust in the Lord. Proverbs 3 chapter-- ch- chapter 3, verses 5 and 6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." That is a should. I should trust in the Lord with all my heart. I should not lean on my own understanding.

All of those because that's what's best for my life. So I don't wanna get rid of every should, but I wanna pay attention to where it's coming from. There are so

[00:16:00] many shoulds in the Bible, and I love the shoulds in the Bible, even if they make me feel uncomfortable, even if they make me feel like, ugh, that's a hard one. But God desires His best for us, and some of those bests come in the form of shoulds.

So I think it's important to pause and think, "All right, who said this should? Who said I should? Who said you should do this? Where did they come from?" So I think it's important to think, okay, did this come from something that I grew up believing? Hmm. Is it something that someone once told you? Is this should coming from something that you see everyone else doing? Is it from comparison? Is it from culture? Or is it an expectation that you put on yourself? [00:17:00] Or is it something that God actually is asking of you? Where does it come from?

And why does all of this matter? We're talking about shoulds. Why does it even matter? Well, it matters greatly. Because I don't believe that we realize how important it is to, to address these shoulds in our lives. Because we have been living however long you've been on this earth, we've been living oftentimes with shoulds for a very long time, and we don't even realize that they're there.

But these shoulds, they could, they can affect so much of our lives. They can discreetly affect 'cause we don't even know it. We don't realize it. They affect what we do. They affect what we don't do. They affect the choices that we make. They affect how we spend our time. [00:18:00] They affect how we feel about ourselves and how we feel about our lives. And the thing is, though, if we have never stopped to even ponder them, to recognize them, and think about them, we don't even know they're there, let alone we've never stopped to ask, "Are these shoulds really true?"

Now, the ones from the Bible you know are true. Well, I know they're true because I believe that the Bible is true. The ones from my past, some may be true. You know, like I should not touch a hot burner, right? I know that that's true. But the, the should of I should do this a certain way because I should make a certain dish this way because my mom made it this way, is that really true? I mean, I wanna do what my mom did because I I loved her, loved her so much. [00:19:00] Still love her, even though she's in heaven. And I, um, wanna honor her, but that doesn't mean that it's necessarily something that I have to do today. I could do it a different way.

Uh, another thing is, is, is last month I had, um, a women's event planned, and I had to end up canceling it because I, um, the registrations just didn't come in.

And I had been so stuck in doing these events a certain way because they used to be very, um, well-attended. And, and so I thought, "Well, I have to keep doing... I should do it that way. Keep doing this this way because that's how it works. That's how they've been well-attended in the past."

Well, sometimes the shoulds, it's really not true. I didn't need to keep doing it that way because I'm... You know, God's directing me to some other way.

[00:20:00] So sometimes the shoulds were true once, but they're not true now. And I think it's really important that we pause. We're gonna talk about this, but look at these shoulds and are they even true? Or have we been living under these expectations? Because, again, these shoulds become expectations that we live by, either someone else's expectations or our own. And then they form us into the people that we are or the, to the, how we believe that we are.

The thing is, scripture points us away from this performance-driven, driven kind of should. Like, , "I should do this because this is just the way it's done," or, "I should do this 'cause it'd be successful." And it, and it turns our, our focus to, um, toward the, the freedom found in grace and identity in Christ and in trust in Him.

Because when expectations [00:21:00] become overwhelming burdens, I'm so grateful scripture reminds us that Jesus is the, the only One who lifts the weight of those burdens. And shoulds become burdens. They do. They become burdens. They can become overwhelming. They can control how, how we live our lives.

And this brings me to the scripture in Matthew, in chapter 11, verses 28 through 30. And I-- we've shared it here before, but in the New International Version it says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Shoulds, their burden is heavy. But Jesus is-- Jesus, He, His, His [00:22:00] burdens are light. Shoulds become overwhelming. They, they, um, they become like yokes on us, like they are just weighing us down. And the thing is, like I've said probably four times here already, is that we don't even realize that we're living under them. We don't realize we're living under these expectations of these shoulds.

And so this week, I invite you to take some action on this. And I'm feeling so passionate about it because I'm seeing what recognizing these in my life is doing for me, that I wanna make sure that I share this with you. Because I think it's going to be one of those things that lifts off of you, and you're gonna feel this peace and this freedom that maybe you haven't felt in a long while.

So this week, I invite you just to pay attention. Pay attention. Notice when you hear yourself say or think, [00:23:00] "I should," or, "I should probably," or, "I shouldn't," whatever. "I should," "I should probably," or, "I shouldn't." Pause for a moment and write it down or put it in your notes app on your phone. Write it down.

It could just be a one-word thing. "I should clean my house." "I should do something this way." "I should do 10 steps a day." Te- 10 steps. 10,000 steps a day. Whatever it is, write it down. Uh, you're, you're gonna know it. But the thing is, I, I'm, I'm gonna be praying that God will show you, make you aware when you say or think the word should or shouldn't or should probably.

Okay. So then ask, just simply ask, "Who said I should? Who said I should do that?" And then I bet you're gonna find, , did it go in one of these [00:24:00] categories? Maybe from the past or from the, from yourself or from someone else. I don't know. But this has been eye-opening for me, and I'm seeing that I have a whole lot more shoulds in my life than I, like I said, than I realized.

So again, just pay attention this week. Notice when you say, "I should blank," or, "I probably should blank," or, "I shouldn't blank." Write it down, and then just ask, "Who said I should?"

You don't need to do anything else with it at this point. I wanna make sure that you don't need to feel like you have to do anything else with it. Don't try to figure out what to do about every should yet. All right?

We're gonna talk about that next week. That's coming next week. Um, because we're gonna be talking about this all month long, and I, I think this is gonna be very transformative.

And because we're talking about this all month long, [00:25:00] and I have been working on this myself, I created a resource to help you take exactly what we're talking about here and to work through it in your own life and in your own time. And I'm very excited about it. It's called I Should Probably. Yes, I Should Probably. It's a printable type workbook or guide that helps you uncover the shoulds that you may not even realize that you're living by.

And then you identify where they're coming from, and then look more closely... You get a chance to look more closely at five of them, and then you can decide what you wanna do with each one, whether the should is worth keeping or not. But you're gonna become very aware of your shoulds, very aware of these expectations that you're living under, that a month ago you probably didn't even have any idea that you [00:26:00] were.

Of course, you can absolutely start with a piece of paper this week or your notes app and begin just jotting down your shoulds. And if you'd like me to walk with you through the process just a little more, - I Should Probably, this, this tool, is there to help you do that. And I'll share it in the, the link in the show notes. I am very excited about it. And as I work through it, I am encouraged by what God is teaching me, and I think you will be too.

So who said you should? Hmm. Yeah. Just notice this week. There's no pressure to fix everything, but just notice.

And next week we're gonna take it one step further. Next week we're talking about should doesn't always mean you should. And, uh, once we've noticed these shoulds and started [00:27:00] asking where are they coming from, how do we decide which ones that we, we actually listen to? Yeah, we're gonna decide that next week, not this week. So come back next week for that.

And if you, uh, found any sort of encouragement in this episode, I invite you to like, to subscribe, to share this episode with another. And, uh, if you're feeling really generous today, of course, I would welcome any sort of review that you wanna give about the Encouragement for Real Life podcast or this episode. It really does mean so much.

And feel free to reach out to me on social media, through my website. I would love to hear from you. Share with me maybe a should in your life or something that God is, is teaching you or maybe how this episode impacted you.

And as always, if you ever want to support the podcast, you can visit my website. I will put the link in the show [00:28:00] notes of all my products there. And, uh, you'll be able to, uh, support the podcast that way, in my shop on my website.

So thank you for being here, for, for showing up, for, uh, being an encouragement to me as you so faithfully are here. And, uh, it's a joy to walk through this life, through this, this podcast with you.

And so until next time, stay encouraged, stay with your eyes fixed on Jesus, and notice some shoulds in your life. Thanks for being here. 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.