

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

272 Should Doesn't Always Mean 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.

I should probably blank. How many times do you and I say this in any given week or even in any given day? I should probably whatever.

Well, here is what I have been noticing as I have been paying attention to [00:01:00] my own shoulds in my life. Shoulds, S-H-O-U-L-D-S, is that sometimes I say, "I should probably," and almost immediately it, it's turned into something that I need to do. But really do I? Do I really need to do that thing? Just because I think I should do something, does that actually mean I should?

This is where we are going today in our series, The Shoulds We Live By, because should doesn't always mean we should. Let's get into this. This is gonna be very encouraging today, and I think it's gonna open our eyes to truly how many shoulds we have and what do we do with those.

So let's get into this episode.

[00:02:00]

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie Lefebure, and I am just so happy that you are here today because we are talking about a subject that I don't think we talk about very often. You may have heard the saying, "Don't should on yourself," S-H-O-U-L-D. And I, uh, I've heard that a lot, and maybe you have too. And I always thought it to be something that I should not do. I should not should on myself, right?

This is a series that we're talking about all month regarding the shoulds that we live by. We are talking about -- all the things that we think we should do in our lives. And as I've, as I've been thinking about this over the last week or so, I have ver- a lot of shoulds in my life. I do, a lot, more than I realized.

And I, I've also [00:03:00] noticed that one of them happens most every night. When I start to get tired and I, I start to wind down from the day, I will think or say out loud even to my husband, "I should probably get ready for bed." And I've noticed how that makes me feel.

But before I get into that, I wanna share that, you know, here's the thing about shoulds, and not all of them are bad because, yeah, not all of them are bad. They're not all expectations that we need to get rid of. Sometimes "I should probably", those words, is exactly right and what we need to do next. So how do we know the difference?

Last week, we started paying attention to our shoulds and asking, "Who said I should?" [00:04:00] And today we're taking it one step further because should doesn't always mean you should, but sometimes it does.

For example, getting ready for bed is a pretty easy one. I'm tired. It's late. I know sleep is good for me. I need it. And I probably should get ready for bed.

But a lot of our shoulds aren't that easy to figure out. I should probably say yes to that. Or I should probably be doing more. Or I should probably start whatever, maybe exercise or start dinner or start a project. I don't know. I should probably spend my time differently. I should probably be farther along than I am, or I should probably be better at this, whatever it is. [00:05:00] And this is where it gets a little trickier. Because just because the thought shows up in my head doesn't mean that it's something that I actually need to do, right?

Just because a thought pops in my head doesn't mean I need to believe it. I say that often. I don't need to believe every thought that I think. I don't need to act on every thought that I think, and I don't need to act on every should that enters my mind.

So how do we tell the difference? Well, I think one of the reasons that this matters is because I don't always realize that I've made a decision in that process of accepting the should.

I think I should probably accomplish this today. And if I think that or say that, then it suddenly becomes part of today's list, right? Like, I should probably get

ready for bed. [00:06:00] It becomes a thing on my list. I didn't decide that it needed to happen today. Like, for example, I'm gonna go back to that example of that I need to accomplish this today. I didn't decide for that to happen today, but I didn't look at everything else I already had planned. I just thought the thought. I just thought the should, and somehow that became a must.

And once a should becomes a must, now there's pressure attached to it, even the bedtime one. There is pressure attached to getting ready for bed because then that means I need to stop what I'm doing right then, even if I'm just relaxing on the couch. There's a pressure of me having to go and get ready for bed. So I've noticed I need to change my wording.

So back to the example of accomplishing something today. If I don't get it done because I've thought I should, I can start to feel behind, [00:07:00] and I can rush through something else to make room for this should. And sometimes I can get to the end of the day and focus more on what I should've done than everything that I actually did get done.

So maybe instead of automatically turning a should into a must, we need to just stop and look at it first. And I think there are three questions that can help us do that. Here they are.

The first one is, is this something that I actually need to do? Is it? Is it something that I actually need to do? Some shoulds are responsibilities, right? Like, I should pay that bill. I should go get groceries 'cause we have no food. I should get ready for bed. Yes, that's the responsible thing. I should keep the commitment that I made. All of those are responsibilities. [00:08:00] And we don't need to overanalyze those.

But sometimes we call something a should when actually it could be, it really could be a could. Not a should, but a could. Like, I could volunteer for that instead of I should volunteer for that. Or I could make that from scratch, or I should make that from scratch. Or I could take on another project, compared to I should take on another project. Do you see the difference? Do you feel the difference from a could to should? It totally changes everything.

To me, changing should to could might just immediately change how it feels. It actually not even might, it does change how it feels. Even when I say it, it changes how I feel when I say it. So do I really need to do this thing? Is it a should [00:09:00] or is it a could? Hmm. That's a really good point. Really good thing to ponder because sometimes our shoulds could be coulds.

All right, let's move on to the, the second question.

Why do I think I should? Now, this kinda touches on last week's episode just a bit, not very much. But maybe there is a legitimate reason to do this. Maybe it's important to you. Maybe it aligns with something that God is asking you to do. Or maybe when you really ponder this should, your answer is, "Well, I should do it because that's how I've always done it." Or, "I should do it because everyone else seems to be doing it." Or, "I should because I think s- I think that's what someone my age should be doing."

The why tells us a whole lot. [00:10:00] Do you see that? The shoulds can be something else that some, some other expectation that we've placed on ourselves or that we're comparing ourselves to someone else or comparing someone else's should to our should and then their should can become ours. It's just as-- It could be just a vicious cycle. When we start looking at these shoulds, it gets really interesting, right?

Okay, let's go on to the qu- the, the third question. Is this right for me right now? And this, I think this one is especially important. I think they're all important, but this one is especially important because something can be good without being something that you need to do. And something can be right for you, uh, eventually without it being right right now.

Now, before I go any further, I [00:11:00] just-- I wanna say that please hear me here. I don't want you replacing one set of rules about shoulds that you should do whatever with these, with my rules. These aren't really rules about what you should do. This is just helping us to pause and slow down long enough to discern and to examine these shoulds in our lives.

So to recap, do I need to? Why do I think I should? And is it right for me right now?

So let's look at an example here. Um, let's look at something that I say pretty regularly, like, "I should probably get this done today." I should probably get this done today."

Okay, but do I actually need to? Well, maybe there's a deadline. Maybe someone is waiting on me. Maybe I've actually committed to doing it today. I have to get it done today. [00:12:00] Then, yes, I probably should. But maybe there isn't any reason it has to happen today other than the fact that I decided it should get done today. Hmm. Yeah.

So let's walk through this. Let's , ask these questions. Do I need to? Well, does this actually need to happen today? Let's look, for example, um, washing bed sheets. I do it once a week. And so say I decided to do it today, which I actually did do today . All right, do I need to do this? Does this actually need to happen today? No, it didn't really need to happen today, but today's the day I usually do bed sheets. I usually wash them. Why do I think I should? Well, hmm, is there a real reason or have I just simply put that [00:13:00] expectation on myself? Well, I guess my reason is that I like to have clean bed sheets and it , doesn't necessarily n-need to happen today. So if I needed to move it to another day, I could.

And is this right for me right now? Well, what else matters today? What would saying yes to this mean that I'm saying no to? Because if I'm saying yes to this should, then I'm saying no to something else So no, I really don't need... I mean, I, it could be okay for me right now.- I mean, I could throw in the laundry as I'm doing other things. So I think it's okay for me to do the bedsheets today. But I didn't have this overwhelming feeling that I should. I could have moved it to another day.

But the thing is, sometimes I turn something that I'd like to get done into something I should get done, [00:14:00] and those two are not the same things. They are not. Now, bedsheets aren't probably that great of example, but is what I thought of in the moment.

Um, you know, maybe, um, I just wonder how often we do this. For example, like say I, um, felt like I should go see my grandchildren today. Okay, that was something I wanted to do. I, I wanted to do, um, not necessarily that I n- I should do, because maybe there's other things that I need, need to, to do here first before doing that.

But I do wonder how often we do this without even realize. We, we take on something that we'd like to do, something that would be nice either to experience or to get done, something that we could do, and then somewhere in the mix of that along the way, it becomes something that we should do. And once it [00:15:00] becomes a should, it can start to feel like an obligation, like I said earlier, or a must, or an expectation, and it becomes a heavier weight. It becomes something that is not a pleasant thing anymore. It can become something like, "I got to do this. I have to do this," instead of, "I get to do this.

I should clean out that closet. I should make that appointment. I should call her. Yeah, I should finish that project. I should make something homemade for that gathering." And some of these may absolutely need to happen. Yes. That's why

we're not throwing all of the shoulds out the window today. We're just learning not to automatically treat every should the same, with the same urgency, intention, weight, any of that.

And I think [00:16:00] this is where we need to stop and bring God into the conversation. Because I do not want to just decide what I should do or shouldn't do based on how I feel that day. Because that can change. That can change with any given day. I don't wanna base this on my own, ugh, frail feelings and thoughts and assumptions. I want, I desire God's wisdom in how I'm living every area of my life and what I'm giving my time and attention to. Because I know that if I invite God in and ask for His will and His purpose and His discernment and His insight, I know that that's gonna be His best for my life. And His best is always the best. My best is not always the best for me.[00:17:00]

So I could ask something like, "God, is this important right now? Is this something that You're asking me to give my time and attention to in this season, in this moment? Is this what You want me to do today? Is this a should or is it a could? Lord, direct me. Lord, guide me." Something simple like that.

And when I was looking through some Bible verses, you know I like to bring in a Bible verse each, in each episode, I came across Philippians, and it's chapter 1, verses 9 through the first part of 10. And I like this in the Voice translation. I like choosing different translations. And you may or may not agree with me on that.

But in the Voice translations, translation, this is what it says. "Here's what I pray for you. Father, may their love grow more and more in [00:18:00] wisdom and insight, so they will be able to examine and determine the best from everything else."

I'm gonna read that part again. I just, I love it. Oh, "Father, that they may grow more and more in wisdom and insight so they will be able to examine and determine the best from everything else."

I just, I love that. The wisdom and insight to determine the best from everything else. It doesn't say to de- determine the good from the bad. It's what's best from everything else.

And I think that applies to these shoulds. I know he wasn't talking about that. I know that, that the author Paul was not talking about shoulds, but it, it's, it's just that, that the, that [00:19:00] wisdom and insight, God's wisdom and insight to

know what's best. We can apply that to, to every area of our life. Because sometimes the things that we're deciding aren't between good and bad things because they're both good things, right? So the question is, what's best? And God always knows what's best for us. He always knows. And we can take the pressure off ourselves involving Him and not trying to figure it out on our own. That's a lot of pressure to figure it out on our own or to think that we need to do it by ourselves.

So when we ask Him, we can trust that He's gonna direct us in the right way. Aren't you so glad for that?

And sometimes we, we pause to evaluate a should and we realize that, mm-mm, no, I don't actually need to do this. And yet we still feel like we should. [00:20:00] Or we've, we've just got this nudge from God that we don't need to do this right now, but we still might feel like we should. And this might be the harder part of it all because I can decide that something doesn't need to happen today and still spend half the day thinking, "I should really get that done." I'm guilty of that.

You know, maybe the closet doesn't need to be cleaned today, or the email can wait, or you don't need to attend that thing that you were questioning if you should go to or not. Nobody is expecting the homemade whatever at the gathering. But you've already labeled it as a should.

And I think here's the point. Once we've decided that something doesn't need your yes, you don't have to keep putting yourself on trial for saying no to it. You don't have to keep continuing to feel guilty for putting it aside for now. [00:21:00]

And how do I know? Because I know that feeling. I know that feeling. Not every undone thing means that you and I have failed to do something that we should have done. Should doesn't always mean we should. That just takes pressure off, doesn't it? Can't you just feel? I can just feel my shoulders relaxing already.

Sometimes after asking these three questions and involving God, the answer will be yes, and so we do it. Sometimes the answer will be not now. And sometimes the answer will simply be no.

So maybe this week, instead of automatically adding every should to your list and my list, how about if we give ourselves a minute to just look at it first? Look at the should. Because some of our shoulds - [00:22:00] absolutely

deserve a yes. Some might be a not now, and some might not need to be on our list at all, ever. And all three are okay.

I think these shoulds play a bigger role in , our lives than we realize. And so let's pause right now and just say a short prayer. Because I think it's really important that we involve God in these shoulds. Let's do that.

Oh, Heavenly Father, I thank You for this time together. And Lord, as we're talking about these shoulds in our lives, that word, it just has some weight to it. And yet, Lord, we know that there are things that we should do, that we need to do in our lives, but there's also things that You don't ever call us to do. And then we put these expectations on ourselves that we don't need to. And so, Lord, the next time we're faced with a should or [00:23:00] that a should pops up, would You remind us to just look at it first, to seek You, to involve You, to invite You in?

Do we really need to do this? Do we really need to make this should a part of our lives today? And if it's a yes, help us to do it. And if it's a not now, help us to be okay with just waiting. And if it's a no, then guide us, Lord, to walk away from that should. We want Your best for our lives. We want Your will for our lives because we know that Your best is best. Thank You. Thank You, Father, for being so faithful in our lives, never leaving us, never forsaking us, but always guiding us to Your will and Your ways. We love You so much. In Jesus' name, amen.

You know, I have been really thinking a lot about these shoulds, um, just because it's just been on my heart for a while. And as we're [00:24:00] working through these episodes, I, I wanna share that if you would like some help walking through some of these, this is exactly why I created I Should Probably. Yes, it's called I Should Probably. It's a printable workbook that I've spent a lot of time on. I've created it just for you, and I hope that it will help you identify some of your own shoulds in your life. It'll help you to look at where they're coming from. And I think maybe the most important part is deciding, help you deciding what to do with them.

If this is something that you'd like to check out, I will put the link in the show notes so you can see all the details there, and you can access it.

And, you know, if, if you're enjoying Encouragement for Real Life, if you're enjoying this podcast, would you just make sure that you're following the podcast so you don't miss an episode? Whether it might be on YouTube or on

your [00:25:00] favorite listening app or, um, you can even follow along on my website, julielefebure.com.

And if someone came to mind today as, as you were listening, would you just send this episode her way? Maybe she needs the reminder of this month too of just what these shoulds, to free ourselves from the pressure of these shoulds in her life too. So that would be great.

And I would love to hear from you. If you have a specific should that you're walking through that you're realizing that, "Oh my goodness, this has really become a, an obligation in my life instead of an opportunity," then share it with me, either on my website or social media. I would love to hear from you, and that way I can be praying for you specifically as well.

And as we close today, we have spent, um, goodness, the last two weeks looking at the shoulds that we put on ourselves. But the thing is, we're not the only ones that [00:26:00] we have shoulds for. Yeah. We do have shoulds for other people. And so next week, that's where we're going. We are going there in next week's episode. So I invite you to come back then.

In the meantime, I just am so grateful for you. Thank you for being here. I will be praying for you throughout the week, and I am just, just glad that we get to do life in this way together. You are important to me. You matter, and you matter to God. So have a great week, and 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.