

# Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

## 273 The Shoulds We Put On Others

[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. Apparently, I don't have shoulds just for myself, but I have plenty for other people too. Shoulds like, "Well, he should know better," or, "She should have called me," or, "They should be doing this differently." And sometimes the [00:01:00] interesting thing is I never even tell them what I think they should be doing, in the first place or after the fact. Oh my goodness.

So what happens when our shoulds aren't about us but about everyone else around us? Well, this is our subject here today in this episode, and I think we're gonna learn a lot. So let's get into it.

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie Lefebure, and I am just glad you're here and that we get to spend these next handful, whatever, two handfuls, three handfuls, four handfuls of, of moments together. Uh, I'm just glad that, uh, we get to just journey together in this way. So, thanks for being here.

[00:02:00] We have spent the last couple of weeks talking about the shoulds that we put on ourselves. Now, I, I, I s- I think I need to slow down and say that better. The shoulds. - 'Cause it can sound like another word if I'm not careful. So, the shoulds that we - put on ourselves. Or the, the shoulds that we carry around with us, right? We've been talking about this.

And I've been learning a lot about myself. And the thing, one thing, you know what I've realized? Is that yes, I don't have just shoulds for me. I have them for the people I love around me, the people that I don't even know, the people that I meet in the grocery store. Oh my goodness. We're gonna get into some of this.

But things like, "Well, he should put that away," or, "She should know better than that to be able to handle it differently." And another one I thought the other [00:03:00] day was that, "They should really know me better than this," or, "He should know what I mean by now," or, "She should be doing whatever, blank."

And sometimes I don't even say these things out loud, but I'm certainly thinking them. Do you know what I mean? Do you ever do this, too? Tell me I'm not the only one.

And this is where we're going in this series. We continue on in this series, The Shoulds We Live By. Because some of the shoulds affecting our lives aren't about - what we think we should do. They're about what we think everyone else should do.

And when I started paying attention to just this part of the should component, oh my goodness, I realized I just didn't have to look very hard. I found these little shoulds showing up in some [00:04:00] pretty, I guess you could call them ordinary places in my life.

So take for example, one day last week when my husband was graciously folding laundry that had been in a laundry basket for days, maybe a couple days. And, um, bless his heart for doing that. And I noticed that he was folding towels like he folds towels, not how I fold towels and how I like to have them folded. He learned something else from his mom in folding towels, and I learned a different way from my mom when folding towels as we grew up. And so I caught myself again, this isn't the first time I've thought this, but I caught myself again thinking, "He should really fold them - like I do." Because number one, they fit in the closet better, and number two, because I like them that [00:05:00] way. Oh, I really wanted to say something. My... That was my flesh just coming out. Really wanted to say something. But I chose to keep my mouth shut and just be thankful that he was folding them in the first place.

Uh, here's another one. Uh, someone in the last, I don't know, week or so, um, cut me off in traffic. A car, of course, that I didn't know, and I caught myself thinking, "Uh, if he is going to drive, he, he should know how to." And I think I probably, you know, got really irritated real fast. You know, if he's gonna drive, he, he should probably know how to, because clearly he doesn't. And I assumed it was a guy. I don't know if it was a guy or a girl, I have no idea. Uh, so that was another instance saying that he should really know how to drive.

And then, I think it was the same day, at the grocery store, I walked in and there were carts just strewn, strewn [00:06:00] everywhere. They were just all over

the place, uh, in the entrance of the store, and I thought, "People, come on, you should put your carts back correctly and this wouldn't happen."

Do you see? Oh, my goodness. I put shoulds on others that they aren't even aware of. Of course, I didn't say these out loud, but in my head I was definitely thinking 'em. They're all different situations, they're all different people, but every time I have already decided what somebody else should or shouldn't have done. Hmm, is that really my place? I don't know. I don't think so.

Now, does all of, all of these shoulds, these expectations that I put on others, are they, I guess what you would call unreasonable? No, I don't think so. There are times when people really should do something differently, [00:07:00] right? Yes, there are responsibilities. There are-- There's things that are just common courtesy. There are ways that we care and respect for each other, for one another, for our things, the things that we own, the things that we possess.

But I think maybe the bigger question for us isn't, was I right in thinking those things? But maybe the question should be, what happens in me when someone doesn't do what I think they should? I think that's the bigger question. What happens within me when someone doesn't do what I think they should?

Because that thought that, you know, he should be folding the laundry my way or that they should not have done that, it doesn't always just end there, does it? Sometimes [00:08:00] it turns into frustration or irritation or even disappointment, maybe even resentment. And depending on the situation and the relationship, it can affect how I respond to, to that person. And I have lived this time and time again. And maybe for the first time in my life, I'm realizing what these shoulds are doing within me and affecting not only myself, but my relationships with others and just how I interact with other people.

And so here's what I've been thinking about, that sometimes the other person doesn't even know there was a should in the first place. They don't know the expectation that I had for them or for the situation. But I'm still responding to them [00:09:00] as if they knew and chose not to meet that expectation. That's really not fair, is it?

Are my expectations actually known, or have I just assumed that the other person should just know? Hmm. This has really got me thinking. It really has got me thinking. So I think that there are really, maybe there's more, but I, I thought, I've thought of two kinds of shoulds happening with other people in our lives.

Some are , reasonable expectations, like if you've made plans with someone, they should show up, right? Or if someone has made a commitment, it's reasonable to expect them to follow through. That's reasonable. If your husband is going to be later than expected for dinner, maybe a communication isn't unreasonable, right? Those are [00:10:00] some reasonable things.

But then there are the shoulds that are really more like, "Well, they should do it the way I do it," or, "They should see this the way I see it," or, "They should know that this matters to me," or, "They should respond in the way that I would respond."

And I think that this is where I have to turn the question back toward myself. Because the thing is, I can't control whether someone calls or someone does the laundry the right way or how someone drives or, or whether someone puts the grocery cart back where I think it belongs or anything, any other thing that we could think of, that we could think that people should do. But I can pay attention to what happens in me when [00:11:00] they don't, and that is the key. That is the key.

And I think , um I've come up with some questions that I've been asking myself, and there's probably a whole lot more questions, but I've come up with three that I think help really pinpoint how I'm gonna act, how I'm going to respond when someone doesn't do what I think they should do.

And I think the first question needs to be, do I need to communicate this? Do I need to communicate the should? Do I need to just voice it out loud? Because sometimes I'm frustrated that someone isn't doing what I think they should do, but I've never actually told that person what I need, what I want, or what I expected. I can think, "Well, they should just know." You know, I could say that [00:12:00] about my husband, "Well, he should just know how to fold laundry." We've been married for 34 years. He should just know. But should he? Should they? Have I actually said it? I have actually said it. But there's nothing wrong with the way my husband folds towels. It's just the way he does it, and I do it differently.

And sometimes, like I said, I have communicated it, and they know, and they still don't do what I think they should do. Maybe they forgot, or maybe they made a mistake, or maybe they made a different choice. Now, that's different. And I think that that's where the next question becomes very important.

And I, I think the next question, not only do I n-need to communicate it, but do I need to let it go? There's these shoulds that, you know, really nothing-- I...

There's really nothing for me to do with them. [00:13:00] I, I... It's, it's, it's done. It's over with. You know, like when someone cut me off in traffic. They know they shouldn't have done that. That could have really caused a, a, a major, uh, crash or an accident. It could have. But I could be completely right about that, right? But, but now what do I do with it? They're already down the road. They might not even know, th-that, that person did it. They might have just been on their merry way. They could have been headed to the hospital. They could have been dealing with something that I will never know that they were dealing with. So they're down the road, and I'm still in my car, and then now I get to decide how long I'm going to stay irritated about something that I can't change. Hmm.

And letting it go doesn't mean that I'm saying what they did was okay. Not at all. It wasn't okay. But it just means that I'm deciding that it doesn't get any more of me, any more of my attention, [00:14:00] any more of my peace. It doesn't get any more of me.

You know, same thing with the grocery carts. I can think that people should put them away, and yeah, I might be right. They, they need to go in the little cart thing, whatever they call it. I call it a cart corral. Cart corral? I don't know. What do you call it? Especially the one-- the things that hold them that are in the parking lots. What do you call those things? Cart, cart whatever. We call them corrals in our family. But I don't need to carry my irritation through, through the produce aisle. I can just let it go. So what if the carts were a mess? As long as I got one, right? I don't need to carry that irritation any longer.

And then this leads us to the third question: Do I need to adjust my expectations?

So we looked at, [00:15:00] do I need to communicate this? Do I need to let this go? And this last one, do I need to adjust my expectation? Sometimes I just need to ask myself whether the problem is actually what the other person is doing, or whether I've decided that my way is the way it should be done. Kinda like my way or the highway.

So yes, take, take the example with the laundry. My husband folds, you know, the way he folds it, it makes sense to him, but that's not wrong. Is the laundry folded? Yeah, it is. And somewhere along the way, my preference can become the standard in my head that someone needs to do or measure up to or just be the standard of all standards.

Just because he's folding it differently than me [00:16:00] doesn't mean that I'm right. And it doesn't mean that I'm gonna go and refold all the towels. Number

one, that would be mean, and number two, that would just be silly, and that would be a waste of time. The, the towels are already folded, and thankfully he folded them. I'm so grateful that he did.

So sometimes the you should really means I would. Sometimes the you should really means I would. I would fold it this way. I would respond this way. I would make this decision. I would handle that situation differently. But the thing is, different doesn't automatically mean wrong, right? It doesn't.

And I think this is where God has something to [00:17:00] s- something to say about how we respond when people don't do what we think they should do. This is where God is, is at work in us and growing us. And, and you know, I pray often that, Lord, just help me be the woman that you want me to be. And this is one of these refining moments that it doesn't have to be my way. It doesn't have to go the way I think it should.

Because number one, God's plans are always better than my plans. Always. And when I put a should even on God, that limits Him, that limits me from receiving His best for me. And so, yeah, number one, He-- His best is always best. He knows what's better.

And number two, my shoulds might not be right. Maybe someone's way is better [00:18:00] doing it different than me, doing it just in a different manner than me. Maybe I can learn from someone else.

So , it's so much about how we respond and how we, we treat the people that when they do something different than we think they should or they act a different way or whatever it might be, what is happening within us.

And I found this verse. I love this verse, and I haven't read it in a while, but it's Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 and 13. And in the New International Version, this is what it reads: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, , clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." [00:19:00]

That's such a great, great verse, two verses. That's so... I love, I love all of that. Well, I've-- I love all of, you know, the scripture. It just, it just, it's food for my soul. But when I hear that, "Bear with each other and forgive each other," you know, when I respond, uh, I could have responded and said to my husband, "Please fold it the other way," and he would have out of the gentleness and grateful- graciousness of his heart. But it's in that moment that we just bear with

one another and say, "Maybe my way, maybe my should doesn't really belong here." Maybe it doesn't. And maybe that's when we just surrender to God and say, "Lord Help me with these shoulds. Help me not to put these expectations on people, especially when they don't know these expectations. Especially when I can't do anything about them.

Oh, there's so many things we can [00:20:00] learn about these shoulds that we put on other people. And yeah, maybe I need to communicate it better. Excuse me. Maybe I need to let it go. Or maybe I need to adjust my expectation. But whatever the answer is, I can respond with the character that God is forming in me. And my friend, that is what's most important.

So this week, this week let's do something a little different. Instead of only noticing the shoulds that you're putting on yourself, I invite you to pay attention to the shoulds that you're putting on other people. When you catch yourself thinking, "He should, she should, they should." First of all, don't beat yourself up over it because [00:21:00] we're just becoming aware of this. I, I had no idea I had this many shoulds in my life and in my life that I was, I was putting on other people. So let's not beat ourselves up about it. That's not why this-- That's not what we're talking about. We're just noticing it. We've done a lot of noticing lately.

And then we can ask, "Do I need to communicate this or do I need to let it go or do I need to adjust my expectation?" It's just those three questions. And I think when we ask those three questions, we're going to find-- We're gonna learn, number one, and we're going to find how God will work in those situations and how God may teach us and may teach others. Because I guess the goal isn't to never have expectations or on ourselves or, uh, expectations of other people because that's just simply not [00:22:00] realistic. But I, I think I would say that the goal is to notice what those expectations are doing in us. And to invite God into how we respond when people don't meet those expectations.

Let's pause here and just pray for a moment. Let's do that.

Heavenly Father, we are talking so much about these shoulds in our lives this month. And Lord, this is one that I, phew, I am just becoming aware of the shoulds that I put on other people. Lord, , I know You're so faithful at not leaving us where we are, but You continue to grow us and mold us into the women that, that you desire us to be. And even in areas like this, Lord, where we are not bearing with one another, where we're not, um, being kind or being gracious, we don't even realize it, Lord, I ask that You would help us to [00:23:00] see where we are doing this, where we are putting the shoulds on

other people so that we can love others better, and then we can serve you better, Lord. Open our eyes to see. Not to make us feel guilty because You, that's not You, but to, to change us, Lord, from the inside out.

You are so good, Lord. You are so good to us, and we are so grateful. Thank You for teaching us this, Lord, for guiding us in this way. We are so grateful. We love You. Amen

It's always good to just pause and pray, isn't it? And I'm so grateful that He is just showing us these things. And I, I look forward to hearing maybe what you've been learning in these last weeks here as we're talking about, uh, in this series that we're, we're looking at the shoulds that we live by.

And if you've been following along with this series and you want a place to [00:24:00] truly actually work through some of the shoulds that you're noticing, well, I created this workbook. It's called I Should Probably. And it's, it's a printable workbook designed to help you identify your shoulds and to look at where they're coming from and also decide what are you gonna do with them. And, uh, I designed it for me, and I designed it for you, and I am, I'm really using it to, to help me, um, to help me with this. So, uh, you can find that, that workbook. There's a link in the show notes that you can find that. And I think you're gonna really benefit from - from working through it as I have.

And before we wrap up, I wanna tell you about something that ... Something brand new. It's a f- it's ... I really haven't mentioned it, it yet, but it's, it's happening on i'm off- I'm offering this on Thursday, November 5th. It's called When Life Feels Like A Lot, an online [00:25:00] gathering for the woman with a lot on her plate and even more on her mind. We, it's no secret, we are heading into the season where there seems to be even more to think about and more to do. And sometimes it's not one big thing making life feel like it's a lot. It's just all the little things that pile up, right? Do you feel this too?

So we are gonna spend one intentional hour together talking about what's adding to the mental weight that we're carrying right now, how our thoughts and words affect the way we experience our days. And we're also gonna talk about what we can do when everything starts to feel equally important. What do we do first?

It is Thursday, November 5th, from 6:30 to 7:30 Central Time. It's gonna be live online. And you'll also have access to the replay for a couple weeks [00:26:00] after. So registration is \$24, and I'll put the link in the show notes so you have

that right there. And I would love to have you join me. It's gonna be a fabulous hour together.

So here we are. We're gonna close for the, the week, and I just wanna encourage you, when you catch yourself thinking, "He should," or, "She should," or, "They should," or, "They shouldn't," remember those three questions. Do I need to communicate it? Do I need to let it go? Or do I need to adjust my expectation? Because sometimes you should really means I would. And different doesn't always mean it's wrong. We can't control what other people do, but with God's help, we can choose how we respond. Amen. Amen. Amen.

So thank you for being [00:27:00] here. Thank you for spending time with me today. I will meet you right back here next Tuesday for another episode. It's our guest episode of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. It's gonna be a great one. Can't wait for that. Until then, keep living encouraged, and God bless you.

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