Encouragement for Real Life Podcast275 What If Today Changes Everything?

[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.

When you woke up this morning, what were you expecting? I'm guessing that you probably were expecting just a normal, ordinary, typical day, right? I mean, that's probably with most of us. We wake up and expect, well, today is another day.

And maybe you had some sort of idea what was [00:01:00] ahead because you know what was on your calendar or what, what was gonna be on your schedule. Things like the stuff to do on your list, the places to go, the people to care for, the responsibilities that were just waiting for you to get out of bed and get going.

But what if today changes everything? What if something happens today that you never could have anticipated? What if God does something that you never saw coming? I wonder. I wonder how differently we'd approach our days if we lived with that kind of expectation. Well, we're talking about this today.

If you could use a shot of hope and encouragement, then you've come to the right place, and I'm so glad you're here. So let's get into this episode.

[00:02:00]

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie, and I just thank you for joining me here today. Last month, we discussed our shoulds and we had a lot ... I had a lot of shoulds. But we talked about all different things regarding the shoulds that we carry ourselves and the shoulds we put on people.

And since it's a new month, we are turning, I guess you could say, a different direction with a series that I believe fits well for just living these days, living our lives these days. It's living with expectation. Yes, we are living with expectation this month.

And in this series, we are not just talking about, well, we're not at all talking about expecting God to give us everything we want. Because we know ... If God gave us everything we wanted, that probably [00:03:00] wouldn't be a great thing, right? So instead, we are talking about anticipating His presence, His activity, and His perfect purposes in our everyday lives.

And I'm so excited about this, uh, this series, and I'm excited about today's episode. And I'm wondering, is it possible that you and I expect so little within our ordinary days? Do we? Do we expect so little?

Now, I'm, I'm thinking an ordinary day, we might define it differently, but I, I say an ordinary day is simply a day that looks much like the ones before it. Like yesterday or the day before. It's just an ordinary, typical, regular kinda day. But just because a day may look ordinary to us, it doesn't mean that God can't do something extraordinary in [00:04:00] it. Because God is God, and He can do anything, and He can do everything. And yet, so many times I know I'm guilty of just thinking about what's ahead of me in the day and don't carry with, with me any expectation of how God might be moving in it.

And maybe we expect so little from these, these kinds of ordinary days because we've just become accustomed to our routines, and we assume that tomorrow will look much like yesterday, or today will look much like yesterday. Or a week from now is just gonna look like right now. One day kinda blends into another.

Or we often associate God's significant work with extraordinary circumstances, like a huge answer to prayer. Or something that you've been anticipating for a long [00:05:00] time finally happens.

Or another thing is, is we can also be so focused on what needs to be done, what needs to happen, that we overlook what might happen. We look at what we can control and what we need to get done instead of what God might do.

Or sometimes we might forget that the God who worked in extraordinary ways throughout scripture is still at work in life today. I think we forget that. This is why I think it's important to, to read our Bibles, to be familiar with the stories and the accounts of God working in, in ordinary people's lives in scripture. And

when we, when we do that, when we read the Bible, we read those accounts, we recognize this, and we get encouraged by it. Because then we know, we do remember that the same God from the Bible is the same God that's present in [00:06:00] our lives today. And I get excited about it when I think about all the ways God has worked that people wrote down in, in, in s- in the s- account of scriptures that we get to read it today. Yeah. And so we know if He did it back then, He can do it today.

So friend, right now does matter. We don't need to wait for a special occasion or a vacation day or a day where it's just perfect. We don't need a different season or a significant life event for today to matter, do we? No, we don't.

We may look at today and consider it ordinary, yes. But I don't think God does. I believe that God considers today significant. And if He, if we think He believes that, if I think He believes that, [00:07:00] then why don't I always believe that?

Today is significant. Today is not some ordinary day. Today is special because God created it and we, we get to live in it. We get to live in this day that He created. And that encourages me so. And sometimes I forget that. Sometimes I forget that today is significant, that right now does matter.

Well, we're gonna look at a, a scripture, um, an account in Exodus. We're gonna go clear back to the beginning of the Bible today in Exodus 3, and we're gonna look at verses 1 through 12 in the New International version. And I have linked it in the show notes, um, so you can find it there if you want.

But in this account, um, Moses found something that he didn't expect. Uh, and this encourages me so, and I pray it's gonna encourage you, too. [00:08:00] But Moses was going just about his ordinary day. He was tending his father-in-law's sheep, and this was something familiar to him. That was his job. That's what he did. But he had no idea what was about to happen. And we read verses 1 through 4. This is what it says in the New International Version.

"Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God."

Verse two. "There, the angel of Go- uh, excuse me. There, the angel of the Lord appeart- appeared to him in flames of fire , from within a bush. And Moses saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up."

Verse three. "So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight, why the bush does not burn up.'"

Verse four. "When the Lord saw [00:09:00] that he had gone over to look, God called him from within the bush, 'Moses, Moses.' And Moses said, 'Here I am.'"

So the story continues that God tells Moses who He is, that He's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And then Moses hides his face. He's afraid to look at God. And then God proceeds to tell Moses that He has seen the suffering of His people, the Israelites, at the hands of the Egyptians, and that God has chosen Moses to be the one to lead His people out of Egypt.

Well, of course, Moses questioned his ability. He's, he's just a, he's just a sh- a sh- a shepherd. He's just tending sheep. So he's questioning his ability to fulfill such an important task. But God reassured him in verse [00:10:00] 12.

And this is what it says. "And God said, 'I will be with you, and this will be a sign to you that it is I who have sent you. "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Can you even imagine? Can you imagine, first of all, seeing a bush, a burning bush that's not really burning up? And can you imagine speaking with God? Uh, I mean, wow, I can't even imagine. And, but, you know, what I can't even imagine even more is how Moses must have felt in that moment. You know, he didn't wake up that morning knowing that God was going to call him to something that extraordinary.

I, I assume, you know, we don't know. We don't know for sure, but he was doing what he normally did. He was tending the sheep. He was doing what he normally did. And God's presence, God just [00:11:00] showed up in such a profound, wonderful way.

And while we may never experience anything like a burning bush. We serve the same God. We do. We serve the same God that met Moses in the bush, at that burning bush. We serve the same God. Doesn't that just blow your mind? The God who met Moses in the middle of his ordinary day is still meeting us in the middle of our ordinary days.

No, we may not be tending sheep, but we're changing diapers. We're making dinner. We're replying to emails. We're attending meetings. We're taking care of those we love. We're doing what we're called to do. We're doing what's familiar. We're doing what we know to do.

But God shows [00:12:00] up in the middle of our ordinary doings, in our ordinary days. And the thing is, His presence is what makes the difference. It's His presence. His presence is with us right now, and that encourages me so.-- When I remember that, it changes my perspective. It changes the hope I have. It changes how my day goes because I think about the day differently, and I think about my life differently.

How many days have you and I approached it as just another day without considering that God might have something in store that we never could have imagined? How often do we do that?

We just never know what God might do. And I'm guilty of putting God in a box. I'm guilty of just thinking, okay, well, today's gonna be like yesterday. And I put God in a box, not really understanding or realizing or appreciating that [00:13:00] He can do whatever He wants to do. I know it, but I forget it. I get to my own routines. I get to my own rhythms of life, and God gets put in a box.

What if, what if I didn't put Him in that box every day? What if I just, you know, thank God, You are so good, and You are so amazing, and You can do anything. I mean, I pray that in the mornings. But yet somehow throughout the day, that can get lost in all of the things of the world and all the things that I have to do. You know, we may know what's on our calendar, but we don't know the good God has planned. We do not.

So living with expectation, what does this even mean? What does this look like? I mean, if you said to someone, "What does it mean to live with expectation?" I would think that [00:14:00] maybe, depending on the perception or the, just the experiences of that person, that person might think, "Well, I'm just gonna expect. I'm gonna expect things to happen my way. I'm gonna expect things from God, the things that I want." And we're not talking about that at all. We're not expecting that.

Um, we're living with this hopeful expectation, and that's what I des- describe it as, hopeful expectation of just looking for God and what is He gonna do? What's He gonna do today? What's He gonna do through me? What's He gonna do through others? What do I get to experience today?

So this all sounds great, but how do we live this way? How do we live this way? Well, we start by moving from assuming to anticipating.

And this is the first part. So we st- we start moving from assuming to anticipating. Now, yes, we can begin our [00:15:00] days with assumptions,

right? We can begin our days assuming that today will look like yesterday, assuming the same things are gonna happen. We do the same routine. We do the thing day after day after day. Assume the same responsibilities will be waiting. The same people will need us. The same routines will fill our time. And much of that, yes, it may be true. We are routine people, aren't we? We just kinda get in a-- we just go and do our thing. But just because we know what's on our calendar, it doesn't mean we know everything God might do in our day.

So take Moses, for example. You know, he knew he was gonna tend sheep. That was his responsibility. But he had no idea God was going to meet him there, especially through a bush that wouldn't burn up. And I wonder how many mornings I've gotten out of bed already [00:16:00] assuming that I knew what my day would, would hold, what it would look like. I looked at my calendar. I thought about what needed to get done. And I jumped right into it.

I wonder, have I been approaching my days with too little expectation? I think I have. Have I been so focused on what I have planned that I haven't even considered what God might have planned? Maybe.

Living with expectation isn't necessarily about changing what we do, but I think it's more about changing how we approach what we do. Yes, we can still have routines and schedules and responsibilities, and that's probably wise to have them. But we can approach them with anticipation rather than assumption. [00:17:00] Approaching them with anticipation.

So instead of saying, "Ugh, I have to follow up on my emails," I could say, "God, what are you gonna do through these emails? I wonder what God's gonna do through this, this task that I really don't care to do. God, what are you gonna do?" Totally different. Totally different. Isn't it? Wow.

So maybe a question worth asking ourselves is, "Am I approaching today as another day to get through or as another day that God can work in it?"

So the second way , um, to live with expectation is to move from controlling to trusting. Now, I would say this is just a natural next step because living with expectation means accepting that we don't know exactly what God will [00:18:00] do, right? And this can be so uncomfortable. This can be very uncomfortable.

We like knowing what's ahead. We like to, to know things in advance. We make plans. We organize. We, we have schedules, and we imagine how things should unfold, right? And there's nothing wrong with planning.

You know, the Bible talks about planning. But sometimes I think we become so attached to our plans that we struggle when, when something unexpected happens. I know I do.

And I, I thought of Proverbs chapter 16, verse 9, and it, uh, uh, and it says that, "In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."

So we can plan, but it's the Lord that establishes our steps. The Lord that, [00:19:00] that really is in charge. And that's in the New International Version.

But we can make our plans while remaining open to God's direction. And I think that's the key, remaining open to God's direction. Maybe, I don't know, an unexpected conversation changes the course of your afternoon. Or maybe an opportunity arises that, gosh, we just hadn't considered. Or maybe something doesn't work out the way we hoped it would. Living with expectation.

I think also it just means trusting God with what we didn't plan. It's like having open hand. Lord, I, I'm feeling I'm supposed to be doing this today. I, I, this is my plan today, but I'm holding it with an open hand. I'm giving it to you.

Now, not every interruption or unexpected [00:20:00] circumstance is necessarily a specific direction from God. We know that, right? But we can respond to the unexpected with, with trust rather than with assuming it's a, an inconvenience. We can respond with trust instead of frustration.

So for example, if I have something that I really thought I needed to get done today, but someone needed me instead. Well, I can either get frustrated or I can just trust that God had a better plan for me today than, than what I had planned. You know, maybe going to serve that person was better than me doing what I thought I needed to get done today.

Yes, I can make my plans and still leave room for God to lead me differently and not get frustrated when it happens. I don't have to know every detail of what's ahead, even though I kinda like to. And I certainly don't have to figure everything out [00:21:00] before I take the next step. I can trust. I can trust God, who already knows everything that I don't. And I'm gonna say that again, 'cause I need to hear that again. I can trust God, who already knows everything I don't.

A good question we could ask ourselves is, am I willing to trust God when my day doesn't unfold the way I expected? Hmm. Yeah. Am I willing to trust God?

And then the third way that we can apply living with expectation in our lives is from overlooking to appreciating. I just have to ask, do, do you ever, like me, get so focused on getting through the day, crossing things off the list, that you miss the important moments within it? Do you ever?[00:22:00]

I do. I can get so focused on working down my list that I miss important moments in it. And I have I have written books about this. I have spoken on this so many times. I teach women how to live appreciating the moments within the days, not just getting through the day. My goodness, and yet I still struggle with this.

You know, we may be waiting for something big or exciting or different to happen, but God isn't limited to work only in these extraordinary, exciting, wonderful experiences. No, He can use a simple conversation with a friend or a quiet moment with a grandchild or an encouraging word from someone that just, it just came out of the blue. Or even a challenging situation. He can use it to create something meaningful.[00:23:00]

And we may not realize the significance of those moments until much later. And often that's the case. We may not realize it until later down the road and we look back and see, ah, I see how God used that in- that instance that was unpleasant at the time.

So could God be doing something meaningful in the ordinary moments of today, too? I think He can. He absolutely can, and He absolutely does. And if you've lived on this Earth for any amount of time, you've experienced that. You've seen it. Maybe even not in your own life, but in the lives of others, too.

Now, the thing I wanna caution against is something that we could easily fall prey to and that is analyzing every moment to figure out what God is doing. "Hmm, what God could, what could God be doing here? All right, this happened, so what, God, what are You up [00:24:00] to?"

That's not our responsibility to know these things, right? It's not. We, we can instead just be present and grateful and trusting God and open, open to His activity. Because if we trust Him, we know that He's good, that He's gonna bring good into our lives, what's good for us, what's beneficial for us, what's good for others, and what's gonna give Him glory.

So maybe a question for this we could ask ourselves is, is am I, am I so focused on what's next that I'm overlooking the significance of what's happening right now? Yeah. I don't wanna miss anything, and I know you don't wanna miss

anything. Let's not be so focused on what's next that we're overlooking the significance of right now.

This living with expectation, it doesn't have to be complicated. I think we make it. [00:25:00] Sometimes I think we just make life complicated, don't we? And living with expectation does not have to be complicated. Maybe it's just waking up in the morning remembering that God is already present with us. May that be our first thought of the day. That He's going ahead of us, that He's already at work, that He's already where we aren't. But He, of course, He's with us, but He's going ahead of us.

It's making our plans, but trusting Him with the unexpected when the unexpected pops up. It's going about our ordinary responsibilities while remembering that He can do extraordinary things right in the middle of them.

And maybe, maybe it's just simply approaching today with a little more anticipation than we did yesterday. You know, we're not guaranteed something amazing will happen today. But we know [00:26:00] that God, He is with us. We know the God who is with us. We know the Creator of the universe is with us. Is that not amazing?

We know what He is capable of because we've seen it. Gosh, we can just look out the windows and see what He's capable of. Uh, the-- What He's created for us to enjoy. It just blows my mind when I stop to think about it. Doesn't it blow yours, too?

I mean, we know He has good plans and purposes for our lives. Scripture is full of that, of evidence of that. We know that. And this changes how we look at today. And I don't wanna say the word should, but yeah, this should change the way we look at today. And I want it to change the way I look at today because today isn't just another day. It's a day [00:27:00] that we get to live with God. It's a day that we get to live with God.

Now, I was trying to think of a story that I could share here. Um, I have so many stories. I know I've told you some of them. And one of them, I'm just gonna tell again because when I used to work at a local mission, it was the hardest work of my life. And I did it for, I don't know I don't know how many years. A lot. Five, six years. I, I, I, I'd have to look back. But I-- After a few months of there, working there, I would see God show up in miraculous ways.

I think I've told you about the day that one morning some ice cream cones were donated. I'm sure I've told you this because it still stands out in my mind today.

[00:28:00] And I left that place 13 years ago. I left that mission 13 years ago, and yet this story continues to just touch my heart.

So yeah, in the morning, we received some-- We received a donation of, I don't know, 100 ice cream cones, you know, with the flat bottom and the wrapper around it. And I, uh, and I was wondering, "What are we ever gonna do with ice cream cones?" You know, we were serving the lost, the h- the homeless, the needy, the formerly incarcerated. We were serving, uh, you know, just really down and out people, um, according to the world's standards. And so we, we rarely had anything like that, like a ice cream cone, you know. W- why would someone donate ice cream cones?

Well, that afternoon, guess what came in through the doors? Someone else who didn't know about the ice cream cones brought in [00:29:00] gallons of ice cream. You cannot make this stuff up. You cannot. God provided ice cream to go with the ice cream cones. No one can tell me differently. No one can tell me that that is a coincidence. No way.

Because what happened is I would see evidence of God's presence every single day at that place, and it became an expectation. How is God gonna show up today? Every single day, I walked away from that, that, my workday with an evidence of what God did. Either a conversation I had, someone's life being changed, something as simple as ice cream being brought in as a donation to go with the ice cream cones.

And the nice thing was the people that we served, they never got ice cream. At least not normally. And so it was a treat for them to have an ice cream - cone that hot summer day.

But the [00:30:00] thing is, I started expecting God to show up. And when I stepped away from that job, I stepped away, not intentionally, but I stepped away from expecting God's presence to show up. Because I wasn't seeing it. It wasn't right in front of me as much as it was when I was working there. And I wanna get back to that. I wanna get back to that expectation And I know I can.

That was a beautiful way to live. Just when I'd pull up like, "What, God, what are you gonna do today?" It, it was a beautiful way to live my life. It was a beautiful thing to see every single day. And so why can't I see that now? Why am I not expecting that now?

You and I can e- have that kind of expectation every day. You know, we don't know what [00:31:00] God's gonna do, but we know He is capable of doing

anything He wants to do. And He is capable of, of doing things beyond our wildest dreams, not necessarily for our sakes, but for what's best, right?

So I'm gonna go back to those days of living with expectation for how God is going to show up in my life, and I invite you to come with me. You know, we don't know what tomorrow's gonna hold. We don't know what conversations we'll have, what opportunities might come our way, or what God might be doing that we can't yet see, let alone tomorrow, but today. We don't know. But we do know this, that God is already here. God is already there tomorrow. But we have today to live.

And it's so exciting to think that, wow, God, you are with me today, and I get to live this day with you. That's amazing. I wonder what would [00:32:00] change in our lives if we began, began approaching our days with a little more expectation. Again, not expecting what God's gonna give us, but expecting His presence to show up. We get to see how He works. We get to see more of Him in our lives.

And instead of waking up thinking, "All right, here we go again. It's just another day," as we wipe the sleep from our eyes. Yeah, instead of that , what if we woke up just remembering that, remembering who we're doing life with. Yeah. That alone should cause us to live with expectation. He's the same God who met Moses in the middle of an ordinary day, and He's the same God who walks with you and me today.

Yes, like I said, we may know what's in our calendar, but we don't know the good God has planned. [00:33:00] It's so exciting, isn't it? That doesn't mean that every day will bring something extraordinary, no. Or that everything will go the way that we plan, no. But it does mean this, that we can approach each day with anticipation, knowing that God is present and He's at work in our ordinary lives.

So friend, as you go about your day today, I encourage you just to simply keep your, keep your heart open. Yes, make your plans, take care of your responsibilities. Do the things that you need to do. But don't, do not underestimate what God might do in the middle of it all. Because who knows? Today just might change everything.

And before I wrap up, I want to personally invite you to [00:34:00] join me this Thursday, this Thursday, November 5th, for my online women's gathering. I'm so excited for it. And there's been such an excitement, uh, to attend. But it's a

online gathering for women. It's titled When Life Feels Like a Lot. It's for the woman with a lot on her plate, and even more on her mind.

And it's for you if you've been feeling overwhelmed, maybe by everything that's going on in your life, or if you've just found yourself simply trying to keep up with it all and you're struggling to do so. Well, yes, this is for you.

We're going to spend an hour together, just an hour. We're gonna find encouragement. We're going to, um, gain some fresh perspective, and we're going to explore how to navigate these kind of seasons when life just feels like a lot. Now, we are coming into some of the most [00:35:00] full weeks of the year with, um, this month and next month with Christmas around the corner, and life is probably not gonna feel any lighter in the weeks to come. So come and equip yourself this Thursday.

And I am looking forward to us walking through this together as we learn how to, to live a different way. Not adding more to our plate, but just coming from a different perspective and inviting God into it. It's from 6:30 to 7:30 central time. It's gonna be on Zoom. And I would so love for you just to be a part of it. I think it's gonna be well worth your time.

It is, uh, $24. And if you can't attend live, here's the good thing, you will have access to the replay after. So you won't miss a thing if you can't attend live. You can find all the details and you can register through the link in the show notes.[00:36:00]

And next week we are going to talk about recognizing God's work even when life doesn't look the way we expected. We may wonder, "God, are you in this?" Because sometimes He's doing something that we can't see, right? We've experienced that too.

So until then, I just appreciate you being here. Keep looking to Him. Keep looking to Jesus. Keep trusting Jesus, and keep living the abundant life that He came to give you. Thanks again 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.