Encouragement for Real Life Podcast 276 Could God Be In This?

[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.

Do you ever stop and consider just how involved God is in your everyday life? I mean, we know He's God, right? We know He's powerful. We know He's the creator of the universe. We know that He's created the things that we see, um, outside and, [00:01:00] and we read all about the incredible things that He did throughout the Bible.

But what about today? What about the conversations we have or the circumstances that we find ourselves in, or the things that happen that we just never saw coming, whether good or not so good? Is God involved in these things, too?

Well, I believe He is. And I believe that He is working in ways that we don't always recognize or understand. And I wonder sometimes how much we're missing simply because we're not expecting to see Him at work.

Well, this is what we're talking about today as we continue in our Living with Expectation series. And here's a question for us to consider right out of the gate. Could God be in this? [00:02:00] Let's get into this episode.

Welcome back to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I am Julie, and I am just thrilled that you're here today. We are continuing on in our Living With Expectation series. And I hope you enjoyed last week's episode as , we kinda kicked it off. And this week's episode, we're taking it one step further.

... I think we often believe that God is involved in the big things in life, right? I mean, we pray when someone is sick. We ask for His guidance when we have a important decision to make or not quite sure which way to turn. And we definitely turn to Him when life feels uncertain, right? All these things are wise things to do, and I'm grateful that we can do [00:03:00] these things. We can turn to Him and seek Him.

But what about all the things in between? What about an ordinary Tuesday afternoon? Or the conversation with a neighbor? Or the plans that just unexpectedly changed? Do we consider that God might be working in these kinds of moments, too? Because I believe He is. I do.

And there's an account in scripture that illustrates this so beautifully. And as I, as I study scripture throughout the years, I think this might be one of my top 10 because it reminds me that just because we don't recognize God at work doesn't mean that He's not working. Let's look into it.

It's found in Luke chapter [00:04:00] 24, and it takes place, the whole scenario, the whole story takes place shortly after Jesus's resurrection. You may be familiar with it. Two of Jesus's followers were walking from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. And they were talking about everything that had just happened, that Jesus had been crucified, and they were trying to make sense of it all. I mean, can you even imagine? The one that they followed was crucified, and now what do they do? Where, where do they go?

They had hoped that Jesus was the one who was going to redeem Israel. But things didn't, uh, they just didn't unfold the way that they expected everything to unfold. And as they walked and talked, interestingly, someone joined them.

Let's look at - Luke 24, verses 15 through 16, and, [00:05:00] and I'm looking at the New Living Translation. This is what it says: "As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him."

Can you even imagine? Here they are, just two ordinary guys, two dudes walking on the road to Dema- or to Emmaus, and they're talking about Jesus and everything that had happened to Him. And Jesus Himself is walking right beside them. That's so cool.

But they don't recognize Him. They don't recognize Him. They don't realize who is ta- who they're talking to. They don't realize who is walking with them. But that doesn't change the fact that, that Jesus is right there.

How often, I wonder, [00:06:00] that how often we experience something similar. Maybe something like this happens in our own lives. Not that Jesus is physically walking down the road beside us, because that would be really awesome. But that God is present and working, and we're not even aware of what He's doing. We're kind of blinded, so to speak. Isn't that, uh, isn't that interesting? Yeah.

All right, we're gonna continue on in the story and continue on in verse 21, the first part of, of verse 21 of the same chapter of Luke, and it reads, "We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel."

Those words right there tell us so much. They had expectations about what Jesus was going to do. They expected him to be the Messiah, to [00:07:00] do it the way that, that they expected him to be the Messiah. And from their perspective, things hadn't gone the way they hoped.

Yet what they didn't realize was that God had already done something far greater than they could even comprehend or understand. Jesus had risen from the dead They just hadn't recognized the full picture yet. Jesus explained the scriptures to them as they continued walking down the road. And when they reached Emmaus, they urged Him to stay with them, and so He did.

And later, they shared a meal, and something remarkable happened. And this is documented in verses 30 through 31. Same chapter. This is what it reads, "As they sat down to eat, He took the bread and blessed it. Then He broke it and gave it to them. [00:08:00] Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And at that moment, He disappeared."

Can you even believe it? Suddenly they recognized Him. They, uh, their eyes were opened. The one that they had been talking about, who had been walking with them and talking with them the whole time, and they didn't recognize Him. And what I find so encouraging is that Jesus didn't begin walking with them when they finally realized who He was. He had been there the whole entire time. I just think that's amazing. I think that's just amazing. He was there the whole entire time. He didn't wait to reveal Himself before He started walking with them. He walked with them, when they didn't know that it was Him.

He does the same for us, doesn't He? I don't know what your day looks like today. [00:09:00] Maybe everything is going just as planned. Maybe it's going perfectly, just swimmingly. Or maybe you're facing something that you never anticipated today. Or maybe you're having a really hard day, and it's really a struggle today.

But I want you to remember this, that God's involvement in your life isn't dependent on your ability to recognize what He's doing. I'm gonna say that again because I think this is so important.

Excuse me. That God's involvement in your life isn't dependent on your ability to recognize what He's doing. Mm-mm.

Those two followers of Jesus, they couldn't see the whole picture. But Jesus was right there with them the whole entire time [00:10:00] of walking and talking, and He was teaching the scriptures. He was with them.

And while we may not always understand how God is working in our lives, we can certainly trust that He hasn't stopped working, and He's not going to stop working.

Maybe there's more happening in our circumstances than we realize. Could it be? Yeah, I think so.

So why is it sometimes so difficult for us to recognize God's work in our lives? Because sometimes I think it is. And maybe we don't always need to know what He's doing. But I think that there's this hope that we have that He is working behind the scenes.

And I think there are a few reasons worth considering. Let's look at this. That, you know, we might, we may not recognize [00:11:00] God at work. Um, but I think one of them is that I think we have a, we have an idea of how God should be working in our lives, right? We, we, we know. We, we have an idea that we just think God should be doing it this way.

We pray about something, and without realizing it, we may already have a preferred answer in mind. We may be praying for the way we want it to work out. When the answer looks different, however, though, it's just we wonder, "Okay, God, where are you? Where are you? - Are you here? Are you working at all?"

Another one I think is that, that we're looking for something obvious. We want the neon sign. We want the billboard, right? We expect a clear answer, a fast answer, a dramatic change, or maybe, I don't know, an unmistakable sign that we just see it right there. We just-- It's just right there. We can't miss [00:12:00] it. But sometimes God's work is, is a whole lot more subtle than we anticipate.

Or another one could be, I think that we're too close to the situation to see clearly. Maybe we're too disappointed, or we're feeling uncertain, or we're grieving, or we're simply just trying to navigate something that's just not familiar. And in these circumstances, we may not be able to recognize what God is doing. We may not feel His presence. We may not see Him at work.

But just because we can't see what God is doing, it doesn't mean He's not doing anything. It doesn't mean He's absent. It doesn't mean He's forgotten us. It doesn't mean that He has left us or abandoned us. He has ab- left us or [00:13:00] abandoned us. I can't say that, that He's left us or abandoned us. Sometimes the words just don't wanna come out. ...

think about your own life. Have you ever looked back on a season of, of, a past season, maybe even a recent season, and you recognized something that you couldn't see while you were living through it? Have you ever had that happen?

Well, I, I'm in this in my own life. Recently, just last month, I stepped away from something that I had been involved in for three decades, for 30 years. It would, it would've been 30 years in February. 30 years. That's a, that's a long time. That's a long time to be a part of something. And I was [00:14:00] raised with the mindset that you don't quit. You don't quit. You're not a quitter. Mm-mm. No way. You keep showing up, you follow through, you do what you need to do, and you stick with it. So you can imagine that this was not an easy decision for me to step away from this that I had been involved in for so long, and it was a good thing. It was a great thing.

But I began realizing that I was continuing to do this particular thing mainly because it's what I'd always done. Yeah, how could I step away? And honestly, between you and me, I started dreading it. I started dreading it. And I couldn't understand why. And as I prayed about it, I sensed that God was nudging me to just step [00:15:00] away. To step away.

And a dear friend of mine, actually she's, she's joining me on the podcast at the end of the month, she's my guest. My dear friend Natalie, Natalie said-- quoted, um, an author. He might be a pastor too, but quoted, um, I believe John Eldredge, I think is his name. And she said the quote, I won't get it right, but she said, "What was once sweet, God sometimes makes sour to move us on to the next thing He has for us."

And when she said that quote, I knew. I knew that what was once sweet for years of my life, God was making sour, and I needed to move on. That He was nudging me to move on and to step away. And when I finally did, it took some

time, 'cause that's what, that's what I do. I seem to take some time when [00:16:00] I'm not sure about a decision, and that's okay.

But once I finally did, I experienced such peace and such joy. It was just like a weight was lifted and I didn't even know that that weight was there.

But here's the thing that I'm in right now. I don't know what God is doing with this. I don't know if He's making room for something different maybe. I don't know if there's something He's going to teach me through this season, through this circumstance, through stepping away. I don't, I don't know if I'll ever fully understand why I needed to step away when I did. I, I, I don't know. I really don't know.

But what I do know is that I can trust Him. I can [00:17:00] trust Him. And that's what I'm doing. Instead of needing to figure out exactly what He's up to, I'm choosing to remain open to whatever, whatever He might be doing through this, and it's really uncomfortable. It's really uncomfortable. 'Cause I like to, I like to know what's going on. I like to be informed.

So could God be in this? Yeah. I know He is. And I'm looking forward to, to seeing what unfolds because I don't know. I don't know.

And I don't know what you're walking through today. Maybe things are going well, or maybe you're in a season where you're not sure what's next either. Maybe like me, you've made a decision and you're still wondering, "Hmm, [00:18:00] what is God doing? What are you doing, God? What are you doing through this?"

But I, I guess here's what I hope that you'll remember from our time together today. That just because we can't see what God is, is doing doesn't mean that He isn't at work. Just because we can't see what God is doing doesn't mean that He isn't at work.

Those two guys, those two of Jesus's followers on that road to Emmaus, they didn't recognize Jesus at first. That gives us hope. But He was right there with them all along.

And we can trust that God is right here with us, too. He's present and He's working in our lives right here and right now. And that can give us such hope and such confidence and such peace all at the same time.[00:19:00]

So I encourage you this week, as you go about your day, just look, look around. Pay attention to what is happening around you. And-- or maybe what's happening in your life, or maybe what's happening in someone else's life. And when you encounter something unexpected or something that you just don't quite understand, I invite you to ask God, "How might you be working in this? God, how might you be working in this?"

And we don't have, we don't have to figure it all out. Mm-mm. You and I, we can simply just remain open to Him and to trust Him with what we don't yet understand.

Would you pause here with me and pray with me? Because I think we need to pray right now. So let's do that.[00:20:00]

Oh, Heavenly Father, I just thank You for, ugh, the truth that You are always with us. Thank You. I praise You that You are always with us. There's not a moment of the day that we are ever by ourselves. -- Our brains can't comprehend that, but we believe that that is true. We know that that's true.

And so, Lord, as we remember that even when we can't see You at work, that doesn't mean that You're not working. Or when we can't see You or feel Your presence or, or see any kind of movement happening, that doesn't mean that You're not there with us, that You're not working all things out for good. Your sc- Scripture says that. That You, Lord, You work things out for good. It may not be always what we think is good, but it's always Your good.

And so Lord, we trust You today. And when our, our faith starts to waver or falter a little bit, would You remind us, [00:21:00] Lord, of this truth that You are with us, that You are working behind the scenes even when we don't see You.

And for the, the one that's listening or watching today that's, is just really downcast, really struggling, really trying to find her footing, Father, I pray that You'll remind her, that You'll sink this truth deep in her heart, that You'll remind her today that You're not gonna let go, but You are working. You are working. Mm.

We love You so much, Lord. Thank you. Thank you for Your Word. Thank you for encouraging us through it. Thank you for being who You are. And we love You so much. In Jesus' name, amen.

It's such a good, it's, it's such a good place in life right now to have this, no matter what, what kind of day you're having, to have this reminder that God is working. Jesus is with [00:22:00] you. Yeah. He's not gonna leave you.

And maybe someone, maybe someone popped in your head, in your mind. She came to your mind, um, as you, as you're here today. I invite you to share this episode with her. You know, maybe she's walking through something that she doesn't understand, and this might be just the encouragement that she needs today. So go ahead and share that with her.

And as we do, as we were just talking about walking through seasons, seasons of uncertainty or just not even seasons, but maybe days of uncertainty. If you're trying to figure out what's next or if you're longing for maybe some clarity in an area of your life, well, I would love to come alongside of you through Abundant Life Mentoring. Sometimes just having someone to talk things through [00:23:00] with or having someone who will listen, to encourage you, to help you see things maybe through a, a fresh perspective, that can make such a difference.

You can learn more about mentoring with me, working one-on-one at the link in the show notes below. It would be an honor to walk alongside of you in this season.

And as we look forward to next week, we are continuing on our Living With Expectation series, and it is going to be a hope-filled episode where, uh, we look at something pretty amazing. How God doesn't just work around our lives or in our lives, but He invites us to participate in what He's doing. And I'm really excited for this episode.

So come back next Tuesday and, uh, we will look forward to journeying together again. And so until next time, I invite you to [00:24:00] keep looking to Him, keep trusting God, keep living the abundant life that Jesus came to give you. Thanks for being here, 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.