

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

102. What to Do When Life Is Overwhelming

You are listening to episode 102 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, What to Do When Life Is Overwhelming. Welcome to the podcast today. I'm thrilled we get to hang out here for this short while! Two weeks ago, we celebrated a milestone on the podcast: 100 episodes! To continue celebrating this milestone, we are reaching back into the archives this week to one of the most popular and most played episodes out of these 100: episode number 4, originally titled Living Overwhelmed? If So, This Is for You. It's no wonder this episode has been played a lot, because I believe many women, just like you and me, may be in a state of living overwhelmed. Thankfully, we have hope to overcome this! For the next two weeks, I will also be highlighting a popular past episode. I pray these encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. If life is overwhelming, let's get into this episode to find encouragement for our real lives right now.

Two words: "I'm overwhelmed." How many times have you heard those two words recently? How many times have you voiced or thought them yourself? Three people in just the last week said these exact words to me, and part of me wanted to join in their chorus. Because I was feeling that way, right along with them. Friend, if you're feeling this way, you are not alone. I wonder, have we become accustomed to living overwhelmed?

Sometimes it helps me to look up the definition of words. So, I searched the word overwhelmed. From Dictionary.com it means: completely overcome in mind or feeling, loaded, filled, or addressed with an excessive amount of anything. Thesaurus.com added: affected; devastated; overpowered. That last word, overpowered, perfectly describes how I feel when I'm living overwhelmed.

Can you relate?

Are we living overwhelmed?

Maybe we are, but we don't have to keep living that way. We can choose differently. So, let's take an inventory.

I've had much experience with living overwhelmed in my years. So much so, I've learned a way to diagnose it. Maybe someday I'll master it, but it might not be until eternity. When I start to feel stressed, overwhelmed, or out of sorts for any reason, I've learned to pause and do a check. Because our bodies don't lie. Our bodies tell us when something's off. I ask myself questions such as: *What's causing me to feel this way? Why am I stressed, or overwhelmed, or feeling out of sorts? What's creating these overwhelming feelings?*

Then I try to dig a bit deeper to find the cause.

- Is it what's going on around me? (My environment, the world, people around me?)
- Is it what's going on in me? (Internal agitation, sin, not using my time/resources wisely?)
- Have I said yes to too much? (Taking on more than I'm called to do?)

- Is my schedule too full? (Does something need to go?)
- Why am I not filled with peace? (Pray, ask God)

Interestingly, more often than not, I can pinpoint my feelings of overwhelm originate in my schedule. It's then I ask myself another question.

What needs to change?

We can ask that with any of the above as we diagnose the origin of why we're feeling this way. *What needs to change in my environment? What needs to change with my resources or time? Is there something that needs to change in my schedule? What will give me peace?*

I believe we will receive the answer we are seeking. Does anything come to mind right now? Do you know what needs to change for you? Is it your environment, your internal struggles, your schedule? Have you taken on too much? What has robbed you of your peace?

Or maybe you really don't know. But you certainly know you're overwhelmed. What then?

I suggest asking God.

When I don't know what needs to change, I pray and ask God to show me. Because He knows. He knows me better than I know myself, after all, He created me.

I recently was feeling overwhelmed (again), but this time it was about my approaching schedule for this fall. I didn't have God's peace about it. Once we feel God's peace, we know it. And when it leaves, well, we know that too. I felt agitated and dread as I considered all that I would be responsible for in the months to come. It was awful. So, I did my little check that I walked through above. And when I got to the question, *what needs to change?*, I didn't have the answer.

I asked God to show me, and through a way I didn't expect, He did. The answer didn't come right away, but He certainly made it clear at the right time. I knew in that moment what I needed to let go of. Not just one thing in my schedule, but two. And you know? God's peace returned. I'll share more in a future episode, but truly, God will show us what to do or what change needs to be made when we ask.

After all, He knows what's best for us. He knows how and where and through what process we will thrive. He won't leave us to figure it out on our own. God will guide us to the answer.

And when the answer comes, we can trust as we make any changes that our peace will return.

Is living overwhelmed His best for us? I don't think it is. Our life on this earth is too short and too important to be living this way, all day every day. It sounds great to stop living overwhelmed, right? But can we? Can we stop doing so while we live in a world that's fast paced, that's filled with brokenness, and that's sometimes overwhelming on its own?

I believe we can. And it all comes down to our choices.

We can choose how we live the lives God has given us. Will we choose to live overwhelmed or will we choose to live full of God's peace?

You will keep the peace, a perfect peace, for all who trust in You, for those who dedicate their hearts and minds to You. Isaiah 26:3 VOICE

Did you catch the ending part of that verse? "For those who dedicate their hearts and minds to you." Our minds. Do we dedicate our minds to God? A good way to do that is to devote our hearts, our minds, our entire beings to God every morning. Because from our minds come our actions and our actions determine much of our lives. Our minds have much to do with living overwhelmed. We may not always be able to choose what happens around us, but we can choose how we react to it.

Living overwhelmed does not have to be our way of life. May we choose differently, beginning today.

I've designed for you a printable on my Resource page: 5 Ways to Stop Living Overwhelmed. The link to this helpful resource is in the show notes. I invite you to print this off and keep it somewhere you'll see it. Change doesn't happen overnight, but if we keep at it, it will happen.

I invite you to stop over and join our Encouragement for Real Life Community Facebook group. We're talking about living overwhelmed over there today. I'm glad we can encourage one another in this! You'll find the link in the show notes.

Thanks for being here. It's a joy to do life with you, friend. God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre