

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

152. How to Live Now When You Are Stuck in the Past

You are listening to episode 152 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, How to Live Now When You Are Stuck in the Past. Welcome to the podcast! Thanks for tuning in today. When I share the message of living undistracted, I'm often asked which distraction is the most common in our lives today. Many are surprised at my answer. There's not one main distraction, because you know as well as I do, we can struggle with many throughout each day. But what I've found is this: there are five big distractions that are common with many. So, naturally, I call them the Big Five, and I share them in Chapter 5 of my book *Right Now Matters*. Now, I didn't come up with this list of five; those who took my online poll a year ago did. Almost each woman who responded struggled with these distractions. In this episode and in the next four, we're addressing these five distractions, how they are plaguing us, and what we can do about them. Today we discuss the first one--the past--and how to live now when we're feeling stuck in the past. Let's get into this episode to find the help and encouragement our hearts need today.

The past. It's tricky, isn't it?

The past is our history. Much of it has helped us become who we are today. Our past is a part of who we are. But some of us would rather forget it all together. We don't like visiting it often. It's full of pain and mistakes and things we'd rather not remember or relive. Yet some of us would return there right now if we could. The past, or what some term "the good old days," were much better than life today. Some say life was simpler and more enjoyable back then.

I resonate with both of these spheres. I grieve things from my past, yet I'd love to live other former moments again and again because they were so meaningful. I'm guessing you're similar to me in this way. The past was awful, yet it was wonderful.

This is where the distraction of the past enters the scene.

Because of this so awful and yet wonderful past of ours, many of us can get stuck there. Quite frankly, several of us are stuck there. We can't seem to move past it. Something triggers a memory, or a feeling, or a moment from our past. Or we continue to ruminate or ponder our experiences of our earlier days. Or our thoughts continue to return to the past, no matter how we try to divert our attention away from it. Can you relate to any of these?

The past can easily keep us stuck. So much so, it prevents us from living in the moment and enjoying the right now. It can easily distract us from living our best lives--the abundant lives Jesus came to give us--right now. Being stuck in the past can also cause us to miss priceless moments happening right in front of us that we'll never get to live or experience again. Who wants any of that in our lives? Not us!

Could you be stuck in the past?

Do you know? How can you find out?

I invite you to think about what you're thinking about today. That sounds kind of silly, doesn't it? I mean, who thinks about what she's thinking about? Well, believe it or not, it's a good habit to get into. Because sometimes our thoughts aren't so helpful or hopeful. Sometimes they aren't beautiful and wonderful. And we never notice if we don't stop and pay attention to them. No one else knows our thoughts but God. Sometimes I'm grateful for that! But not even the enemy of our souls can see our thoughts, but he sure can affect them.

So for the next hour, just notice what you're thinking about.

And be honest with yourself. What from the past tries to entice you away from the present? What from your younger years creeps in to rob your thoughts of right now?

For example, just the other day I was thinking about how simple my life used to be when Bill and our two kids were still under one roof. Sure, our lives were full and, on the go, but they were lovely and joy-filled. I loved being a mom to two young children! Not that today isn't wonderful with our kids as adults, but it's just different. I also love my role as a mom to two amazing adults today. But every once in a while my mind takes me back to the sweeter, younger days. And I long for them to return.

Another example takes me in the opposite direction. Sitting in my car after last month's appointment with my Christian therapist, I intentionally thanked God for how far He has grown me through my appointments with her. A number of years ago God crossed my path with her during a time that I couldn't break free from my mistakes of the past. My past sins, failures, and terrible choices consumed me and almost every waking thought back then. How I wanted to break free from the bondage of the past! Thankfully, God has helped me do that through these appointments. He has used her to heal me in ways I never could have expected.

No matter if the past is positive or negative, it can become a distraction of the present.

But, friend, it doesn't have to.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 says, "Don't long for 'the good old days.' This is not wise" (NLT). And 2 Corinthians 10:5 encourages us to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (NIV).

Instead of allowing our thoughts to be captivated by the past, we can intentionally choose to set them on right now, the present. Because the present is where God is. He's with us now. Sure he was with us in the past, but the past is over. There's nothing we can do about the past, except to learn from it for today. God is with us in this moment. Guiding us, leading us, loving us. He's providing what we need, He's teaching us what we need to know, and He's graciously giving us His grace and peace right now.

He doesn't desire for us to live in the past. He desires for us to commune with Him right now. This moment. This is why right now matters.

Now is far too important to live it stuck in the past.

After you think about what you're thinking about, commit to living in the present with God's help. Ask Him to lead you, to align your thoughts with His, and to help you let go of anything from the past that's keeping you stuck. He will guide you every step of the way. And if He leads you to seek professional help, please don't be afraid of that. Honestly, it's one of the best things God has ever prompted me to do. I'm so grateful.

If you've been stuck in the past for some time, believe me, I know it's not so easy to just cut ties with it. But intentionally breaking yourself free from it day after day and moment by moment, it can be done. I'm living proof of that. Even when the past attempts to consume my present, which it still tries to every now and then, I now know living stuck in the past is not God's best for me. It's not His best for you either, friend.

Another Scripture that has helped me live in the moment and not stay stuck in the past is from Isaiah. In chapter 43, verses 18-19 in the Message paraphrase it says this, "Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is! I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in the badlands."

We will miss what God is doing now if we remain stuck in the past.

Let's live in the now, this moment. Not the past.

Friend, right now does matter, more than we realize some days. I invite you to pick up my book, *Right Now Matters: Empowering Right-Now Women in a Culture of Distraction*. I wrote it for us who are missing priceless moments happening right in front of us, and for us who struggle with staying present and living in the moment. From the women who have read it before you, many have voiced they had no idea just how distracted they were living! But they are now equipped with the tools to help them live the abundant lives Jesus came to give them. You can find it and the companion Bible study in the link in the show notes.

Also, we will be resuming our Right Now Matters Bible Study group sessions in the fall. Of course, you can always walk through the *Right Now Matters Bible Study: A 28-Day Guided Adventure to Living as a Right-Now Woman* on your own, but it's much more fun and enlightening with other women. I host these both online and in person. If you'd like to be notified of the next sessions, find the link in the show notes to join the waitlist. They will likely begin in September.

If you found some encouragement and hope in this episode today, would you please leave a rating and/or a review from wherever you're listening today? This might just help another find this encouragement too. Subscribe if you haven't already to never miss an episode.

To close out our time together today, it's true, our past has played an important role in our lives. But as they say, the past is passed. It's not where we are designed to live. God has good things in store for us today. Even if life may feel a little heavy in the moment, God is with us right now. That's comforting, isn't it? This distraction--the distraction of the past--doesn't have to be one of our Big Five distractions. Today, let's let go of the past and put it into the very capable hands of our Creator. It's not ours to carry or live

in anymore. Friend, I am praying for you today. Come back next week to learn about the second distraction of the Big 5--the future! Remember to stay present and enjoy the moment. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[Ecclesiastes 7:10](#) NLT

[2 Corinthians 10:5](#) NIV

[Isaiah 43:18-19](#) MSG

Learn more about [my books *Right Now Matters* and the *Right Now Matters Bible Study*](#)

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Julie Lefebvre