

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

153. How to Stay Present When the Future Distracts You

You are listening to episode 153 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, How to Stay Present When the Future Distracts You. Welcome to the podcast today! I'm glad you're tuning in. In last week's episode we began a series regarding the top five distractions we women struggle with on any given day. I call these the Big 5. I share them in detail in Chapter 5 of my book *Right Now Matters*. Last week we touched on the first one--the past. These distractions aren't in any particular order, just the order I have them in my book. Today we're discussing the second one--the future. I'm guessing we each think about the future every now and then, right? But what happens when we get so fixated on the future, that we get stuck there? Let's dive into this episode to find help and hope for our real lives today for when the future distracts us from the present. Here we go!

The future can be a big distraction.

Similar to the distraction of the past, the distraction of the future can rob us of the moment we're in. And like we discussed last week, God desires us to live in the present. Not the past and not the future, but right now. Because that's where He is. He's with us now. Yes, He was with us in the past and His Word promises He will be with us in the future, but right now, this moment, is where He is. Leading us, guiding us, blessing us, and walking with us. You know that saying, "There's no better time than the present," right? Well, that's absolutely true. The past is passed, and tomorrow isn't here yet. So all we have is right now, this moment, today. There's no better time than right now.

When we stay stuck in the past or borrow from the future, however, we miss what God is doing right now. We miss the lives He has given us to live right now. And we miss the blessings, the hope, the people in our lives, the joy, the experiences of right now, and so much more. Friend, these are priceless gifts we will never receive again in this moment. This is one big reason why right now matters.

When the future invades and consumes our thoughts, it keeps us from living the abundant lives Jesus came to give us today.

Focusing on the future distracts us from the present.

This likely happens more than we realize. Just like with the past that we discussed last week, the distraction of the future can originate from either a positive perspective or a negative one. Allow me to explain.

You and I think about the future every now and then, right? Some of these thoughts of tomorrow are lovely. So much so, we can't wait for tomorrow to get here. The anticipation is almost too much some days! Maybe we're anticipating that trip we've been planning, or we're looking forward to the day a

specific goal will be realized, or we're excited for an upcoming celebration. (Like our son's wedding next month!) The future will be so good when it gets here, won't it?

On the flip side, however, some of our thoughts of the future aren't so lovely. Some of them cause us anxiety or worry or dread. We question: what will the future hold? What if this scary or uncomfortable thing happens? Will everything be okay? Will I be okay? Maybe you're worried about the election, or you're concerned about what will happen to a loved one, or possibly you're wondering how the uncomfortable situation you're in will shake out. In Chapter 5 of *Right Now Matters* I share an example from my own life about a fear I had when I was twelve years old. It's worth noting that we don't have to be adults to struggle with the distraction of the future. Could our kids be picking up this unhealthy distraction from us??

You've probably heard of the statistics about worry. I've heard it stated that 80% of what we worry about never happens. But in digging a bit further in preparation for this episode, I found one study conducted at Penn State reported that a whopping 91% of our worries never materialize. Whew! That's good news, isn't it? So why do we spend time worrying about something that may never happen? We waste too much time and energy on worries that never materialize. And while we do, we miss the blessing of right now.

Both the anticipatory thoughts and the worrisome thoughts of the future entice us away from the present.

If we're not careful, we'll miss this moment all together.

Maybe that's why God often instructs us in His Word to keep our focus on right now. Here are a few Scriptures I found:

"Don't brag about *what may happen* tomorrow because you have no idea what it will bring" (Proverbs 27:1 Voice).

"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21 NIV).

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes" (Matthew 6:34 MSG).

"Yes, we should make the most of what God gives, both the bounty and the capacity to enjoy it, accepting what's given and delighting in the work. It's God's gift! God deals out joy in the present, the *now*. It's useless to brood over how long we might live" (Ecclesiastes 5:19-20 MSG).

These are so encouraging, aren't they? These Scriptures help us see just how important living in the present is--to us and to God. Jot these down somewhere so you can refer to them whenever you need to. They are listed in the show notes.

So what can we do today?

How do we stay in the moment when the future distracts us? Well, we can follow the same suggestion from last week's episode regarding dealing with the distraction of the past. We can intentionally choose to stop our thoughts from running away from us into the future by returning ourselves to the present. We can bring ourselves back to the present moment, appreciating where we are and what we are doing right now.

It's sometimes helpful to remember also that God is the only one who knows the future and who is in charge of it. No amount of anticipation or excitement will help the future arrive any faster, and no amount of worrying or fretting will delay it, either. The future belongs to God, not to us. So it's pointless to borrow from it today. We can simply trust God with tomorrow, because He has it all under control. He'll give us what we need for tomorrow when it gets here.

We can't fight this distraction on our own, however. We need God and His strength to do so. I suggest committing to doing all you can to live in the present with God's help. Ask Him to lead you, to align your thoughts with His, and to help you embrace right now without fixating on the future. He will guide you every step of the way.

Of course it's good to plan for the future, though. There's nothing wrong with that. But when our focus of the future blocks us from living in the present, we must pull ourselves and our thoughts back to within the boundaries of today.

When we do this, God's peace fills us.

We find joy, hope, and refreshment as we live in the present. We find we are less stressed and can enjoy life more. And because we are living in the moment, we no longer miss the priceless blessings happening right in front of us. As I say often, life is too important to live it distracted.

Friend, 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? This might just help another find this encouragement too. Subscribe if you haven't already to never miss an episode.

In closing, God has the future all planned out. It's His to handle. As we are tempted to focus on the future in the days to come, I pray God reminds us of this truth. He is with us in the present. Let's stay

with Him here. One day at a time, one moment at a time. This moment is too important to miss. Thanks for being here today, friend. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

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

[91% of what we worry about never happens](#)

[Proverbs 27:1](#) Voice

[Proverbs 19:21](#) NIV

[Matthew 6:34](#) MSG

[Ecclesiastes 5:19-20](#) MSG

My books: [Right Now Matters and the Right Now Matters Bible Study](#)

[Access my free Resource Library](#), full of tools and tips to help you live an undistracted life

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Lefebvre". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a horizontal line.