

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

161. What Happened When I Rested This Summer

Welcome to episode 161 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast. Have you ever had or taken a season of rest? I unintentionally had one back in 2014 when God prompted me to walk away from a long and fruitful calling He placed on my life. Wouldn't you know? Ten years later God called me to another one--this past summer. And it looked entirely different than the one ten years ago. One thing I've learned is this: God's view of rest is likely different than ours. In this episode I disclose the circumstances, the details, my reluctance, and how rest was more than I expected it would be. I share what happened when I rested this summer. I pray it encourages you and inspires you in your own real life today.

A season of rest sounds wonderful right about now, doesn't it? I mean who doesn't want more rest in their lives? Who couldn't use more rest factored into our days? No one raises their hands here, unless it's my three-year-old grandson. He'll tell you he could do without rest, and he'll do anything to fight it. You know? Maybe he gets that from his grandma.

Back in episode 150, eleven episodes ago which was aired back in May, I shared how God had called me to a summer rest. (The link to that episode is in the show notes if you want the full details.) But not only that, He called me to a summer of what I refer to as the Four Rs: rest, refreshment, rejuvenation, and relationships. And here we are already at the first week of September. Now, I fully realize summer isn't over yet (that won't happen until September 22), but many of us consider "summer" to be the period between Memorial Day through Labor Day. But since summer is my favorite season, I'll gladly take it through the majority of September, too.

If you've learned anything about me, you might know that rest doesn't come easy for me. In fact, I have to force myself to rest most days. I love what I do so much, that I could do it all day long. And sometimes I do. No matter if I'm writing, or working, or creating, or hanging out with my grandsons, I like to stay active. I like to keep moving. I'd rather not rest until I lay my head down on the pillow at night. Now, that can be a good thing, but it also can be a detriment--to me, to my health, to my schedule, to pausing long enough to hear God's still small voice. It's not healthy for any of us to not have periods of rest. Even Jesus, the Savior of the world, rested. If He rested, you and I can too, right?

When May arrived, I fully intended to spend the next three months writing my next book.

That was my plan for the summer. Did you catch that? I said, "that was MY plan for the summer." But it wasn't God's. Every time I sat down at my desk in early May, ready to begin writing, the strangest thing would happen. I couldn't come up with words. Any words. It was so weird! No matter how or what I tried, I was met with what felt like a wall as I stared at my blank computer screen for hours.

I couldn't make sense of it. After much frustration, I turned to God. *Why can't I write this book, God?* I could write other things, but nothing regarding the book. I didn't hear audible words, but in my heart, I

heard something I didn't expect. God was prompting me to rest this summer and not write. *What??* After a year of writing, studying, publishing, launching, and marketing my two books, He was calling me to rest. And let me tell you, friend, I didn't like it. I perceived resting all summer would be wasting the summer, and I believed that resting all summer meant taking naps and sleeping in and sitting on the couch doing nothing--which is not like me at all. I'm not typically a napper, mind you, and the thought of napping every day made me feel lazy. But I listened to and I trusted God. He knew what was best, even though I questioned His timing. *Are you sure, God?*

To say I felt like a fish out of water would be an understatement.

I mean, I didn't like resting, and I wasn't sure how to rest in God's ways. So I just kept asking, listening, and following what I believed God wanted me to do daily--sometimes moment by moment. I even sat down at my laptop one day to see if I could write, just to test it out again. I should have known better. The words still would not come. So I finally surrendered my will for God's. And let me tell you, once I did that, my days changed and so did my heart.

I want to pause right here. I continue to learn that when we surrender our will for God's, it's often uncomfortable. It doesn't feel natural. Why would it? God often grows us through taking us beyond what's comfortable for us. And because it's uncomfortable, we shy away from surrendering, and we think we know what's best. Because we will always steer towards what's comfortable. Always. Because who likes to be uncomfortable? No thank you. But when we surrender, something amazing happens. The uncomfortable is replaced by God's peace.

So I ask you today, what uncomfortable action is God calling you to take?

I knew right away this season of rest would not give me the option to forego my many responsibilities and commitments. I couldn't just be a blob in this season of rest. After all, I'm part of a church staff, I help my daughter with her business, I spend two days and an overnight with my grandsons each week, and I have a podcast to maintain and show up for. God wasn't calling me to let all of these things go, but to execute them in His strength, not mine.

So I continued to show up for my job, and I still produced a podcast episode each week. I remained committed to spending my typical time with my grandsons, and I also chose to build relationships with others by spending time with them through the summer.

I soon found out God's rest meant something entirely different than what the world considers rest.

God taught me as I rested this summer, that true rest is resting in Him. It's not about napping or sleeping or doing nothing, even though these can be a part of His rest. It's more about leaning on Him to lead and guide me. It means moving over to the passenger seat to let God do the driving. And it means trusting God to provide all I need. When God takes me beyond what's comfortable, I know He's taking me to where He wants me. And that's the best place to be.

He even redirected my plans for a summer girls' trip to Georgia that eventually was canceled. I was disappointed, but it was then I fully understood God was serious about me resting, not creating, not traveling, not doing the next big thing. God wanted me to rest. Period.

So that's what I did. I rested. Here's what happened:

- I had more patience with my grandsons and those around me. I found I was a kinder, gentler person because I rested.
- Little annoyances or detours didn't bother me as much. Even the disappointing detour of canceling our girls' trip! I was able to see the big picture because I rested.
- I grew relationships with others around me. Because I rested, I was able to be more available.
- I was able to work efficiently in my responsibilities because I rested.
- I found joy each day because I rested.
- Incorporating exercise and clean eating helped me be healthier than I ever have been because I rested.
- And I spent time with God, ready to be lead and taught by Him, because I rested.

Because I rested this summer, and followed God into this rest, my life was changed.

My life isn't perfect, but it's changed. The pull of striving, of doing, of staying on the go all the time left me. And I pray it doesn't return. My pace is more relaxed and so are my thoughts. It's almost as if God knew this season would break me of some unhealthy habits and cycles in my life. But he knows everything, correct? Of course, He would want His best for me and he drew me to His best.

So if I didn't nap, what did I do?

I sought His will daily. Not perfectly, but I asked God to control my time, and I got out of His way.

I looked for opportunities to build relationships with others and I set up coffee dates, lunches, and extra moments with others.

One thing I also did was stay present and live in the moment. Especially when my grandsons were with me. No task is more important than my time with them.

I chose to walk slower, to live slower, to let go of the pressure I was putting on myself to "keep up." God reminded me the only person I need to keep up with is Him, and his yoke is light.

The Message paraphrase of Matthew 11:28-30 describes this perfectly. It reads, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

You'll learn to live freely and lightly.

That's what I learned this summer. And I pray I can walk in it all the remaining days of my life. I never want to return to the heavy, burdensome kind of living again.

Friend, no matter what God is calling you to do today, I pray your heart's desire is to follow Him and His leading wholeheartedly. I almost didn't. I almost wanted to run like Jonah did when God called him to Nineveh. But the thought of being swallowed by a whale didn't sound like a fun summer to me! God always knows what He's doing. It's us who don't. But trusting God to lead us to His best is the most beautiful act of obedience. Who knows what God will do with hearts solely trusting and devoted to Him! It won't be anything but good and glorifying and completely amazing. What a God we serve and love!

If you found some hope and encouragement in today's episode, would you please consider leaving a rating or review from wherever you're listening today? If you haven't already, subscribe so you never miss a new episode. Share this with a friend who may need this encouragement too.

To conclude this episode as summer winds down, I didn't get my book written, and no, I didn't accomplish much this summer in the world's eyes. But today I have a peace I didn't have a few months ago and I have confidence that God will continue to use this season of rest and the Four Rs for my growth, for the good of others, and for His glory. I pray we remember, no matter what God calls us to in the next season, He will lead us through it. Stay encouraged today, friend. Thanks for tuning in. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

Episode 150, [What Do You Soul and Self Need This Summer?](#)

[Matthew 11:28-30](#) MSG

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Julie Lefebvre