

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

162. How to Stay Fully Present on Memorable Days

Welcome to episode 162 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast! Thank you for joining me here today. Every day can be a memorable day, right? At least we desire them to be. But some days just stand out. They are the ones filled with big and momentous moments. Like the day you took your dream vacation, or the day child was born, or the day you achieved something you had been working on for a long time, or the day you got married. These kinds of special days aren't our typical, run-of-the-mill kinds of days. Sometimes we've prepared for them for so long, only to realize when the day finally arrived, we didn't appreciate it like we wanted to. Or we didn't stay fully present like we wish we had. Well in today's episode I share a recent memorable day for our family, and what I did to personally prepare myself to stay fully present in it. I pray my story will help you to do the same in the next memorable day in your life. Let's get into this episode.

Ten days ago, our son got married.

As you can guess, it was a big day in our world. We had been preparing for it for over a year, and I remember thinking back in January if August 31 would never arrive! But arrived, it did, and let me tell you, it was the most wonderful, special, beautiful, memorable day. Just like our daughter's wedding day was nearly six years ago!

As we prepared for his and his fiancé's wedding, I also did some preparation on my own. *For me.* Because you likely already know I'm all about living undistracted. I help women overcome everyday distractions to live the abundant lives Jesus came to give them. If you've been around here for any length of time, you know I've missed some important moments in my life. I was physically present, but maybe not mentally or emotionally present. I've learned from my mistakes, and now I desire for you and me and every woman on the planet to live undistracted lives. To stay fully present, not just in the big, memorable days but in the everyday kind of days as well.

So every chance I get, I share how to do that and how I'm personally doing that. I share my mistakes and also what I do to live fully present in this life God has given me to live. John 10:10 states how Jesus came to give us joy-filled and abundant lives, yet so many of us are missing it. A number of us are missing priceless moments happening in front of us because we're distracted--by our own thoughts, by external factors, by our internal dialog, you name it. Distractions are plentiful these days.

But friend, we don't have to live this way. We don't have to allow the distractions in our lives to run and rule our lives.

Our lives are too important to live them distracted.

So, as we turned our calendars to August, I paused on August 1 and I consciously made a decision, knowing the wedding awaited me at the end of the month. From experience, I remembered how fast wedding days go. I remembered they are a blur. You arrive in the morning with the day fully ahead of you. You're excited as you get ready, and the photos begin. But something happens. You feel like you blinked, and the ceremony is over, and on to the toasts and dinner and dancing. And the next thing you know, the day is done.

I'm not far off, right? That's the thing about memorable days like this. They tend to pick up speed as the day goes on. So a month out, I desired to do all I could to slow it down. I knew preparing myself ahead of time would be key.

Before I share what I did, and how I prepared myself, I want you to think about your own memorable days similar to this. Both in the past and in the future. Is there anything you would do differently regarding past memorable days to stay present in them? How do you want to experience the upcoming memorable days in your life? How can you prepare yourself to stay fully present in them? Here's a little secret: the more prepared we are, the more joy we can experience on days such as these.

Preparing ourselves to stay fully present is key.

But please know, I didn't do any of this perfectly. I'm still a work in progress, but I'm learning more about living undistracted and honoring God in that way of life every time I apply what He's taught me already. Here is how I did that for our son's wedding on August 31.

I prayed.

I had been praying for Zach's future wife and marriage since he was born. So, for 27 years I've been praying for him and for this memorable day. Not only that, but for their marriage. Of course I didn't know who God would have for Zach's life partner way back then, but I knew she would be perfect for him. And God answered that prayer with Paige. They are a God-ordained pair. So mommas, I suggest to begin praying for your children's spouses now if you aren't yet doing that. Even if they are already married. Prayer is powerful and inviting God into these relationships is the best thing we can do.

I prayed for their wedding day: for beautiful weather, for all of us to be healthy, for God to be glorified throughout the day and for His presence to be known and felt.

I also prayed for myself: for God to align my thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions with His. For God to keep me in each moment and to savor each one. For God to enlighten my mind, my emotions, my senses, my experiences of the entire day through the power of the Holy Spirit. I asked Him to allow me to not miss a single thing, but to experience all He wanted me to experience. I knew if I didn't, the day would escape me. Both the wonderful small and big moments would elude me. And I knew I wouldn't be able to stay fully present on my own.

Here's the thing. God wants us fully present. Why wouldn't He? God is with us in the now. Yes, He was with us in the past and His Word promises He will be with us in the future, but He is present with us now. This is where He is. If we choose to not live in the present--where God resides with us--we choose to miss Him and what He has for us in the right now.

God graciously answered every prayer.

"Don't be anxious about things; instead, pray. Pray about everything. *He longs to hear your requests*, so talk to God about your needs and be thankful *for what has come*" (Philippians 4:6 Voice).

I took to social media.

This was completely from God. The week of the wedding I felt God's prompting to pose a question on the social media platform, Threads. This was my post: "It's wedding week here. Any advice for the mother of the groom?" Oh my goodness! The comments flooded in. Two hundred sixty-one, to be exact. Everything from, "Keep your mouth shut, your pocketbook open, and wear beige," to "Have a 'first look' with your son before the ceremony if time permits."

One of the best suggestions I received was to give my phone to a trusted friend so she could take candid photos of the day and I wouldn't feel like I had to. I gave my phone to my best friend, Tina, and the next day I opened my photo gallery to so many amazing photos! She captured the day perfectly! Best idea!

Another suggestion was for us parents to forego sitting on the traditional sides during the ceremony but to sit so we could see our child's face as they said their vows. I'm so glad we did this! Another mom suggested this, "Watch your son, not the bride, when she walks down the aisle. I can't explain it, but this was the most memorable moment of my entire time with him." One other mom said to, "Be PRESENT." She must know me.

I can't tell you how grateful I am for the suggestions of these strangers--these women--I didn't know. I had never been a mother of the groom before, and I knew other women had. They knew what I didn't know. God used them and their words to help me to stay full present on Zach and Paige's wedding day. I'm so thankful. Who says social media is bad? Not me. I'm glad I took God's prompting!

"If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help, and won't be condescended to when you ask for it" (James 1:5 MSG).

By the way, if you're on Threads, find me there through the link in the show notes.

I refused to be distracted.

I was determined to not allow one distraction to deter me from enjoying every single moment of this memorable day. Now, I'll tell you this wasn't easy. I almost let the distraction of nervousness and my tangled-up thoughts snatch me away a couple times, but I consciously gave those to God to handle.

Distractions were everywhere, but I chose not to give in to them. And that's what we do when we've prepared ourselves for a memorable day such as this. We understand there will be distractions, but we can choose to not be enticed to follow them.

I told myself a number of times, "Soak in this, Julie." And I said often, "Help me stay in this moment, Lord." But the thing is, we don't have to wait until a big, memorable day to soak in the moment and to stay fully present. We can say these kinds of things to ourselves on any typical day. We can ask God to help us stay in the moment all throughout every single day.

Think about how our lives would be different if we did so. Think about the blessings we would notice, the people we would notice, and the seemingly insignificant yet special moments we would otherwise miss. This is the way I want to live every day. I'm guessing you do, too. Not just the big memorable days.

"So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times" (Ephesians 5:15-16 MSG)!

I gave myself permission to have fun.

Life can get too serious and so can planning a wedding. I gave myself permission to have the most fun I could on Zach and Paige's wedding day. I smiled, I laughed, I cried tears of joy, I let me experience any and all emotions. Let me tell you, I had a ball.

One thing you may not know about me is that I love a good dance, and a wedding dance is the best. For weeks I had pictured in my mind dancing with my son during our mother-son dance. I just had no idea what song it was going to be. Zach picked it out and wouldn't let me in on the secret. Until we got on the dance floor and the DJ began playing the song I used to sing Zach asleep to when he was a toddler. Tears flowed and time stopped. Neither one of us could stop crying. It was the most special moment. I never want to forget it. What if I had been distracted by anything else? What if I had not soaked in this moment? It still brings me to tears here today.

Looking back, I think I danced to almost every single song of the evening. Except for when I was visiting with our guests. And dancing with our grandsons, ages 2 and 3, was absolutely priceless.

Sometimes we just have to let go of all the seriousness and give ourselves permission to have more fun than we think we should. I need to do this more often. That dance floor was full all night long, and I was there for it. Dancing my heart out was just what I needed!

"And so I *heartily* recommended *that you pursue* joy, for the best a person can do under the sun is to *enjoy life*. Eat, drink, and be happy. *If this is your attitude*, joy will carry you through the toil every day that God gives you under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 8:15, Voice).

What will you do to prepare yourself to stay fully present in the memorable days in your life?

Or in the ordinary Tuesdays, Fridays, and every day in your life? We don't want to miss one thing God has for us.

If you're looking for assistance in living an undistracted life, I invite you to join me for our next Right Now Matters Bible Study group sessions. I originally thought they'd begin in September, but they will begin the first week of October, instead. The dates are coming soon. I host these both online and in person. If you'd like to be notified of when these sessions will be, find the link in the show notes to join the waitlist. I can't wait to study God's Word with you!

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? Forward this episode to a friend who could use some encouragement in her life. If you haven't already, subscribe so you never miss a new episode.

In summary and to close out this episode today, when you're preparing for a memorable day--or any day, for that matter, I invite you to try what I did to prepare for our son's wedding. I suggest to pray, to ask advice from those who've been in your shoes before, to refuse to be distracted, and to give yourself permission to have a ton of fun. Friend, our lives are too important to live them distracted. I'm cheering you on and I'm grateful for you. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[Philippians 4:6](#) Voice

[James 1:5](#) MSG

[Find me on Threads here](#)

[Ephesians 5:15-16](#) MSG

[Ecclesiastes 8:15](#) Voice

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