

177 A Thrill of Hope - Carols of Encouragement

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, your host. Life is remarkable, sometimes raw and always real. And some days we could use a little extra encouragement for our real lives. Here, you'll find that, along with personal life impacting stories, helpful life hacks, timely inspiration, biblical insight, and a fresh perspective.

The Encouragement for Real Life podcast equips you to be a light in this world and to shine bright wherever God has you. I'm glad you're here today.

Julie Lefebure: Merry Christmas! Here we are on Christmas Eve. I can't even believe it. Time has gone fast in this season, hasn't it? But all month long, we have been inspired by the lyrics of Biblically based Christmas carols throughout what we've called, this little series called, [00:01:00] Carols of Encouragement. We've reflected on the profound truths hidden in these songs, and I think we've been blessed by them. I know I have. We've discovered how they speak to our everyday struggles, and we've embraced the hope, peace, and joy that Christ brings through them. I pray that these episodes continue to encourage your heart and point you back to Him. And today's episode is the last in this series, as we learn how we can find a thrill of hope when weariness of life settles in, especially during the holidays. So, are you ready? Let's get into this episode.

Julie Lefebure: Well, what do you get when a French parish priest asks a wine merchant to write a poem for Christmas Eve Mass? [00:02:00] We could let our minds run with this, couldn't we? And the results could be endless. Well, let me tell you, though, you get the original version of O Holy Night. In 1847, well known poet Placide Capot, which I may be pronouncing his name wrong, who might have been more familiar with wine than church, turned to the Book of Luke in the Bible for inspiration to pen the requested poem from priest Maurice Gillis.

After finishing and admiring his work, Capot realized that this was more than just a poem. This was a song. Partnering with friend and composer Adolph Adam, the song Cantique de Noel was born. And I hope I'm pronouncing that right as well. Until the church banned it because of Capot's socialist ties and Adam's Jewish heritage.

But the French people loved it [00:03:00] anyway, and they secretly kept singing it. Nearly a decade later, John Sullivan Dwight, an American writer, discovered this song and translated it for an American audience. Oh Holy Night grew in popularity in America, and in 1906, it was the first song ever broadcast on radio.

Hmm. "Oh Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining. It is the night of our dear Savior's birth. Long lay the world in sin and error pining till he appeared and the soul felt its worth. The thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices and yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall on your knees. Oh, hear the angel voices. Oh night divine. Oh night when Christ was born. Oh night divine. Oh night, oh [00:04:00] night, divine." I really want to sing that. Every carol that I've shared, I've really wanted to sing. But the thrill of hope. Can you feel it?

Well, I couldn't in December of 2006. You see, my mom just died 10 days before Christmas. Yeah. I've shared the full story here before, and I'll add the link to that episode in the show notes if you want to listen. But in the days following her death, I felt I had no hope, even though my faith was in Jesus. My dad had been gone for seven years already, and this was the first time that I ever felt like an orphan here on Earth, with now both of them gone.

It was the strangest, weirdest feeling. And it was a season of unexplainable sadness and grief, unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. And even though Christmas had always been my favorite, I could have cared less [00:05:00] that year about Christmas. And the reality of never celebrating Christmas with the one who always made it so special. She really did. Mom made Christmas very special. It made me wonder, would I ever enjoy Christmas again? I didn't know.

The weariness of this world can nearly bury us if we're not careful. It can sucker punch us in the gut so forcefully that we question if we'll ever be able to catch our breath, to ever breathe normal again. No matter what the weariness is, we can never seem to prepare ourselves for it, no matter how hard we try.

Friend, I don't know what weariness you're experiencing today, but I'm guessing you're facing some. Someone I love is weary in his job, and it's not easy to show up for work when the weariness is so heavy. A friend of mine lost both of her parents this year, and her [00:06:00] weariness of grief is overwhelming. And another friend can't seem to find any joy in her life. She's experienced one disappointment after another, and she wonders when the next disappointment will rush in. Weariness isn't fun. We'd much rather experience hope and joy, wouldn't we?

But, you know, I can't help but think of Jesus' words when He warned us that we would have trouble in this world. And James in his book says that we are to count it all joy when we face trials. And Apostle Paul tells us to rejoice in our sufferings. No, thank you. I don't like trouble. And I avoid suffering at all costs, if at all possible. And the last thing I feel is joy when I am in a trial. And I'm guessing that you might be a little like me in these ways. But these words right [00:07:00] here that we just looked at, they leave us without hope. But hope isn't far behind, if we keep reading. So, let's look at these scriptures together and read just a bit further.

John 16, 33, in the New International Version, reads, "I have told you these things so that in me you will have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world." And James chapter 1, verses 1 through 3, also in the New International Version, says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance." And the final one is Romans chapter 5 verses 3 and 4, also in the New International Version. "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance [00:08:00] character, and character hope."

There it is, the thrill of hope. We have the thrill of hope because of the promises we cling to. According to the Romans passage, suffering leads us, ultimately, to hope. And that's what I found in the difficult Christmas season of 2006. I found the thrill of hope. Not because of anything I did or didn't do, and certainly not because of my circumstances, because those were not fun circumstances. But because I began to cling to the promises of God.

Yeah, the weariness lingered, but I was no longer buried underneath its weight. It was as if hope lifted it off of me. And even though it wasn't what I would call a Merry Christmas that year, I was reminded my hope came from a [00:09:00] baby born in a manger with no crib for a bed on a silent night.

My heart was preparing Him room. And that's exactly what my heart and soul needed, and has needed every day since. They needed Jesus and the thrill of hope that only He can give. We may not consciously feel the thrill of hope, and we may not even actually embrace it during times of weariness. But if our hope is in Jesus, we know that that thrill of hope is there. We can cling to it and ask God to remind us of it, even when we don't feel it. Romans 15 :13 in the New International Version states, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen to that. [00:10:00]

There's a thrill found in this hope. A truth arising that proclaims that we aren't alone in our wearying circumstances. Jesus walks with us through them as He lavishly gives us His hope. Even the tiniest glimmers of hope He provides sustain us. But will we notice them? Will we see them or will we miss them?

Well, we will see them if our focus is on Jesus. Our focus can shift anywhere this season. I know because I've experienced it in the last few weeks, but especially today on Christmas Eve, I encourage you to spend some time with Jesus today and in the days to come. Talk with Him, pray to Him, seek Him. Take some moments to read the Christmas story. In fact, I made that really easy for you this year.

I have a Christmas gift waiting for you in my free resource [00:11:00] library. It's a compilation of the scriptures that make up the full Christmas story. So you can access that in the link in the show notes. It's my gift to you this Christmas. So Merry Christmas.

But look for His glimmers of hope all around you today. They are there. They are. And as you celebrate Christmas today, tomorrow, and even in the days to come, I invite you to listen to O Holy Night, our carol for today. Allow the words to encourage your heart and bless your soul. And I've included one version in the show notes.

We'll pray together here in a moment, but before we do I want to remind you of another way to embrace the thrill of hope we have in Jesus. If you live local to me, I invite you to begin the new year with purpose and a heart ready to follow God's calling. Join us for Coffee and Calling, a special gathering where [00:12:00] women come together over a cup of coffee or tea or hot chocolate or something fun like that to reflect, connect, and prayerfully choose a guiding word for 2025. It's going to be here before we know it 2025. My goodness. But this event is on Saturday, January 4th from 8:30 to 10 a. m. in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The details and the tickets can be found in the show notes. There's only 30 tickets available, but I cannot wait to begin the new year with you and with this thrill of hope. Will you pray with me?

Lord, we come to You today to give You glory and to praise Your holy name. Lord, the burden of weariness feels heavy and too much to bear most days in this world. But You've told us in Your word that we are to expect trouble in this world, and that we are to rejoice in our sufferings for what suffering does [00:13:00] in our lives. It produces hope. Thank You that it does. The hope that only can be found in You. So I pray for the one listening right now. Please meet her in her need, Lord Jesus. Give her Your thrill of hope as her weary heart

rejoices in You this Christmas. Remind her how much You love her and how You are with her today and in the days to come, even in the weariness. Increase her faith and joy in You, Lord, even amid the struggles of life. Thank You for coming to us as a baby, and we look forward to Your return. Thank You, Lord. We love You, and it's in Your name we pray these things. Amen.

Merry Christmas, friend. Thank you for tuning in today. God bless you.

thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at [00:14:00] JulieLefebure.com and until next time, stay encouraged.