



Episode 80: Don't Take Offense

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 80.

This is a podcast all about making decisions. It's also a podcast about making a life.

If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place.

For a few minutes each week, I'll offer a thoughtful story, a little prayer, and a simple next right step.

Our month of celebration is in full swing now because The Next Right Thing is not only a podcast, it's also a book! So we've been releasing two episodes every week in the month of April so far we've had Annie Downs and Kendra Adachi and I've had them on to talk about their decision-making process both the logic and the fear behind some of their own life choices. This week we'll have another bonus coming your way so you can be on the lookout for that one.

This would also be a good time to mention if you haven't subscribed to the podcast yet, do your future self a favor and hit that subscribe button in your favorite podcast listening app so when those bonus episodes release, they'll magically appear in your podcast feed.

Now on to today's episode. If you've ever wished for more time in the day, this episode is for you. It's not about time management, productivity, or getting more done but if you practice this one thing, it will help you in all three of those areas. What is it?

Listen in.

The gate into our backyard has been slowly breaking for years. At first, it just needed an extra shake to get open but now we have to keep it tied with a rope at the top so it will stay closed. John's made it work over the years, but something is weird with the design and it keeps needing more than we have to give it.

I pull the gate closed, put the rope back in place, and walk inside to do the dishes, only to discover the sink has clogged and the water won't go down.

My favorite jeans have a hole (and not the kind you want) but I wear them anyway because every other option is dirty. When I finally sit at my desk to do some work, as soon as I meet one deadline, three more show up in my inbox.

I read an email and someone is disappointed with me. In a conversation, a friend says some things that feel dismissive of me and my situation. Later I'm sitting in a group and leave feeling like an idiot for no particular reason but also for lots of reasons I can't quite articulate.

From the woman at the grocery store who looks at you funny because you give your kid two of those free cookies they offer in the bakery area. From her all the way to the Maker of the Universe who invites us simply to come away for a while in the midst of all we have to do.

From the girl who didn't mean anything by it when she inadvertently insulted you, to the child who needs you at the most inconvenient times.

Defending yourself can become a full-time job, one that takes up brain-space at work, in your car, on the weekends, at the grocery store. You may find yourself explaining the actions of this ungracious person to your spouse, your best friend, your sister, your mom or anyone else who will listen. I only know this because I have done this. A skill we all come by quite naturally is our remarkable ability to take offense. It's quite impressive if you think about it.

In the broad scope of life, these annoyances are minor, but that doesn't mean they have no impact. It's true, we live as resurrection people after the blessed reminder of Easter. But in our actual life, we often never really let go of the shadow of Lent.

One cause of decision fatigue I see is not always a result of having a massive amount of important decisions to make. It can be that, but many times instead, decision fatigue comes when we refuse to acknowledge the weight of the small hurts, annoyances, dismissals, and offenses we carry around all day, every day.

So when we are confronted with the necessary task of having to make a decision about our work, our home, our schedule, or on behalf of other people, well, we're kind of just done.

We're offended when we're hurt. We're offended when they misunderstand. We're offended when they don't acknowledge our feelings. And when we are offended, one of two things may happen.

One, we feel dumb for feeling offended so we deny the offense on the outside but still stew on the inside.

Or two, we feel justified for feeling offended so we lash out, hide out, or design a passive-aggressive version of both.

I'm not issuing an invitation to wallow in our offenses. But what if we agreed to face them, admit them, and quickly let them go.

Why? Because we need to leave room for the offenses worth fighting for. In the face of injustice, discrimination, prejudice, and racism of any kind, outrage is the appropriate response. But even in this - it isn't outrage for outrage sake.

Dallas Willard says whenever we become angry it's because we believe our kingdom just got invaded. But the good kind of anger is when God's kingdom is invaded. This is the offense to pay attention to.

So I'm not saying there is never a time to take offense. I'm also not saying we aren't allowed to feel hurt, violated, or dismissed. We are allowed to, of course, we are.

I am saying imagine a world where you could choose *not* to take offense. Where just because someone offers an offense in your direction doesn't mean you have to take it. The most

important decision you make today could be to decide to not persevere over that conversation, that weird look, that dismissive behavior. What if you took the word, the glance, the insult intended or unintended and instead of carrying it around, what if you looked at it, acknowledged it, and set it down instead?

What if you dared to remain delightfully un-offended?

I'm not saying this is easy. I am saying it's interesting.

Take action.

Set boundaries.

Remain grounded.

Remember who you are.

Keep a light heart.

Extend grace.

Don't take offense.

Jesus promises his grace is sufficient. He promises in our weakness his power is made perfect. So when schedules get full, when patience runs low, when the opportunity for misunderstandings run as high as the sky, stay close to your friend Jesus who had every right to take offense, but chose love instead. Instead of turning his back, he turned toward. Instead of lashing out, he leaned in.

The truth is death doesn't always look like a tragedy. Sometimes death is a slowly dripping faucet. And even though these things can't be compared to real danger or true poverty, disappointment and weariness can drip the life right out. Slow. Quiet. Drip.

The life of Christ was a one way road to death. It's been said *Jesus died so I didn't have to*. The truth is, *Jesus died and so did I*. Jesus didn't stay dead. And neither do we.

When we are offended, it can feel like dying a little bit on the inside. But let the dying moments remind us where to find the living.

Being offended takes energy. Staying offended is a full-time job.

But this is energy you need to do your good and beautiful work, to love the people you are called to love, to move through the world as the person you most deeply are and to live your one life well. Don't allow someone else's dysfunction to poke yours awake.

As Colossians 3:3 says,

“Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life.”

Here is the place where the ordinary peers through the glass dimly, where even though I stand alone in my kitchen or sit waiting on the phone or stretch out on top of the covers, or sit behind the steering wheel, I can be there at the cross. Because even though I am offended, I do not have to take offense. Instead of standing up tall and tensing my shoulders, I can bow down low and remember I have died. And in that quiet, lowly place, I see a small blade, green and strong, born from the death of a seed. And life shoots up from broken earth carrying truth, joy, and freedom because if I have died, then what have I to fear? And so from death like Christ, I live!

Here's the thing, these words may not resonate with you right now. But maybe next week or next month or tomorrow, when the way she speaks to you is so shocking it makes your eyes cross, when the kids disrespect you so blatantly you can't stand up straight, when your boss blames you for that thing you had nothing to do with, maybe you will remember these words. *This is what it feels like to die.* And it hurts and is painful and doesn't seem to have a point. Maybe it won't have a point unless you demand it does, unless you insist on squeezing the death out of the moment until the life shows up, be it through gratitude, acceptance, belief and a refusal to take offense.

If you feel worn out or a little teary, if the fog of doubt and the shadow of anxiety lingers too close by today, if the burden of defending yourself has proven to be too much for you, take heart.

There is another option.

In the midst of the rubble and heartache of everyday life, I hope you'll pause with me to find the quiet path of hope.

What if we remained so stubbornly close to Christ that it became impossible to offend us?

May the love of the Father, the power of the Son, and the protection of the Holy Spirit be with you now as you simply do your next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 80 of The Next Right Thing.

A few lines of this episode came from my third book *A Million Little Ways* and they are lines I find myself returning to again and again. In an episode like this, it could be easy to think of all the people in your life who need to hear these words. But if I may gently encourage you this episode is not for your neighbor, your political enemy, your father-in-law, or that lady in your book club. The only way the practice of not taking offense will make any difference in the world is if we each take it for ourselves. The minute we try to use any of this to make a point, well, we've missed the point.

As always, you can find a transcript of this episode on my website at emilypfreeman.com - just click on podcast in the top navigation and look for episode 80.

You can find me there at emilypfreeman.com or on Instagram or Twitter @emilypfreeman. If you want even more step-by-step help to make a decision, check out *The Next Right Thing* book on Amazon, at your local Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million or wherever you like to buy books.

In closing, here are a few words from Henri J.M. Nouwen, in his book, *The Way of the Heart*

“The raging torrents of our tumultuous times have made it very hard not to lose sight of the light and not to let ourselves drift away into the darkness . . . When we have been remodeled into living witnesses of Christ through solitude, silence, and prayer, we will no longer have to worry about whether we are saying the right thing or making the right gesture, because then Christ will make his presence known even when we are not aware of it.”

May it be so in us. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.