



Episode 72: Design A Rhythm of Life

Hey, it's me. I know I keep coming in here at the top of the podcast episodes to tell you new things. But listen y'all it's five weeks til book release and so I'm going to point some things out at the top of these episodes. And so, today's no different at the end of this episode, I finally get to share with you something I've been working on for literal months that I think you are going to love. Stay tuned.

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 72.

This is a podcast all about making decisions whether you're chronically hesitant and tend to be a decision-avoider OR if you're someone who makes a lot of decisions on the daily and, while you may be confident in making them, the sheer volume of decisions has worn you out.

This is also a place for you if just need a little white space or a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment.

For a few minutes each week, you've come to the right place for a thoughtful story, a little prayer, and a simple next right step.

Here in North Carolina, we're flirting with spring and maybe in the slow transition between seasons, you're gearing up for the second quarter of the year: looking at calendars, plans, trips, and weekly commitments. There's a chance 2019 already has you ruh-roh-ing over your schedule and the decisions that need to be made are piling up.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by all the little steps in front of you and you wish you could just take a step back and see the big picture, or maybe you HAVE stepped back but you aren't sure what to do with what you've learned about the big picture, then today's episode is for you.

Listen in.

They say adults make over 35,000 decisions every single day. Many of those are second nature. I'm here for the ones that aren't.

Over the past year I've received email, notes, private messages on Instagram and even letters in the actual mail from people (maybe even you?!) who tell me I have helped them finally make a difficult life decision, from choosing a particular job, moving across the country, getting married or not, buying a house, supporting an aging parent, or having a tough conversation with a co-worker.

While my ego is happy to believe I did the work, the truth is, every one of those kind people who contacted me already had everything they needed to make a soulful decision.

I know this for sure because, after over 70 episodes of The Next Right Thing Podcast, I've never once, not one time, told one person what to do, what choice to make, or what particular path to follow. I don't have people call in my show and share about a decision and then advise them on what choice to make. No way. Not a chance.

All I've done is create space for you to discern what's happening beneath the surface of your own life and then decide with your friend Jesus what your next right thing might be. You already have what you need. My job is to simply create space so you can connect the dots.

This, I've discovered, is something I believe we are all called to do in the kingdom of God for one another.

Recently one of my professors, Keas Keasler, asked our class what are the implications of Jesus leaving behind, not a book, but a community?

Of course, the complete Bible came later and we believe it's God's word and we trust God speaks through it. But before Jesus left on earth, those actual days that actual time before he left earth to be with his father, if what he valued more than anything else was for his people to just do the right moves and make the right decisions, he would have left behind detailed instructions for every possible scenario. He could have done that.

Instead, he did something quite different. He said, I'm gonna go, but I'm going to send my Spirit to live in you and among you. You can trust me. And because I live in you now, you can trust each other.

One day when He was still here, the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the Kingdom of God come?" Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs. You won't be able to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is already among you."

That's in Luke 17:20-21 and it's important to note what Jesus was saying here. He said the kingdom is among you, you the *plural* version. He was saying you can't get to the kingdom on a map because the kingdom of God is not a place, but a *people*.

If that's true, and I deeply believe the Bible teaches that it is, then we need each other. If marriage is the best metaphor for the relationship the church has with God, then in essence we could say that we as a community in the kingdom of God need each other to have and to hold, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish.

For those of us embedded in the culture of the West, well this doesn't come so natural to us. But it's still an invitation, extended to us across time and generations, straight from the heart of Jesus who cast a hopeful vision of our life together as his children, as his people, as his bride.

So what's this have to do with discerning our next right thing?

Well, a lot actually. Because if we move through life believing that we have to figure all this stuff out on our own, if we move through life believing that's the most important thing, then we are living counter to the vision God has for his people.

In the episode just before this one, episode 71, I shared about the Westminster Chimes, how when Big Ben is in operation, they ring out over London every quarter hour, marking time.

But of course, the idea of marking time didn't start with the Westminster Chimes. For centuries people have been using chimes, bells, gongs, and many other things to mark time and call people to prayer.

In fact, some say Saint Benedict, who lived back in the 6th century was often depicted in artwork as holding a type of rod and they say he may have used that same rod to strike whatever was near in order to make a noise loud enough to call the monks to prayer.

I bring up Saint Benedict on purpose here, actually, as the rule of life that he established called The Rule of Saint Benedict is something I've been doing a lot of thinking and reading about lately especially in the last few years.

The Rule is not a legalistic code. Instead, he created it to be a practical guide to living a life in balance. Today, we can take the principles from St. Benedict's rule and create our own rule, or many call it rhythm of life. We don't have to live in reaction mode all the time. We can, instead, learn to respond to actually be responsible, or response-able, both to God and to other people.

If you are a regular listener of this podcast or if you're new and you're here because someone told you it helped them make a decision, I want to stand up and cheer because that is one of my goals.

My even bigger goal, though, is to help you not only make better decisions but to help you make decisions in a better way.

One of those ways? Is to stop making decisions in a vacuum. Stop making them on your own.

Stop procrastinating and waiting until the last minute because you're so frazzled and torn up about a thing on the inside that you overthink and second guess.

I'm not saying decisions will always be easy. But I am saying they don't always have to be so hard.

We don't have to live a life of reaction. We can live in response.

If we want to make life decisions in a better way, then we can't wait to start with the decision. We actually need to start with the *life*.

One way to start with the life is to follow the lead of Saint Benedict and design a rhythm of life. A simple way of thinking about designing a rhythm of life is to see it in three movements: look back, look around, and look forward.

Look back in reflection, both big picture and as a regular habit. How can my past decisions inform my future ones?

Look around at your current rhythms and habits. In what ways does the life I'm living put me in the path of God?

Look forward. As I consider my life in the presence of God, where do I sense he might be leading and do my current habits make sense in light of that?

In essence, designing a rhythm of life is a plot-holding practice, a way to remember on the daily what matters to you, what is your place in the world, and how you can partner with God by linking arms with those around you.

If designing a rhythm of life sounds intriguing to you, I've got great news. As of right now, today, I have a brand new resource I've created to help you do just that.

I've been teasing it for a few weeks, dropping hints here and there, and today, it's finally ready. It's an online, self-paced class called Discern + Decide. It's all about helping you design a personal and communal rhythm of life. It's a hands-on companion to my book, *The Next Right Thing* complete with video teaching, audio descriptions of simple spiritual practices, and a beautifully designed 30 page printable workbook.

The class, Discern + Decide is a sister to both the podcast and The Next Right Thing book. While the book gives big picture principles, practical perspective, and a prayer and a practice for each of those principles, the class will guide you step-by-step through your own life, with

questions for reflection and guidelines for establishing your own personal rhythm of life. The book is the foundational belief and the class helps you put that belief into action by creating a life rhythm that supports soulful decision making.

The class is available right now, today and the best part is you can get it for free. I'll tell you in the outro - but first a reminder of why a rhythm of life is important from **Romans 12:1-2**:

“Take your everyday, ordinary life —your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life— and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”

This is the word of the Lord. It is absolutely true and given to us in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 72 of The Next Right Thing.

Of the thirty-five thousand decisions you'll make today, I'm grateful one of them was to listen to The Next Right Thing.

It's taken me ten years to get down on paper in one sentence what I believe my deepest calling is, but finally with the help of lots of time, reading, writing, and conversation with people like you, I think I've landed on this:

I create space for your soul to breathe so that you can discern your next right thing in love as we live together in Christ's kingdom and bring the world along.

That last line about living together in Christ's kingdom comes from a book by David Fitch called Faithful Presence and when I read it, I sensed something release within me, like the final chord resolving the melody of a complicated song.

Yes, I want to create space for your soul to breathe. Yes, I want to help you discern your next right thing in love. But all of that is so that we can live together in Christ's Kingdom and bring the world along.

One way I was able to come up with that sentence at all was through following my own rhythm of life - leaning into these three rhythms of looking back, looking around, and looking forward.

I would love to walk alongside you as you design your own rhythm of life or tweak the one you have. You can start today with Discern + Decide, available for the very first time right now for absolutely free when you pre-order *The Next Right Thing*. The book isn't available until April 2 but you can sign in to the class today. Once you pre-order or if you've already preordered weeks ago, just visit nextrightthingbook.com to claim your free access to Discern + Decide.

Because we believe life with God is better than life without God, then wouldn't it make sense that we, to the best of our ability, to the extent that it is within our capacity to choose, that we design our lives in such a way that our lives sing in harmony with the kingdom of God? That's what a rhythm of life is for. I'd love to help you create one.

I'll leave you with this beautiful imagery from Walter Wangerin Jr. In his book, *Preparing for Jesus*.

“Oh Lord, you are the musician, and we are all your instruments. You breathe, and we come to life. You breathe, and we are horns for your glory. You blow through the world the winds of the spirit, and we like chimes cannot keep silent. You pluck the strings of our hearts, and we become a psalm. You come, and now we must sing.”