



Episode 69: Tell Someone

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to Episode 69.

This is a place where I hope to create space for your soul to breathe so that you can discern your next right thing in love.

Maybe you've always been prone to indecision, what I call chronic hesitation, or maybe you are in a season of life that requires more from you than usual, like a job transition, a cross country move, or a weird new family dynamic.

No matter the cause or the onset, my hope always is in the few minutes we have together, that you'll discover ways to create space for your own soul to breathe even in the midst of your busy life so that you can make decisions with confidence and hope. One life-giving choice I've made when I'm feeling overwhelmed with indecision is to decide not to walk through it alone.

Listen in.

We've lived in our house for over ten years and since the day we moved in, I've meant to remodel our upstairs bathroom that our three kids share. So at the end of last year, we finally prioritized it, picked out the essentials for the room and the work started just a few weeks ago.

So here I am, one day last week, a day where I have exactly eleventy million things to do, the workers show up and ask me no less than ten thousand and seventeen questions about the tiniest details. These are the kinds of choices that you can't make ahead of time because they aren't obvious until you tear into walls and rip up floors and find parts that are missing, floors that need fixing, choosing that needs chosen.

And it would be fine and it may even be fun except, today, I'm already at capacity.

In this moment I remember why it's taken us ten years to do this thing. I've not been avoiding the expense. I've been avoiding the decisions.

An hour from now I'm teaching a class on finding time to write on a day when I don't have time to eat, much less time to craft thoughtful sentences together. Except I do craft them and they aren't really that thoughtful but the work has to get done.

Sidenote - this is not an episode about writing but I'll use it as an example because it's going to apply broadly, which you're going to see in just a minute.

In this daily writing routine teaching I'm doing, I give the writers 6 principles to remember when they are trying to establish a routine and the very first principle has been one I've stood by for many years. It's not "find the perfect notebook" (although that helps) it's not "wake up earlier than everyone else" (although I do that, too alot of the time). It's not "read this particular book" or "write this number of words per day" or "download this high tech app."

Instead, the first thing I encourage writers to do when they want to establish a daily writing routine is this: *Tell someone.*

If you want to get serious, the first thing to do is to say it out loud.

I made the mistake of going at it alone over a decade ago when I started writing. I wrote on a blog and, though my husband John knew I had a blog and he knew I was writing, it wasn't a secret, I didn't actually have a conversation with him like, "You know, this is meaningful to me. Something about this helps me walk up to my own life. I want to prioritize it." I didn't say any of that. At the time I didn't have the vocabulary to explain it or the experience to know how important it was to share with him.

It felt so personal, vulnerable, but also really important. I didn't want to risk telling him and then be rejected. So I kept it to myself. In some ways, looking back, I kept it from myself. Not only did I not tell John how important this writing was becoming to me, but I don't know I even recognized it myself, much less was able to articulate it out loud.

P.S. That is one reason why I am such an advocate for life reflection and paying attention to what brings life and what drains life. I think if I would have been in a regular habit of reflection back then, I would have recognized sooner the vital role that writing played in my own spiritual formation.

So, when one spouse places a high value on something and the other spouse doesn't *know* said spouse has placed that high value on the thing, conflict and frustration are bound to ensue. And ensue they did. One of my deepest longings in life is to be understood and this was a season of our marriage where I felt deeply misunderstood. But the problem wasn't John's misunderstanding, not really, the problem was my unwillingness or inability to communicate.

This principle applies way beyond writing. If you want to get serious about *anything*, the first thing to do is tell someone: say it out loud to a person you trust.

Tell someone doesn't mean tell *everyone*.

It doesn't mean tell the *Internet* or announce it at the next family gathering.

It doesn't mean tell them and then expect them to keep you on track or check in about it.

The telling is so when you prioritize this new thing over something else you used to do, now your person will understand why.

The telling is for you and for mutual understanding of what this commitment might mean.

The telling is a declaration of something, to hear yourself say words out loud, into the room.

The telling can be an important next right thing.

When God created the world, he didn't just think about it. Scripture tells us God spoke and the world came out.

There is power in the spoken word.

I get this can be scary. Just listen to episode 49 where I talk about my fear of collaboration. My tendency is to hunker down and figure stuff out on my own. Over time, though, this mentality is more hurtful than helpful. And it's not the way God designed us to exist in the world.

He made us to need each other. He invites us into communion so that we can communicate and build community in the world.

After talking with the bathroom workers upstairs and finally making some decisions, I notice my hands are shaking and there's a pulsing ball of what feels like electricity in the pit of my stomach. This is what happens when I'm put on the spot and forced to make choices that can't be reversed. Even small choices, ones about tile, or molding, or bathroom faucets, they are still choices. And in an already overwhelmed schedule, all these little choices well they add up.

Just when I start to settle down, just when I begin to finalize notes for my live teaching in an hour, the contractor calls to confirm some of the decisions I just made with the bathroom workers.

Am I certain I want to have a threshold between the hardwood floor and the bathroom tile?

And am I certain of my grout color?

And, just checking, but do I remember about the color that the tile will be?

She just wants to be on the same page with the workers and she told them to do one thing but I'm telling them something different which is *fine* she says sweetly because I'm the customer so they'll do what I want but she just wants to know am I certain?

Yes, I tell her.

Yes, I'm certain, I say.

But the truth is, in this moment, I know nothing.

I'm certain of nothing.

Everything feels ridiculous.

Soon after I hang up, John walks in. I tell him of the one hundred million decisions I just made about our bathroom. I tell him of my shaking hands and how dumb I feel that making decisions about non-life threatening things bring this weird low-grade anxiety. I tell him and he hears me.

The circumstance does not change but the load feels lighter because I said it all out loud.

That's true when I tell someone about my big ideas and hoped for goals as well as when I tell someone when the day has been a little nutty and I just need some company.

Today as you face your own decisions, does someone come to mind who you can tell?

Do you have a friend who knows you well, who you've been wanting to just mention this new idea you've had but you're feeling vulnerable about it? Tell her.

Are you thinking about making a career change, starting a hobby, moving toward a degree, going back to work, trying a new exercise program? Are you thinking of starting, of quitting, of changing course?

Tell someone. Not everyone and maybe not everything. But tell someone something. Let people into your life.

And if no one comes to mind right now, don't let lonely win. Start by telling your friend Jesus. Say it out loud to him. Let him receive you with joy. Ask him who might be a trustworthy person to tell.

Because we want to be people who dare to say the words out loud so someone may receive them. We don't have to carry them alone - whether they are words of sorrow or words of joy, of hope or of fear, of starting or of letting go.

As we remember the courage it takes to tell someone, may we be the kind of people who others can tell. As Jesus has received us, may we receive others in return as we continue to do our next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 69 of The Next Right Thing.

Hey, hey you remember, we have a book coming out April, 2. Y'all are just going to have get used to mentioning it every week now. You can pre-order *The Next Right Thing* right now wherever you buy books. I'm hard at work behind the scenes on what I think is going to be a fantastic pre-order incentive. So, if you order it now, you'll get that incentive when it's ready. More on that soon.

Well, I outlined this episode weeks ago that's actually not normal for me with this podcast, but I had these thoughts about the power of telling someone several weeks ago, and then last week my friend Laura Tremaine launched a brand new podcast, 10 Things to Tell You - where she says she has 10 things to tell you about a specific topic and reminds us that we have 10 things to tell. You can check out 10 Things to Tell You wherever you listen to podcasts or at 10thingstotellyou.com

Some of my most treasured ah-ha moments and my most personally transformative work have come from finally finding the courage to tell someone about a dream, a problem, a half-baked idea. If you

feel stuck in a particular pattern or are wondering a next step to take, consider if it might be time to tell someone.

It may help to listen to Episode 33 where I talk about gathering co-listeners. You can find that at Thenextrightthingpodcast.com where you can also find show notes for this episode.

As always you can find me at emilypfreeman.com or @emilypfreeman on Instagram. Another thing you might like to know about, every Saturday I send out an email with my favorite finds of the week, that is stuff that you guys are making. It's designed to be relentlessly helpful and mercifully short, just one last thing to read before you start the weekend. We'll put a direct link in the show notes if you'd like to receive that.

Now may your week be filled with hope. If you need time, may you have the space to take it. If you need courage, may you have the heart to find it. If you need support, may you have a friend who sees you. If you need laughter, may you discover the funny where you least expect it. But if time is full, courage hides, friends are distant and funny doesn't share, may the silence of your loneliness escort your spirit to discover your deepest desire is God, and his fullness is available to you in every ordinary moment.

Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.