



137: Remember What You Know

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 137. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you 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 thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step.

Even as we continue to learn more about this coronavirus that has drastically changed our way of life, we also acknowledged there's much we still don't know. And we have more questions than answers. From the scientists to the school board, no one really knows for sure what the next best step is and those who thought they knew for sure before, well, they keep changing their minds. Still we continue to move forward. We're tasked with having to make decisions without all the facts, with a rapidly changing landscape of advice.

And with fewer certainties, we've come to rely upon how in the world are we supposed to make wise decisions with little information now, more than ever. It's essential to remember what we already know and practice doing just the next right thing, but first a word from this episode, sponsor [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

As I've already mentioned, we're doing things a lot differently these days than we have in the past wearing face masks, gathering with safe social distance in mind and spending more time with our families. Maybe time together has inspired you to take a trip through time. You can learn about your family's history with [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). With an ancestry DNA test, you learn exactly where your ancestors lived and you can trace paths of your recent family members from place to place and learn not only where they moved, but why they moved there through ancestry family tree.

I learned that my maternal grandfather enlisted in the army just one week before Pearl Harbor. And I even found out his exact height and weight at the time. Maybe you'll learn something interesting about your family as well. The ancestry DNA test help you uncover personal stories about your past and a unique interactive format. You can make it an activity for your family near and far and let your shared past bring you closer together. Start exploring your family story today. Head to [ancestry.com/nextrightthing](https://www.ancestry.com/nextrightthing) to get your ancestry DNA kit and start your free trial. That's [ancestry.com/nextrightthing](https://www.ancestry.com/nextrightthing). Now onto today's episode. Listen in.

The announcement from our governor came when we were on the road. So we tuned in at 3:00 PM to hear what he had to say about school reopening in the fall. The connection was spotty when we turned it on, but we finally got it to work about eight minutes into the speech, but by then, he'd already laid out all the important stuff and mainly the framework for the plan.

So we had to piece together what the options were based on his explanations, questions from the audience, and a fair amount of Googling. Once we finally got home, we later learned that at the top of the hour, he had described essentially three different plans for our state's school reopening and individual school districts within the state had the option to choose between those different plans for the 2020-2021 school year beginning in August.

Simplified, the options were a version of either in-person instruction, a hybrid model of in-person and remote instruction, or completely remote instruction for a period of time with a planned reassessment later in the fall. Now, of course, each of those three plans had many bullet points beneath their explanations. And so you had to page over many times to read the entire plans. Well, later that afternoon, we learned that our public school district chose plan C, which is a completely virtual instruction beginning August 17th for five weeks and then with a reassessment after that.

Well, the news in our house was received with mixed reviews. As you can imagine, there was some reluctance, some relief, some frustration and impatience, all the things that you might expect from two 16-year-olds and a 14-year-old who have been figuring out how to be at home together and with their parents for four months now, already without a whole lot of outside interaction. Well, this school decision is just one of the thousands of decisions everyone is facing right now. And this story simply serves as an example of how the way we make decisions has changed as a result of this virus. You already know the days of assuming business as usual, those days are over the days of doing it the way we've always done. It has passed. At least for now there's much to consider.

And there's much at stake, whether you're a governor, a teacher, or an accountant, a student, a restaurant owner, a medical professional, a social worker, a pastor, or a parent, or any combination of these or a thousand other things. As we approach this sixth month of the pandemic, the rules have officially changed as you do your best to make wise safe, sustainable decisions for your family, your community, your customers, and your parishioners in the coming months. I thought maybe you could use a few reminders today. So I'm sharing three.

The first reminder is if a decision feels too difficult, it's probably not just one decision. It's probably a series of smaller decisions. This may well have been true since the beginning of time, even before the pandemic, obviously, but I'm personally more aware of how true it is. Now. We now have to train ourselves to looking at every decision as if it's just one thing.

Instead, what used to be one decision may now be more like a series of smaller decisions that we can only make one at a time, more than ever. We need to be willing to embrace the practice of doing one next right thing.

Are you planning to host a small event in November, but you don't have enough information to make the final decision yet. Maybe that's not necessary. Maybe today is for having one conversation with a friend about the decision or making a list of alternative options. You already know what the big decision is,

but maybe today is for writing down the smaller decisions that you can make. First, just send one email, research one option, have one conversation, just do the next right thing today.

The second reminder, you don't have to do this alone. In fact, it's perhaps more important than ever that you don't go at it alone. If a serious decision rests solely in your hands, if the outcome of that decision feels daunting and overwhelming, if you worry you'll choose wrong, mess up, stumble, fall and fail miserably. There is a way to soften the blow, and that's to remember to find your co-listeners. We're made for community. No matter your position, your rank or your responsibility, this isn't all up to you just because we're still social distancing doesn't mean we have to be socially isolated.

In episode 33 of this podcast, I share about the spiritual practice of gathering co listeners to help us when we feel stuck, unsure, or hesitant to move forward. If you have a big decision to make the season, one way to build your confidence in making it is to find a few trusted people who can listen along with you to how the spirit might be speaking. The outcomes are never guaranteed, but fear of uncertainty is always lessened when you don't have to face the future alone will finally.

And most importantly, especially maybe in a pandemic, remember the kingdom of God is not in trouble and neither are you daily. I'm holding onto those words. They're a reminder from our friend, James Bryan Smith. This powerful narrative can replace a thousand doubts while we're living in a day where every arrow seems to point towards calamity. Every news brief and headline seems to proclaim destruction and decisions that were once mindless. And second nature are now complex weighty and seemingly endless in these days. It helps to remember that even as the world is reeling, the kingdom of God remains unshakeable. God has not left the building. Jesus has not turned his back. Spirit has not lifted comfort. The Trinity continues to dance.

But God is not indifferent. You are pain, grief, hesitancy, confusion, and frustration. Well, they're seen. Your cries are heard. Your questions are valid. We have a God who refuses to watch from a distance. We have a God who came down to be with us, who walked the dusty roads of earth with us who experiences the pain of life with us and felt the sting of death for us. But remember, God also shows the light to us, raises the dead in us, heals the broken in us, brings the life.

We remain aware of the heartbreak of the world. While we continue to make wise decisions for the love of our neighbors. While we move forward with an admittedly slower pace and with more hesitant steps than we're perhaps used to, we are not without hope. We are not people who are scattered about floating and untethered. We have been brought near.

Remember God is with us and continues to make all things new. Even now, even in 2020. And we can play a part in this new resurrection life as we simply do our next right thing in life.

Thanks for listening to episode 137 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of remembering what you already know can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions. The bigger truth, you know, is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives.

Well, as always, you can find me on Instagram @emilypfreeman and online at emilypfreeman.com, where we always provide a transcript for every episode, either for you, if you prefer reading or for our deaf and hard of hearing friends who would otherwise not have access to an audio offering.

Well, I mentioned episode 33 Gather Colisteners. And that's also a chapter in my book, *The Next Right Thing*. Yes, we have a book. If you haven't heard, it's called *The Next Right Thing*. It's a simple soulful practice to making life decisions and it's available wherever books are sold.

Well, in closing, it seems like a good time to read my favorite Psalm. Once again, Psalm 23, this time, I'm going to read it from The Message version.

God, my shepherd, I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows. You find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. Even when the way it goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty Shepherd's crook makes me feel secure. You serve me a six-course dinner, right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head, my cup brims with blessing. Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life.

This is the word of the Lord. It is absolutely true. And it's given to us in love. Thanks for listening. And I'll see you next time.