



141: Redo Your Morning Routine

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 141.

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 in today's episode, I want to share with you how my morning routine has turned into a dumpster fire, but how I'm still managing to meet God, even though it looks way different now than it used to.

But first a word from this episode sponsor Ancestry.com. Just as my morning routine has changed lately, so have my afternoons and my evenings. In other words, everything is different and like you I'm spending more time at home. Well, during that time, I've done a lot of sorting through old family photos, which has made me curious about what was happening before and after the picture was taken, you can learn about your family's history with 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's family tree. I learned the names of great, great grandparents I never actually even heard of before, much less knew anything about through easy to navigate records and hints. It's fascinating to follow the trail of your family story. Maybe you'll learn something interesting about your family as well. The ancestry DNA test helps you uncover personal stories about your past and the 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/next right thing](https://ancestry.com/next-right-thing), to get your ancestry DNA kit and start your free trial. That's ancestry.com/nextrightthing.

Now onto today's episode where I want to share why my next right thing was to take a second look at my morning routine. Listen in.

According to a survey we sent out back in November, some of your favorite episodes are the ones about either routines and rhythm of life or practicing your faith. Two episodes that did both of these things were number 76, Create a Simple Morning Routine, and also episode 90, that was called start with this simple rhythm. In both of these, I share practical ways that I've structured my mornings over the past few years. And while both of those episodes reflected the truth of my mornings at the time, times have changed and

with it, so has my morning routine.

Last month was a beautiful mess for me. And maybe for you too. The reasons were both obvious and also not so obvious. I'll briefly list a few of them out. Number one, it was July, which means I was offline more than usual anyway, which brings a slowing down and a changing up of daily rhythms, which can be good, but also disorienting in some ways.

Number two, there's the obvious pandemical whole reasons that we need not go into right now, but you understand what I mean when I say that. There's all of the decisions and questions and anxieties that are being faced during this year of our Lord 2020 and for how much longer we know not. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

Number three, we traveled to our usual vacation town, but we stayed on a different side of the island. PS first world problem alert: staying on a different side of the Island, meant that we watched beach sunsets instead of beach sunrises. And while it was all very beautiful and I loved it, it was a small picture of a greater reality that in a very small way, small, small way added to this upside down newness of these current days.

Number four, we're like many of you we've been watching church online and also like many of you, we haven't stepped foot inside our church building in 26 weeks. Yes. Like the mother of a newborn baby, I counted this in weeks. It's the longest I've gone without going into a church building in my whole literal life. And of course, we know that the church is not a building. The church building is the place where we see the church face to face. And well, we're not doing that right now. Of course, as I said, we know the church is more than a building, but the building is usually where we go to see the church. So we have to reimagine, what does it even mean to be the church from the first few weeks of all the shutdowns, it was quickly obvious that we would have to rethink how we've always done church and not to mention school and gatherings and community of any kind. But what has taken me longer to figure out is how much I would have to rethink how I do everything, not just public gatherings with people, but also my own private conversations with God.

Back in episode 90, I shared the five-movement rhythm I practice in the mornings and for a long time, it was quite life-giving for me. Those five movements were really simple. It was a pray, read, write, read, pray, rhythm. It sounds way more extensive than it actually is. It was simple. And I set it up for myself when I sat down to begin my day and it worked for quite some time, there was no secret about the order of it, unless you count deciding on an order, a secret, which these days making any decision kind of feels like a miracle. So maybe that does count for something.

But as I've mentioned as the days, weeks and months have passed, I've discovered the way I'd always done my mornings don't fit anymore. At least they don't for now. I went through all of the regular fits about this frustration, confusion, happiness avoidance. Until finally I decided, as we talked about in our last episode, do the opposite instead of continuing to try to force something, to continue to make it work, I gave right up and I let myself be open to something new. I'm here to tell you I'm still in the middle of this. And so I don't have a new routine to recommend to you, but I do have a few more words to share in solidarity.

I read a few lines from Shannon Martin's Instagram posts recently that I want to put on a billboard. And

that is in reference to the North American church. During this pandemic, she said, “The church is not under attack. Christians are under a microscope. Are we who we say we are? Are we walking in the weird way of Jesus?”

I’m carrying her question close to my heart because that’s the question that really matters. This way of walking through the world should feel upside down. It ought to be uncomfortable. And maybe that starts with my mornings. So what do my mornings look like these days? All those there’s still coffee. There’s still a few lines scribbled in a journal. There’s still reading for 15 minutes right now. It’s the life-giving challenging, honest words of Latasha Morrison in her book, *Be the Bridge*, because by the way, this anti-racism work, I’ve been talking about it’s lifelong and I refuse to stop learning and listening.

And so it feels like 2020 is changing us in every way. Not only in global and communal ways, but also at the cellular level. Of course I’m not a scientist. So I guess maybe that’s not true, but if we can speak metaphorically and I always say that we can, the building blocks that make up all of our systems, politically and relationally, and even the foundation of our faith, at least the foundation of mine. Well, it’s all being rearranged right now. The dust has not settled. The fog has not cleared, but those mornings they keep on coming. And even though I can’t figure out how to make them feel the way they used to feel here comes the sun. Anyway, there sits my friend, Jesus, waiting with me for me, smiling still. And I cannot for the life of me, figure out why he keeps on doing that.

But here we are. And so through this grief, through this disappointment and weird confusion and reorientation and constant making and changing of our minds, we’re still here. God is still with us and things will not always be this way as we continue to pay attention to the world around us and within us, as we continue to ask, what does it mean to walk with people from a distance and to wake up to ever-changing routines? May we continue to do our next right thing in love, even if it’s different than what we expected it to be.

Thanks for listening to episode 141 of *The Next Right Thing*.

I hope this simple practice of redoing your morning routine can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow because it’s true. This is a podcast about making decisions. The bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives. A fun milestone to share with you. August is a special month in the life of this podcast because three years ago, this month, our very first episode dropped last week. We quietly crossed the 9 million total downloads mark, which feels like a big deal to me, but only because it represents 9 million times when my words have hopefully served as an opportunity for someone to pause, to name something or to rethink something in order to create space, to discern their next right thing. That’s an honor and a gift.

As always, you can find me on Instagram @emilypfreeman or online at emilypfreeman.com, where we always provide a transcript to every episode, either for you, if you prefer reading to listening and I know some of you do, and also for our deaf and hard of hearing friends who would otherwise not have access to this audio offering.

In closing, I’ll leave with some of my favorite words about the morning that come from *Lamentations*

chapter three, verses 22 to 23,:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

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