



Episode 76: Create A Simple Morning Routine

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 76.

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

And incase you're brand new around here, The Next Right Thing is not only a podcast, it's also a book - releasing exactly 1 week from today! You can pre-order the book right now from your favorite online retailer and as a thank you for your early support, we have several gifts to send your way including the audio version of the book read by me completely for free.

Once you order, all you have to do is go to NextRightThingBook.com to redeem your free gifts. You can find out more there or keep listening to this episode!

Chances are high you're in the midst of some kind of life transition. If so, it's probably also true that you have a lot of decisions to make.

If you're navigating a job change or a vocational transition, if your place of work or worship is moving locations, if your house won't sell or your roommate moved out or your dog got sick. If your high school student is preparing to graduate or your fiancé just got a new job. If you're newly hired or let go, if you're newly engaged or freshly single, if you just started, just quit, or are preparing for either one well - no matter what the transition is, one thing is certain: things are changing.

What does that mean for you? Where is your fixed point in the midst of these major life transitions? That's what today's episode is all about. Listen in.

What we value when we're 15 is different when we're 25 and different still when we're 45. And all along the way? We have decisions to make. Some of those decisions are big but most of them are tiny, daily, and rote. Still, as we follow the arrows of God, as we listen to the heartbeat of our own life, we're led through one life transition after another, one fog after another, always looking for the clearings, always watching for the hope, always listening for clues that we're headed in the right direction.

If there's one thing I've learned from hosting a podcast called The Next Right Thing over the past 19 months it's that most of us want to do the right thing but a lot of us don't trust ourselves to always know what that is.

We worry we'll miss the best for the good. We worry we're too late or too early. We're suspicious of our own desire, fearing that maybe what we want may not be what God wants.

The beauty of doing the next right thing isn't necessarily found in the word *right* but in the word *next*.

To do the right thing may sound easy in general, but in the midst of a foggy transition it can be hard to know what that is. But to do the next thing is more friendly, accessible, and hopefully *possible*.

I want to suggest a next thing for you today. It's the simplest action step around but that doesn't mean it's easy. If you're struggling through a transition, carrying a heavy bag filled with unmade decisions, or worried about choosing the right thing for your life, I want to suggest you begin with creating a simple morning routine. Because how you practice your life will change over time and it starts in the morning.

If you're already worried I'm going to tell you to wake up at 5 am and do hard things before the sun comes up, take heart. That's not what this is about. Instead, it's about intention, energy, life, and joy.

At a time when I had a lot of decisions to make recently and my life was extremely busy I talked with a mentor of mine to ask for some advice. Her encouragement to me was simply this: Hang on to your morning routine.

At first it seemed like odd because my morning routine is not particularly productive. It doesn't move the needle forward or offer much by way of checking things off my to do list. But what it does to for me is provide a fixed next right thing every single morning I wake up. And in the midst of a busy season of life, I need all the pre-made choices I can get.

In the online class I created called Discern + Decide, I walk you through the importance of not only a morning routine, but an entire rhythm of life - from your day to your week, month and year.

We won't do that here now, but just remember you can get access to the entire class for free when you pre-order *The Next Right Thing* book before April 1.

But generally speaking, here are three things to remember when creating your own morning routine (and then I'll share my routine at the end if it's helpful). And before I jump into these I want to speak directly to you if you are already saying "Well this won't work for me because _____"

I want to gently invite you to consider one simple way this *could* work. One tiny change you *could* make. One small next right thing you could do to show yourself some kindness at the start of your day. If nothing comes to mind, if a morning routine still feels impossible to you, ask your friend Jesus to give you ideas. Because he's intimately interested in the details of your life. It could be interesting to discover what he might have to say.

First up, why a morning routine?

I mentioned this before, but the gift of practicing a morning routine is that everyday I have one thing I can count on. Though the day may be unpredictable, there are a few minutes I can look forward to that are fixed. It may not be long and it may not be fancy, but it's mine.

I saw on Twitter not long ago that Jon Acuff said "I love coffee so much that sometimes I think about going to bed earlier because then I can get to the coffee in the morning faster." It's funny, but that's the power of a morning routine (and also caffeine) but STILL.

A morning routine offers us a fixed point to count on in the midst of our fast-moving worlds.

My friend Kendra who you may know as The Lazy Genius says a morning routine is "Kindly opening the day with the purpose of gradually increasing my productive energy." She talks about finding things to do at the beginning of the day that help you feel like yourself so that you aren't looking for yourself for the rest of the day. If you want even more advice from her on this, you can listen to her episode on The Lazy Genius Podcast all about morning routines. I'll link to it in the show notes. So, that's the first thing.

Second, what should you do in your morning routine?

If you've grown up going to church, particularly in the evangelical tradition, you may have had the concept of a quiet time taught to you since an early age. For those of you who don't know what that is it's what church people call spending time with God, typically described as reading your Bible and praying.

And while the intention is good, and while both of those things are things I do I think the execution at least in some church circles has missed the mark.

First the phrase "quiet time" sounds like something for kindergarteners so that's lame. Second, we tend to imagine this time has to look the same way for all of us instead of asking ourselves the deeper questions. I'll give you two for now.

When it comes to creating a morning routine, rather than just assume I mean “have a quiet time” (Which I do not mean that, by the way), the first question comes from Kendra - what makes you feel like a person?

The second question comes from me - what draws you close to God?

Sometimes the answer to those two questions could be the same thing but my guess is they will not look the same way for every person. And they may not look the same way for *you* depending on your own current season of life.

A third bonus question for you could be what pushes you away from God? Don't do that thing in the morning.

Some things you may include in your morning routine: take a shower, sit on your porch, read a poem, listen to music, light a candle, drink your coffee, write in your journal, read scripture, pray the Lord's Prayer, sit in silence, make a list of 5 things you love.

The options are endless so my advice is this: start small. Choose 3 or less. And don't give up too soon.

Third, remember this, a morning routine is not a schedule, it's a rhythm.

Don't get caught up with at 7 am I take a shower. This, I promise you is going to lead to frustration for you especially if you live with other people and even more especially if those people are tiny.

Instead of thinking in time slots, think in trade offs.

For example, if part of your morning routine that you value is to read for 10 minutes but you get sidetracked during your normal morning routine time, no worries. Instead, just decide not to do something else until you read for 10 minutes. For me, often that's something like checking instagram. I may not be able to read for 10 minutes right now, but I won't check instagram until I read for 10 minutes.

It's not a legalistic rule, instead it's a life giving rhythm. It's reminding me of something that I've already decided is valuable to me. Something I've already decided is important for my rhythm of life. It's not a schedule it is a rhythm. Think in trade offs not time slots.

And if the kids wake up weirdly early on a Tuesday and you just aren't able to get to your morning routine because you have to make breakfast and keep humans alive, it doesn't mean your morning routine is shot for the day.

Instead, tell your friend Jesus as you flip the bacon. Ask him to find 10 minutes for you to read. And if it doesn't come, if the day moves too quickly on, take heart. Remember the time at the stove with the bacon counts too.

This is your own tiny monastery. Your own Brother Lawrence moment of practicing the presence of God in the midst of your ordinary life. Some weeks you may practice your morning routine everyday at the same time because that's what works best for you. Other weeks it might be completely different.

For me, these days, my morning routine usually includes three main things: reflection, reading, and prayer.

I reflect on the day before by writing in my One Line A Day journal - I'll record the stuff of life, like what the kids are up to or what show we watched on TV the night before. Again, not fancy, not even particularly deep. Just my life right now.

I'll read for 15 minutes because I set a timer. The reason I do that, I have a hard time focusing lately. As long as the timer is running, I just tell myself I can't do anything else until the timer goes off.

And sometimes I'll set the timer for my prayer time as well - 2 minutes, 5 minutes. It just depends.

Overall my morning routine right now may take up to 30 minutes some days. Other days I only get 10 minutes. When my kids were small my morning routine was half a cup of coffee and a prayer on the go.

It all counts. It's all life. And God is with you in every bit of it.

You might be thinking, well that is just stuff I do in the morning. That's not a routine.

It is a routine. It's stuff you do in the morning. And sometimes just the simple practice of giving it a name can help you feel a little more grounded especially if you are in the midst of a lot of transition and there are things going on in your day that you just can't control.

How you practice your life will change over time. So will your morning routine.

Let that morning time be like a tiny gift you give yourself every single day - a nod to joy, a celebration of life, a fixed point in the midst of this crazy world.

Trust yourself to choose well, then give it time to work.

Change your mind if you need to. There's no wrong here.

Trust God to give you what you need when you need it.

Believe he's truly on your side.

Let the morning bring you word of his unfailing love.

Put yourself in a position to receive it.

No matter what transition you may be in the middle of, know this one thing for sure:

God will not let you miss your own future.

He's with you each step as you simply do your next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 76 of The Next Right Thing.

If you want more detailed help to create not only a morning routine but also an evening routine as well as a plan for having an entire rhythm of life that supports soulful decision making, well that's what my online class Discern and Decide is all about.

If you've never taken an online class or you have questions about it, no worries. All you have to do to get free access is order a copy of *The Next Right Thing* book from anywhere — then visit nextrightthingbook.com to claim your free bonuses, including the class.

When you do that, you'll receive an email with access to the class and you'll log in and immediately see a welcome video from me and you'll also see a link to download your workbook as well as 5 modules that include the video lessons I created for you.

I'll talk to you just like this with video slides to guide you through your workbook so that you can create your own rhythm of life that will support your own decision making.

This is one of my favorite resources I've ever created and I'm super excited to be able to offer it to you for free but you only have a week to claim it so now is the time!

Reader Lynn says this about the class "I've been making myself crazy over a decision, making endless lists of pros and cons in my journal. Emily's Discern and Decide course is helping me create a Rhythm of Life as I move forward with the next right thing in regard to this decision. Priceless. It's like she lives inside my head."

Well, I love hearing that, Lynn! Y'all I can't tell you how grateful I am for the thousands of you who have already pre-ordered this book and started going through the class. It's self-paced and available now. So as soon as you pre-order and enter your info, you can start that class today. Your early support means so much and I'm for real giddy that this book is **almost** here.

We have fun things in store for next week to celebrate the release of the book on April 2. Until then, here are a few thoughts from one of my favorite morning experts, Kat Lee of Hello Mornings who says, "The goal [of a morning routine] isn't overnight transformation, but slow and steady progress toward life long habits that radically change the direction of our lives and allow us to thrive in whatever role God has given us."

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