



Episode 10: Be Where You Are

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 10: Be Where You Are.

Before we jump in to today's episode, I wanted to take a minute and thank you again for your kind support of this new podcast. Whether you are a brand new listener today or if you've been listening since we started, thank you, thank you.

It's been two months since the first episode aired now that we've made it to episode 10 well, I don't know, it kind of feels like a milestone. Now, something you might not know is that we have a complete transcript available for every episode of the next right thing. So, if you prefer reading to listening, simply visit thenextrightthingpodcast.com where you can download the episode transcripts for free.

To let you in on the process a little bit, these episodes release on Tuesdays which for me right now means Mondays are recording days.

The night before this recording day, I couldn't sleep because I was making to do lists in my head. When it was finally time to get up for the day, I got up to start in on those lists only to be sidetracked by a computer that wouldn't charge and a car that wouldn't start.

The irony was not lost on me that my next right thing was clearly to attend to both of these things first so that I could record this episode of the next right thing.

So if this is your first time listening in, this is a podcast for the second-guessers, the chronically hesitant, or anyone who suffers from decision fatigue. This is also a place for those of you who may just need a little white space or a few minutes away from the constant stream of information or the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of

The Next Right Thing with Emily P. Freeman

entertainment. Maybe you long for thoughtful story, a little prayer, and a simple next right step. Maybe today you're staring down a to do list a mile long. The problem isn't so much about indecision about what needs to be done, but maybe for you the problem is just simple overwhelm because you *know* what needs to be done and you have no idea where to start.

If that's you, this episode is *for* you.

It was the beginning of 2014 and we had just spent a week on a cruise as a family. It was cloudy when we got off the ship in Miami, an unseasonably cool day for the area. The weather didn't bother me in the least. I was simply glad to finally see land.

Looking back, the most important thing I learned after my first cruise experience was this: If someone is trying to convince you to go on your first cruise and one of the arguments they use to persuade you include the words "the ship is so big you can't even feel it move," do not, I repeat do not believe them.

They sit on a throne of lies.

In my family's defense, the ones who had convinced me to come who had all been on cruises many times in their lives, they did admit that this cruise was by far the rockiest. Small comfort that was to me, right? Because there I was, on a small city in the middle of the ocean with days and days ahead of me and miles and miles of only water and the only choice was to stay on that rocking ship.

So what do you do when you feel the rocking and you can't get off? First, you vow to never take another cruise again and to only book hotels on land from this day forward.

Second, you find a way through it and learn to be where you are.

For me, this looked like working hard to make peace with the rocking ship rather than trying to fight against it.

It meant finding peace in the midst of my circumstance rather than waiting for my circumstance to change and bring peace.

Sometimes my to do lists feel like that rocking ship.

The Next Right Thing with Emily P. Freeman

The world says tackling your list will calm the waters. But it's a myth. Ask me how I know.

Instead, I'm learning how to make peace with the waves, learning how to bring peace with me into the chaos rather than trying to calm the chaos in order to find the peace.

In his book *Souvenirs of Solitude*, Brennan Manning says this:

“I don't expect and I don't like a God who comes to me in failure, in loneliness, in poverty. Yet God comes to me where I live and loves me where I am. If I am not where I am, God cannot meet me. It's as simple as that. But when I remain where I am with everything that is moving inside me, salvation comes.”

Today I'm especially thinking of those of us who are just in the midst of a super busy seasons. This may not apply just for regular day stuff, but if you are in a time of intense busy-ness or have so many tasks and activities to do that you simply can't manage to be where you are. Today, I just have two simple responses. One is an action, the other a question.

First the action:

In times of intense activity and full schedules, I've found one practical way to take one next right step in the midst of the overwhelm.

Here's what I do. I make a page long list of everything I have to do, and get it all down in one place. For example, right now in my bullet journal, I have a page with the heading Hope*Writer Guided Writing Retreat at the top because at the end of this month, I'm co-hosting a writing retreat in Charlotte. I've written every single thing on that page I need to do for the retreat and it's good to get it all in one place.

But if that list is the one I work from, I end up feeling overwhelmed when I look at it even if I'm checking things off because the amount of things that remains unchecked is so much greater than the amount of things I'm checking off.

So I will use that list as a starting point, but for my daily list, I will look at the master list and choose a task by simply asking myself what is the next right thing I can do right now.

The Next Right Thing with Emily P. Freeman

When I choose something, I write it down on a fresh page and I only do that task. When that one is finished, I check it off and only then will I write down the next one.

This is super simple but it makes a big difference for me, because instead of seeing everything at once it forces me to simply focus on the next right thing.

And by the way, I don't only put project tasks on my list. That's not real life.

Sometimes my next right thing on my daily list is to take a 10 minute break.

Sometimes it's to eat lunch.

It could be to put in a load of laundry, go to the bank, walk around the block.

In seasons of intense activity, recording your next right thing in a list becomes a sort of liturgy, a way to slow yourself down and simply take the next right step.

And if you are motivated by a completed list like I am, it can be satisfying at the end of the day to have a record of what happened that day instead of an anemic list of all the things you didn't finish.

Again this might not work for just regular day activities when you are in a regular rhythm of life but for those times in life where it seems like everything is coming at you at once and for me that usually happens this time of year when school schedules, work schedules, church, and family, and community life all sort of combine to create this perfect storm of activity. This simple practice of writing down your next right thing is just one way to perhaps slow you down, root you in the present and help you be where you are rather than trying to rush ahead to get where you think you need to be.

When I think about the way Jesus lived his life on the earth, Luke chapter eight comes to mind. When Jairus comes to Jesus and says his daughter is dying and he wants his help. And when Jesus goes into the house, it turns out He's too late and the young girl had already died.

But Jesus didn't seem to be in a hurry. He didn't seem overwhelmed. He didn't come undone. He did not seem to need to prove himself, impress the crowd, avoid embarrassment, or explain himself. When Jesus walks into this room, he doesn't take the

entire crowd with him but just a few of his disciples and the girl's parents were there too. He tells her to get up, much like a parent would tell a child to get up in the morning, and she did. In my mind it seems like the very next thing he should do while he has everyone's attention is to tell her parents maybe all the wonderful things this girl was going to do with her life. Maybe give her a five year plan or a ten year plan, some type of hopeful vision for her future. This was such a fantastic opportunity.

Instead, do you remember what he said? He gave orders for something to be given to her to eat. I love that instruction. Because essentially what Jesus said to those parents was this, simply do the next right thing in love. Your daughter is alive, now give her lunch. And so this is a story of how Jesus lived on earth, but Jesus is still living in us today. The way He lived then isn't so different that the way He wants to live now. He simply took his next right step with his Father. And He is inviting us to do the same.

Making a list of your next right step and only your next right step, that is one super practical way of moving through the chaos.

So I told you I would share an action and finally a question. You've probably seen this one coming.

Here's the question, or rather a series of questions to help you consider your next right step.

First, in order to be where you are it's good to know where you are.

Where are you?

What is moving inside you?

This is where you may need to carve out a little bit of space, or even let this episode be that space for you. If you have trouble figuring out where you are, Episode 6 could be a good resource for you.

Now, I'll actually make this easy for you today by giving you just a little bit of space right now as you listen.

I'll ask a series of questions and give you a few moments to consider for yourself of what the answers might be. We will do this simple practice to help you simply get present to where you are so that you can be where you are and allow God to meet you there.

In this moment, where are you?

What's the first emotion that comes to mind?

Is there something you fear today? If so, name it.

Is there something that excites you today? If so, what is it?

In this moment, what is the truest thing about you?

What do you want it to be?

What are you hoping for?

If you had trouble answering any or all of these questions, then that is where you are today. And there is no shame in that.

Father, help us to know where we are and then help us to *be* where we are.

Meet us in our weakness, our smallness, our exhaustion, our insecurity, and our questions.

As we move forward in the midst of where we are, help us to see You even though we don't see You.

May we not demand a spectacle, a miracle, or a sign. May we simply, quietly, be still and know.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The Next Right Thing with Emily P. Freeman

Thanks for listening to Episode 10 of The Next Right Thing.

I'm Emily P. Freeman, author of four books including *Simply Tuesday* and *A Million Little Ways*. Both are available at emilypfreeman.com/books or wherever books are sold. You can also find me on Instagram @emilypfreeman and visit thenextrightthingpodcast.com for a complete transcript of this episode

If you are in a particularly full season, you might benefit from a free video resource I created. I'll include it on the show notes page of this episode. It's a free, 4-part video series to help you create space for your soul to breathe today. Simply visit today's show notes at thenextrightthingpodcast.com for access.

In closing, give yourself a minute and receive these words from a familiar passage of scripture from Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.
He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort.
You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.
Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.