



## Episode 38: Zoom Out

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 38.

If you're new to the podcast, I'm so glad you're here. I hope our time together will become a habit you look forward to every Tuesday.

Each week I try to keep things fairly simple. Every story, reflection, and prayer I share on Tuesdays is meant to help clear the clutter and make a way for you to discern your next right thing.

If you've been around here a while, you already know I consider one of the most important parts of my job is paying attention and connecting the dots.

Today I'll share how one simple sentence from a New York pastry chef could help shift your perspective and take your next right step. Listen in.

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Christina Tosi was born to an accountant mother and an agricultural economist father. She grew up in Northern Virginia surrounded by women who loved to bake. She went to college for engineering because of her love of math but a year in, realized it wasn't for her.

Rather than quit or change her major, she hurried up to finish school, graduating in just 3 years and then asked herself an important question about her vocation: "what is one thing I could do that's going to make me excited about waking up in the morning that I'll never get sick of?"

Her answer? Making cookies. She remembered how much she loved making cookies as a kid, how happy it made her and the people around her. So she set out to learn how to make a career of it by going to culinary school.

In an interview for the Netflix Series *Chef's Table*, Christina says this about her ambition at the time: “The dream was to move to New York to become a pastry chef. Did I really know what that meant? Mmm, no.”

In culinary school, she learned fancy french techniques and everything she would need to become a pastry chef. Her skill was impeccable.

She worked so hard during those years that she says she missed weddings, birthdays, holidays, and many other family gatherings for a really long time.

She lived a solitary life and at first, she filled it with work. But this didn't feel like the life she wanted to live. When she finally made it to the top of her game, she realized this: being the pastry chef of an incredibly cutting edge restaurant was just not who she was.

Though she loved the craft and technique of the fancy desserts, making them didn't give her that same satisfaction that she remembered she had making cookies when she was a kid.

It was as if the fancy desserts were fit for an evening with royalty, but she realized she'd rather bake for a Virginia afternoon.

So she had some decisions to make.

“At that time,” she says, “I was in a space of not really knowing what my next step was. I was so zoomed in, I knew I needed to kinda zoom out.”

It was that sentence right there that made me hit pause. *I was so zoomed in, I knew I needed to kinda zoom out.*

Every decision we make zooms us further in to a center. We choose a goal and then we set out to meet that goal. We make sacrifices, choices, and commitments based on that goal. But

sometimes we can become so busy with the daily task, the meetings, the benchmarks, and the busy days, that we fail to realize what may be happening beneath all that frenetic activity.

As time passes, as we grow, and change, and become more fully ourselves, sometimes we need to pause on the path and take a moment to zoom out.

When we do, we may realize we're headed in the exact direction we want to be headed. But we may also realize that what we thought we wanted isn't exactly right.

When Christina Tosi took that moment, she had to admit that every time she worked her way to the top of a fancy restaurant, she would quit.

When she paused to zoom out, she realized it was because becoming a pastry chef in New York City wasn't quite right for her.

She left fine dining and took a job at a restaurant that didn't even have desserts on the menu. She came on board to help the owner deal with some problems he was having with the health department and her job sort of morphed into helping him run his business. After a while, she wasn't baking much at all, but the restaurant owner called her on it. At her old job, she would make special desserts for her co-workers and everyone LOVED them. But here, at her new job, she was doing more operational kinds of things.

After her boss asked her why she didn't bake anymore, she decided to make a pie and brought it into work to share. Her co-workers lost their minds over it and she continued to bake just for them.

Well, her boss, the owner, kept telling her he wanted to put these desserts on the menu and she was horrified. These were just simple desserts she made for fun, for herself. They did not belong on an actual restaurant menu. They weren't fancy enough.

He persisted. She refused.

Finally, he insisted and told her she had 3 hours to make enough dessert for service *that night*.

Under the time crunch, she decided to make a strawberry shortcake the same way that her grandmother did when she was growing up.

One critic described it as having “layers of intelligence with crazy going on.” That’s when her boss realized she needed an outlet for creative expression. After making dessert for the restaurant, they eventually opened a bakery called Milk Bar. In November 2008, the tiny shop had a line around the block the day they opened their doors, and she was off. Her career for making approachable desserts with a unique point of view was born.

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Christina Tosi thought she wanted to be a pastry chef in a fancy restaurant. But zooming out helped her realize that wasn’t quite right.

It doesn’t mean that she chose the wrong road by going to a culinary school in New York in the first place. It just means the road we start on isn’t always the road we end up on.

I wonder if you could use a little zooming out of your own?

Maybe your days are zoomed in right now, filled with a lot of menial, seemingly trivial tasks and you have forgotten the big picture. Perhaps zooming out will be the encouragement you need to remember why you’re doing this and what it’s all for.

You are headed somewhere, whether you realize that or not. And all these little things are necessary movements toward the whole. The question is, is the place you are headed a place you have chosen or someplace you are headed to by default?

Something else might happen when you zoom out. Maybe you’ll recognize that horizon you’re headed toward is familiar only because you’ve repeated it so often, you’ve had it circled as your destination, and you’ve let it serve as your deciding factor.

But is it still true?

Obviously, we don't all have the luxury of changing our entire career, but that doesn't mean we can't make any changes at all.

Take a moment now to see your life from higher up.

Look at your schedule this week, this month, maybe even this year.

As you simply do the next right thing in front of you – check the mail, read the chapter, make the phone call, pull out the meat from the fridge for dinner, may you also carry around the big picture as well.

We can't always know where we'll end up, but we can set our face in a direction and know that our friend Jesus stands between us and every possible future.

May we be willing to zoom out.

May we be honest about what we see.

May we have the courage and humility to admit if things need to change.

And may we have patience and faith if they need to stay the same.

May we be open to finding a gift in an unwelcome situation, hearing wisdom from an unlikely person, and receiving grace in an unexpected place.

Thanks for listening to episode 38 of The Next Right Thing.

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If you want some help zooming out in your own life, maybe you would like to join me in a simple practice each quarter that I call What I Learned. Super creative, I know. Calm down.

I've been doing this for years and have found it to be an approachable way to review my life from higher up.

In the show notes, I'll include a link where you can sign up to receive some downloadable sheets where you can record your own list of things you are learning each season. I'm only mildly

obsessed with these simple downloads just kidding I'm totally obsessed with them. They are so cute and simple and lovely.

At the end of each quarter, I share a portion of my own list with my blog readers, so at the end of every May, August, November, and February, I share what I learned in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter respectively.

I would love to have you join me in that practice.

Meanwhile, you can find me on Instagram [@emilypfreeman](#) where I post almost daily or online at [emilypfreeman.com](#)

I hope these few minutes we've had together have helped you create a little more space for your soul to breathe today.

To that end, here are some final words from one of my favorites John O'Donohue from his book, *To Bless the Space Between Us*:

“Often we only know it's time to change when a force has built inside the heart that leaves us uneasy as we are. Perhaps the work we do has lost its soul or the love where we once belonged calls nothing alive in us anymore . . . May we have the courage to take the step into the unknown that beckons us; trust that a richer life awaits us there, that we will lose nothing but what has already died.”

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