



Episode 53: Allow the Present to Be Imperfect

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 53.

I'm all about helping create space for your soul to breathe so you can take your next right step in love and it's an honor to join you each week in this space. We meet here for a few minutes together on Tuesdays, to honor our vulnerable humanity, to remember who we are, to get in touch with what we most long for and make decisions from love, not fear.

When I started this podcast 53 episodes ago, what I knew was I had about 8 episodes in me, 10 if I was lucky. It's not that I planned to stop after that many, it's just I could only peer about 8 episodes into the future. Beyond that was a mystery.

But there was another thing I was sure of and that was that the simple advice - just do the next right thing - had been so grounding and practical for me over the years that I knew there was enough content in that phrase to carry us forward. And many ways this podcast began as an act of faith and that's how we'll continue.

I hope by now you've caught on to the fact that with each episode, my goal is to simply encourage you to stay in the now, to take each step as it comes and to walk with your friend Jesus into the next ordinary moment.

I have found personally, though, that some of the most difficult times for me to practice presence is when I have a big decision to make. I become fixated on the next move, unable to stay here because I'm concerned about later, about what's best, about what's right, and about not making a move I will later regret.

That's why we meet here - to settle down. I'll tell you a story, sometimes read you a verse and we'll always end with a few questions and a simple prayer. While I, of course, can't tell

what your next right step should be, my hope is always after these few minutes together you'll have a bit more clarity to what it *could* be. If you're facing a big decision or a full schedule and you can't quite find space for a deep breath, listen in.

If you feel mostly normal but when you sit down to read or pray or rest you just can't stop moving...

If you google "heart pounding" more times than you care to admit, looking for an answer different from the one you keep getting.

If you don't *feel* anxious but your body keeps telling you-you *are* anxious...

If your heartbeat continues to feel like a drumbeat every time you get silent...know this.

Sometimes our bodies know things before our minds can catch up.

When your insides start to hum with that familiar low-grade buzz, it could be a sign that your soul is being held under the thumb of too much hustle once again.

This may be common, but it doesn't have to be normal.

When it comes to our work, hustle is both a gift and a skill.

The problem for me comes when the healthy hustle energy needed to finish specific tasks morphs into a general state of low-grade anxiety even in the midst of non-tasks.

The line from one side to the other isn't always easy to see. Before we talk about relief, I'll briefly share 3 signs you've crossed the line from healthy into unhealthy hustle.

1. You're distracted.

The hustle hostage often comes on the tail end of a big project. You're working hard toward a deadline and you make it! But weeks later you realize you're treating *everything* like it has a deadline even though it doesn't.

I have also experienced this after back-to-back travel, a busy weekend with houseguests, or when our routine is interrupted for an extended period of time.

To counterbalance the frenzy, I might try to do something calming like read a book. But instead of sinking into the story, I'll read one or two sentences and notice my mind wandering. Or I'll take a picture of the book and put it on Instagram instead of actually enjoying the book I'm trying to read. This chronic inability to focus is a sign you may have crossed the line.

2. You lack inspiration.

When hustle and hurry have seeped into the level of my soul, I realize it most readily when I lack inspiration. I'm particularly sensitive to this because, as a writer, inspiration feels really important. To be clear, it's maybe once a month that I write from a truly inspired place. It's usually more of a discipline, a walk of faith from one word to the next, where I trust because that God has made me a writer, he's going to turn my tired words into something meaningful eventually.

But when it comes to my life in general, I know hustle has taken over when I don't feel inspired about *anything*. Whether I'm in my kitchen, deciding what to wear, planning out my calendar, or even in a conversation with my husband John, if I feel unable to see the lovely things, if I notice that I am only able to see the downside of everything, this is when I know hustle has too loud of a voice.

3. You're struggling with decision fatigue.

From an inability to choose my meal at a restaurant to prioritizing goals and vision for my work, when hustle takes over I feel unable to make a decision at all.

Sometimes this feels like I'm drowning in a sea of options as if there are so many directions I could go and I don't know which to pick. Other times it feels like the opposite like all my options have dried up completely and any hope for moving forward is gone.

Maybe you can relate to this tired, grey, indecisive mindset. Maybe you are feeling it too: the rush to produce, the pull to compete, the thoughts flying fast and furious, the mad sprint toward the finish line.

I've got a secret for us both: *that kind of race doesn't have a finish line*. It just keeps on going as long as we're willing to run.

There have been times I've been tempted to compare what I've accomplished in the past with what I'm unable to accomplish right now. I'll think things like

I've been able to do so many other things that I begin to list in my head then I'll ask myself why can't I manage to write this email or make this simple decision or finish reading this paragraph in this book?! Why can't I keep my mind from wandering during a five minute prayer?!

That's when I know I've allowed the hustle mentality to seep into more of my daily moments than is necessary.

When I feel overwhelmed in my schedule, the answer might be to organize my calendar. But when I feel overwhelmed in my soul, these kinds of rigid systems they just don't work anymore. Because the soul and the schedule don't follow the same rules. My soul is begging me to remember this.

The deepest need of my soul isn't a personal organizer or an empty inbox. The deepest need of my soul is Christ. But the problem is, I often forget where to find him.

One of my favorite things I've ever learned about my friendship with Jesus is that the gift of it is that there is no long, meandering road back to Him. Though it may feel as though I've hustled my way far off the path with Him, the truth is He's never far away. I don't have to retrace my hurried steps to find my way to Him again.

I simply turn around and there He is, walking right beside me in the weeds, finding His way with me in the darkness, ready to be enough for me in every situation.

What does it mean for your soul to be truly at rest? I can't answer that specifically for you, but for me, it looks like this:

When my soul is truly at rest

I laugh more.

I can take a true deep breath.

I don't drop things as much like physically I'm able to hold things in my hands.

I am able to sit still for longer periods of time.

I don't rush through decisions.

I take more risk.

I don't worry so much.

I feel safe.

I feel seen.

I believe God is with me.

The rest I'm looking for doesn't descend upon me once when my work is finished. Instead, it comes slowly when I am willing to allow the present to be imperfect. That phrase is one I've held onto for many years now. It's from a little book called *Choosing Rest* written by Sally Breedlove.

She talks about a counterfeit version of rest: "When all our accomplishing crashes into the wall of utter fatigue, we finally take a break and call that rest." Instead, she says, "in resting, we pull away from doing although all is not done. We allow the present to be imperfect."

Instead of waiting for the tasks to be finished so that you can finally rest, consider allowing the tasks to remain unfinished and resting in the midst of the imperfect. I know that sounds impossible.

When Jesus invited the weary to come to Him in Matthew 11, it was an invitation to wear the light burden of love, not the heavy burden of shame.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me. Watch how I do it.

Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Matthew 11:28-30

What about you? What is true of you when your soul is at rest? Because when it comes to battling decision fatigue and taking our next right step one of the most fundamental things we most need but often ignore is the space to consider what we really want, who we really are and how Christ is with us in the midst of every ordinary moment.

What does it look like when your soul is truly at rest?

How does rest show up in your body?

When you are rested, what are you able to ignore?

What no longer feels like a big deal?

What do your conversations sound like?

When your soul is truly at rest, how do you feel when you climb into bed at night?

As you continue into this week that is filled with plans and people and spinning around, may your movement be deeply rooted in Christ.

If you look within your soul and find worry, it isn’t of Christ.

If you sense shame, if you feel panic, if you feel an unexplained sense of fear, it isn’t of Christ.

As you become aware of the brokenness within you, know He is standing strong in the gaps. Enter into His unhurried rhythm of life and simply do the next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to Episode 53 of The Next Right Thing.

If you want to explore more about cultivating rest in your own life so that you might have the space to move forward with your next right thing, check out Shelly Miller's book Rhythms of Rest — pro tip, for the entire month of October 2018, the ebook version of her book is only 99 cents. That's basically free. Again that's Rhythms of Rest - I'll link to it in the show notes where you can get the ebook for just 99 cents.

Of course, you may already know I wrote a whole book about what it looks like to sit down on the inside. It's called Simply Tuesday and it's all about embracing small moment living in a fast moving world. You can find out more about that at simplytuesday.com or of course I will link to it in the shownotes.

Since you are a podcast listener you may also want to check out my girl Kendra Adachi's The Lazy Genius podcast. This weeks episode, Episode 77: The Lazy Genius Rests, very timely. Of course, she offers practical applicable tips to what rest could look like in your own life. Finally, episode 40 of The Next Right Thing: Keep Your Rest and there I offer even more book suggestions and a perspective of what it looks like to embrace Sabbath in your own life.

As always, you can find me at emilypfreeman.com or on Instagram [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman). If you like this podcast, help us out by learning a review on iTunes and then sharing your favorite episode with a friend who might be stuck in decision fatigue. It's an honor to spend a few minutes with you each week.

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