



## Episode 68: If You're Afraid of Making the Wrong Decision

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to Episode 68.

For a few minutes each week, this is a place for anyone to come who might be struggling with decision fatigue of any kind and for any reason — whether you are chronically hesitant, prone to indecision, or if you simply have a thousand tiny things on your mind right now clamoring for your attention.

If you follow me on Instagram - you can find me @emilypfreeman - you might remember a while back I asked this question: What's the most difficult part of making big decisions? I received hundreds and hundreds of responses and the number one, most often repeated response was some form of this: *I'm afraid I'll make the wrong choice.*

Maybe your hesitancy to make a decision stems from a pervasive fear of making a wrong choice, taking a wrong turn, or missing out on what might be best because you lack all the necessary information. And so you are left feeling stuck, unable to make a move.

I've been there and it is not a fun place to be.

If your fear of making a wrong choice is keeping you from making any choice at all, my hope for you is by the end of this episode you'll find a bit more peace and maybe even one simple next right step you can take toward making a decision maybe even before the sun goes down tonight.

Listen in.

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I'm going to jump right in and offer you three simple things to remember that I hope might help loosen the grip of indecision in your life today.

## **1. Unmade decisions hold a lot of power to either close us up in fear or open us up to love.**

If you are unable to move forward into your next right thing because you are desperately afraid of making a wrong choice, I want you to pause for a moment and consider where that fear is coming from.

You might have to get still for just the next ten-seconds and try to identify your answer to this question.

Is your fear coming from a place within you that feels solid and instructive or is it coming from a place that feels scattered and untethered?

The thing about fear that we don't always talk about is it's not always a bad thing and, despite what every meme and graphic on Pinterest tell us, the goal is not necessarily to get rid of fear altogether. The goal is to pay attention to our life as it's united with Christ and make our moves as he leads.

Sometimes, he'll invite us to move and we'll feel afraid, but that kind of fear has courage woven through it. We would do well to move forward with fear trailing behind.

Other times we'll realize our fear is coming from a place of anxiety and an out-of-control imagination. We would do well to *leave* that fear behind.

The fear instinct can give us information and drive us to take action - we're hard-wired for it. But in my experience, the kind of fear I have when I'm having trouble making a decision is usually the kind that feels threatening, whispering *you'd better make the right choice or else*.

God never speaks that way.

That leads us to our second point.

## **2. God is not trying to trick you.**

Another answer I got when I asked that question about decision-making on Instagram was about regret, specifically what if it's God's will for me to do the other thing?

For our short episodes we do together, I certainly don't have time to go into the theology of God's will, nor do I claim to have answers to these complicated and nuanced questions that will come up in conversations like that. But I do have time to say this.

God's will is to establish his kingdom on earth; to renew, restore, and redeem all things, from the people he loves to the world he created. God's will is for us to have a part in that mission. Hallelujah.

How that renewal, restoration, and redemption will play out in each of our lives, on a daily basis, with the people who we come across and the life we've been given to tend and steward? That is the question - and that is where we are each called to work out our vocation and our calling and our giftedness with God on the daily as we listen, respond and do our next right thing in love.

This will look unique for each one of us because there isn't only one secret way God wants to move in and through us. There are many ways, even a million little ways, that God will reveal himself over the course of our lives.

And while it may in some ways feel comforting to think that there is one right and one wrong choice, the truth is our real lives don't often play out that way.

It may feel like this decision you're carrying has a secret right answer, the truth may look less like a list and more like a lyric.

God wants to be with us and he wants us to be with him. He wants us to ask him for help and then trust that he can tell us in all kinds of ways what to do next. He invites us to move with wisdom but he doesn't leave us alone to figure it out.

He moves toward us, not away.

He loves us. He doesn't trick us.

If the fact remains that we don't know what to do next, maybe it simply means we aren't to do anything. Maybe we are to wait, to listen and to trust in time we will know. Maybe we are trying to do too much at once. Maybe we are trying to rush ahead to an answer just because we want to get it over

with not realizing that in fact, it's not time and we're not ready and the answer just hasn't revealed itself yet.

**Finally, number 3, one you may not like. The decision is rarely the point.**

I realize this is probably not what you want to hear exactly and I'm also aware that I've been doing that a lot lately. In a previous episode so I talked about waiting, which is not always our favorite topic. But in some way, maybe this will be a little bit of a relief?

I mentioned earlier how fear is not always a bad thing and the goal is not to get rid of fear altogether, not always. The goal is to pay attention to our life as it's united with Christ and make our moves as he leads. Well, that statement begs the question: how do we know how to follow his lead?

That's what I mean when I say the decision is rarely the point. Union with Christ is the point.

Rather than wait to pray when I have a big decision to make, what if my life was a prayer and my decisions were secondary?

Because really, that's what we have been getting at now for sixty-eight episodes. This next-right-thing mindset is, at least for me, the practice of making decisions in a better way, creating space to name my fear, to recognize and admit my desire in God's presence is all part of this process. Wholeheartedly believing that God is not trying to trick me. That's part of the process. And finally, beginning to let go of the myth we've all fallen prey to that our decisions are the point.

They are important. They play a role. They determine a lot of things.

But as we are people who have a listening posture, as we take the time to walk with God and ask him what he thinks about things, and then trust that whatever follows in the hours and days to come will actually hold his answer to us. I truly believe our fear of choosing wrong will begin to fade into the background.

Ask him by faith and go on with your day.

What if we were people who practiced walking with Jesus everyday in all kinds of different ways - like walking to the car, walking through the grocery store, into the parent/teacher conference, out of the coffee shop, down the street to see our neighbors.

What if it looks like asking him what he thinks about things and then taking time to listen for the answers. And trusting when I don't hear answers the way I expect to hear them, that doesn't mean he didn't hear me it just means maybe I need to start paying attention to ways he might be speaking in ways that I didn't expect to hear?

What if it looks like trusting God is smart enough to tell me what I need to know when I need to know it? And if it isn't super obvious, and as long as I'm bringing it into his presence, that I can look within myself for the answers he's placed inside and I can trust that he'll go with me no matter what I choose?

What if the way I make decisions is more important than the decisions I'm making?

As we learn to take off our crowns and trust God is the King of the Kingdom may the pressure to make the "right" decision give way to peace. May we have the courage to pick what we like then see how it grows as we simply do our next right thing in love.

And if time reveals that we chose poorly, or if more information reveals itself to us that we didn't have at the beginning may we have the courage and the humility to bring our questions, our disappointment and maybe even our failure into God's presence and trust that he is not only in the business of renewing, restoring, and redeeming the world, but he wants to renew us, redeem us, restore us into his likeness. And there is no wrong turn, difficult choice, or discouraging outcome that will stand in his way.

May it be so in the world, and may it be so within us.

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Thanks for listening to episode 68 of The Next Right Thing.

Well, since you like listening to podcast, last week I had a conversation with Jen Hatmaker on her podcast. She is in the middle of a series called For the Love of Good Change. I'll link to that

conversation in the show notes. One thing we talked about was the difference between trying to make better decisions and learning to make decisions in a better way.

So, if you're feeling stuck, I hope that conversation is a helpful and friendly resource as you navigate your way forward.

Another resource I hope you'll add to your queue is *The Next Right Thing* book. It releases in just 2 short months (I cannot even believe it) and if this podcast has been helpful to you in any way, this book is for you. What you may not know, is one of the best and encouraging ways you can help an author is to pre-order their book. That's a little pro tip. Now you know. I've made it easy by including some links in the show notes and you'll be hearing more about some surprises we're working on as well as an opportunity to help launch the book when it comes out. I'll tell you more about that soon!

But for now, if you would like to read more about living your life less like a list and more like a lyric, that's a line from one of my other books called *A Million Little Ways*. That book is all about living life creatively as yourself rather than a try-hard version of someone else and, bonus, the ebook version is only 1.99 right now, through the end of this month even if you're listening after the fact, you can usually find a paperback version of *A Million Little Ways* for less than ten dollars. I've seen it for as low as seven. So keep an eye out for that. Fun fact, of all of the books that I have written so far, *A Million Little Ways* is the only one that I narrated the audiobook. So, if you prefer to listen via audio, that is available as well.

Well, if you're afraid of making a choice because you fear you'll choose wrong, take heart. There's no shame in being afraid and wanting to make a wise choice. But fear doesn't get to have the final say. If it's time to wait, wait in God's presence. If it's time to move, let fear trail behind.

I'll close us out with a few words from my book, *A Million Little Ways*. I hope these words are an encouragement to you today.

“Dare to get a sense of yourself in the world, as you live and breathe and *are* — if it's true that in him you have your being, in him you move and exist, then you have value and weight, not the kind of weight you want to lose and get rid of. The kind that makes it possible for you to move into the world with courage, and security, as if you know you have something to offer and where your life comes from . . . Today as we face our dishes, our proposals, our classrooms full of the

future; as we sit to create, to write, and to live on purpose, may the promise of growth outweigh our fear of stumbling. May we remember how swiftly perfect love drives out fear. May we know what it means to make art with our hands, in our souls, and with our lives.”

Thanks for listening and I’ll see you next time.