



138: Leave It Behind

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 138.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and then sometimes delightful, but also distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place for a thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step.

The title of this episode is Leave It Behind, which for me immediately conjures images of Left Behind, the book series that I did not read, and/or Leave It to Beaver, the TV show that I did watch. We won't talk about rapture books or 1960s black and white TV shows, but we will talk about you and what it is that you might need to leave behind today. Listen in.

There's a hashtag on Instagram called #FridayIntroductions, where every Friday, you can find someone using that hashtag and introducing themselves. Particularly, this can be a good time to do a Friday introductions post if someone has had a lot of new followers on Instagram and they want those people to know a little bit more about who they are. Well, I tend to do Friday introductions about once a quarter, and I always have fun sharing a little bit more about myself, but also I enjoy asking people to share a little bit more as well.

Well, a few Fridays ago I shared a Friday introduction post, and I mentioned in that post, the different names that people call me. I'm Emily P. Freeman professionally, as you know. I'm Em to friends and family, Emmy to my mother, Bem to my college roommate, and Bird if you knew me in the early 90s. Actually more specifically, Bird Mouth, if we want to go there, but I'm not going to go there, and I'm not getting specific and I'm certainly not elaborating.

Well, at the end of that post, I asked people to share their weirdest nicknames and it was highly entertaining to read all of the wild nicknames that people have. Most of the nicknames could be categorized into, as I read them, I figured out about one of three-ish categories.

First, it was the name adjacent nicknames. So those are names that sound kind of like your name, but aren't exactly your name like Shells for Shelley or Hez for Heather. Or names that were hard to say by smaller siblings or cousins, so they were reduced to their one-syllable version. That was one category.

A second category I noticed a lot was names that were more like terms of endearment like Bug or Katiebaby or Rosebud. Usually, these are from a parent or a grandparent and are received warmly and remembered fondly. These could also be another term of endearment I noticed were the ones that were more like cool nicknames given by college friends that make you sound like the sidekick in a romcom. Like Smitty or Sammy or Ren.

But then there were the dreaded nicknames and this was a big category I noticed as well. These are the ones that nobody asks for, but they seem to be the ones that stick, and they tend to be based off either a physical feature that you don't like BigFoot or Dumbo. Anyone? tThe way that you walk, Waddles, for example. Or a moment that you would rather forget that people just won't let happen.

Whether your nickname is just another version of your actual name, or if it's based off a moment, you would rather forget the nickname, conversation is for the most part, a lighthearted one, but per usual, this lighthearted conversation led me to think more about the importance of naming the names that we hold on to and the ones we cannot wait to let go.

When it comes to the decisions we have to make, the choices that we're all carrying and the many different potential roads that we could walk down, it's important to remember that we don't face these decisions neutrally or at zero every time. In fact, we really never do.

Like a good novelist begins her story with the story already happening, that's how we arrive at every decision we make. Your life is a story already happening, and you bring every name with you wherever you go. Like Madeline L'Engle wisely said, "I am still every age that I've been." In the same way, we bring our six-year-old self and our 16-year-old self to the age we currently are, we also carry every name we've ever had whether that name was gently bestowed as a gift of love or critically slung as a cruel insult. Here we are named and present, making every life decision through the lenses we've been wearing for decades.

If I could, for a moment mentioned just a handful of the decisions that you might be facing right now for conversation and sanity reasons. I'll leave off the pandemic related things, but just know that those are, of course, in the mix as well. But some decisions I know you might be carrying.

What's the wisest way to prioritize your marriage and your parenting? Should you focus on your career or let your spouse focus on their career?How do you connect with God when you feel deeply disconnected as a person? How can you pray when you doubt what you believe?

And then there are the more this or that decisions that you're having to make, apply or not apply, accept or decline, keep trying or let go, move or stay, speak or stay quiet, schedule or cancel.

Finally, there's the, what if decisions? What if I'm too late or too early? What if I miss the mark, mess them up or ruin everything? What if they won't listen? What if I don't like it? What if they don't like me? What if I get fired? What if I offend someone? What if I don't have what it takes after all? What if I'm wrong?

I'll stop there before I give you a panic attack from voicing all of these questions, scenarios and what ifs.

But I say them out loud because I know there are real and specific decisions you're carrying today, and they require real and specific answers.

In our last episode, I shared how I am a slow processor. And for years I let that name weigh me down rather than open me up. Maybe for you, the name is different. Maybe it's impulsive, lazy, unorganized, emotional, or too sensitive. The reasons decision-making may feel impossibly difficult right now are many and valid.

Not the least of which could be because you're carrying a name that's been given to you for better or worse. And that name is holding you back, tripping you up and singing a dissonant melody in your mind, loud enough to have an impact, but not so loud that you remember to turn it off.

And so today in these few moments, I guess I just want to say out loud that maybe it's time to leave it behind. Leave what behind, Emily? Yeah. Well, I can't say for you, but my guess is you already know. An inaccurate name could be one thing, although it's not the only thing. In fact, I intentionally didn't indicate what it is in the title of this episode, Leave It Behind because as you face your own life choices and decisions today, there are many things that you might be invited to leave behind.

And so maybe your next right thing is to practice letting go of something you no longer need for your journey. It could be something hurtful or harmful. It may be something you've outlived or outgrown. It may even be a very good and useful thing that served you well for a season, but now that season has passed. I don't know what it is for you, but let's practice letting it go. I'll lead us through it.

When you saw the phrase Leave It Behind, what is the first thing that came to mind?

What's something you wish you could leave behind, but the letting go feels impossible, irresponsible, or scary?

When you think of yourself, what is the first name that comes to mind?

When you say that name, what does it bring up in you? Joy or sorrow, anger or peace?

Is it time for you to embrace that name fully? Or is it time to leave it gently behind?

Could you leave behind regret?

Could you leave behind the responsibility for everyone else's emotional wellness?

Is it time to let go of that too-tight pair of pants, your five-year plan, that box filled with stuff from your ex? Is it time to leave behind your own idea of God and finally get to know the God Jesus knows. He's the one who says this, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke. And my burden is light. This, from Matthew 11:28-30, is the word of the Lord. It is absolutely true. And given to us and love.

Thanks for listening to episode 138 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of leaving it behind can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions, the bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives.

As always, you can find me on Instagram @emilypfreeman and online at www.emilypfreeman.com, where we always provide a transcript for every episode there for you if you prefer reading to listening, and for our deaf and hard of hearing friends who would otherwise not have access to an audio offering.

Programming note: Next week will be a special episode of this podcast. I'm going to be talking with one of my favorite humans of all time, Kendra Adachi, we're going to be celebrating the release of her first book, *The Lazy Genius Way*.

I don't typically have guests on the podcast as you know, but this is one I couldn't resist and I cannot wait to host her here in our space. Here's a bonus. It won't be a super long episode, but if there's something that you are just dying to hear us talk about together, or a question that you would love for me to ask Kendra, send an email to info@emilypfreeman.com with LazyGenius as the subject line. And we'll be sure to take a look. Again, that's info I N F O@emilypfreeman.com. And let me know what your question is.

I hope to hear from you. And in the meantime, if you're listening to this in real-time before August 11th, 2020, there's still time to preorder Kendra's book *The Lazy Genius Way* and get all of her bonus content as well. P.S., I wrote the foreword for this book. I've read it cover to cover.

It is a fantastic companion for anyone who wants to learn to be a genius about the things that matter to you and lazy about the things that don't. Just visit thelazygeniuscollective.com/book to learn more about how to preorder her book and collect your bonuses.

In closing, I'll read the end of a poem called *The Sacrament of Letting Go* by Macrina Wiederkehr. The poem itself describes a tree letting go of her beautiful leaves, one by one. And then she asks the question and here's the quote, "How do you give shade with so much gone? And then the sacrament of waiting began the sunrise and sunset watched with tenderness, clothing, her with silhouettes. They kept her hope alive. They helped her understand that her vulnerability, her dependence and need her emptiness, her readiness to receive. We're giving her a new kind of beauty every morning. And every evening she stood in silence and celebrated the sacrament of waiting."

Thanks for listening. And I'll see you next time.