



## 147: Be Anti-Racist

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 147.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but it's 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 the 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. Sometimes I talk about specific decision-making practices here. Other times I'll share life for them and routines that help clear space for making more soulful decisions. In general, we explore why it's hard to make decisions, discernment for slow processors, as well as how to know our next right thing when we're sad or when we're lonely. Other times though, I share a bit more personally and let you in on some of my own next right things with the hope that if you're in a similar place, you might find a friend on the journey.

So today I wanted to continue the conversation about what it means to be anti-racist in the middle of your everyday life. Before we do that, I want to tell you about this episode sponsor, Talkspace, because in the midst of what has been an extremely stressful season, I wonder what it would be like to have a personalized support system, someone to reach out to whenever you needed them. Someone trained to listen without judgment and is there to offer accountability and support. With Talkspace, you can have that for as little as \$65 a week. Talkspace is on a mission to make therapy affordable and accessible for all, because we could all use a little extra support to feel our best from time to time. Talkspace has thousands of licensed therapists trained in over 40 specialties, including anxiety, depression, relationships, and more, and they've made it easy to get started. You take a quick assessment, choose the plan that best fits your needs, and Talkspace finds the best therapist for your experiences. After you're matched, you can send text, audio, or video messages in a secure, private chat room, right from your phone or device. We all need someone to talk to and Talkspace strives to give you the support you need at a price you can afford. Right now, Next Right Thing listeners can get \$100 off your first month on Talkspace. To match with a therapist whose right for you, go to [talkspace.com](https://talkspace.com) or download the app, use the code NextRightThing, all one word to get a hundred dollars off your first month. That's [talkspace.com](https://talkspace.com) or Talkspace in your app store and use code `nextrightthing` at checkout. Now on today's episode, listen in.

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On June 2nd, I released an episode called On Racism. It wasn't the episode I planned. In fact, we already had another episode uploaded and ready to go, but as I paid attention to the conversation happening on social media and in the news that day and in my own community on June 2nd, 2020, it became clear that the episode I'd planned was not the right fit for the day. So I wrote a new one at 9:00 PM. The night before

that episode went live, something was rising in our country and something was waking up in me. I took a few minutes to record that short episode, and that was the beginning of a season of lament.

It's now been four months since that day that we all put black squares in our Instagram feeds. And I know the messaging and origin of those blackout Tuesday posts might've become a little bit confusing. And some of the initial intentions of that original initiative might've been lost in the frenzy, in the fast-paced nature of social media. But I remain grateful for that day because I know that for some of us, that day marked a beginning, or maybe a new beginning, a moment that we can point back to and say, "That was the day I made a decision to be more than not racist. That was the day I decided to be anti-racist."

I think sometimes we're hesitant to mark the beginning of something, especially when it comes to something as important as racial healing. Because you worry that to say that day was the beginning for me implies that before that day, you were indifferent or ignorant of the injustice or the pain. And that doesn't necessarily have to be true. But marking moments is important. Like Ronald Rolheiser says in his book, *The Holy Longing*, "We get into trouble whenever we do not name things properly."

In this case, to deny that the summer of 2020 was a turning point for me in my understanding of my own privilege, is to risk letting the moment slip into the background. To refuse to mark it, for me personally, means maybe I will forget to learn, to listen and to do the work. This is not merely for a moment. This is for the long haul. When we decide something is important, we prioritize it. We put it on the calendar, we practice it and we continue to bring it to mind.

One way to continue this work of anti-racism for me is to return to this conversation here on the podcast, the space that I want to steward well by providing a safe space for every listener, not just the ones who look like me. I share this not because I think I'm doing it right, or even well, whatever that actually means, but I'm sharing it for two main reasons.

First, because I know some of you, some of my white brothers and sisters listening, might be in the same place as me having been profoundly impacted by the events of the summer and maybe motivated at first to actively learn and grow in our understanding of more of the history of our country and to listen to the stories of the people who live here. But perhaps in the last four months, you felt at a bit of a loss to know what does it actually look like to be anti-racist in my everyday life.

The second reason that I wanted to talk about this today is because after writing and talking about some of the things I was learning about being anti-racist back in June, I heard from a reader named Toya who thanked me for talking about it and said a phrase I haven't forgotten. She said, "I think I'm so used to matters like this not being on the radar of the white people in the media whose work I listened to or read. I truly didn't expect for it to mean that much to me, but it did." Toya, I want to say to you and to all of my Black and Brown brothers and sisters who are listening, my next right thing is to let you know, I'm still listening. I still believe you. I'm still learning. I'm still sorry.

The learning and the listening will never stop. So what does it look like to be anti-racist in her everyday life? What is our next right thing? I've already mentioned listening and learning to be key in this practice, so with that in mind, I just wanted to share some practical scaffolding and maybe these few action steps might help you, too.

### First, Learn and Listen

For me, that looks like creating a system for organizing quotes, articles, and resources that I want to save. For example, I spend a lot of time on Instagram. So whenever I come across a quote graphic or a helpful resource that explains something I didn't fully understand before like unconscious bias or the difference between race and ethnicity, I save it to a collection in my dashboard that I've titled simply The Work. And if you don't know how to save things in collections, when you're on an image that you want to save, look for the little bookmark ribbon icon it's in the bottom right-hand corner.

And if you hold that down, a little screen pops up at the bottom that says, save and then you can choose a collection or create a brand new one to save things that you want to go back to and remember. So I do that both with resources and things that teach me something, but I also do that with stories, personal stories and narratives that I just want to remember and hold and learn from. So that's number one.

### Second, Pace Yourself

For me, that looks like reading one book at a time. I know it's a shocker. Don't get me wrong. I'm always reading several books at a time, but when it comes to understanding race relations, racial healing, and the invitation to bring peace and humility to this conversation, it's helped me to stay focused by reading one book at a time. For example, in June, I read a book called *One: Unity in a Divided World*.

What took me so long to finally read this book by my real-life friend, Deidra Riggs, I will never know because I've had the book for years, but I finally finished it to the very last page. And I'm grateful that she took the time to write all of it down. Mainly the feeling I had at the end of the book was hope, gratitude, and a profound longing for God who is at this very moment in the business of making all things new.

I also finished a book called *Be the Bridge* that a lot of you have heard about and have read that's written by Latasha Morrison. And I finished *What Lies Between Us*, which is a workbook that coincided with a course led by Dr. Lucretia Berry. Dr. Berry's course taught me so much about the history of racism in our country, and she models her mantra so well, which is to be people of peace with voices of hope, doing the hard work of love.

Third, and finally, to add some scaffolding to this practice of being anti-racist in our everyday lives is to simply practice humility.

This means embracing discomfort. I don't like it, but its part of the deal being human among humans means sometimes we just don't understand each other. And we certainly don't understand what we don't understand. So we have to ask awkward questions and take small steps toward each other timidly, wondering if we're saying or doing something wrong. I cannot state this enough, it's okay to be a beginner. And in our humble beginnings, it's vital that we learn to lament. This may not be a word you're used to hearing or using much less practicing, but lament in the Bible is simply a complaint followed by a petition and finally a resolution. In other words, it's stating something isn't as it should be. It's asking God to make it right. And it's trusting him to bring it about. I mentioned *Be the Bridge* already, and in that book, Latasha says, "The purpose of lament is to allow us to connect with and grieve the reality of our sin and suffering. It draws us to repentant connection with God and that suffering." She goes on to say, "Lament also serves as an effort to change. God's mind to ask him to turn things around in our favor, limit seeks. God has comforter, healer, restore, and Redeemer. Somehow the act of lament reconnects us with God and leads us to redemption."

I'm grateful for her words and grateful for what she's teaching me about what it means to lament. And I'm grateful that these women who I've been learning from the summer and into the fall have taken the time to do their own work, to share with us their own experiences. And I'm grateful to receive them and to learn from them.

I want to close with the same prayer I shared earlier this summer with a few lines added in. Maybe you'll want to pray these words along with me.

May I hold my own responsibilities with the same care, reverence, and humility I ask for from our leaders. May I use my voice to speak up and stand with even if I stand out. May I not underestimate the power of an honest dialogue and a loosely held agenda. May I not be afraid to examine my own heart in the presence of God. May I continue to seek God's image as it shines through the lives of our Black brothers and sisters. May I know when to speak up and when to stay silent. When I am silent, may be because I'm learning and listening and not because I'm afraid. May it be so in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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Thanks for listening to episode 147 of The Next Right Thing.

I hope this simple practice of being an instrument of peace 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 in a transcript of every episode [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com). And you can find me on Instagram at [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman).

Thank you for journeying with me as I continue to learn what it means to be an anti-racist ally in the kingdom of God. I hope you're with me in it and I know there's so much I could learn from so many of you. The last four months have been for me a time of grieving, of confession and repentance, and like we talked about lament. It's also been a time of considering how I can continue to not only learn from the Black women in my life, but how I can use my spaces of influence to share their wisdom, talent, and artistry with my corners of the world.

I'm paying attention. It's my next right thing. I'll close with another prayer. This one attributed to St. Francis,

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sew love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. And where there is sadness, joy. Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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