



155: Collect the Quiet

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 155. 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 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.

Since I joined the That Sounds Fun Podcast Network earlier this year, this is where I would usually tell you about one of our delightful partners. But today, that partner is, well, me. I wanted to take a moment this week to tell you about a project I've been working on in the quiet cracks of time over the last few months. You might be familiar with a title, but this year it's all new. It's a brand new version of The Quiet Collection for Christmas, an audio devotional series created by me, for you, to help you set your mind before you begin your day for 10 days in December.

I created the first version of The Quiet Collection three years ago and I always look forward to this time of year when I start seeing questions pop up on Instagram, or in my inbox, asking for its return. Well, I'm thrilled to share that The Quiet Collection is back, but it's all new this time, recorded especially for us at the end of 2020. That means if you bought it in the last three years, you'll want to get this new one for 2020.

As I said before, the audio devotional series gives space for thoughtful reflection this holiday season. As a bonus, this year, the music is original to this collection. It's written and performed by my friend, Caleb Peavy: artist, videographer and audio genius. His team at Unmutable edits this podcast for me, and now, he works his magic on the piano to create the perfect reflective mood for this Quiet Collection. I'll tell you more at the end about how to get the collection. But for now, I'll just say you can learn everything about it at emilypfreeman.com/christmas for all the details. It's available for the first time today and I hope you love it.

Now, on to today's episode, where I'm glad to share a little more and dig a little deeper into why collecting the quiet could be a life giving practice for this last month of the year. Listen in.

At the end of every quarter, I meet with Ginna. She's my executive assistant also known as my right hand gal, also known as the most patient human I know, also known as a gift from God to me, also known as a detail ninja. Well anyway, Ginna and I meet at the end of every quarter and we talk about what the next

quarter will hold, the goals we want to accomplish, the projects we want to work on.

Now, before you get too impressed with my ambition, please know that our Q4 goals were totally just Q3 goals repeated because all the things that we planned for quarter three took way longer than expected because of things like lack of margin, and a full house of humans, and grief, and looking out of windows, and pandemics and things of that nature. But one thing we came to quick agreement on, one project we both instantly knew was the right move, was that we wanted to offer The Quiet Collection for Christmas again, but this time we knew it had to be a new version.

If you've never heard of The Quiet Collection, essentially, what you need to know is that three years ago in the fall of 2017, I was newly in love with the audio format. In August is when I started this podcast and then later, in the fall, I was compelled to create another different kind of audio offering as well. Audio is unique because unlike reading or watching, you can listen while you're engaged in something else. You can listen while you're walking or cooking, driving, commuting, closing your eyes. That last one's my favorite because when it's hard to read, closing my eyes and listening is a way to help calm the chaos around me.

Back then, in 2017, I wanted to design something to count on for December. If every other solitary intention for the season flies out the window, all you have to do is pop in your earbuds on the way to the grocery store or on a walk around the block and be reminded of the story of Jesus. Some things we do on the regular because we have to: make the dinner feed, the pets, pay bills, work, take a shower. On bad days, they're annoying and on good days, maybe even those things are a joy. But one way or another, they become a sort of liturgy: the ways that we observe and practice our lives.

Other things we do special, just every now and then: the season finale party, a girls' night for your birthday, a movie night with the family, or a special anniversary celebration. But then, there are still other things and we do these things, or at least we're learning to do them, because they feel like us. It's not because you have to. It's not because it's special or a special occasion. And if you didn't think of it or work on it or initiate it, that thing wouldn't get done at all. That's what The Quiet Collection for Christmas was for me.

When I created that first version, I was still in grad school. One of our girls was on a travel volleyball team and we were all getting used to the crazy schedule that was our life at that time. It seems like forever ago. But I couldn't shake the excitement and the challenge to create an audio devotional offering, especially for Christmas. I couldn't ignore the pull, the challenge and the invitation to go deeper into the lives of Zachariah, Mary and Jesus, and to let their lives sink deeper into me.

So that collection, created in the fall of 2017, that's the one I've offered for three years, and then we all lived through 2020. And though that collection is still beautiful and relevant, I was compelled in a new way this time to honor what feels like a liminal space, a sacred moment in our history rife with struggle, loneliness and grief. Still it's December and you don't want to miss it, but maybe you're questioning things that this time last year felt set in stone. Maybe you're grieving something you didn't even realize you had until you lost it. Maybe you're planning to read an advent devotional to try to set things right on a soul level this month, and I would encourage you to do that. As I've already mentioned this year, I'll be reading Tsh Oxenreider's *Shadow and Light*. It has become a sacred part of my December to pick a book to read during that month.

But at some point during the month, you might feel extra frazzled, a little distracted or a lot distracted, and maybe flustered despite your best intentions. When I get that way, it's difficult to sit and to read, to focus my eyes on the page, to still my body long enough to settle in to the story of Jesus. That's where I hope this Quiet Collection can meet you. That's why quiet can be such a gift. Maybe in this 10 day series, you'll see your own experience reflected in the words and the music. Maybe you'll hear a bit of what I've been learning in the process, connect with the themes of darkness and light, homesickness, connection and belonging.

What a gift it was for me to close myself in a room again this year and sift through the words and images to find what I hope will be a kind offering for you. It was an honor. It was a joy. But whether or not you sign up to receive the collection, I hope more than anything that you'll pay attention to the things that feel like you this month. If there's a pull, a challenge, or an invitation happening in you today, maybe this is the season to start to look it in the face and to see what it has to say to you.

My bet is that finding some quiet spaces are going to help bring those things into the light. Dare to listen in the quiet for what makes you come alive. Rather than trying to fill the silence, let the silence fill you for a change. No matter what you're carrying today, I hope you aren't afraid to sift through your desire and your gifting, and uncover the shape of your soul. I'm always here to help you create space for your soul to breathe, so that you can discern your next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 155 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of collecting the quiet is just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow because it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions, but the bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives.

As always, you can find me @emilypfreeman on Instagram and online at emilypfreeman.com. If you want access to The Quiet Collection for Christmas, it's just a dollar a day. Visit emilypfreeman.com/christmas and get day one of the collection delivered to you today. If you know someone who could benefit from a short daily audio reflection as well, you can gift them a version of The Quiet Collection by following the instructions on the page at emilypfreeman.com/christmas.

Once you purchase the collection, there are several ways you can access it, either in your inbox, a page we'll provide online, or the private podcast feed, whichever way works best for you. Today's the first day it's available. To get it simply head to emilypfreeman.com/christmas for all the details about The Quiet Collection. We'll close up shop about midway through the month, so get it while you can at emilypfreeman.com/christmas. This is a brand new series of audio devotionals for 2020, so if you've enjoyed The Quiet Collection in the past, I hope you'll enjoy this series as well.

In closing, here are some final words from Madeleine L'Engle, from a poem she wrote entitled First Coming. "He did not wait until the world was ready, till men and nations were at peace. He came when the heavens were unsteady and prisoners cried out for release."

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