



155: Collect the Quiet

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 156. This is a podcast about making decisions, but it's also about making a life. Every week I invite anyone who struggles with decision fatigue or chronic hesitation to join me for a few minutes for a thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step. That will always be true, but for the next four weeks, I'm going to change the format up just a little bit and invite you into a final mini-series here on the podcast.

What do you say we do a month where I share with you my favorite things? Even better, I'm calling it my next right favorite things because, of course, I am. So this week, we'll start with my favorite things I read this year. Maybe one of these books will be your next right thing to read. And there is actually rhyme to my reason, in just one month, The Next Right Thing guided journal will hit the bookshelves all around the country. And one of the reflections in the book is a page that I call a happy list. And it's there for you to write down what you read, watched, listen to and made for each month. So this I've felt like was the perfect time of year to share my own happy list. But first, a word from this episode's sponsor Skillshare.

Skillshare is an online learning community where you can explore your creativity and learn something new thanks to thousands of engaging classes. And what better time to get creative than the holiday season? Who knows, you might even learn how to make the perfect handmade gift just in time to check off everyone from your list. Take Cat Coquillette's class Modern Watercolor Techniques, for example, she teaches you how to create beautiful watercolor paintings in less than an hour and a half. I can just imagine how breathtaking it would be to receive a hand-painted watercolor Christmas card from a loved one this year. Or if you'd rather spend time in the kitchen, you can take Easy & Versatile Baking by Julia Turshen to learn how to make a no-fail yeast dough that works for sweet treats or savory breads. These are items that we love reaching for at the holidays. There are tons of interesting classes like Cat's and Julia's available on Skillshare that can help you give a gift that's one of a kind, completely personalized or perfectly imperfect. Explore your creativity at [skillshare.com/nrt](https://www.skillshare.com/nrt) and get a free trial of premium membership. That's [skillshare.com/nrt](https://www.skillshare.com/nrt).

Now on to today's episode. Listen in.

I keep a list in the back of my planner of all the books I finish every year. A book does not make it to that list unless I completely finish it from cover to cover. But if I included every book I read parts of, that book list would much longer as I read parts of many, many books every year. But for today, I wanted to share with you five of my favorite books that I read this year. Now, these are not necessarily books that came out

in this year. They're just books that I personally happened to pick up this year, and I wanted to share them with you. So in no particular order, let's jump right in to my next right favorite things I read in 2020.

#1. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?: A Memoir of Learning to Believe You're Gonna Be Okay* by Sean Dietrich.

This is, according to the Amazon description, a story of what happens after the unthinkable and the journey we all must make in finding the courage to stop the cycles of the past from laying claim to our future. Now I've been reading Sean Dietrich's work online for years on his website, *Shaun of the South*. I highly recommend it. I've always loved his writing, but to sit down with an entire book of his, it was next level for me. This is the story of his life. It's the story he said he would never tell. And let me tell you, I was hooked from the first line. I read the hardcover copy of the book, but his Southern accent drips with story. So if you're into audiobooks, this could be one to at least listen to the Audible sample online before you decide which version you want to read. Again, the book is called *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?: A Memoir of Learning to Believe You're Gonna Be Okay* by Sean Dietrich.

#2. *The Dutch House*, a novel by Ann Patchett.

First, you must know that I love novels where a house is one of the characters. See my love for *The House at Riverton* by Kate Morton. I'll give you that one as a freebie. I did not read that one this year. I read it years ago, but it's one of my favorite books. But I listened to the audiobook version of *The Dutch House*. It is read perfectly by Tom Hanks. I loved it so much.

I won't give much of a synopsis because especially when it comes to fiction, I am one of those people who has an extremely low tolerance for anything resembling a spoiler to the point where I refuse to read dust covers on novels or the back or much of the synopsis at all, because they give way too much away. It drives me nuts. But the only thing I will tell you, if you don't already know, is from the book description that says it is set over the course of five decades. And *The Dutch House* is a dark fairytale about two smart people who can not overcome their past.

So the other thing I will tell you about this book, which is kind of not relevant, but something that drew me in is one of the main characters name is Maeve, which meant I was immediately interested in her because I've always loved that name. So if your name is Maeve, I instantly like you. Again, book two is *The Dutch House* a novel by Ann Patchett.

#3. *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* by Scot McKnight.

It came out in 2016. There's a new edition that came out in 2018. I read the hardcover version of this book, and this is when I started years ago but for some reason put it down not because it wasn't good, but it's a non-fiction book. And I think I picked it up at a time when I needed the first half, but I picked it up and finished the second half at the beginning of this year. Scot McKnight submits that the way we treat our birds is sometimes how we approach the Bible. We trim their wings and put them in cages, essentially we tame our parakeets. What if we approach the Bible less like a systemic belief system we're supposed to figure out and adopt and more like a story we're invited into?

That sounds rather whimsical. And I have to say, if you know anything about Scot McKnight, the first word that comes to mind is not the word whimsy. He's a New Testament scholar, a theologian, and an author who has written widely on the historical Jesus. When he taught at my master's residency several

years ago, I took notes so fast my hand cramped up and I had to take breaks in the hallway to kind of stop the fire hose of such fantastic information coming in. But I will say that *The Blue Parakeet* was a fantastic book, especially if you have questions about some of the ways maybe you've approached or been reading the Bible all these years. Again, the book is *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* by Scot McKnight.

#4. *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* by Latasha Morrison.

I read the paperback version of *Be the Bridge* and I've already talked about this book several times in previous episodes. So I won't say a ton about it, except one of my favorite things about this particular book about racial reconciliation, aside from the vulnerability with which Latasha tells her own personal story, but one of my favorite things is how she emphasizes the importance of lament, confession and forgiveness as the foundational framework for restoration. I have so much respect for anyone who shares their own personal story, but there's something compelling and deeply humbling about listening to someone who is a black person in America, specifically a Black Christian in a predominantly white church. And that was Latasha's story. She didn't just attend the church, she worked at the church and it gave her a unique perspective into the racial tension and the history and story of our country. So a fantastic read that really does focus on reconciliation and restoration. Again, the book is *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* by Latasha Morrison.

#5. *Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First.: 10 Questions to Take Your Friendships to the Next Level* by Laura Tremaine.

Here's what you need to know, first, Laura's book is not out yet. I know that's annoying, but hear me out. I got my hands on an early copy to read for endorsement and listen, I knew I would like her book a lot. I even figured I'd probably love it, but I did not expect for it to be one of my all-time favorite books. "Why?" You ask. I know favorite books are highly subjective, but a couple of reasons why her book really stood out for me is because first of all, she's a phenomenal storyteller. She shares with honest vulnerability, graceful charm, but I'm here to tell you the true gift of this book is what I wrote in the endorsement is the delightful alchemy that emerges at the end of every chapter because after reading her story, I was compelled every single time to share my own story. Which is the whole premise of her book, *Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First.* And that's exactly what she managed to do.

I told Kendra after reading Laura's book, I was like, "I don't know how Laura managed to write an entire book about herself and her own stories. And all it did was feel like she wrote an entire book about me. That takes some skill. I don't know how she did it, but she did it. Five stars, three cheers. I adore this book. And I will tell you it does come out, you can read it too, February 2nd, 2021. If you're listening to this later, go quickly and get *Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First.: 10 Questions to Take Your Friendships to the Next Level* by Laura Tremaine. I can't wait for you to read it and then we can talk about it.

Well, those were five of my next right favorite things I read this year, and now I'd love to ask you, do you have a happy list of books you read this year? I would love to hear what one of your next right favorite books was in 2020.

I already know I'm going to love sharing with you some of my favorites of 2020, but in keeping a little bit with the format of our usual episodes, here's a quote to reflect on to close out this segment of the episode from Laura's book, *Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First.* It's about decision-making, so it seemed just right for us. "I sometimes wonder if these huge decisions are also the easiest ones to make. Oh, sure we'll hem

and how and make pro and con lists and seek counsel from sources to either confirm or deny what we've already deeply and secretly decided. But when people tell me about their pivotal decisions, it seems like the biggest ones come as naturally as water flowing, choosing a partner, a job, a school, a location, leaving a marriage, a career, a country. There is an undeniable pull to choose what is right. We don't always heed that pull of course and then what follows is resistance down a bumpy road, but when we turn away from 1000 wrong decisions and toward one right one the energy flows differently. There is an ease to our words and our spirit."

Thanks for listening to episode 156 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of making a happy list of books you read can be 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.

In closing, I wanted to remind you about The Quiet Collection for Christmas. For the past three Decembers, I've offered The Quiet Collection, which is ten short audio reflections leading up to Christmas, not an advent offering exactly as it doesn't cover the entire span of the season of advent. More it's for those of us for whom a daily advent reading is sometimes something that we want to do, but somehow keeps not being the thing we choose to do.

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The Quiet Collection for Christmas is a daily companion to take with you as you go along the way. It's a way to frame the seasons, something you can count on and hold on to. After the shock and loss of 2020, it seems we need something new this time, a fresh word, a unique hope in a dim light. Something specific for us for this year the survivors of 2020. This offering is not linear or chronological, I trust you'll still be able to follow along. Visit emilypfreeman.com/christmas to learn more and sign up today. The day you sign up becomes your day one, and you'll receive a new audio offering each day for 10 days.

This Christmas, it's going to look different and there's pain in the change, but we continue. And I hope this small offering will be as much a comfort for you and the listening as it has been for me in the making. May it be so in the name of the father, son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.