



## 157: 10 Favorite Things I Watched This Year

Hi guys. Before we get started, I wanted to let you know, today is the final day to sign up to receive the Quiet Collection for Christmas. Thousands of you have signed up to receive the brand-new, 10-day audio devotional series I created just for us in 2020. And many of you have come back and purchased the collection as gifts for others. We make that super easy for you to get it for yourself or for a group, large or small. Simply visit [emilypfreeman.com/christmas](http://emilypfreeman.com/christmas) to learn more and sign up today.

All right. Now back to your regularly scheduled podcast episode.

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 157.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but 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. This month on the podcast, I'm changing up the format a bit, and I want to invite you into a final mini-series of the year where I'm sharing some of my next right favorite things.

Last episode, I shared five books I read this year and in this one, I want to share 10 favorite things I watched, because next month, The Next Right Thing guided journal will hit bookshelves around the country, and one of the reflections in the book is a page that I call A Happy List. And it's here on the Happy List is where I invite you to write down what you read, watched, listened to and made each month.

This is the perfect time of year to share my own list. And I'm so excited to share with you 10 things I watched and loved this year. But first a word from this episode sponsor, KiwiCo.

To say things have changed this year is an understatement, but with a little creative problem solving, you and your family have found new ways to work and learn from home, celebrate milestones via video conference, and keep in touch while staying apart. Now with the holidays coming up, KiwiCo wants to help you continue to celebrate moments of wonder and discovery, even if things look a little different than they did last year.

Choose from KiwiCo's eight crate lines and find a hands-on science and art project that's sure to spark curiosity and learning in your loved one all year long. We had a great time working on our Maker Crate, building a terrazzo clay organizer. Our Crate came with everything we needed to complete the project from start to finish. It was so nice to spend time together, working with our hands and using critical thinking skills to make each organizer our own.

While it may be hard to find new creative ways to keep kids busy while stretching their brains, especially now, KiwiCo does the legwork for you to find hands-on projects that are as engaging as they are educational, while building confidence, creativity, and creative thinking skills. There's something for every kid or kid at heart. And right now you can get 50% off your first month plus free shipping on any Crate Line using the code [nextrightthing](#) at [kiwico.com](#). That's 50% off your first month at [K-I-W-I-C-O.com](#) with the code [nextrightthing](#).

Now onto today's episode. Listen in.

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I feel like today's episode is another level in our relationship together because I'm going to share with you shows that I watched, and in doing so, you're going to learn something about me for better or for worse, #I'm not a pop culture podcaster. I try to be super honest and share with you things I truly watched and loved this year that came to mind immediately. So I didn't try to think too hard about it. Some of these things will be pretty basic and mainstream, like shows from TV, and then other things aren't TV at all, because we have all kinds of ways that we watch things these days.

So here we go. Are you ready? I'm ready.

Number one thing I watched this year and loved, and by the way, these are in no particular order, but number one on the list is *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*. This is a show that comes on NBC. I watched it on Hulu. Season One is completely out. So I've watched season one. I found it during the height of quarantine, thanks to my sister. I will tell you right upfront, they sing on the show, so if singing on TV is not your thing, just move on along. I have more shows I can tell you about. If you don't know anything about *Zoey*, essentially, after a strange event in her life, *Zoey*, who doesn't even like music that much, suddenly starts to hear the innermost wants, thoughts, and desires of the people around her, her family, and coworkers, even complete strangers. And she hears their thoughts through their performing of popular songs.

I know it sounds kind of weird when I say it out loud, but it's such a fun show. And Peter Gallagher from *While You Were Sleeping* is in it. I'm sure he's in a lot of other more famous things, but that's how I know him. Lauren Graham of *Gilmore Girls* fame, and also *Parenthood*, she stars in this show that's almost annoying if I didn't love it so much. It's like a comedy drama. There's a word for that. *Dramedy*? Anyway, I know, I'd said it. I'm not a pop culture podcaster, so don't expect me to know these things, but I just know what I like. And this show was pure joy and drama just when I needed it. And this summer, I needed it. Season Two of *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist* comes out this January of 2021. So if you watch the first season, there's more to come and I'm super excited about it.

All right, are we warmed up? Here we go. Another show, number two, it's called *Little Voice*. I watched it on Apple TV. There's one season with nine episodes. And speaking with shows with singing on it, you guys, *Little Voice*, it's about a budding talented songwriter named Bess, trying to find her way in New York City. It drips with sincerity, which was just the heart note that I needed to get hooked on it. The show *Little Voice* is about 30 minutes long. Like I said, it's on Apple TV+.

And it was co-created by Sara Bareilles and Jessie Nelson. They worked together on *Waitress* for Broadway and when that was done, they wanted to create something else together. And so this is kind of what came about. But the music is music by Sara Bareilles, and it is fantastic. I love it so much. I mean, if you're not into drama, this might not be your thing, but I really enjoyed it. And it was kind of right during that time when there was nothing new happening on TV. And we also had no hope for knowing if there was ever going to be anything new because of the pandemic. So that was a fun discovery for me. Again, that's *Little Voice*. It's on Apple TV+. There's one season with nine episodes.

And also by the way, Sara Bareilles is one of the executive producers alongside JJ Abrams, who, if you remember, also created *Felicity*. So it's kind of got a *Felicity*-esque feeling. A show from back in the early 2000s. One more thing about *Little Voice*. If *Zoe's Extraordinary Playlist* is a rainbow of flavor and pop and mostly fun, the music here on *Little Voice* is much more nuanced and layered and brooding. So take your pick of singing shows that you like, but I only have two on my list. So if you're like, "Emily, stop it with the singing shows," maybe this mainstream next one is for you.

Number three is a show that a few people told me about and I'd heard about it for years, but I never really tuned in. It's called *Madam Secretary*. It's on Netflix. There are six seasons there. I didn't watch it when it was actually on TV, but it's the one political-ish show that I watch. It's about former CIA analyst, Elizabeth McCord, who leaves that high profile job to ride horses and to be with her family, until her former boss appoints her as Secretary of State because he is the President. So she and her husband, Henry, and their three kids move to DC. And it's all very predictable. And the family is like a real family and she saves the world every single episode. And I'm here for all of it.

Something about watching someone in a position of power in government who's a woman, do good work every week, even though it's pretend, I don't know, it's been a really nice escape, kind of a nice predictable. It's like a Hallmark movie except in politics and not quite so cheesy, but you kind of know at the end, it's going to work out. And that's the kind of TV I like these days. So that's *Madam Secretary*. I watched it on Netflix. Six seasons are there. You're welcome.

My number four next right favorite thing I watched this year is not a TV show at all. It is Bri McKoy's Instagram stories. So much joy this year. And by the way, that's McKoy, M-C-K-O-Y. And here's the thing. When you get on Instagram and you see those little story circles pop up at the top, there's certain ones that if you see it pop up, you're always going to click on it. And that is Bri McKoy's Instagram stories for me. Every time she says, "You all," I just get so happy. Every time she says, "Something's amazing," I agree with her. She talks to the camera. She tells me how to use stuff in my kitchen. She tells me what rose gold coffee stirrers I need in my life, what tumblers from Amazon I should order, how to make iced coffee at home in the best kind of way. She teaches us how to make simple syrup and what container thing to get to mix it in.

But most of all, she's kind, she creates a fun and joyful space. Even when I know everything in her life is not fun and joyful, but she continues to hold on to a hopeful worldview. And, let me tell you, if there's something that I've needed more than anything this year, that's been one of those things. So I'm so grateful that Bri continues to create lovely and engaging and helpful content for my kitchen and my life.

A number five show, back to the mainstream show, that a lot of you might have strong feelings about one way or the other, and it's an NBC show that's in season four. This Is Us. You guys, how much did I need the Pearsons to come back to us this fall. So much. I know a lot of people don't watch This Is Us, maybe the same group of people who didn't want to watch Parenthood because everybody's like, "I cry every week." And then people are like, "Why would I watch a show that makes me cry every week?" Well, this girl right here who has a lot of big feelings, sometimes I need something else to cry about besides my own life. And This Is Us is just the ticket.

The other thing about the show that I've really enjoyed is it's one of the very few shows that John and I watched together with our three kids. They're all teenagers now, and so we just enjoy it to watch it together as a family. And so I have just really enjoyed that show. Again, it's got four seasons. They've already announced they're going to do six seasons total. So I'm really glad there's two seasons left.

The sixth thing I watched and loved this year is Hamilton on Disney+. You guys, I don't think I could create an episode that was about some of the next right things that I watched and loved this year in 2020 without including Hamilton. It seems like really on the nose, but I had to do it. I've seen Hamilton the play twice in person, once on Broadway in New York and once in London with John and the kids. So I know what it's like to see it in person, but I never saw the original cast.

Still, I was skeptical about watching it on the screen because seeing it in real life, that's hard to replace, but I will say it was the one thing we looked forward to this summer, really. And we were so excited when it came out. I know so many of you had the same experience. We watched it with lights out. We watched it straight through, and I still cried at all of the regular parts. So, a fantastic performance. They really just recorded one of the performances, maybe a couple of them. I don't remember the details of that, but all that to say that was one of the highlights of things that I watched and loved this year.

A couple of shows that John and I watched together, just the two of us, number seven, Victoria. This comes on Masterpiece on PBS. There's three seasons out, all about Queen Victoria and her ascension to the British throne at age 18. The show also covers her fascination with her favorite adviser, Lord Melbourne, which by the way, is my favorite track on the soundtrack. It's called simply Lord Melbourne.

Her relationship with Prince Albert is also obviously covered in this series, as well as their eventual nine children. I went through a whole Queen Victoria phase and I listened to the Lucy Worsley book on audible called Queen Victoria: Twenty-Four Days That Changed Her Life. It was really good.

Also, another reason why I just found myself interested in Queen Victoria's life and also the generations that her life covered and the generations since then, she died in 1901, which stands out for me because that's the same year that my great-grandfather was born. And I still remember visiting his house when I was little, he and my great-grandmother Goldie. They always served unsweetened tea in green plastic cups. And the only "toys" that they had was one large picture book they kept by their fireplace that had photos from the Barnum & Bailey Circus. It was not a toy. It wasn't even a kids book, but it was the closest thing we had. Their house was super boring. That's what I'm trying to tell you, but they were born the year Queen Victoria died. So that feels really interesting to me.

All right. So Victoria is a show that John and I watched together. I could also add The Crown in there. I'm not adding it in. I don't know why, but that is another show that John and I watched together. So if you

like *The Crown*, you might like *Victoria*. If you like *Victoria*, you might like *The Crown*.

All right. These last three shows, things that I watched, are examples of things I've watched the eventually inspire content for me in my teaching work or here on the podcast. So number eight is called *Chef's Table* and it's on Netflix. There's six volumes in all right now on Netflix of the original *Chef's Table* and each one has about four to six episodes in it. A couple of highlights for me, volume one, Dan Barber is the name of the episode. And it's about a chef who started a restaurant called the Blue Hill in New York. And it's a fantastic episode, but the thing I took away from it is something I talk about a lot, something Madeleine L'Engle talks about a lot, is the power of naming. And how he floundered in his work until someone gave his work a name, and then he was able to move forward with some confidence in owning that name. So that's in volume one, and the chef's name is Dan Barber.

In volume four, one of the episodes is called *Christina Tosi*, and it's about a woman who started *Milk Bar*, which is also in New York. There are other shows I watched that aren't set in New York, but I'm finding I'm mentioning New York a lot. But *Christina* thought she wanted to be a fancy pastry chef in a big time restaurant, but she zoomed out in her life and it helped her to see something different. And for me, that really inspired an episode for *The Next Right Thing Podcast*. It's the importance of zooming out. It's episode 38. But her life and her work for me really demonstrates what *Sue Monk Kidd* would call erring on the side of audacity. So you can check out episode 38, if you want to hear more about what I took away from that volume four *Christina Tosi* episode of *Chef's Table*.

And a final highlight of *Chef's Table*, still on the same show, but a different episode, is one about a chef named *Mashama Bailey*. It's volume six, episode one, and *Mashama* took what was once a segregated bus station in Savannah, Georgia, and turned it into a restaurant that puts a new spin on Southern food. Great episode. Also bonus show, *Mashama* was also featured on *Vivian Howard's PBS show Somewhere South*, in her porridge episode. So it's fun to watch both of those and hear her story told in different ways from slightly different perspectives. But *Chef's Table*, it's on Netflix. There's a few different iterations of the show, but I've only watched episodes from the main *Chef's Table* show. So go forth and watch *Chef's Table*.

Number nine is a show I watched, I've watched several episodes of it. It's called *First Ladies*, and it's a six-part documentary series on CNN. I've tried to figure out how you can watch it now because it's already been on and we recorded it when it came on TV. But I think if you go to [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), there's a way to watch their past episodes of their shows. But this one profiles *Michelle Obama*, *Jackie Kennedy*, *Nancy Reagan*, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, *Ladybird Johnson*, and *Hillary Rodham Clinton*.

I just love seeing the behind-the-scenes stories, the family background, or other details about the personality or backstory of these women that doesn't maybe carry over into an overarching narrative of the life of these public figures. Side note, a few years ago, I read a book called *First Women*, different from... The show is *First Ladies*. A book that I read is called *First Women*. The subtitle is, *The Grace and Power of America's Modern First Ladies*, and it's by *Kate Anderson Brower*. And she looks at all the first ladies spanning from 1961 to 2017.

So, a really fun show to watch, an interesting show called *First Ladies*. The book is also good, *First Women*. I'm confusing things now because I'm adding in a book to a shows episode. Sorry about that. But that's a bonus.

The final thing I watched this year that's kind of stuck with me, and I watched it and loved it, is actually an online series called Open Door from Architectural Digest. It's 70 short episodes. I'm talking 10 to 12, maybe 15 minutes, some of them, where celebrities give a tour of their homes. It's a simple concept, but it's really fun. And a few that I watched, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, who plays Mitchell on Modern Family, he shows inside his New York apartment home that he shares with his husband, Justin Makita. And they walk us around and it's pretty unspectacular. I mean, I know for a New York apartment, it's spectacular, but when you watch it, it's just like, "Oh, this is just like a regular..." I mean, there's some interesting things like Tony Awards that I wouldn't find in my house, but it was just interesting to watch him share his small kitchen and what they had to do to be creative. So that's one. Jesse Tyler Ferguson.

Another one I loved and this one has stuck with me, was Maggie Gyllenhaal shares her Brooklyn brownstone with her husband, Peter, and their kids. And I haven't stopped thinking about that house since I saw the episode, like I said, and it's because the house was so lived in. You could tell they live there. They had to work around the weird oddities of this home and it doesn't get great light in certain areas. And you can see where they stack some things in the corner, and they're just people living in a house. And it was just an inspiring like, "Oh, look what she did there." It was beautiful, but it wasn't opulent. And I think that's what was inspiring to me to watch.

And another one I watched was the guy who plays Hopper on Stranger Things, David somebody. He also has a New York brownstone, and the thing that really caught my eye about his episode was he has so many plants and bookshelves. Seeing the plants at bookshelves and what a difference they made in his space, and a weirdly tiny bathroom that they had to work with, super fun to just watch him give a tour of this place. It was pretty clear he didn't have a whole lot of hand in designing it because of the way he talked about it, but it was still really interesting to see where he lives, where he spends some of his time.

But I think the thing about all of those, and then some other episodes of this show. Again, it's called Open Door and it's an online series. So you can just Google Architectural Digest or AD Open Door and you can look at a lot of different people's inside their homes where they give a little tour. But I think the thing that was fascinating to me and why it's one of the shows that stuck out is what all these places and people really had in common was the thing that they wanted to show the camera, it wasn't necessarily like, "We have this cool drawer microwave, or we have this really fancy thing."

It was that they would share their meaningful pieces from their home. They would point out a art piece that was really meaningful to them, or maybe an award that they won, or something small, or a little corner where they like to do reading, or where they sit at the table and do stuff with their kids, or the place where they love to cook. It was just home and we all have a home. And I think that we turn to watch things for many reasons. And one of them often is to just be entertained or to unwind. But sometimes I turn a show on because I want to be inspired and I want to remember why people do what they do and hear the backstory behind things. See what makes people tick and what we all have in common. And some of these shows are just for fun, but underneath that, it's really lovely how art and how story can remind us ways in which we're all connected.

So I hope that this has been fun for you and I hope that as you look back on this year, that you can make your own fun list of favorite things that you watched and loved as you continue to do your next right thing in love.

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Thanks for listening to episode 157 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of making a happy list of things you've watched 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, it's also about making life.

Don't forget, today is the last day to sign up to receive The Quiet Collection for Christmas. It's a dollar a day for a five to eight-minute reflection. And if you're feeling behind on your advent reading, or you find you just simply cannot this season, I would love to send you what I'm really calling a tiny podcast episode every day for the next 10 days. Visit [emilypfreeman.com/christmas](http://emilypfreeman.com/christmas) to learn more and sign up.

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Well, as always, you can find me at [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman) on Instagram and also online at [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com), where you can also find complete transcripts of this and every episode.

A final word from musician John Foreman, who reminds us that, "The best stories often come from inconvenient and uncomfortable places."

And I share that quote, because sometimes it's in the things that we watch when we sit down just to be entertained or even distracted. If we're paying attention, sometimes those stories spark something new in us. And it might be inconvenient and it might not be efficient, but maybe as we watch our things, we can continue to pay attention.

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