



162: Is It Time To Move On?

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 162.

This is a podcast about making decisions and 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.

Even though we're a little over halfway through January, it's never too late to start learning something new, which is why I want to share a few classes from this episode sponsor, Skillshare, that can help you discover a new skill, a new passion, or a way to create more meaning in your everyday life this year. Skillshare's online community offers thousands of classes for the creative and the curious.

One particular class that caught my eye is Creativity Unleashed taught by Nathaniel Drew. He's an online content creator with the goal of better connecting with others around the world through his digital newsletter and YouTube channel. He wants to help others refine their creativity online by sharing what he's learned.

Or maybe you want to embrace your inner artist? Laci Jordan teaches digital illustration for all, where she encourages us to constantly look for inspiration and how to transfer inspired ideas into digital artwork. Her work is so colorful and fun, and I love her perspective on how we develop our personal style.

With so much to explore, real projects to create, and the support of fellow creatives, Skillshare empowers you to accomplish real growth. It's affordable, too. With annual subscriptions available for less than \$10 a month. Right now, Next Right Thing listeners can get a free trial of premium membership at [skillshare.com/nextrightthing](https://www.skillshare.com/nextrightthing). Explore your unlimited trial access to classes like Nathaniel's and Laci's for free just for being here with me today. Go to [skillshare.com/nextrightthing](https://www.skillshare.com/nextrightthing) to claim your offer, or tap the link in today's show notes.

Now on to today's episode. Listen in.

In our last episode, I shared about the importance of being willing to change your mind. This is difficult for all the regular reasons. For many of us, it's scary, or at least unsettling, to change your mind about

something.

But there's another layer, isn't there always, to why changing our mind can bring all kinds of angst. Because it's one thing to change your mind when you know what you're doing is the right thing, but it's a whole 'nother thing to have confidence changing your mind when you're not sure if you're doing the right thing at all.

On Instagram recently, I asked a simple question. Where are you stuck? By the way, Instagram is my favorite social media place to hang out. You can find me by my name, Emily P. Freeman, there. But two comments I received on that post have really stayed with me and, ultimately, they've become the foundation for this episode.

The first comment was this one: "I'm having trouble navigating feelings of grief, guilt, shame and, ultimately, paralysis over contemplating choosing to bring things to a close, despite feeling a deep need to do so, because of that initial conviction that it was the next right step." I nodded my head when I read that one because I could relate to being sure and confident of a decision, and then living into that decision and, over time, it no longer feels right anymore. There's a lot of grief that can go along with that, and depending on your circumstance, there could even be some guilt or even embarrassment.

The second comment that stuck with me that sums it up all quite well, "How difficult does something have to be before you decide to move on?" That's the core of it right there, isn't it? I'll get right to it and share some next right thing principles, but these are not blanket statements. In fact, they're not statements at all, but they're questions for you to consider to help you know if it's time to move on. I trust you'll use wisdom in answering these questions, and hold them up to the light of your own experience, your own discernment and faith and core values, alongside the people who know you and have your best interest in mind.

So how can I know if it's time to move on?

First question, what is my body saying? I like asking this question first because our bodies aren't liars like sometimes we are. It's not that we mean to lie to ourselves. It's just that we can't always tell the truth because we don't always know the truth.

But our bodies know the truth. They aren't filters. They're more like mirrors, so name what's happening in your body. When you think about whether or not it's time to move on from this job, relationship, ideology, place, whatever it is, consider the state of your body. When you hold that thing in front of you, does your body rise in expectation, or does it fall in defeat and dread?

You can ask yourself, am I losing sleep over this decision?

Are my shoulders sore?

Do I have constant headaches?

Am I grinding my teeth?

Does my heart constantly race?

Am I experiencing digestive issues?

Is my hair falling out?

Is my skin breaking out?

Y'all, I'm not a doctor, medical or otherwise, but I am a person with a body, and my body tells me important information if I'm willing to listen. Your body does, too. If you're experiencing physical symptoms of discomfort, stress, or illness, don't be so quick to dismiss them as unrelated. Everything's connected. Listen to your body.

Question number two, what is my schedule saying?

Do the activities, appointments, and hours of my actual schedule aligned with what matters most? Am I able to connect the dots between events on my calendar and my own core values? Of course not everything on our calendars is always going to fit directly in with what we really want to do. But if the answer is not even close, then your next right thing might be to at least consider areas in your life where it might be time to move on.

Question number three, do my co-listeners say it's time? Some of the best teachers in our lives are often ones we overlook, the people we live with, our partners, roommates, kids, parents, a small group leader, a friend from work. It's one thing to Google, "How to know if it's time to move on?" To look to the experts and the books and the articles about practices and principles, even to listen to a podcast episode like this one to help you discern if it's time to move on. But it's the people who know you the very best who might have insight you'll never find in a 10-step article or a best-selling book.

What are my people telling me?

What kinds of questions are they asking me?

Am I willing to ask their opinion?

Or am I afraid because I'm afraid of what they're going to say?

Am I willing to let them be honest?

Question number four, am I living in the past? Sometimes we're hesitant to move on from something because we remember how things once were, and we have hope that they'll be that way again. We don't want to let go of the idea of what could be, and so we train ourselves to ignore what is. When things become difficult, it's normal to look back and remember how they once were, or even to look ahead and hope for things to get better. But if you find yourself thinking about how things used to be the majority of the time, well, that could be an arrow to pay attention to.

Question five, what would I say to a friend in my situation? One way to access your own wisdom is to

pretend you're not the recipient of it. If a friend comes to you carrying the same question and the same circumstance you are, what would you tell her to think about? What questions would you ask her? What would be obvious? What advice would you give?

Question number six, what is the worst thing that could happen? You're likely thinking through the scenarios anyway, so why not face them directly? Make a list, write them down. If you do, indeed, decide to move on, imagine what are all the worst things that could happen. Be relentlessly honest with yourself here. Don't leave anything off the list.

Then make a second list.

That's question number seven. What is the best thing that could happen? Be just as honest on this list. Write it all out, bullet-point style. If you decide to move on, what are all the best things that could happen as a result of that decision? List out the benefits and the wins, the hope and the health, the best possible outcome.

When you're done with both of those lists, compare them side by side, and ask yourself one final question. Do I want to move on? This is the one question we're afraid to ask, or we think it doesn't count. In my experience, once we get to a place where we're seriously asking ourselves if it's time to move on, that's not actually the question that we're asking anymore. The real true thing we're most likely saying is I want to move on. How do I know if that's okay?

If you're afraid that it's not okay to do something, and you're looking for something beyond yourself to affirm what you really want to do, it could be helpful to know that your desire is not your enemy. It's what we do with our desire that matters most.

Ronald Rolheiser says in his book, *The Holy Longing*, "Desire can show itself as aching pain or delicious hope. Spirituality is, ultimately, about what we do with that desire." So knowing and naming what you want and demanding or getting what you want are not the same thing. Don't confuse them. Demanding what you want is an act of aggression, a closed-off and unrelenting stubbornness, even. But naming what you want can be a beautiful confession. It's an acknowledgement that yes, I have a deep desire for change here, but I am open and I am listening.

So do you want to move on? What is your body telling you? What is your schedule telling you? What are the people who know you best telling you? What would you tell yourself? What is the worst thing that could happen, and what is the best thing that could happen?

When you answer all of these questions, hold them all together in the presence of God. If you're a person of faith, you might have already been wondering or waiting for me to list God on that list. But the reason I didn't put God on the list is because God is the list. God can speak through all of these questions to us, through our bodies, our schedules, our people, our desires. To make God one bullet point of many is to forget the actual point.

Likely God will not show up with writing on the wall or a burning bush, at least not the kind that we might expect. Instead, our burning bushes are the daily movements of our schedule, through our illness, our wellness, through people God made in his image who live around us and with us. And God can speak

through our longing through honestly answering the question, what do you really want to do? We don't have to be afraid of that question.

Is it time to move on? Chances are you already know. Trust it. There's likely not a perfect solution, but the way you make your decisions could be infinitely more important than the final decisions you make. If you make a decision while paying mindful attention to your body and your people and your own inner wisdom in the presence of God, well, I'd say you're building a pretty beautiful life. Don't be afraid to do your next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to Episode 162 of The Next Right Thing.

I hope this simple practice of deciding if it's time to move on 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 emilypfreeman.com, or on Instagram at [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman).

If you're in the midst of a transition, or have a decision to make but are feeling stuck, I hope you'll check out my book, *The Next Right Thing*. It offers 24 chapters that have 24 practices to engage in while considering what might be next. You can visit nextrightthingbook.com to learn more, or grab a copy wherever you buy books.

In closing, a short word from Dr. Larry Crabb in his book, *Real Church*. He says, "God meets us where we are, not where we pretend to be."

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