



## 97: Take a 10 Minute Timeout

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 97. This is a podcast all about making decisions. It's also a podcast 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. I'll bring you a thoughtful story, a little prayer, and a simple next right step. Today I'll talk directly about what we want most when it comes to making wise decisions. What is it? How about some clarity? Listen in.

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One afternoon when the kids were younger, I was headed upstairs at our house and my daughter flew past me on her way down the stairs, shouting over her shoulder, "I know it isn't true, but I'm going to prove it to you." Well, I watched her go bursting out the front door, out into our front yard and immediately look back up at our house and she started waving her arms up toward the sky.

Well, I kept going up the stairs and when I got into my bedroom, there stood her sister and her little brother at the window, one holding an iPad and then over their shoulder I noticed our address was typed into the map app and the camera was zoomed into an aerial view of our cul-de-sac and now I'm starting to catch on.

They stared out the window at her down below, waving her hands frantically and then back to the screen in their hand. Window, back to the screen. Window, back to the screen. "Okay, you're right,"

one of them finally calls out to her through the window, “I can’t see you.”

If only all arguments were so easy to resolve. If only all we had to do when we’re unsure.

If only all we had to do when we were unsure of something is to run out in the front yard and start waving our arms to confirm, No, Google Maps is not in fact a live feed from space.

We’ve talked specifically about clarity here way back in episode 27 where I shared about how we can’t rush clarity, and maybe I don’t always use that exact word, but really in a podcast about decision making, clarity is our always companion. It’s one of those words I’ve used in prayers for many years. One I’ve held onto like a tattered lovey. A comfort when things seem dark. I’ll be all right if only I could just get some clarity.

In nearly every major decision and honestly sometimes not so major decisions, I’ve prayed for clarity. I’ve shared here before how in sometimes of cloudy decision making frustration, I’ve even Googled how to make a decision in a desperate search for more clarity. More and more though, every time the word clarity comes out of my mouth, I hesitate and I realize for me it’s because clarity can be a more acceptable word for control. If I could just see the future, I could make a good decision about this part of my life.

And so I say I want clarity. And what I mean I think is that I want to have a peaceful feeling about this particular decision. I want to know the right answer. I want to know I’m making the right choice and I desperately want to take out all shades of gray when it comes to making this decision. I want clear lines and long views and big pictures. I can become so focused on making the right choice that I forget to acknowledge what a gift it is that I have a choice to make at all. And what is all this really about? I forget to receive the gift of grace, to remember how Jesus is with me and has made my heart His home. I forget I can trust Him with my life and trust myself to choose well, regardless of how unclear things may seem.

I’m not saying that I won’t get peaceful feelings or right answers eventually, but when I make those first things instead of second things, decision making becomes a lot more frustrating. And that conversation in John 14, it comes to mind when Thomas said, “Lord, we don’t know where you’re going, so how can we know the way?”

The most logical response of Jesus should have been, if you ask me, “I’ll show you the way. I’ll show you the truth. I’ll show you your life.”

We would like that and that would seem loving and it would make a lot of sense and it would comfort everybody. It would comfort me. Instead though that’s not what Jesus said to Thomas. Instead, He simply said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

Thomas wanted to map, a plan. Instead, Jesus reaches out His hand. He didn’t say, “Come to me and I’ll give you answers.”

He said, “Come to me and I’ll give you rest.”

And maybe we’ll get the answers, maybe He’ll show us the way, even while He is the way, but I think He’s telling Thomas something important about life and He tells me this as well. Jesus prayed to His Father, give us this day our daily bread, but the truth is secretly I want bread to last the month. He invites me back again and again to ask only for grace to last through nightfall and no longer. Trusting more will come tomorrow. So before you look for clarity, ask yourself one question, what do I want even more than clarity?

Sometimes to be honest, I can’t answer that because there’s nothing I want more than clarity. In a way, this answer is telling me something all by itself. Something that’s important to know. Maybe I’m worshipping clarity rather than Christ. If I always had clarity, why would I need faith at all?

I’ve been reading a book called *Group Spiritual Direction* by Rose Mary Dougherty, and in it she talks about how we’re often looking for just the right program or process that’s going to guarantee the rightness of our decisions. But she writes and I quote, “There is no human process that can protect us from mistakes and failures. We will never really be sure of the right course of action. As long as we are human and dealing with other human beings, we will be subject to uncertainty and ambiguity in our motives. We can however, open ourselves to God in the uncertainty, in the ambiguity and allow the compulsion for rightness to be transformed into an openness to responsible love.”

Well, I love those words that Rose Mary says in her book and here's the part where I say things that are unpopular, where I tell you the words you don't want to hear. Where I bring to the surface the subversive point of what I hope I've been doing in this space on this podcast for nearly a 100 episodes and that is this, the decision is rarely the point. The point in all its beautiful, maddening truth is a question and not a statement. Who are you becoming?

Today if you're searching for clarity, let me first say there's no shame in that. I want clarity every single day in parenting, ministry, business, meal planning, friendships, and all my future decisions. There isn't one area of my life that isn't touched by the longing for clear steps and sure things, but instead of grasping, demanding, enforcing our way to what I hope will be clear answers, what if we took 10 minutes just to be with God?

What if we put away the phone, close the laptop, turned off the TV, shut down the podcast, put away the books, lay down the pen and the long list of to do's, erase the whiteboard, and put away all potential outcomes. And just for the next 10 minutes, what if we considered the following questions?

Is this decision drawing you near to God or pushing you from Him? In the process of making this choice is your faith being built or is it being assaulted?

Would you dare to believe that if there isn't one right answer that your friend Jesus is inviting you to confess your desire and act accordingly? And if there is one right answer and you choose the other one, would you dare to believe that your friend Jesus is with you still to comfort and walk alongside?

Do you trust in the love of the Father, the friendship of the Son and the comfort of the Holy Spirit?

More than clarity sure things or the settled confidence of a rightly made decision may we be people who remember the witness of God no matter what happens. We say we want clarity and that's honest and true, but what we want more maybe is peace and they aren't the same thing.

Clarity implies we know what will happen, but peace is a settled wholeness even in the midst of the unknowing. And peace has already been given.

John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

This is the word of the Lord. It is absolutely true and given to us in love. Thanks be to God.

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Thanks for listening to episode 97 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple habit of this 10 minute timeout can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow because it’s true that this is a podcast about making decisions. Remember, the bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives. If you know someone who could benefit from these episodes but they aren’t podcast listeners, remember we provide transcripts for every episode and those are available at [thenextrightthingpodcast.com](http://thenextrightthingpodcast.com). Just click on the episode you want and then you scroll down within the episode to the green button that says, download transcript. As always, you can find me at [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com) or on Instagram @EmilyPFreeman.

In closing, here are a few words from Mike Cospers in his book, *Recapturing the Wonder*.

“In the scriptures we see that He comes not in a storm, but in a still small voice. Not in a conquering hero, but a carpenter. Not in a victorious try, but in an impoverished and persecuted church. The real wonder is that this is what we really want. The mountaintop experiences don’t satisfy, but the presence of Jesus does. And He’s promised that He won’t forsake us. He’s as present when we’re mowing the lawn or arguing with our boss as He is at an altar call or in our own quiet moments of prayer. It’s mysterious and hidden, and yet it’s a core promise of the New Testament. God is with us.”

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