



184: The Next Right Thing in Marriage with John Freeman

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 184. 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 or 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. Today is a special episode where I'm talking with the love of my actual life, John Freeman. He's never been a guest on the podcast before, and today is the day. But first, a quick word about this episode's sponsor, Talkspace.

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Now onto today's episode where as I said before, I'm talking with John. A couple of weeks ago I asked on Instagram what questions you have for John or John and I together, and I used those in our conversation together. Of course we get off track, what would you expect after 20 years of marriage. But we are celebrating our 20th anniversary this week, and so I thought it was a perfect time to bring him on. If you haven't met John yet, you are sure to love him. I am so excited to have him join us here today on the podcast. Listen in.

Emily:

All right John, I asked on Instagram for people to tell me what questions they might have for you, because I've never had you on the podcast before.

John:
Well, that's true.

Emily:
It's been four years I've been doing this podcast. Yeah, that's right. Almost four years. How do you feel about that?

John:
It's a long time. It's great to be here, though. I'm even a little nervous like wow, I'm here.

Emily:
You're on the podcast. Well, that's good. Well, one reason I want to have you on is because I love you.

John:
I love you, too.

Emily:
And the second reason is because we will be celebrating 20 years of marriage-

John:
Yes.

Emily:
... this very week.

John:
It's crazy.

Emily:
It feels like a nice way to mark it. But I will tell you that there was one question that a lot of people asked, and it's the most obvious question. So I'm going to ask you. And that is, people have asked us how we met. Would you like to tell the story?

John:
Well, yeah. The place is very significant for me as you know, and I remember more than anything the place. It was at the Christian college that you attended and the seminary I attended in the cafeteria, of all places. So our mutual friend Faith introduced us, and she kind of did so with a glow like there's something here, she knew us both. I just remember we are in the center of the cafeteria, and I just remember looking at you and seeing you, and your eyes, and something happened there.

Emily:
Well, let's be clear. You were dating someone else at the time.

John:
You were, too.

Emily:

I know. I'm just saying. Something may have happened but it wasn't ... I mean, you did have a-

John:

It felt significant, and I think that's part of me remembering the place and remembering the moment. It was significant.

Emily:

Well, I had heard about you before we met because we had mutual friends. The people had said you guys should meet, you're from the same hometown. Because our college was the college that ... The seminary you were at and the college that I had gone to, it's in a different town from where we live now, and people had said we should meet. But I was hesitant because you were a graduate student, and historically graduate students at that school were not super my type, let's just leave it at that. But then I met you and I was like, "Okay, that's different."

John:

Well, it felt different and it felt really important. And we had a background. Our moms knew each other in the same prayer group and I mean, even before we met they were at our home church praying together, and I think the running joke was what are they praying for. The world and people ... No. I mean, maybe they were praying for us, I don't know.

Emily:

Maybe, maybe not. Who knows, who knows the heart of a mother? Well that was how we met, but we didn't really start dating for a couple of years, it feels like. Maybe it was just a year, I don't know. What is time?

John:

We started dating January 1999.

Emily:

Well I know when, but I don't remember that compared to when we ... Note for the audio, he just looked at his notes. I just want to make that clear, trying to be ... No, that was a significant date, because I do remember it was New Year's Eve, New Year's Day when we kind of made it official. But we'd hung out for many, many months before then because bear in mind, we both had some breakups to go through. But no. I mean, and here's the thing that's interesting is we never really broke up after we started dating. We dated and then we ended up getting engaged I don't know, two years later, a year and a half. Gosh, that seems quick now looking back, compared to 20 years.

Emily:

Well let me tell you John, there were a few other questions when I asked people what questions would you have for John, what do you want us to talk about. That is a dangerous thing to ask my friend, let me just tell you. Because one thing a lot of people asked about was about our Enneagram numbers. Now, let me just preface this by saying I used to talk a lot more publicly about my Enneagram number. I don't talk as much publicly about it now, partly because number one, I think it's really personal and I don't love the way that the collective we of humankind, has kind of memed the Enneagram out and it's kind of become

in some circles, people are like oh, I'm so tired of talking about the Enneagram.

Emily:

I think it is a tool that is a helpful tool for transformation, for something to be held in respect. But the way that ... It's like for thousands of years it was this sacred tool that was helpful, and now in the last five years we've just wrecked it all up. So I tend to be like, I'll move back away from that. Do you resonate with that at all John, what I just said?

John:

I do. I mean, I think to me it is more private and sacred. It feels that way. So it comes into play more with my own reflection, maybe my own personal prayer time. It feels more helpful in those spaces, yeah.

Emily:

But it is helpful, and I think that I don't want to not talk about-

John:

Yeah, relationally-

Emily:

Yes.

John:

... it can be, yeah.

Emily:

I don't want to not talk about it just because of my aversion to anything that becomes really mainstream. So there's my preface to say I don't think you necessarily learn your number from a test, I think you have to read and discover. I think it could take years to figure out really what your number truly is. Then these days people are like well, I took the test in five minutes and I'm definitely a whatever. But having said all of that, I have done many interviews. I've done interviews with Suzanne Stabile and Ian Cron and different people because of my Enneagram number. So I have talked about being a four on the Enneagram. And people know that, they've listened to those episodes. I loved doing those, having those conversations with these Enneagram experts. But what they may not know is what Enneagram number you resonate with. Would you like to share about that?

John:

Sure. I connect more with the Enneagram two number. I think it's helped me to understand my journey of shame and to see that I'm in that cul-de-sac of the two, threes and fours. And so two.

Emily:

A friend Phil Anderson, is it Phil who talks about this?

John:

Yeah. cul-de-sacs.

Emily:

About the cul-de-sacs, that if you have a hard time discerning what your number is, that think of it in

terms of the heart, the head and the gut or the body space, and that maybe you don't know am I two, three, four or five, six, seven, eight, nine, one, but you might know which cul-de-sac you're in. Usually if you can find the cul-de-sac, if you're more of a heart person, a head person or a gut person or instinct, that once you get to your cul-de-sac it's easier to find your house. So determining between the three rather than the nine at first could be really helpful, and I think that's been helpful for us. But we live in a literal cul-de-sac, and also we are in the same Enneagram-

John:
Shame cul-de-sac-

Emily:
... cul-de-sac right. Which yeah, and you colored it. Thanks for that, coloring it and shame, shades of shame. But it is. It is when you get down to the root when we are not at our best, or when we are most afraid, it shows up like shame. I can recognize that in you, and you definitely recognize that in me. What's been most helpful for you when you confront, when you are confronted with that shame?

John:
I think for me, it's knowing how to return home. Because I think my mind can be taken off to a distant country, whether it is shame or like beating myself up or self disappointment, to really know how to return home and allow my feelings time to be in tow, and to return home as well to the father's love and to God's acceptance. So that's been huge for me.

Emily:
One thing people wanted to know about was the interaction between your experience of life as a Enneagram two, and in our marriage, interacting with me as a four on the Enneagram. Any words that you have?

John:
I think it's been helpful to understand where you go in stress is actually a two. So that's kind of my space, and so that's been a connecting point to have empathy and to help you have your own version of returning home and just being with you in that. Not trying to fix, but to help empathize and identify with you has been really helpful. I think you alluded to it earlier when we're both really stuck in these places of shame, that's hard. I mean, that's just to be honest with parenting and all the other things. But I think there is a connection there for us when you are in stress, and that is a helpful kind of place to understand you. I think that was the other thing too, is really understanding you. That has been huge, and Enneagram fours need that. Truly, that's been key.

Emily:
Yeah, I think when I was able to name that one of my biggest fears is not being understood, and I think you've grabbed hold of that and that has become a great language, a shared language that we have is that you recognize when I start to spin out, that the work isn't-

John:
Fixing.

Emily:
... making me un-spin, it's an understanding the motion of it, and kind of you coming alongside of me.

I think you do that so well. I mean that's part of your superpower as just yourself, and part of your identifying as a two, I think that's what twos do so well is to be with. But the work, I think you've done a lot of work in learning how to be with without saving, or trying to make it right. Because one of my things that I think I do really well is I can be with and hold the space for the grief without really looking for solutions necessarily, which can drive a lot of people crazy until they're in a place of grief and suffering and they don't want someone to do that for them. Then I think that's when it's a good time to find someone who identifies as a four.

John:

Yeah. I think when you spin, it's worth it for me to spin with you and to be with you in that. I think when you have someone else with you and you're spinning, it's easier to slow down.

Emily:

But I don't see you as spinning with me, I see you as a fixed point alongside me.

John:

Yeah, and that's interesting because I think I feel spinning.

Emily:

Uh-oh.

John:

I know, but I think that's okay. I mean I-

Emily:

But you don't look spinning.

John:

I don't, and I think there is a part of me that is more sturdy and stable. I do think I want to be that for you because I know that's what you need. But it is. To me, I think internally it feels a little spinny.

Emily:

Well, and I will say I mean, 20 years of marriage, right? But when we first got married first of all, we did not have this language. I'd never heard of the Enneagram when we first got married, but also we were just young 20s and didn't know things. But I think this played out way differently those first years of marriage because you would spin with me, and we have now fully adopted this metaphor of spinning. But you would kind of go into that place of maybe anxiety or fear or whatever with me when I would go into those spaces, but I could see that I was bringing you down with me in a bad way.

John:

Right, and I think that is-

Emily:

Because you felt so responsible to make it okay, and you couldn't make it okay because I didn't want you to make it okay.

John:

And that was unhealthy of me because I'm not okay unless you're okay.

Emily:

Yeah, it's a whole thing.

John:

But I do think now there is ... We understand more about our being united to the kingdom of God. I mean, that has just been a huge thing for us that I think has grounded us and allowed us to return home.

Emily:

Yeah. John, you and I were pretty dorky when we were dating. We would connect over books written by Major Ian Thomas and we would talk theology, and we do that now but it's different, I guess. We still do that a little bit.

John:

Sure, yeah.

Emily:

But one of my favorite rhythms of life, I talk a lot on the podcast about rhythms of life and I share things that have worked for me and things that have changed. But one thing that I think has stayed fairly steady is not every single morning but almost every morning, and John will have made the coffee the night before, praise be unto the Lord, and then we'll get up. Usually you get up before I do by a little bit. But then we'll meet at some time in the morning and have some coffee together and talk about ... And we'll talk about the day, we'll talk about what we're struggling with or what we've been reading or whatever, and it's been pretty organic. But it's been pretty consistent, too. I will tell you, I did not drink coffee til I met you. I just don't know if you know that.

John:

Sorry.

Emily:

I didn't drink ... I drank maybe here and there in college. I didn't drink coffee very much, and I never really ate seafood til we started dating. That's a whole side note. But I do really think that's a part, sometimes those things that are the most life giving in our rhythm of life are not like things that we plan on. They're the things that are a part of our life that we can ... And oftentimes the most favorite parts of my rhythm of life are the things that I didn't necessarily plan to implement, but they're the things I name when looking back on my life and I think oh wait, that's a thing we do that when it's missing it's missing, and I miss it. I miss you, I miss that connection.

Emily:

But let me tell you another thing a lot of people asked about, I'm just moving right along with these questions, was about your transition from full time, being a pastor working at a church, to the work that you're doing now. I've shared on the podcast a couple different episodes about what happened when you quit your job and how to know when it's time, drawing from our experience. During those years, I don't know that we had the luxury of sitting for very long at least in the mornings, because you had to obviously

get to work. But do you want to share just a little bit about your pastoral journey over the years of our marriage?

John:

Yeah. I think what was key in that season of transition and trying to figure out what was next was the ability to pay attention. I don't think I had that ability when I was right in the thick of things. I don't think I was able to pay attention to my longings. I remember even you saying I don't feel like you're able to look me in the eye and us to connect. And I think there was an attentiveness to you that lacked in that season. So what was key was the circumstances really forced me to pay attention. So Dad passing, the ministry getting so busy and hurried that I was really tired, and it was like my body was saying you need to pay attention, close attention. That was the first step was together paying very close attention to what were the signals both in my body and my surrounding and you, and they were all signaling and pointing to a possible transition.

Emily:

We talked for years before you left youth ministry about what it would be like for you to leave youth ministry. You had a real difficulty visualizing that and taking what I call pretend risk, that you had a difficulty using your imagination to imagine a different ... I don't even know if vocation is the right word because I think you still have the similar, same vocation as you did even though it manifests itself differently now. But I think grief helped you access the dream of what could be different. It's like if you close off ... I think Brené Brown has talked about if you refuse or close off your access to the pain, you're also closing yourself off to the joy and the life, that you don't get to choose the good and avoid the difficult. So I think the grief opened you up in all the ways and hard ways, but also in really beautiful ways.

Emily:

But I'm curious if you would have any words to say to anybody who maybe is in that place that you were eight, 10 years ago where they're on a track, they might be successful in that track but maybe their body, their mind, their soul or their significant other is telling them you need to pay attention, something is off here. Do you have any words for that person to begin to explore, or questions to ask to maybe be able to take that pretend risk of imagining what could be different?

John:

Yeah. I mean, what comes to mind is really what does the pain have to say. I think our mindset is we avoid pain, we avoid the frustrations. Well, maybe sit with it and face it, and maybe it actually has more to say about our life and our dreams than we know. That would be the first thing I would say is explore the pain. What is your grief, even? What does it have to say to you? That was really significant for me, because I felt like something was wrong. I was feeling these deep things and it felt wrong. But actually it was really right because I was beginning to wake up to myself and to God and to you, especially you.

Emily:

Especially me.

John:

I mean, it's true. In that season when I look back on it, there was a very deep intimacy that was happening

that I felt invited into with you. Even though there was all these things going on with Dad and family and vocation and shift, there was an intimacy that was growing with you.

Emily:

Now you telling someone to face the pain and see what it has to say, they might have just turned the podcast off. They may not still be listening.

John:

Sure.

Emily:

But, so what's the next step?

John:

Well I think again, that may be a very scary thing. But boy, there are some key people that crossed our paths during that time.

Emily:

Yeah, that's right.

John:

I think community and I think maybe even having trusted friends and mentors face that alongside of you was awfully key for me. We can definitely name those people, they were there. So looking around and paying attention to okay, who are the people that may help me face the things I really don't want to face.

Emily:

There's something really beautiful about having people who can lighten the load. It's like you don't ... You think that you have to travel over ... I know Preston Gillham talks about traveling over when you feel like you're in this ungracious place, or this place of suffering or struggle, and it maybe took you a while to get there, it seems like the hope is found only in retracing your steps through all this ungracious territory that you've just traveled, and it will take equally as long to get back to hope as it took to get away from it.

Emily:

But in fact his message I remember, I think we were in person listening to him speak at a conference once, that's Preston Gillham. He said, "It's just one turn back, it is just one step back into the presence of God." God's always there obviously, but for us in our experience, you just turn right around. You don't have to re-travel over the ungracious terrain. I think that's been really transformative for me, because I think about that time in our lives when your dad died, it's coming up on 10 years now, 10 years ago, is that right?

John:

Yeah, that's right.

Emily:

Wow. Ten years ago, so we were just 10 years into marriage when that ... That was really a pivotal time. I don't know that we're going to be in that space again, but there are still moments where for example, you said you listened to your body in that time and that was more of a ... It's a really extreme time of anxiety

and of grief, understandably so. I think you had a big pivot away from that, but obviously that's still a struggle that comes back, maybe not to that extent or that depth. But there are ... I mean, I just recently had an episode, our last episode before this one was, let's have some real talk about overfunctioning. I think overfunctioning is maybe a symptom of some of that anxiety similar to what you experienced back 10 years ago. But I know you still have some of that too, right? Do you want to talk with us and with the people about how overfunctioning manifests itself in your experience? Because I shared about that in the last episode about how it looks for me.

John:

Yeah. No, I think that's a great question. I have a great sense of managing my own shame and anxiety, and I think I will do anything and everything to perhaps suppress struggle and pain. So I think I'm allowing it more and I'm allowing those feelings to come, but also just allowing God to have something to say and be in the midst of that for me. So I'm not as hurried to run to something or to distract myself or to get busy doing something, I think that's the biggest thing that's different now.

Emily:

Yeah, I think that's true. I see that to be true in you. It's good, John. Are you having fun?

John:

Yeah. Yeah, it's good to be here.

Emily:

When John and I get together, we tend to go deep pretty quickly. So let me see if there's a question that someone asked. Oh, here's a question for you, John. I should probably answer this too, but I don't know if I have an answer right away. Katy asked, what was different about years one through 10 versus years 11 through 20?

John:

Oh gosh, that's a good question.

Emily:

That's a great question. Do you have an answer?

John:

Yeah. What comes to mind is that idea of the first and second half of life. Maybe I'm presumptuous to assume that here, but the first 10 years, it felt like going back to pain, it felt like pain was more suppressed, at least for me. Whereas the second half, the 10 to 20 years it seemed like pain was more stewarded. In other words, there's a greater use for pain that we felt like we could allow that to form us and guide us, and bring Jesus into that. So I don't know if you resonate with that, the difference between doing and suppressing and being and stewarding.

Emily:

Yeah, I do see that you ... I mean clearly 20 years is a lot, but it's nothing compared to how long we plan to be married. So we're still in that, but in the process I think in some ways you maybe were more suppressed in your emotional expression/life-

John:

Life, yeah. For sure.

Emily:

... in the first half of our marriage so far. Versus now yes, I think you have become, learned how to be more fully alive or emotive or not as afraid of when you get angry or sad or mad or all of those things, and learning how to say what you need and that's okay that you have needs, too. Whereas maybe the opposite has been for me, not that I'm suppressed now but I think I'm learning ... I think I sort of showed up on the scene as like this fully emotive, all the things are out. There's never been a question of how I feel about something, I just feel my way through the world. I mean, I've talked about this recently even on Instagram, is I think I felt for many years that it is not okay to be "emotional," and that feelings are fine, but you got to ... They should follow the ... They're the caboose on the train. There's the engine of your thoughts, and your thoughts and beliefs are the most important and then your feelings follow.

Emily:

While I get the point which is don't make all your decisions on how you feel about something and if you just feel like God doesn't love you, then that doesn't mean it's not true, that just means that's how you feel right now. I get the reasoning, and I think it came from maybe a good place, but I also think that advice is bad theology, and I think that advice has done a lot of damage among especially people who do feel their way through the world because it basically says, you got to change in order to grow in your faith, basically. So there's that. But I will say, I think it is important to recognize the superpower of emotionality, but also embracing that fully, the full range of emotion and feeling because you not expressing that and experiencing that cause trouble, right?

John:

Absolutely.

Emily:

But at the same time, so that's trouble. But I also think, what I'm trying to say is I have grown in understanding how to channel my deep feelings and deep emotion, and the opposite is also not "okay" or healthy of just feeling my way through life only without having the information that I get from my thoughts and from my instinct, and how all that plays into my walk with God and my relationships. So I guess I'm just saying I have learned the beautiful sacramental, I don't know the word. I've learned the journey, I'm learning on the journey of feeling deeply, and also being able to carry that in a way that doesn't throw me off the rails or cause me to spin out. I can feel but I can still be centered, and that's the work for me. It's not accessing the emotion, it's okay, here's the emotion, what is it trying to tell me. What is the message here, and then what's my next right thing based on not just the feeling, but also the information the feeling is giving me. And that's a journey right there.

John:

Yeah, and that's one of my most favorite things about you. You had mentioned that was a question that someone asked.

Emily:

Oh yeah, someone did ask me that.

John:

And I have been thinking more about that question than any other, but I do think you make bright the kingdom of God. Even all the things you just said about emotions, that is a big part of that is you

bring such life. I'm not saying the podcasting writing, but today and yesterday. You just bring so much brightness to the kingdom of God that our family benefits from, and that was without question my favorite thing about you, for sure.

Emily:

Thanks, babe. You made me cry-

John:

Sorry.

Emily:

... on the podcast. Well, I mean that means a lot because I think that that comes with a cost because it doesn't ... Whatever light you see there's a dark side to it, because the feeling deeply can be really lonely and it can be really like I wish I was more whatever, fill in the blank, or I wish I was less whatever. I think that's one of my favorite things about you and our relationship anyway, is that I never feel like you are saying that to me, like you ought to be more of something, or you need to be less of something. You just have a way of being a fixed point for me, for our family, but just as a person not even how you relate with me, it's just that's who you are when you walk in a room is I am here, I am a rock of a human. But I know you don't always feel that way, but I think that's how people experience you all the time.

John:

Well, and there's a dark side to that.

Emily:

And what is that dark side?

John:

Well, there can be an unraveling for me. And I think my journey especially with shame, that can be there. But I think for both of us, with life there's death, with lightness, there's darkness. So to not be afraid of those dark valleys that hey, actually those are the meeting places, the deep meeting places that we share and we share that with God. I mean, I think that's key.

Emily:

I think that is key. John, we've been talking for a bit, let's close it out. I'm probably going to have to have you back, and we'll have a poignant conversation-

John:

That'd be great.

Emily:

... about something funny. I'm really funny. John just doesn't fully know that yet sometimes, I think.

John:

I'm learning that.

Emily:

I'll say something hilarious and you look at me kindly. And I'm like, "No, that was funny."

John:
Yes.

Emily:
Like right now, for example.

John:
Right. And we play a game-

Emily:
Do we?

John:
... where we see people in public, and we say who does that person remind you of.

Emily:
No, we don't say that. We say oh, here comes Bill Clinton.

John:
Yes.

Emily:
You don't talk about it. But I mean, I think doesn't everybody play that game?

John:
I don't know.

Emily:
That doesn't feel like our game.

John:
We'll have to find that out.

Emily:
It feels like a universal human game.

John:
But we have laughed a lot over that.

Emily:
We have laughed a lot.

John:
And not even just the other day I was like, "Oh, here comes so and so," and before I said their name, I let you say their name. And you said the right name.

Emily:
Of course I said the right name.

John:
It was awesome.

Emily:
That's my other superpower is knowing who people look like, like the famous person people look like.
Okay, so final question. Do you have a favorite memory of the last 20 years?

John:
Oh, my gosh.

Emily:
That's an impossible question.

John:
It is, but I will say at our 10 year anniversary, it was a hard year.

Emily:
Yeah, I don't even remember it.

John:
And so we thought oh, we're going to celebrate well our 15th anniversary.

Emily:
Did we?

John:
So what we did was, you had this opportunity to attend a writer's retreat in Italy, in Tuscany.

Emily:
Oh, right. Yeah, we did do that.

John:
And spouses were invited.

Emily:
Yes.

John:
So we treated ourselves, and that was kind of ... That made up for 10 and 15 wedding anniversaries.

Emily:
That did.

John:
But I think some of those moments together in beautiful Tuscany, just man, just being I think awake to what God was saying to us, and being able to actually look you in the eye and engage with you. Boy,

that's on the top of the list of memories with you.

Emily:

Yeah, that's impossible to choose a favorite memory. I have one, and it's super specific. We knew I was pregnant with our first, and we went in for an ultrasound early because they weren't getting a heartbeat at the heartbeat appointment, and that was terrifying. So we went in for an early ultrasound, and I should have been 12, 13 weeks along according to all the things. But I wasn't, and the ultrasound person was like, "Well, I know why we didn't hear the heartbeat yet, it's because you're not as far along as we thought. And so all is well, there's a heartbeat." And she was like, "But there's not one, there's two." I remember thinking, does my baby have two heads? What-

John:

What does she mean? Yeah, that's funny.

Emily:

It did not translate. But what I remember when I finally understood she was saying we were having twins, when we finally got that, I remember you had a laugh that I don't know if I've heard that laugh since. You just started laughing and it was probably terror, it was probably joy, it was all the things, but it's like all these feelings. That was during a time when we'd been married at that point three years, two, three, early in the marriage when maybe emoting wasn't your most natural thing. But it was the most natural expression of something in that moment of like oh, we're having two human people at one time. And just, I remember that laugh that you gave in that little tiny room.

John:

Wow.

Emily:

Little tiny room.

John:

Thanks for sharing that.

Emily:

Yeah, good. Do you remember that, too?

John:

Oh yeah, absolutely. I do think there was a joy that was even beyond us that for a moment there I was able to access, and that remains today even at a different season of parenting. But I just love sharing that with you.

Emily:

Me, too. Thanks for being on the podcast.

John:

You're welcome.

Emily:

Oh, I have one more question for you. I ask everyone who comes on this question and that is, what is your

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next right thing?

John:

Oh my gosh. I think I love our town, and I think I want to have a couple little gatherings around the prodigal son story. I just want to sit with people and reflect on that story, and maybe hear what may be their version of returning home to God's love. That's something that's on my mind.

Emily:

I love it. All right. Thanks for joining me.

John:

Love you.

Emily:

Love you, too.

Thanks for listening to Episode 184 of The Next Right Thing. We didn't really talk about a practice today, but I hope you found at least one takeaway that was just for you, and that that can become one 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 our daily decisions are actually making our lives. We mention that John used to work as a youth pastor and transitioned out of that role in 2013, but we didn't mention the work that he does now. John runs a small nonprofit here in our hometown in North Carolina. It's called Grace Discipleship, and he offers soul care and spiritual direction to young couples, individuals, and people in ministry. Mostly he works hard to live an unhurried life so that he can be a non-anxious presence for others. His is a slow and hidden work, and we are all better for it. You can learn more about the work John does at Gracegreensboro.org.

As always, you can find me at emilypfreeman.com or on Instagram @emilypfreeman. We have one more episode next week before I take a short break. I can't wait to have somewhat of an extended rest, and then I can't wait to come back. In closing I wanted to read a short passage from Hannah Coulter, a novel by Wendell Berry. It's a short passage about marriage, and it seems fitting to end this episode with these words.

The room of love is another world. You go there wearing no watch, watching no clock. It is the world without end, so small that two people can hold it in their arms and yet, it is bigger than worlds on worlds. For it contains the longing of all things to be together, and to be at rest together. You come together to the day's end weary and sore, troubled and afraid. You take it all into your arms. It goes away, and there you are where giving and taking are the same, and you live a little while entirely in a gift. The words have all been said, all permissions given and you are free in the place that is the two of you together. What could be more heavenly than to have desire and satisfaction in the same room? If you want to know why even in telling of trouble and sorrow I am giving thanks, this is why.

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