



212: How to Walk Out of a Room

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 212. 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 and the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment, you are in the right place for discerning your next right thing. Today's question. What do we do when a room we've walked into is no longer the room where we belong? Listen in.

During the years 2017 till about 2019, those were years for me of learning how to walk into a room as my full self, as a fixed point, as a woman, as God's beloved, and with Shalom. Those were the years when I finished graduate school. I started this podcast. I, with my co-founders, leveled up hope*writers for membership. I co-hosted several live conferences, wrote and launched a book in a matter of 10 months from signed contract to release day. Yes, it was just 10 months. We'll talk about it later. But one of the chapters in that book, *The Next Right Thing*, is called *Walk Into a Room*, that's chapter 22. And it's an important concept that we all need to learn. Every room we walk into, we bring our own stories with us, our narratives, true or false, that we believe about ourselves, about God, about each other, about the way the world works or doesn't work.

Well, those were years where I was tasked, called even to walk into rooms that required me to show up in ways that were oftentimes out of my comfort zone. I learned how to walk into a room leaning forward, even just on the inside, even though my natural tendency is to lean back or to blend in. I learned how to bring peace with me into a room of chaos. I learned that not only can I be my full feminine, creative, authentic self in my interactions, but that I need to be, that I'm compelled to be, and it's not a liability, but a necessity.

I began to learn how to access courage to speak up even when it felt unnatural, even when there was opposition, even when I didn't want to. I learned how to walk into rooms as a leader even when I wasn't in charge. We can learn a lot about ourselves by paying attention to how we walk into rooms, both literally and metaphorically. And maybe you've been in a season of walking into different kinds of rooms, familiar rooms, new rooms, exciting or empty rooms. In some part of our life, we're always going to be walking into a room.

As important as it was and still is for me to learn how to walk into rooms as my full beloved self, what the last few years have taught me and maybe you're learning this too, is the equal importance of knowing

when and how to walk out of a room in the same way. Some rooms are not for us. Other rooms are not for us anymore. What do we do when a room we walked into is no longer the room where we belong. I know you may be hoping that I will tell you how to know if it's time to walk out of a room. And while that would be helpful, I have actually already done that. I have episodes about that already.

For example, episode 138, *Leave It Behind*; 161, *Change Your Mind*; 162, *Is It Time To Move On?*; and 174, *Is It Time To Quit My Job?* Those four episodes offer specific questions and scenarios to consider if you want help discerning if it's time to walk out of a room. For example, to pivot your vocation or release a childhood dream or move on in a relationship. But here, I want to assume you've already made that decision. And now, you're in need of some guidance about how to think about the decision you've made. How do we walk out of a room with confidence and not let regret or second guessing get the best of us? Well, I don't know really a foolproof way to do that, because I think some of those things are just a natural part of transition and of leaving something behind. But it's helpful to consider a few things and I'm going to name three of them now.

Number one, just because it's time to walk out of a room now doesn't mean it was the wrong room then. Here's something you know, but you may have forgotten. Nothing stays the same, including you. Chances are good this room once was a fit. It was a room you belonged in or felt compelled by or called to in some way, you were doing your next right thing, and your next thing led you here to this room, sit with that for a moment. Let it be true. Be a friend to your past self, refuse to hold her in judgment or shame for not knowing then what you know now. And if there were signs that maybe you ignored or if a failure to trust yourself led you here, or if you knew this wasn't right, but you did it anyway, well maybe it's time to forgive yourself for that. Look at what you've learned. Look at the wise person who you are becoming and let's carry on together.

Number two, take some time to reflect together the gifts that room had to offer and then leave the rest behind. It may be true that that room no longer fits, and maybe it's one you've already left and that's okay. It's still possible in your mind to take some time to reflect on the gifts. Maybe this room helped to shape you into the person who you are, how you see the world, who you love, and why it matters. What do you know now that you didn't know before you walked into this room? When was a time of deep gladness that you experienced there? Who are the people you got to meet as a result of being in that room? What are you going to bring forward into the world in this new stage of life? Maybe something that you received in that room that you're going to bring with you.

Finally, number three, when you walk out of one room, you don't walk into nothing. We're always leaving and entering, holding on, and letting go. The reason it often feels scary and unsettling to walk out of a room is because we only know what we're leaving, but we don't know what's waiting, but something is always waiting. If you're leaving a room you loved and that loved you, walking out can be especially painful, more so if you're leaving a room and it's not your choice to go. You know what you've lost, you know the gift that it was, and you know what you'll be missing when you're gone or maybe you're leaving a difficult room, but still no matter how difficult it was, how ill-fitting it may now seem, at least it was familiar. At least you knew what to expect there, and now you don't know anymore.

Either way, when you leave, you don't walk into nothing. What's ahead is not an empty abyss. Just like before, you will find new gifts. There will be things to learn. You may be a beginner again, but you'll also discover a strength inside that you didn't know was there or a weakness that needs to be nurtured and

respected. You may find your voice again, or for the first time, there may be people who are waiting for you to show up and they don't even know it yet, but they'll be so glad you've come. If walking out of the room is your next right thing, you will not be alone. There is no place you can go that eternal God cannot reach.

I wanted to read a reflection I wrote about walking into a room that may also apply to walking out of one. No matter what room we find ourselves in, help us to remember that because of Christ, we are free to holler with the world changers. We are free to ponder with the contemplatives. We are free to campaign with the activists and be still with the liturgist. We are free to be quiet and free to be loud. We are free to live in the center, on the side or in the back. We are free to go. We are free to stay home. We are free to linger and to leave early. We are free to dream big and free to dream small. We are free to draw boundaries and free to change our minds. There's room at the table for all of us. We are free, we are free, we are free. May this change how we walk into and out of rooms as we continue to do our next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 212 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of learning how to walk out of a room 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 online at emilypfreeman.com, where you can also find a copy of a transcript of this episode and every other episode we've ever done. You can also find me dailyish on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman, I would love to see you there.

In closing, I wanted to read some wisdom from Ecclesiastes 3.

There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to uproot. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them. A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. A time to search and a time to give up. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

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