



248: Start With Hello with Shannan Martin

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 248.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but it's 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, well, you're in the right place for discerning your next right thing.

Today, I'm glad to welcome one of my favorite writers and also one of my favorite humans. It's author Shannan Martin. She has written several books including *Falling Free*, *The Ministry of Ordinary Places*, and her most recent title is *Start With Hello and Other Simple Ways to Live As Neighbors*. And she speaks directly to that part of us that wants to reach out, wants to belong, wants to embody connection with our community in a way that's tangible, accessible, equitable, and with hearts bent toward justice. She's a mom of four, and together with her husband Cory is a glad resident of Goshen, Indiana, where she serves as a cook at The Window, a local nonprofit dedicated to feeding the community. Mostly, her writing is always reminding us that hope is alive and her work is teaching us how to see it. Listen in.

Emily:

All right, Shannan. Before we do a singular thing, let the reader understand what we're dealing with here, and that is this, that we met back in the days, the heydays of blogging when you were Flower Patch Farm Girl, and I was *Chatting At The Sky*.

Shannan:

This is true.

Emily:

Tell me the words that you need us to know about that fact, that that is how our friendship began.

Shannan:

I mean, we were babies on the internet together and we had babies during those years.

Emily:

We had babies. Yeah, we did.

Shannan:

And now we're just, here we are. We've got these big teenagers and they're going out into the world and all those things, and we're just going to chat.

Emily:
We're just going to chat.

Shannan:
Which is totally normal.

Emily:
But not at the sky-

Shannan:
No.

Emily:
... because those days are over.

Shannan:
Right. Well, and so it's important to say I am not, just like you are not *Chatting At The Sky*, I am not *Flower Patch Farm Girl*. I'm not living my farm girl life anymore, and I haven't been for about 11 years. But that's just how far back we go.

Emily:
Well, I'm glad you said that, because I've often heard you describe yourself and others describe you as a writer who found her voice in the country and her story in the city. Can you tell us what voice did you find in the country?

Shannan:
Well, that's just where I really began writing more seriously. It's where I... You know, I never set out to be a writer or an author. That was never a plan I had for my life. It was very unexpected. But there in our farmhouse, out in the middle of nowhere with little kids running around, I started that blog. And it was fun. It was a way to connect. It was a way to sort of mark down the days and the hours. But in the process of very consistently, a little aggressively, posting on that blog, I was actually, without really meaning to, I was practicing. I was practicing the art of writing.

Shannan:
And so that's just something that sort of takes time and some intention, and then you take a step back and look behind you and realize, oh, I really enjoy doing this and I'm finding my rhythm. I'm finding kind of my cadence as a writer. I'm finding what works for me. And so that's, when I say I found my voice there, I just, that's where I began to step into the fact that, oh, I am a writer. And you were one of the first people who really helped me, slash forced me, to name that, because for so long I was like, I don't know. I'm not... You know, I'm not... I write, but I'm not a writer. And I didn't feel like I was really doing the thing that made it be definable, I guess. And you were able to say, "Oh, no, you're a writer, Shannan." I will never forget that moment with you.

Emily:
When was that moment?

Shannan:
It was at Blissdom.

Emily:
Oh, okay.

Shannan:

Was that what it was? Like, at one-

Emily:

At the blogging conference.

Shannan:

Yes, it was at a conference and we were sitting in an atrium of a huge hotel. I remember... It's one of those moments that's really seared into memory, because it was a really big deal for me to have you. You know, you were a writer I really respected. We were not close friends at that point in time. We knew each other. We followed each other's work. We commented on each other's blogs. But to have a writer that I really looked up to saying, "You are a writer," gave me kind of the courage to step into that a little bit more. So thank you.

Emily:

Well, it is my pleasure. I don't know if I knew that story, Shannan.

Shannan:

Oh, well, there you go.

Emily:

Here we are, uncovering treasures.

Shannan:

Already.

Emily:

Right here, right now. Well, I'm curious. I mean, now that you've said that, you said it helped you uncover and kind of embrace that identity as a writer. What practically changed for you after that?

Shannan:

I mean, I think I just... I started writing for different sites soon after. I wasn't just writing on Shannan Martin's blog, Flower Patch Farm Girl. I was able to step into other opportunities. So then we were writing together at Encourage, and that was a huge deal for me. And then from there, not long after all of that, my family did move into the city where we still are in our neighborhood. I'm sure we'll be talking about some of that. And once I got into this phase of my life here in the neighborhood, I started to realize that not only was I a writer, but maybe I had a real story to tell. Maybe I could be an author. Maybe there was enough there for me to do that. And that's when all of that changed. I started to take more seriously the idea that maybe there was a book somewhere in me. And it turns out there was at least three.

Emily:

Three and counting. Well, I'm glad you helped me make that pivot from the voice in the country, because your story in the city is still unfolding. But I would love to hear you name some pivotal moments in your life, and in many ways, decision-discerning moments, decision-making moments that you made with your family that led you to want to write this unconventional handbook called Start With Hello for living as a neighbor, what it looks like to live as a neighbor. Are there moments that really stand out in your mind as that's where there was a fork in the road and we had to choose a path, or we had to forge our own path? Can you recall some of those pivotal moments that began to shape your story in the city?

Shannan:

Yeah. I mean, I think the most pivotal thing for us was just arriving here and going from living this very, what I thought of as a very idyllic life down this long gravel lane and with these pastures in the orchard and all the things we think of, or I should say I thought of, when I thought of what was the life I wanted to live, where did I see myself, where did I think I would be raising children. And to have that life and then to kind of pack it up and put it on the shelf and move into a very different setting where, really for the first time in my life, I was now living with people all around me, neighbors on every side of me. I had grown up in the country and this was new to me.

Shannan:

And so just arriving in this place, and it was... We knew from the beginning it was going to be a very special place. It's kind of a neighborhood that I feel like a lot of people wouldn't really give it a second thought. It's just very ordinary. It's a lower-income neighborhood. There are a lot of people coming and going and not necessarily sticking around for a long time. There are a lot of rental units. It's a very diverse, in every sense of the word, neighborhood.

Shannan:

And so to land here, no longer were we secluded and isolated. There were people all around. And I just knew I needed to figure out how to be with them. How do we do this? That was my question to myself and to anyone who could help me, was this really neon, "Now what?" How do we do this? How do we get to know each other? Why does it matter? Does it matter?

Shannan:

So answering those questions, and really now that we've been here for 11 years, I'm seeing more and more consistently within myself as I look behind me, I am not the one with the answers. I came with a lot of questions, and in so many ways, I was led and taught by my neighbors, by the people around me, that this is how we can do this. And it's not as complicated or as difficult or as scary as maybe I would've thought.

Emily:

You were compelled to move from a lot of land, and I imagine spaciousness. I never went to your house in the country, but I imagine there weren't a lot of homes nearby right next door.

Shannan:

That's right. Yeah.

Emily:

And so you were compelled at least enough, together with your husband Cory, to move to the people, where the people are. It sounds to me like you didn't exact... You knew why, but maybe not fully why or how.

Shannan:

Yeah.

Emily:

Was there a compelling spark? Or what was the, let's do this, get up and go, that caused you both to want to even make that move in the first place?

Shannan:

Yeah, I mean there were a lot of little things that built up into this big decision for us to sell that farm and go. And I wrote almost all of that down in *Falling Free*. So that's the book that really explains how we got from there to here where we are now.

Shannan:

But I can say the most compelling question for us at the time, and it happened in a way that felt pretty dramatic and also ordinary somehow at the same time, was this idea of, Cory and I were both raised in Christian homes, in Christian churches, and the through line through the Bible of love your neighbor as yourself, there was a very ordinary but very monumental moment where both of us looked at each other and kind of said, “Oh, this seems to be a really big deal.” And we’ve heard it a million times, we’ve said it a million times, we understand it with our heads, but it’s something that we have not learned to really live out with ourselves, with our bodies and our lives and our time and our money. And in part because we don’t have a lot of neighbors. We’re not in proximity with a lot of people.

Shannan:

And so it really was, as you said, Emily, it was this idea of moving to where people were, where we knew we were just going to end up in the thick of it. And that was a big decision to make without really understanding much more behind it. We weren’t making that move because of a job or because of something else that kind of dictated those circumstances. We really intentionally but sort of cluelessly moved because we wanted to be near others. And we particularly felt really captivated by the idea of living in proximity with people who would not necessarily remind us of ourselves in various ways.

Emily:

In those 11 years, Shannan, has your definition of neighbor changed at all?

Shannan:

Oh, my definition, I have just learned to stretch that word until it almost snaps. I use the word neighbor very loosely. I take it to mean, if our paths cross, we are neighbors. And I really even... I see the world from a more global perspective, so I really do think globally we are on this planet together. We are under the same sky together. We are neighbors. So I use it very broadly.

Shannan:

When I talk about neighbors, I’m typically, or even writing about neighbors, I’m typically talking about people who live nearby. I am not always talking about people who live on my block. A lot of times I am, but not necessarily. I mean, I think the definition has expanded a little bit. I’ve been really compelled over the years by the quote by Mother Teresa where she says, “The answer is to draw a wider circle,” to keep expanding that circle and to keep drawing the circle wider and wider as to who do you belong with, who should you be spending your time with. Keep drawing that circle wider. And that has been really sort of a central value to me over time. But I think what has changed the most is not so much how do I define it, but how do I live it, how do I look at it, what do I do. And so that is Start With Hello. Start With Hello is the what do I do book.

Emily:

When I’m reading Start With Hello, which I have endorsed and am pretty much obsessed with, by the way, because, here’s why, and you just said it when you said you think of your neighbor, I mean, both as the people who live on your block and also in the world in which we live, like the world, the literal world. And there are precious few writers who I think can take that large of a scope of humans and think about myself globally and also myself in a neighborhood. But you have this brilliant and beautifully poetic way of weaving us in and out of thinking big picture and tiny next right thing. It is, I mean, poetic, really, the way you do this in both this book, but also anybody who follows you on Instagram already knows that. And we get these small snippets of it in your captions, but this is a whole book of it, and I can’t wait for everyone to read it.

Emily:

But I’m curious, and you talk about, this is the what now, this is the how-to but not a how-to, because I

hesitate to say this is a how-to book. But if someone says, “But Shannan, how do I live as a neighbor?”, this is the book you hand them.

Shannan:

This is the book, and that’s why I wrote it. I wrote it because after writing about this journey, I guess, for a lack of a better word, but this idea of living as neighbors, to some degree, *Falling Free* and *The Ministry of Ordinary Places* were in that same vein. And so I’ve written these two distinct books and people were still saying to me, “I love it, and I get it, I think, but how do I do it?” I was just getting that question over and over again, and I really understand it because I would have loved for somebody to put this book in my hands 10 or 11 years ago or 20 years ago.

Shannan:

I think no matter where we are... I mean, by no means do I think the answer is that we all have to sell our house and move to a new neighborhood in order to really take up this endeavor. I think it can and it really should begin right where we are right now, whether we’re brand new to a place, whether we’ve been in our place for decades. It’s just never too late to really get serious about knowing and being known by the people who are closest to you. It is the dream, to have that connection, to have that sense of security and belonging right where you are. I think we’re all longing for that even if we don’t necessarily know it, even if we haven’t said it out loud. We are looking for that sense of peace and security and consistency in a world that just feels sideways a lot of the time.

Shannan:

So that’s why I wrote *Start With Hello*, because I wanted to break it all the way down. I wanted to give all of us, including myself, baby steps and just tangible, basic, practical ways forward.

Emily:

Each of your chapters in the book tell us how one thing is greater than or more compelling than another. And one of those is listening is greater than talking. And of course, as a spiritual director, I’m going to be drawn to that concept, because I have found listening to be one of the most transformative practices in my own life. And I have maybe a two-parter question on that. But I guess first of all, I would say, when thinking about this sort of on-the-ground, how-to, connect the dots for us between a life of attentive listening and loving and living with our neighbor.

Shannan:

Mm-hmm. I think the road towards each other begins by paying attention, and paying attention in the most literal, obvious way. And that was really new to me. That was a practice that I have learned accidentally in a lot of ways. But I started to see that as I started to listen to my actual place, listen to the sounds that are around me, the soundtrack of our lives, we all have one, and they’re all a little different. Part of my soundtrack, you might hear at some point during this podcast, because it’s a train that is very close to us and very loud, and it comes through all the time. And that is something that I know, as a mom, it’s special to me because I know that for the rest of my kids’ lives, that train, when they hear a train, that’s going to signal something down in their soul. That’s going to signal home to them.

Shannan:

And so I really think listening in that most obvious sense is where it begins. And then we can begin to make that shift. And that was one of the things that I really started to understand only when I found myself here in this place with knowing nobody. Everybody was new to me here. And I realized, for the first time, I was surrounded by people who did not necessarily look, live, or believe exactly as I do.

Shannan:

And I let myself be curious. I let myself lean into that curiosity, and I let myself really believe that not only was it okay that we all come from different places and have different beliefs, but it’s actually really

beautiful. And if I want to know and be known by these people around me, I really need to be listening to what they have to say. And I need to shut my mouth and stop talking so much, and really just sit down and listen to their lens on the world, to see the world from their perspective. That fact changed my life. I mean, it changed the way I see the world over time. It changed everything.

Emily:

You write, and this is a direct quote, I'm going to read your words to you, "Listening is the price of admission for a stable world, especially if the thought of it makes us feel antsy, guilty, or scared."

Shannan:

Mm-hmm.

Emily:

And I was struck, Shannan, by when you said, "Especially if the thought of listening makes us feel antsy, guilty, or scared." And you just described how listening changed your life, listening to those who might believe or think differently from you, who have grown up differently from you, who have a different social location. How do we find our way through that, that listening without an agenda, in a way? And is there ever a time to pick up an agenda when we are in that space of listening, listening, listening, but then the alarm bells go off because you either hit against something that you disagree with on, or that you're offended by? Help us navigate this, Shannan, in our how-to book.

Shannan:

Yeah, I came from a perspective of... and I don't know that anybody ever really... Maybe people said this with their actual voices, maybe they didn't, but I brought into adulthood this sense of a low-grade but very real fear of getting too close to difference, getting too close to something that pushed against the way I see the world or the way I believe, or my politics, or just on and on it goes. And so I brought that with me. That was part of the baggage I brought into this neighborhood, was this feeling of like, oh dear, there's a lot going on here. And even certain times when I remember being in conversation with people who I barely knew at the time, and realizing there were some really significant differences in how we see the world and how we see God. And just sinking into the feeling in the moment of, isn't this interesting?

Shannan:

Somebody once said, I don't know who it was, but "God does not change so we must." And I think we grow. Change is another word for growth. We're growing into who we're becoming and we're growing into hopefully people who can really embrace this idea of kingdom living, where we are shoulder-to-shoulder and we're rubbing against each other, we're rubbing off on each other and bringing new things into the world because of our closeness with each other.

Shannan:

But to be able to say, listening to somebody with a really different perspective does not necessarily erase my own views or my own beliefs or my own faith or my own fill-in-the-blank. We are able to carry the tension, or even to just carry the beauty of listening and offering that full dignity to the person on the other side of the table or the other person holding the coffee cup, whatever it may be, and to really listen and hear. And maybe it's going to lead to growth within us, and maybe the growth is not necessarily going to be that we change our minds or that we change our ways, but that we just see each other as more fully human together. I think either of those options are really beautiful. But if we're going to get to either one of them, we have to first be able to say we're not afraid. We're not afraid of the differences between us. We're not afraid of what the world might tell us separates us. It doesn't have to.

Emily:

Listening as an act of dignity. What an image that is for me, even in reading your words and just in being your friend. I know that sometimes you are afraid and we are afraid together. But having that not be our

knee-jerk reaction has been really transformative for me, that though there might be fear there, whether that's fear of saying the wrong thing, of looking like a dummy, of missing something that's probably obvious were I to know more, of having the wrong data, whatever the case might be, but having that fear maybe take a backseat. I mean, Elizabeth Gilbert talks about fear is still in the car, but it doesn't get to drive. When we talk about getting to know our literal neighbors, even in an example that I've heard you share, or maybe it was in the book, about there's someone on your block who you probably should know their name and it's been too long. And often we talk about, like, I've passed the point of asking. Can you say more words about that and just reassure us that it's not too late?

Shannan:

I think, and I write about this a good bit in *Start With Hello*, I think part of the work is embracing and accepting some awkwardness. We are just humans. We're busy, complicated, emotional people doing our best. We are afraid. I am still afraid. I have new neighbors moving in right this very day, and with some of my neighbors, these folks included, there's a language barrier. And so that's another layer for me of like, ugh, I don't know what to do. Who's going to write a book about this? Oh, wait.

Emily:

Uh-oh.

Shannan:

But there's going to be... There will be awkward moments. There will be awkward silences as I'm encouraging people to not only get to know the names of the people around you, but when we're able, when we see that opportunity because we are paying attention to what's happening around us, we see that opportunity to eat together, that is such a uniter of people. But there will be awkwardness that happens. I will for sure say the wrong thing. I always want to make it very clear when I talk about this, I am a deep introvert. So for anybody who thinks, "Well, that must be easy for you, Shannan Martin, but I am not an extrovert," well, I'm not either. And I wish I was, but I'm not.

Shannan:

So we have all these things that we're bringing to the table. And the example of, okay, I've lived here... I mean, I could say this for my own self. Half of what I'm writing is me preaching to myself. I've lived here now for 11 years. I know a lot of my neighbors because I have been intentional about it, but there are still plenty of people that I do not know. And there can be that feeling of, how do you walk two doors up? And they've been here for 11 years, and I've been here for 11 years, and I don't know their name. It feels so terribly awkward to think of. It's a little easier when you can be like, "Hey, you're new to the neighborhood. My name is Shannan. What's your name?" When you don't have that kind of shortcut, it can just feel like, well, maybe I'll just pass on that.

Shannan:

But I just think it's going to be awkward one time, and then you're going to get to know that person. And I always like the idea, and I try to do this with myself even, to flip that script and think, if that person were to show up at my door with cookies or just a friendly hello and say, "Hey, I should know this by now," or even, maybe possibly more awkward, "You've told me your name before a long time ago and I don't remember it, and can we do this again?" There is no part of me that would be like, oh my word, how dumb are they? I would never. I would think that is amazing. I would think they're kind of brave and cool. I would think, okay, they know they're not perfect, so maybe I don't have to be perfect either. And maybe that's just a really great place to start, is on this wobbly, awkward ground together and just kind of push through it.

Emily:

I'm so glad you said that, because so many things in life that we're learning, the unspoken part of as we're learning is like, how do I learn to be a neighbor without feeling awkward? How do I learn to, whatever the

thing is, without looking like a dummy? And I think what you're saying, correct me if I'm wrong, I wish I was, but I think what you're saying is, it's going to feel awkward.

Shannan:
Yes.

Emily:
That's actually part of it. And working to not be the avoider of the awkward is actually what starting with hello is all about, because sometimes that's awkward to start to say hello-

Shannan:
It is.

Emily:
... which is what you literally just laid out for us.

Shannan:
It is. But I think I can only say it's been awkward for me, and it's still awkward for me. Maybe there are the rare humans in the world that just do this flawlessly. I don't necessarily know them. I mean, it can be also very disarming in a really good way to just be our whole selves, to be our kind of bedhead in the morning. And I mean, because this is who we all are. We forget. We forget that everybody kind of lives in this own land of feeling like we are the most awkward person or we are the most introverted, or our house is the messiest, or we're not a very good cook. And so we could never invite somebody over for dinner. We all think we're the one. And when we begin to see in each other, oh, maybe we're all just kind of pretty similar, and maybe if we just lean into that instead of trying to be the one who appears to have it all together and who looks like it's so easy for them, I think that's just a better foundation for us to begin together.

Shannan:
That's why I say all the time, one of my favorite, favorite tips for people who are like, "but how do I get started?", or, "how do I get started again even after the pandemic?", and the pandemic is still happening, but even after we were forced to stay apart from each other, and maybe we used to be pretty good at this and now we feel kind of rusty and how do we begin again, be the one to ask for help. Be the one to ask for the egg or the rake, or can you grab my mail, or... I mean, whatever it is, being the one to show up needy and in need sets the bar at a really beautiful place.

Emily:
Well, these things starting with hello, asking for the rake, borrowing an egg, they're so desperately small, and that makes them on the one hand really accessible. On the other hand, we wonder, will this really make a difference? And we know change is slow and the change we hope for won't often, always, or sometimes, in some cases, ever be realized in our lifetime. You write, Shannan, these are your words, "The fruit of listening will not grow overnight. This is long-haul work. The shifts are sure to feel sluggish." What ultimate change, and this is big picture, what ultimate change are you most hoping to see in the world, and what role does starting with hello have to play?

Shannan:
I think if we could all get to know even four or six people around us... and when I say get to know, I don't mean you're going on your vacations with those people. I mean, I think that would be really cool. Maybe that will happen, but just knowing faces and names and breaking down that wall between us. I think if all of us did that, what I know happens from there is that it builds. And what I know is that we have this idea that other people can signal danger, when in reality, really knowing the people around us makes us safer. It's more fun. It is more full. It is richer. And when we get a taste of that, when we push ourselves through

that awkwardness or whatever it is that holds us back, and when we set the intention of, this is just a small practice that I'm going to move into, it's not something we complete in a day or a week or a month or a year... I am many, many years into this and it's still intentional work that I have to wake up and decide to do. It has changed my world. It has changed my view on the world. And so when we come towards each other, when we move towards each other, it changes everything.

Shannan:

So that's the dream I have, is that we would begin wherever we are to decide that today we are going to take that first small baby step into building a life of connection right where we are. I think most of us, like myself, we're living on streets that are flying... people are flying actual competing flags, and there's plenty of division between us, and yet here we are together. So what does it look like to be able to look at each other, and though we might disagree about certain things, to prioritize the dignity of each other and to move through the world in that way, I think it would change everything.

Emily:

Amen. I think so too. I have one final request for you, Shannan. I want you to read a portion of Start With Hello to close us out. And I'll set you up. Over the years of our friendship, we've discovered common fears, common pet peeves, but we've also discovered common loves. And one of those things that we both love are those few minutes before a band or orchestra concert when all of the instruments are warming up together and it just sounds like a mess. And you wrote about that scene in Start With Hello, and I would love it if you would close us out with that.

Shannan:

I would love to. It is my favorite, and I love that we have that in common.

Shannan:

A chorus of connection. Half of my kids play in the orchestra at school. One violin, one cello. Several times a year we get the opportunity to see them in concert. As someone not particularly musical, I'm in awe every time. There's something fancy about orchestras, even those comprised solely of seventh graders who show up, again, wearing white socks with their black concert shoes.

Shannan:

As time passes, the Martin musicians continue to grow in their art. The pieces get longer and more complex. They start moving more with the music, sailing on the current they create. I love it all. But my favorite part is the 15 seconds before a show begins. Each musician sits in their chair testing their bow and strings, tuning their instrument. They're playing different notes at different tempos, but they're playing with conviction. Soon, everything will come together, but first it's a cacophony, musical chaos. Then there's the pause. They sit a little straighter. The conductor's baton lifts. The chaos converges into a unified song.

Shannan:

We don't have the symphony without first having the dissonance. When I'm emotionally healthy enough to locate hope in the soup of humanity, I'm inclined to believe it arrives not as a monologue, but as a song. You'll sing your part, I'll sing mine. With time and persistence, our notes will build and blend into something beautiful. Here's to being quiet enough to listen, awake enough to see, curious enough to hope, and bold enough to believe it's our business.

Emily:

Amen. Thank you, Shannan.

Shannan:

Thank you.

Thanks for listening to episode 248 of The Next Right Thing.

I hope this simple practice of starting with hello 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 our daily decisions are actually making our lives.

To learn more about Shannan and to learn how to start with hello, pick up a copy of this practical field guide wherever books are sold. It's available now. You can also find Shannan online at shannanmartin.com and on Instagram, a favorite, where she shares street-level practices and real talk storytelling on the regular, always mixed in with a healthy dose of compelling photos from around her neighborhood, reminding us what it means to be embedded and embodied in our own hometowns.

So many of us have been reading Shannan's work for years, raising *My hand*, and I know you're going to love and adore this newest book of hers, *Start With Hello*. Again, it's available now, and I hope you'll grab a copy. Especially if you ever expect to read it, and if your resources allow, go ahead and buy a copy now. It's so helpful for authors when people buy our books, when they buy our books close to the time when they come out. I can't tell you how much it means just personally as an author when we see that support of people actually showing up and getting those books. But also from a publishing perspective, it lets retailers know that this is a book that people want to buy.

Now, I have said that, and I know that some of you may not be able to buy a book or to put money towards books at all. Checking out the book at your library is also helpful for authors. Libraries are so important for our communities, and showing up there and requesting it if your library doesn't carry it, well, that's one small way you can, number one, get the book into more people's hands, and number two, support one of your favorite authors, and I hope you will.

Well, as always, you can find me on Instagram at [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman) and online at emilypfreeman.com, where you can also find a transcript of this and every episode, thanks to Leah Jarvis who does our transcripts and our show notes, and also thanks and a shoutout to the team at Unmutable, who edits our audio every single week.

Well, in closing, I want to leave you with a few of Shannan's words from *Start With Hello*. It's from her chapter called *Awake Is Greater Than Asleep*.

“Without some real intention, it wouldn't cross my mind to carry my relational scraps out into the world. Immersed in familiarity and sameness, I wouldn't know what I was missing. The swirling seas of contrast and creativity. I would miss out on that inexplicable ta-da feeling that lands when I meet someone who challenges my tired ideas, making me feel hyper-alive. If I allowed myself to operate from a mine-first mentality, my family, my home, my preferred social cliques, I would collapse each evening in a heap of fleece and tortilla chip crumbs, certain my time and bandwidth were exhausted by the daily grind, nothing left over to give. I'm a big fan of the fleece and crumbs liturgy, and nothing will change that. But I have more capacity than I often think I do. When we orient our identities around community, the all in this together, we see there's enough for everyone, enough time, enough attention, even for me. This doesn't mean abandoning the duties and loves of my life. It means being thoughtfully aware that a connected life offers abundantly more.”

Thank you for those words, Shannan. Thank you for teaching us how to start with hello. May it be so in us and around us. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.