



255: Ask Emily Anything! Celebrating 20 Million

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to the Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 255. 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're in the right place for discerning your next right thing. Well, it took 255 episodes and also five years, but we've hit another milestone here at the Next Right Thing podcast. As of last week, we now have 20 million total downloads of this podcast, and I couldn't be more grateful, seriously. Just saying 20 million downloads, it sounds like I'm making up that number, like I'm a 10 year old, but here we are. I can't believe it. What is this life? To celebrate, I'm answering your questions this week and wow, are they good ones. Maybe my favorite collection of questions ever. Listen in.

Now, typically these episodes are fairly thought through. I either have a robust outline or a full out script. When I have a guest, I always think through the conversation flow, I know where I want to end up and I'll have at least five questions prepared to ask with room for meandering in natural conversation. And then there are those few episodes where I allow a bit more freedom in conversation, even when it's just me talking and you listening and things aren't quite so planned out. And that's today's episode. I'm using your questions, when I put a question box up on Instagram last week, I'm using those as my outline and I'll be responding to some of the things that you want to know. Now, obviously I can't get to all the questions, I wish I could. A few of them were probably questions I wouldn't answer here anyway, but for the most part they were wonderful questions and I would love to get to as many of them as I can. But I'll start with the ones repeated most often. There were maybe four-ish questions that a lot of people asked in different ways, and so I'll start there and I'll also just say the repeated questions and the other ones too, but they are such evidence of the kindness of this listening audience.

So starting with, so many people wanted to know how are the twins? How are you with an almost empty nest? So if you're new here, John and I have twins who are 18, almost 19. They are both freshman in college, almost done with their first semester, and then we have a 10th grader still at home. I just said yesterday that I can hardly believe that two of them have already left the house. I think I'm still waiting for that to change and for us to get real busy again with band practice and football games and all of those things. But that's not going to happen, those days are kind of passed for us.

Our son is not in the band. And so from sixth grade till 10th grade, one of the twins was in the band and I was a band mom. And that's one of the things that's different now. But big picture, I'll just say, they're doing great. They're thriving, they're experiencing all the things that... All the questions that you might experience when you go off to college, figuring out how to be a sort of grownup and we're really, really proud of them. And then as for us, I'll say that again, I think we're doing really well. I've shared this before, maybe even on the podcast, but I think watching them, and so many of our teenagers go through

the COVID-19 years, where they had to school at home. Our twins were in the 11th grade during that time, and it was such a difficult year that I think by the time they got to their senior year and now in college, I'm just so deeply grateful that it's "normal" and haven't been a lot of disruptions that has taken the place of my what could have been a deep, deep sadness.

Now I just feel a deep gratitude. Not to say there aren't moments of sadness and things that I miss, there are. And I think those things will continue, but for the most part we're just really grateful and I thank you for asking.

Another question that was repeated a lot was questions about spiritual direction, either how to find one. If I have room for directees, how I decided to become a spiritual director. Lots of questions around spiritual direction. A couple resources I'll point you to right at the top. If you are wondering what is a spiritual director, how is a spiritual director from a pastor, a counselor, a mentor, any other role? I have an entire episode, episode 167, Spiritual Direction for Beginners that could be helpful for you. I also have another episode 178, How to Find a Spiritual Director. So that's 167 and 178.

If you want to do somewhat of a deep dive into spiritual direction and my sort of pulled from definitions and explanations for the practice. But the two questions those episodes won't answer is if I have space for new directees and how I decided to become a spiritual director myself. Well, the first one's easy. I don't currently have capacity to take on any more directees, but when I do, you'll be the first to know. And I'll say you, meaning you who are subscribed to my monthly letter. I probably won't put it out on the podcast ever, but if you go to emilypfreeman.com/letter, that's where I put out all first word news, including when and if I have new capacity in 2023 to receive new directees. But the second part of that question, how I decided to become a spiritual director, when I recorded those two episodes, I just mentioned 167 and 178.

I was not accepting directees at that time, and I did earlier this year, started to do that and have begun practicing in a more formal way. But I'll say it's been about a decade that I have been learning about and sort of stepping into the posture of a spiritual director. And it's one of those things combined with seeing my own spiritual director for the last eight and a half years, that has been a practice that has been probably one of the most transformative practices in my life. Being listened to, having someone hold prayerful space for me while I discern and discover how God is moving in my life through all types of life change and personal development, parenting, all of the things that has been such a gift for me in my own life. So seeing that type of transformation in my own life, that's something that has been so meaningful, which gave the practice a lot of value to me.

But I will say back in 2011, John went to Colorado to do a week long training with Dr. Larry Crabb. Now that training was not to become a spiritual director, but it was to learn how to be a person who listens, how to have conversations that matter, not in a formal way but just in a conversational, we are humans together kind of way. And that set off a series of events over many, many years where I eventually also did some training with Dr. Larry Crab, and we continued to read all the books and have all the conversations and recognized something in this practice that felt like coming home. And I would just encourage anyone who is discerning your own vocation to pay attention to those places and spaces that feel like you have come back to a place that maybe you had once been before, even if you really hadn't been there before.

A friend of mine who is also a spiritual director, says it this way, Phil Anderson, "It's a wild and wonderful thing to bump into someone and realize it's you." And I think that that is sort of what's happened for me in the practice of spiritual direction. And so my journey to this role or to this space maybe hasn't looked traditional. In fact, in some ways here for the last five years on this podcast, I have practiced spiritual direction even though not in a traditional way, but I have tried on that posture a lot. And I think being a trained listener, both as a spiritual director as well as a sign language interpreter so many years ago. Has informed so much of my person, my work, my writing, and so much more. So stay tuned. I'll keep you updated as things change or if slots open up for me to have more directees than I currently have.

But I thank you for asking and it's always a joy to talk about spiritual direction and to have spiritual direction postured conversations. Another question I got a lot again, said in several different ways, but all kind of asking the same thing. And that was about whether or not I had ever experienced a shaky faith. How I moved through it, and what are my thoughts about deconstruction and deconstruction of faith? First of all, I will say of course I've experienced a shaky faith. I experienced that on a weekly basis. How do I move through it? Just like anything else, doing the next right thing. And I know that might sound super branded, but listen, there's a reason why I have a podcast and a book called *The Next Right Thing*. It didn't happen backwards where I started a thing and then began to live that out.

First, it was a living out and then a recognizing and a naming of it after the fact. Doing the next right thing has saved my life over and over and over again. Specifically and maybe even most importantly in the last several years of parenting, of navigating and discerning when it was time to stay in particular spaces, groups, and when it was time to leave those spaces or groups or communities. And that is something that is deeply personal for each of us. And I don't know that we can put parameters, timetables, or expectations on them. And that includes when someone close to you, maybe is experiencing some sort of deconstruction in their faith, whether that's a disentangling or a long period of doubt or a long wilderness space, or even a desert space where you're wondering and questioning all these things I always thought were true, or all these ways that I thought... Things that I still believe, but I thought they played out in particular ways.

And I'm realizing maybe they don't, that can be so deeply disorienting. And I've experienced a lot of that myself. I'll have more to say about this in the future, but for now I'll just say I don't think we have to be so afraid of it. Words have a lot of power, and I think when we hear that word deconstruction, just like when we hear the word Christian. They come with a lot of preconceived ideas and experiences and narratives for better or worse. But as we look at our own experience and as we walk with God in ways that we are able to do in this moment, I really believe that in the end, God is big enough and wide enough, loving and intuitive enough to allow us a lot of space to have big questions, to have large doubts, and to feel nothing in our faith many times or to have big feelings of anger or sadness or fear.

God can handle all of those things and we need not be concerned that we are going to be in trouble if we experience a shakiness in our faith. I would say that's not something to be alarmed about. In fact, I would say that is the normative experience for someone who is believing and working to trust in a God we can't see with our two eyes in ways that we're used to seeing things. Of course, we're going to have doubts. Of course, we're going to experience some shakiness. And depending on what's happening in our life, in the world around us, the world within us, those times are going to come and go and maybe they'll come often. But I hope that you can find... Sometimes you have to find new voices and new spaces to express those doubts and those fears and those reevaluations. I hope this can be one of those spaces for you.

So thank you for asking the question. And again, I hope to have more conversations about this in the future. Another question, and these are the four questions that were asked the most about parenting, about spiritual direction, about a shaky faith. And then number four, a lot of people asked about hope*writers and it's an online membership community for writers that I was a part of and help to start, seven years ago. And people asked, why'd you leave and what's next? And are you super sad? And lots of lovely, kind questions. And I'll say that this was a company that had three visionaries and we built something together with a really lovely and incredible team. Over time, it just became clear for me that if I ever wanted to write again or do anything that required any deep work at all, that I wouldn't be able to run a business full time.

And so the truth is, when we start things, we don't ever know where they will end up, how they will unfold, who we'll meet along the way, what things might get in the way, what obstacles we'll face, or

what versions of ourself we will become and also un-become. And so for me, with hope*writers, I had to look at what was and hold it and ask myself, does this still fit? I did that for many years with hope*writers. I do it for a lot of things in my life. And for this one, it became very clear over time that the time is coming and approaching for us to make a change. And so I'll say co-running this company was one of the greatest gifts and greatest challenges of my professional life. I learned how to manage a team there. I learned how to show up at the table as myself.

I learned how to compromise when vision conflicted. I learned how to solve problems with a team. All normal, wonderful things to do when you are running a company. I love talking with writers about writing. I think I'm really good at it actually. But just because you're good at something, you've heard me say it before, it doesn't mean you have to do it forever. And the truth is, if you try to do it forever, that might be keeping you from a different, more fitting work down the road. So I'm doing great actually now that I have publicly announced my exit from hope*writers, I wish them well, but it is definitely my next right thing to move on to something else, and I really look forward to what that might be. Well along those lines, Morgan asked, "Now that you've started, built and now sold a successful online business, what do you wish you would've known as a fresh, first time entrepreneur?"

Great question, Morgan. Here's what I'd say. I wish I would've known I was a fresh, first time entrepreneur. I did not really look at our online business as a business for several years. It felt like a hobby, felt like something we did on the side. We started in 2015, and I would say we probably only got pretty serious about it in 2018. We were serious about it, but maybe we only started treating it as a business in 2018. If I was starting over again, I would trust my gut faster. I would hire help earlier and I would have personal goals and parameters around where that particular business fits in with my other work in life. And those are just things that sometimes you can't know in advance, but after the fact. So since I now have the luxury of an after the fact, I think those are some of the things that I would say someone else asked.

How much external help do you rely on paid, unpaid, personal and professional? Great question. Well, first of all, my biggest help in all of this work is John having a partner who understands the work that I do, who values it, who supports it, who makes dinner, y'all, John makes the dinner. Can we just for a moment, I try to remain quiet about that sometimes because it's so wonderful and I sometimes feel like I'm the luckiest, so I try not to rub that in. But it is a wonderful gift to know that for the most part, five out of seven days the week, he's the one doing the dinner. So that is one example of the many, many ways that John supports this work. And I couldn't do at least the amount of work that I do without that support. I'll also say I have an executive assistant.

Many of you have come into contact with Ginna. She and I have been working together now for three years. Her official title right now is executive assistant, but in reality, she's also my bookkeeper and she's also my project manager. And probably in 2023, we're going to untangle some of those roles and get a little bit more clear on the work she's doing. And then to be honest, we're probably going to have to hire in 2023 for a few more roles. Note to the listener, I promise I will tell you when that happens. I love you. I think you're amazing. Please don't send me your resume. I'm not hiring right now, but I will let you know when I am. Again, that will probably not come through the podcast. Maybe it will, but probably not. It will be probably sent out to my newsletter subscribers first, emilypfreeman.com/letter. And we'll see, maybe it'll show up on Instagram as well.

But again, I'm not hiring, but I will be so stay tuned. A few more team members I have that work here and there when I needed. I have Leah Jarvis who does our show notes, who helps me sometimes with some of my podcast related things on Instagram. She's fantastic and wonderful. Also, praise the actual Lord, I no longer edit my own episodes, which I did for the first two years of having a podcast. But my friend Kam over at Immutable does that and sometimes other members of the team do that. They are wonderfully reliable and I couldn't do this work without them. And then also I have a designer I sometimes call on to

do lovely graphics and she basically, I'll say, words, words color, and she will be like, "Yep, got it." And she just can read my mind. Her name is Karla and she's fantastic.

And then like I said, I will be looking at the needs of the team in the new year, and discerning what do we need moving forward. So I'll keep you posted on that. Well Sarah asks, "Does asking yourself what's the next right thing ever feel draining or get in the way of being present?" What a great question. And I could see how that could be a thing if someone was more future oriented, always asking, what's next? What's next? What's next? For me, I have an orientation to the past, and so asking the next right thing for me is both helpful in keeping me moving forward and not getting stuck in memory, regret, sentiment. So that's helpful for me in that one way. And also it helps me to keep things on just the next right thing and not rushing way ahead to the future. I'm nothing if not focused on the extremes.

So I'm either stuck in the past or I go way too far ahead. So that question for me has been a grounding and helpful question to help me stay present because I'm not looking too far down the road. I'll also say that a couple weeks ago I had Suzanne Stabile to be on the podcast and not to get too far into the weeds with the Enneagram. But if you haven't listened to that episode, there's a part of that episode that was so helpful for me. She was talking about the three centers of intelligence, thinking, feeling, and doing. We all have a dominant, we all have a supportive and we all have a repressed center. For me, my repress center is doing. And so the question, what is the next right thing, helps me think using my support center about what my next action, my repress center, could be.

Because the reality is I lead with my heart, I lead with my feelings. And if I allow my feelings to determine my actions all the time, sometimes I'll be acting in great congruence with reality and with what I most deeply want, but sometimes I will be reacting in a way that upon second thought, third thought is maybe something that I will later wish I had thought through a little bit more. And so the question, the next right thing, has been uniquely grounding for me as someone who's doing repressed because it's not that I don't do, I do things all the time. But it's that my doing is often unproductive or not the thing that needs to be done in the moment it needs to be done. And so asking, "Emily, what is just the next right thing in this moment, the next deeply right thing?"

Sometimes it's brushing my teeth, y'all. And that is a deeply helpful practice for me. Speaking of decision making, someone else asked the question, "In the last few years, what's your most favorite decision that you've made?" First of all, this is a favorite question. What a great question to ask. And I'll say something that has been so helpful for me in answering this question is the Next Right Thing Guided Journal. Many of you may know in January of '21, we released a way to work through a lot of the questions and practices introduced in the Next Right Thing book. Well, a year later, the journal comes out and that journal has been so helpful for me in discerning my own next right things in celebrating things that help me come most fully alive in naming and recording things that are life draining for me. And they've helped for me to identify arrows to my next right thing and then actions that I need to take on a monthly basis. So this very month, in fact this very week, I am finishing up my second Next Right Thing Guided Journal. So that is actually one of my most favorite decisions I've made in the last few years, was creating and then using the journal I created because it's helped me access my repress center of action. It's helped me think through the decisions that I need to make, want to make, have been avoiding. And it's helped me be a little bit more aware of and awake to the things that are the most helpful actions for me to take in my life and the most generative actions and things that are most aligned with who I most deeply am and becoming. A second decision that's been a favorite decision is buying our mountain house. If you follow me on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman, then you've probably seen a [inaudible 00:23:16] tours we've done.

We sold our Greensboro workhouse that we had for five years. That was such a gift and was a wonderful meeting space for friends, family, and also was a place where I wrote several of my books, several other friends wrote their books there. It was a great brainstorming house, it was a wonderful space. But we found the place in the mountains, just a few houses down from where my sister and her family recently

moved and we bought that thing up, y'all. And listen, it has been such a gift. It's a lot of house and so we are working our way doing some, not tearing down walls or anything, but we've been doing some painting and trying to work through the house one room at a time in order to make it home, in order to dream about... We know how we used our Greensboro workhouse.

We don't have that house anymore. We used it daily, weekly. The mountain house is a bit of a drive, so we can't use it daily. So how might this new season of life look different and how might that now inform how we inhabit, use, bless with this mountain house. So to be continued there, but that has been a real favorite decision. Speaking of my sister, someone asked, which I get this question every now and then, if I feel anxious whenever my sister comes to my house and I'm assuming what they mean by this is. So my sister goes by The Nester online, her name is Myquillyn Smith and she has written several home decor books and she basically helps us create the home we've always wanted with the stuff we have right now. And she has these wonderful principles that help us know not only how to make a room beautiful, but why, almost math-like.

Why the room that we are standing in, we know something's wrong, but we don't know what it is. She helps us to recognize name and then fix it. And again, she wouldn't say that something's wrong in this room, it doesn't look right. It's more like, if I'm in a room of my own house and I'm like, something doesn't feel right in this room for me. She helps you identify what that is or what it could be and then to make it lovely and to move things around in such a way that makes sense in the room. And so the question, do I ever feel anxious when my sister comes to my house? I'm assuming is implying that because she is a house person, because she sees the world through house colored classes that maybe I feel nervous or judged by her being in my own house.

And the answer is absolutely not. I love when my sister comes over, I never feel weird about it. Remember, she was my sister first. So we shared a bed together in elementary school. We have been through all the things together. And so she's been doing this whole life. Her room always looked better than mine, if you want to know the truth. We have different styles, but we have very complimentary styles and I enjoy every bit about her home and I trust and believe that she enjoys every bit about mine. And so it's definitely really fun when my sister comes. I ask her advice all the time, she asks mine too. She's definitely the expert and it's always fun to see her brilliance come out when she starts to talk home stuff. I love it. I love it when she visits and I never feel anxious about it. Absolutely not.

This is a fun question I get every now and then, someone asked if I'm Catholic. The answer is no, I'm not Catholic. I have a great respect for a lot of Catholic writers and thinkers. Henri Nouwen, St. Theresa, [inaudible 00:26:29], Thomas Merton, modern day Ronald Rolheiser. My friend Seth and Amber Haynes are Catholic, another Catholic writer I follow on Instagram, Shannon Kay Evans. So I could see maybe why you might think it. I have, like I said, a deep respect for that faith tradition but I am not myself Catholic. I'm also not a Latter Day Saint. There is another writer, Emily Freeman, Emily Belle Freeman. She is delightful. I have met her in person many years ago. I've also gotten her mail. I've gotten some of her messages on Facebook, people confusing us. But she is a different person and I am a different person though we do have the same name.

That's another question. Sometimes people think we're the same person and we're not. We're two different people so there you go. Christine asked if I could host another podcast about anything, what would I talk about or teach? Well, this is a fun question. The first thing that came to mind is unconventional leadership, how to lead when you're not in charge. But that word leadership, like we talked about just the word deconstruction, the word Christian. I think the word leadership has a lot of connotations as well. So maybe I would work to redefine it and maybe come at it from a different perspective. Also, the idea of how to be a maker in a manager world. That's something else that I really resonate with and also love talking about. Listen, if y'all start asking me ideas about things, I will have them forever. Having ideas is never the problem, it's having the time.

So we're going to move forward. But I do have lots of ideas for not just other podcasts. And listen, I'm not starting another podcast right now, but I always have ideas for things so that's something.

Someone else asked about parenting young adults. And I love the directive she was like, talk us through

it. Talk us through parenting young adults. Well listen, I'm a brand new infant baby, having young adults. The twins are 18, almost 19. And to be honest with you, full disclosure, parenting is not something I talk about much at all. There are lots of reasons for this, mostly being that I just have to choose a lane and I try not to just talk about all the things. I try to talk about those things that I maybe feel specifically equipped to talk about, practiced in. Now, yes, I'm practiced in parenting, but y'all, parenting is so personal.

It really is. And it changes all the time. And anyone who kind of gives parenting advice, I have a lot of respect for. I also am never going to be that person just because I've been hurt by a lot of parenting advice to be quite honest with you. And so I really try not to give it. Every kid is so individual and needs things from us that are unique to them and unique to your family dynamic. So again, I try not to go there much. But after all that, I will say it has been a great joy watching our kids grow up. There's been a lot of heartbreak, there's been a lot of things I wish I would've done differently. But one of the things that John and I both are working to practice is having great kindness and compassion with ourselves and also being relentlessly interested in what our kids are interested in.

That has been probably one of my favorite pieces of parenting advice is to be obsessed with what they're obsessed with as much as you are able. It opens the door for conversation, for connection. And those are conversations that you might not ever have chosen or had if you hadn't actively become interested in the things that interest them. And maybe that's even more true now that they're not living under our roof really very much anymore since they're at college. It has been really fun to hear as much as they're willing to share about their own things they're learning and things that they're into. So there's my advice be into what they're into. Another question that came up in various ways was many of you are grieving the loss of a community, whether that's faith community, connections with family, losing particular friendships and not understanding what happened.

And I have so much compassion for this and I can relate with so much of it. And I guess what I'd say to that, three things off the top of my head, one is it's helpful for me to list the gifts anyway, the things that I received from that friend or that community. To list them out, to look at them, to hold them up in the light and be grateful for the person I am that I wouldn't be if it weren't for that community or that person. But equally important I think, is to grieve the losses, which is to maybe even write down as well. We're used to counting the gifts sometimes we're not as used to or comfortable with counting the losses, but for me, I have found this to be equally helpful, is to write them down and really put language to the loss so that we can grieve it.

And finally, I would say don't let the end define the whole story. A lot of communities and friendships we begin because they're going great and we're drawn to them and they're beautiful. And the reason why it's so painful is because there was a time when it was lovely and we long to have that back. And so the ending, especially if it ended badly, that's something to grieve but that's not the whole story. And the person who you now are is probably much thanks to some parts of that community or some parts of that person from before. So trying not to throw it all out as a waste when there may have been something you can hold onto moving forward, may or may not be helpful. Take what's helpful and leave the rest behind. Fun question Laura asked, what fiction and nonfiction book has had the biggest impact on you creatively?

Laura, I shake my fist at you. This is an impossible question. The word biggest is the part that I don't love, but I will give three. Fiction Jayber Crow By Wendell Berry, in keeping with my lifelong quest to learn all I can about smallness and also the lure of success and fame, something I'm just really interested in. I'm always reading about those two things. This book is a must read and the way of downward mobility is often despised by so many of us. And so this book did take me a while to finish. Full disclosure, I'm slow. It's a really... It's a long book, but it burrowed its way into my soul and informed my life probably more than any other fiction book I've read in many years. That's Jayber Crow By Wendell Berry. Nonfiction, I am completely cliché about it and I don't even care. It's Walking on Water by Madeleine L'Engle. I came to Madeleine later in life after I'd already maybe

written one book. Now I did read some of her fiction when I was a kid, but I didn't fully appreciate it or latch onto her voice until *Walking on Water*. And that book on faith and art has really deeply informed my own work and I'm so grateful that she wrote it. Then finally, I'll share a memoir. You didn't ask Laura, but I'm going to share it anyway. Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*. That story held onto me and just hasn't let go yet. She allows us as the reader to crawl inside her grief after her husband suddenly died in front of her. I knew it would be a sad story. I didn't expect how difficult it would be for me to put it down and it was. So the journey of that book was something I haven't quickly forgotten *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion.

Jamie asked if I have a favorite poet. Well, if you've listened to this podcast very long, you might know it's a current tie between Pádraig Ó Tuama and John O'Donohue. I have a thing for the Irish. Kathleen asked, who are my most profound teachers in 2022? What a lovely question. So many wonderful teachers in 2022, but the most profound are probably my own kids and my spiritual director. Final question, Katie asked, "Emily, what is your next right thing?" Well, I appreciate the question, Katie, since it is one that I ask everyone at the end of an episode and to speak very literally, my next right thing in the next, let's say week or so, fingers crossed, is releasing the Quiet Collection for Christmas version 2022. This is something I've been doing now and hopefully you have listened to it for five years.

We started in 2017 and I sold one version of it for like three years, 17, 18 and 19. And then when 2020 came and we all lived through it, I created a brand new version for 2020 and realized this is something I want to create new every year as long as I'm able. So the 2022 version is ready. It is not ready to release yet, but the actual art of it, the content is all ready to go. We're still working out some of the final details for getting it from our side into your ears, and that is hopefully going to come very soon. And we've worked longer on this version. It's been months and months of work longer than we've ever worked on the Quiet Collection before. Soon you'll see why, and I can't wait to share that with you, but that is my next right thing that I'm both deeply humbled to be able to companion you through the Christmas season, and I'm really looking forward to sharing that.

I may have not said, the Quiet Collection for Christmas is a 10 day audio devotional series, reflections on the story of the incarnation of Christ. So if every other solitary advent intention flies out the window and you get really behind on your advent reading, or even if you want to supplement your advent reading with me reading the story to you with some personal reflection and lots of thoughtful questions to ask you along the way, then I hope that you will get the Quiet Collection for Christmas, either for yourself or as a gift. We've tried to make it very easy for you to gift it. That's coming soon. I hope you'll enjoy it. Well, that's all I have. I want to thank you for being the kind of community who asks thoughtful questions and sticks around to hear the answers. It's a gift to hold space for someone as they answer questions and I thank you for holding space for me.

Thanks for listening to episode 255 of *The Next Right Thing*. I've loved this simple practice of taking your questions and giving some answers or at least saying some words in response. As always, you can find me online at emilypfreeman.com or on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman, where a lot of these episodes often begin with an image question or fun conversation in the comments. And thanks for celebrating 20 million total downloads with me this week. We've got good things to come next week with the release of the Quiet Collection for Christmas. You might be wondering why it's not out yet, last year we released it really early on Black Friday. Man, we don't want to do that again. Black Friday does not play, y'all. So this year we're giving ourselves a little bit more room for release, so we're not having to work during the holiday weekend, but worry not, it's coming. We're doing some final testing, as I said before, and it will be available until December 16th.

So again, stay tuned. emilypfreeman.com/letter is where you can get first word news, but we'll also be sharing it in all the places, including here on the podcast when it's ready. But mostly I just want to say

thank you so much for listening not only today, but for the 20 million downloads that have been listened to by you. I am grateful and honored that you would trust me in your ears. Thank you for being part of this Next Right thing community. It has been and continues to be a real gift in my own life and I hope in yours as well. Well, in closing, I'm going to share a few words from one of my favorite poets, John O'Donohue. A portion of his blessing called For Light.

Light cannot see inside things. That is what the dark is for. Minding the interior, nurturing the draw of growth through places where death in its own way turns into life.

And the glare of neon times let our eyes not be worn by surfaces that shine with hunger made attractive. That our thoughts may be true light finding their way into words which have the weight of shadow to hold the layers of truth. That we never place our trust in minds claimed by empty light, where one sided certainties are driven by false desire. When we look into the heart, may our eyes have the kindness and reverence of candlelight.

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