



## 295: How to Walk Into a Room

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 295. I'm an author, a spiritual director, and an occasional workshop leader. I live in the Piedmont of North Carolina with my family, and through my work I've helped thousands of spiritually thoughtful people overcome decision fatigue so that they can discern their next right thing in faith, work, and life.

You are enjoying this podcast ad free because of the generous support of subscribers to The Soul Minimalist on Substack. You can learn more and subscribe at [emilypfreeman.substack.com](http://emilypfreeman.substack.com), and it's where we'll continue the conversation that we begin here about discernment and decision-making for anyone who wants to move beyond the pro, con list.

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, today I'm sharing about one of my next right things. It's exciting news about my next book. You heard that right. I wrote another book, and I'll share all about it in today's episode. Listen in.

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In the winter of 2022, I finally had some margin to begin to consider an idea that had been swirling in my mind for a few years. I scheduled a date on the calendar to get away for the night so that I could walk around in this idea for a little while, see what more it might have to say when it wasn't rushed or squeezed into the cracks of my daily schedule. And by the way, I do mean cracks, as my daily schedule at that time had been packed for quite some time. The Next Right Thing book had released in the spring of 2019, and that, by the way, was based on the first 30 or so episodes of this podcast. I thought that spring of 2019 would usher in a season of less, as the two years prior to that had been filled with grad school, building the podcast, co-running an online writing community, and of course launching the book.

Once the book was released and grad school was over, I thought margin would sweep over me like a slow wave. But when the pandemic hit less than a year later, business really took off with hope\*writers. My days were filled with managing people, attending team meetings, troubleshooting issues, vision casting for the business, and responding to Voxer messages, so many Voxer messages. It was good work, but it was no longer creative work, and I was longing to get back to my maker ways.

And so Winter 2022 brought a bit of a respite as I was able to delegate a lot of my more manager responsibilities, and that finally afforded me the time to explore this shimmery new book idea. Well, explore I did, dear listener, and what I learned was that idea, though a good one I think, wasn't quite fully formed and needed time to sit in the dark and grow some roots. I'm talking it needed years of time, and to be honest I was discouraged, but I decided that the idea was worth the wait, so I continued to work on it here and there with the understanding that it was going to be a while. Sometimes that's how things go. Even though you're ready, it isn't quite time.

Meanwhile, I had a lot of words to say about something else, something I found myself doing, quite honestly, a little bit more than I liked, and something I knew a lot of you were doing as well. It all circled around this question, what do we do when a room we're in is no longer a room where we belong? Over the years, I've heard so many of you asking that question, and then often unspoken but lingering just beneath the service of that question, were these, how do we know if it's time to move on? What if I stay and nothing changes? Or what if I leave and everything falls apart?

I've asked these questions myself in several areas of my own life, both personal and professional. I know I'm not alone. Whether an ideological room, like a political party, a faith community, or a personal belief system, or a physical room, a workroom, a classroom or a home, I want to help people discern the how, when, and what now of leaving rooms and finding new ones. As I've done this myself, I've been grateful to discover that this life of reflection that we talk so much about here, these decision-making practices that we engage in, this next right thing posture that has become our habit, well, all that actually makes a difference in the face of big, potentially heartbreaking, or seemingly life-altering decisions. Especially when it means we may have to make a change about a space that perhaps we never imagined we would have to make a change in.

The reality is that the work of discernment is layered. The road is often long and sometimes dark, and even just the next right thing is not always easy to define. And so the more I paid attention to what I was thinking about and writing about during the winter and early spring of 2022, the more I realized I had some things to say about staying and about leaving, about navigating endings when there's no closure, about how to read the rooms of your life with wisdom and grace, about how to walk the line between staying quiet and raising hell. And so in the spring of 2022, I named that it was time to write all this out, even though I wasn't sure I was ready. Sometimes that's how things go. Even though you don't feel ready, it may still be time.

And so I'll skip over some of the behind the scenes publishing details to let you just know that a little over a year ago, actually on the day Queen Elizabeth was laid to her final rest, after meeting with many different publishers and receiving six offers to publish, I chose HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins, as my next publishing partner. The title of our next book, *How to Walk into a Room: The Art of Knowing When to Stay and When to Walk Away*. It will release in March, and it's available to pre-order at your favorite retailer right now. If you're standing in a threshold, this book offers a framework for knowing when it's good to stay and when it's time to move on, because these are things we've all been forced to practice, but maybe we've never properly learned how to leave, how to wait, and how to start again. In an effort to make it through, some have left too soon, walking all the way out, leaving everything behind without a look back. Others left on time, but they didn't have a framework for reflection or support to know how to walk into the rooms that were waiting for them. Still others were forced to leave even though they wanted to stay, and now they're left asking, what now? And then there are those who stayed but might be wondering how to make peace with the change or if they should have left, too.

When it comes to making big decisions about when to stay and go, we've all had a lot of practice, but we still question our place and wonder, are we doing this right? For anyone who knows or thinks they know, their next right thing might be to leave or maybe to stay. Here's a book to help along the way.

While *How to Walk into a Room* is not a book about me, I do share a lot of my own story from the past few years, a story I haven't shared anywhere else. And one last thing I'll say, and I'm not exactly sure how this will sound, but I'm going to say it anyway, and that's that as the host of this podcast, I've always seen my role here as one of a spiritual director for the listener. It's not perfect, and it does not replace having an actual spiritual director, but I do this work for the most part on purpose in a certain way, to help you create space to discern your own life and the life of God in and around you to see what's there and what might be missing.

It honestly grieves me that my capacity is such that I can only meet with a very limited number of one-on-one directees in real life. And so the gift of this medium is that tens of thousands of you have free access to these episodes every week, and I hope that they serve at least a little bit to create that kind of space for you. And I say that now, and I say it here because I wrote this next book the same way, as a spiritual director holding space for you, the reader, to discern your own life and the life of God around you to see what's there and what might be missing in the various rooms where you find yourself.

And so through these pages, I hope to serve as a worthy guide around rooms, across thresholds, and down the hallways of your life as you develop your own art of knowing if it's time to pause, stay, or walk away. So this is not exactly the book I thought I would write next, but it's the book I needed to write next. If you need it to, well, it's finished, edited, covered, and ready to order. It will release five months from now in March. Writing this

book was a healing practice for me as I share some deeply personal stories from our life, but it was also an affirming practice for me to lean forward into what I believe is the next iteration of this work of discernment and decision-making. I hope this message is a timely one for you, and I would love to continue to companion you along your way as you do your next right thing in love.

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Thanks for listening to episode 295 of The Next Right Thing. Well, I hope this announcement is as fun for you to hear as it is for me to offer. I'll say more about that in a minute, but first, as always, you can find me on Instagram @emilypfreeman or online at emilypfreeman.com where you can find a transcript of this and every episode. I'll also say now thanks to Ashley Sherlock who does our tech and show notes, and to the team at Unmutable who edits our sound. I'm grateful for all the humans who help make this podcast possible, including you.

Thanks to our subscribers at The Soul Minimalist on Substack who make it possible to offer these episodes ad free, and a special shout out to our founding members who allow us to be able to offer scholarships to anyone who can't afford the \$5 a month. Our Soul Minimalist highlight of the week is from Karen, who simply said, "Thanks for being a helpful voice in the midst of all the chaos." Well, that's high praise. You're so welcome, Karen. I'm glad you're here.

Finally, I'll say, if you think you might want to get a copy of this book, I hope that you'll consider doing it now rather than waiting until later, because I know you've heard authors say it, but they're all telling the truth when they do. It's that pre-orders are more important now than ever. You can find *How to Walk into a Room* at virtually all online retailers, including IndieBound and bookshop.org, wherever you buy your books. You can even start requesting it at libraries or at your local indie bookstore so they will have copies when the book releases in March.

It really feels good to finally tell you what this book is about and to finally tell you that it exists. I've been writing in secret and behind the scenes for a while, so it's really fun to be able to finally share it with you. If you want to know a little bit more about that process or a little bit more about the behind the scenes, I write about that on Substack. I wrote about it this week, so you can check me out there at The Soul Minimalist.

Well, in closing, I'll offer a reminder this time rather than a quote, and that is that while it's true there is pain and heartbreak, sometimes trauma, sometimes joy in the process of deciding to go or stay, it's also true that staying and leaving is how it's supposed to be. You are not the exception, and there isn't something wrong with you when you feel as if you no longer belong. Leaving rooms and finding new ones is actually part of a healthy human rhythm of life. I look forward to helping you name, grieve, celebrate, and embrace this rhythm for yourself. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.