(ACOUSTIC GUITAR THEME MUSIC FADES UP) **JONATHAN ROGERS, HOST:** Welcome to The Habit Podcast: Conversations with Writers about Writing. I’m Jonathan Rogers, your host.  
  
(THEME MUSIC CONTINUES)  
  
**JR:** Emily P. Freeman has a gift for helping others clear a space in the midst of mental, emotional, and spiritual clutter. In a place of complexity, she points to simplicity without being simplistic.  
  
(MUSIC FADES OUT)  
  
**JR:** She’s the author of *The Next Right Thing*, the creator of The Next Right Thing Podcast, and co-founder of Hope\*Writers, an online community for writers. I think your’e gonna enjoy hearing from Emily P. Freeman as much as I enjoyed talking to her.  
  
Emily P. Freeman, thank you so much for being on The Habit Podcast. I’m really glad this worked out.  
  
**EMILY P. FREEMAN:** Oh, me too! I’m so excited about it.  
  
**JR:** So you write and speak in your podcast The Next Right Thing… you have so much to say about decision making, decision fatigue… and I was sort of reviewing some of your episodes of the podcast and some of your writings, I was just really thinking about the idea of decision fatigue with relation to writing. Because there are so many decisions one makes when writing. It kind of is a series of decisions, is one way to think about it. And I think you say, an adult makes 35,000 decisions a day?  
  
**EPF:** That’s the number I’ve heard over and over again. And I’ve tried to do the research that opposes that number, and I have not found it. I’ve just read between 30 and 35,000 decisions every day. Which if you think about it, that sounds impossible, but really everything we do is a decision. It might not be a conscious decision, but it’s a decision nonetheless. So I’m assuming they’re counting those too.  
  
**JR:** (laughs) So talk to me about decision fatigue and writing, because you think a lot about decisions and you write. So… do you have thoughts on this subject?  
  
**EPF:** That’s a great question! Because when you said really writing is just a series of decisions… man, isn’t that the truth? Maybe that’s why it’s so hard!  
  
**JR:** (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** We’re just constantly making decisions. It’s a great question, and I do think decision fatigue shows up for me in writing in small ways and in big ways, and a lot of it is, in some ways can be related to confidence of you know… if I lack confidence in my own voice or just on a particular day, then the decisions feel a lot harder. Whether that be technical decisions I’m making in writing — usually it’s more angle or tone. I heard Seth Godin say once about writer’s block that he doesn’t believe in writer’s block because he doesn’t — he says, well have you ever had talker’s block? We just say words! It isn’t so much that we’re unable to make words. It’s just the words we’re writing aren’t very good. And so we’re afraid that we’re gonna write bad words, and that’s where the writers block really gets us, is that we feel like it’s terrible.   
  
And I can relate with that. When I feel like I’m making a series fo terrible decisions in my writing, it feels impossible. but when I just change the rules and just say that, you know, that Im allowed to write, whether or not it is terrible at first, that kind of loosens things up a bit and gives me permission to be a little bit more playful and have a little more grace with myself in the process.  
  
**JR:** Yeah. Well you saying that, giving yourself permission to be more playful and write bad first drafts reminds me of one of your recent podcast episodes in which — now I can’t remember who you were quoting, but in your address to graduates for 2020, you were quoting somebody else’s commencement speech, and you were talking about, “Don’t try to be great.” Who were you quoting there?  
  
**EPF:** Yeah, you’ll learn about me, if you don’t know this yet, I’m really good at finding great things other people say…  
  
**JR:** (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** … and quoting them, and hopefully always giving credit. But that was Charles Wheelan. He wrote a book — actually he gave a commencement speech in 2011 to Dartmouth College — and that commencement speech was turned into a book called *Ten and a Half Things No Commencement Speaker Has Ever Said*.  
  
**JR:** (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** And I think this might have been thing 10, but the title of the chapter was “Don’t Try to Be Great.” And it came from a — it was actually something someone else said to him. He was a guest on a live TV show in Chicago, and it was 30 seconds til air time. And Phil Ponce was the journalist who was hosting the who, and Charles Wheelan, the author of this book — or the commencement speaker, prior to giving the commencement speech — he was on the show and he was nervous, and he was realizing that anything I say, no matter what it is… if I fall of my stool, if I make a weird face, it’s going out there to the live audience of Chicago.   
  
So right before they went live, Phil Ponce leaned over and said, “Don’t try to be great. Just be solid.” And he said that advice had a profound affect on him, because he realized, oh, if I don’t try to be great, I just get to be myself and I bring to the table what I have to give. I don’t have to be funny if I’m not in a funny place, if that’s not my thing. I don’t have to prove anything. I just get to be myself, and I know I can do that. I can be solid in what I can give.  
  
And I just thought, wow, what amazing advice. First of all for graduates, because we live in a world that says, “Try to be great! Be great! Greatest of all time!”  
  
**JR:** Yeah…  
  
**EPF:** Nobody says, “Be the solidest of all time!” Like, that’s not a thing that we say. But the pressure that can be relieved when we just give ourselves permission to just be solid. Just be you. And then as a writer, when I think about writing… wow, that gives me permission that I don’t always have to dazzle. I can just be honest and write true things.  
  
**JR:** Yeah. Um… the next question is, I guess, I know there are people who feel like when it comes to writing they can’t even be solid, or they don’t have enough to give. Being themselves isn’t enough. And the desire to be great, I think, is almost by definition a desire to be something that we’re not, cause none of us… I don’t *think* most of us walk around thinking, I’m really great! (laughs) So if I be myself, I’m gonna be great.  
  
**EPF:** Yeah, now that’s the truth.  
  
**JR:** I’m in the middle of teaching a class called Writing with Flannery O’Connor, and just yesterday we were talking about the ways O’Connor, just by paying attention to what’s going on around her — you read her stories and think this feels really original. This feels like nothing — well, I say it feels like nothing I’ve never read before, except there’s so many people who have tried to imitate Flannery O’Connor that I have read other things like that. But I’m sure at the time it felt very unique, very original. But the truth is, I don’t feel like her originality comes from thinking, “how original can I be,” but rather, “how can I really give an account of what’s going on around me?” I think Flannery O’Connor’s writing is great, but it probably doesn’t grow out… I can’t imagine it grew out of her trying to be great. I think it came out of her trying to give an account of what she’d seen around her.  
  
**EPF:** Absolutely. And I think when you just change the posture from… cause we all know what that feels like, to try to be great. And like you said, I would venture to guess that most of us always feel like we’re falling short of that. Because if great is the standard, then it’s like… who gets to decide what that is? But solid is almost this idea fo being a fixed point. And when I think of being solid, I think of being grounded, being rooted… not floating away, of being gathered. And that is much more accessible, because I can think of times in my life where I have experienced being tethered to something deep and being fully rooted in who I most fully am. And that’s something you know on the inside, where greatness is something you have to prove on the outside.  
  
**JR:** Oh, that’s great…  
  
**EPF:** And that’s very different.  
  
**JR:** I do like that language of being gathered. And I do think that that is a standard that writers can live up to, right? I think we… kind of the job of the writer is to look around and see these scattered things and kind of look at them long enough to just sort of gather up some things… nobody’s asking you as a writer to think thoughts that nobody’s ever thought before.  
  
**EPF:** (laughs) Right.  
  
**JR:** It’s just, can you just bring some things into focus. That is largely a matter of taking the time. I’m not making the claim that I’m smarter than everybody else when I write something. I’m just saying I’ve spent some time thinking about something that you haven’t had time to think about. Or haven’t taken the time to think about.  
  
**EPF:** Absolutely.  
  
**JR:** I think I remember you saying something along these lines, that your job is just to sort of give voice to some things that other people have thought, and haven’t necessarily had the language for. Was that you? Am I right about that?  
  
**EPF:** You are right about that. I think I’ve made it my job to say thoughts that people don’t have time to think, but once they’re spoken into the world, you realize that… oh yes, that! It’s such an honor to be able to put into words something that someone hasn’t been able to name yet. You know, Madeleine L’Engle talks about the importance of naming, and I think as writers that’s one of our highest callings, to be able to name things that are unnamed. Because I think so much of our human lived experience goes unnamed.   
  
There’s so many things we don’t learn in school. We don’t learn how to grieve. We don’t learn how to say goodbye. We don’t learn how to name racism. We don’t learn… there’s a lot of things that we don’t learn in school, and I think one of them is we don’t know how to feel our feelings. We don’t know how to name things that are beneath the surface that are more intangible. And so as a writer I’ve kind of made it my job to pull up things from… as you say, things that seem scattered around, and bring them up, and see how they relate, and connect the dots a little bit. And I might not be right in my assessment or my observation, but at least I feel like a call to do the work of making one, or having an observation so that it can be talked about, or maybe misunderstood or debated… but what an honor that a reader is paying attention. And maybe that can give voice to something that has been unnamed within them.  
  
**JR:** Yeah. I love that. And that doesn’t seem… I mean, when you put it in those terms, I feel like it gives hope to the writer. Right? You’re talking about something that, again… you may be a genius, Emily, but one doesn’t have to be a genius to do that.  
  
**EPF:** Right. (chuckles)  
  
**JR:** I’m not commenting on whether you’re a genius or not… (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** (laughs)  
  
**JR:** I’m just saying one doesn’t have to be a genius!  
  
**EPF:** One doesn’t have to be!  
  
**JR:** (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** It is not a prerequisite.  
  
**JR:** Um… yeah. And so, okay. I don’t think we really dug int the way… we kinda moved on to the idea of greatness before we really finished talking about decisions. Your way of thinking about decision making… can you say a little more about how your ways of… you’ve done a lot more thinking about diction making than most of us have. Can you be more specific about how some of these things apply to the series of decisions that is the writing process?  
  
**EPF:** Well, I’ll tell you if there’s one thing that can make a human feel scattered, it’s when you have decisions to make and you don’t know what to do.  
  
**JR:** Yeah.  
  
**EPF:** I started paying attention to what I paid attention to when I had a decision to make. And that can be very telling. When you have an unmade decision, it demands your attention. And what do you do with that demand? Where do you look? Where do you go? What actions do you take? What lists are you making? What’s keeping you up at night? Who are you listening to? Who are you asking for advice? Are you someone who starts to make the list? Are you someone that starts to pray? Are you gonna ask everyone you know? Like there’s all these different — I don’t wanna say coping mechanisms, because that’s not always what they are. But in some ways they can be that. They can also just be tools we use to make decisions. But a lot of it is rooted in fear that we’re going to make the wrong decision, or we’re going to make a decision that we regret. We’re going to make a decision that might be counter to what God might want, if you’re a person of faith.   
  
So there’s all these factors that come into this decision making process, and we’re so focused on making the decision that I think we sometimes can miss the point. That’ it’s not so much about the decision that we make, but it’s about the person we’re becoming. And sometimes one beautiful and sure path to being spiritually formed is the decision making process. Cause guess what? We will be making decisions until the day we die. You don’t retire from it. You don’t graduate from it. You don’t age out. It’s just always a part of our life! And what an interesting embodied and embedded kind of experience for us as human people, that the way we make decisions is the way that we make our life. So if we can pay attention to where do we go when we have a decision to make, t hat can tell us a lot about the person who we are becoming.  
  
**JR:** Yeah, that’s great… yeah. I feel like in my teaching of writing, a lot of what I end up doing is helping people to see where they need to… I mean, you talk about paying attention to what you pay attention to. Writing is hard enough when you’re doing it right. Um, and… so often people are sort of perseverating of things that… they’re really working hard on the things that they don’t need to be working hard at. Whether that’s ornamentation in the way they write, or feeling like, I gotta make this sound like somebody who’s smarter than I am, or whatever. I feel like it’s so important to redirect. Like, let’s let that go, and pay attention to everything from, you know, making sure your verb and your subject are close together, at that level, but also thinking through, as you were saying, what’s important? What am I really writing about here? Devoting my energy to those kind of decisions instead of all these other decisions that are sort of wasting precious attentional resources, right?  
  
**EPF:** Yes.  
  
**JR:** We have a finite amount of attention we can pay, and when we pay attention to the wrong things, we don’t have anything left.  
  
**EPF:** We go broke.  
  
**JR:** (laughs) That’s right.  
  
**EPF:** And I think you have hit it really on the — what is it? Hit the nail… on the head.  
  
**JR:** Yeah. Hit the nail on the head.  
  
**EPF:** That’s a cliche that some say. But that idea of when our attention is pulled into the direction, as a writer, of all those things you say, is us trying to be great! We have this idea of what great writers do, and what great writers say and what types of decisions they make, and what types of adjectives they do or do not use…  
  
**JR:** Yeah. (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** And then we try to put those in, and our writing ends up sounding like we’ve tried really hard, but without much to show for it. And I think that is that external… what we believe about a great writer *is* is constantly speaking to us when we are ending or when we are writing that first draft or that second draft or that final draft. There’s this invisible perfect writer that kind of lords over us in our minds and is kind of like, uh… that’s not great. Your’e not measuring up here. And so we try harder from this outside place, rather than having more of a rooted and grounded place from within.   
  
And I just think that’s… and even when I think about, even though we didn’t mention this, but writing in today’s kind of day and age where to… to sell books, but there’s this idea of writing and publishing. And I know you don’t talk about publishing. You talk about writing.  
  
**JR:** Yeah.  
  
**EPF:** If you are a writer who publishes in the marketplace… talk about feeling scattered! There is a pervasive… it’s like a chronic illness of being scattered as a writer. So the more we can bring it in to this gathered place, a tethered center of knowing who we are and writing true… the outcome actually is you’re a better writer! There’s a greatness that can come from that, but it’s not in that order that we always think.  
  
**JR:** Yeah… this idea of looking outward and saying, I know there’s something — the writer I need to be is somebody I’m not already.  
  
**EPF:** That’s right.  
  
**JR:** You have to be careful, because… I mean, writing’s not a natural act, right?  
  
**EPF:** No, you have to learn it and work at it just like anything.  
  
**JR:** Right.  
  
**EPF:** But there can be an intangible idea of, “There’s a writer that I’m supposed to be, but I can never get there,” versus, “I am working on my craft and I am becoming better every day. That comes from a place where I am here, moving forward, rather than an imaginary going forward in the future in anxiety and looking back at myself. And that’s very— I know that’s really imaginary, but that makes the difference for me, personally.  
  
**JR:** No, that makes a lot of sense. And working from, “What can we already do,” right? People are — so, as Seth Godin said, you don’t get talker’s block… (pause) I’ve had talker’s block plenty of times along the way.  
  
**EPF:** (laughs) Right?  
  
**JR:** But I do appreciate where he’s coming from. I do appreciate the idea that there are things that we already know how to do. We know how to form, to put ideas into words. We do it all the time. And so to build on what we already know how to do, and to say, “I am building out from there, not chasing something that’s outside of me.” I think that’s really, really helpful. We know how to tell stories. We do it all the time.   
  
And then on the other hand… I’m always talking to writers about the idea of focusing your energy on, not learning to do the stuff, not fixing the problems, but rather building on what you’re already good at. It’s a great pleasure to me to sit down with a writers and say, “You know, you’re really good at this?” And at the same time, sometimes that conversation goes, “You’re not *as* good at this over here, so maybe let’s focus on… maybe you need to restructure the way you write so you’re really building on that strength instead of thinking that you’ve got to spend all this time fixing all these problems I’ve identified. Sure, fix those, but don’t devote all your energy to fixing those instead of building on what you’re already good at.  
  
**EPF:** That’s a much more hopeful way to do the work, I would say.  
  
**JR:** Well good! (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** (laughs)  
  
**JR:** One likes to give hope. So speaking of hope, let’s talk about Hope\*Writers for a minute. You have a community of writers called Hope\*Writers… I say “you,” but you’re one of a team that’s part of that.  
  
**EPF:** Mmhm.  
  
**JR:** And so you have done some thinking about writing in community and the importance of… well, community and writing, relationships. It’s so easy to think about writing as something that you do alone… and sometimes you do it alone. You have to get off in a room by yourself. But you’re also interested in community and writing.  
  
**EPF:** Yeah. Yeah.  
  
**JR:** That’s not a question, I don’t guess, but the floor is open.  
  
**EPF:** I’ll answer your non-question, and that is that I totally agree that writing is… it’s fooled us for all these years, because it is something you do in the room by yourself. Even if you co-write a book, you still have to sit down and write your piece by yourself, or else you go crazy. And sure, there are people who maybe do it more communally, and they talk out their book, but at some point someone is sitting down and writing it out, right?  
  
**JR:** (laughs) Yeah.  
  
**EPF:** But while the act of writing is, for the most part, a solitary act, the writing life doesn’t have to be a solitary life. And I think that is something I didn’t understand for a long time, and I suffered for it. And then finally recognizing, oh wow, I need other people in this, in fact, other people who not only can read my work for feedback — I mean, of course that’s one practical nuts and bolts way — but just people who are in your corner, who know what this means to you, who understand that this is part of your life and it’s an important part.   
  
And a key to that though, something I learned early on, was I had to be able to voice that for myself first. Because I found myself writing solitarily, by myself, but not letting, for example, my husband know that this was something important to me, that this was something I wanted to work on and get better at. All he saw was me disappearing and doing a thing, and to him, maybe this is a hobby and that’s fine, but let’s do other things now. But that was my job to communicate not only this something I value, this is part of me becoming more fully myself, then him embracing it and saying, oh I get it now. Let me support you in that. That made a huge difference in my ability to write well.   
  
So Hope\*Writers we started, it’s been almost five years now, and over time it’s evolved to become what it is now, which is where we help writers balance the art of writing with the business of publishing. We find a lot of writers, they’ll email me, they’ll ask me, “I wanna ask you questions about writing.” And I’m like, mmm, do you wanna ask me questions about writing or publishing?  
  
**JR:** Right.  
  
**EPF:** Because usually when they wanna ask me questions, they wanna know about publishing. And if writers don’t separate those two things, you’re in for a lot of heartache and trouble. So that’s something that we really work to help writers — both train writers in knowing how to both develop in their business but also the art of writing, but also the difference in knowing the difference. But it’s not always easy to suss out as just that one statement.  
  
**JR:** Yeah. You talked about letting your husband in on the fact that this is important to you reminds me of a saying at our house called “putting on the tennis skirt.” My wife took up tennis when she was, you know, already a — I don’t mean as a teenager, but I mean as a mom, had several kids…  
  
**EPF:** As a grownup.  
  
**JR:** As a grownup. And so she, um… but she wouldn’t buy a tennis skirt, because she felt like it was making too much of a statement, that “now I am a tennis person.” And she didn’t feel like she was a good enough tennis player to, you know, declare herself a tennis person and wear a tennis skirt. And so finally we’re like, you gotta go buy a tennis skirt. And when she bought the tennis skirt, she was able to say, okay, I’m a tennis player. And so you know, anything from buying the expensive pens instead of the cheap pens — that’s a way of putting on the tennis skirt for me. To say, no, this is valuable enough that I’m not going to buy the cheapest pens at Walmart, but rather buy… I still buy ‘em at Walmart, but it’s the more expensive… it’s the Uni-balls. (laughs)  
  
**EPF:** (laughs) It’s a step up. It’s not the BICs.  
  
**JR:** And I get the sense that’s part of what’s going on at Hope\*Writers. It’s people saying, I’m a writer!  
  
**EPF:** Yes, I think Hope\*Writers is the tennis skirt for a lot of writers. It’s them finally saying, you know what, I’m gonna invest, and if I’m investing, then that means this is a thing. And if it’s a thing, then I have to say it out loud. And that might be as far as it goes for some of them, and that’s far enough. It’s like, wow, I’ve made a statement here. And that’s a really beautiful statement to make if you’re a writer. And so that is something we talk about all the time.  
  
It’s funny, cause a lot of times — every writer thinks they’re the only one who feels that way. Insecure about it, like, I don’t know if I… we always think everyone else is sooooo much further down the road than we are. And then we get in community, and we start getting honest and we realize like, oh wait! I see myself reflected in your face. I belong here. And then it frees you up to do the work that you wanna do anyway. That lack of confidence is out of the way and it’s no longer a huge part of the conversation.  
  
**JR:** Yeah, you’re always comparing you’re early drafts to everyone else’s completed work. Unless you’re in community with other people who are writing, you don’t have any other option. There’s nothing else to look at but completed work.  
  
**EPF:** Yeah, we don’t put out the half-done work! That’s not what they sell at Barnes and Noble or the Internet. Well, sometimes on the Internet it is, but it’s not what we compare to. So true.  
  
**JR:** Okay, before we run out of time, I need to ask you about… I found out a while back that you are an American Sign Language interpreter, and then you told me today that you actually majored in that in college. Um, and I’m just really curious, I wanna know… how has that affected your way of using language, hopefully your writing? Because again, I don’t know much about sign language, but one thing I know is that in using sign language, you are literally giving a physical representation of words. Which is literally true when we speak because we’re making sound waves move. But I feel like one is a little more in touch with the fact that you are creating a sensory experience with language, which is what I’m always trying to get writers to do, to focus on the sensory. So… I’m sorry, I’m starting to answer the question. I want you to answer the question.  
  
**EPF:** No, that’s great. That’s good. Well, I did go to school to be a sign language interpreter. So I got my degree in Educational Interpreting for the Deaf, and then I went on to become nationally certified as a sign language interpreter. I have since let that certification lapse as I’ve been writing now for the last ten years or so, but that was my training.   
  
Actually, before that, I was always interested in language. I went to Bible college before I went to the university to learn sign language, but I thought I was gonna go into Bible translation. That was my early thinking. Language was always so fascinating to me. It still is. But it kind of pivoted into sign language, and I loved learning the language, the people. You know, Deaf culture is a fascinating study. And one thing that’s interesting about — side note — Deaf people in general is they’re all over the world. It’s like this hidden group of people, because every culture, every country has Deaf people in it. So it’s not like you can learn about Deaf people one time. It’s like every country, every language has their own sign language. So there’s British sign language. Even though they speak English in England, they don’t use our same sign language.   
  
**JR:** Really?  
  
**EPF:** So the only reason why someone who lives in England can communicate with someone who lives in the United States of America is just because they’re more used to doing gestures with one another. But it’s not because they have a shared language.  
  
**JR:** Really!  
  
**EPF:** Yeah! That’s why when you hear “American Sign Language,” it’s American sign language, and then there’s Australian sign language… it’s all different. In fact, I think in British sign language their alphabet is two-handed, whereas our alphabet in American sign language is one-handed. So you know, these little differences that are just interesting, and it makes you wonder like, why is that? So I wanna like spend all my time looking into that.  
  
So I learned American Sign Language. Um, but even in the United States, the language… um, there’s more of like a, what they call a Pidgin Sign Language, which is sort of an English word order. So that’s how I could sign and speak at the same time, when we’re talking right now, and I could sign everything I say in English word order. But American sign language is actually NOT in English word order. It has its own syntax and grammar, and you can express, for example, the intensity of a word based on your facial expressions. That’s why when there are imitations of sign language interprets on Saturday Night Live or something, they’re really expressive with their face? That’s because the eyebrows are actually part of the questioning. Like, raising your eyebrows will mean something different than furrowing your eyebrows.   
  
**JR:** Huh!  
  
**EPF:** So these are the things you learn. That it’s not just the sign itself. It’s also the position of the body or the expression on the face that determines your meaning. And so I think, to your point — long way around — to your point as a writer, I think because I was trained as an interpreter, I was trained to hear one language, process the meaning and intention of that, and then interpret it into another language for Deaf students. Particularly, I worked in education, so I did that in the classroom. Um, and it was endlessly fascinating.   
  
Now, sometimes you know, I’m interpreting a geometry class. That was not as fascinating because you have to go in English word order to make math make sense. At least I did. But for the most part in history class, English class, it was just fascinating to hear something and quickly process, but also to be able to hold it in your mind. That’s one thing interpreters have to learn to do. They’re always a little bit behind to where you have to be able to hold two sentences ago what was said, because you’re still interpreting. And sometimes with sign language there’s some simultaneous interpreting you can do while someone’s talking, but to actually translate it… there’s just that practice.  
  
But what that did for me is it made me a better listener, not just for the words that were said, but for the meaning behind it. Um, and I think as a writer, I was trained as an interpreter, but I feel like in many ways that’s my job as a writer. To learn things, to take in my lived experience, and to maybe interpret it into a more communal experience or a story or whatever that might be. And when I let my certification expire — you know, you get the letter that’s like, you must earn this many CEUs or else this will expire! — I had to grieve that. But I also had to learn, you know, I’m still using these skills. Nothing was wasted. I’m still using these skills, but I’m just applying them differently as a writer.  
  
**JR:** Yeah. That’s great. I’m loving that we hit on that idea of gathering early on, because I feel like that’s what we’ve been talking about this whole time, the writer as a gatherer.  
  
**EPF:** Yes, absolutely.  
  
**JR:** Alright. Last question, hope you’re ready for it. Who are the writers who make you want to write?  
  
**EPF:** This is almost impossible! There are so many!  
  
**JR:** Yeah.  
  
**EPF:** But the ones who come to mind — modern day writers — I think of John Blase, who is an editor, but he’s also a lovely writer. I think of Barbara Brown Taylor, makes me want to write, because she’s able to write really profound things, but she uses such simple English words, and you think wow, the best writers do that don’t they? I wonder how long it took her to write so simply.  
  
**JR:** Flannery O’Connor, by the way, when I cut and paste her into the little thing that tells you what grade level people are writing at?  
  
**EPF:** Uh huh.  
  
**JR:** Second, third, fourth, fifth grade.  
  
**EPF:** Wow…   
  
**JR:** Isn’t that amazing?  
  
**EPF:** That’s when you know they’re good. Madeleine L’Engle is another one. G.K. Chesterton, who I have to read his paragraphs a couple times, but still it makes me wanna write. And another recent author that I just kinda learned about in the last year or so is Sean Dietrich, who writes memoir and personal story.  
  
(THEME MUSIC FADES UP)  
  
**JR:** Okay. I have so enjoyed talking to you, Emily.   
  
**EPF:** Me too! Thank you for having me!  
  
**JR:** I hope we can do it again soon. So thanks, and onward and upward!  
  
**DREW MILLER:** The Rabbit Room is partnered with Lipscomb University to make this podcast possible. Lipscomb has graciously given us access to their recording studio in the Center for Entertainment and Arts Building. We’re so grateful for their sponsorship, their encouragement, and the good work they do in Nashville.   
  
Special shout-out as well to Jess Ray for letting us use her song “Too Good” as part of this podcast. Visit jessraymusic.com to hear more of her beautiful songs.  
  
**JR:** The Habit Membership is a library of resources for writers by me, Jonathan Rogers. More importantly, The Habit is a hub of community where like-minded writers gather to discuss their work and give each other a little more courage. Find out more at TheHabit.co.  
  
**DM:** This podcast was produced by The Rabbit Room, where art nourishes community and community nourishes art. All our podcasts are made possible by the generous support of our members. To learn more about us, visit rabbitroom.com, and to become a member, rabbitroom.com/donate.  
  
(THEME MUSIC OUT)  
  
(PIANO MUSIC FADES UP)  
  
**DM:** In The Rabbit Room, we love introducing listeners to independent artists who are doing great work. Artists like The Gray Havens.  
  
(SHE WAITS BY THE GRAY HAVENS FADES UP)  
  
**DM:** The music of Dave and Licia Radford explores the theme of human longing with cleverness and profundity. Emotional anthems and catchy pop songs distill huge ideas into compact melodies.  
  
(SONG FADES UP)  
  
**DM:** Their new record *She Waits* gives special attention to the groaning of creation, waiting for its King’s return. Give it a listen, and visit thegrayhavensmusic.com.  
  
(SONG FADES UP AND OUT)