



Book Leader's Guide

Cecil Taylor Ministries
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Introduction to *From Comfort Zone To Trust Zone*

The theme of risk-taking runs strong through a number of my works. After my prior book, *Live Like You're Loved*, I kept thinking about a page in it on risk-taking and decided to expand the thought into its own book. So I studied the Bible for times when Jesus called people out of comfort zones into what I termed "trust zones."

I wasn't disappointed. I see Jesus challenging people quite a bit in the Gospels, all in the name of aligning them with his kingdom. There is always a cost – something that the person must give up in order to fully embrace Jesus's goals.

Eventually, I selected a dozen such stories of Jesus, paired with supplementary parables and minor encounters. These dozen stories are the heart of *From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone*. The book informs how we can map these learnings into our lives today, so that we can discover how to take risks for Christ while deepening our faith.

How to present “From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone”

This is a challenging book study, because it forces introspection and discomfort. As you lead the class, be watchful of how the group reacts during discussions. You may want to ask off-script questions to drill down into what has struck a chord with them.

Consider how to continue making the comfort zones and trust zones real for them. The discussion questions should go a long way to achieve this, but it’s best to make sure the group doesn’t become complacent. Jesus has a lot to say to us; make sure your group is hearing it!

Two types of studies

A separate Leader Guide is provided for [video studies](#) and for [book studies](#). This is the Book Leader Guide.

Structure of the overall study

The dozen book chapters could be taught individually, one per session. But to shorten the study duration, please note that they are grouped into six sessions of paired chapters for study purposes.

Week 1: Risk-taking

Taking Risks

Going All-In

Week 2: Humility

Replacing Status-Seeking with Servanthood

Releasing Our Sins and Stones

Week 3: Commitment

Looking at Jesus Rather Than Obstacles

Exchanging the Familiar for a New Calling

Week 4: Uncertainty

Relinquishing Certainty, Embracing Uncertainty

Trading Governments and Empires for Jesus’ Kingdom

Week 5: Exposure

Leaving Safety for Danger

Yielding Your Privilege for Humble Service

Week 6: Unity

Journeying from Separation to Brotherhood

Implementing Jesus’ Vision of Loving Unity

Structure of each lesson

- Look to the left panel on the first page of the week’s lesson. A summary will show you the estimate of overall class length and how to arrange your time together.
- A preparation section gives you information on how to prepare for class.
- The Class Time section shows the lesson order and discussion question.

The summaries

- After Week 1, each lesson begins with a brief summary of the prior week and questions to the group. This refreshes the memories of those who attended, enhances processing of those participating in the daily questions (see below), and helps absent members to catch up.
- If you desire, you can post or send the summary to the group after each lesson, and then skip the recap to save time in your session together in favor of more discussion or group business.

The discussions

- One of my philosophies is that you should feel free to make this time your own.
 - You can use the materials precisely as written.
 - OR you can use them as a starting point to present and discuss in your own way.
- The Leader's Guide gives target times for each discussion period. Depending on your group and the allotted group time, these targets may feel short or long.
- Cecil Taylor Ministries is pleased with consistent feedback that its material generates great discussion. But the downside is that sometimes participants will want to discuss beyond the limit of the time! Be sure to manage the time and get the group back on track or out the door, as the case may be.
 - Prioritize the questions or rearrange the order as you see fit.
 - For each discussion, the Leader's Guide **recommends a question or questions that are essential to cover**, in case you cannot get to all questions.
 - Add your own questions and comments as the flow of discussion dictates.
- Depending on how much time you allocate to your group time, a time-saving option is to have everyone purchase the Participant's Guide and use the Review time to also review the questions and activities in the Participant's Guide, sharing what each of you has learned from it. See more on the Participant's Guide below.

Sharing the leadership role

Sometimes a single leader will take a group through each session. But this Book Leader Guide is designed to facilitate leadership being shared throughout the series.

This Book Leader Guide is free and shareable. Please pass around the soft copy of the Leader Guide to anyone who leads, or give them online access. Encourage them to read this introduction in advance, in order to better prepare to lead discussions of ***From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone***.

Study and Memory Tools

- I strongly urge your group to use the ***From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone Participant's Guide***.
 - The Participant's Guide contains optional questions and activities for each day of the week as your group goes through the series.
 - The Participant's Guide is meant to deepen the experience, not become a burden. It states upfront that users are not expected to adhere rigidly to the daily format and can change the way they interact with the Guide in order to enjoy a personalized experience.

Hopefully, your class purchased a bundle option that includes it. But if not, your group or individuals in the group can still order it separately from CecilTaylorMinistries.com or online booksellers such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc.

- You can optionally purchase from CecilTaylorMinistries.com **laminated bookmarks** for participants. These will serve as efficient reminders of the key teachings of the entire series. Again, these were optimally purchased in a bundle but can still be ordered later by the group or by individuals within the group.

Book Lesson 1: Risk-taking

Session Length:

39-58 minutes for the total class length.

Session Layout

Give Introduction

Lead "Taking Risks" discussion

Lead "Going All-In" discussion

Ask closing question

Please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

Preparation

1. Read through the Leader's Guide introduction (see above).
2. Preview the chapters in advance.
3. Key points of the Risk-taking session:
 - For Taking Risks:
 - Big Thought:
 - God rewards us when we take risks on his behalf.
 - Core Passage:
 - Matthew 25:14–30 (The Parable of the Bags of Gold) Key verse: 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Self-interest and self-preservation.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Self-denial to serve the Lord's interests.
 - Key discussion points:
 - How have you taken a risk for Christ?
 - Does God call us to be successful or to be faithful? What happens if we take a risk, but fail?
 - When do you stay in a comfort zone, and when do you move into a trust zone?
 - For Going All-In:
 - Big Thought:
 - Jesus wants us to fully participate in his kingdom as soon as possible, holding nothing back.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 6:60–69 – The time when Jesus got too extreme for many disciples, who turned away. Key verse: "The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Accepting Jesus on our terms.
 - The Trust Zone:

- Following Jesus on his terms.
 - Key discussion points:
 - Three key questions to ask ourselves: Are you giving back to Jesus and to the people he loves? Are you maligned enough, persecuted enough, to suit Jesus? Are you negotiating with Jesus to only do what meets your needs and make you feel comfortable?
 - What does it mean to you to go all-in?
4. Prepare for discussion.
- Please note the closing question that follows each segment.

Class Time

Step 1. Introduction to the Series (5-7 minutes)

1. Please read the following to the group:

“From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone” shows how Jesus urges us to take leaps of faith for his kingdom. We will examine biblical stories in which Jesus encourages those around him to trust him while taking risks outside their comfort zones.

Over the next six sessions, we’ll be talking about how these stories apply to us today, and how Jesus wants you and me to leave our comfort zones and enter trust zones where we trust and serve him in new ways.

2. **ASK:** When you hear the phrase, “comfort zone”, what do you think of?

- Write answers where they can be seen.
- *Possible answers from the book:*
 - Easy
 - Safe
 - Peaceful
 - Familiar
 - People you know
 - Confident
 - Rest
 - Relaxed
 - Hassle-free
 - No risk

3. **ASK:** When you hear the phrase, “trust zone”, what do you think that might be?

- Write answers where they can be seen.
- *Possible answers from the book:*
 - Out of comfort zone
 - In danger
 - Safety net
 - Feeling free to speak
 - Comfortably vulnerable
 - No judgment

- Trusting

4. Please read the following instructions from the author to the group:

There are 12 comfort zones and 12 corresponding trust zones identified in this book study.

- You may find that some comfort zones do not apply to you. You are past those comfort zones and are already in the corresponding trust zones.
- You may find that a comfort zone sort of applies to you. You can see where you can improve your faith walk by following the description of the trust zone.
- You may find comfort zone descriptions that hit a nerve, that make your cheeks turn red with shame or make your blood boil with anger. Pay close attention to these, because you have located your most cherished comfort zones, and you should seriously consider how to move from them to the corresponding trust zones. This is where you can grow your faith. But you're going to have to change, leaving behind something you have long believed or followed. Listen closely to what Jesus has to say to you through scripture and through this book study.

Step 2. Read Risk-taking Preview (1 minute)

A core principle of the book is that we need to take risks for Christ. Sometimes those risks are big leaps of faith into new arenas; at other times, they require us to let go of principles or fears.

This session emphasizes that Jesus is looking for kingdom risk-takers who will not hold back when he calls us to go all-in for him.

Step 3. Discussion of "Taking Risks" (16-25 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: Make sure the group understands that the Parable of the Bags of Gold is about risk-taking, and have them remember times when they took a risk. As this is a foundational section, make sure to have the group consider **Questions 3 and 4.**

Questions:

1. In the parable, the master calls the third, unproductive servant "wicked" and "lazy."
Read from the book:
 - Start p. 18 with "Here's a question:"
 - End p. 19 near top with "rather rude excuse when called to account."
1. Cecil seems to lean more to the wickedness by saying that the third servant was working for himself rather than for the master. What does it look like when our thoughts and efforts work for ourselves, and what does it look like when our thoughts and efforts work for the Lord?

2. What if the first two servants had taken the risk but failed? Would the master have been pleased with them or not?

LEADER NOTE: This is potentially a controversial question. Cut the discussion short as needed.

- On the one hand, each servant was given responsibility according to his ability. If one did not achieve the task, it would seem to be underachieving or shirking responsibility.
- On the other hand, the master is apparently expecting the servants to take risks to multiply the money.
- Cecil's view: What's more important to the master is to take risks. Even if the venture had failed, the master would have been pleased with the effort and the faith. God calls us to be faithful before calling us to be successful.

3. The two faithful servants took risks for the master. Tell about a time when you have taken a risk for Christ. What made you decide to take such a risk?

4. Cecil quotes William Barclay: "Jesus tells us there can be no religion without adventure." Do you need an adventure? To what adventure may Jesus be calling you?

5. Sometimes it's OK to settle in and get comfortable. Sometimes we need to take leaps of faith. What is the balance between staying in comfort zones and moving into trust zones?

LEADER'S NOTE: In the section called "The Elephant in the Room," Cecil quotes Ecclesiastes, saying, "There is a time for everything." He acknowledges that the Spirit may say "stop" instead of "go." But Cecil emphasizes that we need to remain aware of the Spirit's insistence to make a move, and to act on it when called.

6. As a follow-up to the prior question, Cecil talked about how our ability to respond may impede us from fully taking a risk (pp.22-23). Even if we're compromised, what is our responsibility to serve God in whatever condition we find ourselves?

Step 4. Discussion of "Going All In" (13-18 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: The group should be able to specifically understand where they aren't going all-in for God. Be sure to have the group consider **Question 2**.

Questions:

1. How do you know if you are or you aren't going all-in for God?
LEADER'S NOTE: From this section, we've seen that Cecil learned through prayer and conversation that he wasn't going all-in. This chapter also gives us three questions (listed below) that would help guide us.
2. There were three questions about the opt-out disciples. Which might apply most to you, as something you need to work on? What might you do to improve in this area?
 - A. Giving back to Jesus and to the people he loves.
 - B. Being maligned enough and persecuted enough to suit Jesus.

- C. Doing only what meets your needs and makes you feel comfortable.
3. Read Luke 9:57-62 (also found on pp.29-30 of the book). *Read from the book:*
- *Start p. 30 with “Jesus’ response to the first man’s promise...”*
 - *End p. 30 before subheading with “follow through on what God wants of us.*
 - A. What is your reaction to Jesus’ responses to these three men?
 - B. What excuses have you given Jesus for not following him more closely?
How do you think he would respond, based on this Luke passage?

Step 5. Closing Question (Target Time: 4-7 minutes)

One of the main themes of this lesson is the question whether you’re working for yourself or working for the Lord – and if so, whether you are all-in. How do you see your life? Are you prioritizing yourself or God’s kingdom? Are you all-in? How can you do better for Jesus?

Book Lesson 2: Humility

Session Length:

42-60 minutes for the total class length.

Session Layout

Review the last lesson

Lead “Replacing Status Seeking” discussion

Lead “Releasing Sins and Stones” discussion

Ask closing question

If this is your first time to teach a “From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone” lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week’s session (see Step 1 below).
2. Preview the chapters in advance.
3. Key points of the Humility session:
 - For Replacing Status Seeking with Servanthood:
 - Big Thought:
 - Jesus eradicates any thought that we should pump up our value through status-seeking. Instead, we are to do the opposite, taking the lowest place to serve others.
 - Core Passages:
 - Luke 22:24–27. Key verse in Luke: “I am among you as one who serves.”
 - John 13:1–5,12–17. Key verse in John: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Chasing and using worldly acclaim to feel better about ourselves.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Humbly serving others so that others will feel better about Jesus.
 - Key discussion points:
 - What does status-seeking look like today?
 - How do you respond to Gandhi’s critique that Christians are so unlike their Christ?
 - For Releasing Sins and Stones:
 - Big Thought:
 - We need to get uncomfortable with our sin so that we repent and receive mercy. We then share that mercy with others.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 8:2–11 Key verse: When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

- The Comfort Zone:
 - Being so comfortable with our own sin that we are comfortable in judging others.
- The Trust Zone:
 - Trusting Jesus to do his job of judgment and grace, and following his will to do our job of dispensing mercy.
- Key discussion points:
 - How did Jesus combine gentleness and discipline with both Pharisees and the adulteress?
 - How do we exhibit avoidance, projection, and control when we judge others? What's your weak spot among those three?

4. Prepare for Discussion

Class Time

Step 1. Review the last lesson (2-4 minutes)

Cover last week's lesson with this summary and add any other points you want to make:

- As we'll do each time, we covered two topics: Taking Risks and Going All-In.
- For Taking Risks:
 - Big Thought:
 - God rewards us when we take risks on his behalf.
 - Core Passage:
 - Matthew 25:14–30 (The Parable of the Bags of Gold) Key verse: 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Self-interest and self-preservation.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Self-denial to serve the Lord's interests.
- For Going All-In:
 - Big Thought:
 - Jesus wants us to fully participate in his kingdom as soon as possible, holding nothing back.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 6:60–69 – The time when Jesus got too extreme for many disciples, who turned away. Key verse: "The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Accepting Jesus on our terms.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Following Jesus on his terms.

Step 2. Read Humility Preview (1 minute)

A general category of comfort zones falls under ego. Our ego may drive us to puff ourselves up into something bigger, or our ego may protect our cherished sense of who and what we are. When we probe comfort zones regarding ego, it can be touchy. We have to recognize when our ego needs to be suppressed in favor of humility.

Step 3. Discussion of “Replacing Status-Seeking” (Target Time: 19-27 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: The questions are designed to personalize status-seeking for us today; how can we see ourselves in place of the disciples in this story? **Questions 1, 3 and 4** are essential.

Questions:

1. The disciples sought status in sitting in the best places at the feast. What does status-seeking look like today? Brainstorm how people might seek status today.
LEADER NOTE: Capture the ideas on a whiteboard or other mechanism.
LEADER NOTE: Refer to page 35 in the book for Cecil’s list.
2. Looking at the list, is it motivation or action that defines status-seeking?
Cecil’s Answer: Motivation. Some of these may be good desires, but the motivations may not be pure.
3. How would you respond to Gandhi’s critique? Do Christians sufficiently emulate Jesus? If not, how can Christians change to more closely emulate Christ?
4. What does it mean to you that Jesus’s first message at the Last Supper was about serving others and putting others ahead of you?
5. *Read from book, p. 39, copied here: “Jesus indeed was and is and is to come, but he can handle that part himself, without our help. Our assignment is to wash the feet of others.”*
 - A. How do you react to this assertion?
 - B. Three passages (Matthew 18:1-4, Luke 14:7-11, Matthew 6:1-4) are included on pages 39-40. What do these passages have to do with our assignment?

Step 4. Discussion of “Releasing Sins and Stones” (Target Time: 17-23 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL: Participants should come to understand how our role is not judgment, but if we do judge, we must do so with humility and gentleness.

NOTE: Try to get to **Question 4** if possible, as it is a thought-provoking question.

Questions:

1. As Cecil points out, Jesus combined gentleness and discipline in this episode. How was he gentle with the Pharisees and the adulteress, and how did he discipline each party?
2. *Read from the book:*
 - *Start near the bottom of p. 47: “Jesus’ response shouldn’t surprise us.”*
 - *End on p.48 with “...or by becoming a believer.”*
 - A. Have you ever considered how Jesus’ mission was to save rather than condemn? What does this mission mean to each of us?
3. What do you think of Cecil’s assertion that we become judgmental because we are too comfortable with our own sin? What does this tell us that we should do instead of judging others?
4. Cecil cites three reasons psychologists say humans tend to be judgmental: Avoidance, Projection, and Control. *Read from the book:*
 - *Start with Avoidance on the bulleted list on p. 51.*
 - *End after the Control bullet on p. 52.*
 - A. If avoidance, projection, and control lead us to judge others, how can we change, with Jesus’ help, to not judge?

LEADER NOTE: What I am looking for here is a recognition that, through prayer and meditation, we must delve into our own feelings of inferiority and shame; we must honestly realize the qualities we hate in ourselves that we criticize in others; and that we realize that Jesus through the Holy Spirit changes people more than we ever could, so we must release our need for control to the Spirit. In summary, if we are honest with ourselves, we must do a lot of internal work to resolve the problems that lead to judgmental behavior. Judging others is our problem, not the other person’s.
5. It’s true that there are times when we need to give feedback to others. Based on the Matthew passage of the plank and the sawdust, how would Jesus have us approach someone else to correct them?

Step 5. Closing Question (Target Time: 3-5 minutes)

How is this lesson connected to humility? What is your major takeaway from this lesson?

Book Lesson 3: Commitment

Session Length:

35-52 minutes for the total class length.

Session Layout

Review the last lesson

Lead “Looking at Jesus” discussion

Lead “Exchanging the Familiar” discussion

Ask closing question

If this is your first time to teach a “From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone” lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week’s session (see Step 1 below).
2. Preview the Commitment chapters.
3. Key points of the Commitment session:
 - For Looking at Jesus Rather Than Obstacles:
 - Big Thought:
 - Instead of denying crisis is happening or focusing on the obstacles surrounding you, focus on looking at and clinging to Jesus while in crisis.
 - Core Passages:
 - Matthew 14:22–33. *Key verse:* But when (Peter) saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Focusing on overcoming obstacles so we can return to normal as quickly as possible.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Keeping our eyes on Jesus and relying on him to be a very present help in times of trouble.
 - Key discussion points:
 - Peter succeeded in walking on the water when he kept his eyes on Jesus. What faced with obstacles, do you keep your eyes on Jesus?
 - Jesus didn’t invite the other disciples out of the boat because they didn’t ask. Will Jesus invite us into trust zones if we keep refusing him?
 - For Exchanging the Familiar for a New Calling:
 - Big Thought:
 - God possesses the vision to steer you in new, fruitful directions when you are faithful to his call.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 21:15–19 *Key verse:* Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

- The Comfort Zone:
 - A trust zone that has become a comfort zone over time.
- The Trust Zone:
 - A new challenge to shake you out of your comfort zone and deepen your commitment to Christ.
- Key discussion points:
 - Reactions to Cecil's own miraculous story of receiving a call into a trust zone and giving up what was familiar and comfortable.
 - What comfort zones are you outgrowing?

4. Prepare for Discussion

Class Time

Step 1. Review the last lesson (2-4 minutes)

Cover last week's lesson with this summary and add any other points you want to make:

- For Replacing Status Seeking with Servanthood:
 - Big Thought:
 - Jesus eradicates any thought that we should pump up our value through status-seeking. Instead, we are to do the opposite, taking the lowest place to serve others.
 - Core Passages:
 - Luke 22:24–27. Key verse in Luke: "I am among you as one who serves."
 - John 13:1–5,12–17. Key verse in John: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Chasing and using worldly acclaim to feel better about ourselves.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Humbly serving others so that others will feel better about Jesus.
- For Releasing Sins and Stones:
 - Big Thought:
 - We need to get uncomfortable with our sin so that we repent and receive mercy. We then share that mercy with others.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 8:2–11 Key verse: When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

- The Comfort Zone:
 - Being so comfortable with our own sin that we are comfortable in judging others.
- The Trust Zone:
 - Trusting Jesus to do his job of judgment and grace, and following his will to do our job of dispensing mercy.

Step 2. Read Commitment Preview (1 minute)

Peter is the disciple we know the most about. He experienced a faith journey that brought him the highest highs and the lowest lows. Because of Peter's potential and his status as lead disciple, Jesus challenged him more than any other disciple.

In this section, we look at two events in Peter's life where he was invited out of his comfort zone into daunting trust zones, and how Peter models for us how to commit to Jesus's challenges in our own lives.

Step 3. Discussion of Looking at Jesus (Target Time: 12-17 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: The group should come to recognize that we can become distracted when under stress and forget to look at Jesus. Be sure to have the group consider **Question 4**.

Questions:

1. The book says that when Peter was at his best in his crisis of walking on water, his eyes were fixed on Jesus. When he was at his worst, his eyes were fixed on obstacles. What does this comparison mean for your own approach to crises or problems? Which do you do – focus on Jesus or on obstacles?
2. *Read from the book:*
 - *Start on p. 58 after the bullets with "In a crisis, we can become..."*
 - *End before the subheading on p. 58 with "...of our comfort zones."*
 - A. How is a crisis like a trust zone where we rely on Jesus and grow our faith as we go through crisis?
3. What does it even mean to focus on Jesus? Peter could look Jesus in the eye.
 - A. But for us, what does it mean to look Jesus in the eye when we're in trouble?
 - B. 2 Chronicles 20:12 quotes King Jehoshaphat, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." How does this phrase help us place our focus on Jesus?

4. Cecil mentions how Jesus didn't invite the other disciples because they weren't willing to ask to come to him. In this analogy, the boat represents a comfort zone where we avoid problems.
 - A. How does this approach impede our ability to enter trust zones?
 - B. Do you think Jesus will invite us into trust zones if he knows we'll refuse to go? Or does he keep inviting anyway?

Step 4. Discussion of Exchanging the Familiar (Target Time: 16-23 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL: This is one of the key discussions in the book study. It's time to ask members what comfort zones they might be holding onto, and what trust zones they are being called to. They should be able to reflect on past, present or even future calls to trust zones. Be sure to cover **Questions 4 and 5.**

Questions:

1. Had you ever considered this idea that, in the seaside reinstatement of Peter, Jesus wasn't only reinstating Peter after his denials, but was also recommissioning him into a new role as shepherd instead of fisher of people?
2. What is your reaction to Cecil's story in which he learned the youth group needed him? Have you ever felt the Spirit's direction to follow in a specific way?
3. Have you ever fought Jesus over exchanging the familiar for a new calling?
4. What comfort zone are you in now that you might be outgrowing? Do you want to leave it, or do you want to stay?
5. *Read from the book, starting on p. 71 at the subheading "How Do You Recognize Your Call?" through the end of p. 72.*
 - A. In what ways have you discerned a new call?

Step 5. Closing Question (Target Time: 4-7 minutes)

This session has been about commitment, especially committing to doing something unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Talk about how you can adapt better to the unfamiliar and uncomfortable in order to commit to Jesus's calls on your life. (Think about what we've learned so far about risk-taking, going all-in, and the contents of today's lesson).

Book Lesson 4: Uncertainty

Session Length:

48-64 minutes for the total class length.

Session Layout

Review the last lesson

Lead “Relinquishing Certainty” discussion

Lead “Trading Governments and Empires” discussion

Ask closing question

If this is your first time to teach a “From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone” lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week’s session (see Step 1 below).
2. Preview the Uncertainty chapters.
3. Key points of the Uncertainty session:
 - For Relinquishing Certainty, Embracing Uncertainty:
 - Big Thought:
 - We crave for our passage in life to be full of certainty. But Jesus draws us to a life that is rife with uncertainty, except for the certainty of his presence, love, and salvation.
 - Core Passages:
 - Mark 10:17–22 Key verse: “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Our quest for certainty through earthly means in a scary, uncertain world.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Embracing ambiguity and uncertainty in your life while leaning on Jesus for your certainty.
 - Key discussion points:
 - Why is it so hard to embrace uncertainty?
 - Why is uncertainty necessary for faith growth?
 - For Trading Governments and Empires for Jesus’s Kingdom:
 - Big Thought:
 - Governments and empires will fail and fall. Take a leap of faith into the eternal kingdom of Jesus as your primary hope.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 14:22–24 Key verse: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”
 - Matthew 15:21 Key verse : “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Reliance on governments, political parties, and political leaders to save us.
 - The Trust Zone:

- Opening our hearts and pursuing others' hearts to serve Jesus' aim to live in those hearts.
 - Key discussion points:
 - Jesus had a golden opportunity to launch a political mission when handed the coin of Caesar, which represented a false idol of a false god. Why did Jesus have no interest in overthrowing the government?
 - What role should Christians play in government and politics?
4. Prepare for Discussion
- In all, this is one of the most important and stimulating lessons of the series.
 - You could argue that Embracing Uncertainty sums up the entire book.
 - Trading Governments and Empires illustrates one instance of how we are desperate to create certainty and control.
 - Target times assume all questions are asked. You may not have enough time for all.
 - Trading Governments and Empires is a Rorschach test of sorts; the interpretation depends a lot on the recipient. My intent in the book was to warn against placing our trust in governments, political parties, and political saviors and to advocate for selective participation in government affairs based on Biblical calls to justice for the oppressed and underprivileged. I argue that government and politics lead to temporary solutions, while we should focus on the eternal aspects of Jesus's kingdom.
 - One reaction I've encountered is, "The author advises to get involved in government and civic affairs." That is an overstatement of my view on selective participation.
 - Another reaction is, "The author goes against Romans 13, which says we are not to participate in government." That is not what Romans 13:1-7 is about. Paul tells his readers to be citizens subject to the ruling government and to not attempt to overthrow it. Paul did not say to avoid participation with government. Paul also did not live in a democracy, which allows pathways to interact with government in non-rebellious ways.
 - I would expect that some in your class or group will be offended as they want to hear that their political participation is essential to bringing Jesus's kingdom on earth (this could be said by both conservatives and liberals). I argue that our primary focus should be on Jesus's goal to win hearts and to live in those hearts; that is what his kingdom is largely about.
 - Pay close attention to the "Alternative" method of leading the Trading Governments and Empires discussion, shown under question 2.

Class Time

Step 1. Review the last lesson (2-4 minutes)

Cover last week's lesson with this summary and add any other points you want to make:

- For Looking at Jesus Rather Than Obstacles:
 - Big Thought:
 - Instead of denying crisis is happening or focusing on the obstacles surrounding you, focus on looking at and clinging to Jesus while in crisis.
 - Core Passages:
 - Matthew 14:22–33. *Key verse:* But when (Peter) saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Focusing on overcoming obstacles so we can return to normal as quickly as possible.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Keeping our eyes on Jesus and relying on him to be a very present help in times of trouble.
- For Exchanging the Familiar for a New Calling:
 - Big Thought:
 - God possesses the vision to steer you in new, fruitful directions when you are faithful to his call.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 21:15–19 *Key verse:* Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - A trust zone that has become a comfort zone over time.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - A new challenge to shake you out of your comfort zone and deepen your commitment to Christ.

Step 2. Read Uncertainty Preview (1 minute)

When we answer Jesus’ call, when we go all-in for Christ, we may still want control of our lives. When we perceive we have control, then we feel like we have achieved certainty. But it only takes the turning of one day of the calendar to discover that life is much more fragile and uncertain than we think it is.

Where do we turn to for certainty? Sometimes we cling to wealth or routine or status, something inside our own possession. Other times, we look outside ourselves, to governments, empires, and those in a political realm, to give us certainty. All such solutions fall short of what Jesus has in mind for us, as we’ll learn in the next two chapters.

Step 3. Discussion of Relinquishing Certainty (Target Time: 13-17 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: The time on this section is squeezed down to give more time to the second discussion. However, this does not mean it lacks importance; it may sum up the entire series. Please cover **Questions 1 and 4** if possible.

Questions:

1. The episode title includes the phrase, “Embracing Uncertainty.” How good are you at embracing uncertainty? Why is this so hard to do?
2. Cecil listed a few options for how we try to achieve certainty in our lives. *Read from the book:*
 - *Start at the top of p. 80.*
 - *End with the bolded words before the subheading, “...certainty in an uncertain world?”*
 - A. Brainstorm other ways in which we try to achieve certainty and control our environment or life situation.
3. Do you agree with this statement at the top of p. 81: “For the Christian, dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty is part of following Jesus?”
4. How do you react to the line, “Uncertainty is the soil in which faith grows?”
LEADER NOTE: A good verse to have handy is Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” In this context, we can see that faith is hard to grow when things are certain. Uncertainty is necessary for faith to develop.
5. Of all the people Jesus encounters in the Gospels, the rich young man in this story is the only one instructed to sell everything he had and give the proceeds to the poor as a precondition for becoming Jesus’ follower. Why would Jesus make this offer to this particular young man?
LEADER NOTE: The thought here is that certainty through wealth was this man’s weak spot. Another person might be asked to give up something else, such as hopes and dreams of a certain future, or their adherence to a particular routine that left no time for serving others.

Step 4. Discussion: Trading Governments and Empires (Target Time: 30-37 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL: This could be one of the most stimulating and controversial discussions of the entire series. The goal is to let people wrestle with the concept of focusing on Jesus’s kingdom rather than humans and human institutions. Question 1 is a warmup before heading into **Question 2**, which may take up a lot of time; see guidance below in the Leader Note. **Questions 3 and 5** should be touched on if possible (note how **Questions 3 and 4** have similarities but are designed to think differently about the same situation). **Question 5** is essential to cover because it puts us into the story.

Questions:

1. Before we get into the details of the Trading Governments and Empires section, let me ask: Why do you think this topic is included in a session on Uncertainty vs. Certainty?
CECIL'S ANSWER: The expanse of governments, empires, and ruling authorities can make us feel small, uncertain and helpless. We are tempted to control these elements to achieve certainty. That focus can take us away from the uncertainty that Christ calls us toward.
2. What is your general reaction to this section?
LEADER NOTE: I usually do not use open-ended questions like this, because it is harder to guide the discussion. However, in this case, it might be good for taking the temperature of the room before embarking on the rest of the questions. Limit the time on the general question as best as you can and steer the class to specific questions.
Another alternative is to mix in the questions below in response to various reactions. In other words, the "general reaction" section gets diverted occasionally into a specific question before moving back out to general reactions.
3. Why is Jesus focused on his kingdom, at the expense of focusing on governments and empires?
4. Let's consider the pressure applied to Jesus to be a political messiah. The book shows how Jesus could have used the incident of the heinous coin to launch a government overthrow. Another example is Palm Sunday; the crowds expected a conquering hero on a white horse, but Jesus selected a lowly donkey, which was a symbol of coming peacefully. What do you think would have happened if Jesus took the bait of becoming a political messiah?
5. What do you think of Thaddeus? Here is a man who was fervently opposed to Roman rule. Yet when he connected completely with Jesus, he gave up this ideal for the greater ideals of Jesus' kingdom. What can we learn and apply from Thaddeus' spiritual journey?
6. Pope John Paul II's approach to communism is interesting. *Read from the book:*
 - *Start on p. 94, "I speak for Christ himself..."*
 - *End with the bolded words on p. 95, "because they lived in Jesus' trust zone."*
 - A. How does the Pope's message apply to us today when we fear our political party will not win, or we fear what the other party will do while in power?
7. How should Christians participate in government? On the one hand, Romans 13: 1-7 says to be subject to government; some Christians interpret this to mean to avoid influencing government or participating in government (though we must remember that the Romans weren't running a democracy). On the other hand, Isaiah 1:17 and 10:1-2 seem to indicate advocating for the helpless and oppressed in society in various branches of government. Is it a black-and-white yes-no to participate in the governmental process, or is there a balance to strike?
LEADER NOTE: Here are the verses for your convenience (NIV used):

- Romans 13: 1-7 – Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.
- Isaiah 1:17 – Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
- Isaiah 10:1-2 – Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, 2 to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

Step 5. Closing Question (Target Time: 2-5 minutes)

What would you have to change in your life to relinquish certainty and embrace uncertainty, whether that is generally speaking or in the realm of politics?

Book Lesson 5: Exposure

Session Length:

37-55 minutes for the total class length.

Session Layout

Review the last lesson

Lead “Leaving Safety for Danger” discussion

Lead “Yielding Your Privilege” discussion

Ask closing question

If this is your first time to teach a “From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone” lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week’s session (see Step 1 below).
2. Preview the Exposure chapters.
3. Key points of the Exposure session:
 - For Leaving Safety for Danger:
 - Big Thought:
 - Sometimes God’s call carries greater risk and exposure, but also greater benefits to his kingdom.
 - Core Passages:
 - Acts 9:10–19. Key verse: But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Protecting our physical health and what we have accumulated – money, possessions, reputations, and more.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Permitting anything we have and are to be used for the Lord’s service, trusting Jesus’ promise to be with us.
 - Key points of discussion
 - Exposure means that we accept danger or liability in a number of ways. Even kindness exposes risks of loss and rejection.
 - The 600-plus year construction of Cologne Cathedral is used as an example of accepting exposure in order to follow God.
 - For Yielding Your Privilege for Humble Service:
 - Big Thought:
 - It’s hard to see our own privilege. But when we do, we should give it up or leverage it well to diminish ourselves for the benefit of others.
 - Core Passage:
 - Acts 9:3–9. Key verse: “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you

- must do.”
- The Comfort Zone:
 - Using our privilege to serve our own needs.
- The Trust Zone:
 - Yielding our privilege to serve Christ.
- Key points of discussion
 - Paul and St. Francis both grew up with privilege. Examples from one or both are: education, wealth, favorable ethnicity, location, connections, and status.
 - It takes humility and soul-searching to identify your advantages.

4. Prepare for Discussion

Class Time

Step 1. Review the last lesson (2-4 minutes)

Cover last week’s lesson with this summary and add any other points you want to make:

- For Relinquishing Certainty, Embracing Uncertainty:
 - Big Thought:
 - We crave for our passage in life to be full of certainty. But Jesus draws us to a life that is rife with uncertainty, except for the certainty of his presence, love, and salvation.
 - Core Passages:
 - Mark 10:17–22 Key verse: “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Our quest for certainty through earthly means in a scary, uncertain world.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Embracing ambiguity and uncertainty in your life while leaning on Jesus for your certainty.
- For Trading Governments and Empires for Jesus’s Kingdom:
 - Big Thought:
 - Governments and empires will fail and fall. Take a leap of faith into the eternal kingdom of Jesus as your primary hope.
 - Core Passage:
 - John 14:22–24 Key verse: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”
 - Matthew 15:21 Key verse : “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Reliance on governments, political parties, and political leaders to save us.

- The Trust Zone:
 - Opening our hearts and pursuing others' hearts to serve Jesus' aim to live in those hearts.

Step 2. Read Exposure Preview (1 minute)

In the tug of war for control of our lives, we are able to make very rational decisions that we must protect ourselves from exposure. That might mean exposure to danger and risk. It might mean exposure of our resources, our identity, and our life advantages known as privilege.

As always, the question is, are we handing over our lives to Jesus in complete submission, or are we holding onto some things we can't give up? And why does it seem like the greater our submission and sacrifice, the greater the benefit to the kingdom?

Step 3. Discussion of Leaving Safety for Danger (Target Time: 15-24 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: The group should be able to articulate different kinds of exposure and danger that arrive with God's call and our duty to answer anyway.

Questions 1 and 3 are essential to complete; Question 2 might help if the group struggles with Question 1.

LEADER NOTE: Group members may question why the book contains scripture from outside the Gospels. However, Acts of the Apostles (Acts 9:17) confirms that Jesus is the identity of the voice that spoke both to Ananias and Paul.

Questions:

1. Cecil felt called to drive the stranger to the next town, even though he also felt some amount of danger. How should we react when God calls us into danger? Are there good reasons to say "no?"

LEADER NOTE: While both men and women may react strongly, this concept is especially concerning to women who may be quite susceptible to "stranger danger." Certainly, we must use judgment and caution at times. Still, during the course of discussion, press those who are concerned for their alternatives for answering God's call while reducing the risk of personal danger.

2. **CASE STUDY:** Cecil has a 70-something single female friend who has been helping a homeless couple in various ways, including driving the woman to and from work each day. The friend feels like she ought to bring the couple into her house, although she is still getting to know them. What would you say to this friend?

LEADER NOTE: In a prior video series, "The Legacy Tree," Cecil outlines a useful four-part model for knowing how to provide to the world. Without going into detail (that's a multi-lesson exercise), the four levels in ascending order of commitment are:

- Donate time, money, or resources
- Mentor or plant seeds in some way
- Develop a two-way, vulnerable, equal relationship
- Sacrifice for the good of others

Cecil's thought is for his friend to consider where she is now (donating time, maybe doing some mentoring) and develop each stage before considering sacrifice (bringing them into the house).

3. God sometimes sends us to places we don't want to go. Jesus sent Ananias to the house on Straight Street. What has been your "Straight Street?" Where did you go on behalf of God, although you didn't want to?
4. The Cologne Cathedral story helps us see other kinds of danger we may encounter when answering God's call, such as danger to finances, danger to reputation, or danger to our cherished plans.
 - A. What does it say about our trust in God when we are willing to endanger our resources, our reputation, or even our lives to obey him?
 - B. *Read from the book the first full paragraph on p. 108.* Sometimes it is not only answering the call to "Go!", but it's answering fully and without shirking any amount of the task. The stonemasons engaged in the full task. How does this inform or inspire your answer of Christ's calls to leave safety for danger?
 - C. How does God help us when we are willing to trust and obey him?

LEADER NOTE: God does not necessarily protect us from all harm. But we must trust that God will use our obedience to do his work, to spread kindness, to inform others of the gospel, to plant seeds according to his will. That level of obedience ripples into eternity.

Step 4. Discussion: Yielding Your Privilege (Target Time: 16-20 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL: The goal is for group members to leverage the examples of Paul and Francis so they can mirror this yielding of privilege in their own lives. As a result, **Questions 1 through 3** are essential.

Questions:

1. How do you define privilege?

LEADER NOTE: One definition of privilege is a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group. In the lesson, Paul and St. Francis possessed privileges such as education, wealth, location, ethnicity, connections, and status.
2. What types of privilege or advantage do you possess?
 - A. For ideas and perspective, *read from the book (bullet list, p. 113).*
 - B. *Read the bolded section at the bottom of p. 115.* What privilege or advantages do we take for granted / see as normal?
3. St. Paul and St. Francis of Assisi required dramatic moments in life before they could see their privilege. How can we see our privilege even without experiencing a dramatic event?
4. What can you take away and apply from the stories of Paul and Francis?

LEADER NOTE: If it helps, share this story from Cecil: *Working in youth ministry, a well-off freshman teen girl stated that poor people were poor because they deserved it. We counselors pushed back on this attitude without success. Fast-forward three years: as this now-senior girl was preparing for college, I asked about her study and career track. She said she was going to become a doctor and move to Central America to serve the poorest people. In fact, she has now spent her entire medical career in impoverished areas internationally and domestically. I don't know what changed her view of privilege, but I can only surmise that God moved in her life.*

Step 5. Closing Question (Target Time: 3-6 minutes)

How has today's lesson helped you consider how to accept exposure and enter the trust zones of this lesson?

Book Lesson 6: Unity

Session Length:

39-57 minutes for the total class length.

Session Layout

Review the last lesson

Lead "Journeying from Separation to Brotherhood" discussion

Lead "Implementing Jesus' Vision of Loving Unity" discussion

Ask closing questions

If this is your first time to teach a "From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone" lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week's session (see Step 1 below).
2. Preview the Unity chapters.
3. Key points of the Unity session:
 - For Journeying from Separation to Brotherhood:
 - Big Thought:
 - We easily become divided because we focus on differences and don't focus on what unites us.
 - Core Passage:
 - Matthew 10:2–4 Key verse: "These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him."
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Accepting division as a cost of upholding our personal principles.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Bonding in brotherhood or sisterhood with individuals who hold different opinions as we cherish Christ's principles.
 - Key discussion points:
 - Matthew and James are both listed as sons of Alphaeus and may well have been brothers.
 - Whether they were or not, Matthew represented Rome and exhibited greedy principles, while James the son of Alphaeus represented overthrow of Rome and exhibited rebellious principles. They could only come together through the uniting force of Jesus.
 - For Implementing Jesus' Vision of Loving Unity:
 - Big Thought:
 - Jesus envisions and wills for his followers to be united in order to live with God's glory

within us and to effectively spread the gospel.

- Core Passages:
 - John 17:20–23 Key verse: “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity.”
 - Philippians 2:1-5,8 Key verse: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”
- The Comfort Zone:
 - Holding ourselves as better than others, through selfish ambition or vain conceit.
- The Trust Zone:
 - Believing that emulating Jesus’ humility will foster unity among believers and shine the light of God’s glory within us.
- Key discussion points:
 - Disunity is actually sinful.
 - Keywords for moving forward to unity:
 - Humility – Paul recommended this quality for the church at Philippi.
 - Glory – Jesus gives us God’s glory so that we may be unified. When we refuse it, it’s as if we are grabbing the throne of God ourselves, saying that we know better.

4. Prepare for Discussion

- It will be good to keep in front of the class that Jesus holds this vision of loving unity (please address your complaints to him!). The book and discussion time attempt to answer how we can do what Jesus desires.
 - **NOTE:** I have heard a passage misused regarding unity in the church; someone said, “Jesus came to bring division, not peace.” (Matthew 10:34-36) This section of Matthew 10 refers to the obstacles and opposition to following Jesus and the sacrifices that may be required in doing so. It is misused when applied to the unity of the church and believers as a whole. As we learn from John 17, Jesus clearly desired unity, not division, among his followers.
- The closing question is important, so save time for it.

Class Time

Step 1. Review the last lesson (2-4 minutes)

Cover last week’s lesson with this summary and add any other points you want to make:

- For Leaving Safety for Danger:
 - Big Thought:

- Sometimes God’s call carries greater risk and exposure, but also greater benefits to his kingdom.
- Core Passages:
 - Acts 9:10–19. Key verse: But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”.
- The Comfort Zone:
 - Protecting our physical health and what we have accumulated – money, possessions, reputations, and more.
- The Trust Zone:
 - Permitting anything we have and are to be used for the Lord’s service, trusting Jesus’ promise to be with us.
- For Yielding Your Privilege for Humble Service:
 - Big Thought:
 - It’s hard to see our own privilege. But when we do, we should give it up or leverage it well to diminish ourselves for the benefit of others.
 - Core Passage:
 - Acts 9:3–9. Key verse: “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”
 - The Comfort Zone:
 - Using our privilege to serve our own needs.
 - The Trust Zone:
 - Yielding our privilege to serve Christ.

Step 2. Read Unity Preview (1 minute)

In a park in Koblenz, Germany stand remnants of the Berlin Wall. The sections remind visitors of the time Germany was divided before being reunited after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. The wall pieces symbolize how difficult it is to stay unified, but how unification is worth the price.

As Christians, we get divided from each other, which was not Jesus’s intent. In this session, I want to explore the comfort zones that divide us and suggest trust zones that fulfill Jesus’s vision of a unified body of Christ.

Step 3. Discussion of Journeying from Separation to Brotherhood (Target Time: 11-14 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS: This segment builds a foundation for the Step 4 questions, so be sure to cover **Questions 1 and 4** if possible. The time on this section is squeezed down to give more time to the second discussion.

Questions:

1. Accepting the premise that Matthew and James son of Alphaeus were brothers, could you relate to the tension of being in the same group where your principles conflicted?
LEADER NOTE: Prompt people to share stories of their own family or close friend conflict, if they like.

2. Cecil shares a story of his family in the book: *Read from the book:*
 - *Start on p. 123, "I have three sisters..."*
 - *End on p. 123, "...how to proceed."*
 - A. How do you think Cecil and his sisters were able to do this?**LEADER NOTE:** They focused on our common purpose of serving their mother. They strongly disagreed on her care at times but were able to work through our differences.

3. *Read from the book: The bullet list of ingredients for brotherhood/sisterhood on p. 124.*
 - A. What is your reaction to this list?

4. The example of John Wesley and George Whitefield shows us that we can get along even with those who strongly disagree with us. What was the key to Wesley and Whitefield re-establishing a brotherhood? How would apply this technique today?
LEADER NOTES: Wesley and Whitefield had to agree to disagree on their points of contention, turning the focus back to their common purpose as church leaders and the points on which they did agree.
For clarity – "Whitefield" is actually pronounced "Whitfield." Yes, very confusing.

Step 4. Discussion: Implementing Jesus' Vision of Loving Unity (Target Time: 18-26 minutes)

MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL: This is a rubber-meets-the-road discussion. The purpose is to go from the theoretical to the practical—how can Jesus' vision actually be implemented? **Questions 1 and 2** are essential to discuss.

Questions:

1. Let's start with the tough question. Is Jesus' vision of loving unity even possible? What enables or hinders the possibility?

2. Cecil has stated: *Unity does not mean uniformity.*
 - A. What does this statement mean to you, and how does it inform us on how to achieve unity?
 - B. *Read David Platt's comments on p. 131.* How do these thoughts align with the difference between uniformity and unity, and what really keeps us united?

LEADER NOTE: We can be unified even if we are different people with differing opinions, as long as we agree on core principles. Relationships also go a long way in fostering

unity. A woman who watched the video course of *From Comfort Zone to Trust Zone* mentioned how the women in her Bible study group disagreed strongly on a number of points yet were united as a group in their caring for and dedication to each other.

LEADER NOTE: John Wesley debated others frequently on theology. But he would conclude with, "If your heart is in Christ, then give me your hand." Ultimately, we are united by Christ.

3. Cecil shares this story: *After I wrote the book, I was speaking to a fellow Christian author who had very strong feelings on certain religious principles. I shared my view that among Christians, we agree on a core 80% of theology (the Trinity, salvation through belief and grace, the importance of the Bible, etc.) but the 20% is where denominations disagree and spend their focus upon. The author argued that the 20% represents table stakes, and that there can be no dialogue, as people who believe differently are simply wrong and heretical.*

A. What would you say to this author in response?

B. What is a path forward to working with others who disagree on the 20%?

LEADER NOTE: Cecil's view is to return to the realm of the 80% and to find points of agreement. Over time, build relationship to earn the right to safely express your view on the 20%. The point isn't really to change their minds, but to plant seeds to change their hearts.

LEADER NOTE: If the group is dissatisfied with Cecil's view, challenge them on how they would handle the situation and find a path forward.

4. To foster an atmosphere where unity can flourish, what discipline and sacrifice would you have to exercise in your life?

LEADER NOTE: This question is meant to explore what side topics or annoyances we choose to ignore, not in the service of getting along, but because they pale in comparison to the bigger issues.

Step 5. Closing Questions (Target Time: 7-12 minutes)

1. What were your favorite parts of the book?
2. In the opening lesson, we read from Cecil's instruction that there may be comfort zones that hit close to home, and this should be a signal that you should leave that comfort zone for the corresponding trust zone. Which comfort zones in this series hit you the hardest, and what changes do you plan to make?

LEADER NOTE: Consider projecting or sharing (printout or otherwise) the table on the next page containing the comfort zones and trust zones. This table appears in both the book and the Participant's Guide.

Chapter	The Comfort Zone	The Trust Zone
Taking Risks	Self-interest and self-preservation.	Self-denial to serve the Lord's interests.
Going All-In	Accepting Jesus on our terms.	Following Jesus on his terms.
Replacing Status-Seeking with Servanthood	Chasing and using worldly acclaim to feel better about ourselves.	Humbly serving others so that others will feel better about Jesus.
Releasing Our Sins and Our Stones	Being so comfortable with our own sin that we are comfortable in judging others.	Trusting Jesus to do his job of judgment and grace, and following his will to do our job of dispensing mercy.
Looking at Jesus Rather Than Obstacles	Focusing on overcoming obstacles so we can return to normal as quickly as possible.	Keeping our eyes on Jesus and relying on him to be a very present help in times of trouble.
Exchanging the Familiar for a New Calling	A trust zone that has become a comfort zone over time.	A new challenge to shake you out of your comfort zone and deepen your commitment to Christ.
Relinquishing Certainty, Embracing Uncertainty	Our quest for certainty through earthly means in a scary, uncertain world.	Embracing ambiguity and uncertainty in your life while leaning on Jesus for your certainty.
Trading Governments and Empires for Jesus' Kingdom	Reliance on governments, political parties, and political leaders to save us.	Opening our hearts and pursuing others' hearts to serve Jesus' aim to live in those hearts.
Leaving Safety for Danger	Protecting our physical health and what we have accumulated – money, possessions, reputations, and more.	Permitting anything we have and are to be used for the Lord's service, trusting Jesus' promise to be with us.
Yielding Your Privilege for Humble Service	Using our privilege to serve our own needs.	Yielding our privilege to serve Christ.
Journeying from Separation to Brotherhood	Accepting division as a cost of upholding our personal principles.	Bonding in brotherhood or sisterhood with individuals who hold different opinions as we cherish Christ's principles.
Implementing Jesus' Vision of Loving Unity	Holding ourselves as better than others, through selfish ambition or vain conceit.	Believing that emulating Jesus' humility will foster unity among believers and shine the light of God's glory within us.