



# **The Next Thing**

## **A Christian Model for Dealing with Crisis in Personal Life**

### **Leader's Guide**

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#### **Introduction to “The Next Thing”**

Everyone goes through crisis at some point in their lives. Hopefully we get better at dealing with crises as we go along; I know I did. I have assembled my ideas, my experiences, my trials-with-error in order to provide a structured model for addressing crisis in our personal lives.

In “The Next Thing,” I propose a Christian model based on the principles of Simplify, Trust, Rest and Grieve. I introduce the concept of “The Next Thing,” which is trying to take the whole complexity of a crisis and focusing on the next thing in front of you.

The four-part model of Simplify, Trust, Rest and Grieve may not seem earthshaking on the surface. Yet I would contend that when we're in crisis, we do not do these things. I offer concrete reasons and plans for enacting these four steps while in crisis.

You'll find the material to be a combination of practical tips, spiritual development and scriptural underpinning for both of those. Just as the Letter of James urges us to go beyond well wishes for people and to instead give them tangible help, I feel like the tangible help of practical tips is essential to the conversation. However, these tips are offered from a Christian context, so there are faith and scriptural components to help participants put their faith into practice.

I have taken a different approach in this book for how I handle scripture, compared to my prior series, "Live Like You're Loved." There, I first offered the scriptural basis to prove that God loves us, forgives us, sends us, and invites us to eternal relationship; then I asked and answered the question, "What would your life look like if you truly believed these Biblical truths?" So the practical faith portion came last.

In "The Next Thing," I present in the opposite order. My feeling is that people can immediately relate to crisis and would like to quickly understand practical ideas for dealing with crisis. That's what I do in the first half of the lessons dealing with the four-part model. In the second half of such videos, I show the scriptural underpinning for the practical faith that we need to employ in crisis.

By "practical faith," I don't mean that I spew Bible verses to match every situation. Instead, practical faith is about establishing a context, then living life based on that context.

Jesus was practical, and He meant our faith to be practical, to be able to put it into practice to address the challenges of life. Jesus gives us wise ways to live that would apply to all humans, regardless of their faith. But when we combine Jesus' ideas with faith in Him, practical faith becomes very powerful. Ultimately, any practical faith suggestions I share should portray a very sturdy way of living your life, built on the rock of Jesus.

Thus, you'll find in "The Next Thing" a combination of practical ways to address a crisis, all grounded in a context that emerges from scripture and from a life of discipleship.

## **The "rawness" of the topic**

As people have encountered "The Next Thing" video series and book, one of the most frequent comments is how "raw" it is. By this, I feel like people mean two things:

1. It is raw due to the frankness and openness with which my wife and I have revealed our lives.
2. It is raw due to the nature of crisis itself, how I'm addressing some of the most stressful, emotional and intimate times of people's lives.

You may receive this same reaction. Prepare for at least some of your group members to have emotional reactions to the topic and to the discussion questions.

I've found that because I've opened up about my life, people have brought some of their "raw" moments to me for private discussions. You might encounter the same as discussion leader. A group member may feel that it is safe to approach you with a current crisis or with something they've been struggling with. Prepare yourself to be a blessing to them in those moments!

Let me also mention here (as I'll mention again in lesson 1) that my wife Sara not only was on board with sharing her very private issues with depression, but it was actually her idea! She urged

me to include her depression story as a way of helping and inspiring others. Please be assured that nothing written or shown about Sara was done without her full approval that she gave at multiple stages in the creative process.

## How to present “The Next Thing”

I recently attended a concert where the composer was in the audience, watching a choir and orchestra debut his latest work. It was interesting to watch him as he observed his work taking shape in front of him.

It struck me: The composer may have finished writing and delivering the piece, but the piece was incomplete until the performers executed it. The way they performed is what completed his effort – and will complete his effort each time the work is performed by a different ensemble.

This is how I feel about “The Next Thing” and my other video lesson series: They are incomplete until you, the leader, and the class finish my work. The discussion is a vital part of the lesson. Every group will have a different discussion, thereby modifying and expanding and re-completing the effort I originally put in.

With that understanding, perhaps my guidance below will make more sense and enable you to orchestrate the best outcome for your group.

### Two types of studies

- This Leader Guide can be used for both video studies and for book studies.
- Video leaders will be instructed to show the video at certain points. Clearly, this does not apply to Book leaders.
- Book leaders do not have the video but do have access to discussion questions. They are given additional “bonus” book study questions, highlighted with a **yellow-titled section** at the end of each discussion question list. These can be incorporated into the standard discussions that apply to both video and book studies. Other notes:
  - The discussions have been broken up according to the video; however, the book and video follow the same sequence. So you can simply run through all the questions sequentially, and they will nearly always follow the sequence of the book.
  - Note that estimated session length varies widely for book leaders, because it is discussion-based, and discussions may be short or long, depending on group response.

### The videos (Video Leaders only)

- Whether you streamline the videos, download the videos or use the DVD option, have all the technology ready to go. Test it out in advance, then arrive early to set up. Time is precious, and you don’t want to lose time on technical issues.
- While the videos usually follow the format of “Watch – Discuss – Watch – Discuss,” video 5 is only “Watch – Discuss” with a longer concluding discussion time.
- **IMPORTANT ALTERNATIVE:** Some groups prefer the split format of video 1 – discussion 1 – video 2 – discussion 2. Some prefer to watch all of the video and then conduct all the discussion. Because there is only a 15-second break between the two videos, you have an easy option to let the intermission run for 15 seconds, combine the video viewing and then follow with all the discussion.

### 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, and helps absent members to catch up.
- The summaries are attuned to the video; however, book leaders can use the same summary as these are the main points of the related chapter as well.

### 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, this time may feel short or long.
- Video leaders: Note that each of the first four component lessons has artwork associated with it, and that artwork is the subject of the first discussion question after part 1 of each video. The video has a 15-second break. The artwork will appear during this interlude, so you can pause on this and allow the class to see the artwork for the question.
  - Book leaders can simply refer to the artwork in the book.
- 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 that is important 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, please consider having 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. More on the Participant's Guide below.
- Book leaders: Feel free to mix the order of the questions between the video and book discussions, as you see fit.

### Study and Memory Tools

- **I strongly urge your group to use the Participant's Guide**; hopefully you 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, Google Books, etc.
  - 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.
- Video leaders: Group members would also benefit from purchasing the book, **The Next Thing: A Christian Model for Dealing with Crisis in Personal Life**. The book expands on the content of the video and also provides an enduring reminder and reference guide

for what was shared in the video. CecilTaylorMinistries.com has bundle options that include books, but group members can also buy the book individually from our web site or from the online booksellers listed above.

- You can optionally purchase from CecilTaylorMinistries.com **laminated bookmarks** for participants. These will be enduring 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.

## **Sharing the leadership role**

Sometimes a single leader will take a group through each video. But videos are also of the nature where leadership can be shared each week.

Please pass around the soft copy of the Leader Guide to anyone who leads. Encourage them to read this introduction in advance, in order to better prepare to lead “The Next Thing” discussions.

## **Feedback, please!**

Based on early feedback, I fully expect that many stories will come out of “The Next Thing”, and lives will be changed. I would truly appreciate hearing about these as you see fit. That doesn't mean I have to know all details or a person's name. I would just like to know about how God is using this material to make an impact, and I can potentially leverage those stories to impact more lives. Please let me know as the Spirit moves you, so we can create a ripple effect of goodness in a hurting world. You can email me at Cecil@CecilTaylorMinistries.com.

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**Video Lesson Length:**

***12:14 for the Part 1 video***

***8:19 for the Part 2 video***

***43-53 minutes for the total class length.***

**Book Lesson Length:**

***41-57 minutes for the total class length.***

**Number of Discussions: 2**

**Session Layout:**

***Give Introduction***

***Play Session 1, part 1 video***

***Lead Discussion #1a***

***Play Session 1, part 2 video***

***Lead Discussion #1b***

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***Please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.***

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## Lesson 1: Simplify

### Preparation

1. Read through the Leader's Guide introduction (see above).
2. Watch the Simplify video (two parts, with a 15-second gap between the two for pausing the video) or read the chapter.
3. Key points of the video:
  - Big Thought:
    - Simplify in a crisis to focus on the Next Thing.
  - Core Passage:
    - 2 Timothy 2: 1, 3-4: **“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer.”**
  - Practical Faith ideas:
    - Make it easy on yourself.
    - Prioritize the essential over the optional.
    - Clear your calendar.
    - Focus on just the Next Thing.
  - Guiding thoughts for crisis, based on the core passage:

- Stay spiritually strong.
- Practice mental discipline.
- Please the Lord.
- Other points:
  - The Next Thing concept is based on something Cecil said on the worst day of his life. The concept is to focus primarily on the aspect of the crisis right in front of you. The whole of the crisis is too complex and too uncertain to address at one time. Instead, address the Next Thing and step your way through the crisis.
  - Crises come in different shapes and forms. They can either be downhill (fairly straightforward) or slalom (many twists and turns). They can be either single lane or multiple lane (depending on number of simultaneous Next Things).
  - Cecil shared these personal crises: Entering Sara into a psychiatric hospital after a suicide attempt; Sara's mother's hospice stay and eventual passing.

#### 4. Prepare for discussion.

- Notice on Discussion 1A Q2 and Discussion 1B Q3, it may be useful to use a white board or other way to capture or remember information.
- Every group is different, but generally it's expected that this material could stimulate a lot of discussion. Please watch the time and make sure that the key question of each section gets covered.
- Of all the video sessions in the series, this one is the longest because of the additional mental health commentary at the end. Upcoming videos will usually be slightly shorter, but the discussions could be longer than this lesson.

## Class Time

### Step 1. Introduction to the Series (1 minute)

Please read the following to the group:

**“The Next Thing” is a five-part series devoted to dealing with crises in your personal life. In it, Cecil Taylor proposes a four-part model for addressing your response to a crisis, suggesting practical steps to take as well as scripture that supports each part of the model. The fifth lesson is a conclusion to the series.**

**Over the next five weeks, we'll be talking about our own histories of crises and evaluating our responses to them in light of “The Next Thing” model. The intent of this series is to foster deep discussion that develops a toolkit for dealing with future crises and creates greater understanding of each other's history.**

### Step 2. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 1 of the Simplify video (12-13 minutes)

## Step 3a. Discussion 1A (Target Time: 12-15 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS:** Get the group talking about crises, and review the practical faith steps for Simplifying during a crisis. Be sure to have the group consider question 4.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 3b in this discussion.

### Questions:

1. What does the artwork for the Simplify video symbolize to you?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *It's not important that people all agree on the "correct answer," as the beauty of art is that it often can be interpreted in multiple ways. If it is useful, you could share how Cecil and artist Connor Walden viewed the symbolism.*
    - *For the Next Thing art piece: This will be discussed in session 5.*
    - *For the Simplify art piece: The ball of yarn represents all of the different parts that go into the Next Thing. The string coming out of the ball represent all of the things that must be prioritized. The colored string represents mostly activities or tasks, but they could also mean general areas such as family or work. The white string is the highest priority, representing God and obedience to God, as Cecil will describe in the second half of the lesson.*
2. Let's start with the term "crisis" itself. List the kinds of crises you can think of.
3. Which of these listed crises have you experienced?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *You could either do this as a vote, or have people comment on their crisis experiences. It may depend on how much time you have for discussion. With more time, they could even share some detail about their crises.*
4. What are the benefits of simplification in a crisis? Possible responses:
  - *Focus on the main thing*
  - *Endurance – by simplifying, we can better outlast the crisis*
  - *It's a coping mechanism*
  - *Peace*
  - *Alleviates paralysis*
5. What are your thoughts and experiences with simplicity in crisis?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *One comment you may get is that the Next Thing crisis involving Ruth was a simple example. You can assure the group that the next lesson will contain a more complex example.*



### Step 3b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 1A (15-18 minutes)

1. Cecil discussed in the section, “Acceptance of Crisis,” within “The Next Thing” chapter, that we can make the mistake of denying that a crisis is occurring, and this can impede our response. Have you found this to be true? Can you think of examples of accepting or denying crisis?
2. Cecil wrote about his atheist uncle who admired Cecil’s family’s “context.” How important is context when addressing a crisis? How do families without the context of faith address crises, and how does a lack of a faith component impair their ability to Simplify, Trust, Rest and Grieve?
3. The book contained the rare example of someone who faced both a fire and a tornado in protecting his house. His choice was to focus on the fire coming straight at him versus the tornado that might hit or might not. What can you learn from this example of how to simplify and prioritize when multiple crises are hitting you?
4. Cecil shared a time in his life when he did not follow his principles of simplification. Examining your own crises, when did you simplify well, and when did you fail to simplify?

### Step 4. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 2 of the Simplify video (8-9 minutes)

### Step 5a. Discussion 1B (Target Time: 10-15 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL:** Participants should be able to connect the practical faith steps with the core scripture passage. Be sure to cover question 3.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 5b in this discussion.

#### Questions:

1. Cecil had a couple of different interpretations of the phrase “Stay spiritually strong.” What is your takeaway? What does being spiritually strong in a crisis mean to you?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** Cecil had two interpretations: Resisting temptation; relying on God’s strength.
2. Cecil said that simplifying can help us endure and “soldier on” as a follower of Christ. How do you think this works? How do we increase our endurance through simplifying? Possible responses:
  - *Focusing through simplification can help us block out other noises and concerns that can wear us down. We’re marshalling our energy just for the most important and immediate items.*

- *The passage talks about enduring hardship. A crisis IS hardship! So we need techniques like simplifying to help us endure it.*
  - *Part of simplification is focusing on obedience to Christ. In being obedient, we can find we are gifted with attributes like endurance.*
  - *The dedicated Christian is designed to endure hardship.*
3. There were three key thoughts to extract from the core Bible passage: (1) Stay spiritually strong (2) Practice mental discipline (3) Please the Lord. From these three thoughts, what do you see as the connection between simplification in a crisis, and our Christian walk with God?
- **LEADER NOTE:** *You may have to repeat or post these three thoughts to clearly remind the group.*
  - *All three thoughts encourage us to focus on the most important things – the key Next Thing of the crisis, and our continuing obedience to and relationship with the Lord.*
  - *C.S. Lewis once wrote that all events in life either draw us closer to or pull us farther way from God. In a crisis, it would be easy to be pulled away from God. Through these three thoughts, the crisis does not overwhelm us nor cause us to lose faith in a God that suffers with us through the crisis.*
4. What other thoughts will you take away from this session?
- *This could be an opportunity to bring up the mental health discussion at the end of the video.*
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *Someone might express a concern that Cecil shared such intimate health information about his wife. Please assure the group that it was actually Sara's suggestion to incorporate this story into the videos and book, that long consideration was given before doing so, and that she reviewed and approved any information shared about her story.*

## Step 5b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 1B (3 minutes)

1. Cecil wrote how football gave him a mentality and toughness to allow him to endure hardship. What experiences help you to endure hardship?

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**Total Content Length:**

***10:20 for the Part 1 video***

***8:55 for the Part 2 video***

***48-60 minutes for the total class length.***

**Book Lesson Length:**

***37-52 minutes for the total class length.***

**Number of Discussions: 2**

**Session Layout:**

***Review Session 1***

***Play Session 2, part 1 video***

***Lead Discussion #2a***

***Play Session 2, part 2 video***

***Lead Discussion #2b***

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***If this is your first time to teach a "Next Thing" lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.***

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## Lesson 2: Trust

### Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week's video (see Lesson 1 above).
2. Watch the Trust video or read the chapter.
3. Key points of the Trust video:
  - Big Thought:
    - Trust that God and others will help you get through the Next Thing.
  - Core Passage:
    - Psalm 13, with emphasis on verses 5-6: **"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me."**
  - Practical Faith principles:
    - Prayerfully trust that God will place trustworthy individuals in front of you.
    - Although you feel vulnerable and at risk, you gain control in a crisis by trusting.
    - We trust the trustworthy God we read about in the Bible.

- Other points:
  - We trust that God will provide us peace, empathy and reclamation in crisis.
    - We can count on God to give us unexplainable peace when we give over our anxieties to Him. We can count on God empathizing and crying with us, as through Jesus, he understands our anguish. And we can count on God to build off the negative outcome and reclaim something good.
  - A prayer during times of crisis: “Lord, please put others in our path who can help us. Guide us to wise and skillful people. Help us to recognize them and to rely on them.”
  - Cecil explored the following personal crises: Dealing with Sara’s depression during the year after her first suicide attempt; Getting Ruth’s business affairs and estate under control after she went into hospice care.

#### 4. Prepare for Discussion

- On question 2 during discussion 2A, it may be useful to have Cecil’s list of trust qualities on a white board or other reminder method.
- Usually the review of the last lesson will be straightforward. But in this review, you’re asked to check with the class on how the discussion is going – in particular, how comfortable they are feeling in sharing their stories.
  - Depending on the history and the makeup of the group, people may find it easier or harder to share. After the Simplify lesson, they now have an idea of what story sharing will be like. Please take a little time (as necessary) to ensure the group is comfortable and open in sharing these personal crises in their lives.
- As you can see from the estimated length of 47-60 minutes, this session is expected to foster a lot of discussion. Keep an eye on the clock and skip questions if needed to stay within the time boundaries of your session. The last question on discussion 2B could be trimmed if necessary.

### Class Time

#### Step 1. Review the last lesson (4-7 minutes)

##### Cover last week’s lesson as follows:

- Big Thought:
  - Simplify in a crisis to focus on the Next Thing.
- Core Passage:
  - 2 Timothy 2: 1, 3-4: **“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer.”**
- Practical Faith ideas:
  - Make it easy on yourself.
  - Prioritize the essential over the optional.

- Clear your calendar.
- Focus on the Next Thing. The Next Thing concept is to avoid taking on every aspect of the crisis, but to focus instead on the Next Thing right in front of you. The whole of the crisis is too complex and too uncertain to address at one time. Instead, address the Next Thing and step your way through the crisis.
- Guiding thoughts for crisis, based on the core passage:
  - Stay spiritually strong.
  - Practice mental discipline.
  - Please the Lord.
- **ASK:** Name some things that you have been considering about “The Next Thing” learnings since last week’s lesson and discussion.
- **ASK:** Last time, we began sharing stories of our personal crises. Do you feel comfortable sharing your stories? What could help you be more open to sharing your stories?

## Step 2. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 1 of the Trust video (11 minutes)

## Step 3a. Discussion 2A (Target Time: 12-16 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS:** Because we live in an era of mistrust, the group should come away with the reasons for trusting and the conditions for trusting. Be sure to have the group consider question 3.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 3b in this discussion.

### Questions:

1. What does the artwork for the Trust video symbolize to you?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *It’s not important that people all agree on the “correct answer,” as the beauty of art is that it often can be interpreted in multiple ways. If it is useful, you could share how Cecil and artist Connor Walden viewed the symbolism of the Trust art piece.*
    - *This is a provocative piece of art. The knit piece is able to hold a weight. You can tell the weight is heavy by the way it stretches the knit, yet the fibers work together to sufficiently hold the weight. The lighter color in the knit piece represents God, while the gray stripes represent those God sends to help you. The weight can represent you and/or the Next Thing in general, all the activities, stress and feelings that go into what you’re experiencing in crisis.*
2. Let’s start with one of the last topics. Cecil is asking you to trust others in a crisis. He has a list in the Participant’s Guide of the qualities he looks for that helps him discern whether to trust another person or organization. Cecil’s list of trust qualities is:
  - *Integrity*

- *Listens to me*
  - *Works with me*
  - *Reasonable*
  - *Competent*
  - *Motivated*
  - *Responds well after mistakes*
  - *Has my best interests at heart*
- Name a quality that might be on your list.**

3. What are the benefits of trust? Possible responses:
- *Receive practical guidance.*
  - *Receive kindness (can't receive kindness if we refuse it).*
  - *Feel more confidence during your crisis.*
  - *Feel more in control because you trusted. (Trust is something you can control)*
  - *Experience peace.*
  - *Experience God's presence.*
4. What are your thoughts and experiences with trust in crisis?

### Step 3b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 2A (4-6 minutes)

1. Cecil told the story of the role Trust played in his family's adoption of Rebecca from China (pp. 45-49). What struck you about this section? How do the Taylor family experiences with trust exemplify the phrase, "You lose control in a crisis; yet your choice to trust is something you can control."

### Step 4. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 2 of the Trust video (9-10 minutes)

### Step 5a. Discussion 2B (Target Time: 12-16 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL:** Participants should be able to better understand the mystery of God's action in the world and how God can be counted upon.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 5b in this discussion.

#### Questions:

1. Psalm 13 shows an interesting paradox. David is able to both question God and choose to trust God. How does the questioning play a part in trust? Possible responses:
- *Doubt can strengthen our faith. Doubt forces us to examine our beliefs, discard false beliefs and base our remaining beliefs on truth.*
  - *Once we have challenged God, we can be satisfied with trusting Him.*

- We question a lot of things in life. Once we understand the answers and see how the answers play out, we begin to trust.
  - Cecil's comment: **People around me wonder how I can ask challenging questions of a doctor and then trust the doctor, even when they have been wrong. I'm looking for their thought process, the way they react to new information, their willingness to change, their ability to explain. It's not exactly the same with God, as I'm not expecting God to be wrong! But asking the questions helps me answer them for myself or allows God to reveal the answers in some way. When I am informed by this process, I become aligned with God even more strongly.**
2. Cecil talked about how God can be counted on for peace, empathy and reclamation. How have you experienced peace, empathy and reclamation from God?
    - **LEADER NOTE:** Reclamation can be a difficult subject. People may feel that God hasn't reclaimed an event in their lives. Someone may not understand how a negative event can even be reclaimed! If someone struggles with this, I encourage the group to wrestle with this together (perhaps even outside of class) rather than insisting that someone just accept the answer that "God reclaims." This is very much tied to question 1 about learning to trust God.
  3. What other thoughts will you take away from this session?
    - **NOTE:** The frankness about Sara's depression may be startling to people, especially if they did not see the first lesson. As necessary, they may need to be reassured that Sara wanted to reveal her private struggle in order to help others. At the same time, this is not a course on depression, so actually, a lot of details have been omitted. The point is regarding the crisis that depression represents to the person and their family.
    - Still, some may wrestle with how someone can attempt suicide so many times and yet be considered a follower of Christ. Please help them see Sara in the context of suffering from an illness. Also assure them that, even though we don't explain it in this lesson series, God has revealed to both Sara and Cecil His love for her in the midst of her depression and His desire to use her story for His purpose. Sara and Cecil are hopeful and faithful that this lesson series is another way in which her story will glorify God and help others.

### Step 5b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 2B (5-7 minutes)

1. What reaction did you have to Katie's story? (pp. 53-55)
2. Cecil compared a crisis to Peter walking on the water, writing the phrase "Keep your eyes on Jesus, so you won't sink." What does this phrase mean to you, in the midst of crisis?



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**Total Content Length:**

***11:02 for the Part 1 video***

***7:35 for the Part 2 video***

***42-57 minutes for the total class length.***

**Book Lesson Length:**

***34-53 minutes for the total class length.***

**Number of Discussions: 2**

**Session Layout:**

***Review Session 2***

***Play Session 3, part 1 video***

***Lead Discussion #3a***

***Play Session 3, part 2 video***

***Lead Discussion 3b***

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***If this is your first time to teach a "Next Thing" lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.***

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## Lesson 3: Rest

### Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week's video (see Lesson 2 above).
2. Watch the Rest video or read the chapter.
3. Key points of the Rest video:
  - Big Thought:
    - Rest, so you are ready for the Next Thing.
  - Core Passage:
    - Isaiah 40: 31: **But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**
  - Practical Faith principles:
    - To rest your heart in crisis, label your emotions.
    - To rest your soul in crisis, connect to the Holy Spirit.
    - To rest your mind in crisis, be in the present.
    - To rest your strength in crisis, increase exercise and sleep.
  - Other points:
    - We can easily become overwhelmed during a crisis, to the point of exhaustion.



- You can get hooked on the adrenaline of activity during a crisis or a very busy time. Instead of catching your breath and resting, you seek another task.
- The Bible is full of reminders and even commands that we must rest.
- Cecil discussed the following personal/family crises: Sara's need to rest after her mother's burial; the caregiver's need to rest when dealing with overlapping crises regarding the dementia patient.

#### 4. Prepare for Discussion

- As you can see from the estimated length of 42-57 minutes, this session could have a wide variation of length because of the discussion; they could either be short or long, depending on the group's experience with the topic. As a result, fewer questions are given on discussion 3B, and its last question could be trimmed if necessary.

## Class Time

### Step 1. Review the last lesson (3-5 minutes)

#### Cover last week's lesson as follows:

- Big Thought:
  - Trust that God and others will help you get through the Next Thing.
- Core Passage:
  - Psalm 13, with emphasis on verses 5-6: **“But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me.”**
- Practical Faith principles:
  - Prayerfully trust that God will place trustworthy individuals in front of you.
  - Although you feel vulnerable and at risk, you gain control in a crisis by trusting.
  - We trust the trustworthy God we read about in the Bible.
- Other points:
  - We trust that God will provide us peace, empathy and reclamation in crisis.
    - We can count on God to give us unexplainable peace when we give over our anxieties to Him. We can count on God empathizing and crying with us, as through Jesus, he understands our anguish. And we can count on God to build off the negative outcome and reclaim something good.
  - A prayer during times of crisis: “Lord, please put others in our path who can help us. Guide us to wise and skillful people. Help us to recognize them and to rely on them.”
- **ASK:** Name some things that you have been considering about “The Next Thing” learnings since last week's lesson and discussion.

## Step 2. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 1 of the Rest video (11-12 minutes)

## Step 3a. Discussion 3A (Target Time: 9-14 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS:** The group should be able to share ideas on how to rest. Be sure to have the group consider question 3.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 3b in this discussion.

### Questions:

1. What does the artwork for the Rest video symbolize to you?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *It's not important that people all agree on the "correct answer," as the beauty of art is that it often can be interpreted in multiple ways. If it is useful, you could share how Cecil and artist Connor Walden viewed the symbolism of the Rest art piece.*
    - *The art symbolizes a journey toward collapse and subsequent improvement after rest has been achieved.*
2. Cecil talked about a loved one's crisis where there were multiple Next Things going on, fighting for priority. Have you been in a crisis like this, with multiple Next Things? How did you handle it?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *The point isn't whether your class has encountered a dementia crisis or caregiver crisis. It's whether they can relate to the side-by-side nature of the example crisis, and how parts of the crisis can lurk, growing, overlooked, while other parts are demanding more attention.*
3. What are the benefits of rest? Possible responses:
  - *Better able to face a crisis*
  - *Better able to deal with the Next Thing*
  - *Make sure you don't create a new crisis for yourself because you're not resting*
  - *Avoid breaking points*
  - *Feel less stress, generally feel better, feel more energy*
  - *Feeling better leads to better mood, more optimism and hope and joy*
  - *Tap into God's power rather than only relying on your own.*

**LEADER NOTE:** *On the next question, you can either take each part of the model individually, or let the conversation flow between the topics.*

4. Cecil shared a four-part model for rest, by resting heart, soul, mind and strength. He invited us to add to his thoughts. What are your thoughts and techniques for:
  - A. Resting heart (or emotions). Cecil's idea: Label emotions.
  - B. Resting soul (or spirit). Cecil's idea: Connect your spirit to the Holy Spirit.
  - C. Resting mind (or thoughts). Cecil's idea: Focus on being in the present.
  - D. Resting strength (or body). Cecil's ideas: Increase exercise and sleep.

### Step 3b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 3A (6-9 minutes)

1. Expanding on question #4 above, in the book Cecil adds more ideas for resting in the first three of the four categories. What are your thoughts and techniques for:
  - A. Resting heart (or emotions). Cecil's idea: Solitude.
  - B. Resting soul (or spirit). Cecil's idea: Prayer.
  - C. Resting mind (or thoughts). Cecil's idea: Rejuvenation.

### Step 4. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 2 of the Rest video (8-9 minutes)

### Step 5a. Discussion 3B (Target Time: 11-17 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL:** The topic of rest is always stimulating, because people have varying needs to rest. So the goal is to come away with an understanding that it is important to find rest, although individuals may approach amounts and types of rest differently. Be sure to cover question 2.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 5b in this discussion.

#### Questions:

1. Have you ever felt like you were at a breaking point during a crisis? What pulled you out of it?
2. (a) Do you find it difficult to rest? What stops you from resting? (b) How does your approach to rest change during a crisis?
3. What does it mean to you that God offers rest and urges us to rest and practiced rest Himself?
4. What other thoughts will you take away from this session?

### Step 5b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 3B (5-8 minutes)

1. Cecil describes a day (May 19, 2021) on p. 80 during which he was a caregiver, but was not taking care of himself. He finally snapped with a very angry day toward others and himself. Have you had a time when you did not take care of yourself and finally snapped in some way?

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**Total Content Length:**

***12:14 for the Part 1 video***

***8:19 for the Part 2 video***

***42-55 minutes for the total class length.***

**Book Lesson Length:**

***32-46 minutes for the total class length.***

**Number of Discussions: 2**

**Session Layout:**

***Review Session 3***

***Play Session 4, part 1 video***

***Lead Discussion #4a***

***Play Session 4, part 2 video***

***Lead Discussion 4b***

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***If this is your first time to teach a "Next Thing" lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.***

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## Lesson 4: Grieve

### Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week's video (see Lesson 3 above).
2. Watch the Grieve video or read the chapter.
3. Key points of the Grieve video:
  - Big Thought:
    - Grieve, so you can accept and act on the Next Thing.
  - Core Passage:
    - Lamentations 3: 20b-26: **My soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.**
  - Practical Faith principles:
    - Accept the loss realistically, directly and responsibly
    - Live the life that is given.

- Don't "heal"; "seal". Compartmentalize as a tree responds to injury.
  - Other points:
    - *"The Next Thing" only focuses on the acceptance phase of a crisis. Its focus is on the idea of grieving during a crisis rather than after the crisis is past.*
    - Crisis usually involves an ending. Grieving addresses that ending.
    - Acceptance doesn't mean that we like or enjoy the Next Thing. It means we acknowledge the reality and adapt.
    - Jeremiah illustrates how we can grieve even in the midst of crisis.
    - Cecil discussed the following personal/family crises: Loss of his dream job; the family's need to grieve in stages as the dementia patient declined.
4. Prepare for Discussion
- To the last point, Jeremiah may seem that he grieves differently than Cecil's family did for the dementia patient. But like the dementia case and Cecil's exit from the startup, Jeremiah is grieving not only for the future, but also for the ongoing changes and process that will ultimately lead to a bad situation.
  - One of the challenges of this discussion on grief is to limit the scope. The lesson is about grieving during crisis and focuses on the grief stage of acceptance. As the lesson indicates, there are other stages, but they are not addressed. As discussion leader, you may need to gently guide the discussion to follow suit and focus primarily on acceptance rather than other grief stages.
  - Expect that the first discussion, 4A, could need more time, and adjust discussion 4B accordingly. There are fewer questions in 4B to account for this situation.

## Class Time

### Step 1. Review the last lesson (3-5 minutes)

#### Cover last week's lesson as follows:

- Big Thought:
  - Rest, so you are ready for the Next Thing.
- Core Passage:
  - Isaiah 40: 31: **But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**
- Practical Faith principles:
  - To rest your heart in crisis, label your emotions.
  - To rest your soul in crisis, connect to the Holy Spirit.
  - To rest your mind in crisis, be in the present.
  - To rest your strength in crisis, increase exercise and sleep.
- Other points:
  - We can easily become overwhelmed during a crisis, to the point of exhaustion.

- You can get hooked on the adrenaline of activity during a crisis or a very busy time. Instead of catching your breath and resting, you seek another task.
- The Bible is full of reminders and even commands that we must rest.
- **ASK:** Name some things that you have been considering about “The Next Thing” learnings since last week’s lesson and discussion.

## Step 2. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 1 of the Grieve video (12-13 minutes)

## Step 3a. Discussion 4A (Target Time: 10-15 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS:** The group should be able to master the concepts of acceptance of loss and compartmentalization. Be sure to have the group consider questions 3 and 4.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 3b in this discussion.

### Questions:

1. What does the artwork for the Grieve video symbolize to you?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *It’s not important that people all agree on the “correct answer,” as the beauty of art is that it often can be interpreted in multiple ways. If it is useful, you could share how Cecil and artist Connor Walden viewed the symbolism of the Grieve art piece.*
    - *The art symbolizes a couple of things. First, there is the frazzling nature of grief. Second, the fraying of the wisps indicate the loss that is happening; however, note that the wisps disappear upward, symbolically putting the outcome into God’s hands.*
    - *Also note that the black color represents the crisis itself.*
2. What are the benefits of grieving in the midst of crisis? Possible responses:
  - *Can accept and act on the Next Thing.*
  - *Starts the grieving process earlier.*
  - *Helps to label your feelings, just as in the Rest discussion of resting emotions.*
3. Cecil talked about acceptance as a key part of grieving that allows us to embrace the Next Thing. Cecil has said that one of his favorite parts of **The Next Thing** is the inspiring phrase on acceptance that came from a young cystic fibrosis victim who wrote, “I will live the life that is given.” How does that phrase teach us how to accept a loss and be able to act on the Next Thing? Possible responses:
  - *Increases our gratitude for what we have.*
  - *It’s taking action, to say “LIVE your life”. Gets you unstuck.*

- *It would be easy to focus on the life that was taken rather than given. And certainly, the life that was taken results in the life that was given. But this is a positive statement for dealing with the new reality.*
4. Trees use compartmentalization to seal a wound with callous tissue in order to protect the ongoing new growth around the wound. What does this teach us about taking care of ourselves when experiencing loss in a crisis? Possible responses:
- *Honors the loss and even preserves the loss while not focusing on it.*
  - *Recognizes that we will never be the same, that we will carry the scars of the loss or injury.*
  - *Allows us to move forward with new growth.*
  - *Just as the tree seals so that infection and decay cannot seep out, this compartmentalization helps us from letting the loss or wound spill over into our future in a negative way.*
  - *There is not a final step to grief in this model. It is contained but is allowed to continue. This is different than any model that implies a final step to grief.*

### Step 3b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 4A (7-10 minutes)

1. The book quotes David Kessler as writing:  
**Acceptance is often confused with the notion of being 'all right' or 'OK' with what has happened. This is not the case. Most people don't ever feel OK or all right.**  
 Cecil clarifies (p. 93) that acceptance is "engaging with reality as it is, and adapting, copying and responding skillfully to that reality." Discuss what "acceptance" means to you.
2. The book quotes M. Scott Peck's view that humans tend to avoid pain. Cecil indicates that we are not supposed to ignore the loss when grieving. Why do we avoid suffering? How does suffering relate to facing the loss directly?

### Step 4. Video Leaders Only: Watch Part 2 of the Grieve video (8-9 minutes)

### Step 5a. Discussion 4B (Target Time: 9-13 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOAL:** One of the great challenges of being a Christian is to hope in the Lord even during difficult times. The goal of this discussion is to wrestle with this topic and how we handle confidence and doubt. Be sure to cover question 2.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step 5b in this discussion.

**Questions:**

1. Even in the midst of rubble, Jeremiah hopes in the Lord and points to His love, compassion, faithfulness and presence. How can we hope in the Lord in the midst of rubble?
2. The core passage in Lamentations is the basis for one of Cecil's favorite hymns, "Great is Thy Faithfulness." The hymn contains the line, "Morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided."
  - a. How do you see this play out in your life? What new mercies do you experience each day? Can you point to times when God's provision gave you all that you needed?
  - b. Alternately, do you feel that God has failed you at times, and not provided what you needed? Did you have the same or different perspective as you look back on that episode?
3. What other thoughts will you take away from this session?

**Step 5b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 4B (3 minutes)**

1. The book expands on God's compassion as witnessed through the actions and attitudes of Jesus (p. 106). Had you ever considered Jesus' compassion? Because Jesus is so compassionate, what lengths did Jesus go to express and live that compassion?



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**Total Content Length:**

***11:20 for the video***

***44-59 minutes for the total class length.***

**Book Lesson Length:**

***33-47 minutes for the total class length.***

**Number of Discussions: 1**

**Session Layout:**

***Review Session 4***

***Play Session 5 video***

***Lead Discussion #5***

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If this is your first time to teach a "Next Thing" lesson, please read the introductory sections prior to Lesson 1.

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## Lesson 5: Conclusion

### Preparation

1. Review the key points of last week's video (see Lesson 4 above).
2. Watch the Conclusion video or read the chapter.
3. Key points of the Conclusion video:
  - Four main points shared in the video:
    - Cecil has learned this Simplify-Trust-Rest-Grieve model the hard way, through his own mistakes in crisis. Read the accompanying **The Next Thing** book for more depth, more examples and as a reference by which to remember the video series.
    - He sees a connection across the series, in that our role is to take care of our response to the Next Thing. God's role is to take care of the outcome of the Next Thing.
      - This means that the outcome is always in God's hands, whatever it is, and that gives us peace and comfort.
    - Crisis fundamentally changes us.
    - A helpful phrase to remember is "This too shall pass," especially as we address the Next Thing by

- simplifying, trusting, resting and grieving.
- Other points:
  - Echoing the trust lesson, God handles the outcome by providing peace, empathy and reclamation.
  - Still, we should pray for our favored outcome and for God's will to be done, as in Jesus' Gethemane prayer from Mark 14: 36: **"Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."**
  - Crisis can fundamentally change you for better or for worse.
  - A crisis tries to teach you something you wouldn't learn voluntarily.
- 4. Prepare for Discussion
  - Although there are not that many questions, these questions should stimulate longer answers and deeper discussion to occupy the discussion time.
  - While most of the questions are targeted to the Conclusion video, there is hopefully time to allow participants to discuss anything from the series that stood out to them.

## Class Time

### Step 1. Review the last lesson (3-5 minutes)

#### Cover last week's lesson as follows:

- Big Thought:
  - Grieve, so you can accept and act on the Next Thing.
- Core Passage:
  - Lamentations 3: 20b-26: **My soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.**
- Practical Faith principles:
  - Accept the loss realistically, directly and responsibly
  - Live the life that is given.
  - Don't "heal"; "seal". Compartmentalize as a tree responds to injury.
- Other points:
  - Crisis usually involves an ending. Grieving addresses that ending.
  - Acceptance doesn't mean that we like or enjoy the Next Thing. It means we acknowledge the reality and adapt.
  - Jeremiah illustrates how we can grieve even in the midst of crisis.
- **ASK:** Name some things that you have been considering about "The Next Thing" learnings since last week's lesson and discussion.

## Step 2. Video Leaders Only: Watch the Conclusion video (11-12 minutes)

## Step 3a. Discussion 5 (Target Time: 30-42 minutes)

**MAIN DISCUSSION GOALS:** The goal is to use the video as a starting point to review the entire series and its key thoughts. Be sure to have the group consider question 6, as it's important to reflect on the entirety of the series and where you go from here.

**BOOK STUDY LEADERS:** Please include the questions in step b in this discussion.

### Questions:

1. What does the artwork for the overall Next Thing image symbolize to you?
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *It's not important that people all agree on the "correct answer," as the beauty of art is that it often can be interpreted in multiple ways. If it is useful, you could share how Cecil and artist Connor Walden viewed the symbolism of the Next Thing art piece.*

*The large ball of yarn symbolizes the Next Thing itself. It is a tangle of types and colors of yarn, reflecting the confusion, the tasks, the decisions, perhaps even the people who become part of the Next Thing event.*

*Entering the ball from the left, the gray yarn symbolizes you. The white yarn symbolizes God. The black yarn symbolizes the crisis itself. Often but not always, the crisis already exists before we are aware of it. The black yarn represents the looming crisis.*

*Exiting the Next Thing ball of yarn, you see these three colors persist. Other colors (representing all of the items within the Next Thing) fall away, and what is left is you, God and the crisis, interwoven tightly. This symbolizes how the crisis has changed you. Ideally the experience has brought you closer to God, but as I've discussed in the video series, God is near whether you recognize it or not.*

2. Reflecting on the crises you have experienced and what you have heard in the videos, what mistakes do you think you've made in previous crises, in terms of NOT simplifying, trusting, resting and grieving? How would you change your decisions or behavior if you had a do-over?
3. Cecil stated that our role is to take care of our response to the Next Thing, and God's role is to take care of the outcome of the Next Thing. How do you react to that statement? How do you see our role and God's role?
4. When talking about how crisis can fundamentally change us, Cecil shared how economic difficulty and infertility changed him and his family. Talk about a crisis you experienced and how it fundamentally changed you.

5. Sam Farler's phrase to get through a crisis was "This too shall pass." What words of wisdom have sustained you in a crisis? Or, what helpful advice did you receive that helped you get through the Next Thing?
  6. Here at the conclusion of The Next Thing, what final thoughts do you have as you reflect on this series? What will you take away? What will you share with others? How will you remember and act on what you've learned?
- **LEADER NOTE:** *This is a good time to remind people of the benefits of other materials and services available from CecilTaylorMinistries.com.*
    - **For video groups:** *The book goes into the topic more deeply while also serving as a reference manual during future crises.*
    - **For both groups:** *The Participant's Guide (if not used earlier) allows deeper personal introspection and exploration of the topic, useful for both evaluating the past and preparing for the future.*
    - **For both groups:** *If you did not purchase the Exclusive Bundle, please be aware that it is possible to arrange Cecil to speak to your group either in person or remotely, as a follow-up to the study. Please contact him at [Cecil@CecilTaylorMinistries.com](mailto:Cecil@CecilTaylorMinistries.com) to understand this option.*
  - **LEADER NOTE:** *Please ask anyone who purchased the book to review The Next Thing on Amazon. If they did not purchase from Amazon, their review can still be accepted by indicating that they either purchased the book elsewhere or purchased it directly from the author's website. **Such reviews are very important to others who are investigating the material, so please urge the participants to post a review.***

### Step 3b. Bonus Book Study Questions related to Discussion 5 (0 minutes)

There are no further questions for book study groups.