



**Q&A about “The Next Thing” book (2023 Living Water Award from Blue Lake Christian Writers’ Conference, as runner-up in Nonfiction).**

Some of the answers are written out fully; others are bullet points.

**Q: Give us a brief overview of “The Next Thing.”**

A: “The Next Thing” has to do with a faith-based way to approach crisis. It contains practical principles and shares the scriptural underpinning of those principles. It has a four-part model to Simplify, Trust, Rest, and Grieve your way through a crisis. Those sound like simple steps, but in a crisis, we can become so overwhelmed that those are the last things we do!

The concept of the phrase, the next thing, has to do with our approach to crisis. We can try to “boil the ocean”, dealing with every contingency, fretting over every possible outcome. In the “Next Thing” approach, you focus on the next thing in front of you.

For example, when my mother-in-law went on hospice care, we didn’t start planning the funeral or fretting too much on her passing. We focused our energy and emotions on tasks immediately in front of us, such as getting control of her bills and finding key paperwork like powers of attorney.

**Q: What makes “The Next Thing” unique (or special or different)?**

A: From feedback, I think three things stand out. First, it applies to any crisis. People have used it in divorce, job loss, depression, and grief. Second, this is a book that counselors and chaplains are starting to use in their practices. Again, its principles are seen as adaptable and flexible. Third, small groups have told us that the openness and vulnerability that our family displays about our crises have led to open and vulnerable discussions in their groups.

*NOTE: I'm not sure if you want to go this deep in your podcast, but if you're skimmed the book, you've seen that the story of my wife Sara's first suicide attempt is the basis for the phrase "the next thing." I always want to assure people that, while my first approach was to talk generically about the crisis, Sara encouraged me to tell her story in her desire to help others, which is definitely happening.*

**Q: How do you define a crisis?**

**A:**

- Crisis: Intense difficulty, trouble, or danger; a time when a critical decision must be made; a turning point.
- Most personal crises fall within three areas: Health, financial, or relationship. These can be for yourself or for someone close to you.
- Therefore, most crises are associated with loss and/or with stress.
- As a result of all these characteristics, crisis fundamentally changes us. Life is always different, and you as a person are different, from having gone through a crisis.

**Q: Should believers handle a crisis differently than non-believers? Why?**

**A:**

- 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18: Rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- As believers, we realize that every day of life is a gift from God. And we don't know what that life will hold. We are to live the life that we are given, whether in poverty or prosperity of wealth, health, time or options.
- Part of trusting God during a crisis is to realize His reclaiming power, to take negative events and reclaim them for good.

**Q: Why is focusing on the next thing so important during a crisis?**

**A:**

- No doubt, it's easier said than done. But simplifying your thinking is a wonderful thing.
  - A crisis can overwhelm you with its magnitude. You have to start thinking about what's in front of you.
  - Memorable example from the book of a guy who was battling a pallet fire from an industrial site next door to his house in the middle of a storm. Then a tornado appeared! Firefighters ran for shelter, but his approach was, the tornado might come to my house, but the fire will come to my house! So he stayed in the yard and kept fighting the fire.
  - This is very symbolic of what happens in a crisis. We can start thinking about all the possibilities, all the tornados that might happen. But there is first the fire in front of us, and we have to wrestle with it primarily.
- I've had a number of readers and viewers tell me of the peace and clarity they got out of focusing on the next thing in front of them. They talk about how a crisis can be so complicated, but if you just tackle the next thing, and the next thing after that, you can make it through.

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