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Do the Next Right Thing

A Gentle Practice for Grief, Overwhelm & the Unknown

A personal invitation

This practice was born out of my own journey through grief. There were seasons when sadness felt so heavy and the unknown so overwhelming that even thinking about the future felt like too much. In that season, the Lord gently taught me to return to what was right in front of me. I did not have to figure out tomorrow, find the answer to every question, or carry the whole journey at once. I could ask: What is the next right thing for today? This helped me become present rather than continually occupied with my pain or trying to solve things too great for me: my direction, purpose, and all the unknowns.

Psalm 131 gives language to what God was teaching me. The psalmist says, “I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me” (Psalm 131:1, ESV), and then, “But I have calmed and quieted my soul” (Psalm 131:2, ESV). This is not a call to deny pain, silence difficult questions, or pretend to be okay. It is an invitation to release the exhausting demand to understand everything today. Like a weaned child resting near its mother, I can learn to be with God even when I have no answer.

Sometimes the next right thing was practical: a decision or one small step forward. Other times it was grieving, resting, reaching out, or simply being with God. Just a few months into my deep grief after a devastating loss, when I heard the song, “The Next Right Thing” in Frozen 2, it felt like a sweet confirmation of what the Lord had already been teaching me. The song is sung by Ana, who is grieving the loss of her sister, and its invitation to “do the next right thing” put words to a practice that had already begun to sustain me.

God does not merely offer answers from a distance. Scripture shows us a God who is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), who comforts us in our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3–4), and who meets us in suffering.

We can learn to reach for His presence, not only reach for a resolution from Him.

We can bring Him our sorrow without needing to make it disappear first.

This is not about rushing grief or solving the unknown. It is about breathing, quieting ourselves, and receiving enough grace for today.

Song reflection — “The Next Right Thing” (*Frozen 2*)

The song gives voice to numbness, disorientation, and the overwhelming weight of grief before turning toward one breath, one step, and one choice. As you listen to or read the song, notice what resonates with your own experience. You do not have to know the entire way forward today.

Listen to the song, “The Next Right Thing,” performed by Kristen Bell. A few lyrics from the song that give voice to the experience of grief:

This grief has a gravity

It pulls me down

But a tiny voice whispers in my mind

You are lost, hope is gone

But you must go on

And do the next right thing

Can there be a day beyond this night?

I don't know anymore what is true

I can't find my direction, I'm all alone

The only star that guided me was you

How to rise from the floor

When it's not you I'm rising for?

Just do the next right thing

Take a step, step again

It is all that I can to do

The next right thing

I won't look too far ahead

It's too much for me to take

But break it down to this next breath

This next step

This next choice is one that I can make

An invitation to practice

Out of my own journey, I created a gentle reflection exercise called **Do the Next Right Thing**.

It is designed for those navigating grief, overwhelming emotions, difficult transitions, or seasons of uncertainty.

The exercise helps you slow down, notice what is happening inside you, separate what belongs to today from what doesn't, and begin discerning what your next faithful step might be.

It also includes grounding questions, Scripture, and a closing prayer inspired by Psalm 131 to help you quiet your soul in God's presence.

You do not need to complete every question. In fact, if you are in the early or most painful stages of grief, I encourage you to begin with just the first two sections. There is no pressure to rush, resolve, or figure everything out.

My hope is that this practice will help you experience something the Lord so tenderly taught me:

You can be present with God and your pain at the same time.

You can have unanswered questions and still experience His nearness.

You can grieve what has been lost without needing to know exactly what comes next.

And you can trust Him with tomorrow while tending faithfully to today.

You do not have to carry the whole road today.

Sometimes, the next right thing is enough.

Before you begin: breathe and quiet yourself.

Move through these questions at your own gentle pace and do not feel pressure to complete all of them. Answer what you can. They exist to help you stay present and sift what you are carrying inside of you. Questions 1–2 are the most important.

Settle into a comfortable position. Take a few gentle, unhurried breaths. Notice the support beneath you. You do not need to force yourself to feel peaceful or make your sadness go away. Simply become present to yourself and to God.

Reflection: Which part of the song puts words to what I am carrying today?

_____

1. NOTICE — What is here right now?

Before trying to solve anything, slow down and notice. What am I feeling? What feels heavy, confusing, painful, unfinished, or uncertain? What is taking up the most space inside me today?

Right now, I notice: _____

Naming what is present is enough for this step.

GROUND IN TODAY — Before moving forward, ask:

Where did I experience any joy today, even briefly? _____

Where did I sense God's nearness or care today? _____

What do I know to be 100% true today? _____

If I cannot identify joy or sense God today, I can name that honestly too. His nearness is not dependent on my ability to feel it.

What is the pain my body is carrying?

2. SEPARATE — *What belongs to today?*

What actually requires my attention today? What am I carrying that does not need to be decided, solved, or understood today?

Mine for today: _____

Not mine for today: _____

I can leave tomorrow with God while tending faithfully to today.

3. CLEAR — What is creating internal clutter?

What keeps circling in my mind? Is there an unfinished decision, expectation, fear, delayed conversation, someone else's burden, or question I cannot answer yet? What do I continue to wait on? What is not in my control? What seems too big today?

What can I decide, release, postpone, delegate, or bring to God?

_____

4. DISTINGUISH — What do I know and not know?

What questions remain unanswered? What need or desire has remained unmet?

What I don't know yet: _____

What is already clear through Scripture, wisdom, circumstances, responsibilities, limitations, and trusted counsel?

What I do know to be true today: _____

I do not need every answer before taking a faithful step.

5. DISCERN — What is driving me?

Am I moving from fear, urgency, guilt, people-pleasing, avoidance, or a need to control? Or am I responding from love, wisdom, faithfulness, courage, responsibility, and trust?

Fear may be present—but does fear get to lead?

_____

6. LISTEN — What has this season shown me?

This question may be too premature depending on where you are in your grief and loss.

What has been life-giving—connection, meaning, joy, strength, peace, or rest? What has been consistently depleting?

Life-giving: _____

Life-draining: _____

What might these patterns help me notice? They are information for discernment, not automatic instructions.

7. RECEIVE — What might God be inviting me into today?

The emphasis is today. We are not trying to solve everything inside us or around us right now. We are learning to be present in this moment, with God, and to respond to what belongs to today. For today, that is enough.

Instead of asking God to reveal the entire outcome, ask: Lord, what is mine to receive, release, or respond to today?

Perhaps the invitation is to rest, grieve, ask for help, have a conversation, say no, wait, pray, connect, or take a small step. Test what you discern against Scripture, God's character, wisdom, reality, and wise counsel.

What am I sensing or considering? _____

8. ACT — What is my next right thing?

What is one faithful thing I can do with what I know today? Not the next ten steps—just the next right thing today. Make it small enough to do, and allow that to be enough for today.

My next right thing: _____

When grief is especially heavy

The next right thing may be to get out of bed, eat, cry, shower, call someone safe, sit outside, cancel something, remember the person or thing you lost, honor what was good from what you lost, receive help, pray one sentence, or rest. Small does not mean insignificant. Grief can reduce emotional and cognitive capacity; faithfulness is not measured against your capacity in another season.

A closing prayer

Father,

I am hurting. Some days I feel overwhelmed by sadness, by what has changed, and by everything I cannot understand.

I want answers. I want relief. I want to know how this is going to turn out. Sometimes I feel angry, afraid, exhausted, or even numb. I don't know what to do with all that I'm carrying.

But here I am, Lord.

I don't want to pretend I'm okay when I'm not. I don't want to rush past my pain or deny what is happening inside me. I want to learn how to be present with You in the middle of it.

Like the psalmist in Psalm 131, help me stop occupying myself with matters too great for me to carry today. I recognize how often my mind reaches into tomorrow, trying to find answers, certainty, and relief.

Teach me to quiet my soul.

Not by suppressing my feelings or forcing myself to be peaceful, but by learning to settle into Your nearness, like a child resting securely with its mother.

Help me calm my soul. Breath with me. Stay with me.

Lord, when I reach for an explanation, remind me that I can also reach for You.

When nothing changes around me, help me discover that I can still be with You right here.

Help me notice what is true today. Help me recognize even the smallest moments of joy, goodness, or comfort. Open my awareness to the ways You have been near, even when I haven't been able to feel You.

I release what is too great for me to understand or resolve today.

Give me grace for this breath, this moment, this day.

Show me the next right thing for today.

And for today, let that be enough.

Amen.

Scripture for reflection:

- Psalm 131:1–3
- Psalm 34:18
- 2 Corinthians 1:3–4
- Matthew 6:34
- Psalm 119:105
- James 1:5