



Making It Safely Home

Ecclesiastes 6:10-13

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In his best-selling book, entitled *Into Thin Air*, the author tells the account of an expedition to the summit of Mount Everest that took place 25 years ago.

One member of the expedition was a 46-year-old Japanese woman who had a long record of accomplishments as a climber. She was renowned in her home country of Japan.

Yasuko had already climbed 6 of the famous 7 summits, representing the highest points on each of the 7 continents — so far less than 500 people in history have climbed all 7. There was one summit left for her to conquer: Mt. Everest.

This had been her life-long goal. As the expedition team climbed, she pushed herself extremely hard, even jostling her way past everyone to the front of the line. She wanted to get to the top of the mountain and eventually she did, along with the entire team.

Later that same afternoon, Yasuko and a number of other climbers were caught in

a sudden and blinding blizzard. The temperatures plummeted and icy winds blew unmercifully.

Having expended all her energy to get to the summit, already weakened, she succumbed to the exhaustion of the climb and she froze to death on the mountain.

According to their guide, her fatal flaw was that she had mistaken her ultimate goal. What she wanted the most was to stand at the top of the world, and all of Japan cheered their favorite daughter when she did. But the guide said, “This was the wrong goal, and a common fatal mistake among climbers.”

The guide said, “The goal of climbing is not to reach the summit – to get to the top; the goal is to get back down to the bottom, safely. She had pursued the wrong goal in life.

For several months, before any of us knew how to pronounce coronavirus, we

had been reading from the expedition journal of King Solomon.

He's been climbing such great heights that we find hard to imagine — from buildings and parks and gardens and palaces to a global reputation for his splendor, not to mention that every utensil in his dining room was made of solid gold.

He was the golden King! What a climb to the summit of life!

But somewhere along the way, he began pursuing the wrong goal in life; he began heading in the wrong direction.

But now, as an old man, having come to his senses — and I believe, to genuine repentance — he writes about his expedition: where he got off track, why he ended up losing so much, and how not to make the same mistakes in life.

Let's go back to our study of Solomon's journal. It's called the Book of Ecclesiastes. We're now in chapter 6, where Hebrew scholars believe this is the halfway point in his journal.

So, it's almost as if Solomon is pulling us over at halftime to remind us of the big picture. And he's going to make some sweeping statements here. I've outlined them into 3 reminders we need to keep in mind as we climb, so to speak. Here's what we need to know to climb the mountain of life, and make it safely home, in the end.

Here's the first reminder:

What has happened in the past took place under the creative authority of God.

*Whatever has come to be
has already been named.*

Ecclesiastes 6:10a

God isn't mentioned specifically, but He's in between every line of this summary text.

Solomon is essentially saying that whatever has happened throughout history has been under the authority of Creator God.

At the beginning of creation, on the 6th day, God creates and then names the first man, Adam (Genesis 2:7), demonstrating His authority over mankind.

But then, if you remember your creation history, God brings all the animals to Adam and has Adam give them all their names, which demonstrated Adam's God-given right to rule over the animal kingdom (Genesis 2:19).

In Genesis chapter 1, God creates the universe and the Bible tells us that He named everything. I think it's ironic today that our evolutionary world can't help but use God's vocabulary. For God named the earth and the sun and the moon and the stars.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that God created the galaxies of planets and stars

and then calls them all by name (Isaiah 40:26). That's a lot of names.

Throughout the ancient world, the act of naming someone was a sign of authority over them.

Daniel and his three Hebrew friends are taken to Babylon where they are given different names from King Nebuchadnezzar — it was nothing less than a demonstration of his authority over them.

In Genesis 17:5, God will change Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah; God will change Jacob's name to Israel in Genesis 32:28.

Jesus will look at Simon and give him the name Peter — exercising his lordship over Peter's life (John 1:42).

Now here in Ecclesiastes, Solomon broadens the idea with a Hebrew construction called a divine passive.

In other words, God has actually named everything — whatever has come to be has already been named by God. Nothing has come about; nothing has happened throughout history that God does not have a name for. Why? Because He is in authority over all of past history.



Do you trust in this reminder? Are there moments in your past history where you have seen God in authority over what has happened to you?

Here's the second reminder:

What is happening in the present is taking place under the caring sovereignty of God.

And it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity (fleeting), and what is the advantage to man?

Ecclesiastes 6:10b-11

What advantage is it to argue with one stronger than you, and in this case, the stronger one is the one who named you.

God not only named you, but He knows everything about you and everything you're going through.

You can argue with me, God says; you can dispute with Me, but you're disputing with someone far stronger, far superior than you.

C. S. Lewis wrote that to argue with God is to argue with the One who made it possible for you to argue.

Are we really capable of disputing with God? What do we know about anything that has taken place or is taking place compared to what God knows?

Just how smart do we think we are?

We weren't even able to figure out how to program that VCR — how many of you even remember a VCR. We don't have them anymore; we don't have video cassettes anymore. They came and went. Which means we never figured them out. Not to mention we can't remember what we had for lunch 3 weeks ago.

But we're going to argue with God about what's going on?



Is there a subject of your life where sometimes you feel like you know more than God? What is that, and how can you submit that to him today?

This is Solomon's reminder to himself that even though he was considered the smartest guy on the planet, he was nothing compared to wisdom of God's sovereign glory.

Instead of arguing more with God, he should have surrendered more to God.

I read recently from a pastor who wrote about our own sense of independence of confidence, and sometimes it's humorous if you'll think about it. He illustrated this concept by writing this:

"When I started a new church, I was soon overwhelmed with pressure and stress; 70-hour workweeks, and eventually pressing worries and the inability to sleep. When we finally moved into our home, I had saved the heaviest piece of furniture for last — it was the desk from my office.

As I was pushing and pulling that desk with all my might, my four-year-old son came over and asked if he could help. I smiled and said, 'Sure.'

And then together we started sliding that desk across the carpeted floor of the living room. He was pushing and grunting and straining as we inched our way along. Then after a few minutes, my four-year-old stopped pushing, looked up at me and said, 'Dad, you're in my way.' And then he tried to push it all by himself — and of course, it didn't budge.

It occurred to me that my problem was that I was handling my present situation like my son was handling that desk. As I struggled and pushed and pulled at the challenges of life, God wasn't really helping at all . . . in fact, He seemed to be in the way."

Solomon has spent years putting God over on the sidelines — or in the analogy of a mountain climber, he left God down at base camp while he struck out on his own. God was just going to slow him down.

The good news is that God was long suffering in Solomon's life. He didn't leave Solomon alone; oh, Solomon has paid a high price of consequences for his rebellion: he's virtually lost out on so much of what matters in life, which is why I'm so glad to see him here, now as an old man, realizing he had been following the wrong goal.



What is your goal? What are the times where you have been following the wrong goal? How can you know that you are following the right one now?

It wasn't reaching the summit of all those grand achievements; it was walking with God, and getting home, safely.

So, an older, wiser Solomon dips his quill in the ink and makes another entry in his expedition journal — here's a third reminder:

What will happen in the future will take place under the comprehensive wisdom of God.

For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain (fleeting) life, which he passes like a shadow? For

who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 6:12

Now let's break this reminder down into the two questions Solomon asks here, and these are two questions Solomon would have expected us to answer with the only answer possible.

Question number 1:

Who knows what's best in this life?

Go back to the first part of verse 12:

For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his fleeting life, which he passes like a shadow?

Ecclesiastes 6:12a

Who knows? Make that a capital "W":
God knows!

God knows.

He created everything and named everything and ordained your very life and then managed history up until He planted you in the middle of it.

Who really knows what's best in life during the time we spend racing through this fleeting lifetime?

Who's got the best advice for life?

This is the struggle we have as parents trying to give advice to our children. Mom, you tell your daughter, “Honey, popularity is not the highest priority in middle school.” And she thinks you don’t get it. “Son, it’s not a good idea to make your college decision based on where your girlfriend wants to go.” And he thinks to himself, “My dad is really out of touch with reality. What does he know?”

Solomon is essentially asking, “What do you know about life? What do you think is best for your life? Go back to the beginning: God made you; He named you; He knows you; He knows everything about that mountain you’re climbing; He is completely aware of what satisfies and what will not.”

Are you older than God?

Solomon asks, “Who knows what is good for man while lives life as briefly as a passing shadow.” And keep in mind that Solomon lived the kind of life that everyone who knew him or saw him or heard about him would have categorically said, “Solomon lived the good life.”

Oh? What is good?

Who knows what’s best in life? God knows. He’s the wisest counselor you’ll ever have.

Question #2:

Who knows what’s beyond this life?

For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 6:12b

Who knows the future? And again, the answer can only be: God knows.

But isn’t this the question of the ages? How can we know the future?

All the way back to the tower of Nimrod in Genesis chapter 11, defiant mankind has built an empire and the centerpiece of that empire is a tower reaching into the heavens (Genesis 11:4). Literally, the top represented the heavens; it had depictions of the stars and constellations above.

Archeologists have discovered the remains of a tower in this region — a step pyramid, or a ziggurat — which was part of a temple system. The Arabs in this region even nicknamed it the Tower of Nimrod. We don’t know if it’s the original tower ruins or not.

What we do know is that here in early Babylonia, Nimrod formalizes the worship of the stars with the belief that they can reveal and even influence the future.

400 years before the birth of Christ, the historian Herodotus wrote that these ziggurats dotted the landscape and were topped by religious shrines, brightly tiled

and painted with the astral signs of the zodiac, originally created by Nimrod.

From the Tower of Babel, astrology passed down into ancient Egypt with their smooth-edged ziggurats, or pyramids, which were constructed with mathematical relationships to the stars.

Their famous sphinx had the head of a woman and the body of a lion, the head of the woman symbolizing Virgo, the first sign of the zodiac, and Leo, representing the last sign of the zodiac. The sphinx represented astral worship, the worship of the beginning and the end.

To this day, people will tell you the sign they were born under; millions pore over their horoscopes, believing the stars influence their lives. Part of common language today is saying things like, "The stars were aligned."

This isn't new; it goes all the way back to people who defied their Creator and worshiped creation instead.

My friend, you deny your Creator and you no longer know where you came from, you do not know where you're going.

Solomon says, "Who knows what's beyond this brief life down here under the sun?"

Who knows? Make that a capital W – God knows!

Let me read for you, believer, a description of our future, designed by our glorious Creator God, shown to John and recorded in the last Book of the Bible.

This takes place after the Millennial Kingdom, then the final judgment of the unredeemed, then the destruction of earth and the universe by fire (Peter describes in 2 Peter 3).

Now John sees what happens next as eternity essentially unfolds:

Then I saw a new heaven (universe) and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (He described it earlier as a city of gold, adorned with priceless gems). And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said,

“Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, [I am] the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

Revelation 21:1-6

- The best way to understand the past is to trust Him because He was in authority over it.

- The best way to handle the present is to walk with Him because He is in control of it.
- The best way to prepare for the future is to look for Him, because He will one day lead you into it.

By His faithful grace and mercy, you, believer, will not only reach the summit of life, but you are going to make it safely home.

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