

## Finding the right thing to say

Imagine a student going to office hours

- “I failed the exam. What should I do?”
  - What might the instructor say?
  - Which thing is the right thing to say?
- Without a good diagnosis, we don’t know what the treatment plan should be

“A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—  
and how good is a timely word!” *Proverbs 15:23*

- How are we to know what to say?

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## Finding the right thing to hear

What word do you and I need from God today?

### **First step:**

Choose to pay attention, no matter what He says

### **Second step:**

Ask God to speak

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**Living Under God  
Ecclesiastes 12:8-14**

[ref.ly/Ecc12;niv](https://ref.ly/Ecc12;niv)



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## **"Inclusio"**

Two very similar statements around other text  
Maybe "bookends" that surround a unit of text  
And sometimes the bookends tell us something  
about what's in the middle

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## Ecclesiastes 1:1-2 12:8

The words of **the Teacher** son of David,  
king in Jerusalem: “**Meaningless! Meaningless!**”  
<sup>2</sup> “**Meaningless! Meaningless!**”  
 says the Teacher. **says the Teacher.**  
**Utterly meaningless!**  
 “Everything is meaningless.”  
**“Everything is meaningless!”**

Life is a puzzle with no human solution  
 → There are mysteries we can't explain Complexity  
 → And decay and death come to us all

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## Ecclesiastes 12:9-12

<sup>9</sup> Not only was the Teacher **wise**, but he also **imparted knowledge** to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. <sup>10</sup> The Teacher searched to find **just the right words**, and what he wrote was **upright and true**.  
<sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are like **goads**, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by **one shepherd**. <sup>12</sup> Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.  
 Of making many books **there is no end** and much study wearies the body. **Pick your teachers carefully**  
**He brings attention to what is next**

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## Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

- <sup>13</sup> Now all has been heard;  
 here is the conclusion of the matter:  
**Fear God and keep his commandments,**  
 for this is **the duty of all mankind.**
- <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment,  
 including every hidden thing,  
 whether it is **good or evil.** = **Everything**

**Simplicity on the far side of complexity**  
**In every situation, this is it!**

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## The Main Point

**"Fear God and keep his commandments"**  
**So what does it mean to "fear" God??**

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## Going to Space

We need...

- a spaceship!



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## A Spacewalk

We need...

- A space suit
- A tether
  - A source of oxygen
  - A connection to the spaceship so we don't drift away

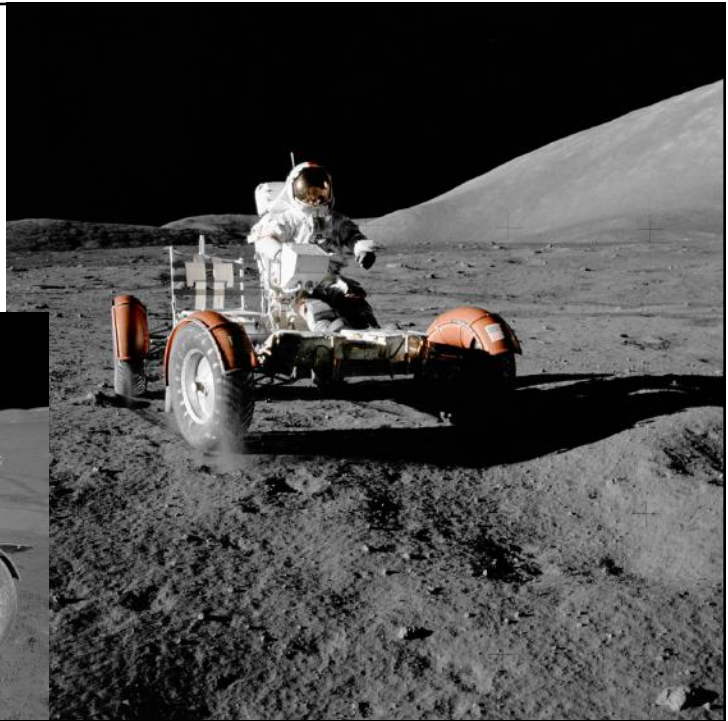
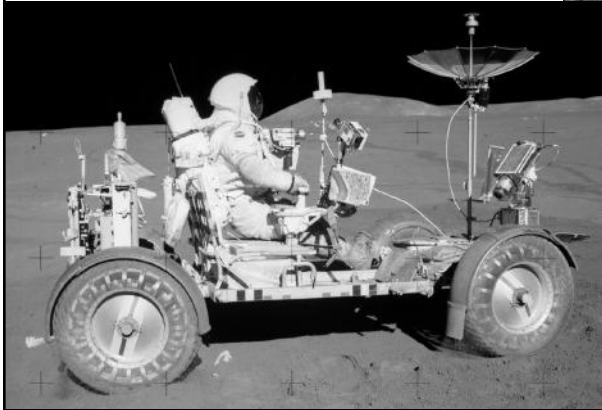


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## A Space Drive

We need...

- A "moon buggy"
- Enough battery power to get back home!



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## A Spacewalk with no tether

We need...

- A working jetpack!
- Enough battery power to get back home!

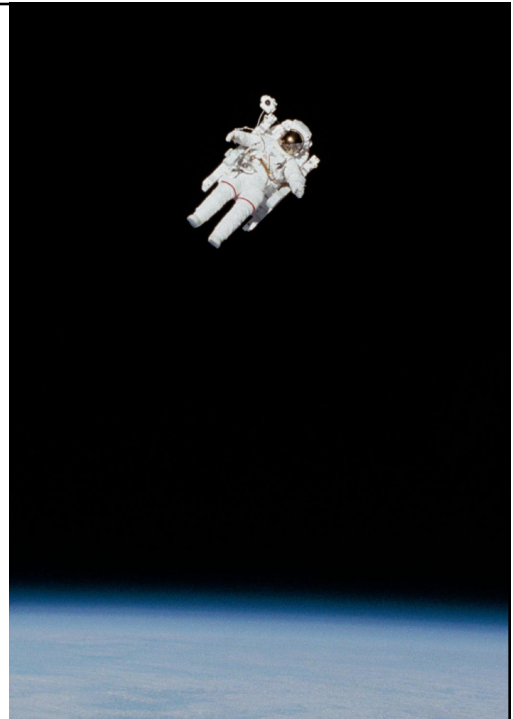


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## A Spacewalk with no tether

What matters most?

- Always aware of how to get back to the spaceship
- They "**fear**" the spaceship
  - they **know** that they are entirely dependent upon getting back to the spaceship
  - **always** have it in mind
- Every action is tested: **Is this moving me toward the spaceship or away from it?**

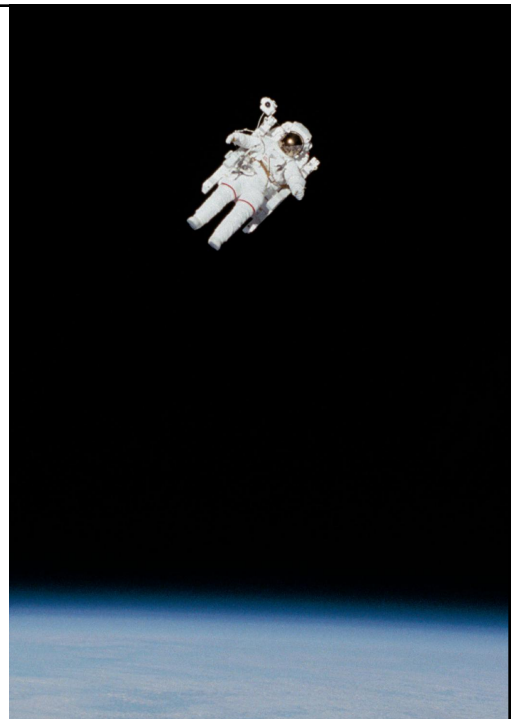


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## Ecclesiastes: Life is like a spacewalk with no tether

What matters most?

- Always aware of our connection with God
- We must "**fear**" God
  - **know** that we are entirely dependent upon our connection with God
  - **always** have God in mind
- Every action is tested: **Is this moving me toward God or away from God?**



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## The Main Point

True life is only and always through  
a life-giving connection  
with Almighty God

In **every** life circumstance,  
this is what matters most!

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## God is the source of all life and goodness

"God is **light**; in him there is no darkness at all."  
*1 John 1:5*

"God is **love**."  
*1 John 4:16*

"We have put our hope in the living God,  
who is the **Savior of all people**, and especially  
of those who believe."  
*1 Timothy 4:10*

"I am the LORD, who **heals** you."  
*Exodus 12:26*

"Yet their **Redeemer** is strong;  
the LORD Almighty is his name."  
*Jeremiah 50:34*

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## The Main Point

True life is only and always through  
life-giving connection  
with Almighty God

In **every** life circumstance,  
this is what matters most!

First thought in trouble or joy:

Where is God? How am I connected with Him?

**Second thought:** How do I move closer to Him?

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## Application

**Cry out to God**

**Take steps toward God**

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## Cry out to God

### When there is good, praise God!

- Ten lepers had asked Jesus for a miracle and got it...healing!
- "One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ... Rise and go; your faith has made you well." *Luke 17:15-17*

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## Cry out to God

### When there is trouble, cry out God!

- "Hear my prayer, Lord;  
listen to my cry for mercy.  
When I am in distress, I call to you,  
because you answer me." *Psalm 86:6-7*

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## Cry out to God

### When tempted, cry out God!

- “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

*Matthew 6:13*

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## Cry out to God

### When we have sinned, cry out God!

- “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

**Wash** away all my iniquity and **cleanse me** from my sin.” *Psalm 51:1-2*

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## Cry out to God

### When bored or lifeless, cry out God!

- "My flesh and my heart may fail, but **God is the strength of my heart** and my portion forever." *Psalm 73:26*
- "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will **remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.**" *Ezekiel 11:29*

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## Cry out to God

### When we feel unworthy, cry out God!

- "But **I am a worm and not a man,** scorned by everyone, despised by the people.  
**"Do not be far from me,** for trouble is near and there is no one to help." *Psalm 22:6, 11*

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## Cry out to God

### When we are rejected or persecuted, cry out God!

- "So then, those who **suffer according to God's will** should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

*1 Peter 4:19*

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## Cry out to God

### When we are lost, cry out God!

- "Some wandered in desert wastelands,  
**finding no way to a city**  
where they could settle.  
They were hungry and thirsty,  
and **their lives ebbed away**.  
Then they cried out to the Lord  
in their trouble"

*Psalms 107:4-6*

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## Cry out to God

**When we are in a dark prison, cry out God!**

- “Some sat in **darkness**, in **utter darkness**,  
**prisoners** suffering in iron chains,  
because they rebelled against God’s commands  
and despised the plans of the Most High.  
...Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.”

*Psalm 107:10-11, 13*

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## The Main Point

True life is only and always through  
life-giving connection  
with Almighty God

In **every** life circumstance,  
this is what matters most!

First thought in EVERY situation:

Where is God? How am I connected with Him?

**Second thought:** How do I move closer to Him?

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## Then take steps toward God

### Ask and listen: how am I to come closer?

- The promise: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age." *Matthew 28:20*
- The command: "Come near to God and he will come near to you." *James 4:8*
- Take steps toward God = Move with God
- That is: Obey His commands
  - Love God and love people
  - Seek first His Kingdom and His ways

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## By God's design, Jesus is our tether

"All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is **the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.**"

*John 6:37-39*

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"Fear God and keep his commandments,  
for this is the duty of all mankind."

Fear God

like a spacewalker fears the spaceship

First thought in trouble or joy:

**Where is God? How am I connected with Him?**

Then: **"Come near to God**  
and He will come near to you."



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