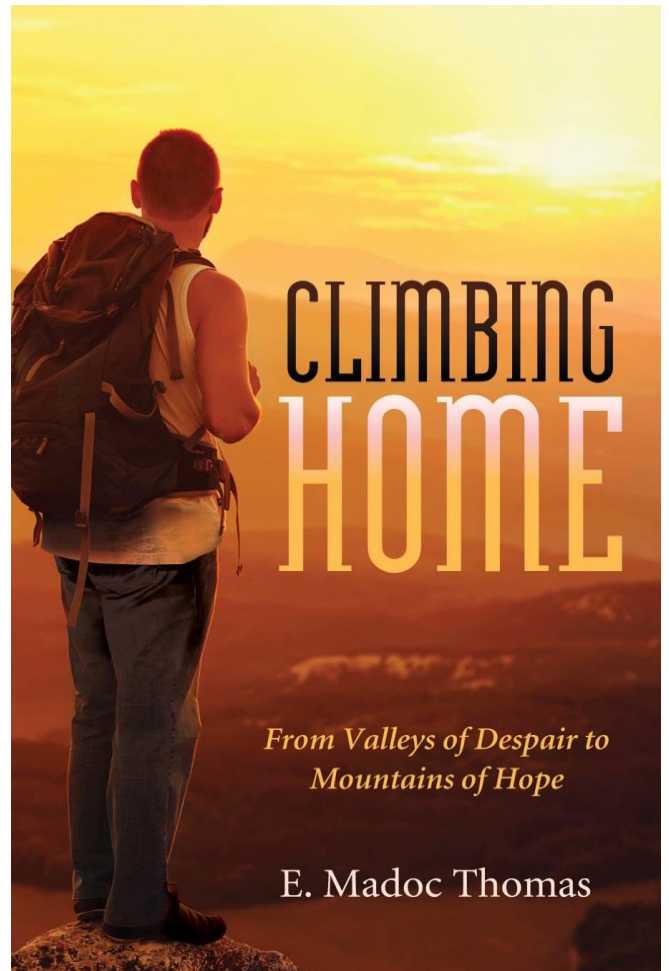


# Climbing Home

By E. Madoc Thomas

The journey of life is nothing short of a mountain climb. “The heavenly places” is a theme of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. This phrase does not refer to places in heaven, but to life on this earth which is lived in the reality of God’s heavenly gifts. We begin in the valley, asking questions and attempting to meet our basic human needs for safety, hope, trust, love, and purpose. Our valleys often include faulty answers—addictions, materialism—which fail to meet our needs and can destroy life. If we’re willing to leave the valleys of failed answers, we can travel forward on paths that point to heavenly places, describing what it looks like to enjoy life in Christ, through practices such as prayer, exercise, communion, play, meditation, and rest.



Dr. E. Madoc Thomas and those he has served have walked from death to life through Jesus Christ. *Climbing Home* is a story of reality, where Jesus travels alongside His followers, from alcoholism to hope, from cancer to courage, from marital discord to delight, from anxiety to peace, from abandonment to belonging, and from suicidal thoughts to a reason for living. It’s a word of hope that God is bringing us into the folds of his love, even when the shape of his presence is only dimly discerned. The pages unfold from thirty-five years of Dr. Thomas’s counseling and teaching ministry, and from a lifetime of journeying out of his own dark valleys toward the heavenly fullness of God’s light. Chapters include thought-provoking questions designed to help readers experience their own journey of *Climbing Home*.



### **E. Madoc Thomas - Lubbock, Texas**

E. Madoc Thomas earned a PhD from Texas Tech University, and an MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary. He spent the past several decades in ministry, teaching, and founding Shiloh Counseling Services. But Jesus Christ has taught Madoc that life goes beyond degrees, walking with him from death to life as a recovering alcoholic, cancer survivor, and other challenges of human life. He is a retired United Methodist minister and his practice now continues under new ownership, but he still loves to serve folks like his five sons, ten grandchildren, and the readers of this book. He and his wife, Calder, live in Lubbock, Texas with their two dogs, and they can be found walking on trails through the woods, sand on the beach—in the joy of God’s presence.

### **Connect with Dr. E. Madoc Thomas**

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/climbinghome>

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### **Endorsements for *Climbing Home*:**

“In *Climbing Home*, Madoc Thomas is just the right mix of truth-telling realist, visionary prophet, and gentle-but-firm trail guide...Read slowly and carefully, but start climbing.”

**-Terry Hargrave, PhD**, bestselling author; professor of marriage and family therapy, Fuller Theological Seminary

“[It] will challenge you to look at the valleys in your life as simply stops along the path to becoming healthy, whole, and complete in Christ.”

**-Debra Fileta, MA**, licensed professional counselor; author of *True Love Dates*

“...an eminently readable book supported by careful theological underpinnings—truly a remarkable achievement that will enrich Christian readers’ understanding of pain in the valley or joy on the mountain of life’s faith journey.” **-Beth Pratt**, former religion editor for twenty-five years with the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

## **Suggested Interview Questions for Madoc Thomas, author of *Climbing Home*:**

### **1) Madoc, why are you a Christian? And what does it mean to you to be a Christian?**

A Christian is, I believe, "of Christ," belongs to Him, receives Him, follows Him. I have tried a bunch of things in order to come alive, to know and experience the life I need and yearn for. I am a Christian for pragmatic, not academic or apologetic reasons: Jesus Christ gives me life; other pursuits have drained the life out of me.

### **2) You are a retired United Methodist minister. Why would a good Baptist or Roman Catholic get anything from your ministry or writing?**

I told my wife recently I would like to find a church with Methodist hymns, Anglican worship liturgy, Biblically Reformed (Presbyterian) preaching delivered in Methodist style, and a Baptist doctrine of adult baptism! She laughed and asked, "Are you fixin' to start a church?" I endeavor to follow Christ, not a denomination.

### **3) You had liver cancer and you have said that you are an alcoholic. I thought Christians believed in healing; why didn't God heal you of your cancer and alcoholism?**

God did heal me. He used a wonderful liver transplant team at a Dallas hospital to heal me of liver cancer, and He used AA, a treatment facility, and several counselors to help set me on the path of sobriety. God can also use disease to heal our spirits, as He did with Job.

### **4) You are a seventy-year-old man and have had a good career as a minister, teacher, and counselor. Why in the world do you want to start a writing career at this stage in your life?**

To stay young! One of the things I discuss in my latest book is the expansive quality of God's call. I felt that God had brought me out of the operating room after liver transplant to do something other than sit on my hands. And my wife kept after me about writing. She has a special ear to God's Spirit, so I've learned to listen to God through her.

### **5) Your title is *Climbing Home*; that sounds like a lot of work; what if someone doesn't want to make the climb? Could they just stay home and watch this show (or listen to this broadcast)?**

An actual mountain climb is indeed a lot of work.

Christian life is not passive; it is active. We have a passive or, to use another word, entitled society in the western world, both inside and outside the church. That is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Life in Jesus Christ is life with muscle, discipline, effort that results in rest and peace and joy. Like a mountain climb.

### **6) Now, along those same lines, how will someone relate to this book who has never climbed a mountain and never intends to do so? Why is the metaphor of climbing so important to the message you want to convey? Or is it?**

No, the climbing metaphor isn't essential; the book could have been written using the process of learning to play a late Beethoven Sonata, pitch a baseball like Clayton Kershaw, or give birth to a child. Climbing is one of hundreds of life metaphors that could be used to convey the process of growing alive in Jesus Christ.

### **7) I mean no offense by this, but there are so many books out there—e books, written books, video booklets; what led you to believe that one more book needed to be added to the pile?**

I felt called to do it, by God. And my wife called me to do it.

It's kind of like preaching, or medical missions, or teaching school. The decisions to engage in any of the helping professions can't be based on whether someone else is already doing it. It has to be based on a calling that comes from who one is.

**8) What is a cairn and why is it so important?**

A cairn is a roughly triangular pile of rocks left by previous travelers that shows the way forward. A cairn is a trail marker that is often replenished by preceding hikers. There are many markers that help point the way in a Christian's Climbing Home: sacraments, music, sermons, the example of a mentor, a place that becomes significant in the experience of God's presence. These cairns, if you will, are important because the route from first faith to the fullness of life in Christ is often unclear. The cairns help keep us on track.

**9) You are often heard to talk about the pleasure of following Christ. Isn't a Christian supposed to suffer for the Gospel? What do you find so pleasurable at your age and after your challenges?**

It is not any wonder that David says, "In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11, NKJV). It is not that Christian life does not include suffering; my goodness, the greatest growth I've experienced has come in hard times. But there is always-- I'll say it again, always--good in the lives of Christ's followers. For nearness to Him whom we love sight unseen is the greatest pleasure of life.

**10) I know this puts you on the spot a bit, but I notice you don't say anything, at least directly, about homosexuality, abortion, sex before marriage, or other issues which are important to the evangelical community. Are you avoiding controversy?**

Let me say right off the bat that I am not without opinions about those issues. Two principles are very important to me and to the fabric of Climbing Home.

First, if a person follows Jesus Christ, everything changes. But what changes first for which person—even which things change on this earth and which things change in heaven—varies tremendously. I can't say what God has assigned as top priority for someone else's growth. Second, the center of Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ. I don't want to elevate one behavior or another to the level of faith in, love for, and hope in Christ. Climbing Home is focused on life in Christ. If that's in place, all else will eventually fall in place as well.

**11) What was the hardest part of this book to write?**

The chapter on grace was the hardest to write. Grace is difficult for me. I tend to be perfectionistic, especially when it comes to things that are very significant, like grace. So I had to keep learning to practice the grace about which I was writing.

**12) Madoc, you have ten grandchildren; I know this is a bit scary, but if one of your great-grandchildren read this book, what would you want them to take away from their reading?**

I would want them, and all readers, to seek life in Jesus Christ. Specifically, I would hope that they and others would benefit from the valleys I have traveled so they wouldn't make the same mistakes I have made. If they follow Christ more nearly, love Him more dearly, live Him more fully, and serve Him more faithfully, I'll be happy.

