

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

JOURNAL OF A DESPERATE JOURNEY

SELECTED VERSES IN ECCLESIASTES



The Heart of the Matter

Living on the Ragged Edge is a study of the book of Ecclesiastes, and it's for folks who live in the trenches—down there where it's dark and dirty and full of responsibility, where the grit of reality mixed with the grind of accountability holds people's feet to the fire. It's for real people who cannot free themselves from the demands of competition or escape the pressures of deadlines. All the messages in this study will offer straight talk on coping with life as it *really* is.

No matter where you live, it isn't long before you realize that you're back on the ragged edge of reality . . . especially if you're the type who wants to make a contribution to this world before you're six feet under.

Solomon, David's brilliant son who followed his dad as king of Israel, came to realize that nothing is worthwhile—everything is futile.



Discovering the Way

1. Introductory Matters

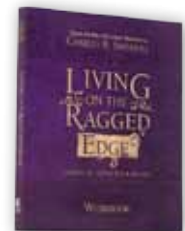
One doesn't need to be a Hebrew scholar to realize that Solomon's outlook was pretty bleak. Solomon, a man of great wisdom, went through a maddening period in his life when everything lost its luster, when the very roots of his life were loosened. With clenched fists and cynical words, Solomon called into question the most basic issues of existence. The man kept a journal of that dark and desperate journey that has been preserved for all to read. It is not only the story of one man's experience but of all who attempt to live their lives apart from God.



Tools for Digging Deeper



Living on the Ragged Edge
by Charles R. Swindoll
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softcover workbook



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2. General Survey: The Flow of the Journal (Ecclesiastes 1–12)

Learn the structure and flow of thought in the book of Ecclesiastes:

- Introducing the Journey (1:1–11)
- Pursuing and Exploring Life (1:12–6:9)
- Reflecting and Summarizing (6:10–11:6)
- Being Young and Growing Old (11:7–12:8)
- Drawing Some Final Conclusions (12:9–14)



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Life Below the Sun

The phrase “under the sun” is repeated twenty-nine times in the Hebrew Old Testament and all in Ecclesiastes. It’s the realm characterized by grievous labor (1:3, 14; 2:11, 17–22; 8:17), endless cycles (1:9), injustice and wickedness (3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:12; 6:1; 8:9; 9:3), and a short lifespan (5:17; 6:12; 8:15). It’s the material world of earthly pleasure and chance (9:6, 9), the human experience considered apart from God. In today’s world, the philosophical equivalents would be secular humanism (that humanity is supreme in the universe), materialism (that the physical universe is all there is), naturalism (that the natural flow of the universe is not disrupted by the supernatural), agnosticism (that we don’t know if God exists), and even atheism (that there is no God to whom we’re accountable).

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Starting Your Journey

How does Solomon's journal relate to *our* journeys? We must understand that:

- The lure of something *better*—something more than what we have—is forever with us.
- The temptation to *go for it* is often so strong, it blinds us to consequences . . . it creates an irresponsible “itch” that begs to be scratched.
- This book stands as timeless proof that without God, apart from His presence and His approval, *nothing* satisfies!

Do you invest all of your time, talents, and treasures in some uncertain future when you believe you'll finally reap the rewards, or do you treat each day as a unique gift to be enjoyed and used to God's glory?