

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: Coming to Terms with Reality

What Every Worshiper Should Remember

Ecclesiastes 5:1–7; Hebrews 4:12–13



LET'S BEGIN HERE

So much of this ancient journal is horizontal musing, the bitter and barren side of life seen through the eyes of a cynic—Solomon himself. But on a few, rare occasions, the book is punctuated with remarkable vertical insights that scrape away the façade of empty religion and drive us back to the reality of a meaningful relationship with God. This passage is one of those occasions. Like a cool oasis in the middle of a hot, dry desert, these seven verses provide refreshment to a soul weary from horizontal pursuits. Ecclesiastes 5:1–7 allows the Christian to take a few steps away from occupational involvements and into the Lord's presence . . . to worship and focus on Him. What's to be remembered? How are we to think and respond?



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Word of God: Hope for Our Times

Solomon describes how reverence for God and His Word leads to the right perspective:

- *What God's Word Does:* It pierces and cuts through the garbage, the fog, and the thick veneer of our phoniness and our rationalizations. It judges and sifts out our thoughts and motivations.
- *Why God's Word Works:* It is universal in scope and crosses all cultural, generational boundaries and touches every conceivable realm of experience. And it is limitless in exposure—it's impossible to hide from, dodge, or shield ourselves from its razor edge.



Quotable

*Keep short
accounts. Keep
your promises.
Keep your vows.*
— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. The Worship of God: Truth for Our Minds (Ecclesiastes 5:1–7)

In Ecclesiastes 5:1–7, Solomon shifted his focus to worship, which provides an oasis of hope in the desert of despair and lifts our perspective above the sun, to God Himself. Corporate worship ushers us spiritually into the very throne room of God. If we're feeling weary of worship, we must address this condition immediately rather than wait to see if it gets better on its own. Solomon gave four specific commands on how to conduct ourselves in worship along with four corresponding reasons for obeying them:

- Draw near and listen well because God is communicating.
- Be quiet and stay calm because God hears the inaudible and sees the intangible.
- Make a commitment and keep it because God believes it and doesn't forget it.
- Don't make a vow now and deny it later because God never overlooks our decisions.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

God's Sword

Several words are used in Hebrews 4:12 to describe the attributes of the Word of God. First, it is “living.” The Greek words *zao*, “to live,” and *zoe*, “life,” are connected with the Word of God in several New Testament passages (Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 1:23; Philippians 2:16; 1 John 1:1), pointing to its life-giving work. The word *energes*, “active,” from which we get the word “energy,” refers to the effective power of the Word, that which “performs its work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). From the word *kritikos*, “able to judge,” we get our word “critic.” It indicates the deep probing nature of the Word's activities. In the hands of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is alive, energizing, and critical, and no believer can escape its transforming power.



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LET'S LIVE IT

In conclusion, Solomon shares a warning that, if heeded, will give us strength in life:

- *Fear God:* We must take God seriously, hold Him in high regard, and refuse to play games with Him.

Do you take time to listen to the Lord? Do you take God seriously and obey Him?



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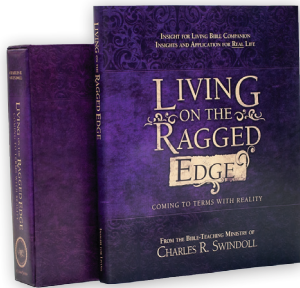
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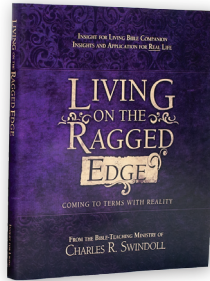
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Tools for Digging Deeper



Living on the Ragged Edge
by Charles R. Swindoll and
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softcover Bible Companion



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