

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: Coming to Terms with Reality

Gray Hairs, Fewer Teeth, Yet a Big Smile
Ecclesiastes 12:1–8



LET'S BEGIN HERE

This ancient journal has taken us from the energetic vitality of youth, through the disillusionment and cynicism of middle age, and now right up to the grave. We have entered into the writer's struggles, we have felt the sting of his frustrations, we have nodded in agreement with many of his cries of exasperation, and now we sigh alongside Solomon as he describes the reality of growing older. But let's not miss his point! Solomon stated his thesis at the beginning (Ecclesiastes 12:1) and at the end (12:6) of this very eloquent paragraph. Because all of us will "return to the earth" and because our spirit "will return to God who gave it" (12:7), *now* is the time to "remember Him" in all our ways.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Traditional Feelings among the Aging

Before we jump into studying Solomon's divine perspective on growing old, it will be helpful to survey some common feelings about aging in our culture. A life lived without a relationship with God and trust in His sovereignty can result in some pessimistic views on aging.

- *Uselessness*: "I'm in the way. I'm over the hill and don't have much to contribute."
- *Guilt*: "I blew it and fouled up my life."
- *Self-Pity*: "I have been given a raw deal in life."
- *Fear*: "I'm so afraid . . . of getting sick, being alone, dying."



Quotable

*You may feel like
you've fouled
up your life. I
don't believe God
is done with you.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Original outline copyright © 1984 and Message Mate copyright © 2014 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

MM23

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE:

Coming to Terms with Reality

Gray Hairs, Fewer Teeth, Yet a Big Smile

Ecclesiastes 12:1–8

2. Scriptural Realities Worth Considering (Ecclesiastes 12:1–8)

In this section on aging, Solomon argued that because life apart from God amounts to vanity (Ecclesiastes 12:8), we should remember God all our days and enjoy life as His gift (12:1–7). Don't wait until it's too late to remember and obey Him — do it now! Solomon wrote about how to prepare for old age.

- *What to Do Before the Fact:* We must remember our Creator — we must keep God at the forefront of our minds so His will affects our attitudes and actions.
- *Some Inevitable Issues All Must Face:* Before we reach our final years, we will face physical and mental deterioration. So let's worship God with all our faculties now.
- *Life's Final Factor:* Unless the Lord returns, every one of us will die. After this, there will be no opportunity to serve God, enjoy His good gifts, or build a relationship with Him.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

The Act of Remembering

The verb “remember” in Ecclesiastes 12:1 is the Hebrew word *zakhar*. While “remember” in English is almost completely a mental exercise, *zakhar* often emphasizes the God-focused action that results from a person's reflection on God's works and ways.¹ Remembering our Creator means more than just thinking about Him now and then. It means keeping Him at the forefront of our thoughts and affections so His character influences our attitudes and actions.



LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: Coming to Terms with Reality

Gray Hairs, Fewer Teeth, Yet a Big Smile

Ecclesiastes 12:1–8



LET'S LIVE IT

Woven between the lines of some of Solomon's final words, we can find some practical truths for people in all stages of life. If we accept the reality that we will grow old, we can walk confidently with the Lord down the path of aging. We must admit:

- *"I am not getting any younger."*
- *"God has designed me to be empty without Him."*
- *"Now is the time to prepare for eternity."*

If people were to observe you throughout this day, would they conclude that you're remembering your Creator? What evidence could they point to in order to support their observation?

ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 269–70.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Original outline copyright © 1984 and Message Mate copyright © 2014 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

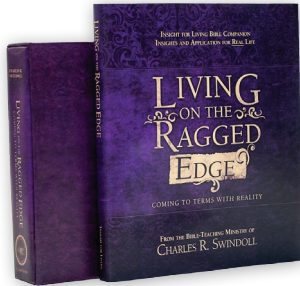
MM23

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: Coming to Terms with Reality

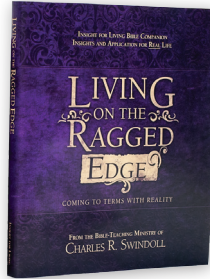
Gray Hairs, Fewer Teeth, Yet a Big Smile
Ecclesiastes 12:1-8



Tools for Digging Deeper



Living on the Ragged Edge
by Charles R. Swindoll and
Insight for Living Ministries
Classic CD series and
softcover Bible Companion



Living on the Ragged Edge
by Insight for Living Ministries
softcover Bible Companion



Solomon
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series

For related resources, please call USA 1-800-772-8888 • AUSTRALIA 1300 467 444 • CANADA 1-800-663-7639 • UK 0800 787 9364



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Original outline copyright © 1984 and Message Mate copyright © 2014 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc.
All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

MM23