

# LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE:

## Coming to Terms with Reality

Interlude of Rare Insight

*Ecclesiastes 3:11–15*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Solomon had been in the pits. Having engaged in numerous projects, pleasures, and pursuits, none of which yielded any lasting satisfaction, the man foundered. Life seemed terribly boring . . . until he caught a brief glimpse of purpose in it all. That occurred when he mentally slipped *above* the sun, *beyond* the earth, and caught a ray of hope from God's vantage point. He momentarily entertained a few thoughts with the Lord God in focus. This interlude, though brief and rare, brought into perspective several things Solomon had missed in his search for purpose and direction in life.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Life without God

During his momentary period of illumination, Solomon didn't doctor his drab world with costumes, props, or computer graphics. Solomon didn't delude himself into thinking that he could find meaning on his own. He dealt with the reality of life on the ragged edge—he didn't smooth it over but called it like he saw it. King Solomon concluded that life apart from God is boring, empty, profitless, and purposeless.



## Quotable

*Everything God does is thorough.*

*It's never too little.*

*It's never too much.*

*There's never anything missing.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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### 2. Life with God (Ecclesiastes 3:11–15)

After spending several pages in his journal describing the depressing life without God, the tone and perspective abruptly changed. Without warning, Solomon's desperate journey turned from focusing on human activities to:

- *What God Makes* (Ecclesiastes 3:11): God makes everything beautiful in its time, and God makes everybody curious about the future!
- *What God Gives* (3:12–13): God gives us the ability to rejoice, the capacity to do good, an appetite for food and drink, and the perspective to see good in all of our labor.
- *What God Does* (3:14–15): What God does is permanent, thorough, and complete. God's actions cultivate respect for Him, and He patiently teaches us the same lessons over and over until we learn them.



#### A CLOSER LOOK

##### *Common Grace*

King Solomon concluded that life apart from God is unfulfilling and pointless. Yet all of us have encountered unbelievers who still appear to experience happiness and excitement in life. Does that contradict Solomon's conclusions?

Unbelievers and the ungodly still experience temporary enjoyment in life, even apart from a saving relationship with Christ. But how? Our loving heavenly Father extends common grace to all people, even those who reject Him. Several forms of common grace include natural revelation (Romans 1:18–20), sunshine and rain (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:16–17), the order of human government (Romans 13:1–2), and the presence of truth and beauty in the world (Philippians 4:8).

Though unbelievers experience blessings and joy in the present, God has stored up justice and wrath for judgment day. On the other hand, while believers experience the common effects of a sinful world now, in the world to come they will receive the full blessings of salvation.



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### LET'S LIVE IT

Solomon described the kind of life that can only come *from God*:

- Life from God comes from *outside* the physical realm, not from within it.
- Life from God is supernatural power *now*, not a vague force limited to “a long time ago.”

Where are you looking to find purpose in life? To God or to empty pursuits? Are you living life by God's power?



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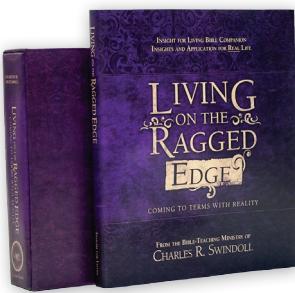
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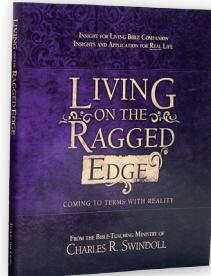
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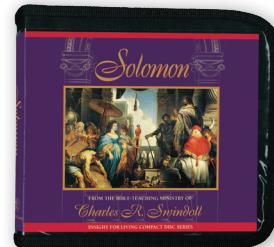
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