

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

AN OBJECTIVE VIEW OF THE RAT RACE

ECCLESIASTES 9:11-18



The Heart of the Matter

We all need an objective view of the rat race we live in! Many of our lives can be summed up in three words: *hurry*, *worry*, and *bury*. Thankfully, Solomon's ancient journal that God has preserved as the book of Ecclesiastes tells us to come to terms with reality and, with God's help, enjoy life! This God-inspired book encourages us to squeeze every enjoyment out of life *now*, while we still have time!

So what words would sum up *your* life? Don't let someone else set your pace or establish your objective, or you will be woefully off target. If you feel like you're on the proverbial treadmill, beginning to resemble a mouse in a maze more than an intelligent human being en route to an admirable and challenging goal, here is a section of Scripture that invites us to pull out of the rat race and take an honest, studied look at life.



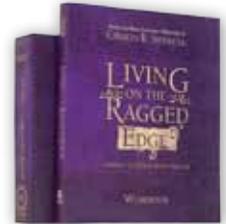
Discovering the Way

1. Various Ways to View Our Lives

As people are faced with living on the ragged edge, they often construct systems of coping with the chaos. These aren't philosophical approaches, such as humanism, nihilism, or materialism but more practical approaches to life that people often adopt without thinking. The problem with each of these is that they are self-centered, and they focus on our own strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and power. These coping strategies include optimism, pessimism, suspicion, and fatalism.

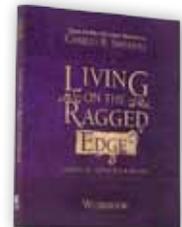


Tools for Digging Deeper



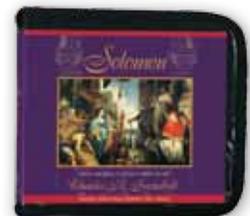
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2. An “Under-the-Sun” Observation (Ecclesiastes 9:11–12)

At the close of chapter 9, Solomon warned his readers against the unending cycle of competing harder, running faster, getting up earlier, neglecting family and friends, and making our jobs a top priority.

- *The “race” as it’s being run:* If you’re in the rat race, speeding down the highway at full throttle, remember that God’s omnipotent hand still rules. He’s like a traffic cop forcing us to slow down when we’re headed for a spiritual wreck.

- *The end of it all:* Death is a reality, and sudden cataclysmic change is real. It does us no good to deny our own mortality or to challenge God’s sovereignty. We are only deceiving ourselves if we pretend to be immune to tragedy.

ROAD MAP FOR THE JOURNEY

God’s Above It All

At this point in his journey through the practical issues of life, Solomon stated his central thesis that God is God and we are not. Solomon asserted that God’s sovereign plan supersedes all our labor, gifts, and abilities (Ecclesiastes 9:11, 18). Because we can’t know His purposes (9:11–12), we ought to live our lives in quiet fear of God and in wisdom, regardless of what the outcome may be in this world (9:13–18).

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Starting Your Journey

In Ecclesiastes 9:13–18, Solomon provided some “under-the-sun” wisdom to those who feel pressure to participate in the relentless drive for success:

- *Human ability cannot guarantee genuine success:* The competitive world tells Christians to keep our faith private. But God is God, and success ultimately comes from His hand.
- *Strength is more impressive, yet less effective, than wisdom:* Christians must turn to God’s Word to guide us in mundane decisions such as jobs or finances.
- *Wise counsel is never popular, rarely obeyed, and seldom remembered:* Be wise, seek God’s will, and walk by the Spirit, but don’t expect to be patted on the back.
- *Human rulers will always out-shout wise counselors, and fools prefer the former:* The rat race isn’t won by soft-spoken wisdom and godly counsel.
- *Constructive words of wisdom are no match for destructive weapons of war:* Only by quitting the rat race will we begin to experience success and satisfaction on God’s terms.

Do you feel like you’re on the proverbial treadmill, running frantically but getting nowhere? When will you get out of the rat race and seek *true* success?