

# LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

ENJOYING LIFE NOW, NOT LATER

ECCLESIASTES 11:7–12:1



## The Heart of the Matter

Many people make the mistake of indefinitely putting off the enjoyment of life, almost as if the pleasure of living is something to be done once people are up in years. They spend their energy and time building toward some distant day when they can sit back, relax, smile on life, and finally enjoy it. But nowhere does Scripture urge us to embrace such a philosophy and certainly not in this ancient book of realism and wisdom named Ecclesiastes. In this section especially, Solomon repeatedly exhorts us to rejoice *now*, not later—during childhood and adolescence as well as adulthood and our twilight years. This disconnects true happiness, by the way, from material possessions, emotional maturity, and financial security. In Ecclesiastes 12:1, we find the secret to true joy in life. Joy is inseparably linked to living in daily relationship with God and trusting in the plan of our wise Creator.



## Discovering the Way

### 1. Enjoying Life: What Are You Waiting For?

When asked, “Why are you waiting to enjoy life?” people usually respond in three ways. Some would say, “I’ll be happy when I have all the things I’ve ever wanted.” Others may reply, “When I meet the person who will fulfill my life, I will have joy.” A third answer might be, “When I have achieved my goals and realized my dreams, then I will really enjoy my life.” These may represent common responses, but the Bible has something different to say about finding joy.



## Tools for Digging Deeper



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## 2. Enjoying Life: What Does God Say about It? (Ecclesiastes 11:7–12:1)

Solomon linked joy in life, not to our material possessions, personal relationships, or ambitious pursuits but to our relationship with God. When we learn to walk with God each day, we will develop contentment with the simple things He has graciously given us, such as:

- *God gives us the okay to enjoy life.*
- *God removes the traditional limitations.*
- *God inserts enough warnings to keep us realistic.*
- *God reminds us of one essential ingredient.*



### GETTING TO THE ROOT

#### *Anger Under the Sun*

The Hebrew word translated “anger” in Ecclesiastes 11:10 is *kha’as* and refers to the kinds of anger and resentment that come from undeserved treatment.<sup>1</sup> This kind of anger flares up in response to external conditions outside our control. Solomon used *kha’as* several times in Ecclesiastes to indicate the frustration that people feel when they realize the futility of life (Ecclesiastes 1:18; 2:23). However, the feeling can cause a person to look beyond the sun to the profundity of life from God (7:3). Ultimately, such feelings of anger and resentment should be exchanged for wisdom and contentment (7:9).

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## Starting Your Journey

If God has given us the okay to enjoy life, what hinders our pursuit of happiness?

- First, *self-appointed excuses keep us* from claiming daily joy. These are the “if-onlys” of life. We don’t have to wait for our circumstances to change. We can find pleasure in our lives right now by turning to God alone for contentment that rises above the ragged edge of life (Philippians 4:11–13).
- Second, *self-styled independence keeps us from remembering our Creator*. This is the “it’s all about me” and “I’ll make it on my own” perspective of life. This prideful, self-centered attitude robs people of joy because it keeps us from relying on the only One who can give us lasting joy—our loving God.

What is one thing you could have done today to enjoy the good things in life given by God? Why didn’t you do it? What will you do tomorrow to enjoy life?

### ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 495.