

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

GRAY HAIRS, FEWER TEETH, YET A BIG SMILE

ECCLESIASTES 12:1-8



The Heart of the Matter

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.



Discovering the Way

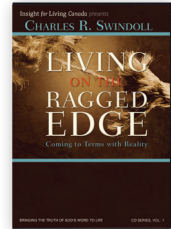
1. Traditional Feelings among the Aging

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.

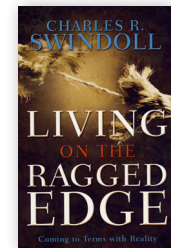
- *Uselessness*: "I'm in the way. I'm over the hill and don't have much to contribute."
- *Guilt*: "I blew it and fouled up my life."
- *Self-Pity*: "I have been given a raw deal in life."
- *Fear*: "I'm so afraid . . . of getting sick, being alone, dying."



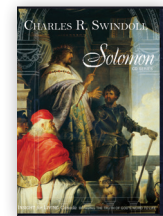
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2. Scriptural Realities Worth Considering (Ecclesiastes 12:1–8)

In this section on aging, Solomon argued that because life apart from God amounts to vanity (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.

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Starting Your Journey

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.