

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

BE BULLISH!

ECCLESIASTES 11:1-6



The Heart of the Matter

Interestingly, the older we get the more cautious we become. With deliberate and careful concern, we study before we step, we ponder before we leap, we hesitate before we move out into the open. If we're not careful, we replace the risks of faith with a methodical, almost tedious lifestyle that borders on boredom. But is that what God wants of us? Must growing old be synonymous with an overly cautious mentality? Not if we take to heart these first six verses in Ecclesiastes 11! You may be surprised to discover that the God of Scripture condones what would be called today a "bullish" approach to living . . . a bold, aggressive investment of our lives that has eternal value. Perhaps the best way to paraphrase these verses would be the five-word command, "Stop existing, and start living!"



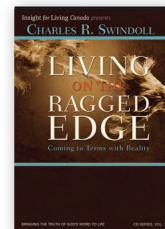
Discovering the Way

1. Common Counsel for the Aging

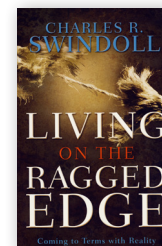
All too often, the aging are advised to adopt a lifeless lifestyle—to stop exerting themselves, to take it easy, avoid risks, and live cautiously. Most of the stereotypical lifestyles we're expected to adopt, or the common counsel we're expected to follow, are not supported by Scripture. While life undoubtedly changes as we age, many of the changes reflect our attitudes, not our physical condition. Aging is a fact. But this doesn't mean we need to stop pursuing life with the passion of youth.



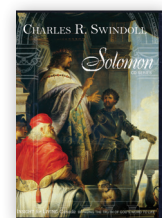
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2. God's Uncommon Advice for All (Ecclesiastes 11:1–6)

The last two major sections of Solomon's journal can be summed up in three commands: Be bold! Be joyful! Be godly! When we pursue these directives, our lives will transform from boring into exciting and contagious—regardless of whether we're young, middle-aged, or elderly. Solomon exhorted people of all ages to adopt a bold lifestyle, to maintain a healthy fear of God, and not to fear uncontrollable circumstances. Solomon gave us four instructions:

- *Instead of protecting, release yourself.*
- *Rather than hoarding, give and invest.*
- *In place of drifting, pursue.*
- *As an alternative to doubting, courageously trust.*



DIGGING DEEPER

Road Map for the Journey

As Solomon paved the way to a bold, faith-filled life, he reflected on the whole of life in the most profound and practical terms. In the beginning of Ecclesiastes 11, Solomon explained:

- God is in control of life's events, and we don't know what will come (11:2, 5).
- We must not fear the uncertainties of life but trust the Lord (11:3–4).
- We should work and plan for the future in light of God's sovereignty (11:1–2).

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Starting Your Journey

As we wrap up our study of this section from Solomon's ancient journal, let's consider three challenges that can help us become more bullish and less timid in our approach to life:

- *Start living it up today and never quit.* Let's invest in someone else, volunteer our services, and refuse to allow our lives to collect dust.
- *Remember that wisdom must accompany action.* We shouldn't let the extremes of fear or foolish impulses dictate our decisions. We must live with discernment and balance.
- *Watch out for enemy attacks during lulls in the action.* Remembering this will help keep us from giving in to mediocrity and will motivate us to press on with enthusiasm.

Are there activities you've been avoiding due to fear of unknown results? Are there things you would like to try but are intimidated by the "mights" and "what-ifs?" If so, what is the worst that could happen if you stepped out in faith and just did something with boldness?