

LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD BOSS

ECCLESIASTES 8:1-9



The Heart of the Matter

Wisdom. This one word describes the theme of the second half of Solomon's memoirs in the book of Ecclesiastes. The terms *wise* and *wisdom* appear more than thirty times in the last six chapters, and the concept is interwoven through most of the paragraphs . . . sometimes in a subtle manner, other times boldly. In the previous message, we discovered some of the benefits that come our way when we operate our lives according to wisdom: balance, strength, and insight. In today's exposition, we'll see these benefits personified in the life of "the wise man," portrayed by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 8:1-9. Obviously, this individual is in command, having authority over others . . . hence, we can apply the passage to today's CEO or anyone who exercises authority over others.



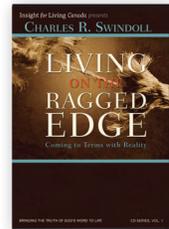
Discovering the Way

1. Brief Explanation of the Structure

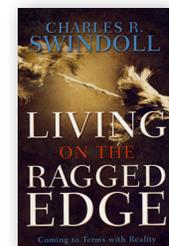
While the first six chapters of Ecclesiastes record Solomon's exploration and observations of the futility of life under the sun, chapter 7 contains a series of proverbial principles based on his conclusions. In chapter 8, Solomon painted for us a picture of those principles personified, and in this particular instance, he illustrated the traits of a wise leader.



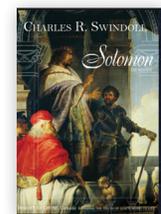
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2. Clear Description of the Leader (Ecclesiastes 8:1–9)

Although Solomon viewed the king's rule from the perspective of those he was ruling, it is precisely this point of view that good leaders need. Solomon focused on five qualities of a good boss.

- *A clear mind.* Good leaders know where they are philosophically and theologically. They don't just follow the trendy, pragmatic, action-oriented approach to leadership.
- *A cheerful face.* When leaders are happy and positive, this can rub off on their followers. When bosses are negative and critical, those below them will reflect this same mentality.
- *A discreet mouth.* Leaders who exercise authority with tact, diplomacy, sensitivity, and compassion will generally receive the benefit of a supportive and loyal staff.
- *Keen judgment.* Good leaders acknowledge God's sovereignty, can map out and execute a successful plan, remain stable under pressure, and act on their intuition.
- *A humble spirit.* Good bosses depend on God to accomplish their tasks, and they draw on the strengths of those under them, giving the individuals they manage a sense of importance and dignity.

Solomon also gave two practical warnings that bosses must keep in mind.

- It is inexcusable to take unfair advantage.
- If you do, you'll be hurt more than anyone else.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Solomon's Solution to Life's Problems

The word translated “interpretation” in Ecclesiastes 8:1 is the Hebrew word *peshet*, which means “solution.”¹ Solomon's God-given wisdom gave him not only insight into the “under-the-sun” problems that face human beings but the ability to look beyond the sun, to God, to find solutions. *Peshet* is also used in Daniel some thirty times with reference to the interpretation of dreams (Daniel 2:4). Therefore, it refers to the hidden, secret, or not-so-obvious explanation of something.

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Starting Your Journey

Now it's time to personally appropriate these principles by understanding:

- *The value of being a model:* Our example outlives our achievements.

- *The vision of seeing a cycle:* Our followers may one day outstrip our influence.

How do you want those you have led to describe your impact on their lives? What can you do today to begin building this legacy?

ENDNOTE

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 833.