

Lost in the Middle

Preface and Introduction

Preface (pp. 9-12)

The Bible never discusses midlife, just like it never discusses teenagers. Yet the Bible is able to unpack any of life's experiences because it was written by the One who made them all. You do not have to be lost in the middle of your own story (p. 11).

Although this book is targeted at those who are struggling with the issues of midlife, it has a much broader net than that. *Lost in the Middle* can help all who are struggling with life in this broken world and have lost their way. ... *Lost in the Middle* is written to give you eyes to see Him, to see yourself more clearly, and to find the function hope you need to carry on (p. 12).

Introduction (pp. 13-25)

Let me present you with two seemingly contradictory statements.

- The Bible has nothing whatsoever to say about midlife crisis.
- The Bible tells you everything you need to know about midlife crisis.

Because the Bible is not an encyclopedia, it is right to say that the Bible has nothing whatsoever to say about midlife crisis. ... The Bible is a narrative, and because it is a narrative, it tells us everything we need to know about midlife concerns. The Bible is the great story of redemption that encompasses the stories of every human life. ... The Bible is the lens through which I look at all of life. In it I find the truths, values, goals, and hopes that are meant to give shape and direction to my life. ... So, even though the Bible never directly discusses the experience of midlife crisis, it is a rich resource for understanding it and for learning how to respond to it (pp. 13-15).

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob,
And speak, O Israel:
"My way is hidden from the LORD,
And my just claim is passed over by my God?"
²⁸Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
²⁹He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
³⁰Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
³¹But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:27-31).

Four Biblical Perspectives (pp. 16-23)

1. The Bible presents us with a **Real World**. The force (of **sin**) is the inescapable pathology of the created universe.

²⁰For the creation was **subjected to futility**, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; ²¹because the creation itself also will be delivered from the **bondage of corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole **creation groans and labors with birth pangs** together until now (Rom. 8:20-22).

How does the Bible help us deal with a topic like midlife? By providing us with *context*—an honest and expansive portrayal of the real world.

2. The Bible introduces us to **Real People**. There is no better means of self-knowledge and self-exposure than the mirror of Scripture. The Bible exposes us for who we really are. ... In its masterful portraiture of humanity, the Bible requires us to make one painfully humbling admission—the one confession we work so hard to avoid: *that our deepest, most pervasive, and most abiding problem is us!* ... Only in Scripture will we ever understand the true nature of our need and the true magnitude of God's provision.
3. The Bible calls us to the worship of a **Real God**. The grand and glorious God, for the purpose of redemption, becomes a man. ... This meeting of glory and humanity reveals all other gods to be the counterfeits they actually are. It is only the God of ultimate glory and incarnating grace who offers what is needed in the face of the horrible personal and environmental ravages of sin. ... The revelation of God in Scripture is the only place to find real hope. He is the only one who is at once completely above everything that we face yet is intimately familiar with all of it by personal experience. We run to him because he is Lord over it all and has the power to help.
4. The Bible welcomes us to **Real Redemption**.

⁵Then the LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great in the earth**, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, **he sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Heb. 1:3, NIV).

In Scripture's redemption story, the sadness of total depravity (Gen. 6:5) kisses the celebration of the totality of Christ's provision (Heb. 1:3). God is satisfied, Christ has sat down, and there is hope for us—a practical hope stretching from now to the ends of eternity. This functional tension between sadness and celebration results in the kind of practical wisdom that the Bible alone affords. Midlife must be viewed from these two redemptive perspectives.

Boiling It All Down (pp. 23-25)

These four Biblical perspectives (Real World, Real People, Real God, Real Redemption) give us essential wisdom for anything we will ever face in human life.

1. A comprehensive worldview that addresses everything that is.
2. Practical perspectives on every human problem.
3. Life before death.
4. Real hope of self-knowledge.
5. Practical help for the deepest issues of the human experience.
6. Real hope for lasting personal change
7. Real comfort.

The hope of this book is nothing short of changed hearts leading to radically transformed lives. We cannot settle for expanding knowledge and enhanced understanding.