

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

- **Story**
 - Bill and Tammy
 - Empty ness
 - Story – unique in specific details
 - Struggle is quite typical.
 - Believe what is will always be.
 - Ignore that everything is always changing
 - Lulled to sleep until huge chunks of time have passed.
 - Not noticed how much has changed.
 - Sudden shock
 - Does everyone have a midlife crisis? Not necessarily.

1. A Problem of Interpretation

- Two things are true of every middle aged person
 - Our lives have not worked according to plan.
 - Our lives are part of a bigger story – God’s sovereign plan
- We are always trying to figure our lives out.
- We sort through the details of our existence everyday sometimes as:
 - Archeologists - sifting through
 - Detectives looking for that one clue that will make it all make sense.
 - Philosophers and theologians - bringing the profound questions of life
 - Diagnosticians - examining the personal symptoms to discover what is wrong.
 - Historians, examining the past for wisdom as we face today.
- The disorientation of midlife - collision of:
 - A powerful personal awareness, and
 - A powerful personal interpretation.

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

2. *Sloppy Categories*

Human Development

- Child – Age 0 to 12
- Youth – Age 13 to 20
- Adult – Age 20 to 65
- Senior – Age 65+

Problem is third category is over-generalized.

3. *It's All About Relationships*

3.1 My relationship to God

- Everything I am and everything I do is shaped by the health and vitality of this relationship.

3.2 My relationship to others

- The Bible always sees people in some kind of community with one another.
- Titus, "a people for his own possession" (NASB)
- I am:
 - Child
 - Parent
 - Husband
 - Wife
 - Neighbor
 - Friend.
 - Citizen of the kingdom of God
 - Covenant child
 - A member of the body of Christ
 - Stone in the temple in which God dwells.
- Galatians 5:14: "The entire law is summed up in a single command." "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

3.3 My relationship to myself

- Psalm 42:5 - "Why are you downcast, O my soul?"
- No voice more influential in our life than our own, because no one talks to you more than you do.

3.4 My relationship to the rest of creation

- As a human being made in the image of God, I am also called to a responsible interaction with the physical world.
- Two very important dimensions of human life:
 - my life of labor
 - The Bible presents work, not as a curse, but as a principal part of God's ordained plan; and
 - the way I view and relate to the world of material things
 - Called to moral responsibility
 - 1 Corinthians. 6:12-20
 - Luke 2:13-21.

4. *Middle Life Crisis: A Portrait*

- Some characteristics of a person in the throes of midlife confusion and struggle.

4.1 Dissatisfaction with life

- Suddenly we don't like our lives
 - Struggle with:
 - Job
 - Marriage
 - Appearance
 - Etc.
- This dissatisfaction is not necessarily about a particular thing but a general feeling of discontent.

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

4.2 Disorientation

- Times when each of us loses our way - get lost in our own stories.
- The disorientation of midlife has to do with identity and function.
- Profound questions of life - *I thought I knew who I was and what I was supposed to be doing, but now I am not so sure.*

4.3 Discouragement

- Realize that we have lost the:
 - Expectancy,
 - Vibrancy,
 - Hopefulness, and
 - Courage of our youth.

4.4 Dread

- Few of us look forward to old age.

4.5 Disappointment

- Two powerful realizations
 - Regret - assess our life and realize that there were things we wanted to accomplish that we never seemed able to pull off.
 - Dashed dreams - entertained our personal dreams.

4.6 Disinterest

- Realize longer interested in the things that once excited me
- Hard to motivate myself to do the things that I once found stimulating and attractive.

4.7 Distance

- With some or all of the above characteristics - hard not to withdraw.

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

4.8 Distraction

- In a place of real vulnerability to temptation.
- Every sinner's tendency is to deal with inner struggles by feeding the outer man.
 - Overeat when we are upset.
 - Deal with disappointment by acquiring things that we think will satisfy us.
 - Numb ourselves with excessive pursuit of leisure or pleasure.
- When I am disappointed with myself and discouraged with my life, it is tempting to give way to the lust of the flesh.

5. *So What's Really Wrong?*

- Several themes that subtly run throughout must be recognized
- Heart of what the midlife struggle is the struggle as sinners living in a fallen world.
 - Phil and Sarah
 - Dean
 - Sally

6. *Recognizing the Themes*

- See the powerful, life-altering themes can create a struggle so unsettling that our culture has coined the term "midlife crisis" to capture it.

6.1 An unexpected event.

- We don't live our life, but our life lives us.
- We just get carried along by its locations, relationships, situations, responsibilities, opportunities and activities without stopping very long to look, listen, and consider.
- Then we experience some unexpected event that suddenly opens our eyes. *trigger events* - provide a window into our lives that we had not looked through before.

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

6.2 A new awareness

- Trigger event opens our eyes and we begin to see and feel things that were probably already there but in the busyness of life got no attention.
- We perceive great differences between our lives and the lives of others around us

6.3 Powerful personal interpretations.

- Crisis is really rooted in the way we interpret the things that we see.
- Interpretations actually *determine* what we see and how we see it
- That is why we all need the wise perspectives of God's Word.

6.4 Exposed ruling desires.

- Midlife struggles very pointedly - Reveals the heart.
- Functional theology that shapes the way we respond during this period is rooted in the values, treasures, and cravings of the person's heart.
- Midlife crisis is:
 - A crisis of the heart.
 - Exposes what a person has really been living for and where a person has tried to find meaning and purpose.
 - Reveals the significant gap between a person's confessional theology and their functional theology.

6.5 Reflexive responses.

- Reflex responses may seem logical, but they are only the twisted logic of desire.
- Our responses to our new awareness will only change to the degree that we address the underlying issues of our heart.
- We need constantly to carry two commitments with us wherever we go.
 1. We need to commit to be persistent and teachable students of God's Word.
 2. We need to be committed to a habit of ongoing self-examination.

Lost in the Middle
Midlife and the Grace of God
Paul David Tripp
Chapter 1 – Midlife: A Portrait

- What about you?
 - What keeps you going?
 - What makes your life worthwhile?
 - What dreams have tended to capture your heart?
 - Right now, how are you making sense of your life? What are you convinced you cannot live without? Where do you seek to find identity?
 - Why do you call one day good and another bad?
 - What, in life, do you crave most?
 - Be honest-Why do you really do the things you do?
 - As you make choices and decisions, what are you hoping to get out of them?
- May God expose our hearts, so that in really seeing ourselves, we may hunger all the more deeply for him!
- Midlife exposes what a person has really been living for and where a person has tried to find meaning and purpose.

God is constant in His unchangeableness page 35