

**March 2016**

*Chronicles of a Middle Aged Man:*

*Bowling, Backs, and Acceptance Lessons*



We'll call this Installment #41 from the *Chronicles of a Middle Aged Man*...just a random number, certainly not my age.

It was a Friday night. The setting for a great victory for young HempDaddy. I had not bowled in several years and this was to be a time of fellowship for couples from our community group. Fellowship? Here's the deal...when guys bowl, we bowl to win. There was plenty of smack-talk about speed, agility, and obviously SCORE. By the end of the night, I humbly declare that I had won the trophy for high score. A 171 topped the scoreboard. My only regret is that they did not announce this over the bowling alley speaker-system during the height of Cosmic Bowling.

*Speaking of regrets...there would be a few more to come.*

Let me first remind you that I had not been bowling in years and that I have a mild history of lower back problems. On top of that, in a rush to begin our "2 hour slot of bowling," I failed to do my normal stretching routine. Don't bowlers stretch?

The next morning, during an Upward Basketball game, I was playing with Addilyn on the sidelines. Full of life and energy, this four-year old wanted to play "hop horsey." In one of my hops, some muscles in my lower back declared that they were done hopping. They said "Yes" to bowling but "No" to hopping after a previous night of bowling. And down I went. Ouch...major ouch!

Even as I type this today, I am sitting in a chair with a back cushion, the aroma of menthol, and the lovely, dull ache of middle age, back issues.

**So, here is my top 10 list of "Insights from Bowling, Backs, and Middle Age"...**

1. Always stretch before bowling...even if your friends pick on you.
2. Heating pads are not just for old people...embrace the heat. In fact, go ahead and buy 2 of them...one for the bedroom and one for the living room.
3. Slip-on shoes are a gift from God and a middle-aged man's best friend.
4. Maybe just skip on bowling during these years.
5. If you have to miss a few days of washing your feet in the shower, no one will notice...not even your wife.
6. Menthol can actually be declared a mid-life man's new cologne.
7. You might be middle age, if you get excited when the Amazon package with lumbar cushion and back brace arrives with coupons for Icy Hot.

8. If your wife shoots a video of you while wrestling with the couch/van/chair to get up and then gets a good laugh out of it, laugh with her and tell her, “Payback is sweet.”
9. If you are younger than me, the previous 8 items sound ridiculous and are providing a funny break to your day. If you are older than me, please withhold the “You think that’s bad...” or “Wait until you turn...” statements.
10. The next bowling outing, I’ll be the official scorekeeper.

On a more serious note, I do feel like God is fathering me through the middle years and providing a few *Lessons on Acceptance*. Here are a few...

### **Accept Limitations (fight pride)**

There is freedom in limits. Sounds like an oxymoron, doesn’t it? There is much in the American, western-culture spirit that says, “You can do anything, try anything, and be successful at anything.” We are an independent people. Pride inflates. Pride says to live life without limitations and “be all that you can be.” Faith, though, deflates pride by admitting our brokenness and accepting limitations. Limitations may include personality, gifting, season of life, life situations, wounds/hurts from the past, and emotional makeup. God does not need our puffy, inflated, or do-good version of life. His power is made perfect in broken, weak people...people with limits. And that’s how limits bring freedom.

### **Accept Help (fight self-reliance)**

I hate asking for help...I’m an American and I am a male. It feels weak to ask for help. But part of “growing up” in our walk with God is recognizing that we cannot do this alone. We need others and we need to admit our shortcomings and failures. Spiritual and emotional ailments, which run far deeper and are more defining than physical/lower back pains, give us a handicap in life. Paul had a thorn...a sign of weakness that he wanted to edit out of the story. Truth is...our thorns/handicaps/hurts/pains are needed to fight against self-reliance and keep us in a posture of dependence on our Father. Accept His help...and the help of others.

### **Accept Grace (fight performance and legalism)**

It sounds so simple...accept and receive grace. But everything in us fights it. We want to make things right, earn back favor, and keep the scales balanced in relationships. No one wants to be the one in need. And so we perform...we strive to get validation and love through our deeds, achievements, and religiosity. Legalism, at its core, says that love can be bought through outgiving, out-serving, and out-working the other. Grace destroys that mindset...it kicks the crutch of legalism out from under us and places us flat on our “backs” (excuse the “back” imagery, but it’s where I am). Helpless, weak, and needy...that is where grace finds its home.

“Back” to where we began...*Chronicles of a Middle Aged Man*...I am sure there will be more installments to come...42, 43, 44...

Until then, may God father you in whatever “middle age” spot you find yourself. And may the lessons of acceptance find a place in your journey.

By the way, I did bowl a 171...just sayin...  
Randy