



# LIFE



# Ministries

November 2012

## *“Jeeps, Midlife, and Fathering”*

I really want a jeep. My ol' pickup is starting to show signs of vehicle fatigue and is pleading for retirement. So, I have been eyeing various vehicles that might fit me. I've never been much of a sports car kind of guy. But a jeep... now that's what I'm talking about. I mentioned this to Melody the other day by saying I think I would look cool in one. Her response...“You are delirious!”

I am slightly delirious. And I am also walking through the beautifully frustrating years called midlife. Unfortunately, midlife years in a man's journey have a negative connotation. And rightly so in many ways. It is during these years that some men pick up the youthful looking sports car or fuel fantasies of a younger woman. Affairs, emptiness, depression, and fatigue can fill the landscape of a man's heart during these years. *But it does not have to be that way.*

The mid 30's to mid 40's are a rite of passage in a man's journey. It is normal to hit this midpoint in life and do some soul contemplation. In fact, it is needed. A man looks back, sometimes with remorse, at the dreams that have faded and financial or career goals that are unmet. Reality begins to sink in as we realize our limitations and frailties. With reality comes a desire for more. What will the next half look like? What kind of man will I be? Will my days matter?

To use the sports analogy, this is halftime. When some men see the score, they decide to throw in the towel and waste away their life. Empty pursuits and cheap thrills tempt a man to sell his soul and give up. Instead of fueling up, he drinks the poison of manmade dreams and hopes. *But it does not have to be that way.*

I want to redeem the term “midlife.” It is a rite of passage, an initiation of sorts. There is so much that God is doing during these years in the way of fathering a man and initiating him. For those who have leaned their lives into Christ's life, there is so much more...

**ADVENTURE.** Wired into the heart of a man is the desire for adventure. It is during the middle years that this desire surfaces once again. What a man does with this is vital. Some men bury it. We bury adventure and settle for laziness, discipline, or religiosity. We deny adventure, embrace passivity, and kill our hearts. That does not work so well.

While some bury it, other men look for adventure in all kinds of places: sports, hobbies, women, careers, money, etc. These unbridled desires lead men to an endless quest for the next big thrill. And the thrill never lasts.

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God has set adventure in the fabric of a man's journey because He is the source of true adventure. God is wild, free, uninhibited, and deeply interested in relationship with you. Brothers, does your view of God include adventure? When you think of a journey with God, does it make you want to jump in with both feet? And, to my brothers in the middle years, let's not settle for cheap thrills and short-lived satisfactions. Let's embark on a fathering adventure with God that makes you want to wake up each day saying, "Father, what's next?"

**BATTLE.** Embedded in a man's heart is the warrior strength, the desire for battle. A redeemed man has been empowered with the courage and strength of Jesus Christ. A redeemed man has a heart filled with the living power and presence of God, Holy Spirit. What a man does with this desire for battle is vital. Once again, we can bury the desire and pretend like there is no enemy. We can live in a small story that is safe, Satan-free, and without risk. But we know this is not reality. We can fight the wrong battles. And we can put the wrong face to our enemy: boss, spouse, children, friend, etc.

Brothers, God desires to father us and initiate the warrior heart of a man. Trials and hardship are the perfect soil for God to train up a son. That is where a warrior is trained...on the battlefield of life. And to my midlife brothers, we are in the pivotal years where the warfare is great. We are surrounded by temptation every day. Will we fight the good fight, the right fight? Will we come through halftime and lose heart or will we choose to take our place in the Kingdom story?

**LOVE.** A man's heart is such a treasure. Proverbs 4:23 says to guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life. A man who has been rescued by grace can now become a lover of God. Most of us men do not learn to love overnight. There is so much in the way of giving and receiving love. What a man does with this desire is pivotal. Bury it, and you have a nice, efficient man who has no heart, no passion. Unbridled, the lover heart can be carried on the waves of lust, fantasy, and false intimacies.

Brothers, our hearts are far too valuable to settle for the empty, aphrodisiacs of this world. Our hearts have been walled in with hurt, pain, loss, and hidden grief. God wants to father us and bring healing, life, and freedom. Jesus came for such a time and such a man. Midlife men, we stand in a unique place where we can play it safe and bury our hearts. A loveless life awaits that man. Or, we can take the risk and let God love us.

Men, wherever you are in the masculine journey, what kind of story are you writing? What have you done with the deep desires of your heart? This may be the perfect time to explore a personal, intimate, fathering relationship with God. And to my midlife brothers, it's halftime...what's the second half going to look like?

By the way, I can still look cool in my ol' pickup...can't I?

Randy