
What is it to be Middle Aged?

The answer to this question began with a Google search as what is middle aged in the modern context as it differs according to the life span of the culture and age in which you live. The search identified middle aged in 2021 Australia as being from 40 to 60 years of age, while it is also to be understood that it differs greatly from person to person according to their individual biology and circumstances.

God's context

To take a contextual look at middle age in another context is to see what God says about age in the kingdom which is soon to come when "the young man shall die a hundred years old" (Isaiah 65:20 ESV). When we look at some of the earliest recorded lives in the scripture where Jacob in Genesis 47:9 (ESV) says "The days of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life and they have not attained to the days of years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning".

It is also important to recognise that age is something that is irrelevant to our life in Christ and our commitment to God as that is not measured by our physical ability to serve but by our dedication and desire to serve Him and His purpose as God's gift of mercy "depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy" (Romans 9:16 ESV).

Reduced energy?

One of the difficulties faced in middle age is the reduced energy to do the things that we were once able to do. When examining my attitude about this I recognise that this is not always a true statement and is largely dependent on that age old problem of comparing ourselves to others. We must remember that our only measure is Christ and therefore we need to dwell on the scripture teaching in Philippians 2:3-5 and "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than ourselves ..." and thereby not compare ourselves to others but dwell on the miracle of ourselves as God made us and be grateful to Him for every day of our lives as each day is another day to serve Him.

Now this may all sound very idealistic and contrary to the teaching of the world around us (and it is) because we are not called to be like those around us but to be of the Father (1 John 2:15-17) and thereby not be influenced by the thoughts and attitudes of the prevailing narrative which surrounds us. In order to not be influenced by the prevailing narrative, however, we need to have our minds in tune with God's so we can combat the thinking of the world around us which is so very insidious and particularly difficult to navigate when we are feeling less than adequate in our own abilities and appearance. We live in a world which worships the eternally youthful and the exceptional and makes us feel that we all need to live up to those concepts or we are less.

More vulnerable?

While it is the cry that the young are vulnerable to this way of thinking I believe that in our middle-aged years we are actually more vulnerable as we no longer have the undeniable optimism of youth with its energy and confidence in their ability to do anything. The values of the world around us have denied us the opportunity to stop and recognise the good work that we have achieved in reaching the stage of our lives where the hard work of establishing a firm foundation in our lives of faith, formation of character and the ability to “grow old gracefully” as we are expected to be forever youthful. This does not mean that we should sit in our rocking chairs and speak of “the good old days” but to stop and examine the process that our lives have taken, see where God has worked in them to create our growth and measure our “success” by these values rather than goods or accolades that we may, or may not, have accumulated and celebrate the lives that we have been given as important in His purpose.

It is also important to remember that to reach middle age is not something that every person gets to experience, or even old age, so thankfulness and gratitude are attitudes that will naturally govern our lives if our thoughts are inclined towards God and formed by our focus on serving Him which is where our richest rewards lay, both now and in eternity.

God guided lives

We are a generation who are very privileged in our lives, particularly in the western world, where our innate needs are easily met leaving us to dwell very much on our individual psychology which leaves us very vulnerable to the “what ifs” and “if onlys”. If we reflect on our lives as being guided by God and understanding that He has a purpose for your life in His greater purpose we are less vulnerable to the “what ifs” and “if onlys” and leads to greater peace and greater capacity to be open to serving Him in whatever way He directs.

When looking at middle age in the light expressed above I am exhorted by His words to be forever grateful for God’s guiding hand in my life and the knowledge that He is always there and that I will not always understand the things that happen but to have confidence in His love and care for me as “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28 ESV).

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