

CHAPTER 9

THE HEART JOURNEY AT HALFTIME

I introduced the idea of the Heart Journey at Halftime in chapter 2, but now I'd like to further explore what that really means. Let's recap. You've found your ministry, and you have reallocated some of your time and talent to make an impact for the Lord in addition to your normal marketplace role. You have measured the early results, and you regularly stop to celebrate what God is doing through you and your ministry. So are you through Halftime? Not quite.

"How Did I Get Here?"

For many successful people, midlife is the first time they address emotional issues that have been buried on their rush toward accomplishment. The risk at Halftime is to short-circuit the Heart Journey enroute to significance or to confuse these soul issues with our desire to leave a legacy. We run the risk of missing much of the growth and blessing at midlife if we rush off *only* to more accomplishments, even though they may be eternally significant accomplishments.

Perhaps there are four primary seasons of life: struggle, success, significance, and surrender. Our early years are filled with the struggle of getting a good education and landing our first job. Our

twenties to mid-forties often are filled with the pursuit of success. Once we begin to achieve some level of success, we begin to see that it will not satisfy and we long for significance. We have dedicated this entire book to the transition between the season of success to the season of significance. But, as we pursue significance by living out God's call on our lives, we realize that the deepest satisfaction comes not so much from accomplishing big things for God (as wonderful as that is) but from surrendering our hearts and agenda to God and living each day in community with him. The Heart Journey at Halftime is about this last issue—letting God change our hearts now that we have loosened our grip on life.

Many of us learn these things best in the trenches of serving alongside God, not sitting at home reading a Bible commentary.

To really understand the Heart Journey of your second half, you must start with a short but quiet reflection on the Heart Journey of your first half. Stop here for a few minutes and ask yourself a few deep questions.

How did you get to where you are, and what was the price along the way?

What drove you to pursue success?

What feelings or needs have you covered up along the way?

In what ways could you live life in fuller color, in the three-dimension of deep intimate relationships and soulfulness?

The Value of the Wilderness

You'll recall that the Bible simply says of Moses that "he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner" (Acts 7:29).

Moses left behind his first-half environment that had provided him with his identity, his security, his sense of belonging, and all the perks that come with being a successful leader. While the wilderness time wasn't comfortable, it did enable God to work on his heart in ways that were essential before he could be used in such a profound world-changing way as he was in his second half.

You may be pushed out of your normal environment by being downsized, through early retirement, or after selling your company. Or you may find yourself still in your normal environment but in an emotional wilderness. You go to the same office every day, but those dreams and rewards that used to captivate you have lost their luster—you find your heart just wandering. It no longer means much that your business card says Director, Partner, or Principal. The corporate goals seem stale.

A friend told me recently that, as his business was growing, he used to love to sit down on Saturday morning and read his own company's advertisements in the city paper. Even though he had helped write those ads, had signed off on the final version, it was very satisfying to see the ads in the paper. But one recent Saturday there was an entire article about a large project his company was building—a front section piece—and he found himself completely uninterested. In fact, he had to admit to his colleagues that he had not read the whole article. He called to ask, "What is wrong with me?"

Nothing is wrong with him, but he is in the wilderness of Halftime. God is weaning him from the things that he clung to for his security and identity. This is a healthy place to be for a short time, but it's not a healthy place to stay.

Risks and Rewards of the Journey

The heart lessons God wants to teach us in Halftime can only occur as we loosen our grip on the things that protect us. Many people who have achieved some level of success in their first half are afraid of failing in new endeavors. The Heart Journey is fraught with the additional risk of being somewhat vague and intangible. Many of the tools that enable people to succeed in their career are not useful in this soul work. Moses was asked by God to put down his staff—which represented his security, income, and identity—to just loosen his grip. Then, as he picked it back up, it became the rod of God and was used in a powerful way in his second half. You too must lay down your staff.

My friend who used to sit down on Saturday mornings to read his own company's ads is now well into this journey. I can already see in his life the rich benefits of living life with a more healthy identity and new measures of performance that are not as tied to the business.

Five Elements of the Heart Journey

Bill Wellons and I have identified five areas where a transformation of the heart occurs: your identity, performance measures, interdependence, intimacy, and servanthood.

1. Your Journey to a New Identity

Many of us are defined by our work, sometimes without even realizing it. Others find their identity defined by other status symbols (titles, awards, their children's accomplishments, how attractive they are) that indicates to them (and perhaps to those around them) that they are of worth. Perhaps you're defined by the sense

of having been successful. One of the most devastating occurrences at midlife is when we have this identity stripped away and we come face to face with having to determine who we really are without the title.

My identity is formed when I subconsciously adopt a set of symbols or indicators that define what I feel about myself. When you introduce yourself to someone, what do you instinctively draw on to define who you are? Are those really the things you cling to for identity? A midlife crisis is often triggered when some of these status symbols or markers are taken away from us involuntarily and we're thrust into the messy process of redefining our identity. This can happen if you sell your company, get downsized, retire early, begin to look decidedly older, or if the meaning and value of the things that used to define you dissipate.

Halftime provides us with the opportunity to rethink our identity in a thoughtful, intentional way and reshape an identity grounded on something that will not shake or move.

What truths about you *currently* define your identity? Don't overthink; just write.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

What truths about you do you *want* to define your identity?

Before you answer, let me share with you what mine have slowly become: God loves me; I am making an eternal impact in the world using my unique design; I matter deeply to a few people. Whereas, the things that used to define me had to do with my net worth, creating high-class buildings, being focused and aggressive.

Now it's your turn. Write in the three things you feel you most want to define your identity.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Now ask God to help you live out this new identity.

2. Your Development of a New Performance Standard

We often train our heart to measure our worth and satisfaction based on our performance. Living a life of eternal significance may result in days and years invested in things that are hard to measure. At other times it may appear as if God is squandering our time and talent that we sacrificially give to him.

Psalm 139:16 says, “All the days ordained for [insert your name] were written in your book before one of them came to be.” What does this say about God’s intentionality in your life and mine?

God has a bigger picture of our lives than our little measures of daily performance. Even as you work hard to make an eternal impact for God through your new ministry, always remember that it is our privilege to partner with God and he reserves the right to determine the results.

3. Your Discovery of the Strength of Interdependence

I loved developing real estate, not only because it’s about creating beautiful spaces, but because I loved the independence. As a developer, you decide what land you want to buy, you determine what you want to build, you hire an architect and contractor you like, and you keep the profits. When all was said and done, I always liked walking around the buildings my partner, Andrew Mitton, and I built and feeling a deep sense of satisfaction.

The Heart Journey that accompanies our journey from success to significance involves learning that in the spiritual realm there is an even deeper satisfaction that comes from interdependence—partnering with those people God has uniquely gifted to

bring what you simply cannot bring. As I have written this book with Bill, it has been very apparent at times that he brings special abilities and thirty years of ministry experiences that are making this a much more powerful tool.

We spent this past weekend in the quaint little town of Franklin, Tennessee, writing together. Our long hours were a strange mix of fun conversations about life while walking down Main Street looking in the shop windows, intense debate over chapters and stories in a corner of Starbucks, and reflective moments with tears in our eyes as one of us recounted an amazing story of what a Halftimer is doing to serve the Lord. As I drove away from this weekend, I realized we had come to know and love each other at a much deeper level, and I found myself talking to my team about how much spiritual depth, creativity, and wisdom Bill brings to this work. That's the strength of interdependence. What we can offer together is more than the sum of what we could offer independently.

This, to me, is a stunning contrast to the corporate and entrepreneurial self-made ideal that I focused on in my first half.

4. Finding the Confidence to Long for Intimacy

God has always existed in deep, intimate community between the Father, Son, and Spirit. His intent was for us to live in intimacy with him and with each other, but sin created barriers in every direction. Some Christians learn to live in intimacy in their first half. But many of us are so caught up in the pace and pursuit of goals that we have little or no time to understand the value of intimacy or to learn to dismantle the barriers that stand in the way.

Most men arrive at midlife with no really close friendships—I know because I ask them. Every guy I coach through Halftime, I ask about their friendships. As I drill down, I find that nine out of ten men don't really know what it is like to have friends. What happens when we let off the gas in pursuing success is that we realize relationships are not optional; they are essential. A new preoccupa-

tion becomes the journey from isolation to intimacy, and it's easier to feel than it is to understand.

Many fear the process because it appears weak. Others fear it because they feel that if God or a few close friends really saw who they were on the inside they'd walk the other way. As we fight being exposed, we miss out on what God has in mind for living out significant second-half lives. The only two things in life that last are the truth of God and relationships. Most of the legacy we are going to leave will occur through being able to draw close to those God brings across our pathway.

5. Seeing the Hero in Being a Servant

Our heroes are most often the strong and valiant, but Jesus gave his followers a different ideal: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:25–28).

We set out on the pursuit of significance—to do something big for God—only to find that this Heart Journey that God will take us on at Halftime moves in the exact opposite direction of our first-half ascent up the corporate ladder. Part of the "detox" that we must be prepared for is taking internal steps downward to find deeper satisfaction pursuing significance as a servant.

It's Saturday morning. I drop my daughter Jennie off early for soccer practice and skip over to the bakery shop for breakfast and time to read and reflect. I notice the mentally handicapped man who wipes tables, and as our eyes make contact, I smile, hold the garbage container open for him since his hands are full, and ask him how his day is going. I thank him for the work he is doing. The heroic moments in my inner world now are times like this when I find myself treating a handicapped man who wipes tables with just

as much respect as I do the CEOs that I coach through Halftime. These are the changes I most long to see in my heart, even more than accomplishing big things that may be apparent to thousands, and only God can make these heart changes happen.

The Halftimer's Prayer

So what can you do to expedite the Heart Journey? How can you cooperate with the transformation that God desires most and which you secretly long for yourself? Here are two ways:

1. Understand what God is doing so that when it is difficult to swallow, you have a bigger perspective.
2. Pray specifically for God to do this work in your heart. Let me challenge you to shut the door, go on your knees, and pray the Halftimer's Prayer.

“Dear Lord, I am on a journey to find and live out what you placed me on this earth to do. I need your clear direction. I need to see your hand at work and sense your pleasure in what I do. Even more importantly, I want you to transform my heart, even as I partner with you in what you are accomplishing in this universe. Please soften my heart and bring clarity to my thinking so that you can create in me a new identity, a new measurement of my performance, so I become strong through interdependence, enjoy greater intimacy, and live as a servant. Amen.”