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Hilliard's "Midlife, Manhood, and Ministry" (Book Review)

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Male midlife issues are rarely discussed at all – to each other, or in groups. Of course, there are the surface conversations in which the topic is “talked” about, but the real talk seldom gets done. Physicians talk about hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and depression, mixed with a myriad of emotional, relational and vocational transitions, but rarely mention the male midlife crisis. Seeking external help, whether that involves going to therapy, asking for medical advice, or reaching out in general to family or friends, is not something men readily and easily do. The author recommends that every brother in and of faith find another to share his pain and to hear his story while in the midst of a crisis or in an effort to prevent one, even though that is not how we have been acculturated and raised. As men, we are trained almost from birth to compete against one another in the academic world, the athletic field, and in the marketplace of ideas. We then carry that baggage into our marriages and ministry.

That is Dr. Hilliard’s assessment of the male midlife crisis that affects every man. To be sure that he wasn’t the only one going through such a phase in his life, the author consulted many famous African-American pastors asking them about their midlife years. Privately, they shared their challenges with marriage, parenting, and aging often complicated by their unhealthy alliances with alcohol, young women, and fast cars all while still occupying their pulpits.

So is this book beneficial? I believe it is. Dr. Hilliard creates a safe and therapeutic path for men to begin to understand midlife and ministry. His step-by-step approach will provide an option that is rarely written about in the literature. Will you agree with everything the writer says? Probably not, but the reader will gain a perspective helpful for men to understand themselves and for women to understand the men in their lives.