

Intentional Moments from a Midlife Plot Twist

In the life season of perimenopause, it is all too easy to get mired in the morass of internal processing. Use these prompts to learn to pause for a moment and lift your gaze upward and outward.

1. Numbered Steps and Numbered Days

- Listen carefully to what the world is telling you about the perimenopausal years. What lies lurk beneath the surface of the shiny solutions it proffers? What biblical truths counteract those lies?
- Note the places you tend to run to when you lack wisdom (an influencer, a website, a book, a friend). Write out the areas where you lack wisdom. Ask God to give the wisdom he gladly gives to his children (James 1:5).
- Invite an older or younger friend into your struggles regarding these middle years. Share honestly about your fears and concerns. Ask your friends to pray for God to give you a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).
- Seek to speak with both authenticity and hope when peers talk about their latest perimenopausal struggles. Share honestly but also seek to lead them to the source of your hope (1 Peter 3:15).

2. Changing Bodies and an Unchanging God

- God reminded Samuel, "The Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Ask God for his eyes to see the other women around you, be they young, middling, or aging. When you see something beautiful in someone, say something.
- If you are so daring, write down the three physical symptoms of perimenopause that most trouble you presently. Then, ask the Lord how these increased cracks in your jar of clay might better show off God's radiance to others around you.
- When peers complain to you about their changing bodies, listen empathetically, ask questions, but also don't be afraid to offer biblical hope.
- If you haven't scheduled an appointment to discuss your physical symptoms and concerns with a healthcare specialist, prayerfully consider doing so.

3. Short Fuses and Our Long-Suffering Savior

- What emotional roller coasters have you been riding lately? What big emotions have your friends come to you to process?
- The next time you are overwhelmed by a soul storm, take time to notice, name, explore, and entrust to God your emotions. What did you learn about yourself? God?
- When you feel overcome by emotion, where do you most naturally run? How are you received? How can you let your emotions lead you toward the Lord and his word rather than away from him?
- As those who are received with mercy by the Redeemer, we are called to receive others with grace. Who can you meet with grace this week?

4. Empty Homes and Full Hearts

- Where are you experiencing (or do you anticipate experiencing) emptiness? How are you filling these empty places? How can you better remember the fullness available to you in Christ?
- What does the mobile of your family look like in your present season? What parts do you find beautiful? What parts of the current configuration are challenging?
- Intergenerational friendships offer the gift of perspective to women in the long middle years. Which much younger and much older friends might you initiate more connection with? What gifts might they offer you in this season?
- What habits in your life remind you to find your fullness in Christ? What habits hinder you from experiencing the fullness available to you through union with Christ?

5. Shame and the Savior Who Sees

- Consider a recent time when you experienced shame. What was the story—the shame narrative—that you told yourself? (E.g. "There's something really wrong with me. I must be crazy.") Now consider how Jesus approaches the bleeding woman. What can you imagine him doing and saying if he were to encounter you in that place?
- What are some of the things you're longing for right now? Spend some time acknowledging them before the Lord and offering them to him.
- Psalm 56:8 tells us that God holds our tears in a bottle and keeps a record of them. What's a grief that you may be tempted to minimize, but the Lord gives weight to?

- When has God used something difficult from your past to reveal himself or his kingdom to someone else?
- As you think about a particular place where you need courage in your life, who comes to mind as a trusted sister in Christ who might cheer you on and pray for you? What would it look like to share this need with her?

6. Powerlessness and Prayerfulness

- Where are you experiencing powerlessness in your current season of life? What is your natural response to these feelings? Do you tend toward more apathy or more energy as a response to feelings of powerlessness?
- What new physical, emotional, mental, relational, or spiritual limits are the perimenopausal years revealing in your life?
- If your prayer life were depicted as a chat thread with God, what would it reveal about your relationship with him? What do you pray about most? Least?
- Assess your current prayer habits. Where are you stuck in a rut? What new forms of prayer might you try in this new season?
- Who are your "prayer people"? To whom do you entrust your worries, cares, and prayer requests? How can you become a more faithful prayer partner for a few other women experiencing the powerlessness of perimenopause?

7. Brain Fog and a Renewed Mind

- What is currently contributing to your mental load? How many mental tabs do you have open daily? Which of these are necessary? Which can be closed?
- If your mental health were a tree in this season, how would you describe it? What kind of tree would it be? What condition would the tree be in?
- Write down a list of the lies that most often loop in your mind. Then, take some time to prayerfully find truths from Scripture that counteract those lies.
- Hiding God's word in our hearts helps us to combat sin. Consider choosing one of the passages from the exercise above to memorize.
- What habits are most shaping your mind in this season? Are these habits leading you to be transformed by God or conformed to the world? What new habit might you intentionally insert into your daily or weekly rhythms to help you better have the mind of Christ?

8. Deficits and Hope that Doesn't Disappoint

- Take a few moments to write down some of the disappointments you have experienced. How do you naturally respond to them? Where do you run to process your sadness?
- What alfombras have you carefully created? How are they being changed and reshaped during these years? What might God be doing as he takes away your plans to offer you his perfect ones?
- A grief shared is a grief halved. With whom can you safely process your disappointments? Who might need you as a safe place to process their own?
- Take a few moments to read the poem on the next page and use it to help you process with God in prayer or inspire you to write your own poem.
- What deferred hopes or longings are you avoiding in this season? What gathering griefs are you tempted to drag around with you daily? Where are you running with your ruined dreams?

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Lay Out Your Losses

Lay out your losses before me.
We can count them one by one.
Don't hide or grasp them tightly;
Bring them out to dry in the sun.

Disappointments left in darkness
Tend to fester or mold or grow.
Come and name them in my presence,
There is nothing I don't already know.

You need not be brave with me.
I don't want your stiff upper lip.
I want your honest, alloyed tears;
I want you clinging to my hip.

My purposes may elude you,
But you must trust I am good.
For I am God outside of time;
I don't do things as you would.

Your sun-dried disappointments
You may safely entrust to me.
I'll plant these seeds of sorrow
To grow gardens you can't yet see.

So, open your clenched soul;
Let me linger with you a spell.
For even amidst your sadness,
I continue to do all things well.

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