

***“Mid-Life Issues”***

By Chaplain Mickey Jett  
80<sup>th</sup> ASG Family Life Chaplain

In this Quarter's newsletter of Family Life Today, I would like to explore our challenges around mid-life. If you are 41-57 years of age you are classified as a Baby Boomer. This generation includes almost 78 million Americans born between 1946 – 1964. I was born in 1957 so I fit in the second half of the Boomer generation and grew up with vivid memories of the 60's. I can still tell you where I was as a 6 ½ year old when I found out that our President, John F. Kennedy, was shot. I still remember watching the funeral scene on black and white television.

The Boomers are the largest generation in the history of the United States. We have had a major impact on American society as we have passed through every life stage. We are passing through midlife in our own unique way, differently from Generation X, the group born in the years after 1964.

Did you know that the first boomer turned 50 in the year of our Lord, 1996? The remaining 78 million will all observe their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by the year 2014. O yea, I will see my 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, the Lord willing, in the year 2007. I wonder how much worse mid-life crisis can get when I hit that year. My wife has to deal with me now wanting so very badly a Heritage Classic Harley Davidson. I grew up with a motor cycle and I know there is something pushing me emotionally and subconsciously to have a bike one more time before I become physically unable to ride one. I only have a few years left.

**TYPICAL FEELINGS**

According to *Rocking the Ages* authors J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, and authors like Gail Sheehy, people passing through middle age typically experience the following kinds of feelings (My great desire for a Harley Davidson fits somewhere in these).

**Great Expectations:** Most of us Boomers are beginning to recognize our limitations. Growing up in the 60's and those older than I, in the 50's, I learned that life had so much to offer with endless possibilities. During those magic years I believed that life centered around me – most Boomers do, you know. Now, however, with my years getting so close to 50 (a half century mark), I am discovering that my life has limits. I began noticing that physically when I turned 40. I couldn't average around 280 in the AFPT anymore. Then the Army goes and makes the test even more demanding for those of us older, go figure.

**Regret:** As I have reached my near 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, I have to face the fact that some of my dreams will never be realized. I have some losses as well that will never completely heal.

It is not easy for us to face that person we will never be. Thank God for His understanding. Now, I just need to be as understanding to myself.

**Loss:** There was a song out in the early 70's entitled, "You're So Vain". I can't remember who sang it, but it seems to fit all of us Baby Boomers. As I get older I have to face the fact that I am losing my youth. I hurt more when I exercise, it takes me longer to recover and I no longer look as vibrant and youthful as I did. This is a loss that may bring on mid-life crisis. Many midlife *crises* become mid-life *meltdowns*, says Gail Sheehy, in her book *New Passages*. We have to be careful not to destroy everything we have built in our lives and relationships as we react to these feelings of loss in parts of our lives.

**Self-absorption:** We were once called the "Me" Generation because of our being more narcissistic than other generations. Because of the times we grew up in, we have always been fascinated with ourselves. The indulgence we Baby Boomers experienced in the 1950s and the world's seemingly limitless possibilities created a fascination with self and a feeling of specialness. As a generation, the Boomers see themselves as superior to others. They have always assumed that they could have life their way and that the rules were meant for others, but not for them. They feel entitled to rewards and view themselves as winners. They expect success and cannot accept failure. Therefore, we have a need to feel certain and to sense we are in control of our lives.

Arnie Graham, M.A., has a set of 29 questions for reflection. This, he calls, a midlife checkup. It is a list of 29 unfinished sentences that will help you assess your life to date. The items on this list provide a framework for conducting your own assessment. Please add your own ideas that you think will help you reflect on your life's direction.

### **The Midlife Checkup**

1. My most important accomplishments are...
2. I am disappointed about...
3. I would describe the person I turned out to be as...
4. I want to change the following things about my self and my life...
5. Things I want to do before I die...
6. If I knew I couldn't fail, I would...
7. Things I have mastered...
8. Things I want to keep...
9. I want to keep these relationships...
10. I want to let go of these relationships...
11. I want to keep these possessions...

12. I want to let go of these possessions...
13. I want to have these experiences...
14. I want to clean up these messes...
15. I want to celebrate...
16. I don't ever again want to...
17. My body is...
18. My children are...
19. My parents are...
20. My spouse is...
21. I want to remember...
22. I want to forget...
23. I must apologize to...
24. I must seek an apology from...
25. I am most proud of...
26. I wish I could forget about...
27. I wish I could do over...
28. I wish I had never...
29. I wish I had...
30. Add your own items:

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Please pass this newsletter along  
to a friend. Or call 423-5653 to  
speak with Chaplain Jett.

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*Chaplain Jett is a licensed counselor (NBCC) and an Associate Member of the American Association of Marriage & Family Therapist on SHAPE. He specializes in working with couples and their families. Call 423-5653 for your free consultation.*