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40/40 Vision: Clarifying Your Mission In Midlife



Synopsis

At midlife, our perspective can become blurry. Midlife is a disruptive season where we collide with limitations on all sides. We recognize there is more of life in the rearview mirror than on the road ahead of us. We wonder if our lives so far have been worthwhile. We are uncertain about what lies ahead. But midlife is also an opportunity to recalibrate our vision. It's a time to look back, take stock of our lives so far, and refocus on new dimensions of identity and calling. Peter Greer and Greg Lafferty offer insight for navigating midlife with fresh clarity and purpose. Drawing on the wisdom of the book of Ecclesiastes, they show how we can come to grips with the realities of who we are and what we should become in the years ahead. In a world that can seem meaningless at times, God offers perspective that anchors us, renews us and propels us back into the world in meaningful mission and service. Rediscover who God has called you to be. And see the rest of your life with the clarity of 40/40 vision.

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Customer Reviews

"The stereotypes and stories tell us that midlife is an unpredictable and mysterious time, full of temptation and ruin—but what Greg and Peter offer is a clear picture of how unpredictability and mystery are actually opportunities to bring renewed faith and fresh encounters with Christ. Read this book and be equipped to live for what matters most." (Mark Batterson, New York Times bestselling author of *The Circle Maker*, lead pastor, National Community Church, Washington, DC)"At midlife, we are forced to wrestle with the fundamental question of how to live authentically and make the most of life. In *40/40 Vision*, Greg Lafferty and Peter Greer provide biblical and

practical insights on how to sort through such issues as busyness, unmet expectations, the pursuit of pleasure, wisdom, injustice and identity. Ultimately, they inspire us to lean into the future, seek our pleasure in God and learn to live redemptively. For those well into the race of life or ready for a fresh start, 40/40 Vision is sure to be an energetic and welcome encouragement." (Ken Wytsma, author of Pursuing Justice and The Grand Paradox)"Finding meaningful work, making sense of disappointments, valuing relationships with those around you—these are the questions that many deal with in the second half of life. Greer and Lafferty help us rethink our relationship to work, expectations and others. They use the ancient wisdom of Ecclesiastes to speak poignantly into the realities (and questions) of modern life." (Gary A. Haugen, president of International Justice Mission, author of The Locust Effect)"Greg and Peter are the friends you want to have as you enter midlife. They remind you of age-old warnings, guide you to healthy practices of flourishing and have you laughing along the way. This is an important book about an important decade, no matter what your age." (Jena Lee Nardella, cofounder of Blood:Water, author of One Thousand Wells)"Midlife can be a dangerous and disappointing time. In 40/40 Vision, Greg and Peter do a fantastic job leveraging lessons from Ecclesiastes to help those of us in this critical season find purpose and satisfaction." (Andy Stanley, senior pastor, North Point Ministries)"As a forty-six-year-old dad with four sons, I can testify that midlife is a turbulent time. It's easy to lose our perspective and stumble at a time when our families need us most. Peter and Greg help us see clearly through the haze of midlife and live for what ultimately matters. I am grateful for their insights and confident you will be as well." (Scott C. Todd, senior vice president for global advocacy, Compassion International)"Having recently turned forty, I'm grateful for how 40/40 Vision provides a great opportunity to reflect on the past and look toward a meaningful future. We don't want this second half of life to slip by. We're invited to live it faithfully and fully—in how we love our families, serve in the world, do our work and seek God." (Kent Annan, author of After Shock and Following Jesus Through the Eye of the Needle)"As I approach my forties, I find myself thinking about what's next and assessing what I've done and have left to do. At a time when all of us at any age can find ourselves pondering our gifts, talents and callings, this book calls us to be hopeful through all seasons and believe that our best is yet to come, no matter our age. Just as Moses didn't start his most notable ministry until later in life, this book invites us to not waste our time thinking what could have been and focus instead on what could be." (Jenny Yang, vice president of advocacy and policy, World Relief, coauthor, Welcoming the Stranger)"I turned forty this year, and I'm happy to report I'm still the same person I was last year . . . but not without a bit of existential angst about the brevity of life. In this timely book, Peter and Greg guide us to reflect on the gifts of growing older, inviting us to learn from past mistakes and

refocus on what matters most. This is a book everyone in the midst of midlife needs to read." (Kristen Howerton, founder of Rage Against the Minivan)"The sobering realities of midlife may offer the most opportunity and risk for followers of Christ. During this time, the importance of our ability to thoughtfully reflect and respond to God's call to walk with him cannot be overstated. In 40/40 Vision, Peter and Greg have written an honest and essential guidebook to help us navigate the rest of our days. It's a must-read." (Dave Blanchard, CEO and cofounder of Praxis)"With wisdom and vulnerability, Greer and Lafferty challenge us with questions that really matter—about our identity, our relationships and our plans and purposes. 40/40 Vision is a must-read for anyone wanting to more clearly see a life well lived!" (Tom Lin, InterVarsity vice president and director of Urbana)"40/40 Vision is not just a book; it's also a mirror helping us reflect on the trajectory of our lives. As the psalmist tells us to number our days in order to gain wisdom, see this as a tool to help count. Through the lens of Ecclesiastes, Greer and Lafferty show us it's not a midlife crisis, but a midlife opportunity. If you're hungry to learn from the wisdom of others who have traveled—and who are currently traveling—life's path, this book is for you." (J.R. Briggs, pastor, author of Fail and coauthor of Eldership and the Mission of God)"As I approach forty myself, I have started many of the same exercises that Peter and Greg went through in this new book. I believe great leaders are always learners, and if we don't stop and take a minute to process where we are in life, we could miss some of God's greatest plans for us. I can't wait to get this work into the hands of my colleagues and friends to have these important conversations together." (Tyler Reagin, executive director of Catalyst)"Peter and Greg's book reminds me to look beyond life's repetitive and sometimes seemingly meaningless cycles, to the deepened, perspective-driven wisdom and productivity that await me on the other side of forty. The book weaves practical, real life examples alongside musings of Solomon from Ecclesiastes to engage the reader to reach for a higher world, in living 'above the sun,' no matter the life stage they are part of." (Sarah Cunningham, author of The Well-Balanced World Changer and Portable Faith)"Peter Greer and Greg Lafferty have written boldly into the human experience of midlife and beyond. They have encouraging words for those who find this transit point scary. And they have wise words for those who seek to storm into the second half of life and insist that it be the most productive and satisfying half. Greer and Lafferty get it. They appreciate the great countercultural idea that the Christian gospel offers—that no day is ever wasted, no year is ever lost, no decade of life is ever irrelevant when one's life is grounded in God's purposes." (Gordon MacDonald, chancellor, Denver Seminary, author of Ordering Your Private World, Mid-Course Correction and A Resilient Life)"40/40 Vision is filled with wit and wisdom, as Peter Greer and Greg Lafferty wrestle with the distinction between the

meaningful and the meaningless aspects of reaching life's halftime. Honest and vulnerable, they go to the hard places, tackle tough questions and navigate their way back to lasting purpose. I highly recommend this book, regardless of your age!" (Tami Heim, president and CEO of Christian Leadership Alliance)"This book came to me right as I was entering my forties. It had a profound impact on me, altering the way I will view this chapter of my life as well as the trajectory of my future. I am certain it will do the same for you!" (Robert Dickie, president of Crown Financial Ministries)"40/40 Vision landed in my hands at the time I needed to hear the encouraging words from Ecclesiastes. 40/40 Vision is an inspiring, well-written book full of encouragement, no matter where you fall on the age bar. Greer and Lafferty write, 'Midlife is the time to narrow your focus of your to-do list.'" (Bobbie Bomar-Brown, Baptist Standard, December 19, 2015)"Theological seriousness, with real-life illustrations and an anchor in Ecclesiastes, differentiates Greer and Lafferty's book from common, pragmatic treatments for midlife crises. Clear writing conveys the essential message: 'Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, and we long to gain a new perspective like they did. To have spiritual LASIK remove the midlife blur so we can see our way clear of trivial pursuits, selfish ambitions and destructive escapes. To live for what matters most.' By book's end I was filling the margins with notes." (Bill Newton, WORLD Magazine, February 20, 2016)"40/40 Vision takes up themes from Ecclesiastes and walks through them in twelve chapters with good descriptions, illustrative stories, and serious encounters. . . .There's no sugar-coating by Greer and Lafferty, but an honest-face-the-music approach that gently draws the reader to see the situation in all of its starkness. But instead of leaving the middle-lifer in a crisis, the authors offer sage, biblical counsel on how to turn all of this into a mid-life opportunity. 40/40 Vision is skillfully crafted, standing as it does on the foundation of Ecclesiastes. It's a work that is meant to be read, discussed, dog-eared, marked-up, and returned to for years to come." (Michael Philliber, Deus Misereatur, September 18, 2015)"40/40 Vision is a trove of timeless wisdom and timely insight. It penetrates many blind spots of our own era as well as great questions asked throughout history. Ultimately, it points not only to hope on the far side of the forties but also to weighty purpose and a light heart within them." (Jedd Medefind, president, Christian Alliance for Orphans, coauthor, Upended)"Greer and Lafferty will make readers laugh at just the right moments to cushion the lessons of middle age. Christians and nonbelievers alike will find much to mull over as they approach this most ominous midlife point, or as they find themselves on either side of it. . . . Readers will discover that no matter one's age, one's outlook and purpose for living will determine a path through the ups and down of each phase of life. Greer and Lafferty offer a touching, wise guide for making the midlife struggle a worthy one." (Publishers Weekly, September 14, 2015)

Peter Greer is president and CEO of HOPE International, a global, Christ-centered microfinance organization serving throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Internationally, Peter served as a microfinance adviser in Cambodia, technical adviser for Self-Help Development Foundation in Zimbabwe and managing director for Urwego in Rwanda. As an advocate for the church's role in missions and alleviating extreme poverty, Peter has been a featured speaker at conferences such as Catalyst, Passion and Harvest International's Development Conference and Jubilee, and he has been featured in Christianity Today, World, Forbes, Relevant and Outcomes magazine, and on CNN. Peter is the author or coauthor of *The Poor Will Be Glad*, *The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good*, *Mission Drift*, *Entrepreneurship for Human Flourishing*, *Stop Helping Us* and *Watching Seeds Grow*. Peter and his wife, Laurel, live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with their three children. Greg Lafferty is the senior pastor of Willowdale Chapel, a church with campuses in Kennett Square and Jennersville, Pennsylvania. A graduate of Wheaton College, he cut his ministry teeth working with junior high kids for ten years before transitioning into adult ministry. Previously Greg served at both Wheaton Bible Church and Christ Community Church in suburban Chicago and Saddleback Church in Southern California. He has served the church his entire vocational career alongside his wife of over thirty years, Deane, with whom he has three children.

This book has some good elements. Ecclesiastes is a useful study for midlife. But often the stories seem to promise a quick turn from meaningless life under the sun, focused on self, as soon as one turns the eyes to God above the sun.

Having just turned 40 myself this past September, this book could not have been more timely. Peter & Greg write with such great clarity and honesty from their own experience as well as illustrating stories of others that provide helpful lessons for all of us. I'm so glad to have read this book now and highly encourage & recommend others to read this book, especially if you are in your 40's right now. Thank you Peter & Greg!

A very practical, honest, hopeful look in the mirror, in the light of the gracious God who is brighter than the sun

Well written book providing two perspectives on recognizing mid-life angst and setting a hopeful path forward.

Very good information

An 80-country survey asked respondents, “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?” People in their 40s were least satisfied, with 46-year-olds being unhappiest. I am 46 years old. Needless to say, I read Peter Greer and Greg Lafferty’s new book with keen interest. The forties are the decade when men and women experience midlife crisis. They are halfway through their lives equidistant from the start of their professions and their retirement. The twenties and thirties are predominated by questions of success. In the forties, however, questions of significance take the lead. According to Greer and Lafferty, the kinds of questions 40-year-olds ask are these: “All this work, does it even matter? I’ve striven for so long, but I’m still not there—and now I’m losing interest. Why am I not happier? Is this my lot in life? Did I miss my calling? Is it too late for a do-over? Was all that I pursued in my thirties a mistake?” These are questions of meaning. To navigate the turbulence of the forties is thus to navigate the waters of life’s meaning. And few books of the Bible address the question of meaning more acutely than Ecclesiastes. But wait, you’re thinking to yourself; doesn’t Ecclesiastes say that life is meaningless? “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” If you’re having a mid-life crisis, that’s hardly the kind of statement to cheer you up. True, but as Greer and Lafferty point out, Ecclesiastes’ perspective is that of a “functional deist,” that is, “a person who acknowledges God’s existence but suffers due to his apparent absence.” Such a person can experience great success and pleasure in life, and yet still discover that they don’t guarantee a meaningful life. What is needed is a larger worldview, an above-the-sun perspective. An above-the-sun perspective gives meaning to an under-the-sun life not by pooh-poohing success or pleasure, but by qualifying them, by helping us see the goodness in life’s limitations. For example, chapter 6, “(Un)charitable,” deals with the concept of “true wealth.” Ecclesiastes 5:10 truly said, “Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves money is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.” But notice the parentheses in the chapter title; they are important. A

person focused on getting is uncharitable. But place that negative prefix un- in parenthesis *un-qualify or limit it* and you discover that wealth isn't the problem. It's the lack of generosity. The authors write, "In the United States, we've developed super-sized appetites for pleasure, but we haven't experienced a corresponding rise in our taste for giving. Accumulating money doesn't make you happy or filled with a sense of meaning. Being generous with what you have does, however. The same can be said for all the goods we pursue in life. They're not necessarily bad in and of themselves, but they're unalloyed goods either. A meaningful life recognizes their limited, qualified, under-the-sun goodness. Only God, who lives 'above the sun' is unqualifiedly good, so our search for meaning in midlife must inevitably turn to Him. Of one of the criminals crucified alongside Christ, Greer and Lafferty write: "In many ways, he typifies a wasted life, a nameless man engaged in senseless violence. But during his brief moment on stage, he said a line that goes down as one of the greatest in history: 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Luke 23:42). And that request saves him. "Boom. Immortal. One moment of clarity in a life of futility, and everything changes. Precisely because I'm in my forties, I paid close attention to the advice given in 40/40 Vision, and I recommend it highly, especially if you're in midlife too. I want my next forty years to be even better than my first forty. I especially recommend reading the book to forty-something pastors. It's hard enough to lead a congregation under normal circumstances, let alone on top of a midlife crisis. Get help early and often! At the start of this review, I noted that 46 years of age was the low point of unhappiness in that global survey. If that's where you are today, you don't have to get stuck there! For, to borrow a phrase from Ecclesiastes, God will make everything beautiful in its time (3:11).

I have a confession to make. I'm forty. I aged out in June and I am forced to face the fact that I'm statistically closer to the grave than the cradle. In many ways I don't feel forty yet. I feel like I'm still becoming who I was meant to be. I don't feel like I'm established. There is so much I had hoped to accomplish at this point, there is security which has eluded me, such as a fulfilling job and life success. 4434 Authors Peter Greer and Greg Lafferty both have successful ministry careers. Greer is the president and CEO of Hope International, a global micro-finance organization. Lafferty is the

senior pastor of Willowdale Chapel in Jennersville, Pennsylvania. Greer watched Lafferty navigate his forties and decided to learn from him about how he could avoid a midlife crisis and be propelled towards meaningful mission (17). *40/40 Vision: Clarifying Your Mission in Midlife* is Greer and Lafferty's call for us to reevaluate our lives and press into the things which matter. Lafferty and Greer share vulnerability about their experience of aging. They also engage a third dialogue partner: Qoheleth. The author of Ecclesiastes provides insights on refocusing our life midstream. Greer and Lafferty (and Qoheleth) address midlife (ch. 1), the meaninglessness of life (ch. 2), disappointment with our life not going how we had planned (ch.3), the loss of 'thrill' (ch. 4), facing mortality (ch. 5), growing in generosity (ch. 6), breaking the addiction to go-go-go (ch. 7), aging well (ch. 8), deepening our relationships in midlife (ch. 9), relinquishing control (ch. 10), finding meaning outside of 'a job' (ch. 11), and living a life with lasting purpose (ch. 12). In their introduction, Greer and Lafferty write, " Our hope is that this is not just another self-help book loosely based on Christian principles or a list of ways to ease the symptoms of midlife. Rather, we want to address the underlying questions of midlife through the timeless wisdom of Ecclesiastes. Although many issues in their forties, others face them in their thirties or fifties" (17-18). Sharing vulnerably from their life experience, they delve into each theme, highlighting the wisdom and insights of Ecclesiastes and exploring what it means to live life on mission in life's latter half. This book speaks meaningfully to me in a way I wish it did not. I would rather be young, invincible, and immortal. But the experience of forty means I have to face up to life and press forward knowing that reckoning and resurrection await those who fear God and keep his commandments (183-184). Greer and Lafferty's conversational tone draws you and causes you to reflect on what life could be like moving forward. I recommend this book for those near forty, those who are forty or fortyish, and those who saw forty a long time ago and still pretend they are forty. Greer and Lafferty show how Ecclesiastes speaks to midlife. I give this four stars. Note: I received this book from IVP in exchange for my honest review.

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