

InterVarsity Staff at Mid-Life An Interview

On November 12, 1998 the editors of the Over-the-Hill Journal traveled to the offices of the distinguished psychologist, Professor Allen von Stuckski, to discuss with him his theories of the mid-life transition and it's relevance to male¹ InterVarsity staff over forty. Tucked away in the corner of a ramshackle office building, we found the professor seated in a room littered with books, papers, and colorful charts tacked to all the walls. The professor is a thin, elderly man with a full gray beard, and glasses. He wore a green cardigan sweater, sat hunched over in his chair, and spoke with a slight accent.

Over-the-Hill Journal: Professor, how good of you to see us. I notice that you are wearing the IVCF baseball cap that we sent you.

Professor von Stuckski: Backwards no less! It makes me look, how do you young people say, “cool”, don't you think? I find it always important to try, in some way, to identify with the people that I talk with. How can I be of help to you today?

OTHJ: Well, as you know, our Journal is trying to help IVCF staff members over forty deal with the realities of working in an organization that is focused upon young college students. The average staff member of our organization stays for about five years. Those who remain longer are in the minority. We are trying to find ways to address their developmental needs.

Professor von Stuckski: Yes. I can see that is quite a challenge. Your staff workers at forty are a full generation removed from the people they serve. The issues they face are unique to their age group.

OTHJ: Professor, before we get to the subject of the mid-life transition, could you tell us about the psychological research that you have done over the years. I see on the wall behind you your diploma in engineering. Tell us of your other degrees.

Professor von Stuckski: Well, that is my only official degree. With respect to psychology, I am entirely self taught. I have spent years of intensive research with my patient. From him, and of course consulting with others in the field¹, I have been able to develop my various theories.

OTHJ: Professor, I thought I mistakenly heard you say, “patient,” in the singular.

Professor von Stuckski: No. You heard correctly. In all these years, I have had only one patient. Actually the patient is me. We psychologists, however, find it important to maintain some objectivity, so I usually speak of him in the third person.

OTHJ: Interesting...

Professor von Stuckski: My research began when I was in college. I took a class in abnormal psychology. By the end of the term I realized that I possessed every psychological abnormality known to mankind- excessive/ compulsive behavior, phobias of all sorts, manic depression, Oedipus complex, multiple personality disorder, repression, aggression, and megalomania. Between these ears is a bouillabaisse of madness. I thought to myself, “What a lucky guy I am. There is an

¹ Levinson, Daniel J., The Seasons of a Man's Life, Ballantine Books, 1978

inexhaustible reservoir of insanity living with me in my house.” It was a researcher’s dream.

OTHJ: Professor, we hardly know what to say. We...

Professor von Stuckski: Oh! Don’t worry. Most people react with speechlessness when they first meet me. In the business it is called, “confronting an illusion.” The general population has a hard time accepting the fact that the major theoretical psychoanalysts of the world were certifiable fruitcakes. Don’t get me started on Freud and Jung or we will be here all day.

OTHJ: Wow! Who would ever have thought... Well, what can you tell us about the mid-life transition.

Professor von Stuckski: First, you need to understand that the mid-life experience is a normal developmental process that takes place in adults. My work has been with one adult male. Others can speak more authoritatively for the adult female patterns.² It is a transitional process that men go through between the ages of forty and forty-five. One season of a man’s life is ending and another season is beginning. It is similar, by the way, to the transition that occurs between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. At that time, a person is moving from late adolescence and dependence upon parents to early adulthood and greater independence.

OTHJ: Professor, how many seasons of life are there?

Professor von Stuckski: Well, Jung, Erickson, and the rest of us who study these kinds of things think there are at least four - childhood, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. They each last approximately twenty years. Similar to the seasons of the year-spring, summer, fall, and winter- each season has a unique set of characteristics and feelings associated with it. Within each season a person must address various age related issues common to all people. Between each season is a three to five year transition period where the work of one season is concluded and the work of another is begun.

The Journey

OTHJ: Professor, what do you mean by “the work of a season” ?

Professor von Stuckski: Let me suggest an image to explain the overall concept. We can then unpack the image in more detail as we talk. Recently the Mrs. and I planned a journey from Southern California to New York. By the way, a journey is a good way to think about life as one moves through

their seasons of time. I loaded up my 1973 Buick with enough provisions to travel through Siberia, and off we went. I had a simple travel plan. Drive 700 miles per day as fast as possible, stay at a cheap hotel each night, and get to our final destination within a week. Well, by the end of the first day I knew my plan was in trouble. Mrs. von Stuckski has a one hour bladder. So we were always stopping to look for a bathroom. She figured, as long as we were stopped, we might as well see the local sites. That decision made it impossible to cover 700 miles per day. On the second day, the old Buick blew a head gasket.

² Levinson, Daniel J., The Seasons of a Woman’s Life, Ballantine Books, 1996

The mechanic who fixed the car said the load we were transporting was too heavy for my vintage automobile. So I reluctantly tossed some of the items from the trunk.

OTHJ: I'm glad to hear that you didn't toss Mrs. von Stuckski.

Professor von Stuckski: She was the driver! The older I get the less I like to drive so when it comes to road trips, I'm at her mercy. I'm just glad she didn't unload me! On the fourth day we read about a blizzard that was bearing down on New York so we changed our final destination to Florida. Now throughout the journey we had three concerns that influenced our plan- the first was the load we were carrying, the second was the condition of the automobile, and the third was our final destination. Symbolically speaking, "the work of a season" means developing a plan for the journey that examines those three concerns. When we are in a transition phase of life, our awareness of our life goals are the greatest. That's also the best time to make changes.

OTHJ: Professor, in your story, it sounds like your travel plan had to work not only for you but also for Mrs. von Stuckski.

Professor von Stuckski: Yes, that is a key concept to remember. Our life plan must work both externally and internally if it is to be successful. It must enable us to meet our obligations to those around us-spouse, employers, extended family, society- as well as our internal self. Usually what triggers the transition phase of life is the realization that our plan is not working at some level.

OTHJ: So all of us are on a journey. Somewhere around the age of forty our staff worker acquires a vague sense that something has changed. Expand on this idea for us.

Professor von Stuckski: The period usually starts with very subtle signs. Maybe a person experiences what I call a marker event. For example, someone close to the subject, a parent or friend, dies and the individual must face the inevitability of their own death in a deeper way. Or maybe a man is confronted with health problems such as high blood pressure or chronic back pain. He doesn't have the energy he had before. He doesn't bounce back from the weekend conference as quickly. Others look at what they have accomplished in their first forty years and have a sense of regret. Suddenly, the staff worker realizes that the clock is ticking and they are getting older. In that moment the illusion of youth bursts.

OTHJ: I noticed that students no longer called me by my first name. Instead they called me Mr.....

Professor von Stuckski: Exactly. You realized that you were aging because the people around you treated you as older. One day we wake up and say to ourselves, "Dang, my life is half over! What do I have to show for it? Where am I going next?" You glance at the obituary page of the paper more often. Suddenly the period of evaluation and introspection begins.

OTHJ: Tell us about some of the specific issues a person must face during this transition?

Professor von Stuckski: Let's start with the trunk. When Mrs. von Stuckski and I traveled to New York, we packed our trunk with our treasures. It contained the possessions we valued the most. In real life, relationships with others fill our lives and give them meaning.

OTHJ: A staff worker has relationships with spouse, family, coworkers, students, neighbors, donors, and mentors.

Professor von Stuckski: Yes. He also has a relationship with your organization which is less personal but no less real. He may also have a relationship with a house, a hobby, or a hero that exists only in literature. He may have a relationship with a city, a cause, or an idea. In each case, the relationship occupies space-time and energy- in your staff worker's life.

OTHJ: Professor, as I recall your journey to New York, you reached a point where you had to evaluate the items in your trunk and toss some things out. Is that what you are suggesting here?

Professor von Stuckski: I am suggesting that a person start with evaluation. For example your staff worker might explore the following questions: What are the most important parts of my life and how do they interrelate? Where do I invest most of my time and energy? Are there relationships- to spouse, friends, family, occupation, leisure, God, or whatever- that I would like to modify, to make more satisfying, or to eliminate? Are there some things not in my life that I would like to include? Are there interests and relationships, not present or occupying a minor place, that I would like to make more central? After a person has had the chance to investigate their trunk, so to speak, they can proceed to make changes. All of us have limited amounts of time and energy so it is important that as we grow older, we become more intentional with our choices.

OTHJ: My wife told me that in my twenties and thirties I seemed to work all the time. I had given my job the most space in my life and left

little for her or our children. What intrigues me is that I was, for the most part, deaf to her complaints until I was forty.

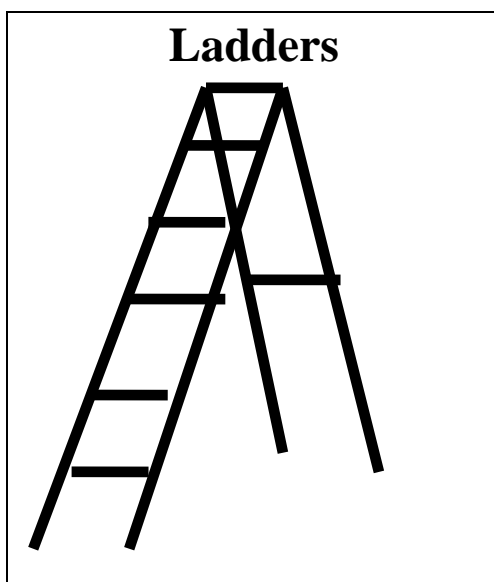
Professor von Stuckski: That response is not uncommon. Many men see themselves as providers, responsible for bringing home the paycheck to sustain the family. They see their wives as the nurturers of the children and caretakers of the home. Those gender roles, however can change over time, which may be what you experienced when you reached forty.

OTHJ: I think that is true. I also noticed that work relationships occupied a major portion of my trunk because those relationships provided a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. This may sound strange, but I think that I needed to prove myself in the work world. I didn't feel the same drive in my family world. As a result, my family received less space in my life.

Professor von Stuckski: You are not as strange as you may think. Our studies have shown that men and

women seek to prove themselves in different ways. This is a broad generalization of course, but men tend to climb ladders³ whereas women tend to build webs of relationships. For a man the ladder may be advancement up the organizational chart of their company. It may be acquiring advanced degrees.

OTHJ: In InterVarsity, it might include working on a prestigious campus, becoming an



³ Levinson, Daniel J., The Seasons of a Man's Life, pages 141-164

expert in evangelism or cross cultural ministry, writing a book, or speaking at Urbana.

Professor von Stuckski: That's right. All of those are signs that say, "I have made it in the world I live in." What is interesting is that while a person is climbing up a ladder in their thirties and doing new, exciting and often risky ventures, they are also seeking to put down roots of stability. Marriage, children, or owning a home, pull a man in the opposite direction. So the thirties, leading up to the mid-life transition, is often experienced as a time of being pulled in multiple directions at once.

OTHJ: Professor, when I reached my mid forties, it slowly dawned on me that I had attained most of my professional and family goals.

Professor von Stuckski: Exactly. That's one possible outcome of ladder climbing. In your case, you had reached the top rung of your ladder. So you probably asked yourself, "Now what?" That question can trigger a sense of despair and confusion as you stood on the top and faced a void of unknown. Suddenly, and this sounds absurd, but the people on the obituary page who died at forty five seemed like lucky stiff to you.

OTHJ: How did you know?

Professor von Stuckski: As I mentioned before, son, my patient was a gold mine of psychosis. Now, other people get half way up their ladder and suddenly realize that their dream is based upon an illusion. Never in a million years will they make it to the top. So they have to decide. Do they get off that ladder and try a new one? Do they abandon ladder climbing all together? In all cases, everyone needs to look in a fresh way at their ladders. Rarely does a person who starts out in their twenties stay on the same course their whole

life. Some type of midcourse correction almost always needs to happen.

OTHJ: Professor, returning to our image of the journey, we have examined the treasured relationships in our trunk. Could you now speak about the condition of the automobile? What does that mean?

Professor von Stuckski: An automobile is the vehicle that transports us to our destination. In life, that is our body. It includes our physical self, our psychological self, our spiritual self. It is our heart and liver and overgrown toenail on our left foot. It includes our personality, our gifts, and abilities. It is everything that is you. For starters, I recommend that every mid-life person get a physical. Ask your doctor what you can do to decrease the effects of aging. What five activities will make you healthier physically and emotionally?

OTHJ: Even though I weigh the same as I did in college, my waist keeps getting bigger.

Professor von Stuckski: It's gravity. Try sleeping upside down. If that doesn't work, buy bigger pants. I also find that various personality assessments are helpful tools for a person at mid-life.

OTHJ: InterVarsity uses instruments such as SIMA, Performax, Myers-Briggs, and the Bobby Clinton Spiritual Gifts Assessment with our staff.

Professor von Stuckski: Introspective lot, aren't you? Well it sounds like you have plenty of resources to help you evaluate. I would recommend that you encourage the mid-life staff to review those reports and ask the following: What are my primary gifts or motivations and how do I make them more central in my life? What abilities do I need to develop and how? What are my ideal working conditions? Who can help me improve my

performance as a staff worker, spouse, father, or friend.

OTHJ: Professor, Jung talks about the need in mid-life to reconcile the archetype polarities of the self. I don't know what he means by that, but it seems like it relates to evaluating the condition of the automobile.

Professor von Stuckski: Did you know that Jung had a speech impediment? Years ago I was traveling in Europe and I had the chance to attend a lecture given by the father of depth psychology. The good doctor got up to speak and he started off by reciting a nursery rhyme about a cow, the moon and the dish that ran away with the spoon. So he said, "The cow yumped over the moon." Well, this Freudian sitting next to me turned and said, "Oh that is so profound. A cow that yumped over the moon. It sounds so orgasmicly sexual. The cow representing the maternal in our world engages the feminine of the universe in some kind of lesbian encounter."

I turned to the guy and said, "That's horse pucky. The poor man can't pronounce his "J" properly. Where do you people get these inane ideas"

OTHJ: Interesting. I never knew that.

Professor von Stuckski: Archetype polarities.⁴ Smart people can sometimes be so dense. He is talking about the little tiny people that live in our heads. All of us have them. They are about an eighth of an inch tall with

little tiny hands and tiny feet. Sometimes if you look closely, you can see them staring out the window of your eyes.

Editors note: At this point in the conversation, the Professor took off his glasses and invited us to look into the pupils of his eyes to see the little tiny people. We thought this a bit strange but we obliged him. After reporting to him that we didn't see anything, he remarked that they were probably in the back room asleep or watching television.

Professor von Stuckski: At mid-life the little tiny people are jolted to a new level of awareness and have a seasonal hissyfit. Some of the people have been locked in cages for years. Their repressed frustration explodes and they start to scream, throw furniture, and stage hunger strikes. One of my people started showing home movies at three in the morning. I thought I was going to go crazy.

OTHJ: Professor, this is very interesting. How many of these little tiny people, as you call them,

are in your head.

Professor von Stuckski: Well, that is hard to say, but all of us have at least eight people. I think I may have nine. I've got someone in there dressed up as superman. He thinks he can fly by flapping his arms, but he has problems clearing the tops of the little tiny trees. Two of the people that all of us have are Mr. Old and Mr. Young. Mr. Young is full of energy and possibility. He is a risk taker. He can be very impulsive. He thinks of himself as invincible.

Archetype Polarities?

⁴ The Seasons of a Man's Life, pages 209-244

OTHJ: We have young staff workers who want to go bungee jumping and hang gliding with their students.

Professor von Stuckski: That's a good image of Mr. Young, the bungee jumper. Mr. Old is probably your legal department- cautious, calculating, conservative. Mr. Old is aware of the frailty of life and the ever-present prospect of death. He can be both wise and senile. At mid-life, Mr. Young and Mr. Old must learn to cooperate more fully. If Mr. Old dominates, a man may experience an early death of his soul as he becomes increasingly self centered, apathetic, passive, and protective. If Mr. Young dominates, you can count on nose rings, a life of irresponsibility, and a new marriage to a nineteen year old Baywatch Babe with a degree in toenail design. By working together, however, they may be able to create a legacy during their fifties and sixties that will benefit themselves, their family, and the world around them.

OTHJ: It seems that a legacy might represent a new destination for the second half of life. Mr. Young might energize those of us stuck on the tops of our ladders to get down and try a new path. Mr. Old, on the other hand, could help us be realistic about our abilities and wisely focus our energies on our areas of giftedness.

Professor von Stuckski: That is a good way to illustrate the cooperation needed. In addition to our young and old tiny persons we also have creative and destructive sides. Our creative voice gives birth to that which is new and life giving. This person is noble, kind, and altruistic. He hopes for the best in others. He looks for a silver lining under every cloud. He stands for truth and justice and courageously

reaches out to defend the rights of others. Pitted against Mr. Creative is Mr. Destructive. This person is dressed like Darth Vader. He is the voice of denial, darkness, and desolation. He sees himself as the victim of other people's aggressions and he responds in kind. He is self-focused, self-promoting, and racist. At mid-life a man must reexamine the harm done to him by parents, school mates, or coworkers and resolve those feelings. At the same time, we must come to grips with the fact that we are more than just victims. We are also villains. If we can learn to listen to Mr. Destruction, we may gain a deeper sense that life is often a tragedy.

“I'm your Y chromosome, Mr. Stud Muffin. Get ready for some big changes. Rather than beat my opponents senseless, I look for ways to cooperate. I cry at weddings, like Alan Alda movies, and am pregnant with creative ideas. Clean up your socks, buster.”

OTHJ: As a manager, I found I needed to review the situations where I had fired various employees. I had tried so hard to act in a loving and honorable way toward each person, but I discovered there was always a voice in my head that wanted to get even or inflict pain.

Professor von Stuckski: And you grew by learning

to accept Mr. Destruction as a permanent member of the household in your head.

OTHJ: The word “accept” may be too benign. Mr. Destruction grieves me. His evil terrifies me. I now find myself second guessing even my best intentions and pleading for God's mercy to mitigate Mr. Destruction's force. At the same time, Mr. Destruction is a wounded, pathetic person, trapped in his own web of pain. So the feelings of fear and pity mingle in my mind.

Professor von Stuckski: That's a good way to put it. Now two other important little people that we need to talk about are Mr. Masculine

and Miss Feminine. Mr. Masculine makes himself known in the late teens. He lives in the left side of the head. He pumps iron, works very hard, and is a responsibly ambitious ladder climber. He is the leader who brings home the bacon. He is a builder who gets things done. His objective is to maintain control at all times. If he had his way, your head would be a football locker room. At mid-life, another tiny person emerges. She was there all the time. Most men, however, keep her locked in the back room. Her name is Miss Feminine. The first time she shows up, Mr. Masculine says, "How in the hell did you get into my house." To which Miss Feminine replies, "I'm your Y chromosome, Mr. Stud Muffin. Get ready for some big changes. Rather than beat my opponents senseless, I look for ways to cooperate. I cry at weddings, like Alan Alda movies, and am pregnant with creative ideas. Clean up your socks, buster."

OTHJ: To which Mr. Masculine replies, "Holy moose doots, somebody hide the *Playboy* magazines."

Professor von Stuckski: Exactly. Deep down Mr. Masculine is terrified of Miss Feminine. However, if a man is to learn how to be a mentor to those younger than himself, if he is to leave a legacy for his children, and if he is to give birth to some new creative work, he must learn to more fully integrate the masculine and feminine voices within his head.

OTHJ: InterVarsity is committed to helping men and women grow in love for God and one another. We are committed to caring for peoples' souls. It seems that care-giving has both a masculine and feminine dimension. The masculine side allows a man to provide and protect others. The feminine side enables him to nurture and encourage.

Professor von Stuckski: Yes, that is true. It is also true that spiritual growth from mid-life on involves surrendering more of our lives to God's control. That too is a feminine function. Probably those who will have the hardest time with this process are those in management positions. Management is such a masculine function. A manager is paid to maintain control not surrender it. So the manager is caught in a unique dilemma. If he is to more fully integrate the feminine voice and grow spiritually, he may need to redesign his work role. He must learn to follow and submit.⁵ That can be quite difficult given the fact that managers tend to become isolated in their roles.

OTHJ: I have found it increasingly important to surround myself with a team of people who will share authority with me and to whom I am accountable. Professor, this is all very relevant and helpful. Do you have anyone else living in your head besides the six you have mentioned so far?

Professor von Stuckski: The last two little tiny people are Joe Attachment and Bob Separateness. Mr. Attachment strives to connect with the environment. As we said earlier, during the twenties and thirties, a man must work very hard to put down roots, prove himself in his job, and provide for his family. He must focus on the needs of others and the world outside.

OTHJ: I have noticed that it is the InterVarsity staff in their twenties and thirties who do the most to help the mission of the organization advance forward. That group is the one most connected to the students.

Professor von Stuckski: Yes, and often their attachment to the mission is done at the expense of nurturing their own souls. Self

⁵ Stewart, Douglas, email on November 10, 1998

nurture requires one to detach-to be separate for a time. Meditation and reflection become increasingly important to a person at mid-life. Mr. Separateness is the defender of our souls. It is especially important for your creative types to pay attention to the balance of these two tiny people. Creativity requires solitude. If a person is to make a contribution beyond mid-life, he must place less value on possessions, rewards, and social approval. He must learn to draw upon inner resources and be less dependent upon external stimulation.⁶

OTHJ: Professor, I'm starting to get a headache. My little tiny people seem to all be talking at once.

Professor von Stuckski: When we are done, go home and watch a James Bond movie. It will keep half of your little tiny people entertained while the other half quietly plot their next move. It works every time for me. Of course, be prepared for Miss Feminine to raise a ruckus. Learning to hear the opposing voices in our heads is the first step in trying to establish a new balance within our personalities. Your forty year olds might want to ask the following: Which voices most dominate my inner conversations? What new voices am I beginning to hear? What are they saying? Also encourage your people to keep a journal of their dreams. Pay careful attention to the little guy showing home movies at three in the morning.

OTHJ: In discussing the journey of our forty year old staff worker, we have reviewed the treasures in his trunk and the condition of his automobile. Tell me now about the concept of destination.

Professor von Stuckski: Another word for destination might be dream. A dream is something rather fragile and mysterious. In its

earliest form, it is a vague sense of the possibilities for our self in the world. It is as unique as one's fingerprint. We tend to view it as something that comes from outside of ourselves, yet is tailor-made for our gifts and personality. It is something that has the ability to capture our attention, to inspire, to fill us with excitement. A life that is based upon a dream has a vital quality to it. Any other is at best a compromise and at worst a defeat.⁷ The dream is a bit like a Polaroid photograph in the process of developing. In the twenties the images on the photo are often just a blur. As the years roll by, however, the true picture of one's life begins to emerge out of the shadows.

OTHJ: For the InterVarsity staff member, the issue of God's will adds another layer of complexity to the concept of a dream. The internal and external obstacles to joining the staff ranks at age twenty-four are great. Those who are able to raise the funds, craft a role, and overcome opposition from family or friends usually have a deep conviction that their dream of being a staff member was authored by God.

Professor von Stuckski: It probably is God's will that they be a staff member. However it is also true that their conviction of God's will forms at a stage when their level of self understanding is just beginning. When the dream is taking shape in us when we are twenty, it is almost always polluted. It contains a mixture of truth and illusion. It may be a combination of our parents' dreams for us, our mentor's dreams for us, or even the American Dream. A person may be working out some inner conflict. They may be striving for things that will ultimately be harmful for them and those around them. As a result, at age forty a person must reexamine their dreams. Some modification is almost always necessary.

⁶ Moore, Thomas, *Care of the Soul*, HarperCollins, 1992

⁷ *Seasons of a Woman's Life*, pages 237-241

OTHJ: At forty-three I remember standing on the top rung of my ladder staring into the void. It was an overwhelming experience. I suddenly realized that I had been using organizational advancement as a means of securing worth for myself.

Professor von Stuckski: In that moment you were given a doorway to explore why you felt unworthy and where your worth came from. With that exploration came the ability to change. But change may have created all kinds of conflicting feelings for you. If your dream was bound with your idea of God's will, then you may have felt your relationship with Him threatened. In addition, you and other forty years olds are quite loyal to InterVarsity. As you contemplated change, you may have felt that you were betraying the organization.

OTHJ: Wow! Wrestling with all these new feelings is exhausting, sir.

Professor von Stuckski: Wrestling is a good word to describe the mid-life experience. Remember Jacob? He is a model for the mid-life man. Jacob had a rough start in life. He lived in the shadow of his energetic brother and his two conniving parents. At his transition to early adulthood, he broke from his past and set out for Mesopotamia to pursue a dream. For twenty years he climbed his ladder. He added four wives, thirteen children, and a barnyard of livestock to his trunk. Upon reaching the top rung of his life, he then decided to return to his homeland and face his past. In that moment he was confronted by his God and they wrestled in the desert. It was a life or death struggle.⁸ At stake was Jacob's soul and God's glory. If Jacob had withdrawn from the fight, he might have continued to exist but he would never have really lived. He would never have discovered God's new name for him. He would have continued to be

trapped as a prisoner of his compulsions and fears. If God had withdrawn, he would have betrayed his name, Immanuel. He would have forfeited his previous investment in Jacob and missed the harvest of grace that was revealed in the later part of Jacob's life. That's the mid-life experience. Both God and the mid-life man wager their relationship together for a brighter future. In the process, our view of God, the people around us, and our own life all change.

OTHJ: Professor, wrestling is dangerous. We could get hurt!

Professor von Stuckski: You bet we could! Jacob ended up with a permanent limp. All who enter the ring with God will intimately discover their own human limits and God's limitless power. That, however, is a wonderful fruit of the mid-life struggle leading to a more satisfying relationship with God.

OTHJ: I have noticed that from mid-life on, I have been a little less concerned with where I go as long as I am with Jesus. Earlier in my journey, I was in the driver's seat. Now I have more of a sense that someone else is taking the wheel. Most of the time I'm striving to steer from the passenger seat. Every so often, however, when my anxiety subsides, I am able to enjoy the bathroom breaks and sightseeing detours.

Professor von Stuckski: Mrs. von Stuckski would be proud of you. Continue to look for signs of God's initiative in shaping your dream. Pay attention to Scripture passages related to His will. Talk with others a little further along on the journey, those in their fifties and sixties. Finally be patient. Developing a plan for your journey in the second half of life takes time as you work through the layers of complexity. Examine the treasures in your trunk, the condition of your automobile, and your dream destination.

⁸ Genesis 27:1-32:32

Feelings of confusion and loneliness are common. Don't run from them. Learn to sit with them. Let the wrestler of your soul embrace you. It may feel like he is squeezing the stuffings out of you, but don't be afraid. He knows what he is doing.

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OTHJ: Professor, I hear James Bond calling. Thank you so much for sharing with us your insights. You have been very helpful.

Professor von Stuckski: My pleasure. Come back any time. My patient enjoys the company.

♦ Thanks to Tom Boyle, Grace Clune, and Doug Stewart for their editorial help.

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