

Ordering Your Private World Notes
by Gordon MacDonald

Memos to the Disorganised:

1. If my private world is in order, it will be because I am convinced that the inner world of the spiritual must govern the outer world of activity.
2. If my private world is in order, it will be because I make a daily choice to monitor its state of orderliness.
3. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have courageously confronted the messiness of my ways of living and chosen to bring them under rigorous discipline.
4. If my private world is in order, it will be because, having faced up to what drives me, I listen quietly for the call of Christ.
5. If my private world is in order, it will be because I respond to Christ's call to be a servant and form my life-purposes, my community-roles and personal identity around His fondest wishes for me.
6. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have made daily determination to see time as God's gift and worthy of careful investment.
7. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have begun to seal the time leaks and allocate my productive hours in light of my capabilities, my limits and my priorities.
8. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have determined that every day will be for me a day of growth in knowledge and wisdom.
9. If my private world is in order, it will be because I seek to use all I learn in service to others, as Christ did.
10. If my private world is in order, it will be because I regularly choose to enlarge the spiritual centre of my life.
11. If my private world is in order, it will be because I am unafraid to be alone and quiet before Christ.
12. If my private world is in order, it will be because I absorb the words of Christ into my attitudes and actions.
13. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have begun to pursue the discipline of seeing events and people through the eyes of Christ so that my prayers reflect my desire to be in alignment with His purposes and promises for them.
14. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have chosen to press Sabbath peace into the rush and routine of my daily life in order to find the rest God prescribed for Himself and all of humanity.
15. If my private world is in order, it will be because I have made a deliberate decision to begin the ordering process. Now!

Notes:

1. The development and maintenance of our inner worlds should be our highest priority.
2. We must choose to keep the heart. Choose! Its health and productivity cannot be assumed; it must be constantly protected and maintained.

Sector One: MOTIVATION

1. Drivenness

- a. Is a quality seen in people motivated to make something of themselves for less-than-best reasons.
- b. In contrast to those who are driven are the called.
- c. People worked hard in the days of my childhood, very hard. But they generally knew when to stop working, when to sit on the porch and listen to the ball game, when to take a walk and visit friends, when to get a decent night's sleep.

- d. I sometimes have the feeling that if I don't tell my friends how tired I am they will doubt I am doing anything worthwhile.
 - e. These days, stress and fatigue are almost a badge.
 - f. There are lots of driven people doing very good things.
2. A driven person is most often gratified only by accomplishment.
 - a. As a child, affirmation and approval may have been received from a parent or influential mentor only when something had been finished.
 - b. The driven person has little appreciation for the process leading towards results.
 3. A driven person is preoccupied with the symbols of accomplishment.
 4. A driven person is usually caught in the uncontrolled pursuit of expansion.
 - a. When a church is more visionary, the pastoral care of the people - which for hundreds of years has been the aim of the church - may become less important in comparison to the gathering of more people.
 5. Driven people tend to have a limited regard for integrity.
 6. Driven people are not likely to bother themselves with the honing of people skills.
 - a. A driven person may get things done, but he may also destroy people in the process.
 - b. In almost every great organisation, religious and secular, people of this sort can be found in key positions. Even though they carry with them the seeds of relational disaster, they often are indispensable to the action.
 7. Driven people tend to be highly competitive. They see each effort as a win-or-lose situation.
 8. A driven person often possesses a volcanic force of anger, which can erupt anytime he senses opposition or disloyalty.
 9. Driven people are usually abnormally busy, are averse to play, and usually avoid spiritual worship.
 10. Why are people driven?
 - a. Working to gain someone's approval can start as an objective but become a habit of living, an addiction you could say, which can be hard to break.
 - b. The book The Man Who Could do no Wrong by Charles Blair ought to be required reading for any man or woman who is in leadership.
 - c. A driven man is operating according to drives and not calls.
 - d. Paul's driven life before his conversion was worthless. Paul was driven until Christ called him.
 11. Living as a CALLED person:
 - a. Today many good and talented leaders face the constant temptation to begin believing the text of their own publicity releases. And if they do, a messianic fantasy gradually infects their personalities and leadership styles. Forgetting who they are not, they begin to make dangerous assumptions about who they are.
 - b. Called people possess an unwavering sense of purpose.
 - c. Called people practice unswerving commitment.
 - d. A called man must embrace littleness, hiddenness, and powerlessness.

Sector Two: USE OF TIME

1. Symptoms of disorganisation:
 - a. My desk takes on a cluttered appearance.
 - b. My car becomes dirty inside and out.
 - c. I become aware of a diminution in my self-esteem.
 - d. Forgotten appointments.
 - e. Phone messages to which I have failed to respond.
 - f. Deadlines I have begun to miss.
 - g. I tend to invest my energies in unproductive tasks.
 - h. I feel poorly about my work.

- i. I rarely enjoy intimacy with God.
 - j. The quality of my personal relationships usually is poor.
2. The Lord of Time:
- a. Although Jesus' everyday world was on a much smaller scale, it would appear that He lived with very much the same sort of intrusions and demands with which we are familiar.
 - b. Jesus brought His time under control.
 - c. Jesus clearly understood His mission.
 - d. Jesus understood His own limits.
 - e. Jesus sought time in solitude with the heavenly Father before every important decision and action during His public ministry.
 - f. Time must be properly budgeted for the gathering of inner strength and resolve in order to compensate for one's weaknesses when spiritual warfare begins.
3. Laws of Unmanaged Time:
- a. Unmanaged time flows toward my weaknesses.
 - b. Unmanaged time comes under the influence of Dominant People in my world.
 - c. Unmanaged time surrenders to the demands of all emergencies.
 - i. Not everything that cries the loudest is the most urgent thing.
 - ii. In the book, While it is Day by Elton Trueblood, he says, "A public man, though he is necessarily available at many times, must learn to hide. If he is always available, he is not worth enough when he is available."
 - d. Unmanaged time gets invested in things that gain public acclamation.
 - i. Unfortunately, young preachers are not in great demand, so many times they will do anything that will make them attractive to people.
4. Recapturing Lost Time:
- a. I must know my rhythms of maximum effectiveness.
 - i. I must reserve study time for the last half of the week and to plan time with people and committees as much as possible in the first part of the week.
 - ii. There are weekly rhythms, daily rhythms, and annual rhythms.
 - iii. William Booth said, "A long life of steady, consistent, holy labour will produce twice as much fruit as one shortened and destroyed by spasmodic and extravagant exertions; be careful and sparing of your strength when and where exertion is unnecessary."
 - b. I must have thoughtful criteria for choosing how to use my time.
 - i. Your challenge will not be in separating out the good from the bad, but in grabbing the best out of all the possible good.
 - ii. If we are to command our time, that demands, as it did in the ministry of our Lord, a sense of mission.
 - iii. C. S. Lewis wrote, "Don't be too easily convinced that God really wants you to do all sorts of work you needn't do. Each must do his duty in that state of life to which God has called him. Remember that a belief in the virtues of doing for doing's sake is characteristically feminine, characteristically American, and characteristically modern: so that three veils may divide you from the correct view! There can be intemperance in work just as in drink. What feels like zeal may be only fidgets or even the flattering of one's self importance. By doing what one's station and its duties does not demand, one can make oneself less fit for the duties it does demand and so commit some injustice. Just you give Mary a little chance as well as Martha."
 - c. I manage time and command it best when I budget it far in advance. (8 weeks)
 - i. First tier of priorities:
 - 1. My spiritual disciplines
 - 2. My mental disciplines

3. My Sabbath rest
4. My commitments to family and special friendships
- ii. Second tier of priorities: (The main work to which I am committed)
 1. Sermon study
 2. Writing
 3. Leadership development
 4. Discipling
- iii. As much as possible, all of this is placed in the calendar many, many weeks in advance of the target week, because as I get closer to that week I discover that people move in to make demands upon the available time. And I need to make space for the legitimate demands.
- iv. Make a commitment to have time with God early in the morning and do not compromise it. Not if you want to seize time and keep it under control. It is the start of an organised day, and organised life, and an organised private world.

Sector Three: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

1. The Cost of Mental Flabbiness:
 - a. Even men and women of great talent and energy have to run the complete course before they can claim the victory.
 - b. To be in front at the first turn is meaningless without the endurance to finish strong.
 - c. Not having the facility of a strong mind, you will grow dependent upon the thoughts and opinions of others.
 - d. God wants us to be mindful people, not mindless people. Mindfulness is a matter of discipline and hard work. Mindlessness is the result of laziness and fear.
 - e. It is easy to fall into the trap of allowing the mind to grow flaccid, especially when there are many dominant people all around who would just as soon do our thinking for us.
2. The Danger of Being a Fast Starter:
 - a. In your early 30's, indications of possible trouble will begin to show in the life of the naturally talented fast starter.
 - b. There are a startling number of exhausted, mentally empty people who have stopped growing and are spending their lives in pursuit of little more than amusement.
 - c. It tends to be those who never realised that the mind must be pushed, filled, stretched, and forced in order to function. Natural talent takes such people only so far and lets them down long before the race is finished.
3. The Life of the Mind:
 - a. Oliver Wendell Holmes says, "The man of action has the present, but the thinker commands the future from his study."
 - b. There may be some who know a little about a lot of things, but that does not guarantee that many of us know how to think deeply and insightfully about what we know.
 - c. Like others, I am convinced that Christians ought to be the strongest, broadest, most creative thinkers in the world.
 - d. Missionary Evangelist Stanley Jones wrote: "Loving God with the strength of the mind, the strength of the emotion, and the strength of the will - that makes the truly Christian and the truly balanced and the truly strong character."
 - e. Does not the man or woman who claims to walk with Christ owe the Creator excellence in terms of thought?
 - f. Thinking is a great work. It is best done with a mind that has trained and is in shape just as competitive running is done with a body that has trained and is in shape. The

best kind of thinking is accomplished when it is done in the context of reverence for God's kingdom reign over all creation.

- g. Some Christians appear to be afraid to think.
- h. We fool ourselves into thinking that we are thinking people when we are not.
- i. Oswald Chambers wrote: "I hate to meet a man whom I have met ten years ago and find that he is at precisely the same point, neither moderated nor quickened nor experienced but simply stiffened."

4. Putting Yourself in a Growth Mode:

- a. The Mind Must be disciplined to think Christianly.
 - i. As a body grows flabby when it is not exposed to physical labour or challenging exercise, so the mind weakens, gets out of shape, when it is not given proper training.
 - ii. The French writer, Ernest Dimnet wrote, "The thinker is preeminently a person who sees where others do not. The novelty of what he says, its character as a sort of revelation, the charm that attaches to it, all come from the fact that he sees. He seems to be head and shoulders above the crowd, or to be walking on the ridgeway while others trudge at the bottom. Independence is the word which describes the moral aspect of this capacity for vision."
- b. The Mind Must be taught to Observe and Appreciate the Messages God has Written in Creation.
- c. The Mind Must be trained to Pursue Information, Ideas, and Insights for the Purpose of Serving the People of the Public World.

5. Organising the Mind to make it Grow:

- a. We Grow by becoming listeners.
 - i. The first step in becoming a listener is to ask questions.
 - 1. Right questions elicit valuable information for the purposes of growth.
 - ii. I like to ask men and woman about their jobs, where they met their spouses, what they have been reading about, what they consider their greatest present challenges, and where they find God most alive in their lives. The answers are always useful.
 - 1. Most people are eager to share something of themselves.
 - 2. There is something to learn from all people if we are only willing to sit at their feet and humble ourselves enough to ask the right questions.
 - 3. It helps to visit people at their places of labour and ask them, "Tell me what it takes to do a job like yours with excellence. What are the great challenges a person faces? Where do you confront ethical and moral questions? What is there about this sort of task that brings on fatigue or discouragement? Do you ever ask yourself about the ways God is present in this job?"
 - iii. We must also listen to mentors.
 - iv. We must also learn to listen to our critics.
 - 1. When I mentally list the most important truths on which I have based my own character and personality development, I am astonished to discover that a large majority of them came through painful situations where someone, either out of love or anger, rebuked or criticized me soundly.
 - 2. Because my time as a Christian leader has been generally my own to use as I please, it would be very easy to avoid routine, unspectacular duties, and give myself only to the exciting things that come along.
 - 3. The man or woman who learns to make peace with routine responsibilities and obligations will make the greatest contributions in the long run.
- b. We Grow through Reading:
 - i. If a leader is not reading, the chances are strong that he is not growing. And if he is not growing, then he may rapidly slip into ineffectiveness.

- ii. I try to set aside an hour a day to read.
- c. We Grow through Disciplined Study:
 - i. Interruptions in study often shatter mental momentum.
 - ii. Studying means developing good filing systems to store my information so that it is never wasted. It means making sacrifices to acquire a good library of reference books. But most of all, it means determination and discipline. And the result is always growth.
 - iii. In marriage, we most often encounter the problem of the wife's continuing to maintain intellectual momentum into her 40's while the husband prefers sitting in front of the tv. But the problem can work both ways.
 - iv. Get notebook paper and a binder to put all sorts of notes in.
 - v. The Christian who wants to grow will always take notes when sermons are being preached or Bible classes are being taught.

Sector Four: SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

1. Cultivating the Garden:

- a. If we are ever to develop a spiritual life that gives contentment, it will be because we approach spiritual living as a discipline, much as the athlete trains his body for competition.

2. We Could Lose Privileges if our spiritual life is undisciplined:

- a. We will never learn to enjoy the eternal and infinite perspective on reality that we were created to have.
- b. We will lack a vital, life-giving friendship with Christ.
- c. We will lose the fear of accountability to God.
- d. We will have little reserve or resolve for crisis moments such as failure, humiliation, suffering, the death of a loved one, or loneliness.
- e. We lose the awareness of our real size in comparison to the Creator.
 - i. Those under pressure seek God, because there is nothing else. Those smothered in "blessings" tend to drift with the current. And that is why I question the word blessing sometimes. Surely something is not a blessing if it seduces us away from inward spiritual cultivation.

3. Silence and Solitude:

- a. This is the first of 4 spiritual exercises of critical importance, exercises that I find many Christ followers neglecting.
- b. When one is an activist by nature, withdrawal can be hard work.

4. Listening to God

5. Journal Keeping

- a. How to Journal:
 - i. Prayers
 - ii. Insights from the Bible or other spiritual literature
 - iii. Concerns about my own personal behaviour
 - iv. Things I see in the lives of my family

6. Why we have Trouble Praying:

- a. Worship and Intercession Seem to be Unnatural Acts
 - i. No one would deny that prayer is important; but few believe their prayer life to be adequately developing.
 - ii. Our spiritual hunger, once undoubtedly powerful, has been terribly dulled by the power of sin.
 - iii. Until we believe that prayer is indeed a real and highly significant activity, that it does in fact reach beyond space and time to the God who is actually there, we will never acquire the habits of worship and intercession.
- b. Worship and Intercession are Tacit Admissions of Weakness

- i. Prayer in its most authentic form acknowledges that we are weak and dependent upon our God.
- c. Prayer Sometimes seems to be Unrelated to Actual Result
 - i. Worship and intercession are far more the business of aligning myself with God's purposes than asking Him to align with mine.
 - ii. What Should we Pray about?
 - 1. Adoration
 - 2. Confession
 - 3. Intercession

Sector Five: RESTORATION

1. The rest God instituted was meant first and foremost to cause us to interpret our work, to press meaning into it, to make sure we know to whom it is properly dedicated.
2. Work that goes on month after month without a genuine pause to inquire of its meaning and purpose may swell the bank account and enhance the professional reputation, but it will drain the private world of vitality and joy.
3. We learned that if we are going to be useful to those associated with us in ministry, to our children, and to the congregation, we would have to jealously guard this opportunity for spiritual restoration.
4. We do not rest because our work is done; we rest because God commanded it and created us to have a need for it.
5. I have to realize that there is nothing wrong with laying aside other work for the purpose of enjoying God's gift of special time.