

Bringing Order to Our Private World

Recently I re-read a book I read about twenty years ago, entitled, *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald. It was a good reminder to not let priorities fall by the wayside in a busy lifestyle. I am often reminded by the small book by Charles Hummel entitled, "The Tyranny of the Urgent." Hummel pleads with us not to allow the important things of our life to be put aside by the demanding things we would classify as urgent.

Please read carefully the following words from Luke 10: 38-42, "*Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*" Now observe Mark 6:30,31, "*And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.*"

Are we cumbered about much serving? Are we like Martha, careful and troubled about many things and we are letting the one needful thing, i.e., sitting at the feet of Jesus, pass us by? Isn't it interesting to note when the apostles were telling Jesus all they had done and all they had accomplished in ministry, our Lord commanded that they should come apart and rest awhile. Vance Havner used to say, "We shall either come apart and rest awhile or we shall come apart."

Ordering our private world will help several areas in life. Allow me to ramify three ways it will help.

1. An ordered private world will boost our prayer life.

Luke 18:1 says, "*...Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*" (Luke 18:1). If we fail to pray we shall fail in life. In three concise words Paul said, "*Pray without ceasing*" (I Thessalonians 5:17). There are a lot of loud voices in this old world that tell us prayer is a waste of time. Nothing could be further from the truth. More time invested in prayer will yield not only temporal but eternal results. Many years ago, I came across two quotes by two men greatly used by God who were incredibly busy. If my memory serves me correctly, it was Martin Luther who said, "On my busiest days I would spend more time in prayer." John Wesley said, "I don't have time not to pray." That is a very revealing statement that Wesley gave us! It is not unusual to hear hurried and bothered people complain of not having time to pray - not so with Wesley; he was saying that prayer economizes his time. I believe this to be true as well. Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*" In the

matter of giving, the principle given by our Lord is, if we give, God will see to it that we shall be given back, but in greater measure! When we give seed to the ground, our harvest is greater than our planting. We plant a handful of corn and reap a row of corn. When we give a portion of our monetary income to God, whether it is 10, 15, or 20 percent, God will allow us to do more with the 90, 85 or 80 percent remaining and even give back to us in more than we invest. The principle is no less true with our time. If we give God a portion of our day in prayer, God will stretch out the rest of our day in a well-ordered fashion.

2. An ordered prayer life will be a boon to our personal peace.

Jesus said, *“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”* (Matthew 6:26). If we will pull aside for prayer, meditation and thanksgiving, we shall find the God who watches over His creation will watch over His children with far greater interests. What peace floods our mind and souls when we focus on the Prince of Peace! Today we observe the celebration of Mrs. Mabel Diehl’s and Mrs. Evelyn Pope’s ninetieth year of life. What is the key to their longevity? Now it should be said, they made it to ninety because God chose for them to live this long. But if you would allow me one glaring, obvious reason why these little ladies sit here in our midst, with smiling faces and true serenity at ninety, I would say they have found in this life a peace that comes only with a pure trust in God.

While growing up, we saw some turbulent times. In every place we lived Mom had this wonderful simple poem by Elizabeth Cheney, placed in the view of a frequently trafficked area of our house. I cannot begin to tell you how this lovely little plaque would just breathe peace to me every time I paused to read it. Let me share it with you:

“Overheard in an Orchard

Said the robin to the sparrow, "I would really like to know,
Why those anxious human beings rush around and worry so."
Said the sparrow to the robin, "Friend, I think that it must be,
That they have no Heavenly Father -
such as cares for you and me.”

Years ago Elton Trueblood wrote: 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. I once wrote a chapter in the Cincinnati Union Station, but that was itself a form of hiding because nobody knew who the man with the writing pad was. Consequently nobody approached me during five wonderful hours until the departure of the next train to Richmond. We must use the time which we have because even at best there is never enough.” William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, once received a letter from his wife when he was on an extensive trip. Here is part of it: ‘Your Tuesday’s notes arrived safe, and I was rejoiced to hear of the continued prosperity of the work, though sorry you were so worn out; I fear the effect of all this excitement and exertion upon your health, and though I would not hinder your usefulness, I would caution you against an injudicious prodigality of your strength. Remember

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.”

3. An ordered private world will be a blessing to our partnership in marriage.

One of the enemies of a great marriage is the hurried schedule of our everyday lives. It doesn't take much to find yourself drifting from your spouse. Many marriages dissipate, not because of one traumatic moment. Most marriages die in slow erosion. Little by little, the benign neglect surfaces in emotional trauma. It will do every marriage good to have frequent times when we give ourselves to each other alone. The Bible says, *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:25). Husbands, do we love our wives in the same spirit in which Jesus loved the Church? He gave His life for His bride. Could we not also slice off great portions of time for our wife as well? The Bible commands the older ladies to school the young married ladies to invest time in their husbands, *“The aged women likewise...That they may teach the young women...to love their husbands...”* (Titus 2:3,4).

I am a proponent of the after-marriage dating program. Why do we look at courtship as only a pre-marriage arrangement? Our best dates have come after our vows. I advise every married couple to date at least once a week. Time is running out, but it is not too late to register for our Couple's Retreat, “Riding the Waves” at Galveston. Quit talking about it and do it! When our private world of marriage is ordered aright, the blessings will overflow in joy!

-Pastor Pope-