



## Ordering Your Private World

*Gordon MacDonald*

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### Has anyone seen my time? I've misplaced it.

We have schedule planners, computerized calendars, smart phones, and sticky notes to help us organize our business and social lives every day. But what about organizing the other side of our lives?the spiritual side?

One of the great battlegrounds is within the private world of the individual. The values of our Western culture would have us believe the busy, publicly active person in ministry is also the most spiritual. Tempted to give imbalanced attention to the public world at the expense of the private, we become involved in more programs, more meetings. Our massive responsibilities at home, work, and church have resulted in many good people on the verge of collapse.

In this updated classic *Ordering Your Private World*, Gordon MacDonald equips a new generation to live life from the inside out, cultivating the inner victory necessary for public effectiveness.

“With much enthusiasm I recommend this book to all of you who, like me, need order in your private world.”

?Charles Swindoll, Chancellor, Dallas Theological Seminary

“This book was the primary instrument that God used to motivate me to integrate spiritual disciplines into my daily walk with Christ . . . I shudder to think where I’d be today had I not read it.”

?Bill Hybels, Senior pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

## Ordering Your Private World Details

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# From Reader Review Ordering Your Private World for online ebook

## **Sarah says**

One of those books that is life-changing. I haven't even had time to breathe in the past few months as I've been striving for my best with my business. It seems everything else has gone to the dogs in the process! This book is getting me back on track with everything that is important

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## **Mandy J. Hoffman says**

276 pages of great reading! Though this is not an easy read by any means, it was a good book that was thought provoking and challenging to the soul level. It's slightly hard to begin and "get into" but once you do I think you will find yourself caught up in how you can order not just your day and schedule, but your private world.

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## **Steven R. McEvoy says**

A number of years ago I was involved with student leadership development while staff with the Navigators. My boss at the time was a huge fan of Gordon's and we used sections of a few of his books as part of our yearlong development program. So when I had the opportunity to get and review this book I was very excited. As soon as I started reading the book I became curious. For this book was originally published in 1983, republished in 1985, revisions in 2003 and now a major revised and updated version that includes a study guide. The book has 221 reviews currently on Amazon, and 2891 ratings on Goodreads and 181 reviews. The majority of the reviews on Amazon are 5/5 stars, 75% in fact. And the overall rating on Goodreads is 4.1. So my giving it an even 3 stars is about par. But realistically I could wish I could have given it 2.5. I have been able to track down information on 30 different editions of this book, 7 are foreign language, and 4 are various audio formats. So over 20 different editions of this book over the last 34 years. Even the second reprint in 1985 was called a revised edition.

The chapters in this book are:

Author's Note

Preface: The Day I Hit the Wall

1. The Sinkhole Syndrome

2. A View from the Bridge

3. Caught in a Golden Cage

4. The Tragic Tale of a Successful Loser

5. Living as a Called Person

6. Has Anyone Seen My Time? I've Misplaced It!

7. Recapturing My Time

8. The Better Man Lost

9. The Sadness of a Book Never Read

10. Order in the Garden

- 11. No Outer Props Necessary
- 12. Everything Has to Be Entered
- 13. Seeing Through Heaven's Eyes
- 14. Friends
- 15. Rest Beyond Leisure (Sabbathing)

Epilogue: Courage, Appreciation, Depth

Study Guide

Notes

About the Author

I really really wanted to enjoy this book. But I found it hard to get into, and even harder to keep reading. It was so easy to pick up something else. I was able to get through it. But only after a few attempts and false starts. There are numerous authors in this genre, some Christian, some just self-help guru's. In the former category we have authors like John Maxwell, Chuck Swindoll, Max Lucado, and Tony Campolo and the list goes on. On the latter category there are authors like Dan Millman, Robin S. Sharma, Deepak Chopra, and Carlos Castañeda. Over the last nearly 50 years I have read books by all of the above named authors.

What I found with this book is it is good, but really seems dated. It is good but not great. And to have a new version come out almost every year and a half seems a bit excessive to me. It is a good read, and people in mainline evangelical Christianity will gravitate towards the author. But it just doesn't do it for me any more. It is older and out of print but I would highly recommend *Managing Yourself* (Out of print but worth tracking down) by Stephen B. Douglass or *How to Achieve Your Potential and Enjoy Life* (currently available as both print and ebook) by Douglass and Al Janssen. Or go give something by Matthew Kelly a read all of his books are amazing.

Read the review on my blog Book Reviews and More.

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### **Susan says**

"We have smart phones, sticky notes, computerized calendars, and schedule planners to help us organize our business and social lives. But what about organizing our inner lives -- our private worlds?"

That's the blurb on the back of *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald.

As a very introverted person, I jumped at the chance to review this book, because I'm quite at home in my private world. I may be a quiet observer in most aspects of life, but I'm always keenly observing and having my own little party inside my head. Loneliness is a pretty foreign concept to me, not because I'm always surrounded by people, but because I enjoy my own mental company so much.

And despite the fact that our inner worlds (or inner gardens, as MacDonald often refers to them) are often hidden to others, they're vitally important. MacDonald quotes C. S. Lewis:

"The battle is lost or won in the secret places of the will before God, never first in the external world ... Nothing has any power over the person who has fought out the battle before God and has won there ... I must get the thing settled between myself and God in the secret places of my soul where no stranger intermeddles, and then I can go forth with the certainty that the battle is won."

In this book, MacDonald urges us to order our internal world: "We are all too tempted to buy gadgets with the hope that they will bring tidiness of life. But it doesn't work that way. Forget the gadgets and start with the interior, the private world." He mentions bringing up this topic to a Christian friend, who asked, "What is the inner life anyway?" The author was saddened at this, saying that no matter how often we attend church or "do good" in the world, if we don't have a solid, dependable inner communication with God, our claims to Christianity are worthless.

MacDonald mentions a missionary who headed to a dangerous, primitive area in Africa. Despite all the trials she faced, she nurtured her inner life, and wrote that despite all this, "I had such a comfortable quiet night in my own heart."

He contrasts King Saul with John the Baptist. Saul was all about controlling situations, while John the Baptist took events as they came, in a peaceful, accepting way. In the same way, we should see our life events as ordained and chosen by God, and seek to accept them as God's will for us.

As Americans, we can get caught up in busy-ness and "doing." I get sidelined by this myself. Recently I was thinking about how my girls were growing up, and wondering what my life purpose was. Did I really have a purpose? I wasn't working (well, not full-time outside the home) anymore. But MacDonald urges us to change our perspective, again quoting Lewis:

"Don't be too easily convinced that God really wants you to do all sorts of work you needn't do. Each must to his duty "in that stage 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 ... What feels like zeal may be only fidgets or even the flattering of one's self importance."

I found this section of the book had lots of good thoughts, and recently God has shown me some examples of this in my own life.

MacDonald emphasizes the importance of continuing to grow and learn throughout our lives. I loved this, probably since this is my tendency anyway. I always am amazed when I see articles pop up touting the fact that a large percentage of the population leaves school and never reads another book.

"What a beautiful thing to see," writes MacDonald: "a human being in God's world with a sharpened mind, having opened every page with insight and truth. Hold on to instruction, Proverbs says, and do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life."

There's just a lot of good food for thought in this book -- ideas for organizing your inner life, yes, but also anecdotes and discussion about what goes on in our lives beneath the visible surface.

This is a great book to linger over. I read just a chapter each day, so I could have time to think about the concepts discussed. Recommended to all my fellow introverted Christians -- and extroverts too.

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### **Alison Stegert says**

I put this book up there with Rick Warren's 40 Days of Purpose. It is so impacting and thought provoking.

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### **Joye says**

I really love this book. I've read it twice, so far and I get something out of it each time. In fact, it's back on my current reading book shelf to read again.

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### **Darsey says**

A must read for anyone truly committed to following Jesus...especially Americans who find mindless busyness to be a virtue. I stepped into the trap & am so glad The Lord rescued & showed me a different way. The way of freedom to connect with Him & for him to lead us out of this fine little frenzied mess we've found ourselves flailing about in.

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### **Vicki says**

This book speaks volumes to Christian people who are feeling dragged down by the press of the everyday life they live, the need to compete, to succeed, to win at the game of life. Gordon MacDonald published this first in 1985, but the message is still as relevant as it was nearly 30 years ago.

MacDonald has given much thought about what it takes to "abide in Him," as He abides in me. To make it more attainable, he breaks down our private, or spiritual, world into five sectors. He looks first at what makes us function as we do..what is our motivation, i.e, are we driven, or called? The driven are those who respond to the stress and pressures of life by working harder and harder, where the called are responding to Jesus' call to be what He would have us become.

As we begin to order our private world, we look at how we use the time God has given us. Practically speaking, MacDonald suggests that we begin to plan our days two months out, filling in the calendar with time that is devoted, say, to our relationship with God and our families, so that we recognize we have a standing commitment when some other worthy opportunity comes up. He encourages reading both scripture and other edifying literature that stretches and/or comforts us spiritually. MacDonald urges us to look to the life of Jesus as our example, learning to look at others "through Heaven's eyes," focusing on something or someone other than ourselves. Finally he urges us to take advantage of God's example and actually rest, in order to be restored and refreshed.

I had the opportunity to read this with a study group over a several week period. The comments of other participants are often more insightful, thought provoking, and beneficial than what I might otherwise have come up with. Reading slower often means thinking deeper. This is a study that one would do well to repeat from time to time. The copy I have comes with thought questions at the end of the book. Though we didn't use that as a guide, it would likely be helpful to guide one's thoughts if going through the book solo.

MacDonald is a thinker and a good communicator. If the stress is getting to you, his suggestions may well be just what you need to re-center and become more like the person God intends for you to be.

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## **Danny Leavins says**

I just read this. I really liked the sections comparing the "driven" person to the "called" person. A great reminder of how important devotional time is.

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## **Mori Bell says**

i've read this book every year around christmas time for the past 8 years. it's a good tool to examine every area of your life.

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## **Paula Vince says**

The premise of this book is that the pace of modern life is impossible to maintain without getting our spiritual tanks empty. So many people are running on the cheap fuels of talent, natural giftings, momentum and caffeine fixes instead of the depth and energy that comes from a purposeful decision to be slower, more honest and reflective. As we're all in this western lifestyle together, it's often impossible for us to perceive who is running on which type of fuel until cracks start appearing.

Gordon MacDonald has observed that many lives are sudden sinkholes waiting to happen, because the messages we get from the world encourage us to focus on the surface levels of our lives, including how they may look to others. There is a gaping chasm beneath this veneer which so often remains unfilled.

I loved his clear distinction between being 'driven' in your approach to life, as opposed to being 'called'. I get the impression driven people may tend to regard life with a 'what's in it for me' type of filter. They wear fatigue and stress as badges of honour. Gratified only by accomplishment and positive feedback, they read books and attend seminars with the sole aim of being even more productive. Although they may appear altruistic and heroic, in reality they are exhausted approval seekers, needing to constantly hear the words, "Well done". They are preoccupied with visible symbols of accomplishment, such as office sizes and social media followings. Their minds never stop ticking away, wondering how they can get better connected with other so-called "greats" in their field, all the while keeping their eyes open to see who is applauding them.

On the other hand, those who are 'called' have no need to grandstand or impress anyone, so they can take time to nurture their inner worlds. Knowing they aren't the centre of the universe, they take time to ponder the mysterious little things in the world. When they do give, they are free to do so out of a deep reservoir. And they don't bother keeping track of who's watching them, because they know that's not the issue of life.

The rest of the book consists of mindsets and practices we can try to set up to make sure we are 'called' rather than 'driven'. These include reading good books in a slow, thoughtful manner, letting their insights shape our lives. He also highly recommends keeping a journal of our inner processes and thoughts. I've been doing this for a long time anyway, but I loved his perspective that it's a type of prayer in its own right, making it easier for us to heed God's gentle insights and counsel.

We are given an example of two Biblical men, one driven and one called. King Saul wasted so much energy chasing David across the desert, convinced that getting rid of his perceived competition would prevent his shaky throne from toppling. MacDonald believes that if modern medical monitors had been available then,

Saul's blood pressure and stress hormones would have been found to be sky high. However, John the Baptist lived a still life out in the desert, aware of the deeper undercurrents of life. When his followers suggested that Jesus' popularity might be threatening his own position, he was totally unconcerned, knowing it was as it should be.

Just the way this book is written forces us to slow down our racing thoughts and get calm and reflective. If you're like me, you might find that your mind is choppier than you would have thought. But reading this definitely helps make those ripples calmer.

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### **Jay Minor says**

I reread this book every year. So many things to learn and relearn.

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### **Valerie Woerner says**

Really good and really challenging! Loved it!

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### **Jason says**

I really enjoyed it. I have marked many many pages to go back and capture quotes and further reading.

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### **Matthew Corbitt says**

Awesome!

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