CITYWEST CHURCH
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ORDERED BY THE LORD.

The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.

Psalm 37:23 (NLT)

The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

Psalm 37:23 (NKJV)

Order is not about controlling every part of our lives. It is about creating the space and freedom to live the life God has called us to live.

THERE IS FREEDOM IN ORDER

I've been thinking a lot about order lately.

Not just about having a tidy house, an organised diary, or a well-managed calendar, although there is certainly something to be said for those things!

I've been thinking about the bigger picture of order and the incredible difference it makes to our lives.

There are so many rewards that come from putting things in order.

With order comes:

- *A renewed sense of purpose.*
- *Greater productivity.*
- *Creativity and fresh ideas.*
- *Clarity and focus.*
- *Strength to overcome challenges.*
- *A deeper sense of peace.*

Order clears away the cloud of chaos and creates room for us to grow, flourish and become who God has called us to be.

But where there is a lack of order, chaos often takes its place.

Frustration, confusion, distraction and discouragement begin to creep in.

Before we know it, we can find ourselves in a constant battle with feelings of defeat, inadequacy and failure.

And sometimes, it's not that we don't have enough time. It's that we haven't put the time we have in order.

It's not that we don't have enough energy. It's that our energy is being consumed by things that could have been addressed through a little intentionality.

It's not that we don't know what God has called us to do. Sometimes there is just so much noise, activity and distraction that we struggle to give our attention to the things that matter.

Here's something I want us to consider today: Order doesn't restrict our freedom. Order creates the conditions for freedom to flourish.

Sometimes the very thing we perceive as restriction is actually the thing that creates greater freedom.

A budget can create financial freedom.
A healthy routine can create physical freedom.
Boundaries can create relational freedom.
Preparation can create freedom from unnecessary pressure.
Spiritual disciplines can create greater freedom to hear and respond to God.

We need to stop thinking of order as something that takes freedom away and start recognising that order can actually give freedom back.

1. GOD IS A GOD OF ORDER, NOT CHAOS

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.[a] 2 The earth was formless
and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was
hovering over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the
light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the
light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

Genesis 1:1–5 (NLT)

I love how the Bible opens.

Before we read about humanity, the garden, relationships, purpose or calling, we are introduced to a God who brings order out of what is formless and empty.

The earth was formless. It was empty. Darkness covered the deep waters.

And then God began to speak.

He brought light into darkness. He separated the waters. He established boundaries. He created environments. He filled those environments with life.

There is something significant about the way God creates.

God doesn't just create things; He creates an environment in which things can flourish.

He separates. He establishes. He names. He positions. He fills.

There is an intentionality to creation.

God didn't create the world in a random, haphazard way. There is design, purpose and order.

And I think this gives us an important insight into the character of God.

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

1 Corinthians 14:33 (NKJV)

God is not the author of confusion.

Now, this doesn't mean that every part of our lives will always feel orderly. We live in a fallen world. We experience unexpected circumstances, disappointments, challenges and seasons where things feel completely out of our control.

But we can know that confusion and chaos are not the character of God.

He is a God of peace.

And when we invite Him into our lives, we invite the One who can bring clarity where there is confusion, direction where there is uncertainty, and peace where there is chaos.

Order begins with God.

Sometimes we want God to bless what we are doing, but we haven't taken the time to ask whether what we're doing is in the right order.

We want more opportunities, but perhaps we need to become more intentional with the opportunities we already have.

We want more responsibility, but perhaps we need to learn to steward the responsibilities already in our hands.

We want to move into the next season, but perhaps there are things in this season that need our attention first.

There is a principle here:

God is interested not only in what we build, but in how we build it.

Proverbs 24:3–4 (NLT) says:

“A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense. Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables.”

Notice the progression.

Wisdom builds. Good sense establishes. Knowledge fills.

There is an order to building a healthy life.

You don't start by filling every room with possessions. You start by building something that can sustain what you want to put inside it.

The same applies spiritually.

Before we can build a healthy marriage, family, church or ministry, we need to establish the foundations that will sustain it.

We need wisdom. We need understanding. We need to make intentional decisions.

Sometimes we are so focused on filling our lives that we forget to establish them.

Perhaps today is an opportunity to ask:

What in my life needs to be brought back into order?

Is it my relationship with God?
Is it my thought life?
Is it my finances?
Is it my relationships?
Is it my time?
Is it my priorities?

We don't need to be afraid of those questions.

Because when God brings things into order, it isn't to diminish our lives. It's to help us live them more fully.

The God who brought order out of creation is still able to bring order into the places of our lives that feel chaotic.

2. ORDER IS NOT ABOUT CONTROL. IT'S ABOUT CREATING ROOM FOR FREEDOM.

This is probably the most important distinction I want to make today.

Sometimes when we hear the word order, we immediately think of rules, regulations, restrictions and control.

We think of someone telling us what to do, when to do it and how to do it.

But biblical order isn't about controlling every outcome.

It's about intentionally arranging our lives around what matters most.

There is a difference between control and stewardship.

Control says, "Everything has to happen my way."

Stewardship says, "I want to faithfully manage what God has entrusted to me."

Control is driven by fear.

Stewardship is driven by responsibility.

Control tries to manipulate outcomes.

Stewardship takes responsibility for our part and trusts God with the rest.

And I think this is where we can get ourselves into trouble.

Sometimes we confuse being organised with being controlling.

But they are not the same thing.

You can be organised and still be flexible.
You can have boundaries and still be generous.
You can have a plan and still be led by the Holy Spirit.
You can have structure and still make room for spontaneity.

In fact, I would argue that the more intentional we become with the things that matter, the more freedom we have to respond to the unexpected things God puts in front of us.

Consider Jesus.

Luke 10:38–42 tells us the story of Mary and Martha.

Martha welcomed Jesus into her home.

She was busy preparing.
She was serving.
She was making sure everything was taken care of.

But Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him.

Eventually Martha became frustrated.

She approached Jesus and said:

“Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.”

“My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:40–42 NLT

Now, I don't think Jesus was criticising serving.

Serving is good.
Hospitality is good.
Preparing a meal is good.
Taking responsibility is good.

But Martha had become so consumed with what needed to be done that she was missing the One who was right in front of her.

She was busy doing something good, but she had lost sight of what was most important.

And I wonder how often we do the same.

We can become so busy managing our lives that we forget to actually live them.

We can become so consumed with our responsibilities that we lose sight of our relationships.

We can spend so much time organising our schedules that we forget to make room for God.

We can become so focused on getting everything done that we miss the people God has placed right in front of us.

Here's what I find interesting about this passage:

Martha's problem wasn't that she was doing too little.

It was that she was carrying too much, and she had lost her perspective.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is put down something that doesn't need to be carried.

There are things we need to stop doing.
There are things we need to delegate.
There are things we need to say no to.
There are things we need to put in their proper place.

Not because those things are necessarily bad, but because they may be taking up space that belongs to something more important.

Order gives us the freedom to say yes to what matters.

Think about this.

If we don't put our finances in order, we can find ourselves constantly worrying about money.

If we don't put our time in order, we can find ourselves constantly rushing.

If we don't put our relationships in order, we can find ourselves constantly dealing with unnecessary conflict.

If we don't put our spiritual lives in order, we can find ourselves constantly running on empty.

Order doesn't eliminate every challenge, but it can remove a lot of unnecessary pressure.

It gives us room to breathe.

You don't have to live your life constantly reacting to everything around you. You can intentionally build a life around the things God has called you to prioritise.

That is freedom.

“If you don't prioritize your life, someone else will.”

— Greg McKeown, Essentialism

3. ORDER REQUIRES INTENTIONALITY, NOT PERFECTION.

One of the things I want to make clear today is that order doesn't require perfection.

It requires intentionality.

Sometimes we avoid putting things in order because we feel overwhelmed by how much needs to change.

We look at the whole picture and think:

Where do I even start?

There are too many things to fix.
Too many things to organise.
Too many things to address.

And because we can't fix everything at once, we do nothing.

Think about Nehemiah.

When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed and the gates had been burned, he was deeply distressed.

Nehemiah 1 tells us that he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed.

But he didn't stop at feeling overwhelmed by the situation.

He began to do something about it.

He prayed. He sought God's direction. He approached the king.
He gathered resources. He assessed the damage.
He organised the people. And they began rebuilding.

"At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people had worked with enthusiasm."

Nehemiah 4:6 (NLT)

They didn't rebuild the entire wall in one day. They started working.

They took responsibility for what was in front of them.

And there was something powerful about everyone taking their place and contributing to the bigger picture.

Nehemiah 3 describes how different families and groups worked on different sections of the wall.

Everyone had a part to play.

Some worked near their homes. Some repaired gates. Some rebuilt sections that had been destroyed.

They weren't all doing the same thing, but they were all contributing to the same purpose.

And I think there's a great lesson here.

Sometimes bringing order into our lives simply means taking responsibility for the part that belongs to us.

We can't fix everything. We can't control everyone. We can't carry every responsibility.

But we can take responsibility for our own part.

We can put our own house in order. We can put our own priorities in order. We can take responsibility for our own attitudes. We can become more intentional with our time. We can be faithful with what God has entrusted to us.

And when we do that, something begins to change.

Don't underestimate the power of preparation.

I love the thought that preparation creates freedom.

When we prepare well, we don't have to spend all our energy trying to catch up.

When we prepare well, we create room for creativity.

When we prepare well, we can be more present with people.

When we prepare well, we are better equipped to respond to opportunities.

Think about a Sunday gathering.

There is a lot that happens before people arrive.

Teams prepare. People pray. Equipment is set up. Kids' spaces are organised. The worship team rehearses. The message is prepared.

Why?

Not because we want everything to be rigid or mechanical.

We prepare because we want to create an environment where people can encounter Jesus.

Preparation doesn't replace the Holy Spirit.

It creates room for us to be attentive and responsive to what the Holy Spirit is doing.

We prepare for what we can, and we trust God with what we cannot.

I think this is an important principle for every area of life.

We don't prepare because we know exactly what tomorrow will bring.

We prepare because we want to be ready for whatever tomorrow brings.

And I think sometimes we are praying for opportunities that require a level of preparation we haven't yet embraced.

We are praying for greater influence, but are we preparing ourselves to steward it?

We are praying for growth, but are we preparing the structures that will support it?

We are praying for new opportunities, but are we being faithful with the opportunities already in front of us?

Preparation is not a lack of faith. Preparation can actually be an expression of faith.

It says, "God, I believe there is something worth preparing for."

Don't wait until everything is perfect before you start.

Start with what you have. Start where you are. Start with what is in front of you.

You might not be able to change everything this week, but you can make one intentional decision.

And sometimes one intentional decision creates momentum for another.

Order isn't built in a day. It's built through daily decisions.

4. WHEN GOD ORDERS OUR STEPS, WE FIND PURPOSE AND DIRECTION.

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.”

Psalm 37:23–24 (NKJV)

The steps of a good person are ordered by the Lord.

Notice that it talks about steps.

Not the entire journey.
Not every detail of the future.
Not having everything figured out.

Steps.

Sometimes we want God to show us the whole picture.

We want to know exactly where we're going, how we're going to get there, what it will look like and how everything will work out.

But often God gives us enough light for the next step.

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.”

Psalm 119:105 (NLT)

And there is something freeing about learning to trust Him with the journey.

Because order isn't just about what we do with our schedules, our homes or our responsibilities.

Ultimately, it's about allowing God to establish the direction of our lives.

The greatest order we can bring into our lives is putting God first and allowing Him to direct our steps.

Put first things first.

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”

Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

Jesus is establishing an order of priority.

Seek God's Kingdom first.

Not second.

1. Identify what is out of order.

Don't ignore the things that are creating unnecessary pressure in your life. Ask God to show you where things need attention.

2. Put first things first.

Make sure your priorities reflect what matters most. Give God first place, and make room for the people and responsibilities He has entrusted to you.

3. Take responsibility for your next step.

Don't become overwhelmed by everything that needs to change. Start somewhere. Take one step. Make one intentional decision.

4. Trust God with the things you cannot control.

Order doesn't mean controlling every outcome. It means faithfully stewarding what God has given you and trusting Him with the rest.

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS

Where have you experienced greater freedom, peace or purpose by bringing more intentionality and order into an area of your life?

What are some good things that can sometimes distract us from the most important things? How do we make room to sit at Jesus' feet in the busyness of life?

Is there an area of your life where God might be prompting you to bring some order or take an intentional next step?