



MANAGING YOUR PRIVATE WORLD

Order and Beyond

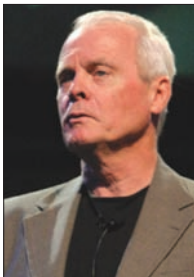
A Conversation With Dr. Gordon MacDonald

Dr. Gordon MacDonald originally wrote Ordering Your Private World in 1984. He revised it in 2003 to reflect the changes that have taken place in the last two decades. With over one million copies sold, Ordering Your Private World encouraged Christians to seek a more genuine, deeper and organized inner life. Many of us, in our twenties and thirties back then, took this book to heart—making changes in our lives that had significant results personally and in ministry or professionally. But sometimes, as we minister and work over the years, our perseverance lessens and we simply don't push ourselves to really reach our potential. Twenty years later (in 2004), he authored A Resilient Life to encourage us to go the distance and finish our lives well...moving ahead no matter what.



Three times a day, he reorders his heart. He reminds himself of who God is and what wisdom is. He's a refreshed, redirected man.

CMA is honored that Dr. MacDonald will be our keynote speaker at our 2007 Annual Conference. He graciously took time to talk with us about these two books—with you, our CMA members, in mind.



CMR: First off, can you refresh our readers on how you define someone's private world?

MacDonald: The inner or private world and our soul are in a strange new dimension. In fact, sometimes I wonder what if our inner space isn't as large as outer space. Our inner space contains the capacity to commune with God. But we probably only know the first few feet of our private world, because of a cloud of evil. In our inner private world, we form convictions and we act out on them. Out of these convictions are going to come both good and evil. Jeremiah speaks of this infinite dimension when he says: "The heart is wicked

and deceitful, who can figure it out?" The Psalmist cries out: "Oh Lord, search and know me."

A lot of people, men in particular, are not in touch with their inner world. A lot of us simply aren't reflective people. We don't assess our emotions and feelings, but we do archive them. If you're 40 years of age, you're living with 40 years of active memory. Some of these memories are very profound and have a profound effect on us.

As a manager, you need to understand that every person on your team is dealing with memories. If you had an abusive relationship with your father, you probably will have those feelings with your boss, who may be a father figure. If a person hasn't learned teamwork and cooperation early in life, chances are he or she will always struggle with it.

CMR: Now, it's safe to say that a lot of us take care of our inner world by having devotions and spending some time in prayer. But it seems that you think taking care of our

private world is much larger than that. Am I right?

MacDonald: Yes. It's true that ordering our private world to most Christians is saying they had devotions that morning, and that's about what it's been reduced to. But if you go back into the Bible, you notice that Daniel, for instance, pays careful attention to his private world. He stops three times a day and prays.

That's a dramatic statement to others. Here he is, working in a hostile world. Yet kings trust him with everything. Then three times a day, he reorders his heart. He reminds himself of who God is and what wisdom is. He's a refreshed, redirected man.

CMR: So if I'm having my daily devotions and counting on that to order my private world, what do I need to change? Just read and pray more?

MacDonald: Time is only one dimension. The teaching of the Sabbath is very important. God was the first person we ever know who took the Sabbath. He rested. If we believe God is immeasur-

ably powerful, he doesn't need rest. He rests as a model to us—one day out of every seven. When a Jewish person took Sabbath, he would spend time in reflection and ask:

- Where have I been?
- Where am I now?
- Where am I going?

In my own Sabbath, I'm seeking to acquire wisdom and connect with God. I think about what I have to do, what I've left undone, where I cut corners, or what has to be cleaned up as a result of my actions, who I need to forgive. I read Scripture and literature that builds up Scripture in my life. I write in a journal.

they've developed a wonderful conference center.

In order to sustain community, they've had to forgive, rebuke and thank one another over the years. I don't think such relationships are humanly possible. I see these people once a year, and over the last three-and-a-half days, my wife Gail and I have had them in our home. We know where the rough spots are in their relationships. We know what it takes to have that type of community; it's all about repentance and gratitude.

A second example is that of the Billy Graham team: Billy, Cliff Barrows,

period. The telephone squeezed that to some extent. But now, most of us sending an e-mail expect a 15-minute turnaround time. So what this has done is compress the decision-making time for the manager or leader. Also, we're available a thousand times more to people who want to be in contact with us.

Then there's the information explosion, which we all knew was coming, but we didn't have any idea of its impact. The ability to tap into layer after layer after layer of intelligence is something we didn't have 25 years ago. So we've experienced a dramatic increase in connective relationships, the speed of communication and information, and even the speed of travel. Where we live is almost irrelevant to our jobs. Modern transportation makes it possible to commute even long distances.

Another thing is that we've decentralized the organization, as opposed to 25 years ago, when organizations tended to be centralized. We've pushed decision-making power to grass roots. That changes the whole way we do business, and puts more emphasis on relationships.

Qualities of Resilient Christ Followers

They're committed to finishing strong.

They run inspired by a big-picture view of life.

They run free of the weight of the past.

They run confidently, trained to go the distance.

They run in the company of a "happy few."

Taken from A Resilient Life by Gordon MacDonald.

I exercise, running three miles a day. I try to spend a better part of an hour-and-a-half a day doing these things to bring order to my private world. The result is that the rest of my day becomes more productive.

CMR: Tell us what this would look like in an organization, if everyone were paying attention to his or her private world.

MacDonald: It's funny you should ask that. Just within the last hour, I said goodbye to nine people from Germany. Twenty-five years ago, these Christians (four couples and a single) decided to form a community and live out their lives together. The reason? To serve the Lord as a team of people in order to make a difference in Germany. They've lived in homes within walking distances of one another. They have different full-time jobs and professions, but together

George Beverly Shea and the Wilsons. Those guys stuck together for 54 years, serving the Lord under incredible stress and adversity. They maintained Sabbath rules, and they wouldn't allow impurities to enter their relationships.

CMR: Since you first wrote *Ordering Your Private World* in 1984, what has changed?

MacDonald: I don't think the smartest of us could have imagined the quantum leap in technology and the effect it has had on organizations and organizational leaders. The whole Internet, networking, and then its subsidiaries—everything from Blackberries to mobile e-mail. This has dramatically increased the number of relationships we can have, and the speed of time between the proposition and closing the decision.

In the past, if someone wrote you a letter, he or she expected a 10-day lag

CMR: So, do you think technology has helped us to be more organized, or has it made it more difficult?

MacDonald: Those who are essentially disorganized hope the next new thing will better organize them and enlarge their capacity. But, if you have a Blackberry, for example, and you struggle with organization, it will eat you up with its demands of immediacy. You'll succumb to the technological domination. Disorganized people usually remain disorganized until they make deeper corrections to work habits.

CMR: Let's say that I've been doing pretty well over the years at keeping my private world ordered. What's next?

MacDonald: *Ordering Your Private World* helps open the world for you: how life should be ordered. In *A Resilient Life*, I look at the question: "Now that you've made these decisions to order your private world, how do you make them sustainable?" This is a very important question because, over the last hundred

years, we've added approximately 40 productive years to a person's lifespan. My grandfather was cashing out at 62. I'm five years past that and have every reason to believe I have many productive years ahead of me.

A crucial question to ask yourself is: "Are you growing spiritually, intellectually, relationally?" I want to emphasize the need for every leader and manager to press him or herself on personal growth. The leader must always be growing. Most of us peak in growth in our early 40s and start playing to the

same basic strengths, because there's a sameness to our lives.

I'm 67, yet I can tell you all kinds of ways I'm attempting to grow on a daily basis. How can I know God better? How can I gain wisdom? Every day, I want to be a little bit more Christian than I was the day before. We all have a responsibility to keep on growing.

CMR: If you were to write a memo to our readers, what would it say? What would you like our readers to know and, especially conference

attendees, to do next?

MacDonald: When I speak at conferences or preach at church, I ask myself: "How can I urge people to move one step forward in personal growth?" Gail, my wife, tells me to preach for change! I think the memo has something to do with getting a fresh look at Jesus, knowing the presence of Jesus is right there. I often urge business people to make sure their office becomes holy space, where not only employees are welcome, but where Jesus is welcome.

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