

ORDERLINESS VS. CONFUSION

ARRANGING MY LIFE AND SURROUNDINGS TO BE IN HARMONY WITH GOD AND HIS WORLD.

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace. . . . Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:33).

DEFINITION OF ORDERLINESS

The Greek word for orderly comes from the word “kosmos,” which means “world.” It is also related to “kosmoso” meaning “to put into proper order; to decorate, adorn, garnish, or trim.” The Greek word for order is “taxis.” It means “an arranging or an arrangement.” “Tagma” is a more concrete form of “taxis” used especially of military company which could keep rank, such as the valiant men of war that came to make David king. “All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel” (I Chronicles 12:38).

WHY IS ORDERLINESS IMPORTANT?

1. Orderliness helps edification.

Confusion at Corinth (see I Corinthians 14:26) sprang partially from the fact that the church members each wanted to “do their own thing.” Every one wanted to share good things, but each one focused on his or her own agenda, not on the good of the whole church. They needed to remember that they must *do all things unto edifying*. Orderliness is a means to that end. God puts a variety of resources at your disposal. You need to arrange them in an orderly manner, so you can “lay your hands on them” effectively when you need them to minister to others.

2. Orderliness reveals God’s character.

Paul declares, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints,” I Corinthians 14:33. The Greek word translated here as *confusion* is *akatastasia*. In Luke 21:9; II Corinthians 6:5; and 12:20 (cf. Acts 19:21-41) *akatastasia* means revolution or anarchy. Here in I Corinthians 14:33 and in James 3:16 (“For where envying and strife is, there is **confusion** and every evil work.”) it means disorder and instability. Disorder contradicts God’s character. If confusion characterizes my life, then I fail to accurately represent my heavenly Father.

3. Orderliness promotes peace.

It is interesting that Paul contrasts confusion with peace. One would expect the Apostle to write, “God is not the author of confusion, but of order.” God is the author of order, but Paul emphasizes here that orderliness brings about peace. Adopting a system of organization merely to “show off” to others will only lead to stress. But arranging my resources so that I can efficiently edify others will save time and eliminate frustration.

HOW TO ESTABLISH ORDERLINESS

1. Follow a wise and orderly schedule

God’s first act in creation was a demonstration of orderliness. He created light and then separated the light from the darkness. “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night” (Genesis 1:5).

God designed the day for labor and the night for rest. Jesus states, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). He also established the day to begin in the evening. “And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5). The hours before midnight have been found to be more beneficial for sleep than the hours after midnight. This affirms the time-honored Proverb: “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

The truth of this saying is guaranteed if we meditate on Scripture before going to sleep and upon waking up in the morning because of the promise: “Blessed is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. . . . whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3). By beginning our day in the evening, we can experience creative thinking during the night in the same way that David did. “I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons” (Psalm 16:7).

2. Practice orderly behavior

Orderly behavior will be in harmony with the will of God and produce the fruit of the spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23). Disorderly conduct is described in Galatians 5:19–21: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Perverted behavior is taking that which God created for one purpose and using it for an adverse and damaging purpose. God refers to immorality and perversion as “confusion.” (See Leviticus 18:23; 20:12.)

3. Maintain clean and orderly surroundings.

Clutter creates confusion. The saying that cleanliness is next to Godliness is not quite accurate because cleanliness is part of godliness, not just next to it. (See Leviticus and II Corinthians 6:17.)

Orderliness requires that we only keep things that are needed and that we have a place for everything we keep. It also means keeping things in good repair.

4. Have orderly behavior in God’s house.

Church order begins with qualified leadership. “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (I Timothy 3:5). Order also involves coming to the house of God with reverence for the King of all the earth.

Orderliness includes the sequence by which we give gifts to God. We are to give Him the first fruits of all our increase, including the first part of our day, our week, and our income. “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9–10).

Acts 2:42 lists four major functions of the first-century church. The order of this list is significant: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Often the last item on a Biblical list is the most important one, as in I Corinthians 13:13 where love is listed last, but it is the most important. Applying this to Acts 2:42, doctrine, fellowship, and communion are all important but their primary function is to prepare the worshipper for powerful prayer because the goal of Jesus for His church is that it be a “house of prayer for all people.” (See Isaiah 56:7.)

Order within the church service is also necessary to avoid reaction by visitors and instead to convict them of their sin and bring them to repentance. “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? . . . For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (I Corinthians 14:23, 33).

PERSONAL CHECKLIST FOR ORDERLINESS

- Do I begin my day each evening by wise planning and scheduling?
- Do I go to bed early and go to sleep meditating on Scripture?
- Do I spend quality time with the Lord each morning?
- Do I seek to discern God’s will for every decision?
- Does my dress and appearance reflect order and an respect for how God made me?
- Do I keep necessary records in an orderly fashion?
- Do I own more things than I can use or keep organized?
- Does my home, yard, and car demonstrate good stewardship?
- Do I have a place for everything and keep everything in its place?
- Is my home ready for guests on short notice?
- Do I encourage younger brothers and sisters to be orderly and attentive?