

I've been re-created by a designer who loves to recycle. It's a celebration that, even if it looks a little out of control—it's in the control of a loving God who has a plan. This is how everything began, of course. With the original materials of a dark and shapeless void, the Hebrew creation story pictures an artist God who brings forth beauty from chaos.

Chaos. It's familiar in every single creation account on the planet and, if we are honest, it's also present in every one of our personal lives. Growth, whether personal or within an organizational structure, can only happen as a result of embracing chaos. "God created the heavens and earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss [Gn 1:1, New Danielle version]. The story continues through a series of phases: first comes LIGHT, then EXPANSE, then LAND, then SEASONS, then LIFE, then REPRODUCTION and finally REST.

"The fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you" (Thomas Merton).

The idea that ordered lives are fulfilled lives is at odds with both the external and internal results of our generation. If, instead of clinging desperately to order, we allow God to set the priorities, then the divine can and does speak a different kind of order into existence that promises permanent and lasting meaning for us personally and in the work that we are part of. We must learn to let go in this transition from human chaos to Divine Order. To create a new order out of the chaos we must let go and abandon ourselves to the possibility of the new, bringing with us the deep learning of our journey to guide us.

The kind of courage God requires of us is belief. It's to hang on to faith in the midst of circumstances that feel like a dead end. It's to know that God really is enough. It's the courage to wait for God. It's the courage to not be in control—to let God lead. What Abraham did was let go of his need for information and control, and let God take the lead. **Many people of faith mistakenly think that doubt is an enemy. I believe it to be a friend.** A friend is someone who wants to know more. And doubt wants just that. **It's in the middle of doubt and fear that faith actually arises.** "God shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life" (Ps 51:10).

"The leaders may have lied to the Russian people, but the people chose to believe them," said a young lady in a Soviet youth camp, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The church does the same. We often promote a God of equation: if you give—He will bless; if you obey—He will lead you to successful places; if you live well—you will get to heaven. Religion will assure you that an ordered life is a secure one. But there are too many stories in the Bible and church history to suggest that isn't true. God's promises are true and He will bring an order to our lives—but it isn't always the order that make human sense.

The truth is that we cannot maintain "human order" control in a postmodern world, no matter how hard we try. Embracing chaos is less a choice than a survival tool. It's also about matching the internal realities of our nature and world with external measures of success; it's about *being truthful AND deep*.

One implication of embracing chaos as a lifestyle is the unpredictability of journey as destination. If you are "embracing chaos" and feel you should position yourself within the messiness of lives, communities, and cities to watch God begin establishing order, it's difficult to explain this in a proposal. A proposal asks you to give a plan—which needs to include goals. For example, I'm aiming at getting intricately involved with 10 messy people. Then I plan to watch what God says, and join in creating new life from the chaos. If I'm aiming at relationship instead of function (chaos instead of order), then how do I measure my effectiveness? How do I measure what's work and what's life?

I remember my running partner from years back. In the beginning of our relationship she asked me a pointed question. In the middle of a run, out popped, "Am I a project?" Was my running partner a friend or a project? Good question. Entering the messiness of others' lives is a necessary precursor to God doing something new in their lives (and probably ours, as well).

Genesis 1-3 creation is a blueprint for Divine Order. It starkly contrasts our version of order: *In approach*: What if we looked for the beautiful moments of creation within our relationships, rather than imposing them before our relationships grow? *In process*: God's order is characterized by symbiotic interdependence. Each stage is deeply connected, organically woven to another. *In character*: Each stage is catalytic. Every part of the creation account has its own creative power. The light, the expanse, the water, the animals, the plants, the seasons...every single thing is a catalyst for more beauty, more life.

Revelation, the bringing of light, is the first part of the journey necessary to establish order out of chaos. It's the first part of the creative process. Saul travelled through the land persecuting Christians, seeking to restore order to the chaos they had caused. But something stopped him in his tracks, turned his world upside down and changed everything—and that was light. This was the first step to creating Divine Order in his life. There followed the collapse of an old worldview and his was submerged in personal chaos. Divine revelation makes us into people who can "see". We understand things from God's perspective.

We are paralyzed by the darkness that chaos brings. We need to learn how to see light piercing the darkness. But revelation or light does not come in the standing still. They are revealed in the doing, in the going. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday" (Is 58:9-10).

After chaos came light. After light came the separation of sea and sky—the formation of expanse. Expanse is one of the “edgeless” words; it is about a wide, open space. More and more people are choosing to live in urban contexts surrounded by buildings and people and a skyline defined by its human-made origins.

I began to write a list of things I would do if nothing was in my way—to live what I believed and felt called to. As the list began to form, I started to see that the list I had created was the list I was living. When we try to structure God and the way He works, we actually miss out on an adventure that is designed not to make life more predictable, but to strengthen our faith in a God whose ways are much higher than our own.

A thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed; but a thing created is loved before it exists (Charles Dickens). Just as creation was developed with the foundation of land (garden), so is the recreation of our lives. Rootedness. Planting. Gardens. Earth. Land. It’s all connected in us. We are made of dirt—that’s how God tells the story.

Seasons flow with constant change in an already lively universe. In the order of creation, God ensures that everything changes all the time. God built constant change into the cosmos, for the seasons to arise and fall. They are something we cannot control. Deserts and winters. They are part of the ever-changing landscape of God’s great plan for my life. Early saints in the church used to call a winter season of the soul the “dark night,” a season where people struggled to find God.

The idea of accepting seasons as gifts is an affront to a culture that demands happiness as the one season of our lives. We do the same with “youth” as with “happiness”—controlling ageing through any means necessary. Why have we forgotten the beauty and value of wisdom? God models for us the fully engaged, creative heart that longs for all seasons to deepen our lives and wants to lead us to deeper places, where even winter is a teacher we can thank God for.

The first animals that God creates are birds and fish. Fish are pretty basic. Birds, on the other hand, are very complex. God’s version of life creation is both simple and complex. At the same time. The love of God is so simple that a child can understand it and so complex that it can bring a theologian to tears. Henri Nouwen made a journey to India to explore with Mother Teresa the clue to faithful living. Her answer, “Spend an hour with God each day and don’t do anything you know is wrong.”

I visited Jackie Pullinger, who moved to Hong Kong over 40 years ago to minister to drug addicts who were “incurable” and left for garbage in an unpoliced area called the “Walled City.” Somehow, through a mixture of her obedience and God’s grace, drug addicts would miraculously be delivered as she prayed for them. Years of faithfulness and re-creating happened and today there is no more Walled City...the government finally tore it down and gave her and her community over an acre of land to continue their work.

I went to see what she was doing because I work with drug addicts without the same kind of success. She told me that

everyone she met who was chronically addicted was unwanted. They were rejected, often even as babies. What she did was welcome them—as they are. She declared them beautiful and valuable. She declared them “very good” and welcomed them into community. And that posture, that truth, changed *everything*. Something shifted inside of them.

When we were born, we were the climax of His creation. He gave us the greatest gift ever given—the ability to co-create. The results of our disobedience are domination, power, and essentially a new idea in humanity’s creation—hierarchy. We have been taught that our happiness and value come from outside of us. In the kingdom of God our value comes from inside of us. We cannot lose the favor of God—we can only reject it.

Rest is often the missing ingredient in most people’s lives. **In order to rest you must trust that God can take care of the world, even your world.** If money is our god, we are enslaved to work. Jubilee is part of God’s design for a nation. But the Israelites never did it. Not once. Rest may be the last act of God’s creative process but it is surely one of the hardest. We know that things bear more and better fruit when they are rested. People included.

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