

Conquering Chaos In Your Life

1. Warm-up question: Jeff told about a closet at home full of clutter a couple years ago. One day when he tried to retrieve a packet of vacuum sweeper bags, everything in the closet fell out on his head. In your home, where do you keep your chaos?
2. Chaos is so much a part of life, there's even a scientific principle for it called "entropy." RealClearScience.com says, "Entropy is like Murphy's Law applied to the universe. Put simply, entropy is a measure of **disorder**, and the Second Law of Thermodynamics states that **all closed systems** [have an] ever increasing **tendency toward disorder**." What are the practical and spiritual ramifications of living in a world subject to entropy?
3. Read Genesis 1:1-19, printed on p. 3. Verses 1-2 say, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was *tohu wabohu*, and darkness covered the face of the deep." The two Hebrew words are pronounced TOE-hoo Wuh-BOE-hoo. *Tohu* means "a place of chaos, formlessness, a wasteland." *Wabohu* means "nothingness, emptiness."
 - a. Imagine you could travel back to when earth was still *tohu wabohu*. In your mind's eye, what do you see? What did it look like?
 - b. Genesis 1:2 says, "The Spirit of God *rachaph* [raw-HAF] over the face of the waters." *Rachaph* means "to brood." Brood means "to think deeply about something that makes us unhappy." Based on this, how did God feel about earth when it was in a state of primordial chaos? Think of a time in your life when you felt the same way about a chaotic situation. Describe how you felt?
4. Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion . . . over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in God's image.'
 - a. What does it mean to say we're created in God's image? If we're created in God's image, how are we "wired up" to feel about chaos?
 - b. Many theologians interpret the foregoing verse as meaning that God has left us in charge of planet earth. If that's true, what's our mandate? How does God want us to carry out our oversight of planet earth?
5. Ephesians 5:1 says, "Be ye imitators of God, as dear children." That means, among other things, that we should respond to chaos in our lives the same way God did in the Creation story. Jeff suggested that the Creation story offers a three-part blue print for how we, as children of God, should respond to chaos. The first step is found in Genesis 1:4, "God separated the light from darkness," and Genesis 1:9, "God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.'" In other words, the first thing God did was to establish **healthy boundaries** for nature. Let's think about the implications of that for our personal lives.

- a. Can you think of a time in your life when you needed to establish some healthy boundaries to resolve an area of chaos in your life? What boundaries did you establish? How did that affect the situation?
 - b. Name an area in your personal life where you're experiencing more chaos than you would like. Think aloud about one or two boundaries/rules you might need to establish to address the chaos.
 - c. In the Creation story, notice that God established boundaries one day at a time, rather than all at once. What wisdom does that suggest for us?
6. In Genesis 1:14, "God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.' God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night." In other words, God established a series of recurring rhythms for creation. In our own life, when we establish a recurrent rhythm, we call it a "habit." That's the second step to conquering chaos in our lives – establishing **healthy habits**. Healthy habits result from healthy boundaries that are practiced so long they become part of us – so deeply ingrained we follow them without even thinking.
- a. Suppose someone has an anger problem that's creating chaos in their job and their relationships. What kind of healthy boundaries might they establish for themselves? How do those boundaries become habits? And once the habits are established, how will that make their life better, i.e., less chaos, more beauty?
 - b. Describe a habit that has served you well in your life. How has it helped you?
 - c. Share your thoughts, feelings, insights about the following two quotes. Gretchen Rubin: "Habits are the invisible architecture of daily life. We repeat about 40% of our behavior almost daily, so our habits shape our existence, and our future. . . . Our habits are our destiny. And changing our habits allows us to alter that destiny." Gandhi: "Watch your thoughts, they become actions. Watch your actions, they become habits. Watch your habits, they become your destiny."
7. It's easy to say "establish healthy boundaries and develop healthy habits," but hard to do. Where will we find the strength? That's the third lesson from Genesis 1. The Bible tells us that the same Spirit of God that brooded over the chaos of primordial earth and transformed it into beauty now dwells in us as children of God. "[We can] be filled with all the fullness of God. . . . [And] by the power at work within us, God is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." Ephesians 3:19. Internalizing this concept gives us a **healthy attitude** – the third key step – when we face chaos. A healthy attitude enables us to say, "Chaos, you have no power over me. I know who I am and I know what to do!" Why is attitude so critical to conquering chaos? Have you ever known someone who exhibited the kind of healthy attitude we're describing? Tell us about them. What keeps us from embracing the same attitude?

Genesis 1:1-19

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was *tohu wabohu* [TOE-hoo wuh-BOE-hoo], and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God *rachaph* [raw-HAF] over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.