

25th Anniversary Plea Part 2

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the need for confidence in God while addressing organizational challenges and the importance of personal relationships in ministry.

Duration: 1:09:08

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of unity and moving in the same direction as a movement. They highlight the need for leaders to lead by example and not expect others to do things they are not doing themselves. The speaker also acknowledges the need to prioritize and not take on too many projects at once. They stress the importance of completing tasks and seeing ideas through to fruition. Lastly, the speaker emphasizes the importance of holiness and living a spirit-filled life, while also recognizing the mercy and grace of God.

Transcript

As I brought the last part of the message, the last tape to a close, I was giving a plea to keep our confidence in the Lord, to avoid looking to man or to organizations and to keep away from what I would term organizationalism. I believe the Lord really wants us now to focus in on some other or more of the weaknesses and problem areas that we have to wrestle with at this present time. I'd like to just pray, the Lord help us, this won't go too long, but we will be able to deal with issues that are so important in this work and that we will be able to lay a foundation for further prayer, for further discussion.

God, we pray that you will help us to be as like-minded as possible on these issues. Help me keep the balance of what I say. I ask in Jesus name, Amen.

Moving on to another area, we come to this area of sometimes conflict in terms of what we should actually be doing in strategy. In some places a greater emphasis now on church planting. We've always believed in church planting.

I think many of us have always felt that a lot of this should be done by people when they leave OM. We feel strongly about this in India and it's sort of the official policy there that most church planting is to be done by graduates. This enables it to be more linked with the soil, more indigenous, more realistic.

Here again, I think that one of the strong points of OM is that we have allowed a wide range of strategies. It's just my plea that it will not get too wide and that countries will just feel they can basically do what they want without any reference back to the original principles and to the thrust that we feel must continue in other areas of strategy. Mass evangelism, of course training, working with existing churches toward renewal, flooding out powerful literature and all the rest.

I know that the word superficiality gets thrown around at times and if there's not intensive follow-up in certain areas then the sowing of the seed and that kind of evangelism is often despised and ridiculed in our day and that we get the image of just still being a movement of people running out running around giving out tracts and in our personal communication and public communication we really need to know how to carefully destroy that image. I've seen in church after church it can be easily destroyed. We say the right thing at the right time, God's help, we can destroy these false concepts and churches that were once very cool about us will just swing around and get behind us and move in a tremendous way.

With different churches and different groups we emphasize different aspects of the ministry and I think in our interviewing people in the September Conference we must make a greater emphasis, a greater effort to get them into a particular field, a particular ministry and when possible with particular leaders we think they're going to be happy with and the kind of ministry they're going to be able to be happy with. Of course the other side of the coin is we need to throw people into the deep water and sometimes doing things especially in their first year that they're not happy about. Who can ever find the total answer to that one? Then we face quite a quite an amount of discussion and controversy in regard to when people should leave.

Do not think that when a person leaves the work that it's only something that involves say him and his direct leader over him, the field leader and maybe the standing country leader. In a fellowship it doesn't work that way. People have relationships, people have friends, people in a sense build up loyal friendships and then generally within a land this is unfortunate they build up people who don't like them.

Just the amount of material that comes to me from one person about another person that's basically negative is sometimes staggering and I know that in many ways I'm still out of it and don't get in on a lot of the nitty-gritty that's happening on a team level. In fact one of my great concerns is that as leaders especially field leaders and people with large responsibilities we can fail to know what's really going on down among the troops. What they are saying, what they are thinking, what they are feeling, their hurts and I don't see any way we can unless we spend more time with these new people.

We cannot just be locked up into various committees and various leadership sessions. We've got to be spending time with new people. I don't see how we can be involved in evangelism and not do that.

Every year I'm involved with new people that I'm leading to Christ. I can't just delegate them off. If I'm a spiritual father I need to spend time with them, write to them, love them and encourage them and in a sense our time some of us seems to be divided almost 50-50 that 50 percent of it has to be toward existing relationships, leaders if we're in positions of leadership in my type of position and 50 percent new people leading people to Christ, discipling new young ones coming up into the work, encouraging them.

Of course this is also linked with how much organizational load we carry but the two are very interrelated. Organization and people are inseparable, absolutely inseparable in Christian work. So it is a big thing especially after the first or second year when someone leaves the work but even during the first or second year the decision to stay or leave is a big one.

This is one of the reasons, one of many of the reasons that I feel strongly as I have shared in memos over the last couple of years that people who do not see definite financial breakthrough in terms of support first one or two years minimum which we're trying to de-emphasize and after that regular support that they should take that as the sign that the Lord is leading them out to another ministry or leading them back to build up a revolutionary relationship with the church. We're not here talking about leading though in some cases the Lord may lead that person to leave because of a number of circumstances but in the area of finance we're talking about challenging that person to build a foundation. That foundation is not only going to be valuable in terms of prayer partners, in terms of a nucleus of people that will stand with them if they stay with OM, that is going to help them the rest of their life.

Missionaries laboring all over the world who were once on OM are thankful to God that we taught them something about faith, something about prayer partners, prayer letters, building up a supporting body of people through prayer because that has helped them the rest of their life and because this is such a big thing we should not expect it to happen without a little effort. It's not a matter of just praying a few prayers and suddenly we've got our financial support and our prayer partner support for the rest of our life. The enemy is going to resist and if we are not more specific with people giving them specific goals to work towards specific breakthroughs we are only hindering them.

If their money is just coming because of the general OM body when they leave OM they're back to zero, they are back to zero. They have perhaps very few prayer partners, their prayer partners have in their mind that they're in any way just supported by the general giving and so they're in some ways going to be back to zero. A majority of mission movements in the world, especially movements that OM young people are going to be interested in, are going to require them to have support and in most cases they're going to require them to go out and raise support and praise God that we never took a totally negative stance against that to the degree that when people leave OM they would be unable to enter into other missions.

We tried to bring this out in the message on balance and the difference between principles and policies and things along that line and I just feel that the whole concept of personal support, seeing people walk with God, seeing actual finance coming into them is an enormous part of what we're teaching young people and is going to enable them to either stay with us in a healthy sound and to a large degree conscience free way because conscience is involved with this or it's going to enable them to join some other great faith mission and have prayer partners and have the kind of support that most of these missions require. I hope that we can have enough balance so that people even can join missions where they're given a salary, though that is not the general thrust of of OM's thinking. This is all very much linked with when people leave the work.

It seems to me that in some cases very few people are asked to leave OM any longer unless they have got into some difficulty, they're not working out, there's this problem, there's that problem and there may be personality clash, let's not think that we're free from that, then those people are eased out. Now this is wrong. If this also gets through to the troops that basically you don't get asked to leave unless something is wrong, we are on weak and dangerous ground.

Now praise God, the other side has been there. Very good people who have done very very well, who we're happy with sometimes, leaders sometimes, outstanding people have been challenged at times to leave, especially at times by myself, but I don't think too many are involved in doing that. Of course maybe people feel afraid to do that, but because there are so many needs for personnel everywhere, that tendency is for people unless they want to leave, and there's a variety of reasons why people want to

leave, generally if they don't want to leave they're encouraged to stay on or they go from one field to another field or sometimes it seems that the jobs aren't even created for them, and so this is of concern to me, and I believe one of God's breaks, one of God's ways of challenging people out of a win, who we love, we want them, we think they're great, we've got a relationship with them, is by for a period of time slowing down their finance and moving them out through finance.

The Lord has other ways of moving people out. He puts it on their heart just to get involved in another mission, what they may feel is a better organization. I believe God has overruled situations where people have really been upset with us, they've not been happy about their leader, they've not been happy about Owen, and so they've decided to leave.

You don't want that in one sense, but I believe God has used that at times to get people out because he's seen, our great God has seen how hard it is to get some people out of Owen, because for some people it becomes very much their spiritual home, their life, they're relatively happy, they've got a fairly good thing in different ways, and they want to stay. Now I fear even saying those words because some person misunderstands that and thinks that the only way to really find it more difficult and to get greater testing and greater difficulty is to leave Owen. This is of course false.

God has given Jonathan McCrosty the greatest testing of his spiritual life, and he's within Owen. Let us understand that the great tests and the great difficulties in life do not come necessarily related to whether we're in Owen or not in Owen. There's plenty of scope to endure hardship within Owen, to grow, to face the tough issues of the secular society, to face problems in family life, there's plenty of pressures, there's plenty of things going wrong in Owen, there are plenty of financial struggles, so that within Owen there is great scope for testing and growth and everything else, even if at times it may appear to be easier in one situation than another.

God is not going to be hindered even by some of the things we attempt to do to help one another and to make it easier for one another when he wants to bring in his program of testing and difficulty, but some people will not find the right challenge for their situation until they're out with another movement, another fellowship, and going out of Owen often is a great step of faith and it means moving into another one of God's graduate programs. I don't have an easy answer to this. Personal guidance from God is the most important.

Careful counseling, avoiding being too subjective. We can be honest about our needs, we need certain kinds of people, we challenge certain kinds of people to stay because there's a desperate need. There's nothing wrong with that provided there's the other side of the issue that we often keep people and challenge people to stay with us not because we see where they particularly fit into our program but because we love them, we want to help them one more year, we want to prepare them for what is ahead of them when they leave.

God is working in different ways in different people. Different people are in Owen for different purposes to some degree within God's program and I think it's important to understand that. Just lastly under this area of the problems we face because of the wide range of viewpoints and backgrounds and philosophy I've just written here that whatever decision is made now with a wide range of people and thoughts within Owen there's always someone who disagrees.

If we don't learn to be positive and I speak to myself cast every care upon the Lord this can become a nightmare. The number of letters and memos that come to me every day that the post comes which is

most days. Disagreeing with this, saying we should do that, giving the answers to this, things that we should discuss at the coordinators conference, warning me about this thing that has crept into Owen.

I am not talking in all of this talk I've given about issues that I've pulled out of the sky. Almost every one of these things I've shared with people have touched on more than one person in their letters, in their memos. I can't even read all of this material anymore and of course I don't but somehow we have a problem here because we want to maintain all the blessings of Owen when it was small and yet we want all the benefits through being large.

We can't have all in both of these worlds we are going to have to lose some things. I feel bad that I've not had more personal fellowship with many of you. If it were 15 years ago when I had hours and days of fellowship with most all the leaders in the work you know it would be a different story.

I think most Owen leaders have come into maturity in this area and they realize that my love for them, my commitment to them, can no longer be directly measured in terms of time with them. There's factors in regard to the providence of God, geographical location. If I had the opportunity with certain people, many of you who are listening to this cassette, I would just be thrilled to spend days, hours, work together, hike down Grand Canyon together, whatever, but in the providence and the purpose of God in a 24-hour day that is just not possible with a huge number of people.

We're not going to be able to have the best out of both worlds. All the advantages of the present structure of Owen, the outreach to the ends of the earth, the two ships, the two and a half to three thousand people that unite with us in the summer, the thousand six hundred committed to world evangelism throughout the year, all the benefits that brings, the souls that are coming to Christ, the tens of millions that are being reached, and then the exact same carbon copy of the kind of fellowship we had in the early days, all spending time together with one another, praying together, all being in certain prayer meetings together, etc. Well, let me move on to the next major area under this section about the weaknesses that we're facing at present.

I've written with a number of people we are relating to, there never seems to be enough time, especially now that many of us have families that demand a good amount of time and attention. Do the main leaders really know what is going on? That's interesting, not realizing, and I already in my thinking ran into that concept, so I don't think I'll go on much longer. Single people, and praise God for the faithful committed army of single men and women in this work, and OM is the kind of work that demands a large segment of single people, team leader level people.

Generally, single men and women fit better into that situation, though there are beautiful exceptions. But these people will need deep patience and understanding about marriage, and that's difficult because they haven't been in marriage, and what they know about family probably was in a totally different context back in their own country, though there are exceptions, young people reared on the mission field and all the rest. But I think we have to face it just takes a lot more time, effort, money, and everything to maintain a family in the 20th century.

And this does at times outwardly seemingly distract from evangelism, from discipling men, from a lot of things that single people have more time to do. And we do have people pointing their fingers at some of the married men because they're not doing enough of this or enough of that, or maybe Saturday morning they didn't show up on evangelism, even though Saturday morning, if a man has a family, is priority time for his family. And I took my family with me on evangelism until they weren't too keen on doing that.

Then I had to find other times to do evangelism, though sometimes I do Saturday morning. My case and situation is often very different from other people. There needs to be a breaking down of any barrier that the enemy is trying to build between single people and married people.

This takes communication, but it also takes believing the best. I'm convinced sometimes we believe the worst about people. I know we don't mean to do that, but we get the wrong signals, we hear this thing or that thing.

And I've had to repent about this in the past. And I'm asking God to continue that crucifying work in my life that I may know how to believe the best until I really have the facts and then to confront, but to avoid generalizations and gossip, and to try to sympathize with the difficult situations that certain families are having just to survive. I'm preaching all the time now on survival.

I just gave a series on this at the Chester Operation World. Maybe you'd like to listen to it. But I know in my case, many times it's not a matter of advancing down another beach of spiritual combat, it's survival.

And I know some of you listening to my voice at this time, even some of the concepts I'm talking about here, perhaps they're not registering very deeply because you're battling for survival. You're battling for survival. And I want to stand with you.

Maybe we need to share a little more as to where we really are. What are some of our real struggles? I know a lot of this is happening in OM, and it's building reality and fellowship, and it's enabling us to get things into the right priority. We would be less judgmental.

Praise God for the section on love covers the last few pages against judgmentalism. But I believe we would be less judgmental about one another, and even about different fields and different groups and different things within OM. If we could really understand some of the problems different ones are facing just to survive, just to survive.

That's why I've been willing at times to compromise certain convictions. That's why I've been willing at times to the distress of some people who feel I should take a harder line on certain issues, to compromise, to be more patient, to give the person another year maybe before I ask them to leave. Because we want to minister.

We want to be a movement of compassion. We want the fruit of the spirit. We want to be sensitive toward people's needs.

And that's going to be constantly one of our greatest struggles. And then the next main point under this section of our weaknesses is the age gap. The lack of time now among some of the older ones to train junior leaders, to spend time with new recruits that they can just be plugged in right to the heart and the pulse of what the Holy Spirit has been doing over the years.

Many don't even seem to understand some of the historical roots of OM. Many seem to be confused about what this whole thing of spiritual balance and the importance of it. Because it is just as important as commitment.

It is part of our commitment. It is that which keeps the sword sharp. There is a danger that there are so many voices, so many messages, so many tapes, so many outstanding magazines and books that a majority of our time in terms of input is from other directions.

And that we don't get enough time in some of the OM material, the leadership manual, some of the leadership tapes, there are piles of leadership tapes from past conferences. I know some of my own material that I only maybe give once a year. And I discover people making major mistakes not understanding things because they didn't get that message.

They missed that emphasis. And this concerns me. And I know that age is a factor.

Perhaps some of us older and they see us in the pulpit and they're afraid to come to us. Some of us don't seem to have another spare minute, another spare hour, yet we have to make time for those that want to see us. We must, no matter how many other responsibilities we have, we must avoid like the plague any kind of OM elite, people with special privileges.

Our policy has been people receive according to their need. A brand new family coming into the work with three children is going to have greater needs than a single man who's been in the work for 10 years. And that single man should have the maturity to understand that.

I don't believe we should move in the direction of giving greater privileges according to the years within OM. That may be all right in some specific area. I understand on the ship in terms of pocket money, people who have been several years have a greater amount of money than maybe people who are new.

Maybe that can be allowed for certain specific areas, but it must not become a general policy. And it seems to me that a family coming to the ship with three children, even though they're new recruits, they're going to have to have a greater privilege, what may seem to be a privilege, than say some single person who's been for three years. It is complex.

We must not try to do through rules and regulation that which can only be worked out in individual situations through fellowship and communication. I'd like to say that again, but I don't think I can quote it again. Different people have different needs.

And in OM, the priority is not the seniority, but it's the person's particular need. And we will have to wrestle with that. But I feel that's the direction we must continue to move by the grace of God and by the help that the Lord can give us.

Sometimes when we've suffered, we don't want others to go through the same suffering. We see OM's weak points, and we can become almost cynical about those weak points. This spreads to the new recruits, and they don't know how to handle some of the cynicism that comes by older people.

And let's face it, sometimes that person that we really want in the work, and he's filling a vital job, and we don't know how we continue without him, he's become cynical, and he's hindering people underneath him. And he needs to be spoken to in a very clear way, and even told that if he doesn't shape up in that area, if he continues to be a stumbling block to the younger ones and not be an example, I know that has to be kept in balance, then he's going to have to pray about moving on. You know, a lot of people really do change when we speak to them very clearly that maybe it's time to leave.

This shouldn't be done just sort of off the cuff in an emotional fervor. It must be done in an objective way. Usually two or three leaders are brought into it.

But we must confront people. We cannot let people drift. And sometimes the hardest people to confront are those who we are so dependent upon in terms of their skills and their abilities.

And sometimes the brother who doesn't seem to be so valuable in terms of the work, if we're honest, he gets jumped on a lot quicker. No one will ever be totally consistent in this area. But let's work toward that by the grace of God.

Yes, let us cry out that no middle age spiritual rheumatism will set in. Young people are going to understand that families need perhaps more time for a break, though they need some time as well. Families are going to understand or single people are going to understand that if a man is not in good health, he's not going to keep up with what may be the standard OM pace.

He's not going to be able to stay in every prayer meeting to the end. And legalism in this area, the failure to be compassionate and understanding is just as deadly as lack of discipline. Let's move on.

The next point under this section about weaknesses is the pressure, the pressure to compromise the standards or even bypass the training to fill needed posts and keep the machinery going. There is a sense where there is machinery within OM. Machinery can be good.

You drive a car, that's a piece of machinery. I'm using this tape recorder, that's a piece of machinery. I'm glad it's still working.

And within OM, there is machinery. We trust it will be held together by the oil of the Holy Spirit. Things need to happen.

Things need to be taking place. It's one thing for people to be spiritual and when they only meet each other on Sunday, they have a nice praise time, a nice worship time. Put them on the battlefield seven days a week and you'd see that a lot of what they think they have, they don't really have.

And so it's going to be a battle. But we must avoid just bypassing basic training in order to meet specific gaps. There are backdoor recruits.

What was us when we have more backdoor recruits than front door recruits? People that go through the tapes, the books, the training conferences, the nights of prayer, the times on the doors, the boot camp. We can't throw away the spiritual boot camp. When people are brought in through the backdoor, they need extra time.

Dare we bring anyone through the backdoor directly to the ship, directly in the STL, directly out anywhere and not spend more time with them. Get them into tapes. Relate to them personally because we're going to lose people, we're going to hurt people.

It's not going to work. It's not hard to see in OM the need for typists, administrators, bookkeepers, carpenters, engineers, people who can be accountants. In fact, let's face it, some of us who I think maybe understand the work a little better than some others, we do see the need for every single, every single person that's in the work.

I'd love to write a paper on how God has used the weakest people over the years to keep this thing moving. People who weren't ready to go somewhere else, stayed in their own country and ended up playing a vital role. Let all of us be thankful to God for those who may seemingly have the most unimportant routine task in this work.

They are vital. And as we see in Corinthians to that lesser member, sometimes there's greater importance. A ten-talent man will be responsible for ten talents.

He's got a very big job and probably is having lots of failure. That one-talent man only has to be responsible for that one talent. He's an easy man to miss in any movement.

He can be neglected and forgotten and lonely. He may not be a great communicator because communication may not be that vital to his particular ministry. And so he gets left out.

Not many seek out his fellowship. He may get classified among the people who are dull. Oh, may we have a wide spectrum of people that we fellowship with.

We don't just fellowship with those who it's a blessing to be with them and we gain through that fellowship, but we reach out and fellowship with people that may be a total drain upon us. People that don't necessarily appeal to us. That to me is spiritual revolution.

We have to ask ourselves, does OM or do the people come first? I think the people should come first. I think this can be kept in balance. As you know, I'm more than willing to cut down on numbers in order to increase the quality of input into each person within OM.

The pastoral care, the man-to-man discipling, that which is one's heart and soul parcel of this movement, man-to-man discipling. Discipling certainly in some places seems to be slipping. And if we ask ourselves specifically for people that we've led to Christ or we found them when they were babes in Christ, and now we've seen them going on in maturity because of the hours and the weeks and the months and the time we've spent with them, sometimes it's a little embarrassing.

On the other hand, I think that has to be kept in balance by the fact that often a person is encouraged and disciplined by a number of people having input into their life. And most of you have heard me speak on that. And then two final points under the setting.

The question, are we trying to do too much at the same time? I think in some ways we are. And I, for one, have had to cut back on projects. I've had to perhaps throw a high percentage of my ideas and things that have popped into my mind that we could do.

I've had to just lay them on the Lord. Ideas are easy to come by in a movement this size with so many pioneer types, so we always need them. But to see last year's ideas becoming a reality, that which we started five years ago because we had a good idea, really coming into maturity, that's something else.

It often is easier to start something new than to pick up something halfway and carry it through to completion. This is why I'm so heavily indebted to so many faithful men. I won't start to give a list of names because it would be too long, who have picked up at times where I felt I had to move on to something else or could no longer carry on.

And they have battled with more difficult situations. And I'm indebted to the Lord for such a faithful army of loyal men and women that I can work together with. I think people really do respect us for the stand we have taken of trying not to become too big.

I find feedback on that all the time, tremendous feedback, that we want to emphasize quality before quantity. Though when we have quality, the quantity will come because lives, quality lives in touch with

Jesus, they will bring forth fruit. And it's fruit we want, not brick, not wood, hay, stubble, fruit.

And that's going to come from Christ-like living and from a body of people in communion with one another, growing in Christ-likeness, in grace, filled with the Spirit. And whether we can measure all the results or put them all on the OM prayer letter or not, they will be there. And then the last point under this heading, have we become unrealistic about finance? I believe many people in OM are realistic about finance.

I believe they're more realistic than many people in the world. And sometimes in OM people seem to almost glory in putting themselves down. And sometimes we find people who see the strong points of people out in the world or in other situations in comparison to our own weak points.

It's a reverse. It's going extreme on something we challenge people to do. We challenge people for the sake of humility to see other people's strong points and their own weak points.

But if people don't keep that in balance and we have to think of ourselves honestly as we ought to think, Romans 12, then they're constantly seeing other people's strong points and our weak points. And they're putting themselves down or they're putting OM down. I have had to repent at times of putting OM down.

It's a hard area. But I think different fellowships have different strong and weak points. We can learn from one another.

But we need to realize God has given us some strong points. And basically the whole area of finance is a relatively strong point within OM. People are realistic.

People are crying out to God for finance, probably more than in most situations. There are people who are selling possessions. There are people who are living sacrificially.

Maybe not as sacrificially as one brother may think. Somebody reared in a very tight home situation with very little money is not going to understand another brother who may be more free with his money. But if that brother were living the way he was living 10 years ago, he would be 10 times more free with that money.

This thing does get a bit relative. And we need to be slow to point fingers at people, especially in these sensitive, difficult areas. At the same time, the enemy is clever.

And in every area he wants to drag us into unreality. I think people are unrealistic about the amount of money it takes for overheads. Money going into overheads in Christian work is almost considered non-spiritual.

I almost used to be this way. Money for tracts for literature, that's where I want my money. I don't want to put my money into a brand new typewriter.

Let's get something out of the junkyard and let the typist bang away at 30 words a minute. And God had to show me that money invested perhaps in a good typewriter, I know that has to be kept in balance, is spiritual. Praise God for the equipment he has given us.

Praise God the vehicles may be a little better than they used to be. Yes, I still have my same conviction. Bicycles for brothers in India should have a greater priority over a better vehicle for Joe Blow in Europe, but maybe we can have both.

OM has to function within its individual culture. There are actually some people using bicycles in Europe, praise the Lord for that. There's no simple, easy answer to this.

We must constantly work for greater reality in the area of finance. This is why our policy of individual support, each individual seeing something come in, even when you're getting your regular support, that's not carrying the whole load. To really carry the load, you've got to get into what Jonathan McCrosty calls ministry support, or what I used to call producing faith, where you're starting to pay for the books, the tracks, the other person, the ministry phone calls, the free literature that costs thousands of pounds and dollars every year.

And that's what every leader should be aiming at, ministry support. Perhaps it should be double of regular support. There are people who have that.

And such people aren't going to put themselves up as being better than someone else because they probably have other areas in their life where they're very weak. But we've got to keep aiming higher. We've got to keep facing the reality of tremendous economic problems in the world today.

There may come a day when some of us will have to go take jobs and count it all joy just to pour finance into the work. A little tent making done here and there with good control doesn't hurt. And it all helps build reality and finance.

In the world, many, many, many families have to have both the man and the wife working just to make ends meet. I'm not saying we have to do that within OM. Praise God, if our wives in OM are able to give more time to our families, we should have better and more committed families as a result of it.

Praise God, when our wives have greater opportunity for the ministry of hospitality, to get in on prayer sessions, to minister to others, or to just minister to ourselves. Because let's face it, a lot of these families where the husband and wife are both working are also having tremendous problems. I can't get into that now.

But certainly both men and women within OM have a big job to do in the home, in the work, in rearing the children, in relating to the neighbors, in hospitality. And I feel that the married women within OM especially need maximum sympathy because I sense that in the kind of work we are in, a lot of times the pressure bypasses different people and lands on the married woman and often it's not seen as having landed on her. And so though I would never want to fail to challenge a married woman to move on in prayer and to move on in her witness and her spiritual growth, she would want that.

I at the same time want to be most sensitive to these women with their children and their pressures in their particular situation, especially in a movement that's moving with the kind of vision and the kind of velocity and the kind of speed that OM is moving at at the present time. Let's keep that in mind and minister to one another in that area. I find that almost every family I have ever interviewed in OM, they want to see their personal and family support coming in.

They know what the teaching is and they want to see that. So though there's some discussion about this at present, I think the devil is going to try to magnify this out of proportion because basically the policy that we are stating and that we are wanting to keep is the policy that most people believe in their own hearts. The greater problem comes when we sit down and have to counsel people and talk to people in the midst of particularly difficult situations when finance is not coming in.

Reality, reality in this area is going to build deep personal faith in God. Less faith in any organization or even to some degree in people and greater faith in God himself, I think is going to be so essential, especially if the Lord allows the church to go into persecution. If the Lord allows the world to go into financial chaos, that absolute confidence in God is going to be the key thing.

That was the key thing for Wang Mingdao when eventually he was separated from the whole Christian community and that may happen to many of us. We must build a deeper confidence in our God. We must not become over-dependent on one another and certainly we must avoid getting over-dependent on all the perks and all the special provisions of our socialistic societies.

Someday we may have something, the next day we may not have it. Someday the Lord may provide for this or that through another person, through an inheritance, through a gift and another day we'll have to go out and work with our hands to get a few dollars, a few pounds, a few deutschmarks just to put food in the stomach of our own child. Let's not be unrealistic about life.

Let's face suffering head-on if God has allowed some of it again into the work this year. Let's not look for some cop-out. Let's not go the way of all flesh, the panicky nervous insurance mania way of all flesh.

I'm not saying that to down all insurance. God can lead certain people perhaps to get at times certain inexpensive and really, oh how can I explain it, bargain insurance. If you get so much insurance for some relative small amount of money in a particular country because insurance is required in that country and because of government regulations, this is something that is an exception to maybe what we originally thought in some of these areas.

I believe OM will continue to be tested in a great way that we must try to hold firm to the convictions God has given us in the midst of the testing. Well I could say a lot more about that whole area but I really want to move on. My final section is entitled what is the best way forward in the light of all this.

Now I'm aware that this is feeble. We're dealing with great truths. We've got a whole bible to tell us the way forward but these are just a few thoughts, some of which have already been mentioned on.

I put number one, let us hold fast to the basic principles we believe the Lord has given us. I've already read that quote about uniting together in the light of the warfare of world evangelism even when there are things we don't agree with or don't necessarily like. Let's listen to some of those old basic tapes and go through some of the manuals and meditate on things like the seven major emphasis.

Let's have that crucial section of important memos concerning the principles we believe. Let's reread these things from time to time and commit ourselves to go in that direction. If we are going to evangelize the world we must to a large degree move in the same direction.

There can be exceptions, there's balance, there's there's flexibility but we've got to move in the same direction. This means even as we come into a coordinator's conference we can't discuss at length everything that everybody has on their heart. We can't deal with every doctrinal issue that comes up.

Someone recently wrote me their concern, somebody on their team doesn't believe enough in total depravity. How many of us have really had a thorough study of total depravity? Basically I believe in total depravity but if my brother in Christ believes that man is a sinner, he's lost, he's going to hell, he needs to be rescued and saved by the grace of God, I don't think I'm going to have a major argument with him on whether he believes exactly as I do about total depravity. I don't think we all believe exactly the like alike

on exactly what hell is.

I think I could list 50 areas where we would have variation and if you go and just join yourself with a fellowship where you sign the 25-point doctrinal statement you'll find you probably have greater disunity because so oftentimes disunity comes through personality, through genes, metabolism, outside influences and who knows what else. Let's move together agreeing on those basic issues, learning to love one another more, being more patient, less judgmental, let's not get into this syndrome where we say oh he spends this much money so I can spend this much, he gets this much so I get this much, he has this amount of free time so I should get this amount of free time, they had a one-month holiday, why don't I get a one-month holiday, they live in a five-room house, why do I live in a three-room house, his car is two years newer than my car. We can't possibly claim to go on in maturity and get into this type of mentality, this kind of worldly comparing and small-mindedness, may God deliver us from that and may we realize that above all else each man walks before God.

If it's a straightforward, clear sin or even if we have questions and it may be a sin, let us in love go to that person and speak to them, otherwise let's press on. I think at times there's a fear of one leader going to another about something and talking it out. Instead of one leader going to another, one leader goes to the friend of that other person and Proverbs says that sometimes the very best of friends can be separated when a matter is passed on and I've seen a number of problems in OM have come when a particular leader has gone to the friend of another leader or has gone to someone else about that leader's fault or sin or error or whatever, rather than in love going to that person at least first.

Then if it's a serious and a big thing and nothing's been done then he brings someone else into it. Now I know that saying this and putting it into practice 100% is one of the greatest challenges we have in the Christian life and I'm not about to lay a double guilt trip on some brother who at an off moment has shared something about someone to someone else because I think we can become very unrealistic and I don't think leaders should get all upset when he finds out his team members at times are talking about him even in a negative way behind his back. I think he should be surprised if that never happens and when you find someone has done that you don't just immediately come down on them with a six-ton spiritual hammer but you share how you at times have made the same mistake and you're sorry if you haven't been more approachable and then try to work from there pointing out the dangers involved.

Secondly I believe the way forward includes a continual emphasis on spiritual balance. You've heard my messages on this subject there are many of them you've seen the verses and there are many the whole chapter 1st Corinthians 13 to start with so let's not play this down. Spiritual balance and all that goes with it as much as commitment and dedication as much as anything else has kept OM on that straight and narrow highway of holiness that the Lord has called us into and I feel that God that of the many messages God has given us to share with one another to share with the church and to learn from the church the message of balance in all of its aspects balance in missionary work balance in leadership balance in the family I believe it's of the messages God has given to us it's a message of love it's a call to obey the whole counsel of God rather than just one side of the coin.

There are certain basic biblical issues in which balance simply means that we stand absolutely unmovable and firm. I read an article recently where it said we should hold our nose saying no to the big issues you know in OM working with people if we give them freedom and let them move and not get negative and always stop people from doing things they want to do then when we do say no it will really count. I hope that by God's grace in some ways about smaller issues you'll hear from me less and that when I do

have to come along in your field or your situation and say no that would always be after prayer and consultation with a lot of people and firstly with the Lord that that no will somehow carry some weight.

Stand firm and then thirdly to realize that people leaving is one of the greatest aspects of OM's growth. It means stepping forward in faith it often means greater dependence on God it often means putting something into practice that they haven't been able to totally learn when they were within the fellowship. It will mean often that new movements are born churches receive blessing that otherwise would remain too much confined within OM.

Each person must find God's plan for their life. Some people find getting to know the will of God much more difficult than others and of course as we've often said God leads different people in different ways. Then four to count the cost about each step forward.

Don't expect others to do that which we are not doing. As leaders we can't just end up behind the desk telling people to do things we're no longer doing ourselves. Personal evangelism, prayer, literature distribution, serving, doing a few dishes, whatever.

Our example is still stronger than our words when it comes to really influencing and discipling people and maintaining the spiritual testimony of the movement. There's so many ways in OM that we can we can kill two birds with one stone. We can take people with us to a meeting where we can be in touch with God's people, we can present a vision of the work, we can give a call to discipleship, and probably there'll be some unsaved people in the meeting as I so often find and people will get converted as well and we can link up the person we brought to lead that person to Christ at the end of the meeting someone else can handle the book tables.

OM is still basically an on-the-job training. Conferences have always been a vital part because in the conference we set our course, we decide what direction we're going, we get some of the basic biblical principles, but the real learning so often happens out on the job, out in the experience, together, suffering, working, praying. We've seen how valuable the ships are as two of the greatest on-the-job training tools that God has ever given us and that's why every time someone leaves the ship ministry and launches into another ministry within OM or outside of OM, it's generally always victory.

It takes those beautiful lessons that have been learned in that particular training environment and puts them out into new situations and new opportunities and that's exciting. And when people, maybe as Phil Bushell recently from Bangladesh, went to spend some time in that unique training environment on Lagos, it generally always results in growth. And this is good, this is exciting.

Then number five, greater emphasis on holiness of life. Spirit-filled living, death to self, war against all that is not Christ-like, yet never losing sight of the mercy and the grace of God. I believe God has given us a message on sanctification that is balanced, that takes into account a wide range of scriptures, that pulls together messages like that which Ian Thomas and Alan Redpath are sharing and Roy Eshin with that which men like Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones are sharing, that bring together some of the best that have different movements that are being used of the Holy Spirit in our day.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit must continue to be one of the strongest messages that comes from the pulpit whenever an OMer is there. That doesn't mean we always share it in a sort of authoritative, preachy way, because many people, that kind of message they just need to share in the way of testimony. I like the emphasis on body life that men like Ray Steadman and others stand for in our day.

I'd like to see more times of sharing within OM. I'd like to see more small group activities. I praise God for those ship families.

I praise God for every time a group of people in OM get together for sharing and prayer in an informal way, in their homes, in their cars. I think it's basic. I think that from this kind of fellowship cell, this small group emphasis can spring more vital evangelism.

I'm concerned about some of OM's evangelism. I feel some of it is stereotyped. I feel some of it is extreme.

I feel we're unrealistic at times. I long to see evangelism as a spontaneous outflow from a people who are in tune with God, who are fellowshipping together, who are working together in prayer, evangelism, and other aspects of the spiritual life. Then I put down here as my sixth point, more leadership recruiting, training on the field as much as possible.

I praise God for the conference, leadership training in Mosbach, for other similar conferences in India, in France, for retreats and conferences that go on in almost every OM field, all of which helps people move on in the relationship toward one another, in spiritual growth, and in learning some of the basic principles of discipleship and of being a follower of Jesus, which is so important. We don't want to set up a hierarchy within OM. We all want to be servants one of another.

We want everybody to be involved in helping to make decisions without degenerating into being some kind of quasi-democracy, which is not the way God's word goes forth. We must get our orders from above, and as a nucleus of leaders in fellowship with everyone, since this is the direction that we must move in, then others, by God's grace and faith, must move forward as a united army, always free to disagree, always free to ask for reclarification, and always free to leave and to join some other movement, some other fellowship that may have a different way of doing different things, may have a different set of emphases. We've got to work on making sure that those men who lead those teams in the summer have had previous contact with us, training, that there's a relationship being built before the summer starts, that the manuals have been read.

Failure in this area is continuing to cripple some of our teams, so praise God for the way he overrules, sometimes on even the weakest team, tremendous things take place. We do however face the problem that people turned on through the tapes, people who make deep commitments to their life in the OM conference and experience something of the grace of God, end up being broken down and worn down through weak team situations where the leader has just not been able to cope. We have that, and we must beware, and we must work together to overcome it.

Seventh, we need to realize that the natural road, the natural road is downhill. OM will go downhill in many ways, we're going downhill and uphill at the same time. The flesh lusts against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh, the two are contrary.

Revival is working within OM, people are being revived, people are being filled with the spirit, at the same time others are backsliding, others are getting into sin. This year once again some people within OM have got into deep sin, no need to go into detail, but let us not be naive about where people are within OM. Discouragement creeping in, spiritual lukewarmness, perhaps the ugliest cancer of all.

This is why we need to be refilled again and again. This is why we've tried to emphasize from those early beginnings, daily denying self, taking up the cross, and following Him. You've all I think heard me say that

great faith is not made in the absence of struggle and doubt and fear and battles and heartaches, it's made as we battle through.

It is going to be a battle. Let's take one another by the hand spiritually at this moment. Though we may feel weak, though we may feel more inadequate than ever, let us take one another by the hand and let us lay hold of God together to go through as a victorious army of Jesus Christ.

Prayer sometimes becomes the hardest work in which we're involved, but let us let us fear more than anything else the choice of the easy road that would lead us into less prayer, less discipline, less hard work, and less repentance. That which may appear to be an easy road probably has a deeper ditch on the end of it than we've ever seen in our life up to now. Then number eight, yes total war against discouragement, against disunity, against pride, against worry.

You find as you're growing older you have more responsibility, you have a family you have children, that worry is beginning to come in and short-circuit some of your spiritual lines, some of your spiritual battery terminals, whatever you want to call it. I find worry is a very subtle thing. Big brother fears always standing around the corner.

Praise God that when we're really under pressure in these things generally we can not only talk to God, we can share with one another. I don't know how much these two tapes have helped any of you, but just to be able to share these burdens when so many of you I no longer see you, some of you I don't even hear from you, I don't even know some cases who you are, you're the recruit of somebody else, we don't know each other, and just the privilege, just knowing that I've been able to share this, to get this off my heart, off my mind, to every major person within OM is an enormous help. I can assure you that within OM there's always someone you can share with.

If you can't find someone I'll tell you, I'll be there if I have to travel a thousand miles to get there. You'll probably find a better listener than I, you'll probably find a more compassionate and wise understanding person than I. Right where you are if you take the initiative. Praise God we're not meant to carry around all these burdens, repressing things we don't like or agree with, becoming more hostile by the minute and allowing roots of bitterness to get in and sap us of spiritual revival.

We can share, we can cry, we can fellowship with one another and then cling together and claim God's grace for the victory. Then believe it or not, my last point, willingness to continue on with the problems and the hardships. That's right, no matter how much planning, no matter how much praying, no matter how much working, no matter how many new committees we start to resolve this problem or that problem, no matter how much advanced training we go through, as we move forward there are going to be the problems, there are going to be the mistakes, there are going to be the hardships, there's going to be suffering.

And we need to be delivered of any remnant of spiritual naiveness that thinks there is some other road. Yes the road for some will be easier than others. Many of us have lived with a cloud over our heads, feeling why did Jonathan get put into this hard period of suffering and difficulty and not us? Why am I free to roam the hills and to run and jog and do this and that, while my brother lays on a hospital bed in Belgium? But thinking that way is neither spiritual maturity, except perhaps for a few moments, nor will it accomplish very much spiritually and it certainly won't get Jonathan out of bed.

Cost of Commitment brings this out very clearly and it's a book we need to re-read at this time. Each one of us will face different problems in life. For some there will be greater mental suffering and spiritual suffering.

For some it will be physical, for some it will be both. For some it may come heavily in their teenage years, for others in their 20s, for others it may be toward the end of their life when maybe they'll go through months of sheer pain before the Lord takes them. It's happened to many of the Lord's servants.

So let's be patient. Let's not become some kind of spiritual masochists or get into some form of asceticism where we sort of want suffering and we try to bring suffering upon ourselves or we feel guilty because we're enjoying something or we feel guilty because someone else is having a harder time than we are. Yes, there's a never-ending area of things that we have to constantly have wisdom about and exercise faith about.

We have to continue to learn how to compassionately disagree. Many spiritual movements today are doing things that are very upsetting to me. Spiritual leaders are saying things and doing things that I don't agree with, that I feel have left the main message that I see in the New Testament.

I don't have enough time to confront all these people. So much has to be cast upon the Lord and I have to constantly pray for a guard over my lips. Even within the fellowship there are more and more things that happen that I'm not happy about, I want to speak out about.

We all experience that. Praise God for the reality of compassionate, patient, disagreeing, even with those that we will continue to work with, even within our own families. We don't have some little stereotype road we're trying to push our own children down or our own friends or disciples or co-workers, but it's God's great narrow road which in comparison to some of our thinking is quite broad.

It's the highway of love and includes a wide range of people. Beware of self-pity and all of its subtle, slippery tentacles. Beware of our inborn self-defense, especially when someone criticizes.

There's no way any of us can mature without being criticized, without being misunderstood. Let's beware of a martyr complex. Let's realize the other brother down the road, the other brother across the sea may be going through something far more difficult than we're going through, that our very words may have hurt someone else far more than their words have hurt us.

Beware of self-pity, beware of overreaction and self-defense, and let's be really forgiving of one another when we see these things coming out because they're some of the last areas of spiritual immaturity that go under the crucifying power in a permanent way. Like a lot of little things such as the lust of the eyes, self-pity, impatience, overreaction, irritability seem to be for most people a lifetime battle. Let's be clear, let's be loving, but let's also be willing to exhort one another and correct one another and not be hurt when others are correcting us, realizing that whenever someone corrects us probably there's some degree of error or miscommunication in that correction.

Don't throw the whole correction away simply because part of what the person was saying in his feeble attempt to give the correction is wrong, any more than you would throw both of these tapes away simply because something I've said during these two hours has not been 100% on target. It takes time to discern exactly what the Lord is saying to us through any particular message. And I praise God that as I've shared over the past two hours on these two tapes, very little has been said as a result of reaction to this person

or that person.

I would be a liar to say that what I share never to some degree is linked with reaction, but I've tried to pray for weeks and months and months before I have shared this way, talking with many leaders. And what I've said here is the mind and the thoughts of dozens of men in and outside of OM and that which I've sensed the confirmation on by the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean it can't be adjusted in each situation.

That doesn't mean I couldn't make five more hours of tapes to bring some of these thoughts into balance, to define terms, to try to communicate what I'm wanting to share. And we've got a Holy Testament that will help us do that as well. A publisher's working on a new book of mine which I have mixed emotions about and I've been challenged to find a title and I found a title they'll probably won't accept.

Following Jesus. It's not an easy road, whether it ever ends up as a title on the book. It's one of the deepest convictions of my life.

Yes, I found it hard going at times. The struggles have been agonizing, the tears have been there, the fears, and yet I can say by his grace every day I've known his forgiveness. Every day I've known whom I believe and I've kept my hands on that plow and I'm not turned back.

I want to recommit myself to Jesus Christ. I want to be refilled with the Holy Spirit even at this moment and I want to recommit myself to you, to each one of you who has been called into this ministry. We're members of the same body.

Forgive me, forgive me. I plead if I have offended, if I have hurt the unkind work, the negligence on my part in some area, I beg of your forgiveness. I pray that no root of bitterness will come in anybody's heart as a result of some wrong thing that I have done or some area of neglect or failure because my failures have been many.

No easy road ahead. We will hurt one another as we continue to go forward in the spiritual battle. There will be times when we don't agree.

There will be times when we will crawl off to our corner to lick our wounds, perhaps after a heavy meeting among leaders in which our viewpoint has not been accepted as the main viewpoint. But God will always be there, fellowshiping with us, wooing us, loving us, forgiving us. The difficulties we face by God's grace will draw us closer to him and he will meet our needs and he will carry us forward.

Eyes upon the Lord. Forward we go through Christ. All things are possible.

A quarter of a century has slipped by so quickly, yet by his grace so much is done through prayer, through our weaknesses and our failures because of his grace. And I believe greater things are ahead this next year, this next decade, this next quarter of a century. No matter how many years the Lord gives us to run the race, let's commit ourselves to this way.

Not afraid to ask questions, not afraid to compassionately, openly disagree, but at the same time by faith deciding to choose this biblical road with this biblical philosophy and with these biblically based policies to carry out a plan of action and to reach out to every person working with every other group to make the name of Christ known, to see millions gathered in to know him, to see the church born and built up and to see revival among God's people. Let's pray. Our God and Father, we thank you for your mercy.

And Lord, as we restudy these things, as we talk about these things in the coming months, as we move out to the fields of spiritual combat to put these things into practice, we would ask you to keep us from spiritual lukewarmness on one hand and extremism on the other, to keep us from putting ourselves down and getting into the syndrome of failure and discouragement, but at the same time to keep us from spiritual pride, high mindedness and foolishness. May we walk as you want us to walk, in honesty, in brokenness, in love, with our eyes fixed upon you, Lord Jesus. We love you.

We thank you for all you've done, for many different fellowships, churches and movements, and in our own feeble teams and bases and headquarters. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

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