

Ict Vision 94 Ict Retreat Nov 1993

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of vision and motivation in fulfilling the mission of the church during the Ict Vision 94 retreat.

Duration: 1:03:37

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, John 3:16, Romans 12:5, Ephesians 4:3

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having vision as a source of motivation. He shares his personal experience of considering a challenging decision and how vision played a role in it. The speaker also mentions the significance of faith and love in taking action and achieving results. He acknowledges that the size of the results may vary depending on the context, but emphasizes the importance of staying motivated. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to have a clear vision, rooted in faith and love, to drive their actions and bring about positive outcomes.

Transcript

I believe this is an important time together. We are an unusual and a diverse team, in which some people have things scheduled a long time in advance. I guess I need to take the blame for not getting out the dates of this retreat much earlier, a number of hindrances, so that a few of those people could have put this into their schedule.

At the same time, I think we're used to, in OM and on this team, going ahead and making the best of what the Lord has given. He's certainly given us a very precious opportunity to be here together for these two and a half days. Again, let us be just so thankful for the provision of this place.

One of the reasons we stopped many years ago having the all-British retreat, we used to all come together, all the teams, I can still remember the occasion, was wherever we had it, there was just considerable expense. In those days, things were very tight, and then there was a lot of travel expense as well. I certainly, once a decade or once every five years, would love to see all of us who work in Britain come together.

Maybe that will happen. I wanted to, just in this first session, a number of the sessions are going to be led by Peter. He's going to lead two sessions on the whole thing connected with strategic thinking and forward planning, and just help us understand what is actually happening.

I think a lot of people, I've indicated, are really interested in understanding this better. Of course, the door is still open for input into the whole flow of thinking, even though it's getting near decision time in January, there's still opportunity for input. He's also going to share with us from the Word of God, and Tony Sargent will also share from the Word of God.

Tomorrow night we'll have our prayer time. I hope it can perhaps be a little bit different than at Forest Hill. We know prayer is prayer, but there are different ways to pray.

There are different styles of prayer meeting. We'd like to focus a little more tomorrow night on some of your own personal prayer burdens that you have, rather than, when we do that, of course, it's some prayer meetings, but rather than just praying for situations around the world, we'll perhaps have both. A number of people will join us for tomorrow.

But I want us in our first session tonight, and I won't be speaking to you that much, so I count this an important privilege. I'd like to just talk about the vision. If we're going to go forward on this team, we need to make sure we have a vision of what it's all about.

On a team like this, it's easy for that vision to get a bit blurry, because we are doing so many things. We're out taking meetings, we're out selling books, we're showing hospitality, we're having conferences, we're serving India, we're in the personnel department, of course, including Carlisle. We're in almost everything you can in some ways imagine.

And it is easy, when you're doing a lot of things and you're very busy, to lose the vision. What are we actually aiming at? And, of course, part of our rethink that's going on at OM right now has been tied into that, and we've come up with vision statements together with a restated goals and aims statement. And I'm not going to be presenting this as sort of an official document for OM or even for the team.

This is just the vision as I see it for your particular department, for your particular ministry. You have to subtract or add and contextualize it into your own situation. But I'm thankful to the Lord as far as I can see on our team.

There is a lot of vision still after all these years. It's five years in this particular mode. We made a leadership change five years ago, a little over five years ago.

I'll never forget the first day that I arrived in Forest Hill. I think Peter was there as well, was the day the news came in concerning the sinking of Lagos. Hard to believe, five years.

Here we are in 1993, November. 1988 was also the year my mother was taken home to be with the Lord. And I feel that there has been a lot of vision and that that vision has been a major factor in our motivation.

It's amazing what we can do if we stay motivated. I have a whole bunch of sort of little mini strategies to stay motivated because I find it very hard to do what needs to be done if I'm not motivated. It may seem strange.

It may sound like an exaggeration. But in God's mercy, in God's grace, I've never had a non-motivated day since my conversion. That's, I guess, a gift from God.

I guess it's partly my temperament. I think it's very much linked with repentance. If I'm cold, if I have a wrong attitude, even a few seconds of wrong attitude toward any brother, any sister, anybody, even the

guy pumping the petrol, the conductor on the train.

By the way, he was a Christian too. I had a great chat with him last night. And I repent.

I just repent. If I find my heart getting cold, if I find discouragement coming in, which is usually several times a day, different types of discouragement, I repent. If lust tries to work its way in, and I've had some of that recently.

In fact, this last week being served at an OM dinner by a waitress who didn't believe in the need to wear a bra and her bending over to serve the vegetables, I was getting somehow a lot more than vegetables. And it was God's grace to just cut the lust and turn away and say, thank you, Lord. Little things, but men are being cut down and destroyed by little things all around us.

And very few people seem to be willing to talk about it. Though I've had a vision and motivation every day as long back as I can remember, with plenty of bad hours and moments and failure and all that goes with it, I don't presume for the future. I believe that if I'm not careful and find the right balance and the right recipe from the Word of God, that I could go into depression, even though I've never known it.

I had morning depressions back in the 70s. I learned how to fight that through jogging and through cups of tea and through a little more relaxation, a little more balance in my life. One of the things that helps me keep going is the right balance of the things I find very hard with the things that I love.

I don't know if you practice that. But if you're going through things that are very hard, and life is full of those things, and as you get older, the equation seems to get more weighed on that side. It's not so little as new.

If some of you are here at this retreat, for example, and you really look forward to this on the human level, spiritually I hope all of you look forward to it, but if you actually look forward to this on the human level, I mean, that's wonderful. Probably you're a new recruit. Probably you may be in a position where you don't get so much fellowship with people, and so you really appreciate coming and having fellowship.

That's good. Some of us, you know, we're fellowshiped out. We're just people, people, people, seven days a week.

We have friends everywhere. We can't even sit on a train without people wanting to talk to us, and praise God, when they end up giving a hundred pounds, that's better than when they ask you for a loan. But I think we have to acknowledge that as we get on down life's road, and our hearts get broken because some of these great friendships break, or they go into limbo because the person's got away from the Lord, the friendship can still be there, things do change.

So if there are people who, humanly speaking, are really looking forward to these couple of days, that's just wonderful. You should rejoice in that, and I hope you're blessed right out of your socks. But other people are here because we just believe this is God's will.

We need this kind of thing on our team. We need time together. We need to seek the face of God.

We need to listen to one another. The leader needs an opportunity to share something of the vision and the burden and the direction. You need the opportunity to ask questions.

So it's just great that we have this time. I noticed one other team, they have a retreat and consume their entire weekend. I think many OMers very much treasure their weekends as a time of some degree of

freedom.

I wonder how it would be if we organized our retreat on the weekend, and then you could work all week and not lose those work days. Some are happy to lose the work days. Some are not happy to lose the work days.

It's all quite complicated on our team. Vision is so important. I guess one of the reasons I've never had a day when I didn't have a degree of vision is because I tend to see things as being rather simple.

That the whole world out there needs the gospel, and we've got the gospel, so the job is simple. Give them the gospel. Of course, you'd be accused of oversimplification.

But it was quite simple when I was converted. I belonged to a high school where most of the people were lost, and so I had a vision to reach them with the gospel. So we gave out Gospels of John.

We started prayer meetings. No one had taught me much how to do these things. I guess I just picked them up from various influences.

Don't claim it was all original. I think of Billy Graham's influence on me from the earliest period. Is it not amazing that Time Magazine has featured Billy Graham this week in a way I have seldom seen any world leader feature? In the USA edition, it's front page and three or four other pages.

In the international edition, it's the bad blood in Germany on the front page, but the inside has a four-page feature on Billy Graham. There's almost nothing negative, including a full-page picture of him at his present age. It's called A Christian in Winter.

I will be circulating one of the editions, the American edition. Maybe the international one as well. I have both.

I wanted to send a fax to Time Magazine. I've been studying and reading Time Magazine since I was 13 years of age, nonstop, hardly missed a week. You do have some habits.

I had to study it at 13. Maybe I was 14, I think, in high school. It was a high school course called Contemporary something, things that were going on.

Vision. Vision equals motivation. Motivation will help us in the action.

And the action, I've tied together two words in my notes, faith and love. I'm in the midst of one of the toughest decisions I have made in a long time, and I'm getting scared. I may share about it tomorrow, but I'm on the edge of accepting the chairmanship of one of the tracks of the 82,000 movement.

I spent time a Saturday morning with the leader of that track, who has been a friend for a number of years, Perry Rickards of YWAM, who has the main mantle of YWAM's thrust to the unreached people, Target 2000, and has the main mantle of this track with AD 2000 and beyond. And as I was almost about to commit myself, I told him I would not do it. David Hicks is on to me quite a lot about this, and Louise Bush and a few others.

I started reading through the documentation and discovered this track is believing or aiming or working toward releasing one million new missionaries. At that point, in studying the documentation, I had a deep... whatever, it was sort of a pain that I was going too fast, that there's no way I could become the chairman.

This was a mock-up piece of communication that was about to go out to thousands of people all over the world.

My name was on the bottom as chairman, and on the top it was one million new workers. This came about the same time on the train as rereading your latest thing on the forward planning, the blue page, isn't it? Anyway, I read that whole thing through as well, which is an interesting, challenging document to say the least. Well, this morning I got on the phone with the number two man at YWAM about this and expressed that I really felt I couldn't go forward.

And then they called me, Perry is in the States right now on the Good Samaritan, that's their smaller ship, that's where I first met him, and he called me. And to my own amazement, they are ready to completely compromise and reduce this goal. It's quite interesting to hear how they came about this particular number.

We're now starting to talk about the possibility, because that goal is really, to accomplish that in the next seven years is more than faith. To me it's completely bizarre. I couldn't possibly even believe it's God's will that he wants another million missionaries.

I don't think the world's evangelism is linked with the number of missionaries. More is better. The total number of missionaries in the world at the most right now, if we add all the kind of national movements like within India, Korea, if we add all kinds of things, we might push the present number up to 200,000 max.

We're going to do some research before we announce that or use that. There's so many different figures going around. There's some excellent ones in Operation World, which I want to look at again.

But I suggested a compromise, and that I might be willing to consider the possibility, if the others agree, and I don't even understand yet how they make decisions in this movement, but the thought of possibly doubling the number of laborers in the world. Even that would be the most fantastic, incredible leap forward of missions in this century, or the last two centuries. If the number is 200,000, think of pushing it to 400,000.

It's interesting. One of the reasons they've got these high numbers is they're looking at the numbers that Korea... Korea is saying, we're going to mobilize 100,000 alone. Korea, 100,000 missionaries.

Some of you, I know this may not make much sense, and maybe you think, well, 100,000 missionaries, great. I tell you, every 1,000 new missionaries we get is a blood, sweat, and tears. Every 1,000, because we're living in the day when they're retreating.

They're going back because they don't have the finance. I'm going to be checking into this Korean statistic. I think it's tied in with the thought the border is going to open in Korea, and these people are going to flood into North Korea, and maybe they consider that cross-cultural.

I don't want to get into that now. Let your creative juices flow a little bit, and tomorrow I'm going to share more and ask for feedback and ask you to help me make this decision, which is not finalized yet, and I certainly will not be able to do it if it's a huge time-consuming thing. The chairman is not supposed to have to give a lot of time, though the one major time of the year is December, and I will have to fly to Colorado Springs for a few days.

I must confess that at this stage in my life, I need increased vision. I need younger men like this Perry Rickards, who's just so visionary. I need these kind of people, and I need AD2000, a movement of this type, to help me maintain my own vision, because surely there's no way that my vision could be limited to Operation Mobilization.

Operation Mobilization is less appealing to me than perhaps it has ever been, in the sense that the job is so huge and OM is so small. No matter what we do, it is so small that we've got to get beyond thinking what OM is going to do, and we've got to somehow see the whole body of Christ realizing our vital place, and as I've said in many public meetings, to be a tiny part, as we are in OM, of all that God is doing is absolutely thrilling. And one of the great blessings to me when I went to Lausanne, way back when it was in Lausanne, to just realize what a little tiny thing OM was, in the midst of all God's great work, and yet not find that demotivating.

You know, it is possible in Christian work to get in an ego trip, and OM, from almost its birth, has been opposed to allowing Christian work to become an ego trip, and building an empire, and getting self-centered, even though Jesus may be on our lips, self is on the throne, and we're in it to somehow get our own emotional needs met, or our dreams and plans met. Not that God has never used a person who has had somewhat of an ego trip, and who are we to judge other people? I don't want to get into that, but I have to stand very sharply on the self-life of George Verwer. Vision equals motivation equals action.

That action, with faith and love, I believe, brings results. I believe it brings results every time. Those results, for example, as in Turkey, may not be big, but they're there.

The results as in Afghanistan may not be huge, but they're there. And we can name country after country where God gave us a vision, He motivated us, we took the action, prayer, recruiting, sending, with faith and love, and we've seen the results. And I feel sometimes in OM we have become a bit introspective, and we don't know how to properly rejoice in the results that God has given.

And that can be true even on our own team. And sometimes we go to our own local church on Sunday, or we go to some other organizational meeting, or we see some kind of video in which the people are much more gifted at presenting their results. And, of course, we just get stirred by what God is doing over there.

And, of course, we should be. The motto, the challenge, the goal of the 82,000 movement, which we in OM are somewhat aligning ourselves to, we've even been persuaded to have our area leaders meeting in Korea just before the big 82,000 mega event, mid-decade event, 1995 in May. I believe it's May, isn't it? We got persuaded to, before we hardly knew what was going on, some of us, to have our area leaders meeting there, which means we all now are committed to stay through the whole 82,000 Congress, which is, I think, 10-day working Congress.

And so I think it is good for people in Operation Mobilization, especially on this team, which is going to be very much tied into this, to know what this is all about. That's why we brought thousands of these across and have been distributing them all over Europe. And we certainly hope that you have read it, because we are part of this thrust.

It's not something you really have to join. It's something you sort of align yourself with, you sort of buy into, you slowly take ownership. Both David Hicks and Mike Stracciura are both in official committees or boards.

They have many different names. I'm convinced the whole thing is going to continue to be messy from A to Z. It's going to be messy from A to Z. There's no way something like this, so large, with such a tiny staff, networking with so many different groups, is going to be just sort of nice and tidy. You can stand up in two minutes with an overhead projector and say, this is AD2000, this is what God's done this week.

It's just way beyond that. It's way beyond that. The AD2000 movement, in some ways, is as big as the whole body of Christ, because the burden of the movement is the gospel for every person and the church for every people.

It's harder to get bigger than that, though there are people with a strong emphasis on building the kingdom who would say, well, look, this is not enough. I told Louise Bush on the phone that if AD2000 is going to just buy in in a huge way to some of the extreme teaching about the kingdom, so that we're going to add to these goals and aims, building houses, opening hospitals, AIDS clinics, as wonderful as those things are, fighting for justice in every nation in the world, street children cleanup programs, and that makes me nervous. I'm not sure I want to get involved.

Not that we're against those things, but the focus of AD2000, which I believe can incorporate all of that ultimately, is to reach the world with the gospel and to see the church planted in every people's group in the world, which, of course, has been on our hearts in OM for 35 or some years. How does this affect us as a team? I just want to throw out some hot words, some new, some old. I guess none of them are new to some of you who are so up on things.

But just some hot words that help me express things in a little different way than I have in the past, since I have spoken on this subject before, and I'm sure some of you are a little bored. I'm George Zora speaking on a vision aims, you know, of ICT. But these are some new ways of expressing things.

The first word I have is facilitating. That's a big word these days in missions. Facilitators.

Have you heard that word? We want to facilitate. To me it incorporates helping, it incorporates serving. I like it.

I want to be completely open to anything new that God brings through any believer, whoever he or she may be from anywhere in the world. I'm not interested in throwing up barriers because I'm now 55 or because I know a better way to do it or I know this doesn't work. I want to be completely open to new ways of saying things and of doing things.

I also, however, when I'm speaking say to a new church group, I want to be very careful about language, more so than I would speaking to my own team. And I hope you understand you just can't go into the ordinary church and just start talking about contextualization, bonding, facilitating, some of these other things without a lot of definition. Some of them are still in John 3.16 or Acts 1.8. And I feel that God has raised up ICT, both Carlisle and London, as a group of people that are committed to facilitating.

Facilitating people, facilitating churches, facilitating our own workers, facilitating people from other organizations. This means helping people financially, it means helping people with literature, it means helping people with information, it means helping people in just so many different ways. I remember Peter speaking once years ago, to whom much is given, much will be required.

Maybe it was on tape, I'm listening to a number of Peter Maiden tapes. And it's so true. And let us acknowledge God has given OM so much and God has given ICT much more than the average OM team.

The speakers we have, the literature we have, the exposure we have, let us not take this for granted. We have teams that are so sensing such isolation. I just had a memo from our brothers and sisters laboring in Japan.

How much contact do you think the grants have in Japan with the rest of Operation Mobilization? How many visiting devotional speakers? They feel very much isolated and they're really struggling just to keep going there in Japan. I just had a letter from my nephew in that little village just over in Iraq. No electricity, guards guarding their houses because I understand there's a thousand dollar bounty on the head of all Americans over there on the part of Saddam Hussein.

You can be sure they feel a little bit isolated. Of course, they're very new, they're very young. They seem to be going okay.

But we have so much. Just go down in our book room and look around what we have there. Just look on our shelves.

You ever look at Philip Morris' India Library? It must be one of the better resource centers for literature about India and Britain apart from official libraries, the Indian Embassy and wherever else. I'm not sure they have all those kind of Christian books. To whom much is given, much is expected.

And so we have a call, we have a mandate to facilitate, to share, to help others. It often involves linking people up. I hardly take a meeting now where I don't have to link somebody with somebody else.

Somebody's traveling here. Can they meet somebody there who's in the Lord's work? Maybe Albania, maybe Mongolia. But there's a lot of that that we are involved in and we want to do it heartily as unto the Lord.

I think of the day so many years ago when the Verwoerd Davie Partnership ran STL and I passed the old out-of-print edition of this book over to Jerry Davie and said, you know, should we consider reprinting this? It's referred to in the opening section of the book. Can we even imagine what God has done through that one book? Now in America alone, 330,000 copies. Ralph Winter alone, 100,000 copies.

But it would be my burden that this particular edition would go over a million. If AD 2000, if they're plugged into what the Spirit of God is wanting to do and if this networking that is being dreamed of and planned and the mobilization of so many new missionaries, then I don't think a million copies of that book is too many. And may God grant it.

And we certainly are part, we are part of the team to help that happen. And to me it's exciting. So maybe you could buy into that word, facilitator, facilitating.

You can add to it, you can subtract a little bit if you want. The other word I have is networking. Of course, it's amazing, people using these words now, some cases by very conservative people accused of being New Age.

Let us not allow the cults to rob us of words that are in the English language that we want to use. When we talk about networking, we're not talking about what the New Age people are talking about. By the way, something that's very interesting, a sideline as I think of New Age, is that the mainstream of the whole Herbert W. Armstrong movement is wanting to shift into Orthodox Christianity and accept the Trinity.

It's unbelievable. I've received their magazine for 30 some years. I've read the biography of Herbert W. Armstrong.

If you follow the magazine lately, it is absolutely powerful. A clear presentation of the gospel and how they're going to shift an entire cult into mainstream Orthodoxy is amazing. Huge chunks of it are pulling out.

But it looks like the heart of the Armstrong cult is coming into Orthodox Christianity. I ever cease to be amazed at some of the things that happen. It hasn't happened fully yet, so maybe I better be patient.

Networking. Again, this is the bottom line in the whole A.D. 2000 movement. It's not a matter of joining A.D. 2000.

It's networking. Dawn is already out there. And if you don't know what dawn is, you need to do a little homework because dawn is one of the hottest things going in world missions, especially in certain countries like the Philippines.

It is also taken off to some degree even here in Britain. In some countries like Canada, they aren't sort of officially dawn, but they've caught sort of their vision from dawn. And they've launched, I think it's called Vision 2000 in Canada.

And it's just amazing to see how many denominations are tied into the dawn program there in Canada. To me, any movement that can make inroads with the big denominations, that's where a lot of the muscle is in the Church of Jesus Christ. It is in these large denominations.

You go to Brazil. There are two major Assembly of God denominations in Brazil, probably more. I was just with the head of A.O.G. for Latin America.

We were ministering at a conference together. Of course, each group in Latin America is autonomous. A.O.G. in the United States has almost no say-so.

And to think and look at the growth of the Assembly of God, not only in Brazil, but a number of other countries, is major. To think of evangelizing the world without somehow including in the network movements like the Assembly of God, to me, is ridiculous. And this is why what we did 30 years ago, which was a bit unusual, of marrying together the so-called charismatic and non-charismatic movement, that's the only way to go now.

And if you want to understand the difference between A.D. 2000 and Lausanne, there are many differences, but one of them is A.D. 2000 is another further step. Lausanne was already partway there. But A.D. 2000 is another further step to esteem and bring together both the charismatic and the so-called non-charismatic, often called evangelical, side of the body.

And if I get more involved in A.D. 2000, one of my burdens would be to try to win to this movement, networking with this movement, people who are perhaps a little bit too conservative to get involved without a little help, perhaps from someone like myself or others in a similar camp. I'm excited. When I call up Joe Stoll, as I did last week, the president of Moody Bible Institute, to find out that Louis Bush was just the speaker at the missions conference that Moody just had.

I'm excited about that. I won't go into detail. Networking is a key word.

Sharing information, building unity, inter-team and inter-field networking. This is internal. In O.M., we're constantly, constantly having a bit of tension between the internal and the external.

What does that mean? Internal, all those things within O.M. External, all the things outside of O.M. Because of Peter Maiden's willingness to take on the job that he has, I've been able to shift my use of time. I always was maybe 30% external in the past and 70% internal. Certainly now, it's at least 50-50.

50% of my time, effort, thrust is external. 50% is internal with some percentage on either side for flexibility because I've never actually measured it that closely. It will be a tension on our team.

I don't think there's a way forward without some degree of tension. How much time and effort do we put into internal things? As we've been doing this forward planning and this task force, it seems that a very large amount of it all is internalized. You've said that more or less in your memo, looking at our own problems.

With the goal, the hope, if we can get some of our own problems a little bit more sorted out, then we'll be able to reach out externally outside of O.M. When it comes to networking, it sometimes is a hard decision, but there's no way in the future, there never has been, but there's no way in the future any sane mission organization can operate in a vacuum. We've got to be involved with the others. We've got to consider collaboration.

This is the big move even in the secular world. The so-called multinational company, don't want to get into that, but it just is interesting when you buy something now, how the parts and the components can come from so many different countries. We're seeing in Central Asia, we're seeing in a number of our new fields, teams sort of form on the field that consist of people from different missions.

This has actually been going on in Turkey for some years. Again, all these things have their problems, and sometimes it seems it's more difficult to get a group of different Christians to work together in some kind of a network team than it is non-Christians, because Christians carry with them their doctrinal baggage, and they carry with them their peculiarities, and it's not going to be easy, and we're going to have to know our limitations. We're going to, no matter how much networking, no matter how much vision, we're going to have to be able to say no.

You cannot say yes to everything. One of our great commitments on our team, both internally and externally, is to build unity, and if we go back to our earliest roots, we know that OM had almost an extreme emphasis on unity. I felt, and still do, that unless you emphasize unity in almost an extreme way, it doesn't get through.

People just sort of, they just presume, in fact, I remember a man really getting upset with me saying, well, you know, we're already all united in Jesus Christ. We're one body in Jesus Christ, so we don't need to go on and talk about unity. I sort of looked at him and wondered, you know, exactly what he had been drinking, because certainly the New Testament doesn't just presume that because we're all one in Christ that there's going to be unity.

Quite a few of the epistles seem to be written to attempt to sort out disunity and things that seem to be worse than disunity. Another key word that I'd like to throw into the arena for our thinking, the word bonding. I like this new word, bonding.

When it first came, I thought, wow, can't we just be friends? Do we have to bond? And then I sort of picked it up, and I realized that bonding for a person like me is almost better than the word friendship. Because, you see, I bond with somebody very quickly, thousands of miles away. I then leave that country.

You can't really say to him much of a friendship. You know, he is a friend. You know, you had a few hours with him, and you flew off back to London.

And to say, you know, he's a friend of mine. Well, that's all right, you can say that. But to say, you know, I met this brother and we bonded.

There was something there, something happened in which there was a uniting of mind, there was a uniting of vision. There was a sense of somehow some glue, some cement bringing us together. That will hold even if he doesn't see me for five years.

One of my close friends from years ago is Philip Lerman. I never forget meeting Philip at Cambridge University. He was very upset about something, very disgruntled.

Took me aside after the Cambridge meeting that I spoke at. I can't remember what he said, but I knew that God wanted me just to link with him. Among other things, around that time when Philip tried to preach in the open air in Cambridge, he was thrown in the river.

And this was a crushing experience for his temperament, where he was emotionally, this was a devastating experience when it was written up in the Cambridge college paper that he was thrown in the river. He then, after his time on OM, I don't have it all clear in my mind, he began to be subject to emotional and mental illness and had to be treated medically. He came out to see me once in Kathmandu.

He came to see me at a conference down in the Herne Bay court. And for a number of years we got together quite regularly. He was then doing advanced pure math research at Cambridge University, which didn't seem to me necessary to help him emotionally.

And I remember God just bringing him through. It took years. He then went back, got married at 33 years of age.

He took his father's business and has kept that business going. He told me yesterday his dream was to get a new Jaguar, which he's just got, only cost him 29,000 pounds. And then we discussed that.

But, you know, with where my dear brother was so many years ago and what I've seen him battle through, I could only praise God. I could only praise God. He has two lovely daughters, young and a son, who I guess is about 13, except the son went walking over the hills of Yorkshire yesterday.

There was a bonding way back 25 years ago, though we seldom see each other. Coming together this weekend was like a celebration. And now it may be in God's providence there will be a resurrection in that relationship, meaning that we will just somehow get some more time together and it may become more active, especially as he wants to line up a businessman's and professional's dinner.

He's an elder in his church. His church has worked, by the way, closely with OM teams. I think we might be able to get to see one another a little more.

He's excited about the possibility of Network 94 and being involved in other ways. So I like the word bonding, and I believe one of the most important ministries of our team, it is not just me, it is all of us, is

bonding with people. They may just come to Forest Hill or to Carlisle for a day, but through like-mindedness, through love, through the reality of Jesus, the reality of Jesus in our hearts, there is a bonding, there is a linking, that's the old word.

We'll maintain that by phone, we'll maintain it by letter, by literature, by sending books. These people that we send books to, a number of you are involved in that. There's no way I could ever do that on my own.

It means so much to them. When somebody receives a free book, as Philip and his wife did, Operation World Children and Adult Edition, it says something to them. It says to them, people are thinking about me.

It says to them, people care. It may be small, but I will tell you, in this world, a lot of the things we do have to be small things. Life is not mainly big things.

And I just believe that God has given our team, with all the resources we have, just with the people that we are friends with, can you imagine the possibilities of 82,000 ex-OMers or OM graduates? There's all kinds of papers going around about what we should call them. We don't, in ICT, ever expect to be in touch with all those people. But when we think of our link with the other OM fields, our link with the other OM teams, our ability to encourage them, to supply them with literature, they in turn are in touch with a very high number of all these people.

I'd love to get a count on it. How many ex-OMers had some contact with some OMER last year? What a fantastic statistic that would be. I know in the course of one year, I'm in touch with hundreds and hundreds myself.

So if the average person around OM is even doing one-tenth of what I'm privileged to do because of my situation, that's a lot of people. I think we're in touch with a lot of ex-OMers. And I can assure you that we have a desire to see OMers giving to OM because it's better to give than receive.

Our greatest burden for ex-OMers is just to see them going on for Jesus. That's the bottom line. And that's why we try to somehow chase after those a little bit who have drifted away and be an encouragement to them.

That's not so easy because sometimes we just hardly know what to say. And I think there's always a danger that we're unwilling to take risks with people who are away from Jesus. And instead of doing something, we end up doing nothing.

And I think that's a great mistake. Another word I've written down here, of course, is an old-fashioned word. Serving.

We've got the book, *Serving as Senders*. We've got the book by Swindoll, *Improving Your Swerve*. That's for our driver's course.

I've just got Swindoll's latest book. I brought it here with me. *Flying Close to the Flame*.

Boy, he comes up with good titles. You wouldn't think after all these years anybody could come up with another good title. With all the books we have.

Flying Close to the Flame. And it's interesting, the first part of the book, when I opened it this afternoon to read, Swindoll was sharing how again and again he turned down the presidency of Dallas Seminary and

now has accepted it. Charles Swindoll, living in California, will be commuting to Texas and be the new president of Dallas Theological Seminary.

Vera has some information we don't have. Is he moving to Texas? Oh, I saw you shaking your head. Yeah.

Well, we all are. But anyway, that's written up in that book. It's an amazing book that you might want to get to read.

When I think of what God has done through that book, that now will be the book of the day in Urbana. It's an unknown book. And probably would be unknown to today, to a large degree, if Neil Parola, who was about to walk away from me after a night of prayer at Biola.

He was tired of waiting. There was a big queue of people talking to me after the night of prayer. He was about to walk away.

Somebody said to him, hang in there, he'll talk to you. And eventually I got to him and he showed me this book. And I tell you, it was like jump-starting a Concord because that book just grabbed me.

And we've been working on that. It's going into Spanish soon, German. Like I said, it's the book of the day at Urbana.

The hundreds and thousands of copies that we've distributed have been networked. And it's just amazing to see it being reviewed. This is part of our ministry.

This is to me part of the excitement of this team that we can meet somebody like Neil Parola. We can buy into what he has produced. That's his life, that book.

He's crying out there that he'll have the opportunity to take seminars and share this in person. He's not getting too many of them, but he is getting some. I just talked to him on the phone.

And he's very encouraged by some of the new opportunities. The message that we have as a movement in that book and in our hearts and on tape about being a sender is absolutely, absolutely vital. Tied in with the word serving, I wrote a couple of other words, the hospitality ministry, the pastoral care challenge that we are so committed to and want to be more committed to and much more happens in that area seen on the surface.

Then I've written down releasing resources. Again, quite a few of us now have this phenomenal open door to be involved in releasing resources. And it's a team effort.

And a lot of the work that's linked with releasing resources, I'm afraid, is nuts and bolts routine work. So much of the work my own wife is doing and Vera and May and a number of you in this room is very routine in some ways. There are the moments of excitement, there are some new challenges, but quite a bit of it is routine.

One of the ways I deal with routine is I have quite a bit of it as well is try to mingle it with prayer. Mingle it with prayer. Because those addresses of people and OMICT, we're getting more and more and more and more addresses just to keep up with our own movement.

All those countries and the changes and the job the personnel department has to produce that little miracle book every year. And that's just, of course, the beginning in terms of addresses that we attempt to maintain. Serving.

But releasing resources is another challenge that... I don't know, maybe there's something wrong with me. I'm just so excited about this. I just find it so exciting to pray with someone, meet with someone, and then find out the person's just given \$10,000 or just given 50 pounds.

A man rushed up to me after the meeting yesterday morning. He said, I haven't heard anything like this since Emerus Davis. Is my preaching like Emerus Davis? Is it Welshman? I don't think my preaching is like him.

Anyway, he hadn't heard anything like this since Emerus Davis. And he was all excited. He was an older man.

And he just reached into his pocket and gave me all that he had. It was about 50 pounds. New notes.

Looked like he just checked it out of a money machine. And I just find that so exciting. Don't you get excited when people rush up to you and give you 5 pounds or 50 pounds or 100 pounds? Am I the only one with that disease? And when we think of the money that has come into ICT in these past five years to keep all this going while maintaining a very generous philosophy toward others and pushing a quarter of a million from special projects into other people and other fields, some of that to ICT as well.

Then there's those old mainline visions and goals and aims, whatever way you want to describe it. Recruiting, which God has put us on the cutting edge of. Prayer mobilization, which we don't want to neglect.

In fact, we want to be involved even more. Building unity in the whole of OM and the whole body of Christ. I wrote these three sort of slogans here at the end of my paper.

Unity in the midst of diversity. I guess we've said it hundreds of times. Reality in the midst of the mess.

There is a great thrust right now to try to make OM a little less messy. I'm in favor. But I will tell you, when the Holy Spirit is moving in power, things will get messy.

If we suddenly, with all of our planning, all of our thinking, all of our strategy, if we suddenly see 200,000 souls saved in Turkey, do you think it's not going to be messy? We will see problems in the Middle East like we've never had before. And if you don't think so, just go to Indonesia. Just go to any nation where the harvest is coming in.

It's messier than when the harvest has not really started. So though we plan and we're very perfection, excellency oriented in these days and all of that kept in balance is good, I think when it comes to evangelizing the world, the whole world, 6,000 people's groups still waiting for their first church, it at times is going to be messy. There will be backsliders.

There will be division in some of these churches. There will be immorality. There will be things going wrong.

None of those things we want, but it happens. And I think I would have lost my faith a long time ago if I didn't believe that God was sovereign and He's working in the midst of a mess. How can you explain God

using our friend in the Netherlands, equivalent to Oral Roberts, who for 20 years has slept with prostitutes? Does that fit into your theology? It doesn't fit into the Bible school theology they taught me, I'll tell you back at Moody.

But if you look around the world and no one is excusing any kind of sin because now that man is out. He's on the shelf. He's finished.

But to say that God was not using him during those 20 years or that God never used Jimmy Baker on television or that God never used this one or that one as we encounter all these things I think would be a great mistake. It's a mystery. It doesn't fit in to some of the things I learned.

But I love this little expression. Reality is often in the midst of a mess and I'm preaching to myself. Don't get discouraged by the messes and believe me there are plenty of them.

And then lastly I've written here community in the midst of individuality. We as a team especially are a team of individuals and I think at times I've heard statements that make us sort of feel a little bit guilty about that. Individualism.

The triumph of individualism. That's bad, isn't it? Well, I think the triumph of individualism is bad. But I think we have to accept our individuality.

Every single one of us is different. My wife and I according to the Bible we're one flesh. And over these last years we've been discovering just how individual we are.

My wife is more of an individual than she was 10 years ago or 20 years ago. She's more free to go her own way and to express herself and to grab the bowl and run with it. On some things not even consulting that much with me about it.

And you know what I say? I say hallelujah because she is an individual. She's not just the wife of George Verwer or whatever other way she might be described. She's an individual.

Jerry's an individual. Each person here is an individual. Each person is important.

Don't be intimidated by your individuality because tied into your individuality is your creativity. We're not just creative as a team, a blob, a creative team. We're creative as individuals.

And you're going to create and do things in ways that I'm not going to particularly do it. So there will be creativity that comes from the group, but a lot of the creativity comes from creative individuals. You look at history.

You look at the church. And there's a strong emphasis these days on team leadership. I hope we can have some team leadership without losing the dynamics of individuals anointed of God with vision who want to set the pace for other people who may not be in tune in exactly the same way.

But I still feel a strong commitment to community and to fellowship. It's going to be a hard struggle to keep these things together. And I commend you as a team for what you have done in maintaining that community in the midst of all of our individuality.

Well, there's my few miscellaneous thoughts just to somehow set things moving at this annual retreat. And to be honest, it helps me to put these down on paper, to think through them, and to make a recommitment

to this vision and to this calling. I realize for everything I have here, there's something missing because the ministry of this team and the vision and what God has called us to is so much beyond what we can put down in an hour of sharing.

Let's pray. Lord, I just thank You for speaking in my own heart as I wrote these things down, as I've thought about these things again and again over these past months, and especially in this past weekend, dealing with this new challenge of AD2000, trying to see what Your will is and what Your mind is. Lord, we know that in these days of great vision, these days of great faith and great expectation, we're also surrounded by many, many, many prophets of doom, prophets of gloom, self-appointed judges and critics of almost every kind.

We don't believe the way ahead is going to be easy. We're just so unique. What You're doing is so unique.

How are we in OM going to work closer with You through the mission? How are we going to work under this umbrella of AD2000 and network with WEF and link on a local level with hundreds of organizations, thousands of churches? Lord, it's only going to be Your grace, but we realize that we have to obey and we have to take the steps of faith to deal with our own lack of vision, to deal with our own lack of motivation, to deal with our own wrong attitude or some subtle area of pride or something else that may be hindering us from really getting in the heart of what You're doing in the world today. Lord, we don't want to be found somehow left out of what You're doing today in a mighty way through Your church as we move toward the year 2000, as we move toward what some people call closure, as we move toward the fulfillment of at least a certain, a particular aspect, the pioneer mission aspect of the Great Commission. Lord, in ourselves, we're scared, we're trembling.

We can see the problems, people like me, way too much. But somehow by faith, we want to keep our hand on the plow again and go forward in obedience to You that the Gospel may go to every person and that the church may be established in every people, among every people. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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