

# Life or Lust

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon calls for a return to biblical truth and purity in the Christian life, urging believers to avoid distractions and focus on God's Word.*

**Duration:** 38:06

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:14-17, 2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Peter 2:11

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Fleeing Sin"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude for the lives of the people present and emphasizes the importance of the gospel being preached with power and authority. He urges the audience to have a spirit of expectation and to be not just hearers but doers of the word. The speaker then highlights the need to be reminded of the basic truths preached in the Keswick fellowship and warns against forgetting them. He specifically focuses on the importance of fleeing youthful lusts and pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace. The sermon also touches on the need to avoid foolish and unlearned questions and to stand against fleshly lusts. The speaker encourages the audience to be examples of believers and to give exhortation to one another.

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## Transcript

I have many problems and struggles in my life. One of them, perhaps you could pray for me about, is I tend to be too serious. I was converted in a Billy Graham meeting in 1955 from a non-Christian family.

And as I got into the Word of God, I became, perhaps, at least in the minds of people in my town, too serious. And they were, some people, very even frightened by me. And maybe as I just lead in prayer, you could just pray that as I share, I may find the right balance.

I just feel, even tonight, this meeting is just so important. And I have this feeling that so often, and I'm not saying this is necessarily true, don't put any shoes on in the next half an hour that don't fit. But in general, as I minister in churches throughout the length and breadth of Britain, and I've been doing that for 26 years, I sense so many things, so many times we're just playing games with God.

And the last thing we want is just this, to be a great Christian game, a great Christian festival. And each meeting is important. Sometimes we're looking forward to one special meeting, one day during the week.

But each meeting with God is important. Let's just pray. Lord, we thank you for speaking to our hearts through this word from Genesis, and through our brother.

We thank you for his life. Lord, I thank you for the life, the lives of the men standing and sitting on this platform, and for so many others here. And I just know that your gospel must not come in word, but in power and authority, that people will somehow know our manner of life, and that purity and reality will ring from our lives.

Oh God, just help us as we look into your holy word, as we see what your word says, on urgent, desperately important subjects. Bring us, Lord, during these days, a spirit of expectation, that we may not be just hearers of the word, but doers, that God, by your grace, we would never be the same again, because we have met with you in these mountains and in this tent. Grant us faith to receive what you have for us from your word, even though the vessel at this moment be weak and stammering and struggling.

Enable us to see beyond any human instrument to what you are saying to our hearts, to my heart, oh God. For we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

I notice that many of you are quite new to Keswick, and I'd like to just share this testimony on behalf of my wife, sitting out there somewhere, and myself, of our great indebtedness to this movement. I personally believe it still is a movement. It doesn't need to have a name on it.

When I was a student in Chicago, a couple of years after my conversion, the Lord had led me to leave secular university to enroll in a Bible college where William Culberson, a regular speaker at Keswick, was the president. And where at that time, Dr. Alan Redpath had become the pastor at the church, down the street. And at that time, men like George Duncan seemed to arrive to minister to the entire student body.

And I cannot even begin to tell you the impact. In fact, really, it's through my wife coming into a great experience of power and grace at a Keswick meeting that probably we ever eventually were put together and sent out as missionaries, first to Mexico, and then Spain, and then India. Though in fact, in the midst of all that, ended up making our new home the British Isles.

So we are so indebted to this movement, and I don't think we realize just how much God has used the writings that have gone out from this convention. All over the world. I think the first Keswick type of convention I ever spoke at was in Kerala, India.

Maybe a few years before that, something in the West Country. They called by that name. There are books of these messages that have come out all through the years.

In fact, I collect them and read them fervently. I have this one that I've been reading this week. A little old.

They used to be, before they put them in proper book form, there's 1933. Some of you were there, obviously. Here's 57, that's when I went to Mexico.

Must be 30 years ago, since we just had our 30th anniversary. But this one is a little earlier. Not too many of you were there then.

1884. And I was reading an article by a man named Webb Piplow. Or was it Piplow Webb? Webb Piplow.

And he gave this message. This one wasn't Keswick. Some of this is Keswick.

Some of it is from other places. After the Moody Mission. And after this unique character who gave a very powerful message, I know, in 1875.

I read that one as well just the other day. After this man gave this powerful word, Moody gave his remarks. D.L. Moody.

I'll tell you, literature like that just about burned your hand off. Now, you can't get that. It's a collector's item.

But you can get this convention's ministry by ordering it at the office. Or you can get last year's or the year before. There's all kinds of these books floating around in all different bookstalls.

And I have for years listened to the Keswick tapes. We've sent those out to our ships. And I'd like to insert a word of thanks for your praying for the ship ministry.

A man interviewed me here on BBC on Sunday morning. Sort of put me on the spot. Asked if I brought one of the ships to Derwent Water.

And I tried to get a quick answer. I often have quick answers. Too quick, my wife feels.

But I said, you know, God is a God. We believe God is a God of the impossible. And I wanted to say it, but I didn't quite get to it.

But not a God of the ridiculous. It would be difficult to bring a 6,000 ton or 2,000 ton liner into this part of the country. But I do thank you for praying.

I was so encouraged by Philip Hacking's clever book push. That just opened the way as I feel a little nervous in pushing books. As I'm sure I'm just overwhelmed by the problem.

And I thought of so many books I'd like to push. George Duncan and Alan Redpath and many men on the platform have written books. But I thought I would just push a couple of books by a man not well known.

A Methodist minister who's written a book called Healing for Damaged Emotions. And even a better book following up on it, Putting Away Childish Things. I really believe many of the struggles in our churches are linked with childishness among God's people.

And it's often because of failure to deal with emotional hang-ups in their own lives. And we're never too old to deal with emotional and psychological hang-ups. And there is such a thing as biblical psychology.

The Sermon on the Mount is filled with it. So I commend these two books just recently done in their British edition. They should be widely available as I send in my little warning slip.

Keswick, everything is done decently and in order. I have to tell them months in advance what books you're going to push. I think they were on my list.

And lastly, this book, Spiritual Depression, Its Causes and Cure. You know, it was an amazing day when Dr. Lloyd-Jones came and preached aboard the ship Doulas on the River Thames. People said, he'll never go there.

That mongrel mixed multitude organization operation mobilization. But he came and he spoke on the need for spiritual balance. Sound doctrine as well as a work of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps this is one of the greatest Christian books ever put into writing. Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Cure. But none of these books compare with this book.

These are just sermons in print. Just like now, you're going to have a message. And someone, I think, is going to volunteer to type it out.

And by the way, whoever volunteers to type these messages, I would just be thrilled to give each one of you about five or ten free books to encourage you in that typing ministry. I'd like you to turn with me now to my text for this evening, to 2 Timothy. I have two versions here.

The one I memorized from, which is the authorized. I sort of got stuck in there as a baby Christian. And the one that I like to read and sometimes preach from, which is the New International.

We're going to read our text from the New International. 2 Timothy chapter 2. We love to read the whole chapter. It's dynamite.

But we're just going to start at verse 14. Even that's much more than I can share on. But I want us to see these few thoughts in context.

Keep reminding them. 2 Timothy 2.14. Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words.

It is of no value and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourselves to God as one approved, a workman, who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Himenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm. Sealed with this inscription, the Lord knows those who are His. Hallelujah.

That's my note. The Lord knows those who are His. And everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.

In a large house there are articles, not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some are for noble purpose and some are for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy and useful to the master, and prepared to do any good work.

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Among those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel.

Instead, He must be kind to everyone. Talk about a big challenge. Able to teach, not resentful.

Those who oppose Him, He must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do His will. I can understand how Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to get stuck for weeks on one verse. We have here just a whole series of mountaintops of great truth and great

exhortation.

I believe there are many ways to present the Word of God. George Whitefield used to emphasize a lot the need for exhortation. Some of you may not be great Bible expositors.

You may not be great teachers. But the Lord may, to enable you from time to time among His people to give exhortation. I thank God for individuals that have given me exhortation.

One brother, Dale Roton, and I have been together now for over 30 years. We were two of the three who went to Mexico when O.M. was being born. A fearless character.

When I would go astray in some area, even a few sentences, he would take me aside. He was very, very careful the way he did it. He would say, Brother George, the Lord is just using you.

So many were stirred in the message. Wow! But Brother, if you could be a little more truthful on this point, how much more the Lord could use you. And of course, I would have to repent and do some work to improve on my communication.

There is so much in this great chapter. I have to just purposely focus in on just a few things. Or I won't get the main burden to you that's on my heart.

I think it would be good, however, if we could take just a few moments to look at a few outstanding truths in these verses before I just get to the one that perhaps is on my heart the most. Even as we open at verse 14, keep reminding them of these things. Anyone criticize you for coming to Keswick two years in a row? I wish there were a few thousands more who would come up here a few years in a row.

Because I believe we need to be reminded of what this fellowship, this movement, whatever you want to call it, stands for and preaches. Because we are forgetting a lot of the very basic truths at times that have been proclaimed in this place for a hundred and some, I think, thirteen years. And that's mentioned in this passage.

It goes on to say, warn them before God against quarreling about words. It is of no value and only ruins those who listen. One of the most beautiful things about these gatherings is that we're here to major, generally speaking, on major issues.

I've been through sermons over all these years, tapes, and generally speaking, we major on the major issues. We don't get quarreling over secondary issues. That's why there are people here who are happy to be here of many denominations, of many backgrounds, even many nationalities.

And we need more of that in the church today because the church is dividing and the church is hurting and fighting because of too much emphasis on secondary issues and sometimes extremist issues. It's of great concern to me the quarreling, the in-house fighting that goes on among the Lord's people. We don't have to say peace, peace when there is no peace.

There's tremendous confusion reigning and ruling in many churches today. I've had hundreds of people literally write to me concerning the hurt and the difficulties in their church, in their fellowship, whether it's an old fellowship or a new fellowship. Satan is no respecter of persons.

He in one sense has got everybody's number. There's a new book just published in America called Letter to Devastated Christians because so many tens of thousands came into groups and fellowships and they

thought they had all the answers and super-spirituality and extremism came in and then there was the breakdown and the hurts and other problems and today we have and it's true in Britain as well thousands of devastated Christians so now we have a new book Letters to Devastated Christians and I'll tell you some of them as it refers to in this passage have had their faith ruined. Humanly speaking they're nowhere spiritual.

Only God knows their right position with Him. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. That's a verse I'm sure many of us have memorized.

I remember being given that one way back in Bible college but it is a beautiful verse. We live in a day when people are misusing the Bible. They're taking one verse here and one verse there and they're leading people astray with texts out of context.

Each biblical truth has to be brought into balance by other biblical truths. I know because I'm a natural extremist. And as a young Christian I'd get some text and whoop! I remember when I got accept you forsake all that you have.

You can't be my disciple. Wham! You know. Luke 14.33 I memorized it.

I ate it. Breakfast, lunch and supper. I started preaching this.

And people started forsaking their possessions. They brought them to my room at Moody Bible Institute much to the dismay of my house mother who was a room inspector. Came into my room.

I was sleeping on the floor and my bed was loaded with all these things I was selling. And we had a lot of confusion because people brought things to sell but we had to you know, they were forsaking all we had to sell them. So we put little notices on the bulletin board about these things being for sale.

So other students came to buy. And after they bought and then hit my message they got convicted. They brought the things back again.

Sell them again. And there was much confusion. And this spread to Wheaton College.

I can't even tell you what happened when this little message hit Wheaton College. President of the freshman class resigned because he wasn't going to put any money into a fountain in one of Wheaton's gardens. And his letter is written up in that famous little controversial book True Discipleship.

Fortunately, I got further on into the Bible. And I found Philippians. God will supply all of your needs according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

But it was trouble at times using these verses. You know, use one verse to get things and another verse to sell things. It doesn't look right.

We need today the whole counsel of God. We need the whole of the Word of God. We live in a day when many people who have been Christians for years have never even read the Bible through once.

They've never read it through once. It only takes 60 hours. How many hours do we spend reading all these newspapers that they're charging more and more money to buy that we missionaries can't even afford them? If you travel on British Rail, you know, you always get them free.

You just wait the right time and try to beat these. These men on the trains now are collecting them. I'm always competing with these different railway people.

They come in the door, go there, gathering up the papers. You've got to go through and you can, of course, sell them on the platform later. I wonder how many here, let's be honest, because no one can remember if your hand went up.

We don't have an electronics, you know, computerized survey system measuring hands in the air. I'd like to get one. But how many of you, be honest, have never read the Bible through? We want to exclude anyone on the platform.

We don't want them to be embarrassed. But how many of you have never yet read the Bible through once? Raise your hand. Don't be ashamed.

That's about one third of the audience. We're busy people, aren't we? So many things to read plus television. All the magnificent things.

You just feel you can't miss on the tube. I would challenge you to make a commitment tonight to read the Word of God, the whole of the Bible through, perhaps in the next year. Maybe you should get a modern translation if you got bogged down in the authorized Leviticus.

But somehow, you need to read the Word of God. It goes on to say in verse 17, their teaching will spread like gangrene. An error does spread like gangrene.

Extremism spreads like gangrene. And how it hurts and it affects the work on the mission field. I've seen the publication of one book, one extremist book in the German language cause more problems in Czechoslovakia and Hungary and those countries than I could even take time to explain.

One extremist book. More heartache, more damage, more division than you could ever, ever know. And they had it back in the early church.

And that's why Paul wrote to Timothy and warned him. Reading on, they say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some. Not time to get into what I'd like to say on that.

The whole still ongoing tendency in many places toward liberalism, toward even denouncing the very basics of the faith. And I thank God that right through the years of higher criticism, right through the years when literally hundreds of thousands were turning away from biblical faith, that men stood on this platform and they stood for the full inspiration of the Bible as God's holy word. That is no small thing, brothers and sisters.

And let us not be afraid to let people know that we believe this is God's holy word. The Lord knows those who are His and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness. I missed a few lines, so let me read it again.

Verse 19, Nevertheless, God's foundation stands firm. Spend many hours on that despite all that happens, despite all the attacks against the church. Most commentators believe this refers to the church.

He stands firm. And that's such a great encouragement in the midst of the battle. Sealed with the inscription, The Lord knows those who are His and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.

And this is what we're, in some small way, trying to emphasize tonight. And today, the need to turn away from wickedness. This was the original vision.

This expresses it negatively, of course. Expressing it positively, it's a call on to holiness. However, I want us to just drop down to verse 22.

Because if I fail to say a few words about that verse, I would fail to bring the message or part of the message that's on my heart. In the authorized version, it says, Flee youthful lusts. Here it says, Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

What a very powerful verse. And it's a verse I would challenge you to memorize. Let me read it again in the authorized and allow, somehow, a laser beam of God's love spiritually to drive this into your heart.

Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord with a pure heart. And then it goes on again to challenge us to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, which perhaps you could study on your own. This has been such a challenge to me.

It reminds me of 1 Timothy 4.12, where we're told, Let no man despise your youth, but be thou an example of a believer. And it mentions some of those great characteristics as well. It reminds me also of Peter, where it speaks about the fact that we are sort of strangers in pilgrims and we should stand against fleshly lusts.

That's 1 Peter 2.11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as sojourners in pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Do you remember in the book of Acts, the apostle Paul? There were 40 men that said they would not eat until Paul was dead. I've often spoken on that text to ministers all over the world.

Because I have believed, and I've taught this for years, that there is a conspiracy. There is a conspiracy against men and women of God. A man of God said many years ago that impurity is an epidemic stage in the American church.

I can assure you that this is true in the British church as well. And not many want to talk about it. There is more under the carpet than we ever want to know.

And I'm not about to take time to bring it out. But I know that Satan, as a roaring lion, seeketh whom he may devour. And if God's Word tells me that I am to flee youthful lusts or flee the evil desires of youth, then that's what I'm going to do with all my heart.

And I had the privilege as a young Christian to hear men like Redpath speak on this subject. To hear Billy Graham speak on this subject. And I took it seriously.

I had tremendous struggles in this area. And when I was a baby Christian, I almost turned away my first year at university from the Christian faith. I was bombarded by unbelievers.

Later in the University of Mexico, I studied under communists and agnostics. My faith at times seemed to be coming apart. And then when I had failures, mainly with my eyes, mainly in my mind, but it was enough to intimidate me to feel I was no good.

God can never use a character like me. My big mouth, my big eyes, my hostility and ten other problems I was wrestling with. But somehow I learned about grace.

Somehow I learned that God forgives. Somehow I learned that Jesus loves sinners. And after we are believers and are Christians, we are still sinners.

We still have to grow. We will sometimes fail. And we need to realize that often failure is the backdoor to success.

Erwin Lutzer, the present pastor at Moody Church, has a book by that title. I haven't even read it. Just the title brought me to my knees in praise that somehow God can turn situations around.

Flee youthful lusts. I don't believe this just refers to moral impurity in terms of sexual sin. I believe it refers to materialism, the terrific materialistic instinct so prevalent not only when we are young but often right through our life.

I believe it can refer to impatience. That was my great problem as a young person and still is. Any of you ever have any struggles with impatience? Perhaps you don't.

I don't want to project my problems on you. You don't have any problem with impatience? Any of these other difficulties? I mean, I admire you. That's wonderful.

You come up after and see me. I'd like you to sign here in my Bible. Little section.

It says hypocrite. Sign below. The Bible says, the flesh lusteth against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh.

The two are contrary. We're all different. We all have different struggles.

But I believe, and one of the reasons I share this with you is I know that many of you are in places of responsibility. That we must go back to our fellowships and our churches and we must in love preach and teach what the Word of God says about sex. There are over 500 verses about sex, about lust, about impurity.

There are awesome pictures of David falling in sin. I don't read that much. I prefer Joseph who had just as wild a temptation, as wild as anybody could ever get.

And he stood firm because he was a runner for Jesus. And he ran out of the room even though she grabbed his coat and later blamed him and he ended up in prison. And what a story of God's providence and God's overruling.

And perhaps there's someone here who when you were tested or tempted did not flee. And perhaps you got in trouble and you feel resentment or you feel pity or self-pity, the most subtle form of self-love. Hallelujah, there's help.

There's grace for you. As there was with David. Read Psalm 51 and let it burn into your heart.

Roy Heshin in his brilliant book *Forgotten Factors Concerning Sexual Sin* has shown, as many books have shown, there's grace for sinners. Though your sin be a scarlet, it shall be made as wool. Crimson as white as snow.

A verse I constantly get mixed up. But I know we know what it means. Flee youthful lust.

Study what the Word of God says on this subject. Those chapters in Proverbs. That great verse in Hebrews 13, 4 which gives such a balanced and biblical view of marriage and of sex.

And let's be those who are known for teaching and exhorting the whole counsel of God. Let us pray. Our God and Father, we thank You for Your Word, which is so sharp and cutting.

We thank You for Paul writing to Timothy, this young disciple, and telling him to flee youthful lust. And Lord, we want to be marathon runners in this great contest of running away from sin. We know there are times when we have to head straight into difficult situations.

And we're not running away from reality or from righteousness. But we, by Your grace, are going to run away from sin and sinful situations and compromise. And we are going to cling to that which is good and hate that which is evil.

Lord, we pray together for a revolution in our lives, in our churches. That will bring a river of purity back into Your body. That there will be repentance and restitution.

And that we may once again know greater purity and therefore greater reality among us and in Your church. Search our hearts, O Lord, even at this moment. That we may examine ourselves and then seek Your face in brokenness and repentance for cleansing and forgiveness.

To be the men and women You want us to be and to go where You want us to go. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're grateful to God for God for speaking to us tonight. May I just say, I was saying it all last week, we do like to take the last few minutes of a meeting seriously. Some of the office staff have got to get out early during this hymn.

But most of us don't have to. If you've got children, they'll be looked after. And I want to sing the hymn thoughtfully.

After the hymn, we remain standing for the benediction. And if there are those who would like to be counselled, there'll be music played quietly. Do stay where you are.

Come to the front. There'll be those we're glad to share with you and speak with you. You may just want to be quiet in the tent and think something through.

But remember God's word. And let's make this closing hymn. Charles Wesley's great hymn, Jesus, lover of my soul.

Our response. It's 104 in Keswick praise. It's 120 in Convention praise.

They're identical, apart from one line, one word in verse 3. Keswick praise talks about us being vile. That's true. Convention praise talks about us being false.

And that's true. And we make our confession in hope as we sing thoughtfully 104 Keswick praise, 120 Convention praise. We stand to sing.

Let me to my Lord abide While the river waters flow Onward, ever, till it's nigh I'll be your fighting guide Till the storm of life is nigh Save me, Lord, while I am nigh Oh, please keep my soul at last Out of every

wound that I'm nigh I find my health, and so am I We are weak, we are alone Sing the Lord, and come for me Oh, light of God, lead this way For my health, for me, I pray Oh, Lord, I need rest and rest In the shadow of thy grace Thou, O light of all I want Thou alone in me I find Raise up, O Lord, and take our place In the safe and meek of thine Trust and believe in thy name I am whole, and thy justice I am true, and here I am Come, my hope of freedom And your gift with me in time Raise, O God, the full mighty When the heav'ns reach the ground Raise, and lead me to thee Thou, O light of all I want Raise, and lead me to thee Raise, O hope within my heart Thine is the glory forever May the love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself May the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service May the joy of the Lord Jesus Fill your souls this night and forevermore Amen Good night and God bless you

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