

# Message 08

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon calls for a renewed commitment to Christ and emphasizes the vital role of prayer and personal evangelism in the church's mission.*

**Duration:** 1:00:03

**Scripture:** Revelation 2:2-5, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 2:15-16, Revelation 2:19-20, Revelation 3:15-17

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of simplicity in the Christian life. He acknowledges the challenge faced by pastors in trying to meet the needs of a diverse congregation, including intellectuals and those who may struggle with reading. He highlights the effectiveness of oral storytelling in spreading the message of the Scriptures. The preacher also discusses the significance of repentance and quickly dealing with sin in order to bounce back in the Christian journey. Additionally, he offers free books on leadership principles and missions to the audience, encouraging them to stay connected and share the resources with others.

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## Transcript

I did want to introduce two very special friends. Every day I've had different people drive up from different places. This morning I introduced the Dixons.

In fact, their name was the Doyles, so that was nice. That little woman, and they've gone now, that woman who is here has seen thousands, many multiplied thousands come to Christ through her ministry. You never know that when you just meet her, and we had fellowship after the meeting last night, but I have been following her and her husband.

She's American, he's British, and they're just back from Sri Lanka. They were with us in the prayer time, and today some other folks drove up all the way from Boston. These folks I met in Kuwait, they're actually originally from a place that we're all hopefully praying for, the Gaza.

Controversial place. We were talking about the Gaza over supper, and he went to college in Egypt, then he ended up in Kuwait, in God's providence. 25 or 30 years ago we met in Kuwait and have been linked ever since in God's work, and now they live in Boston.

So I'd like Sufjan, I'm not gonna make you come up here and embarrass you, but do stand up, Haifa and Sufjan. Stand up please. God bless you.

And committed Christians like Sufjan and Haifa, who are with the Arabic Church in Boston, they are crucial and key to reaching the Arab world, because they speak the language fluently. Even over supper, when they wanted to say a few things and me not to understand it, you know, they spoke in Arabic, then they had a phone call, that was in Arabic. That is one of the toughest languages for us Anglo-Saxons to ever learn, and I have friends who have learned it.

And I hope you'll remember to pray for people like Sufjan and Haifa. The folks who were here last night, the Doyles, they are going to be opening an evangelistic center for Muslims in Detroit. We shared about that after the meeting.

And I believe the international people in our country are one of the greatest missionary challenges we face. And students, every year, students are coming to Christ from all over the world, because of people inviting them into their homes. It's not just because we preach, but because we open our homes, we open our churches to these people from all over the world.

So that is so exciting. Let's just pray right now for some of the countries in the Arab world. Lord Jesus, we think of the Arab people stretched all across North Africa, all across the Middle East.

We think especially of the crisis in Israel and Palestine. And we pray for the whole situation in the Gaza Strip. And we ask Jesus that we could see peace.

We know it seems foolish to pray for peace, but we pray anyway. And somehow we thank you that people of all these different nationalities and backgrounds, some of them have come to know you. So we pray for Syria and Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine.

We pray. We've already prayed especially for Saudi Arabia and Egypt. And we pray for those who are working there, especially those who are from that part of the world and speak fluent Arabic.

Oh God, bless them and use them. And then over in Libya, as we spoke about that country the other night, and Tunisia and Algeria and Morocco. We pray for more workers.

We pray for the release of finance, for literature. We thank you for open doors through television now. And the way my brother Soufiane here with his friends are involved in a television ministry now into the Arab world.

We thank you for that open door. And Lord, we just look to you for greater breakthroughs in the Arab world. In Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. We in OM have about 700 people working among Muslims, and they need our prayers.

And one of the things you can do, because life is not mainly big things. For me, life is mainly little things. And you can do a little thing for us.

A man in Chicago produces this paper. It's not the most posh missionary paper you've ever seen, right? It's actually newsprint. It saves us 10 to 20 thousand dollars a year just using newsprint, because the printer prints them free.

But he prints a lot at once. So we always have them left over. And I think my people in our US office down in Atlanta, I think they're throwing some of these away.

Back issues. And I grabbed the back issues. And one of the back issues I had is actually the one where I'm standing behind with my wife, Peter Maiden, as he two summers ago became the director of OM.

And there's a picture of him. A lot better looking than me, though. Ha ha.

I've got more hair than him. So some of these, some of these back issues, they're really good. I have more in my in my cabin.

If you could take a handful of these. Most people in New Hampshire do not know about Operation Mobilization. It was birthed largely as a European movement, even though some Americans, we were in it from the beginning.

And so we would love you to help make OM known through this free paper and pick up some back issues. If all those copies go, I'll bring the ones over from my cabin. Again, just a reminder that there's always some new books going on on the table.

I don't think I mentioned Mentoring for Missions. This is just a serious book. Somebody asked me just a moment ago, do I have a book on leadership? Who was that? Right.

We got one. There it is. Handbook on Leadership Principles Exemplified by Jesus.

You please come up. I want to give you that free. What's your name? Didn't quite hear that, but it sounds good.

Tim. That's an easy one. That's a gift.

And I'd like to stay in touch with you the rest of your life or my life and send you more free books. Here's another one by a friend of mine. George Miley was on OM 30 years.

We have about 130,000 graduates that have been on OM. And this is one of them. And now the president of Antioch Network, which is a network among churches that are just gung ho about missions and sending teams from their church out into missions.

So George Miley's book is there free if you'll give it away to someone else. A donation if it's for yourself. There's my act series on CD.

I talked to Michelle on the phone, the woman who wrote this book, The Gift of Sam. If you know anyone anywhere that's considering abortion, get this book into their hand. It may save their child, their little baby's life.

A brilliant book. I had a wonderful telephone conversation with her today. And I got a lot of her books.

They're free if you'll give them away. Donation if it's for yourself. We have a lot left of the book that is the handbook for this series.

As we're talking about perseverance, and I'm sharing with you that 12 passages from God's Word that have helped me persevere these 50 years. And if you've looked at this book, you can pick this up free. There's a lot more material here.

There's a little bit overlap things I've said, but a lot of other material that I'm not going to be able to speak. So pick that up. And that's a gift.

Turn with me now to the book of Revelation. Two of the most powerful motivating passages in the whole of the Word of God. Again and again, God speaks to me through these passages.

God challenges me. And I find myself repenting, asking to be filled afresh with His Holy Spirit. We'll start in chapter two, Revelation chapter two.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, these are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, walks among the seven golden lampstands. Here's the key verse. I know your deeds, your hard work, your perseverance, I know, I know your deeds, your hard work, and your perseverance.

I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men and that you have tested those who claim to be apostles, but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardship for my name and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you.

You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first.

If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor. You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. Powerful words, powerful words.

And then going over to chapter 3. To the angel of the church in Sardis write, these are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God, the seven stars. I know your deeds. You have a reputation.

This is so strong. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Whoa.

Wake up. Strengthen what remains and is about to die. For I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard. Obey it and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will like them be dressed in white.

I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And then verse 14.

Gets even stronger. To the angel of the church in the Laodicea write, these are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. Of course, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

I know your deeds. You're neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other.

So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. You say I'm rich. I've acquired wealth.

I don't need a thing. But you have not realized that you are wretched and pitiful and poor and blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in fire so that you can become rich and white clothes to wear so that you can cover your shameful nakedness and salve to put on your eyes so that you can see.

This is such an encouragement. This next verse, if you feel that you're being hit a little by the Lord right now by his word, because it's a double edged sword, then take, take encouragement. Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline.

So be earnest and repent. Here I am. I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in. I will come in and eat with him and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me at my father's throne just as I overcame and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Surely God today is attempting to speak to his church here in America. In a few weeks I'll be in Japan where we have one of the largest church movements in the world.

One church of 700,000. 20% of all Koreans are conservative biblical Christians. Here in the United States, if someone's a Presbyterian, probably 75% chance he's a liberal, doesn't believe the Bible and who knows what other cockeyed ideas will be in his head.

But in Korea, if you're a Presbyterian, you're probably love Jesus, love his word. Almost every seminary in Korea, unlike our seminaries that now have become cemeteries, almost every seminary in Korea is faithful to the word of God. And they are now sending out more missionaries than almost any nation in the world.

But I also know that even when I'm in Korea, God is wanting to speak to the church. And I wonder sometimes here in America, are we listening? Do we ever read these verses, specific letters written to the churches? Do we ever take to heart this kind of strong teaching? We have this new emphasis in America called seeker sensitive. Now I'm not against everything that seeker sensitive people are saying.

It's a play on words, isn't it? We don't want to be insensitive to people. We're not just purposely offending non-Christians. We don't purposely want our churches to look like they were built back in the days of Noah Ark, so nobody wants to even go inside them.

We don't want to be the local weirdos. At the same time, I believe we need to be more sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is trying to say. We can do some market research, but at the end of the day, we have to have a prophetic message to our nation and to the people of our nation and to the church.

One of the reasons, and we've been talking about this, that we see so much prayerlessness in so many churches, and even a survey among pastors, and this must have included liberal pastors, showed that the average pastor was praying five minutes per day. One of the pastors of one of the biggest churches in America, years ago, acknowledged he did not pray at all. He didn't pray at all.

Praise God, the Holy Spirit got to him. Do you know how he learned how to pray? It was so hard for him. It was so against his culture, his background.

Though he was pastoring this huge church, he wrote out, I guess in his room, he wrote out his first prayers. And now, I believe, I was just with him, he's a man of prayer. That's serious.

I preach at a lot of seminaries, even the good seminaries, the seminaries that I love, that teach the Word of God. But as I've gone to the seminaries, I can name some of the most famous in the country, I've found very little emphasis on prayer. No wonder A.W. Tozer said, we are graduating a generation of mascots instead of a generation of prophets.

It was Tozer who also said, if any secular business needed so much raw material to get so little finished product as the Church of Jesus Christ, it would go bankrupt in six months. Some of you have picked up the books by A.W. Tozer and you're starting to read some of his material. Do you remember what he said about the danger of being too enthusiastic for Jesus? Have you ever read what Tozer said about that? Maybe in your church, maybe in your town, just people too enthusiastic for Jesus and they're loving people too much, they're witnessing too much, they're getting on people's nerves, giving out tracts on every corner.

Do you know what Tozer said? To think this was the biggest problem in town was like sending a squadron of policemen to the nearby cemetery to guard against a major demonstration by the residents at midnight. I don't think it's the biggest problem in town. What is God wanting to say to us from this passage? He's wanting to tell us that we do not have to lose our first love.

When we first come to Jesus, we want to talk about it and we share about it, whether we're a very quiet person or like me, a very noisy person. And don't confuse loudness with spirituality. Some of the most spiritual people I know, including the new director of OM, is a rather quiet kind of person.

Peter Maiden actually by nature is shy. I by nature am loud, extrovert, aggressive. I'm described in Tim LaHaye's book as the choleric temperament.

Peter Maiden, the present leader of OM, is phlegmatic temperament. Now, of course, if you read the rest of Tim LaHaye's book, when you come to Jesus and the Holy Spirit's living in you, then you become spirit-filled temperament. Perfect balance.

I'm still working on it. But it's interesting, these books on temperaments describe the choleric temperament as the most difficult. That's really encouraging.

In fact, some of my old friends, knowing my temperament and knowing the way I was before my conversion, after my conversion they just sort of waited around for me to backslide. They knew Verwer was not going to keep me. You know, he's always changing girlfriends.

I had about 32 different girlfriends by the time I was 17. So they figured Jesus was just taking this kind of place in my life. And, you know, it would last a few months.

I want to share with you in ruthless honesty that Jesus has been a reality every day since my conversion. There's no comparison, the romance we may have with the opposite sex, with the deep, deep love relationship, the agape relationship we have with the Lord Jesus. So this passage of Scripture is challenging us not to lose our first love.

And that first encouragement to the church in Ephesus said that they worked hard and that they had not lost their first love. Verse 4, Yet I hold this against you. I'm sorry, they had forsaken their first love.

I hold this against you that you've forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen. I think if we're honest, it is common for people to lose that first love.

However, I don't think you should confuse it with losing initial enthusiasm. I wish I had written out that great quote by that theologian named Hodges, urging people not to be intimidated when they lost some of the initial enthusiasm, some of the initial excitement that came after their conversion. Do not confuse that with the first love, because the first love is an act of the will.

And he went on to say that when we persevere in situations where we don't feel, we don't feel that love anymore, and we persevere, that is a demonstration that we are becoming more mature in Jesus Christ. I'll never forget those words from that theologian, because they really helped me. Because Satan is the accuser of the brother.

And I believe there may be somebody here tonight or somebody listening to this message, you are discouraged, listen, you are discouraged because you have an unrealistic view of spirituality. I had that unrealistic view. And when I was 22, I can assure you that true spirituality did not include golf.

It did not include a lot of things that I thought were a waste of time or a waste of money. I was very fanatic about redeeming the time. I was very extreme about using all the money for world evangelism.

I got this woman who was in love with me to give me all of her money. She'd be a millionaireess today if she had given it to Sam Walton in Walmart instead of George Verwer in OM. And I wouldn't spend any money on her during the engagement period.

That led to some really bizarre stuff. Sitting at Lake Michigan, she was getting hungry. If we were back at the Institute, the meals would have been provided like you do here.

But we were at Lake Michigan. So I figured, you know, we're going to skip a meal. I'm not going to spend any money.

The food is sitting back there. But I thought, well, maybe I shouldn't force this on my fiancée. And I'll never forget it.

I shot a wild prayer up. You know, Lord provide. Looks like my girlfriend needs some food.

And I'll never forget a group came right behind us and had a picnic. And they were all pretty quick. And they left and they threw their bag into the rubbish, you know, into the garbage thing.

What do you call that in the United States? My English all mixed up. And I just reached in, pulled out that bag, tore it open. And there one sandwich was unwrapped.

And I gave it to my fiancée for lunch. I remember later on when I wasn't really giving her any money and I was in total control of all finance. And God began to speak to me about being more balanced in my marriage.

And so I gave her a dollar and I told her she could even she could feel free to spend that however she wanted. She didn't need to check back with me. It was a long road.

It was a long road for me out of extremism to some degree of biblical balance. The amazing thing is during those extreme periods, I was so in love with Jesus. I was saturated with his grace.

I was still human and I made mistakes and I hurt people. So spirituality doesn't mean perfection. Spirituality doesn't mean total absence of your stupidity factor.

And we're all pilgrims. And God had to break into my mind from his word and from other people, men and women, and give me a more biblical understanding. Do you know one of the passages that helped me? Jesus catching up with his disciples, sitting with them and cooking a meal.

Wasn't it fish? Amazing. Jesus saying, come with me and rest a while. You know, a lot of people thought that I was going to have a nervous breakdown.

And so I guess maybe that's why I never did, because these people thought this guy's going to burn out. It's going to have a nervous breakdown. So they put me on their prayer list.

So I've never had, I've never had burnout. I've never had a nervous breakdown. But as I look back, I realized I caused a few and I feel a little bad about that.

And you can be sure I don't want to do that here tonight. So, you know, if you feel really super uptight after this meeting, you know, let's pray together and I'll apologize because we don't want you going back to your cabin and doing anything foolish. I know one Bible college after I preached there in my more hyper days, when I first got to England, you've all noticed how I'd mellowed out.

But in my more hyper days after I'd been to the Bible college, the headlady said every single aspirin everywhere in the college had disappeared. Apparently it was a women's college. And after I got through, they were all feeling uptight.

Some of them had headaches and they were popping aspirin to compensate for the George Verwer visit. You know, I wasn't very encouraged getting some of this feedback and I just thank God for his mercy. So let's not confuse first love with some super spiritual idea.

And if you can remember this one sentence from this message tonight, I would be encouraged. Here's the sentence to remember. No matter how filled you are with the Holy Spirit, no matter how much God is using you, you are incredibly human.

You're incredibly human. And your humanity is going to be there. It's going to be there when you pray.

You ever get a kick out of people when they pray? Again, I got this judgmental streak and I hear some people pray. I especially get a kick out of those that have a spiritual voice. Have you met any of those types? I've been in a lot of prayer meetings.

It's just a guy just has a down-to-earth, ordinary voice. There's nothing wrong with his voice. He can just pray with his regular voice.

But when he starts praying, you know, melodious and you feel like starting to fly away. I'm sure that person could be just as sincere as me. Certain preachers in certain circles, they believe the more filled you are with the Spirit, the more you gasp.

You gasp. And the Lord is going to... I can't even imitate it, but we've all heard it on the radio. There are gaspers.

And I remember when I first moved to Tennessee, I heard a guy on the radio. He was a Baptist. We got every kind of variety Baptist in Tennessee.

I mean, there's more different Tennessee Baptists than there are birds, probably in New Hampshire. By the way, at that polar bear park, they have that big picture of all the birds of New Hampshire. Isn't that wonderful? You got a lot of birds here.

I don't know what that has to do with this message. I believe there's some of you. God bless you.

You have probably never lost your first love. Be encouraged. You've pressed on.

You've shared your faith. You've been involved in prayer. You've repented when the Spirit of God has convicted you of something.

You've bounced back after you've failed. You know the reality of what we've been speaking about all week, personal revival, because revival is Jesus having his way in your life. But it's not necessarily in the absence of doubts and struggles and difficulties, even sin.

It's in the midst of those things. As daily you deny self, take up the cross and follow him. Of course, the message to the Laodicean Church is something that again and again has spoken to me.

Speaking about being hot or being cold. Turn there to verse 15. I know your deeds, that you're neither cold nor hot.

I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. Have you heard many people preach on this? Have you ever seen this text? Some churches I go to, they have texts all over the place.

You ever been in the text, you know, text? And there's usually one on the, you know, on the pulpit. Together with sometimes a reminder to please stick to your time. You know when George Whitfield used to preach out in the open air, I hope you've read something about this amazing man, he would get notes.

People would hand notes up to him as he was preaching. I believe it's God's will that his people are on fire. I believe it is God's will that we constantly forsake lukewarmness.

I don't believe you come to a place where you never struggle with this again. Lukewarmness is so subtle, it comes in so many forms. This may sound strange, but one of my favorite verses is that verse in the Old Testament that says the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

And that's one of the reasons even when God was using me as a young man that there were things in my heart that were deceptive that people had to talk to me about and that I had to deal with. Somehow by the grace of God, every day for 50 years, I've been on fire for Jesus. Not every hour.

I've had some miserable minutes. But I learned from these verses, repent just as quickly as you can. Remember that verse? Don't let the sun go down upon your anger.

That's another one of my problems. That's in my top ten. Struggle with anger.

I come from a family of angry people. My grandfather, my father had struggled with anger. Anger seems to be more of a male weakness than a female weakness.

But if you are a woman and you have an anger problem, believe me, you need to deal with it. Do you know how many women now across our country are finally acknowledging that they've been beaten up by their

own husbands? Do you want to know how many of them are churchgoers? You don't want to think about it. And I just thank God.

As a baby Christian, He put His finger on my anger. Not only would I get angry with other people, I used to get angry with myself. And before I was a Christian, when I lost my temper, I'd just break things.

And I'd let out a whole avalanche of curses and swear words. I used to swear so much at 13 years of age, I was going to produce a little dictionary of curses, dirty stories, and blasphemous to distribute among my school friends. But when Jesus saved me, He began to clean out my mouth.

And as I looked into the Word of God, especially Proverbs, and I tried to read the Proverbs every day, God began to transform my tone. By the way, I'd encourage you. I'd encourage you young people, get into the Proverbs.

I remember I was selling Christian books door to door before I went to Mexico a long time ago. My home area. And a lady bought a lot of books.

And she had discernment. She was an on-fire woman. So she invited me in.

And she looked me in the eye, and she said, young man, are you studying the book of Proverbs? I don't know what I said, but I'm sure I was not studying Proverbs as a baby Christian very much. And she looked me in the eye, and she said, a proverb a day will keep the devil away. And then she turned to the book of Proverbs, and she pointed out there are 31 Proverbs.

One for every day in the month. And ever since my encounter with that out-of-the-box Holy Ghost woman, I've been scared into the book of Proverbs. And I've been there almost every single day.

I must confess at times it gets a little boring. I read them over and over again. Many of them memorized.

Quite a lot of repetition in the Proverbs, which strong-minded, stubborn people like me need. And then I decided I'm going to just start to write my own Proverbs. They're not going to be in your Bible, so don't worry.

But number one George Berwer proverb that's gone out all over the world. I'll share it with you tonight. Where two or three of the Lord's people are gathered together, sooner or later there will be a mess.

Have any of you experienced that with God's chosen frozen? But the beautiful part, the flip side, the flip side is that our God knows how to work in the midst of a mess. Our God knows how to work in the midst of a mess. So being on fire for Jesus, being filled with the Spirit, doesn't mean you're a super saint.

It doesn't mean you always feel wonderful. It doesn't mean you pop out of bed in the morning like some kind of automatic toaster. And you're immediately dancing and praising God.

But it means that you repent whenever the Spirit of God deals with you about anything. And God is not going to just convict us about anger. God is going to convict us about attitudes.

Attitudes. Disposition. You know that word? Is that an old-fashioned word now? Sins of the disposition.

When I picked up books like Calvary Road, when the writings of A.W. Tozer came into my life, when I began to get saturated with God's Word, I realized God was concerned about my attitude. That was

revolutionary. Revolutionary.

In fact, Charles Swindoll, one of my favorite writers, I recommend his book *Grace Awakening*. Some of his other books, Swindoll says something like 90% of the Christian life is attitude. It's attitude.

And I just thank God. So many verses, so many verses that we read can help us with attitude. Tomorrow we'll be looking at 1 Corinthians 13, one of the most powerful passages of Scripture that help us to deal with attitude.

I was mentioning that verse, don't let the sun go down upon your anger. And decided when I read that a long time ago, that by God's grace, I wasn't going to let the sun go down on any sin in my life. I was going to keep short accounts with God.

Praise God, in the summer, you know, get a few more hours to get sorted out. But if you're living in Finland in the winter, believe me, you're almost in a perpetual state of revival because the sun goes down very, very early. Brothers and sisters, it's God's will.

We can be sure it's God's will. That every one of us who's here as a believer, we know the reality of being hot for God. Doesn't mean you'll be loud.

But your heart, your heart will be in tune with Jesus. What are some of the marks of lukewarmness? How can we know that lukewarmness is coming into our life? I believe it's quite simple. In fact, I believe a lot of things in the Christian faith are simple.

Is the Christian faith only for those that can read a hundred books? Is the Christian faith only for those who are literate? What about 50% of all the Indians who are illiterate? Churches are filled with illiterate people. I believe one of the reasons some pastors have lost their congregations is they're preaching above the head of the average person. I just heard that in another church.

They finally got the guy out and got somebody in that they could understand. That's not easy because there's pressure on the pastor to somehow meet the needs of people maybe in his congregation with a doctor's degree. Intellectuals, professors, and he's up there trying to teach them.

But that's not where the average person is. So it's a big challenge. It's a big challenge.

But I believe with all my heart that the Christian life is basically simple. And that people who don't even know how to read, by the way, many of them receive the scriptures orally. Have you ever heard of oral chronicling and storytelling? It's one of the hottest evangelistic movements in the world today.

The Southern Baptists especially are pioneering that. And it's a beautiful thing. And I believe with all my heart sometimes we need to keep it simple.

And so we quickly repent. We quickly deal with sin. And we bounce back when we fail.

And we press on. And we stand against discouragement. Again, I'd urge you if you can to listen to the cassette tape of the ministry I shared the other day from Ephesians 6 because that's so crucial in maintaining the spiritual glow.

But how can we know? What are some of the marks of lukewarmness? Number one, bad attitudes. Often bad attitudes toward God's people. Sometimes, listen, bad attitude toward yourself.

It is not healthy to put yourself down. It is not healthy to have a bad attitude toward yourself. I'm not saying it's not a struggle.

And all my life I've struggled with certain things about myself that I don't like. I even wanted to get, you know, a new nose. I thought, this, living in Asia, this nose, this is not where it's at.

In Thailand, I was living in Thailand, and when they don't like foreigners in Thailand, guess what they call you? Long-nose foreigner. Hey, look at the long-nose foreigner. I'll never forget, I was giving out tracts in the streets of Bangkok trying to be a disciple of Jesus, and a man walked up to me in the street.

Instead of taking the tract, he got a fixation on my nose. And he reached out and stroked my nose in the streets of Thailand. If I'd ever had a missionary call, I never did.

I just went in obedience to Jesus. I think I might have lost the call that particular morning. And I just thank God for verses like Ephesians 1. I think it's verse 6. You are accepted in the beloved.

When I was a young person, even though I was sort of popular, and I was sort of happy, I still had struggles accepting myself. Especially because the girl thing and the romance thing was so big. I wanted to be bigger.

I wanted to be stronger. And I remember there was an advertisement, Charles Atlas Muscle Building. I remember the ad.

They'll know it's probably 55 years ago. It says, You too can be a man. Do you remember those old ads? And a picture of a skinny guy like me on the beach with a really good looking girl.

And then this big muscle guy came along and banged the skinny guy away and he took the girl. I read that ad. I thought, that's what's going to happen to me.

I filled in a form and sent it in, Charles Atlas Muscle Building Weight Gaining. I started lifting weights and started eating extra food for about a pound. It was a pretty discouraging process.

But after I was saved, after I was saved, I began to have a more healthy view of myself. My nose, my skinniness, my loudness, my obnoxious temperament, you know, the choleric. Wherever I went, people would tell me, so and so doesn't like you.

That's always an encouragement, isn't it? Have you ever had that? You know, you think you're having a good day, somebody comes up, hey, you know, you just switched so and so off. They can't stand you. They don't want to see you anymore.

And then, of course, preaching in a church, in my more extreme days, people get up and walk out. That's always an encouragement, right? I always tried to believe the best that they were just going to the toilet. But, of course, when they didn't come back, you know, I don't know, I don't have grace to weak people.

Tomorrow or Friday, we're going to look at those great words in Corinthians. His strength is made perfect in weakness. His grace is sufficient.

They are two of the greatest verses in my whole life. So, I've known this reality because of Jesus, because of grace. Another way that we can know lukewarmness coming in, we don't want to pray.

That is a sure sign but it's not always easy to tie it and figure it out because also it's very human. Remember, we're talking about the human factor. Remember, we're not denying the human factor.

And so, it's very human to not particularly want to pray. No wonder Jesus said, if anybody come after me, let him deny self, take up the cross every day and follow me. I want to share something that I've seldom shared.

I certainly have not shared enough of the mistakes I made as a young Christian. Perhaps the most serious was a false view of spirituality. We especially get that in Bible college.

We get these tremendous preachers. We're reading all these books on sanctification. We all want to be, you know, God's best.

We rededicate our lives, some of us every other month. And then we get all these things. Have you ever had this in your life? All these things we're supposed to do to be spiritual.

It leads to legalism. It leads to a religion of rules. Have you been to enough prayer meetings? Have you witnessed to enough people? At Moody, we used to have to fill out a form.

How many people we witnessed to? I'm not totally against that. But I believe, as Swindoll brought out in one of his books, we need a grace awakening. At the same time, we need to be willing for the hard passages of Scripture.

And I feel many of us American preachers now are overemphasizing grace. And you will not hear messages from Revelation. Be ye hot, be ye cold.

If you're lukewarm, I'll spit you out of my mouth. Because that is not seeker sensitive. That makes people feel awkward.

Somebody in the meeting, it could be here tonight, forgive me, could feel lukewarm. Let me tell you, friend, if you are lukewarm, I hope you feel lukewarm and I hope you repent before you walk out those doors and be refreshed by the Lord and be set free from the self-light and lukewarmness. And so prayerlessness is a sign of lukewarmness.

The lack of desire to witness, the failure to share our faith is a sign of lukewarmness. The lack of interest in global missions, which is basically a lack of interest in people, it is a mark of lukewarmness. My wife and I have sat down with lukewarm people and we cannot judge them.

They know what we're doing. They know we've just come back from India. They know we've been living out on a ship in the Muslim world.

And you get sitting in a circle, they don't ask one single question about what you're doing. I've had many people, missionaries, tell me that. And the talk in the circle just goes down to the same drivel about superficial things in our society.

I'm not saying there's no place for that. But I am saying, if a person's on fire for Jesus and somebody's just come in from Saudi Arabia or from sailing on a Christian ship to the front lines, I would have thought they would be interested in what they're doing. And if someone comes back from Iraq as a soldier and when you meet with them, you do all the talking and you don't let that soldier say anything, that's weird.

Now, of course, if he's emotionally crippled, he may not be able to say anything. Then you really need to go your extra mile to love and to relate to that person. Ninety-five percent of all the wounded men and women in Iraq are alive because of the greatest medical service that they've ever had on the front lines almost in the history of modern warfare.

But surveys show they are coming back mentally wounded. And they need people back here who are going to welcome them and love them. And the same is true of those who go out to the mission field.

When they come back, some of them are wounded, some of them are hurt, some of them have had relational hassles. We need to reach out in love. And so I believe the lack of missionary interest linked with the lack of concern for the lost around us is a sure mark of lukewarmness.

And I pray, I know this message is not easy. I don't give this because I fancy this. I give this because I'm loyal to the whole of the Word of God.

And because these are the passages that all my life, these 50 years, have helped me to stay on that straight and narrow. Sometimes, my wife knows this, I have a wrong attitude toward my own wife. Often, we don't make the connection, do we? We don't make the connection that if I have a wrong attitude toward my wife for whatever reason, that is a spiritual problem.

That is a sign that I'm not in tune with God enough. And that I need to deal with that. That is a sign of lukewarmness.

Another sign of lukewarmness is we don't want to praise the Lord. We don't want to worship. It's so sad when family worship goes down the tube.

Families are no longer praying together. Married couples. No wonder the divorce rate among Christians is almost exactly the same as non-Christians.

What a national scandal. And if you've been through divorce, you're looking at one of the most compassionate people toward the divorce that you've probably ever heard from the pulpit. We were the first mission agency in the world to recruit divorced people when it was totally forbidden.

And some of the most godly people I know are divorced. And some of the even more godly are divorced and remarried. So it is possible to have prevention and restoration.

And that's my message received, whichever is appropriate in your case. Yes, it's God's will that we have that first love. And if you've lost it, God wants you to have it back.

You may be a wounded hero. It may not be exactly the same. But because of grace, because of forgiveness, even if you have wandered from the Lord for 30 years, He can meet you and give you that flame in your heart, that love in your life.

I just heard of a pastor's, a pastor's son, his whole life away from Jesus. He ended up in prison. A well-known New Jersey pastor.

He's 62. I just heard he's come back to Jesus. That's hard for us human beings, isn't it? We think, wow, he's wasted his life.

But that's not the way it is with God, a God of grace, a God of forgiveness. I meet people all the time. I'm going to bring this to a close who feel they've made a lot of mistakes.

They married the wrong person. They made the wrong turn. They went from, you know, did this, did that.

When they hear about plan A, they just get discouraged. Plan A? I missed that years ago. Plan B? Oh, I think I missed that one about 10 years ago.

Plan C? D? I made a lot of mistakes. I got away from Jesus. Maybe you're on Plan M? Plan M! Whoa! You know what I say to such people whose lives have been filled with failure and mistakes? You know what I say? Praise God.

There's a big alphabet. Press on. Receive His forgiveness and press on.

And you can accomplish in the final years of your life more than many people will have in their whole life. Because our God is a God of grace, a God of quality, a God of mercy. And I could tell you story after story of people who were years in lukewarmness, years with little spiritual fruit, and they came back to the cross and back to Jesus and learned how to deal with ego.

Learned how to deal with ego. And you know one of the ways to know that you're a bit of an ego tripper? You want a quick formula? I'm not into formulas much, but let me give you this one. If most of the day you're thinking about yourself and your problems, then you have an ego problem.

If most of the day your world is centered around yourself, you've got an ego problem and you need to deal with it. We all have to think about ourselves to some degree, but you can go through any day without focusing mainly on yourself. And when you get involved with others, praying for them, helping them, serving them, that of course will include your own children, you will discover far greater joy, far greater reality than when you're just focusing on yourself, your own problems, what do people think of me, and then the worries, oh what am I going to do if I lose my job, or if the pension money doesn't come, or the house catches on fire.

Of course worry is another sure, sure mark of the lukewarm life. Because when we're filled with the Holy Spirit, we're walking with God, we will have the strength to deal with worry and fear. It doesn't mean it won't be a struggle, it doesn't mean it won't hit back at us five minutes later, but it means we'll know what to do with these issues.

And I share this, as a struggler, as someone still learning, and yet knowing, knowing where the free refills are. Let us pray. Let us take a moment for silent prayer.

This is perhaps the strongest message so far. These are strong verses, be he hot or be he cold, if you're lukewarm I'll spit you out of my mouth. My own conviction is that this does not refer to a true believer losing his salvation.

It's a message to the church, there would be some believers who would believe that interpretation. I believe it's more connected with our spiritual service, with the reality of our walk with Jesus, not with our eternal salvation. But I wouldn't want to take a chance.

I wouldn't want to take a chance on such a strong passage. And so let's have a moment of silent prayer. Let's feel free in our hearts to repent of anything the Lord's convicted us of.

Let's ask him, fill me, fill me afresh with your Holy Spirit. Bring back your first love. Bring back that love in a greater way.

With or without the feelings. An act of the will. A walk of faith.

Let's pray silently, each one of us. Oh God, your word is so sharp. Sharper than a two-edged sword.

And Lord, I just pray. I just pray. Give us grace to take steps of faith.

Give us grace to be your men, to be your women. To know the reality of the fullness of your Holy Spirit. To be on fire for you.

I want to give this invitation with every head bowed that if you feel you've lost your first love, you feel that lukewarmness has come in. And you want to change directions by God's grace tonight. Through repentance.

Through accepting his mercy and grace, his forgiveness. Through being filled afresh, Acts 4.31, with his Holy Spirit. Then I'd like you to just quietly, where you are, I'm not going to call you to come forward, but I want you, where you are, I want you to just stand up.

Even if it's only one person. And I want to pray for you. That you would never, never lose your first love.

That you'll be neither, that you'll be either hot or cold. And of course, we want you to be hot. But you'll not be lukewarm.

And you'll take a stand against lukewarmness in all of its forms. If you'll take that step of faith with me, I want you to stand up quietly as we all just remain in prayer. And I want to pray for you.

It's an outward expression of an inward transaction, but it can mean a lot. And a lot of people have told me, though in myself, I'm hesitant to give these kind of invitations, someone always seems to misunderstand it. Friends have urged me give people the opportunity for recommitment.

God bless you. Anyone else, young or old, this is an opportunity for you to experience God's grace in a greater way. I'd like you as an outward expression of the inward transaction to stand up right now.

God bless you. Not easy, just a simple thing to stand up and acknowledge your own need and ask God in faith to do something. But God will honor you even in that simple step of faith.

Lord, I thank you for those that are standing before you right now. Help all of us to search our hearts, to search the scriptures, and take the necessary steps of faith on a daily basis. Meet us again tomorrow as we gather in prayer.

Meet us again as we look into your word. Bring other people into the meeting who are in these homes and trailers all over this area. And may we see, Lord, by your grace, may we see a touch of revival in our midst because of simple faith and obedience for we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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