

Missions Conf 16.7.2001 Eng to Korean

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the vital role of local churches in world missions and encourages them to embrace growth and take risks for the gospel's sake.

Duration: 51:11

Scripture: Acts 13:1

Topics: "Missions Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his deep love for the book of Proverbs and how it has been a source of wisdom and inspiration for him for over 44 years. He mentions that one of his own proverbs has gained popularity worldwide, stating that when two or three of the Lord's people gather, there will eventually be a mess, but they should still gather. The speaker also discusses his book, which contains seven seminars and has been published in multiple languages, selling over 130,000 copies. He then introduces the X-13 vision, emphasizing the importance of looking at what God did in the first century as a model for world missions in the 21st century. The speaker expresses his excitement for the next 10 years, as the church growth movement and missions vision merge for phenomenal results. He encourages churches, regardless of their size, to participate in reaching everyone in the world with the gospel. The speaker highlights the need to focus on nations and areas where the church is either non-existent or very small, particularly those within the 1040 window.

Transcript

Thank you very much. Thank you for being here. I'm administering on this ship, in this room, almost every year for 25 years.

I'm a little bit late because I was fellowshiping with one of the engineers. And this engineer has been with the ministry for 35 years. On all three of the ships, he has been in a key position in the engineering department, including being chief engineer.

And I have the privilege of so many friendships with such people. But we don't get much time to be together. So I'm sorry I wasn't here to welcome you when you first came as I was trying to get a few minutes with this dear brother.

The first ship to come to Korea back in the 70s was Lagos 1, a much smaller ship. This man, Dave Thomas, who I was just with, was the chief engineer on Lagos 1. He was with me when we began the ship

ministry and traveled together, my whole family and Dave. He wasn't even married at the time, from Great Britain out to India.

And he was on the ship, Lagos 1, in 1988, when we lost that ship right here in the Beagle Channel. And the ship is still sitting there on a rock, in case any of you want to tour that area and see the ship. I'm so glad for this special missions event that you are having.

Quite a long time ago, I was contacted about this particular conference. And it's one of the reasons that I came to Korea at this particular time. If we are to do the work that God has given to us in world missions, we need the pastors and the leaders to be involved.

And I'm sure most of you are involved. So we really thank God for each one of you and your commitment to the word of God and to world evangelization. I'm going to ask Soo Young if you could please bring me a copy of my new book in the Korean language.

I was just so happy when I found out the book was ready in time for the ship visit. And we really would like to give each one of you one of these as a gift. Now, we don't really have the money to do that.

But we're going to do it anyway. Because seven seminars are in this book. It came out less than one year ago.

Except in Spanish, it came out earlier in Spanish. I speak Spanish. 130,000 copies are in print in 10 languages.

130,000. 130,000. 130,000.

130,000. 130,000. 130,000.

Ten languages. And that is unusual because missionary books do not easily sell. And in the last part of this book, I share the Acts 13 vision.

And if you have your Bible, I'd like you to turn to Acts 13. Because as we think of world missions in the 21st century, we must start with what God did in the 1st century. And we have this tremendous model, this tremendous picture here in Acts 13.

In the back, final chapter about the Acts 13 vision, I share just some general goals that I would like each nation to have as a minimum. Our vision was to see 100,000 churches take their first step or a bigger step in connection with world missions. This came to me about four years ago, five years ago, when I was very much part of the AD2000 movement.

And we all came to Seoul, Korea, thousands of us, for that great Jiko-e event that so many of you were involved in. And I know Louise Bush, my close friend, he would love to be here today, and he would surely want me to give his greetings. I somehow, in God's unique way, became the chairperson of the Mission Mobilization Network, part of that AD2000 movement.

And this Acts 13 vision, combining church growth with world missions, came out of what God was doing through all of that. Some of the countries that are listed here, many of the countries that are listed, they have not reached these goals yet. So we have a lot of work.

These things are hard to measure, of course, because God is doing so many things. But Korea is the country, in my viewpoint, where we've seen the greatest growth and the greatest breakthroughs in connection with world missions. I'm very involved in Latin America.

Our ships have been around Latin America many, many times. At 19 years of age, I went to Mexico. That's really where this work began.

And Latin America probably has a similar number of people as Korea who have, you know, volunteered. Latin America has not been able to get the finance and the structure, good, solid, sending churches to get those recruits out to the field in big numbers. And that's a tremendous, tremendous proof that just getting volunteers is not enough.

World missions must be tied to the local church. It must be tied to church growth. Let me give an example.

In America, back in the 50s, when I was converted to Jesus, there were many great missionary-sending churches. They were really strong on world missions. But many of those churches were also very traditional, very conservative, and not churches that easily make changes.

Within 30 years, many of them had to stop supporting their missionaries because they were not having church growth. And whenever I've spoken in some of these different churches, I have tried to commend them for what they're doing locally. We just can't go and make them feel miserable because they're not doing enough in terms of world missions.

We must encourage what they are doing locally to see church growth. My own wife's church, her home church, was in that kind of situation. It used to have 300 members.

Very strong-minded people, very biblical people, but not very flexible people. Not easily adapting to new situation and to change of pastor. And so church division came.

And it shrunk from 300 to 30 people. And they were still trying to pay the pastor his full salary. And so my wife had that famous kind of letter that all missionaries know about.

She's got the letter. Saying, God bless you, we love you, but we cannot send you any more money. Now this has been happening in quite a few churches.

Not only in America, but other countries. Keeping in mind that mission, strong mission sending goes back 200 years in some of these places. While this was happening, and especially in Great Britain where I live, new churches were being born.

Actually whole new denominations. And many of them were not proactive about world missions. Some of them were even anti-mission societies.

We don't believe in mission societies. And they would say, the Holy Spirit is doing a new thing, and we're not going to get involved in these old things. So the 1980s in a number of countries were very, very challenging years for missions.

Some traditional churches were no longer able to do much. Because of division, because of financial problems. And because they failed to be proactive in church growth.

And especially winning and keeping the young people. Now here in Korea you have many outstanding model churches. And I preached in many of them.

And so I'm not here telling you what to do. I'm more here saying, hey, you know how to do it. We need help.

Can you send us some of your young people for Turkey or for Pakistan or for Afghanistan? And I am thanking God that so many of your churches have been growing. Now some of my Korean friends who are my teachers, like Pastor John Oak of Serang Church, who is also the chairman of the OM Board in Korea, he told me even a couple of years ago that church growth in Korea was beginning to level. It was beginning to level out.

And I will leave you to study your own statistics. I'm not going to talk about your statistics. But I want to say this.

When a church grows so rapidly as the Korean church has, it takes an enormous amount of prayer and pastoral work and care just to maintain that tremendous level for the glory of God. Of course, we know some churches continue to grow very rapidly, like Serang Church. But it might be also quite normal that other churches actually may have less members and less people than five years ago.

That is a normal occurrence. The key is not to give up. Not to get discouraged.

To realize God is using small churches as a very vital part of building the kingdom. And many of the great Antioch kind of churches sending out workers around the world, they are often small churches. I think when people look at a movement like Operation Mobilization and other movements like OMF former China Inland Mission, which we so highly esteem in our work, some people see these as sort of outside of the church.

But it is our biblical conviction that we are 100% part of the church. About 80% of our longer term people, we have many, many, many hundreds of longer term people, they have been sent out by their own local church. If they are sent out by their church, to work in fellowship with OM in church planting in Turkey, to me they are still 100% part of the church.

How can a local church in Chicago possibly oversee a church planting work in the land of Turkey, where by the way we have been involved for 38 years? Is the word partnership. When I was in Malaysia, many of us from all over the world were at the W.E.F. Congress in Malaysia. And also the Great Commission Roundtable.

You may ask, what is the Great Commission Roundtable? As AD2000 had closure last January, a movement with all of its complexity, but a movement that had a huge impact in many, many nations, in many, many ways. There is not time to talk about that. But even two years ago, seeing this coming, seeing this closure coming, some Norwegians called key organizational leaders together to Norway.

Here is Norway. I have this in case somebody steals my globe, and I have my jacket. And at present, the burden of the Great Commission Roundtable is to keep major mission and church leaders in contact and talking.

They are not launching some new global plan for world evangelism. That is not the plan right now. They feel so much needs to happen on a national and on an area level.

And they are trying to esteem the various networks, like the World Evangelical Fellowship, and the Lausanne Movement, and other networks. And I want to say, as someone who has been in missions for 45 years, as someone who will be turning the leadership of this movement, OM, over to someone else in two years' time, it's me, that I am incredibly excited about these next 10 years. And I hope that each one of your churches will have some kind of 5 or 10-year plan, 5 or 10-year dream, what you want God to do in your church during these great days.

And we believe that Korea is to play an increasingly major role in the evangelization of the whole world. I had three wonderful services yesterday that I could preach at in two different churches. And when I came back, or maybe it was this morning, my wife came with me for the first time.

It was the final service. So I started to speak to her about my burden to come, not for a few days to Korea, but to come here and live at least for one month. My wife, who was with me on this trip, and who has been traveling for 41 years, as a human being, does not want to travel anymore.

So if we're going to come here to live for a month, God's going to have to do a special work in my wife's heart. So please pray for that. As I turn the actual leadership of OM over to others, I hope to have more time to do some of the things I've been praying about and dreaming about for a long time.

Because I've also been the leader of the international office and team based in London. A lot of time has been given to that team in London, where I live, London, England. So when I leave that responsibility, I'm going to have a lot more time to do what I want to do.

And I want to come to Korea. I want to preach in your big churches but also your small churches. And I want to talk to pastors and leaders.

And at the end of the day, I want to just tell you with all my heart, keep on keeping on, keep on keeping on and don't rest. In ministry, there will be many discouragements. In mission work, there will be even more discouragements.

We are attempting the impossible. For 42 years, I've been praying for Afghanistan. In fact, some of the first Koreans who were 30 some years ago, they also had a vision for Afghanistan.

We have sent many people there. But we have not seen a breakthrough in Afghanistan. There is no church in that nation.

There are some believers but they are not meeting together. Many of them are afraid for their very lives as the government has threatened to take people's lives. And some Korean churches have adopted, in the adopt-a-people movement, have adopted Afghanistan as their nation, their people's group.

Now we know phenomenal things have happened around the world in these past 100 years. I'm sure you know, everywhere in the world people talk about Korea. Surely you know that.

The statistics about church growth in Korea are known all over the world. Sometimes these things get exaggerated. Probably you are quite aware also of some of your struggles, some of the weaknesses.

And I know some Korean leaders who have spoken to me. They feel, why haven't we made, so many of us, why haven't we made a greater impact in the nation, in the political world, in the social world? The American church is also asking this question. The Brazilian church is asking this question.

It's a good question to ask. But we need a lot of wisdom as we answer the question. Because we will not be in unity as to what God's actual program is for our nation.

You get some people who want to convert the whole nation to Jesus. But there are many godly people that don't believe that is necessarily God's plan. And I don't think the church is going to get united on how all of this is supposed to happen.

One thing I feel very strongly is that we should not start feeling excessive guilt and then discouragement because we haven't totally changed the fiber of our nation. Because sometimes my hearts go out to the average Christian sitting in church on Sunday morning. And if we are not careful, we can lay on them burdens, burdens, challenges that no person can handle.

Because many of God's people are battling in their marriages. They're battling with their children. They're battling with their economic situation.

They are already stretched in terms of their mental capacity. So one of my prayers for each one of you pastors is that you will be a blessing to your people. That you will be a true pastor.

Not just a Bible teacher. Not just a sermon producer. But a true pastor.

Pastoring, loving, caring with all of your heart for the people of God. And that I believe will produce a healthy church. My heart rings in unity with that.

So we are together in this work. We are people who are pastoring. We're not trying to recruit you for Afghanistan.

Some of you are too old to learn the language. You go right out of your mind. But as you create a healthy church, as you work to have an Antioch church, the Holy Spirit will be able to call out as He did Paul and Barnabas, people from your church.

Now we get quite a few churches in some countries, especially Brazil. Brazil for me is the Korea of Latin America. Don't tell them that.

But they often say we are not ready to send out anybody. We have so much more to do locally. We have this problem.

We must solve this problem. And we haven't finished building our church building. And the Spirit of God is leading us to buy our pastor a new bicycle.

And so we're not ready to send missionaries. But brothers and sisters, if we wait till we have the perfect local church, we're not going to send anybody. There will always be complexities.

There will always be problems. When I was selling books door to door as a young Christian, selling Bibles, I met a lady. She bought a lot of books.

I was really happy. Praise God. She gave me a lot of money for these books.

I was trying to earn money to get to Mexico. But then the lady invited me in and started preaching to me. I think just looking at me she knew I was strong on zeal and weak on wisdom.

And she challenged me to read the Proverbs to get more wisdom from God's Word. So I started to read the Proverbs almost every day. She said, a proverb a day will keep the devil away, young man.

And then she showed me that there were 31 Proverbs, one for every day in the month. I don't know about the Korean calendar. And for 44 years I've been reading the Proverbs almost every single day.

It's been one of my greatest sources of wisdom and inspiration for the leadership that I've had to learn and develop in this organization. I read them in Spanish. I read them in English.

I listen on cassette tape. I love the Proverbs. Now I'm starting to write my own.

Okay, don't worry. I'm not going to add them to the Bible. But one of my Proverbs has gone very famous around the world, on the Internet and in different books.

This is the Proverb. Where two or three of the Lord's people are gathered together, sooner or later there will be a mess. The first time in the Korean language.

Where two or three of the Lord's people are gathered together, sooner or later there will be a mess. That is my experience for 46 years. But the beautiful side of the story.

Our God knows how to continue His work even when we have made a bit of a mess. So even if your church is going through a time of crisis, even though you may have what we say in English, a bit of a messy situation, don't allow that to discourage you. God is still using you.

God is working in the midst of that situation. He knows how to overrule our mistakes. One of the reasons I'm still here.

I learned that failure could be the back door to success. When I first lived in Europe, I lived in Spain because it was a closed country. But my vision was the communist world and the Muslim world.

I was hardly interested in Western Europe. They already have churches. My prayer was Turkey, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union.

My first summer in Europe, 61, I was headed for the Soviet Union to smuggle Bibles and distribute Christian literature. Some of you know Brother Andrew, a good friend of mine, known as God's smuggler. I'm Brother George, known as God's bungler, the big mistake maker.

Because the second day in the Soviet Union, I was arrested due to my own stupidity. This work at that time was very small. We did not have the name OM.

We had the name STL, Send the Light. But because of that failure, being deported from the Soviet Union, I went for a day of prayer. And in that day of prayer, God changed me.

Greater understanding of the church, the importance of the local church. And gave me that name, Operation Mobilization. So I moved from Madrid, where there were hardly any churches, to London, where we had 2,000 churches.

The next two years, 2,000 British people were to move out in evangelism across Europe and around the world. Do not be afraid to fail. We as God's people, especially in regard to world missions, must be willing to take a few risks.

Maybe there's someone in your church, they want to get into world missions. If you feel well, they're so young. And I saw him make this stupid mistake last week in the church in the Sunday school.

How can he ever be a missionary? He doesn't know the word of God enough. And I don't think he knows how to pray two hours a day yet. So he must stay here for more years.

We must be willing to take risks. I was saved in a Billy Graham meeting. I was saved, what looks like, outside of the context of the church.

But that's not the way I see it. Billy Graham was sent by the church as an evangelist. It was the churches in New York City that brought Billy Graham there to speak and went to the meetings.

Otherwise, nobody would be there. And after I was saved that night in New York City, I got involved with God's people. And I went to a local church.

And I shared my vision. I was only 19. I'm going to Mexico to evangelize.

They could have easily been negative. Who are you to go to Mexico? You're only 19 years of age. You don't even know how to drive properly yet.

But instead, these dear people in my hometown they said, we're going to pray for you. And one man bought me the first vehicle in the history of our church. Another man bought all the books I had left over from my door-to-door book selling.

He just bought everything that was left over. And three of us headed to Mexico. That was the birth of a movement that was ultimately to give the word of God to one billion people across this world.

I'm excited about these next 10 years. The church growth movement of the world is going to be merging with the mission's vision for phenomenal results in the next 10 years. Whether you are a small church or whether you are a big church, you can have a vital part in this great program to reach everybody in the world with the gospel.

About 90% of the missionaries in the world are working where the church already exists. That includes many of our own workers. But our greater passion for these next 10 years are those nations and those places where the church does not exist or is incredibly small.

Many of those places are across what's known as the 10-40 window. That's 10 degrees north of the equator to 40 degrees north. That's what we're talking about.

I'm sure most of you know about this. Of course, many of those countries are dominated by the Muslim world. Some of them like Libya and Algeria and Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, they have almost no believers.

And as we look across the whole world, we can thank God for all that has been done. But about 20% of the people in the world, about 20%, have never heard of a Christian church. I was greatly influenced by a man from Canada named Oswald J. Smith.

He was a great mission leader. A pastor of one of Canada's greatest churches. He was a great writer.

Many of his books are in Korean. And when I heard the mission challenge from him, 50% of the people in the world had not yet heard the gospel. So a lot has been done.

And we know hearing the gospel once, that doesn't mean they're evangelized. That's just the beginning. Now it's only 20%.

But here's the problem. Population explosion. So that 20% of today's population is very similar in numbers of people to 50% in 1955.

There are hundreds of millions still not heard the gospel. And your churches before God together with others will determine whether they ever hear about Jesus Christ before they die. Let us pray.

Father, we thank you for what you are doing across the world. We thank you for the directorship of your Holy Spirit. We thank you Lord for your Holy Word.

Passages like Acts chapter 13. That can be such an inspiration and such a help to us. Lord, I pray for every church represented here today that we may be proactive, visionary churches.

That we may continue to experience church growth. But also we would be willing to take the risks to send out workers to the more unreached parts of the world. And give us the strength Lord also to care for those workers when they return.

Give you all the praise and all the glory Lord. Amen. Amen.

If there's time I'm happy to answer questions. I don't know what the time setting is.

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