

Opening Session

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of unity, transparency, and spiritual maturity in leadership during challenging times for Operation Mobilization.

Duration: 1:21:51

Scripture: Psalm 145:1-5, Psalm 145:8, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Faith And Prayer", "Praising God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the challenges and triumphs of the work in India, particularly in the aftermath of the Bombay fire. The fire destroyed valuable literature and equipment, but the speaker believes that through prayer, more people can be inspired to support the work in India. A major decision was made to prioritize quality over quantity, leading to a reduction in the number of people involved. The speaker emphasizes the importance of praising God and calls on all to bless His holy name.

Transcript

Every year we gain something and we lose something. We're so hyper-idealist, you know, and we have such a wide range of views that sometimes when we try to get in something new or something some people feel is more important, we lose something else. This weekend has been preceded by four to six hours of discussion every day on the part of field leaders since Monday and also a day of prayer yesterday.

Some of the items that are brought up in the various main sessions, like this afternoon when we speak about administration and leadership, and this year we're having different chairmen rather than me chairing the whole thing, will be items that we have already spent a lot of time wrestling with. And now we want to share these with a larger body to get a greater degree of unity. On finance alone we have probably spent five, four or five hours, maybe more, wrestling with issues.

If this conference turns into some kind of parliament, you know, OM is going to slow down a great deal because on a lot of these issues we're not going to get every single person to fully agree. And in a sense OM does not operate and never has operated on the basis of unanimity, a term I can't even pronounce much less believe in, that every single person must be absolutely united before we move. We would still be back probably in Mexico if we operated on that basis.

But we do believe there must be a high degree of unity before we can move and that different people by their very responsibility in a sense have a stronger voice and it is quite normal for us to be concerned that there be unity among the people who carry long-term such huge areas of responsibility. We've had constant discussion of whether we should try to do everything in the larger meeting, the coordinators conference quite a few years back, that was it. And there was a constant plea for a smaller group.

There are things you can do in a smaller group, it's very difficult to do in this larger group. And yet often we found in the coordinators conference the newer people who only were there because of the larger group seem to be getting more out of the conference. Certainly the feedback to me of people really being blessed right back to 1960 and 1970 often came from people who were at their first coordinators conference.

Many people's decision to remain in OM longer term came about because they got into this level of leadership and discussion and through it felt much more a part of the work. Other people, a minority group, have found these conferences very distressing. They were shocked to discover that leaders had such strong differences of opinion and that people would argue and that sometimes even spiritual leaders at least seem to get a little in the flesh, probably especially me.

And for some it has been a rough thing for them to attend these conferences. I think however in the long run it has been reality therapy that your OM leaders, especially this one, is very human, very subject to the weaknesses of man. We therefore now have both.

We have the small meetings, been going on since Monday. We have smaller meetings now, the huge growth, the rapid growth of committees within OM that go on all year. Whereas some years ago I used to sort of carry the authority, for example in the area of finance, this is now carried by a financial committee who is going to have to double this year the number of times they meet, being chaired by Dale Roton and acting as the main information man and the person who does a lot of the work, Peter Maiden.

So changes have been taking place and I realize that with OM being so big and people spread out all over the world, sometimes you're not even aware of what's going on. In one moment you don't care, but some little thing happens, and all of a sudden yes, you become very interested in something that previously didn't concern you. It was interesting to note that in the subject of finance one of the main pieces of literature actually given to churches and prayer partners upon request that quite a few OM leaders were not really familiar with that piece of literature.

People who were even in the work in major positions of leadership had not even read it for perhaps at least a year. Of course we immediately realized there seems to be an awful lot of material you're supposed to be reading around Operation Mobilization and you need discernment to know what piece is the most important. We have discovered at this conference that this piece is truly one of the most important pieces of literature launched in the history of the work and considerable discussion will be going on about it.

Well, there are my introductory remarks. Now I'd like you to turn to the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms.

I consider it an enormous challenge and privilege to be able to speak with you in this way. The homework for this conference was two cassette tapes called the 25th Anniversary Plea and we attempted through the field leaders to get that tape played to everyone in your category before coming here. I don't want to ask

for a show of hands, but I've had encouragement that a vast percentage of people have listened to those two tapes which ended up a little longer than I expected.

And Vera Zabransky who's here in the front will be happy to help you get a hold of those tapes. So your field leader probably has extra copies that he's wondering what he's supposed to do with. I did play it at the leadership training or ships conference over in Germany.

I understood that they are being circulated throughout India, throughout Dulas and through Lagos. The only way I can ever anymore speak to all the people that I'm involved with in OM is through cassette tape. We are never ever together as one body.

That has never happened. Probably never will till we all get to heaven. I'm not sure if we'll be allowed separate conferences in heaven.

So I hope you will listen to those tapes. It's not a message. I was actually sitting down in a farmhouse in a very quiet mood place I go for retreat and rest and letters.

And I think most people have found it relatively non-controversial and yet strong enough, clear enough to get something out of. Let's look at Psalm 145, the word of the Lord. I'm reading from the living Bible.

I know most of you feel that all the Bibles are living. But just for a little bit of a change, as some of you sometimes criticize my tendency to get stuck in the King James version or the authorized version. We do not refer to it in England generally as the King James version.

You know, there's now a revised edition. I have a letter on my desk asking me to give my whatever it's worth seal of approval to it. Together with some manuscript pages.

Anyway, this is the living Bible. I will praise you my God and King and bless your name each day and forever. Great is Jehovah, greatly praise him.

His greatness is beyond discovery. Let each generation tell its children what glorious things he does. That's my text for what I want to share this morning.

I will meditate about your glory, splendor, majesty and miracles. Your awe-inspiring deeds shall be on every tongue. I will proclaim your greatness.

Everyone will tell about how good you are and sing about your righteousness. Jehovah is kind and merciful, slow to get angry and full of love. He is good to everyone and his compassion is intertwined with everything he does.

All living things shall thank you, Lord, and your people will bless you. They will talk together about the glory of your kingdom and mention examples of your power. They will tell about your miracles and about the majesty and glory of your reign.

For your kingdom never ends. You rule generation after generation. The Lord lifts up the fallen and those bent beneath their loads.

The eyes of all mankind look up to you for help. You give them their food as they need it. You constantly satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.

The Lord is fair in everything he does and full of kindness. He is close to all who call on him sincerely. He fulfills the desires of those who reverence and trust him.

He hears their cries for help and rescues them. He protects all those who love him but destroys the wicked. I will praise the Lord and call on all men everywhere to bless his holy name forever and ever.

So, I think it is good to start with a note of praise. In your program it says, looking back a year of testing and triumph. And as I wrestled with this message and actually made considerable notes, I thought should I emphasize the testing or should I emphasize the triumph? Triumph often comes through testing.

And I thought I would try to emphasize both. But with the emphasis on the victories. I think it's easy when it's been a year in which we've had a couple of people killed.

The most recent an XOMer on a rickshaw in India. There may even be one more recent than that. The drowning on the summer team right here in Belgium.

We all are very conscious of perhaps one of the greatest tests in the history of OM. The accident and the present disability of our brother Jonathan. And all the controversy that rages at times over that.

The strong belief by some that he must be raised up completely through prayer. Which doesn't always satisfy other people who have had to face many many similarities before they ever got involved in Jonathan's crisis. And have wrestled through this problem in what they feel is a more sane and mature way.

I think all of us in our hearts would love to see Jonathan walking into the room this morning. But the history of life on this planet is that our ways are not always God's ways. And that God's glory often comes through suffering.

Though the truth is we still don't know all that God wants to do. And we want to continue praying for Jonathan's healing. We're all aware of the accident in the Sudan.

A mysterious accident and the controversy that follows. And remember in everything that happens of this nature comes the controversies, the disagreements, the miscommunications. When the news first comes over the telephone as to what happens and it's released.

It's often quite awesome to discover 24 hours later that that is not exactly what happened. We're still trying to find out whether there was any bump in the road in the Sudan. The latest I had was that there was no bump.

And then that was topped by the fact that there was some kind of movement in that road. And of course this will become eventually part of OM's history. Truth is not easy to ascertain.

Sometimes we have people who want to grab a hold of some problem in OM and take it to its absolute ultimate final conclusion as to what the truth was. To do this I would have to become a full-time judge. And we would have to set up a full-time, I mean full-time, court of appeals within OM to decide the truth on these different controversial issues.

Who said what? How did he say it? Why did he say it? Who are the witnesses? Have you ever noticed that in most countries, in almost every country I've known much about, there's a backlog of things just to get into court? Have you ever noticed that in our day people seem to be suing each other at the drop of a pin?

And I don't think we're in the position in OM to set up a major court and judiciary or whatever you want to call it, system. And so there are times when of course we have to carry things to a degree of investigation. People have to be confronted.

We have to try to find out the truth. We have to send out one more memo to a group that's complaining about having too many memos. And there are other times when we must leave these things with God.

Survival in OM, now that it's 1,600 people plus children, involves a certain amount of spiritual maturity in that in some things you have to say, I believe other brothers are going to take care of this. That's their responsibility. I'm going to get on with my work.

I could be full-time just in my involvement with other missions. More and more missions and groups are wanting some of us as leaders to be involved in helping resolve their problems. I could have spent days in New Jersey recently just being involved in a church split in one of the churches that I've been linked with over the years.

It is incredibly difficult, isn't it, to know what to be involved in, how far to be involved, where do I stop, where do I leave it with the Lord and press on. It's not an easy area. Each one of these major difficulties that have taken place in OM, testings, trials, there has been research, there have been written reports, there has been a lot of discussion.

We have faced some of the lessons, heavy lessons in some of these things. But not all of this is made public to everybody in Operation Mobilization. Different leaders have a different view about things.

Brother Bakht Singh in India doesn't believe in sharing financial needs even with hardly his most faithful men. He believes finance is between him and God. And, of course, others get involved, like the bookkeeper.

But they don't have anything like we have within OM of discussion and decisions and financial reports and field credit balance systems. And, of course, it's a very different kind of a movement, mainly limited to India. Well, let me move on.

As we think of some of the testings and we're going to touch on some of them as we just take one of my trips around the world. Now, I know some of you have been around for many years. You may think, oh, another Verwerth excursion.

Well, you know, those of you who have been around for many years, I won't mind if you memorize the Bible while I'm speaking. I won't even notice. And, you know, I don't mind you who are spiritual.

You can pray. You can intercede as I'm sharing. But I believe it is important that we just take a little panorama view of some of the things that God is doing across the world.

Many of you are overexposed to what's happening in OM. I may be in that condition. I'm still reading everybody's prayer letter.

One thing in the providence of God, OMers are so weak in sending out their prayer letters. I can still manage to read all of them, generally a little bit late. The ones that are in other languages, I look at them, have a brief shout to the Lord, and pass it on to someone who reads that language.

If, and we're hoping for great things this coming year, everybody starts sending out their prayer letter, and I get my copy, well, I won't be able to keep up anymore. That'll be wonderful. I'll rejoice over that.

But meanwhile, it's quite an exposure. And then also to read, I'm very behind now. The summer crusade, it's impossible.

The reports that come from every team, again, crippled hands or whatever else, seems to hinder some of these reports. So some are unbelievably faithful. And I'm overdosed with OM, obviously.

Morning, noon, night, my sleep. Even when I take a walk off and through the woods, one of my relaxation factors, I often listen to cassette tapes on a tape recorder that I carry with me. And sometimes they're not always the most encouraging, as people now feel they not only can get through to me, their people somehow want to get through to me.

I guess they know I'm stubborn. So they send memos and letters, and now they're sending cassette tapes. It's hard not to listen to a cassette tape.

This is a personal, for George Burr only. And so I'm finding this interesting. And some of you know about some of the cassettes that I've received.

Let's take a panorama, quick look across the world. Maybe we should start with India. And the perhaps greatest testing of the work in India through the Bombay fire.

And the triumph that came out of that. I think some of the literature in the warehouse, we didn't want anyway. Some of it had been sitting around for quite a few years.

Well, don't get me wrong. A lot of it was new and valuable. And many things are not replaceable.

What a test for Brother Alfie Franks. If you've never fought a fire, if you've never been in a fire, where everything you've had, almost everything you've had been destroyed, you won't be able to relate to what he went through. And I can't relate to it.

But I know one of the triumphs was to be with these leaders in Nepal earlier this year. And to see the unity that OM India was able to maintain through this testing. And the spirit of expectation, the enormous response and giving across the world, nothing like we would have initially perhaps dreamed, but slowly it kept coming in and it's still coming in.

Another \$5,000 was just promised to help replace that which was destroyed. Getting a hold of this cash with the way OM operates has not been so easy, but the Lord has his rescue programs. And in God's providence, the fire was God's rescue program for the financial situation, at least during certain months.

Somehow it does seem that with God's chosen, so often frozen people, a little fire can be used of the Lord. Though we would, I think, prefer it to happen actually in other ways. It has put India in the minds and on the map of quite a few people who barely even thought of the place before.

In God's providence, I had just finished speaking at Founders Week in Chicago, one of the most powerful meetings I was in, where a huge number of people, over a hundred came to a separate room for counseling and to cry upon the Lord to be filled with the Spirit, to be committed and to move to the ends of the earth. And a number of those people came on OM. And the fire hit just when I finished, and I was able to share this with George Sweeting, the president of Moody Bible Institute, who shared it with hundreds of

thousands across the radio in the United States.

Through prayer, I believe even more of those people could respond and get involved in the work in India. So we think of this tragedy, of this difficulty, of this crisis. We're still battling it.

We still haven't replaced all the equipment. And we need prayer. A major decision was made, and there's a tape about this if you're interested, to try to cut the number of people down in India in order to emphasize quality.

It was not mainly a financial move. It was mainly a move to emphasize quality rather than quantity. We actually still have both.

And it was a move in which there was tremendous unity. It was not something that I pushed through. It was being echoed more by some of the people in India, especially some of the sisters and women's leaders, than it was myself.

I just went there to try to be a voice and to try to encourage the movement in that direction, and to also face head-on some of the problems of the fantastic and phenomenal growth of the work in India. A work that most of us, if we're honest, are not really familiar with. Even a trip to India doesn't necessarily give you a grasp of all that's happening in so many different states by such a wide range of committed people.

Not to speak of the ministry of XOMers, which is touching every year millions of precious people for Christ. If all I had in this work today was my commitment to India, I would have more than enough to do, have more than enough to keep me motivated. Some have wondered why I have been able to relatively peacefully take my hands off certain things and just let other people do it, because I have more than enough to do.

That excites me, that motivates me, and that keeps me caught up with the Lord. I feel a fresh, a deeper commitment to India than I've felt in the previous 10 years. I don't think I ever lost that commitment.

And I believe this is still absolute priority land field, especially considering now the thrust into the Muslim world and the fact that we have moving toward 100 million Muslims who have had much less in-depth effort than the Arab world or a number of other fields where we also are strongly committed. We have probably reached more Muslims for Christ than all other Muslim nations put together, but we have done less in following up on them than almost any single Muslim nation where we're working in depth. And that's something that we'll be thinking about at the AIC.

David Hicks will be taking my place there. And then when we meet in February or January together for a Coordinators and an Asia Field Leaders Conference in Nepal. Now, I have to discipline myself to move on because there's a lot of places I'd like to just mention.

All of this material, you are responsible to attempt to share to your team members. There's never a reason for a dull OM prayer meeting. No excuse for that.

I don't think I've ever been in one that was dull the whole time. I've been in some that have been a big struggle. Usually, some excitement, some vision, something has happened.

And as a leader, you should always be ready with requests. I don't think it's any good to say, we haven't had any fresh prayer requests this week. We don't know what to pray about.

There's so much to pray about. So much to pray about. And if you keep notes just during this month, as you get to know people from different parts of the world, you're going to get exciting material that you can share with others.

You're also going to get a greater grasp of the work as a whole that will deliver you from some of the never-ending clangers that get dropped on the OMer's, even by their leaders, who should know but don't always know what the facts are. And I, of course, have dropped a few myself. Moving on from India, let us give thanks and praise to the Lord concerning the Muslim world.

We have decided as a body that this decade, we're now in 1982, in case any of you don't realize it, would be a decade of thrust into the Muslim world. Now, it's so easy to criticize OM's attempts in the Muslim world, and I get a few interesting letters about that. Even one not so long ago from an ex-OMer who was quite critical.

But maybe before we criticize, we should find out what we're doing. Did you know, for example, that 250 people in OM were committed to Muslim evangelism? Only a small number of that particular number are in administration. Some of those people would be administration, but most administrators, we have very few pure administrators in OM.

Most administrators are carrying two or three jobs. And it really is a little unfair when people get wiped off as being just an administrator. This controversy is still raging within OM, when, in fact, that person is taking more meetings in the process of his administration than most full-time evangelists or preachers.

We need more committed administrators who don't take so many meetings, and who can help us survive and get on with the work. But in that number of 250, most of those people are involved in speaking to some degree with Muslims about Jesus Christ. This, of course, includes Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Arab world, Turkey.

It includes the work among the Afghans. It includes teens in Berlin, teens in London. It includes some things that go on quietly that we don't all know about.

This is really a miracle. All of us, of course, are aware of the weakness in what we're doing. I stand before you completely overwhelmed in a sense of weakness and inadequacy.

Even me standing here to lead a dozen, okay, I was willing to lead a few dozen or a few hundred, now 1,600 people. That, to one degree or the other, I have some small responsibility, at least even to pray, and once in a while to say something and communicate and make a call or a plea for unity or whatever else. To me, it's just overwhelming and my leadership is intertwined with much failure and weakness.

The Muslim thrust includes so much. Let me just mention a few, just a few things. I'm excited about Bangladesh.

It was a joy for Peter Maiden and I to get 24 hours, a little more, in Bangladesh coming back from Nepal. A small work, but one of the areas where the work in a Muslim country is most aimed at Muslims most of the day. We're involved there in some experimental efforts, they say, attempt to identify a little more with Muslims.

It's now become a major controversy among the missiologists and one of the missionary journals that I subscribe to. I was just reading the article by Hildebrand, by Phil Parshall, and by that theologian from

Fuller Theological Seminary. Interesting articles.

Well, our team out there in the middle of Bangladesh is not so much involved in the controversy, they're just getting on with the job. We'll leave the California crowd to argue about it and let the Bangladesh crowd get on with the work. Not that these things should not be discussed, whether it's California or London, they should be.

And I'm grateful for these missionary journals that I've been reading for 20-some years. I can't read all of them. And we in OM want to continue to emphasize research.

We want to continue to invite in guest speakers of various viewpoints. Our Muslim World guest speaker this year probably would not be 100% eye-to-eye with Lionel Gurney of last year, but isn't it one of the values in OM that we're willing to take truth from any quarter? Are we willing to try to battle ahead? Continue to pray for Bangladesh. They haven't given up on the Christians, though the temptation would be in a land where people are so nominal and where the church has so little vision for the Muslims to give up.

We are in the most difficult period in the history of our work in Bangladesh in our relationship with the church. Because of our commitment to the Muslimani-Bengali Bible, and our commitment to Muslims, we also had very heavy division on the team. In one case between those of Hindu background and those of Muslim background.

I tell you, the reaching of the Muslim World is going to be a battle all the way. Right down to the team level. The battles don't just take place in the field leaders meetings where we come out with our different points of view.

Right down to the team level, there's the constant tension, the constant struggle of people who don't agree, of people who have different backgrounds, of people who see it from a totally different viewpoint. And of course, unless there's a going back constantly to the original principles of OM, Calvary Road, the crucified life, dying yourself, the heavy blow to pride, whether it's a team level or on an international level. We will be doomed to disunity.

In that situation, they had to ask a brother to leave. That's not the way we like to go, is it? But if we're realistic about Christian work, there are times when people must be asked to leave. Some of you, I believe, have gotten in trouble because you've been afraid to ask anybody to leave.

And you easily feel so guilty, and you easily take the blame. And it's becoming increasingly difficult to ask people to leave Operation Mobilization, even Lewis Recruit, because he will muster his support. He will make phone calls.

He will muster his friends, his local church, and the poor leader who's in that situation. If he has had any hole in his arm at all, if he's perfect, everything he says is correct. He always has total spiritual insight.

He has his pulse on everything. He is all-knowing. He also has his family in perfect order, so no one can, when they're trying to escape from the pressure, point out to some weakness in his family.

That's always very encouraging. Then, of course, he probably will be able to stand the test. But if he's a human being, he's liable to find that trying to remove even the newest recruit is not easy.

And the controversies rage every week within OM on this area, every week. One of the main things I'm involved in is helping a leader decide how far to go with a particular person when disciplinary steps must be taken. Is it not true that one of the greatest weaknesses in the present church is the failure to discipline people? It's gone so far that men can be in the church living in fornication and no one will have the courage to discipline them.

He could be a drunkard or a neo-drunkard. No one would have the courage to discipline. Again and again, and remember, more than 50% of my involvement during the OM year is outside of OM.

It's the six hours of letters during that day when I'm involved outside of OM that keep me plugged into OM. I'm involved with the churches, with other groups, with other movements, on your behalf. Building bridges, recruiting, etc., etc.

And I'm amazed as again and again people come to me about this same question. In fact, people have asked me now, is there any book on discipline in the church? If you know of some good books about church discipline, when to discipline, how to discipline, when does a person allow back into fellowship, when does a person ask not to break bread? One of the newest, fastest growing movements in America that I've been in touch with, most of their problems have centered around the problem of discipline. And whenever they've had to ask anybody to leave, it's just been an explosion.

And now whole books have been written, it hasn't been published, one whole book written against that movement, which is a relatively good movement. The Muslim world thrust coming west without bypassing short-term work in Indonesia on the part of the ships. Got a beautiful report, some photos about that.

The realization that Malaysia is largely a Muslim land and we've continued to have input there. And the realization there are Muslims in China. And well, I'd like to know where the Muslims are not any longer.

But anyway, moving west and bypassing India because we've already talked about her, we come to Pakistan. A different strategy, a strategy built on the concept that we are almost already over-committed in India and struggling. That we have Bangladesh, a work built mainly on nationals.

And that in the light of our situation, the work in Pakistan in these beginning stages must mainly involve full-time internationals with the burden that the vision and the teaching and the message will flow into Pakistanis and that in their own structure and in their own churches, they will reach more out to Muslims. This is happening, slowly, but it's happening. The film industry in Pakistan, the relatively good unity on the teams there, there's a lot to praise God for.

A lot of literature distribution and good relationships. I went to Pakistan to find out. Good relationships with Christian leaders and the churches.

Building a movement on a solid foundation involves developing a certain amount of credibility. We are not a movement that has survived on telling everybody we're going to do our own thing. We're a movement that has believed in unity with other believers and other fellowships and other missions.

That takes time. And at times we have to slow down to do that. And there are times, of course, when we have to go forward even though all the other missions may not be in agreement.

And surely there are some missionaries in Pakistan that are not perhaps overwhelmingly happy. About some things we do. Initially, I heard some would be in agreement years ago if it was only men that we

brought to Pakistan.

Whereas the work in Pakistan is the most female-dominated work in almost all of Operation Mobilization under the male leadership of Mike Wakely. And I just thank the Lord that Mike is willing to get women involved 100%. They are not second-class citizens.

There are cases where because of a culture women can't talk to men. And so by that very nature in certain strategies you're going to have to have men. And there are equal situations where we need women to talk to women and other situations where, of course, that is not particularly an issue or a problem.

Moving west, we come to Afghanistan and late last night it was a joy to fellowship with an ex-OMer who soon will go back to Afghanistan. Over 20 are involved in Afghanistan. Something we don't put into print.

Not with OM. OM is not officially involved there. But I would give a plea not to forget to pray for this nation that has gone through so much.

Not to forget that that brother who was martyred there some time ago, is it two years now, was a former member of the Dutch Board of Directors who probably caught a large part of his vision to go to Afghanistan through the many little streams that flow out of this fellowship. Let's remember to pray for his two children. You know, it's easy to remember people one month after the event and one year after the event.

Unsaved people do that. It takes spiritually minded prayerful people to remember five years later and 10 years later. And to keep those relationships and to pray for those children.

I've noticed that a number of families where one of the parents has been killed, the children have faced very special crises. I immediately think of a missionary who was killed, no need to give his name. Alas, I knew both of his children.

Despite wonderful commitment on the part of his wife, a very godly woman, both of the children were in serious spiritual difficulty. I'm not sure I can handle that myself. And it's been, I think in some ways, a real battle.

I only had a short time to visit that operation and made an enormous impact upon my son Ben who was traveling with me. And I hope I can get back there in January or February of this year. I believe it is a central commitment of OM to work among the Afghan people.

It was part of the very original vision to reach Afghanistan for Christ. God in his sovereignty has brought these people over the border. We know it's hard.

We know it's complicated. We know that to sit back here and think about that work may appear glamorous. To get in that work as a new recruit is incredibly hard.

And there will be the battles and the struggles and some of the idealism will slip down the drain very, very quickly as it's such a great and difficult task. We may wonder what OM's concern is about Iran in these days. Recently, one or two of our unofficial research people went into Iran and the news is encouraging.

We are committed to Iran. We don't leave countries because our first commitment is a spiritual commitment. And there are ways that we can invest.

We hope soon to be able to release some money from special projects into Iran where they're crying for money. We hope soon to be able to release some money from special projects into Iran where they're crying for money as they are saying, whether this can be proved, I don't know, that more literature is going out than when we were there. Or maybe they meant the believers are distributing more literature now than they distributed when we were there.

You know, it is amazing that when all the missionaries have to leave the nationals get more under the burden and do the job. Should we not continue to think in our strategy with all of our heart on how we can get nationals involved even when we are there? How we can at times be working our way out of a job to get other people involved? I believe it is possible. Pray for the church in Iran.

The Arab world involves many, many countries. Sudan, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, where our small team had a couple of wonderful days of encouraging ministry and where others have been able to visit. The whole Gulf area, one leader felt that the most significant letter I sent this year was my North African letter, which I dictated from the back of the old bus traveling through Algeria or Tunisia.

If you haven't read that letter, perhaps you could borrow it from your field leader or request it. I don't even know if we have copies around. But I still stand behind what I said in that letter.

I just re-read it some weeks ago myself, and it was quite a joke. I also had many, many feet of film from that trip that probably because of the weakness of our audiovisual department will never be produced. But I will at least look at that footage and those shots from Morocco and Algeria, from Syria, even from Saudi Arabia, where we were arrested for using a camera.

A very interesting experience. Fortunately, an Indian working in Saudi Arabia rescued us. And believe me, the Saudis were very upset with our film making.

We didn't know that you were not allowed to use a camera in Saudi Arabia. And so I stand behind what I said in that letter. I was overwhelmed with the challenge of Egypt.

With all the talk about recruits for the Arab world, let us get down to earth. The greatest resource of recruits for the Arab world lies within the Arab world. We need men and women who can mobilize those resources.

To think about bringing people in who have to work on their third or fourth language. Before they can begin working among Arabs. And to fail to have an effective, dynamic, ongoing program in the Arab-speaking churches is to me something that I find difficult to understand.

We have seen already Arabs getting involved in OM internationally. We know Kamal has this vision. And we must take further steps to help, to be a catalyst, to train, to do everything possible to mobilize especially the resources of the Egyptian church.

And that was part of the vision that increased. I know many of you already have it in my own heart through those days in the Arab world. We were just given a copy of pseudo-discipleship in Arabic in this one youth meeting in Egypt that I spoke in.

A man, very excited. Gave me, or asked me if I could produce that book. And Neil Brinkley was with me.

We sort of gave him the go-ahead. We found out that he published this book in Arabic financing it from within the country. He developed the solution to the Rubik cube and sold it on the streets or somewhere and used the profits to publish pseudo-discipleship.

In traveling through North Africa, I was amazed at the possibilities there if people speak French. We must somehow mobilize French-speaking people to get involved in North Africa. It doesn't necessarily have to be with OM, but it's an enormous open door.

It was great to spend extra days in Jordan trying to pray for visas to Kuwait. What a test. I've got to cut the time, so I'll just cut some of the side talk.

But let's continue to uphold that just tiny work as far as numbers of people in Jordan, realizing it is a catalyst effect throughout the church in Jordan that is hard to measure. And of course, the revisit of Lagos to Jordan is another exciting thing I'd love to talk more about. I think it's exciting that with such a small number of people in Cyprus, they are able to coordinate such an extensive and such a fruitful work throughout the Arab countries.

Praying now, and let's pray with them, about re-entering Tunisia with a small team. The Sudan, a place of great outward tragedy this year with the homegoing of Willy, again, is a field that we have seen fits very much into the OM pattern. Not everything fits as well into the OM way as other things.

We all know that. But if you just compare the number of people in the advanced session that I spoke at this past week with the number of people in the basic session, you realize that in our year program, many are new. Beware of little generalizations as to why people are not with us four years later.

Do some real research. Really get to know people, the problems of people, the problems in the churches, the problems of support, before you make a generalization why more people don't go back long-term to this field or that field. And maybe more do go back somewhere else.

There are many complications that I have been researching and talking about, praying about, have even been invited to write a book on the subject, that are very, very complicated. We have now 400 to 500 people within OM who are committed longer term. That doesn't mean we have a noose on their neck, that they can never leave without a triple-decker guilt trip.

But it does mean that they're feeling this is the way they should go. And most of you are in this room because at least that is somewhat, if not entirely, in your thinking. And that, to me, is something we need to keep in mind.

However, it feels like Sudan can absorb new people. They need some experience, they need some training, but they can absorb some new people and we are needing evangelistic thrusts that can absorb new people. Everybody wants Apostle Paul.

We won't have very much difficulty if we put Dennis Alexander up for grabs. Don't want to get him confused with Paul. But when it comes to absorbing some of the newer people, it is a great problem.

Probably we will discuss to some degree. Well, we continue to move on, not wanting to forget the little land south of Lebanon and all that we're attempting to do there with both a thrust among Arabs and a thrust among Jews. And a steady, encouraging growth in that work.

Our brother David is not able to be with us at this conference, but it is good to have our brother George with us to work among the Arabs. Turkey, of course, to the north, I'm sure you all know, is not part of the Arab world. Dennis Alexander, the coordinator for the Middle East, is the leader of this whole area.

They are separate countries, separate cultures, same as Iran. And let's continue to cry out to God concerning the Iran-Iraq war. There's been an increase, I believe, in the work in Turkey.

There's been some real encouragements, especially when we include the thrust in Berlin. And the fact that we continue to have longer-term people that keep pressing on in Turkey, where some are coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And we must understand, one of the other great problems we wrestle with in OM is that certain fields are far more exciting.

There is more variety. There is more happening. There are more instant results.

There are more answers to prayer visibly every day than other fields. There are other fields that are the William Carey-type situations where we need plotters and where the work often is routine and where it can become incredibly difficult just to go on one week after the next doing the same work. Often with very little breakthrough.

If we are going to make an impact in the Muslim world, we already are, we are going to have to ask the Lord with all of our hearts not just to give us plotters but to make some of us plotters. That we will be able to make the transfer, some of us, from a kind of work which is quick and where there's daily results and where there's a lot of variety. This day it's one thing.

The next day it's something else. We are going to have to make that shift into the kind of work where you can hear the words of a great man of God ringing in your mind. Come and die.

Come and die. And I believe that's the only way we're going to make the impact on Turkey, that great priority field in our thinking. We move quickly west into Europe.

When you're in Turkey, you stumble. You're already in Europe. And for the sake of security, I will not say much about GE.

But I just wish I could talk to you for five hours about GE. If they ever change their rules, I will really let you have something that will turn you on. And half of you will be signing up for miscellaneous tours in miscellaneous nations to do miscellaneous things.

That you'll only find out the results in heaven. Praise God for that continued thrust in that part of the world which involves many, many different countries. As we come into the heart of Europe, we get into Austria.

And I'm amazed how people sometimes in their minds, because they don't understand what's going on, they don't think much is going on. Some countries are more easily definable. You know one of the main thoughts the Lord gave me last night? If you're a good communicator, if you're articulated, if you can express yourself fluently, you will go places in this crazy earth.

But if somehow you stumble around with your words, you say a wrong thing at the wrong time, you don't know how to express yourself, and maybe at your greatest, most courageous effort of trying to say something it still goes wrong, you're going to have a rough time. And you're going to have a rough time in Operation Mobilization. Send me your name, I'll pray for you.

Because we are a movement that highly esteems the well-articulated communicator. And we fail to realize that the gift of the tongue is only a small part of the Christian life. And that a man who may not be able to express things, he may not ever even get into one of these meetings.

The weaker brother, the guy who goofs, the guy who maybe even gets asked to leave OM, he may have a heart bigger than yours or mine. I've met quite a few such people. Maybe that's why I tend to gravitate toward what the world classifies as the underdogs.

Maybe that's why I continue to pray about this new movement that I want to create of OM dropouts, to band together as even a greater army of flunkies and show somehow the world that God can use weak, unarticulated people who do sometimes say the wrong thing at the wrong time, or maybe worse, they're scared to death to say anything. I could greatly relate with a little boy in ET who had somehow difficulty getting on with his big brother who was an outspoken loudmouth and found the little ET, extraterrestrial, funny little man from outer space who's destined to replace Mickey Mouse as a far more loving, interesting creature. Have you ever yearned within the OM year to somehow get out of it all and develop your own little fantasy world of more pleasant people who more quickly forgive and who are not so caught up with strategy and policy and this thing and that thing and maybe will just talk to you? Have you ever found the need to just talk to somebody in OM? Have you ever found OM a lonely place where an army of people seem to be gallivanting at unnamed speeds to various strategies and to various goals and sometimes a new recruit is crying out saying, hey, I'd like to just talk to somebody and not necessarily about the social policy.

God is working in these small places that don't get so much attention. Austria is seeing souls come to Christ. There's controversy in Austria.

Some would like to do more church planting. You've got the church planting mentality, the Lutheran mentality. You've got different ideas which is true in most fields.

But I believe that in a country where we are not necessarily planting churches directly, churches are being born, fellowships are being born indirectly as a result of what we are doing because men are winning, are being won to Christ and generally when they are won to Christ, they form into church bodies and fellowships. You realize that that is happening all the time. Most people don't remain isolated Christians.

Just because there's some in OM because we're dealing with young people doesn't mean as a whole by the time people reach 30 that there's great armies of people that are not involved in any fellowship or any church. Now what kind of church? That's another story. And I think when people are being led to Christ, souls are being won, then churches and fellowships will be born.

I was thrilled to have time with Leo Proulx. I asked him very bluntly, you know, are people being won to Christ? Are people going on? He answered me very, well, not bluntly but very straightforward that people were. People were.

People are coming to Christ. Is this not one of our greatest concerns? That people come to Christ and that they go on and that's happening in Austria, in Belgium. It's happening in France.

I'm running out of time. Other years, I've talked more about some countries than I've talked about others. But let's praise God for the breakthroughs in those countries and in the Netherlands where recruits, it seems to me, have doubled this year.

Whereas our Kilp Streetmen, what's the statistic from last year to this year? That's why I called on you. Last year, after you increased to 15,000 in EW, Anyway, it's greatly increased and that was a definite answer, definite answer to prayer. And of course, we all stand just amazed at the growth in Germany.

One of the things that's so exciting about the Maasbach operation is its amalgamation with Germany. These people are not sitting in Maasbach pushing papers from one desk to the other. They're out taking meetings.

They're training Germans. They're involved in the Easter crusade. It's an amalgamation in Germany similar to ICT's amalgamation with Great Britain in England.

So that administration and management can take place side by side with building a national work in Germany. And the example they have set in people learning German is a challenge to all of our hearts. I'm looking forward to getting to visit the mill as I've only seen it in its unregenerate state.

God has done some great things and the number of summer recruits from Germany and the growth in the year program is exciting. France, again, a main effort during the summer crusade causes me to say that Peter Maiden came up to me in a very excited way reading over his feedback from the summer crusade. Don't know how he expressed it but basically saying that he's just so convinced that these summer crusades continue to turn people totally upside down for Christ.

Sure, we know some don't make it. We know there are always the negatives. Seems to me that this year the team leaders, unless I haven't gotten enough feedback yet, generally did a little better than last year.

Again, they didn't do bad last year. And we praise God for the ongoing thrust, especially in France. The USA has not been a year of great growth as far as numbers of people but I think all of us who try to evaluate the work there see a tremendous consolidation, a foundation that is going to enable that work to better deal with all the Americans all over the world and to see more and better quality recruits coming out of the USA.

And let's continue to cry out to the Lord and to not think it's some form of semi-sin for a leader to go back to the USA and take meetings with a work so strong in other places. I don't think there's a problem of the USA any longer dominating Operation Mobilization, at least for the next couple of years if three years from now we see some phenomenal growth, 600 Americans coming in the summer and saying, well, we'll talk about that at the time. We have not yet experienced the stampede despite a lot more input, Urbana, ship visits, Operation World.

In fact, perhaps this year, Dave's first main year has been a year of counting the cost, that it maybe costs more to get people out of the United States than some of us have thought when we make these little generalizations. And then Great Britain, where amazing this summer we had over 400 recruits. I checked that statistic out with the Manchester leader.

That is amazing. It's a great answer to prayer. And I've written here in my notes, let us thank God for the anointed ministry of Peter and Nigel in Britain, not to play down the other ministries.

And they are anointed as well. The Lord anoints all kinds of people taking meetings. I believe a high percentage of people in OM can take certain kinds of meetings.

But I think we should back in a stronger way the dynamic ministry of Peter and Nigel. I especially think of Nigel because he is somewhat not seen by most of us throughout the year. He's not in the field leaders meeting, though in my mind, people with such a ministry and such a vital part of OM are as much a part of the field leaders than anybody who's in there.

There are different ministries. There are some people that don't want to be in field leader sessions. They don't want to be in administration.

They have a heart to preach and to evangelize. And such people must have a vital central part in OM's forward movement, regardless of whether they're in on all the discussions or have voting power in the chamber of chambers. And I believe, and I've written this in my Bible, that God wants to give OM at least 50 anointed men and women who have a public ministry.

And there is scope in OM for women to have a public ministry certainly among women. More controversial maybe among men, depending on how it's done. Let's at least agree on what we can agree on.

What a challenge. Don't we understand from church history that often one anointed, spirit-filled, crucified man, though he may be a weak, feeble vessel, has often been able to take on a thousand for Christ. OM's tendency has been to be a team movement.

And that's great. And I still lean largely in that direction. But I believe God wants to also give individuals within the work anointed ministries.

They will always be working together with people and so they can be considered almost a team. What a challenge the work in Britain has been, all the many aspects. STL, I think, could say, they've gone again through a hard year with Jerry Davey in and out of the hospital.

With the financial pressure, inflation, people not paying their bills, including a few OM teams, it gets interesting. Shortage of manpower, again, hits STL. They need our prayers, our cooperation.

They need some of our returning people. And that stands to be a great challenge. There's so many other lands I want to mention, but our time has passed.

Let me spare a few extra minutes because we did get a little bit of a late start in order to mention Mexico. Steady growth. One of the best Christmas crusades ever.

Dick Griffin is with us, finally taking the step to delegate a large chunk of the work to Samuel Castro to get out of the bookshop and may finally, after 20-some years, be able to spend some months in the USA. And we're excited, of course, when we think also of the ship visit to Mexico and the fact that the ship and existing OM fields can have crusades together. Of course it will be sometimes more difficult.

That's natural. It's easier for me to go and preach in a non-OM conference than an OM conference. It's as simple as that.

In an OM conference, there are other emotions, there are other things, there are people's philosophies, there are all kinds of things involved when you're at home. I can minister to other people's children probably better than my own phrase. So maybe you can help me with my phrase.

And so, of course, when the ship comes into an OM field with existing philosophy, existing ideas, existing strong mindedness, there are going to be some questions. We don't need to panic about that. It's as

normal as putting butter or margarine on your bread.

But let's continue to believe God, especially with Lagos coming to Europe, that we are going to stand together in nation after nation, not when it's just all blessing. Anybody can stand when it's all blessing, but when the problems come and the struggles and the differences of opinion and all that may be involved. And praise the Lord for so much that's happened in these different cooperative efforts like the Dula's visit to Mexico, the Dula's visit to the USA.

A word about Spain and Southern Europe. Simply to say that this is where, of course, Jonathan's accident took place. Could it not be that the Lord is showing us through the accident that Satan will resist every effort to retake Spain? We need to get the Lord's mind about Spain.

It's been a hard year and we need to pray as Lagos goes into Spain, as Dula has thoughts of Spain, and to especially highly esteem our brother Jonathan as he has to carry much of the load for that country. Praise God for an excellent summer crusade in Spain. Praise God that all three of these brothers are alive after that accident.

Two of them are bounding around like it never happened. And I believe that as we pray for Spain, we should remember the wide number, wide range of XOMers. One of them recently, for almost the first time in Spain, was interviewed on a national television program and was able to present something of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a man who caught his vision and was trained here in our midst.

We thank God for the ministry of Daniel Gonzalez. We thank God for what he's doing in Spain. In Italy, again, a small summer crusade has gone on.

And of course, things are happening in Portugal, in Greece. We wouldn't want to forget Southern Ireland when we think of the work in Europe, a small work hidden under O.M. Great Britain umbrella, sort of a misplaced person in some ways, because it is Southern Ireland, nothing to do really technically with Great Britain. A small church has been born.

Yes, O.M. teams, even made up largely of short-term people, can plant churches. They can't plant perfect churches. And if you know who plants perfect churches, I surely would like to study what they're doing.

As someone very much interested in church planting. So we praise the Lord for that. And Scandinavia, battling on, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, which is not Scandinavia.

Finland is only Finland and will always only be Finland, unless the Southern neighbors get over ambitious. I have such a burden for some of these semi-forgotten places. Don't really think they're forgotten.

But I think Finland could use a little more of our prayer support. Maybe a few more of you want to fellowship with OSCO and see if there's something you can do. I look forward to getting up there again next Easter.

And I believe the increase of recruits from Norway is very encouraging. We were hoping that Ola Stefansson and his wife would be at this conference. I don't see them, but we would not want to forget Denmark.

And we would just make all of you aware that in a number of cases it's not getting any easier to get recruits. Before you make a generalization about any decrease of recruits, realize the winds of

denominationalism that are blowing strong in these days. The anti-parachurch winds that are blowing strong.

The endless gossip about Operation Mobilization. I've just got three more pages on my desk against some little thing in one of my tapes. Uh, I tell you, some of these verbal tapes are being used.

But some of them, maybe we need to be careful who we give them to. Because there are people who just do not agree with some of our philosophy. And when they hear that different kinds of people, different groups are working together in love and unity, they decide they cannot work with us.

When they hear our philosophy about divorce, which is this one is about, they will no longer work with us. And many, many churches are startled beyond words when they hear some of our practices and policies. I don't know how we're ever going to overcome that total.

But we need a lot of wisdom. A lot of wisdom as we face a rapidly more complex church scene. We don't want to forget Australia.

Bob Decker's in our midst. Amazing increase of recruits over the past years. I was with a movement, a leader of a movement from him that was born in Australia.

And I mentioned that we had more than 20 recruits. He almost fell over. He said, we have one from Australia.

An Australian-born movement with structure. And that's had a fair amount of coverage. So we stand in thanks to the Lord for Australia and New Zealand, a separate nation, much further from Australia, than you think.

People do not go on rowing expeditions from Australia to New Zealand, despite what your map may look like. So we thank the Lord for what is happening there. And then Argentina.

Praise the Lord. Just at the right time. Father, why don't you just lead us in prayer.

We've just been covering almost the whole world. Thank you, Lord, for what you've done. We only have Argentina and the ships to mention.

And I wonder if you could give us, just lead us in thanks. I'm sure the Lord will give you some words. Father, we do want to just praise and thank you for your multiple goodness to us this past year.

We thank you for the work and lives. We thank you for your tremendous patience with us, teaching us, leading us, providing. We praise you for the family into which you've put us.

We thank you, Lord, for the triumphs of various teams and lives changed and advances made. Lord, we praise you for the various tests and trials through which you have worked more deeply in our own hearts and lives. We do bless you and praise you.

We recognize that all things come from your hand. And any good, any advance is purely grace and mercy from yourself. And together, we want to unite our hearts and bless you and praise you for what you have done.

Lord, at the very best, we're just unprofitable servants. And yet in your grace, you've chosen us and you've kept us and you've used us at least in some little way. Let me thank you that we can be a part of your plan, of your work.

We belong to you. Oh, God, be exalted, glorified and magnified. In this coming year, do even more for your praise and glory.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. We're just about really finished almost with this session.

We plea with just a little flexibility on the time. I think the coffee will stay hot. As we just close by mentioning a few other places where the Lord has answered prayer this year.

I think of Canada. The number of recruits has dropped. The finance in Canada has one of the highest per capita givings in OM has continued to flow in an amazing way.

And we believe that God's hand is on the work there to, once again, this coming year, bounce back with these recruits. It's a huge nation. It's hard to get to the places where the recruits are.

And with our effort into Quebec, perhaps some of the other work slowed up a little bit. Brother Bird sends his apologies for not being here. And I'm sure Brother Profetti would love to be with us as well.

I've had many letters from him. And if I had accepted the invitation, would have been preaching to a large mission conference of many groups in Argentina during the war. But I was unable to accept it even before I knew the war was coming.

I think down there, what I understand, they think George Verwer is British. I'm not sure it'd be any better if I tell them I'm American. But how we thank God, not only for Argentina, but for the young people from other parts of Latin America, including, I believe, four Brazilians who just flew in the other day.

And it was certainly one of the highlights of the year. Many of you have heard the tape to be able to visit and be with these people on Dulas in Mexico. I want to mention Luxembourg because we don't like to forget the small places.

And God is doing a work there through Hank DeFighter and those who work with him. And I don't want to forget Nepal. And if I went, I had the time, there are other nations that I'd like to mention where God has answered prayer.

We're involved in literature projects or film projects where things are happening because of your prayers, because of your work. And we praise the Lord for it. I think of the tremendous growth in Malaysia and Singapore.

Maybe not the numbers have increased on the summer program compared to last summer, but because of those who stay longer term, the continued growth of the whole work of Malaysia and Singapore and then other countries in that part of the world where we're getting people. We don't want Koreans to feel left out of the OM conference or people from the Philippines or people from Japan. There may only be a few, but when you run across them, maybe you could give them a little extra welcome because believe me, to be here as the only person from your country can be a rather traumatic experience.

And lastly, as it says in Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 11, what should we say then about the Tulas and the Lagos? We have a whole section in this conference where we will hear about that ministry. Other fields do

not have that opportunity. There just is not that time.

But I think as we look back over this past year again, we see continued growth in unity between the ships and between the ships and the rest of OM. And we see many, many people coming to Christ. And God just pouring His grace out upon leaders who have enormous and complicated responsibilities.

And we're excited about the possibilities for Lagos and Tulas in the future. We could spend time in Thanksgiving concerning every port those two ships have visited. I mean, each port is a major event.

Each port is almost like a 1962 summer crusade. And I think of all that was in its day, the 62 summer crusade. There are 150 people on that or something like that.

And so I think we just do have a lot to thank God for. Only because of time, I'll bring this to a close here in Thanksgiving. Father, we do thank you especially for bringing Jonathan to us at this time.

And for working in the doctors and for working in his body. We think in your timing, if it'd been last weekend, it may not have been possible. But in your timing, even though he was able to be with us in August, because of the further operation, it might not be that he could be with us today.

And we know he doesn't want to be exalted. And we know he's just Jonathan. But we thank you for your work and your continued pouring of grace and healing in his body.

And we believe that in these days, we are going to experience great fellowship together. As we praise you and thank you and give you the glory, even in the midst of the testings and the trials and the difficulties. Lord, there are many other things that popped to my mind.

Our sister Mari Hutzdilling, whose husband went so quickly to be with you. Our sister Ruth Crawley, who when I talked to her on the phone, felt Jack was probably just away visiting OM. But who in fact is now with you.

And even outside of OM, our hearts just stand to gasp at some of the trials and testings like the trial of our friend and brother Keith Green and those 12 so quickly taken to be with you through that airplane accident. And Lord, for those that there's not time to mention fields and lands where you've done great things and maybe have slipped my feeble mind, we give you the praise and we give you the glory. And we never want to take any of that.

Lead us in our time of fellowship together in Jesus name. Amen.

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