

Simple Lifestyle 1983

by George Verwer

Simple Lifestyle is about living unselfishly and obeying God, but it must be balanced and contextualized within the broader picture of world evangelism and the Great Commission.

Duration: 1:10:12

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 10:21, Acts 4:34-35, Philippians 4:13, Philippians 4:19

Topics: "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God and evangelizing the world. He mentions the example of a local businessman who could release a significant amount of money for world evangelism through his vision and well-prepared messages. The preacher highlights the Great Commission given by Jesus in the New Testament, which prioritizes spreading the gospel over other concerns like lifestyle or political revolution. He also references the early Christians in the book of Acts who sold their possessions and shared with those in need, emphasizing the importance of unselfish living.

Transcript

For other people who write to me and want to know what do I think about Simple Lifestyle, it is certainly one of the most discussed subjects in our day. When OM first launched out with the concept of Simple Lifestyle in North America 25 years ago, I tell you, we were a lonely crowd. And it was the area where we were often misunderstood and generally accused of being ascetics or certainly extreme.

Now we have leading evangelical writers who turn out whole books on this subject. And it's amazing the change, though the majority of people remain the same. There is a tremendous shift in thinking.

And that's why some of you are probably here, though you have a wide choice of interesting seminars at this particular time. And in some situations, Simple Lifestyle has become the in thing. We're going to grow our own food.

It often fits in with some of the emphasis on ecology. Is that how you say it? Ecology? And not wasting things. I think it's very, very important to have a grasp of this subject.

Now, no doubt you've already read some scriptures. Forgive me if I overlap. But I would like to read Acts chapter 4 again, where we read about these early Christians.

We know Acts chapter 2. Have you looked at Acts 4? They gave great witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was upon them. Neither was there any among them that lacked.

Now that is amazing. Verse 34 in chapter 4 of the book of Acts. Neither was there any among them that lacked.

For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold. I'm often reminded of Mark 10.21 where we have the case of the rich young ruler. We won't turn to it, but it is an interesting passage to study.

I would also commend to you the book I mentioned last night, *The Golden Cow*, as a book giving further insight. I think in some ways more balanced insight than some books that sometimes tend to get rather political. And laying them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted the son of Constellation, a Levite in the country of Cyprus, a great challenge for Cyprus, having lands, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. We also find Peter, earlier in that chapter, able to say, silver and gold have I none. And of course we also have chapter 2 where we find them in verse 45 selling their possessions and helping meet the need of others.

The emphasis and the term we used in the early days of our work, before I think we talked about simple lifestyle, was unselfish living. To me, I still prefer that way of expressing it. That is, Christians were called to unselfish living.

Not that that terminology answers all the questions. Of course it doesn't. But God is concerned about the heart.

I'm sure we can understand that not everybody is going to be called to grow their own vegetables. Not everybody is going to be able to move out of the cities where they can put into practice a lot of the things that are recommended by the simple lifestyle movement, or at least some people in that movement. Before I go in and make comments on this memo just a little bit and then open for questions, let me tell you that my commitment to this way of life has never changed from almost the earliest years.

But it has come into balance. I shared with you last night just how extreme I got in this area. I didn't believe in having anything.

I literally believed one box for a table, another box for the chair, a board and a sleeping bag for the bed, some orange crates for the cupboards, because your wife has got to have cupboards, you've got to have furniture, orange crates. I've never met anyone, apart from a few, who went as far as some of us went in this area of simple lifestyle. Of course, we got not only into the extremes, we got at times into the ridiculous, and we won't go into the details.

But I get amused sometimes because some of the people I talk to are interested in this subject and feel they're living this way. When I find out how they're living, to me it seems like they're living in luxury, and yet they're on the simple lifestyle bandwagon. So I've written a few interesting letters to people about this subject.

One of the books that we pushed and came out not in the early days but in the middle days of the lab was Beyond the Rat Race. Excellent book. I didn't agree with everything, but it was quite a strong book in its day.

One of the older books that influenced us in O.M. is a book called Christian Devotedness. Now this is strong, this is strong. He again didn't have the simple lifestyle terminology, but the message of this book led to the writing of this book.

And again, their emphasis was not simple lifestyle for the sake of simple lifestyle or simple lifestyle to save a few pennies to send to the food relief program or some of the other things that are more important today. Some of the concepts concerning community, that community is the unselfish road and the individual, you know, individuality, that's the selfish road. And all that kind of thing.

These men were more interested in obeying the Lord. That was their big message. They wanted to obey God.

If God said jump, they wanted to jump. And as they studied the scriptures in their desire to obey God and to obey God's word, they came across the tough passages. Like Luke 14.33, except you forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple.

I mean, one would automatically assume that if you follow that to its logical end, you would be living on a fairly simple lifestyle. If you carried it into the absurd and the extreme, without it being brought into balance by other scriptures, like Philippians, God will supply all of your needs according to his glory in Christ Jesus, you would end up, of course, with nothing. You'd forsake your clothes.

So this has been something we have wrestled with from the earliest days, even before there ever was a true discipleship. This teaching within OM did not grow out of true discipleship. True discipleship grew out of this emphasis that just came upon us as young people because we were so committed to world evangelism.

Our forsaking of possessions, I remember when I sold my binoculars, I remember when I started to sell everything else I had my first year at college, it came because we wanted money for missions. We had a reason. We felt the most important thing in the world was that people had Bibles.

I was already raising money for scriptures before I was converted. And when I was in my first year of college, I took a job waiting tables at about 35 cents an hour, which even then was ridiculous because I wanted that money for missions. I then took a job cleaning toilets because I got some more money for missions.

And it was this thrust, world evangelism, another 100 Bibles, another 10,000 Gospels. When we first went to Mexico, which was after my first year at college, we didn't have any money. It was logical.

We needed to economize. We didn't read any of this heavy stuff today about how much wheat we could feed to the starving in Somalia if we didn't eat beef in Texas. I'm still convinced that that argument is semi-ridiculous, but we were certainly not into that heavy kind of charts and graphs, the United Nations reports.

We just weren't that exposed. We just had the Bible, and the Bible seemed to indicate that Christians were unselfish people and that they ought to give, and yet none of us ever went into asceticism. Don't think.

I'm just not the type. None of us ever went into asceticism. We may have boarded on it, and when we got married, we may have sort of pushed our life into it because, you see, if you're enjoying something, and it may seem a bit slim to others, but you're finding it all right.

You're having your ice cream when you want it. You're comfortable. I've never been anti-comfort, but the person next to you may be uncomfortable and being pushed into asceticism without you knowing it.

So the background is that we wanted to print Gospels. We wanted to reach the world for Christ, and then we wanted to go to Mexico. We didn't have any money.

We were selling Christian books door to door, and it just seemed, you know, we needed to live on the barest essentials. That's the term we've used in OM more. Let's live on the barest essentials.

Then you got another problem. What's essential? Now, we were single young men. I was 19.

Dale, I think, was 20. My roommate, who was selling Christian books with me there in the early days, I think he was the same age as me. What do we need? We didn't need much to live on.

So we sold almost everything we had. On the other hand, we found ourselves praying. I had an old Henry J. car.

I didn't forsake that. It wasn't worth much anymore. But we found ourselves praying that God would give us a vehicle.

Now, the moment you step into a car, in one sense, you've left a simple lifestyle. A vehicle was probably one of the greatest, most unusual, radical discoveries that man has ever made. Perhaps the next one was the airplane.

I heard about how they discovered the airplane from Paul Harvey. It's an amazing story. Some man in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, came home with a new toy.

And this was before the airplane. And this toy flew. And his two sons, they never forgot this little flying toy.

And they were the Wright brothers. And that led, at least, to the airplane. But the car... How do you drive a car and plane in the sense of an Indian villager? In the sense of an African villager? The moment you're in that car, you've just leaped beyond most of the people in the world.

They're not on a bicycle yet. The majority of people that are living in these huge countries like India and vast areas of the central Sahara, they're simple. They get a little hot.

And they've got a little pot. And they may be fortunate to get some wood. I was in a third world area recently where everything that was growing was being torn down.

No, I was being told about this. I was there as well. It's the Pakistan border with the Afghan refugees.

They're getting everything that will burn. And they're destroying all the woods and all the trees. You know, we've got people that think that's a sin.

The ecology nuts. How can anybody tear down a tree? These people are starving. You're going to go out there with your little tape recording and your little lecture and your graphs? No doubt you'll take your video recorder as well and give them a lecture on simple lifestyle.

They're starving. They want something to eat. So they're not going to be interested in your simple lifestyle debate on trees.

They're going to cut that tree down. Now, of course, people are like Gordon Magnet. They're all working away and they're going to try to teach them solar cooking.

Great. It seems to me we can learn something from every movement. Every movement.

Today, the big movement in Germany today, this is anti-war day in Germany. Because this is the day when the Germans took Poland. And that was the beginning of a very big war.

And so they're demonstrating against the nuclear arms. And there are so many movements today. And I have a feeling that the simple lifestyle movement as such, as much as I've read about it, is off-center.

It's off-center. It's not, you know, right here where the Bible is. You can ask questions about that later on.

But I believe we can learn something from it. And I don't believe we should be harsh. And I believe we can read some of their books.

And I praise God that it is a voice in the church today. Because so much has gone this way. Now it's a great controversy.

You have the book Rich Christians in a Hungry World. Is that the name of that book? And then you have the book Guilt Trip Manipulators. The big, thick counterattack by the right-wingers against that Rich Christians in a Hungry World book.

What is the biggest problem in this when you're, say, within the United States? Politics. Once you touch politics, as the more left-wing simple lifestyle people have done, you know, you're going to have... Because especially the United States is probably about 60% right-wing. That would be a generalization.

And if they read six chapters in that book and they seem a little interesting, and then they get to the left-wing political chapter, they are going to burn the book. They are going to write books against it. They are going to scream.

And this is another reason that in OM we have not wanted to take a political stance. Now that's harder today than ever. And there are people that write OM off just like that.

Many Americans, they write OM off just like that. Because we are not interested in political revolution, even non-violent. Not that we're not sympathetic.

Not that we feel that there shouldn't be an emphasis on human rights. And that there shouldn't be or couldn't be perhaps some kind of redistribution of wealth. You know, all that kind of thing.

It's a vast subject, isn't it? You just get in it. The more you get in it, the bigger it gets. But because God has called us to preach Christ.

And as we study the Bible, it just seems here in the New Testament, because if you take things out of context in the Old Testament, you can get in so many problems. But as you look at the New Testament, you look at Jesus, and you look at the Great Commission, the final words the Lord Jesus gave before he went into heaven. It was not a command about lifestyle.

It was not a command about political revolution. It was not a command about a lot of these other things people are all hepped up about. It was, ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the innermost parts of the earth.

And I feel that must be our priority. And it was this emphasis, world evangelism, the Great Commission, obeying Jesus Christ, that caused us to realize that the simple lifestyle, living on the barest essentials, unselfish living, was only part of a very big picture. We soon ran into a number of problems.

This memo comes as a result of 20 years of experience. That doesn't mean, you know, I've had so much experience and you poor under-experienced people, you know, I need more experiences. Experiences can also be a bad teacher.

They're not always a good teacher. You develop prejudices, you get more biased, you know. So, you know, this is not the great voice of experience.

But this is just, when I put this out, a few miscellaneous thoughts. I was just sitting somewhere, I got probably a fly in my ear and I went to scratch it. Then I started to hear this and I dictated it into my dictaphone.

And I sent it to a few leaders. Jonathan McCroskey was very upset about this memo. He's always been a harder liner than I have been in some of these areas, but he's definitely come into balance.

He wrote, we do not distribute this memo widely within the work. Well, I don't know what the official policy is on this controversial memo. It's got my name on it.

But you have a copy and I thought I would make a few comments and open for questions. In O.M. we still believe in forsaking all, but we still believe God supplies all. We believe the great example of unselfish living is the life of Jesus Christ.

He did not accumulate things and wealth, and to me that's an example, that he wasn't married. I believe that if Jesus Christ had married, that he would have provided something for his wife. He did have some clothing that I don't think was rags.

So I think he would have provided his wife with a couple of nice pieces of clothing. Forgive me if I'm leaping into wild imagination. Obviously the Lord Jesus didn't plan on getting married.

He didn't get married. You know what the atheists accuse him of, but we won't get into that. But to me the life of the Lord Jesus, we cannot separate that from the theology of Jesus.

We all owe this emphasis on what Jesus taught and the Sermon on the Mount and the theology of Jesus. And it seems to me, and this is where your simple lifestyle people really do get upset with the people on the other side. It just seems that so much today is a lot of hot air.

Everybody's talking about being like Christ. But when it comes to actually living the way he actually lived, there are not too many people lining up to do that. He said, I have nowhere to lay my head.

I have nowhere to lay my head. How my heart was touched as Brother Brewster in the prayer meeting last night shared that he and his wife, wherever they are, that's home. But you know, God has to give you grace for that.

I see a number of scriptures that indicate that the Christians should live at peace among themselves, take up a secular job, and just get on with normal living. Don't you find, Peter, some scriptures like that? So they're not just scriptures that indicate we're an army. The army illustration, like a lot of other biblical comparisons and some of its figurative speech, it only goes so far.

Because there are other scriptures. There are other scriptures. That's why we keep pleading with people to balance.

The balance of scripture. Not mixing the world with Christian teaching. No.

Mixing one scripture with another scripture. That's what we're talking about. Some people don't like the word balance.

They think compromise. But no. It's letting one truth bring another truth into balance.

And there are a number of verses. There are a number of areas in the New Testament where it seems to indicate it's perfectly biblical for a person to settle down and to work, take care of the widows, make sure everybody's having enough food. Acts chapter 6. But there are other scriptures that indicate that some people should be on the move.

And then there's an example. The Apostle Paul. Certainly radical change seems to come when the person gets married.

This book confuses people. They don't realize he's a bachelor. He's seeing it through the bachelor eyes.

He's even calling people here mildly to a single life. And, you know, once I was married, I had to change. There were other scriptures I had to deal with.

There are other examples in 2,000 years of church history I had to examine and I had to think about. And that, I think, is very, very important. Well, let's just look at a few of these points.

Under point 1, I say, not only in terms of evangelism do we have to spend a large sense of money, especially when we think of using the mass media, but also this, in turn, will make such demands on our life that a certain standard of living and, in most cases, certain pieces of equipment, some of which might be considered luxury, will be necessary just to survive when we are in the midst of this kind of warfare. From the very earliest days of O.M., we started purchasing equipment. Who got me into having a dictaphone? A dictaphone? I wrote my letters, some of them even on toilet paper to save money.

Postage, because it was light paper. And I went out to see William MacDonald. He challenged me.

He had a secretary. He was in a very nice office, old Bill. Very nice office.

President of the Mass Bible Store, couldn't believe it, had a carpet. And I went out to see Bill. And he challenged me about getting a dictaphone.

I've had dictaphones ever since. Now, how can you justify a dictaphone? It costs a hundred pounds. If you get the machine the typists use, they cost more, the transcribers.

Immediately you're moving out of what some people call simple lifestyle. You know, man, living in Mauritania I've got a dictaphone. The moment you get into this equality thing, it's a dead end street.

It's a dead end street with a half a ton of guilt. Because God hasn't made us all equal. He's put us in totally different situations.

Why do some people like Billy Graham seem to have so many talents? I mean, this guy seems to have all the talents. He's an administrator. He's a preacher.

He's an organizer. He's a Bible teacher. I mean, why is it so many people I meet don't seem to have one-tenth of what he has? You know, what are you doing, God? Why don't you be a little more equal in the talent business? Isn't that where we're born? People are born in this world, I'll tell you, and my heart aches for them.

They don't have a chance from birth to death. They don't have a chance. Just coming to this conference gives you more of a chance than they'll ever have all their life.

Now, you can blame it all on the devil or you can blame it on their grandfather. You know, I know the theological explanations, but you cannot say there's equality in this world. And somehow, I just feel God wants us to be more realistic and to amalgamate idealism with realism or being idealistic with being realistic.

Do you know, in the whole thing of feeding people and relief work, which I believe in, even though there are problems, even though I've read and listened to the arguments against relief, against food aid, powerful arguments, that make me very happy in what I'm doing, but I don't want to condemn what they're doing. But one of the reasons, one of the biggest problems these people find, they can't find honest administrators to handle this. The greatest need in the relief program right now are people like Tony Land down there with a cross program in Kenya and Sudan.

That's the greatest need. They can get money. Governments have got money.

Christian groups have money. But they can't find dedicated people who will go out and administrate. What good is money without administrators? What good is money without dedicated people who can think through the problems? Do you hear about the rice that was airlifted into Bangladesh during the crisis? They airlifted it into Bangladesh.

It would be sold to the market, taken on the oxcarts back to India, sold to the relief agencies, airlifted into Bangladesh, back to the oxcarts over the border into India, sold to the relief agencies. I mean there are a hundred problems. There are a hundred problems.

And I feel that a lot, especially people who have not traveled widely and have not actually been in these situations who write some of these books, I feel a lot of it is naive. And I feel some of it in the OM is naive. And it just produces confusion and guilt.

You know, if some brilliant organizer is willing to leave the Exxon Corporation with his gifts, his management skills, and lives in Calcutta and helps a food program to feed a million people in Calcutta, you know, I'm not going to judge him for living in a little better house than the people he's trying to reach. If he tries to live on the level of people he's trying to reach, he's going to be sick and he's going to be back in a hospital in the United States and it might mean the premature death of another 5,000 babies. And I think the thinking people in those situations, they want him to live in a house in Calcutta where he feels his wife can survive, he can survive, where he can do his administration work, where his computer can function, where he can handle the bookkeeping.

We live in a highly technical world that is side by side with a highly primitive world and it takes expertise, it takes organization, and it takes money to do the job. And the great need today are people who can find the balance. Who won't go to Calcutta in some big administrative position with relief and just live like a slob.

That's a strong word, but you know, Rolls Royce, six bedrooms he doesn't even need, you know, everything flown in from the United States. These kind of people, the ugly American as you read the book, you know, we don't need these people. These are the people that have driven the communists to extremes.

And of course, many a book to be written, but a man who lives in a decent clean home and his home is open for people to come, his life is an open book, maybe he has a fridge, maybe he has a stove a little better than someone down the road. His goal, his purpose in being there is to increase their lifestyle. If he's in Christian work, of course, to give him the gospel, but I'm talking about a man who may only be in secular work.

Balance and moderation is the answer. A balance of idealism and being idealistic and being realistic. It seems that we have often so few really talented, dedicated people willing for this kind of work.

Release agencies can't find them. The UN can't find them. There's such a hunger for money in the world to get a doctor to leave the big buck job in California to be a doctor in Bangladesh in any size house, in any size house.

Now I want to tell you, one of the reasons we don't have more people long term in OM India is because the standard of life we tried to get them to live through a series of guilt trip manipulations, nobody would live and very few have ever gone back. And we made a lot of mistakes. You can hear the lovely little testimonies how we lived on the level of the Indians.

You know, this doesn't make sense because what level Indians are you talking about? There are many rich Indians and Indians don't appreciate their country being thought of as some kind of back street rubbish dumping place. I tell you, there's hotels in Delhi that will match anything you've got in London. India is a big place.

There are all kinds of people. We must not think of India as squalor and as poverty and these images. And when we tried to go out and live on the level of Indians, we got more mixed up by the year.

No wonder somebody dropped out of the race. We couldn't get Indians to live on the level of other Indians. We didn't even know what the level was.

We've been arguing for 18 years over this. We're still arguing. And I think the idea that we're going to go out to the mission field and live exactly as the nationals is a big issue.

Which nationals? Villagers? You're going to get ill, probably, if you don't make at least a few changes. And yet in some places, believe me, villages and village people are often very clean people. In Bangladesh, they take a bath before they have lunch.

Think of all you people sitting down for a nice lunch without a bath. What a dirty crowd. And this, I mean, this is an insult.

This place, one bath a week. This is an insult to any Bangladeshi. It's good we don't have any here.

One bath a week. Of course, you learn how to take other types of baths. If you're skinny like me, you can bathe with a large-sized cup.

So if we're going to evangelize the world, let's be realistic. I find that a lot of people who talk about world evangelism are not always realistic about the number of people we're trying to reach. How many people do we have? 4.7 billion.

4.7 billion. So it's going to take some money. It's going to take some money.

And as we've wrestled with this issue, and stayed up nights discussing it, we have felt that the bigger emphasis is not on saving money. The bigger emphasis is on releasing it through faith and prayer. There's plenty of money around.

And are you going to judge all these millionaires? Christian millionaires or Christian half millionaires or Christian quarter millionaires? You're going to write them off? What are you going to do with them people? I like my theology to include everybody because I mix with a lot of different people. I don't like anybody to be outside my theology. So I've got to try to figure out where do they fit in.

And I just believe that all this money and Christians with money, it's a challenge to the church to go back to the Bible and to believe that people will become unselfish. And when a Christian millionaire becomes unselfish or anybody with money becomes unselfish, things happen. People get fed.

The gospel goes out. Three hundred vehicles start moving out across the world. Ships come into being.

And the result, heaven gets populated. Thousands and thousands come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment we talk about warfare, point number two, you talk about spending money.

If we're speaking about doing anything, we're talking about spending money. Just to have a conference like this so that we can plan and pray and work harder. We are living here in a relatively simple way.

Relatively simple way. But we've got to spend money if we're going to do something in three weeks. The moment we move out of here, it gets more complicated.

Five hundred gallons of petrol at four dollars a gallon. If we're going to really be simple, simple, get rid of all those vehicles. Let's walk.

Let's get some other method. Think of the money we'll save. Let me just tell you, extreme people in the area of lifestyle and saving, they don't waste any food.

They're right there with their piece of bread when they see gravy on your plate. This type of person has called untold grief to the work of God. Because most people will never get there.

So they judge people. They have arguments. They put people in guilt.

And it just becomes a vicious syndrome in which people eventually say, hey, I don't want this kind of stuff. Man, let me go live my own life. Let me have peace.

At least if I make my own mistake, it's my fault. I can live within a circle, but I can somewhat control. Now, they're in for a few surprises as well.

So in a warfare, we're going to have to spend some money. And then number three, time is a premium. Some people put such a low value on their time.

Here's a guy that's graduated from university. He's got a tremendous mind. Think of the things he could be doing.

He spends every Saturday in his garden growing lettuce, unpolluted lettuce, and green beans. I mean, you know, if this man learned to preach, learned to speak, he could form a meeting of the local businessmen who are sitting on, at that time when he's growing his green beans, the local businessmen are sitting on about \$50 million. He could go in there and with a well-prepared message and a vision, he could release maybe a million dollars.

You know, Bill Bright in one meeting released \$5 million. You know, I like the Bill Brights. I think he lives relatively simple from what I've heard.

And think of what that man has done for world evangelism. I can't talk about him without standing up. But really, you know, do we want to get the job done? Do we want to evangelize the world? Do we want to give everybody a chance to have the Bible? Praise God for the Cameron Townsends.

He lived simply, but his vision wasn't simple lifestyle. His vision was all the tribes of the world to have the Bible. That's a lot of money.

The Wycliffe translators are spending money like it's going out of season. Time is valuable. You only get 24 hours in a day.

And so I say, let's spend some money. Let's buy the green beans in the supermarket. Let's convert, if necessary, the back garden to concrete so you don't have to keep wasting your time mowing the lawn, buying grass, grass, crab, grass killer.

You know, I'm not going to judge you if you have a lawn. Mine is still a lawn. I can't afford to cut it.

It's concrete. But it's a bad law, I tell you. And we're not going to put a lot of money into it.

And if you come to me and you feel, you know, we keep our garden clean. We have neighbors, very good friends with neighbors. They made a comment in our front garden recently that a lot of paper was there.

That's because we live in the first house and everybody's paper blows into our garden. So I went out there and I was cleaning and I was picking up the paper and they came out and they said, we're glad you're our neighbors. Boy, that warmed my heart.

You know, that's part of the balance. We got to keep a neat house. I'm arranging how to paint the windows.

That's going to cost money. I don't like to spend money. We got to paint the windows because if it doesn't, they rot.

Then they fall out. We had a window fall out. It's hope.

Now, ours is a very small house. It's a rent-free house. It's the best accommodation we've ever had.

I don't feel guilty about it. I wrestled a bit with it. My wife wrestled a bit.

It was better than what we'd been in. Twenty-three years, my wife's been in twenty-four different places. We really feel this is a nice place.

A little garden. It's not close Now, we got a good landlord who gives it to us free. He even repaired our fence free.

It's a real botched job. But, you know, it looks sort of like an L.M. fence. It's got the new section and the old section.

But, you know, if we don't teach balance in this area, when the young people go out of the land, they're going to come down with a thud. And when they get married, it's going to be one continual because, number one, the wife is either not going to put up with it or the children aren't going to put up with it. Richard Warren came to me.

He said, if you inflict poverty on your children, you're going to make them into atheists or agnostics. And from the earliest days, OM took an anti-poverty commitment. We are not going to submit our children to poverty.

And if you take an extreme view on simple lifestyle, then you submit your children to what they later on will consider poverty. My own children are wrestling with some hurts from the early days in a very balanced way, especially some things that happened. My son reminds me of the day when he wanted to buy a little train set.

Train sets? Where does that fit into the scheme of world evangelism? Will these trains carry tracks to the ends of the earth? We're so hyper-pragmatic. We world evangelize. I'm not a simple lifestyle nut as you now know from this lecture.

I'm a world evangelism nut. That's my problem now. To be able to do things that have nothing whatsoever seemingly to do with world evangelism without a very hyper-imagination.

And my son, one of my sons is hurt because I refused to get that train set. Now that's part of life. You can't help that.

Everybody in the world is wrestling with that. Especially the group that are called the have-nots. But we learned a long time ago let's open bank accounts for our children.

Let's teach them how to save. Let's pay them a little bit when they do some work. Let's not continually put them in guilt like, you know, he's six years old.

Aren't you going to just do that for Jesus? And if he has more of a desire to do it for money than Jesus? Boy, isn't that annoying? Look what you did for money yesterday. You wouldn't do that for Jesus. How not to rear your children? And you can teach them in such a way that they will grow up to hate rich people.

Or they will grow up to realize you're a screwy and they want to go on the other side of the fence. One of my sons once admitted to me, I think he put it in the children's O.M. brochure. His great goal was to make a million dollars.

That was reacting from the kind of stuff that I put him into. And I would like to save some people some of the extremes and some of the crazy things that I was into in the very early days. And my children were born, some of them 23 years ago.

So time is valuable. And often by spending money we can save time. The reason I got into this bus, which I'm sure could be classified as a luxury, it's a very old bus.

It was laying gutted on the other end of London. Cheaper than many people would spend for a car, but it's still a bus and it guzzles fuel. Boy, it was really backslidden.

You see that bus he lives in down there? Ten year old diesel bus without the O.M. dedicated mechanics. I wouldn't want to touch it with a 100 foot pole. But it's still nice.

We got, the reason we went ahead with that vehicle we had before that and then that bus is my wife and I were so committed to this. We've never had a furlough. We've never been back home.

It's been 23 years of these conferences. I tell you, we were starting to come apart. She was already apart.

She was apart. She was depressed. She didn't want to travel anymore.

She didn't want to look at another O.M. conference. I was beginning to come apart and we had to rethink our lifestyle. And that's when we spent just a little.

I even bought her a dryer. I bet you don't have a dryer for clothing. But you know, on top of that, my wife's got to do a lot of other things.

Number one, a Christian leader generally is a highly demanding person. Just to take care of a Christian leader, that's a full time job for any wife. By the nature of their work, their wife is continually brought under pressure.

It goes right by the, my wife has to go to that conference. She's had enough women's conferences to put her up to here. But you see, she's the wife, the leader.

I mean, after all, she was so nervous this morning, I thought she was going to go right through the roof of the bus. Because she wanted to be there until, I said, going late. You see, if you're late, you've got to walk in in front of 200 other women.

Oh, there's George Fowler's wife. Oh, what's she wearing? Oh, it looks new, doesn't it? Oh, she's so, now they're saying she looks like my daughter. Oh, that's a real encouragement to me.

My daughter says I'm a winkly old man. We just learned that life is so complex, so unpredictable. People are so unpredictable, and people are also, at times, without, without them realizing it, they're, they're ugly.

People are ugly at times. They do hurt, we do hurt each other. So we started to make a few expenditures for survival.

Ultimately, it led us to that combination of literature-based, I always like at least two, three thousand books with me, couple hundred cassettes. You can't believe the things that my wife has had to do juggling with my books, my cassettes. I always like to have a team, usually very interesting people, and so that's our survival wagon.

I don't need any of that. I don't have any great infatuation for that. We did it so we can get Mom with a job, more days on the road, more literature, more time redeemed.

You ever try to dictate letters in a little Volkswagen car? Whenever I'm in a car, people want to talk to me. It's impossible to dictate letters. I used to escape to trains.

Every time I go on a train, there's pornographic books waiting for me. That's a station. It happens to be my biggest weakness.

So trains, they're not only in the stations now, they're on the trains. You go through the train, they're just laying there. Now, of course, why am I more victorious? We won't get into that subject.

Go to point four. I think our time is more or less gone. You better read point four on your own.

Read point five on your own. Time-saving gadgets, time-saving equipment. I have a telephone that automatically dials 28 numbers.

What a luxury. People come into my room, even Peter May, ooh, they eye, ooh. Now, you know what? We don't have much of this kind of thing.

We are very conservative, but I tell you, every expenditure that God has let us into in these lines, with some exceptions because we all make mistakes. That's part of the theory. You've got to make mistakes.

You've got to make mistakes to survive. You've got to waste to survive. There's no way to evangelize the world without wastage.

You get people real hyper about wastage, it's not going to work. To distribute 10 million pieces of literature in India, we've got to be ready to waste 100,000. The man who doesn't want to waste 100,000, he'll never distribute the 10 million.

And we've got to understand that you're constantly wrestling between quality and quantity, quality and quantity. And gadgets can save time. It needs balance.

This is why we need to go more on a cash basis in Christian work. If God really wants us to have it, let Him provide it. Then we've got to keep everybody else's needs in mind.

There's no easy road. But we've got to be willing to trust God for finance and to spend. And I mentioned in point six, if our main goal is simple lifestyle, we've just got to put a lot more time and effort in that.

I can't come to conferences like this. This is counterproductive for simple lifestyle. Except maybe when I can teach people about it.

I've got to be home doing all these things. Now here's another thing I want to throw in. I think overemphasis on simple lifestyle denies the reality of man as a human being and a psychological creature.

My big problem now, I tell you, is just sometimes keeping my head. Yesterday morning I was within two, for two hours I was in the border of tears. There's too many people here.

There's too many problems. Life is an unpredictable thing. It's like a rugby match and a cricket pitch with Americans playing.

It's just, if you think it's just O.M., it's not just O.M. This is what life is about. The unpredictable. The man that's going strong, bang, he's gone and cancer.

What do you do with his wife and three children? Life is just so full of the unpredictable. And this is why at times we are battling for survival. And people who are in a highly technological world, they can't always dictate what kind of job they want.

They want a job in a perfect environment which fits in line with their philosophy of simple lifestyle. There are only so many jobs like that. I just talked to a man downstairs.

His job was in an ammunition factory for American tanks. Interesting job. He gave me the joyous experience just a little while ago of telling me that I visited his area and it touched his heart and his wife and now he's here.

It's a great privilege. But are there any Christians left back in the munitions camp? We are very unrealistic about jobs and job fulfillment. I'd love to talk to you for an hour on job fulfillment.

That's another American luxury. We're all going to have a fulfilling job and people all come into OM looking for total fulfillment. I will tell you in the world today if you have a job and you have food on your table you ought to be thanking Jesus for everything in your soul.

And then let him add. If he adds, fine. If he subtracts, well you could die if you don't get enough food.

But food and raiment is very important. And I just think we become very vain and very unrealistic about some of these things. And when we think of a job and we think of a task, we think of the 24 hour day and we think of all the needs people have psychologically, emotionally.

To take a man who all of his life has been living on hamburgers and steak and he's got a on his table and he's got a meal Just to get him to accept Christ is a miracle. It's a miracle. When a man is born again who's lived in the world 40 years, I'm not talking about people being saved to 10, and then you lay the guilt trip on him.

No more hamburgers because you're eating cows and if we take the food that goes to the cows and give it to the people we can give 1,000 more people in Somalia the food. You know, it's so dreamy, it's so dreamy how do people fall for this. And the people fall for And do you think we are going to change the hearts of these government leaders? Man is bent on his selfish pursuits.

I think we forget the lost. This is why people who believe in the depravity of man, as I happen to believe, forgive me, I won't use the word total depravity, I just believe in depravity. I don't think they fall for this nonsense.

We're not going to change all these governments. And when those people change governments and they become more and more depraved, they're going to be greedy and greedy. And some of the greediest people in the world are in the Kremlin.

I've read and researched the Kremlin, not to a long, not a big thing, but I've done a lot of reading and research about the Soviet Union, it was one of my favorite countries, still is. I tell you they are some of the greediest, selfish people in the world. And there are a lot of good features in communist ideology, or at least we make some of you happier with a few good features.

Trouble is, they don't work. Man is lost. Man is sinful.

Man won't exploit. And if you fall into the naive thinking of some of the simplistic lifestyle talkers, you're just playing into their hands. No, we're called to follow Christ.

We're called to preach the gospel. We're called to moderation. We're called to a life in which God seems to bless some materially and they live in a bigger house and some they don't seem to have much, and they live in a smaller house.

And one reads this book and he sells his house and he gives to the poor and he gives to world missions and another reads George Ferrer's book from now on or Chalice's book from now on or George Ferrer's, No Turning Back, and he comes into freedom and he buys a small house. It's wild. What would you rather have? The jungle or the zoo? Did you see Born Free? Communism has a lot of good ideas.

Some of the extreme left-wing people have some fantastic ideas, but it's a zoo. It may look like it's going to work, but read Solzhenitsyn, it's not going to work, and we are not called to communism. Ours is a jungle.

Here's the elephant, comes along, he's already too big, snatches something and takes it away from the monkey. The monkey goes down and he snatches something and he takes it away from the rabbit. He takes it away from the chipmunk.

I don't have all this worked out, technically. But in the human zoo, the Holy Spirit comes in. The elephant is radically changed.

He suddenly develops a real loving heart and he's running around the jungle returning everything he stole. And then somehow he influences the rabbit and he gets saved and he starts returning. It's free will.

It's man created in the image of God with a unique ability to say yes or no and who has some mysterious free will. And that's what I want to do. I want to preach Christ to the poor, to the millionaires and see them worshipping Jesus in the same chair and to see one giving and the other receiving.

And then maybe later the other one will give and he'll receive. Some will forsake all and others will receive more in the process. And next week it'll change.

You think about it. You pray through it. You read through the New Testament.

You study church history. You study missionary history. You study the biographies of a hundred men of God as I've had the privilege of studying.

You listen to a thousand cassette tapes as I've had the privilege of listening to and you realize, I'm speaking figuratively, it is the jungle but it's God's jungle. He created it this way. Of course Satan brought it into its present state and if we pretend it's something else, if we pretend it's something else or dream about it being different from what it really is and just spend all of our time trying to change it, organizing the elephants and organizing the rabbits and getting the chipmunks in their side, making sure they all get equal food and equal accommodation and all the rest, you're just going to run out of steam.

Probably eventually like many of these people, throw up your hands and you know what the fastest growing group is today? It's the existentialists, it's the despair people, it's the ones who have tried all these different things, the Jean Paul Sartre's and now they just say you know, there's no exit, there's no way. And people who are hyper idealistic on these areas, often end up in total despair and I'll tell you, I almost did. I was so idealistic.

I so wanted every dollar for missions. I wanted to live just the most unselfish life. That I denied my own humanity.

I denied the fact there are things I like, there are things I enjoy. Tonight I'm going to give every woman a Keith Green tape that's going to cost me two bucks a shot. Is that a sin? That's a lot of money.

We're in a financial crisis. But that music is beautiful. Before I came here, I was listening, there's no place for beauty.

It's got to be kept in moderation. I don't think we committed to the idea that Jesus Christ should go out and buy \$500 stereos. Somebody might give you one, and usually two years after you buy such a machine, it's only worth \$100.

And if you go out to sell it, I like to sell everything I've got my hands on. I'm still a little neurotic in that area. What can you get for some of this stuff? Secondhand stuff.

And how much time does it take you to sell it? The time I give to sell something, it costs me more than I ever get when I sell it. Because I could have been using that time to win men to Christ, to write another book, to at least write a letter, to visit the prison, to go to the elderly, to distribute a thousand tracts, to win another soul to Christ. Do you see the problem? Well, I'm great at creating problems.

Let's pray. Father, you know my heart and how I feel very strong about this and I'm not always able to verbalize it, but I believe certainly we have a lot to think about. We thank you that we know our calling, that we have been called to preach Christ.

We have been called to a life of self-control and moderation in which the fruit of the spirit is the dominant factor. We're not all the same. Any more out than out in your creation, everybody's the same.

The elephants and the birds and the monkeys and the tigers and the lions. You've just given us so many different types of people in this world. We don't want to all be equal, but we want to all be faithful and we want to all be good stewards.

The whole area, I'm sure Peter will talk about. So, Lord, help us. You know the pendulum can easily go the other way and we can justify all kinds of cockeyed expenditures and I believe as your Holy Spirit controls our hearts, we will not do that.

We will not do that. Give us wisdom and understanding in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, ten minutes for questions. Anything at all. Just really feel free.

Well, the first need is not the major emphasis of this seminar, maybe it is. The first need is for people to know God. To know God and then to know God's word.

And if I didn't believe that as people got to know God and know God's word that they could be directed on how they should live, whether they ever get to the simple life cycles seminar or not, you know, I just don't know what I do. Because we're a minority group just having this much exposure, just having all these books. So my burden is to get people into the word and to get people converted and to get them going on for God.

In the process they're going to hear many messages and they're going to have to wrestle with a lot of issues because that's what life is about. And I believe in the Lord. As people get into the word and they see Jesus and get to know Jesus, they will want to live in moderation and they will want to grow in grace and in knowledge of him.

Is a man converted at 50 years of age, working for the Exxon Corporation, used to a certain psychological environment, to certain lifestyle? You know, how much do we expect him to change the first five years after his conversion? I'd say if he comes to Christ and he develops some humility and love, that's a miracle. That's a miracle. What if he was an atheist or an agnostic? In turn, if I lay all this other stuff on him, it's like telling the new teenager when he first comes to Christ, these are ten more things you can never do again in your life.

You've killed him before he gets to one year old in Christ, in many cases. It's a form of legalism. Simple lifestyleism, the moment it gets organized, becomes a form of legalism.

And these people are spiritual and these people are not spiritual. Moderation, and I believe in a simple lifestyle with moderation, will keep us from judgmentalism. Eugenia Price said whenever she saw someone that was really behaving in a way that she felt was really, you know, really apt to lunge, she would just pray, Lord, maybe they haven't had the light on that yet.

Maybe they haven't understood that truth yet. Therefore, she would be delivered from judgment. So when you see someone living really, you know, really wild and really wasting money, of course, that's not right.

And it may be that it is a form of immorality. Some teachers would feel it. But it may be that the person is not aware of that.

Just like people that are breaking other scriptures, they're not yet aware of it. They need more of Jesus. They need more light.

They need more teaching. You must understand that. The Christian life is growing.

It's growing. And if I had tried years ago to live the way I'm living now, I probably would have just given up in discouragement. God didn't reveal all of my self-life to me at once.

He revealed it bit by bit, bit by bit. And he's been so merciful with me. Such a strong areas of the self-life that had to be crucified.

Someone else? What do you find hard in this area? Have you studied this before? Is it new? What question would come out of that? Yes? As we put this into practice for a few years, people will ask us questions. And that's where it begins. I think our priority is to stick to the priorities.

Christ, salvation, world evangelism, love, fruit of the spirit. Man, there's a lot here. And examine these scriptures, some of the ones I've just read.

And then share as God opens the way by his Holy Spirit. We can share what we believe. But sharing what we believe includes very much respecting what other people believe.

That's part of the sharing. And trying to bring in the balance. Trying to be honest.

You know, like I did the other night when I told about a girl who responded to the forsaking all message and was a bit mixed up and threw all of her clothing in a canal and hollered. We don't like to tell those stories. They are counterproductive against what we're trying to say.

When we're honest, we tell both the positives and the negatives. You might even share some of the problems you've had putting it into practice. Just as I've shared with you some of my failures.

I could share with you some of my I could share some of my I could share some of my I could share some of my failures. I could share some of my failures. I could share some of my failures.

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I could share I could share some of my what is coming out from so many different men of God. And I think it's unfortunate that some of the very extreme right-wing people have just, you know, opened all barrels at these other people without any, with very little confrontation and discussion and dialogue. We need more dialogue.

And I'm not against, even there was a conference in England, Simple Lifestyle Conference, cost thousands of dollars for airfares to get them there, and I had trouble with that one. But I think they were honest men, seeking answers. And I, you know, if some of the big leaders in the world government spend another ten thousand to have a Simple Lifestyle Conference in Geneva, and as a result of it ten million people get through it, I would say airfares well spent.

And I think some people in Oman have got extreme against airfares, as this is the ultimate, this is the ultimate of, you know, leaving and departing from the Simple Lifestyle. You now go by airplane. That's nonsense.

We live in a world of airplanes, when Solzhenitsyn left the Soviet Union, he had to go by air. I mean, this is ridiculous. Trains now cost more than air in some countries, automobiles sometimes cost more than air.

More than ever we need balance and wisdom, we got to examine all the facts, then we got to see what money we have. Of course, that's the great balancer, at least in O.M. Someone else? Another question. Yes.

Yes, absolutely, in fact, I didn't get into that, what I wanted to say. You cannot, in the name of forsaking all the Simple Lifestyle, force other Christians to do this or that. We're not made that way, God hasn't created us that way, and so if a man forces his wife, he's in trouble.

Psychologically, you know, she's going to be in difficulty. And I wanted to say something about the whole thing of food. In certain situations in the world, food is mainly survival, it's mainly to fill the stomach.

I have found that however, even in some of those situations, those people certainly enjoy something special. How much more the way we've been reared. We are set psychologically at 12 years of age, most of us to a large degree.

And yet all these messages come to us after we're 12 years of age, it's a miracle any of us are sane. Because emotionally, you're not able to make these adjustments. Now, with certain benefits, it's interesting that some of the people in the cities who got into the Simple Lifestyle thing, now have really nice rural houses and gardens, and I mean, boy, I can see why they're surviving this Simple Lifestyle challenge.

But the man who has to stay in the city and work in the factory, he's got a different set of problems. When he comes home at night, boring factory work, contemporary modern man, he needs a psychologically satisfying meal. They say an army fights on his stomach.

An evangelist, a man committed to spiritual warfare, he fights on his stomach. And he needs food that is psychologically special. I know I am so different in diet, I don't know why, I don't need much.

And I can get to a time because I'm so hyper, I'm so active, I don't just bypass meals. But then I find myself moving toward boredom, depression, irritability, hostility, anxiety, and just to stop and have a pack of chocolate-covered peanuts. That's a full meal for me.

I'm like a bird, chocolate-covered peanuts, I'm ready to go for two more hours. You know, that prayer meeting was supposed to end at two last night, quarter to three, we're still praying. Early this morning, I'm trying to get up, you know, it's not easy when you've been in it for twenty-some years, getting up, just propping yourself up into bed, and my wife, praise the Lord, she brought me the tea.

Simple sugars. Within ten minutes, I could feel the energy flowing. Totally different than my wife.

She's a zombie for the first three hours. Her body heals sugar in a totally different way. She takes in sugar.

I was jogging, within the ten minutes after getting up this morning, I was jogging, I felt great all day. But I fell asleep two hours ago for six minutes, listen to the Keith Green. I can recharge in six minutes.

I could have slept right through this 4 o'clock thing. I think I was up here about 5 after 4. Keith Green playing, I went right off, Don woke me up. I mean, I woke up, you know, if you don't like to be spiritual.

But we're all different. On the other hand, I hardly ever buy anything. I hardly ever go to shops.

I love shops. I think they're very interesting shops. So every once in a while, because we're told we need recreation, I just go in shops.

Well, most shops, I don't see anything I need to buy. Automotive shops, I can find a few. I usually buy batteries.

I can always use batteries. Every once in a while, I go supermarket while. It's to prove my freedom.

And I go through a supermarket, and I buy anything that meets my fancy. I figure I miss so many meals, I hardly ever go to restaurants, I spend very little money, that I am free to buy a few of my favorite things. I buy chocolate covered biscuits.

I buy radishes. I buy plums. I buy some cheese.

And I got some of that in the bus. I got my psychological weapons in the bus. Sometimes I end up giving most of it away.

Now, that's my particular quirk. Now, most women have quirks. They want to buy something.

You say, what do you want to buy that for? I don't know, I don't want to buy it. You tell me I'm not going to buy it? Who's boss? What do I marry? Ah! And, you know, we've got to come down to earth. We're all different.

We've all got quirks. Nobody's going to tell me to wipe up my gravy with a soggy piece of stale bread. And, you know, I'm so free, this is why I'm still going.

In fact, I might get in a bad mood and push the gravy and the bread in his face. And I wouldn't feel too guilty about it. I'd repent and apologize, but I'm not going to do any big thing over it.

So, you know, maybe I'm too human. Maybe the pendulum's gone back too far. I still find that I live on very little money, very little, but I'm happy.

My wife is happier than she was. I wouldn't want to say yet she's happy, but thank you for this time to share. Let's watch out where this tape goes.

Yeah, let's just close and wrap and have a back to it tomorrow. Let's pray. We've got questions and answers.

Peter may deny with the women tonight. All the wives. Bring the Keith Green tape as a peace offer.

Father, we thank you for this intensive day we've had so far, considering issues of how we should live in order to please you. And Lord, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the experiences we've had related to us this afternoon. And we pray, Lord, that you might help us to take all of this in.

And we pray you might help us to appropriate it to our individual situation. Lord, we're all so different. You've called us different ministers who are living in different places.

Help us to appropriate what we're hearing to where we are. And Lord, not to be looking so much at others and judging others. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. ■ We look forward to it.

Amen! Yeah, I think the key is that you're in a training program. My wife and I were in the exact same thing for many years. That's not where you're going to settle.

It's just like if you go to college. University, Army, a lot of places. Your life for that period of time is going to be, to some degree, watered for you by other people.

And it's a temporary thing. And that's one of the reasons, emotionally, you can also generally end it because, you know, this isn't the way it's going to be. If you get put in prison, there's also going to be appeals.

An OM, in some ways, is like the Army. It's a training program. On the other hand, people have pocket money.

And, boy, I tell you, if they don't have the money, they can go out and buy an apple or a pear or an ice cream or a hamburger, then they must be in a funny situation. Now, even there might come a period when that is lacking, but that will be the norm. And so it's because it's temporary that it can be handled.

And one of the great problems we have in OM is the people are longer term. How long do they continue to eat or live with everybody else deciding where they sleep and what they eat and all the rest? And it's a struggle, of course, and it's more for some people than others, especially, of course, we didn't get into this today, in our society, and we are so accustomed to so many things. And, you know, we have our own prices.

We could run out of water, out of air.

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