

The Local Church Extremism

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the critical role of local churches in evangelism and the importance of practical outreach methods to engage communities effectively.

Duration: 1:01:54

Scripture: Acts 2:1

Topics: "Local Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spreading the gospel and the vision of world missions. He compares it to fishing, stating that just having a line without a hook is ineffective in catching fish. The speaker highlights the need for a 'hook' in our communication and presentations, something that grabs people's attention and leads them to further engagement. He also mentions the importance of follow-up and communication in spreading the message effectively. The speaker emphasizes that the message of the gospel is more important than worldly pursuits like Coca-Cola or McDonald's, and encourages the audience to prioritize spreading the gospel around the world.

Transcript

If you want to be used of God in spreading the vision of world missions and the vision that God has given us in this fellowship, one of the keys is that when you take a meeting or when you share, you have not only a line but a hook on the end of the line. I went through a period of a number of years as a young lad when I loved fishing. I used to go fishing and it was always difficult to catch fish with just a line and no hook on the end.

And we get a lot of people out in O.M. fishing, taking meetings and presenting the challenge, throw out the line and no hook. Nothing to bring in the people who are interested, to get their address so you can follow up because people today are bombarded with different things. In the United States, one man is trying to make you totally dedicated to the sale and the spread of vitamins.

Another man is totally committed to make you a diamond in the Amway sales industry. Another man is committed totally to get you to help arm the United States to become world's biggest military power. And so it is.

You know, in England also, there are quite a few. And they have their literature. They have their propaganda.

And they have their messages. If you don't believe this and practice this, you're promised all kinds of things. We have, we feel a message that's more important than all this.

Even more important than Coca-Cola or McDonald's. They're already negotiating in China to open McDonald's. They've already taken Britain by storm.

They've taken Japan by storm. We have something more important. How many agree that spreading the gospel around the world is more important? Let's see if you've learned anything.

Raise your hand. Look at this. Must be mass hypnosis.

Very good. Call a doctor, please. And yet often when we go out to spread this vision, we're so lackadaisical about it.

Not that we want to become carnal. That's the last thing we want in OM. To fall down and bow down to the gods of Madison Avenue, Hollywood, or anybody else in that category.

We want to go in a spiritual, crucified, humble way. This means constantly examining our own hearts. Constantly searching our own hearts to see what kind of garbage is being dumped into the OM ranks.

One of the reasons we're meeting as leaders during these days and field leaders is to search our hearts, to root up, to tear down things that are in OM that are not of God. But to keep that in balance, when we have a burden and we have a vision, we need to spread it. And so we have literature.

One piece of literature we have, which is only produced once a year now, is the OM news. And the reason I'm showing you this, because some of your countries don't have that, so I'm not mainly calling your attention to this, but to show you that on the back of this little paper is the hook. That little coupon brings in more prayer partners than you'd ever know.

And we've had things similar. Just a one-page letter welcoming them to the meeting, telling them a little bit about what OM was, inviting them to be a prayer partner, and then a coupon on the bottom that they could fill out. And in the meeting, not to leave this over in the corner of the free literature table.

Have you ever seen the average person approach the OM free literature table in a normal meeting? You know, you see all these people from India, Bangladesh, Turkey, down with Paris, up with Belgium, you know. They walk away. Many times they just look, and they walk away.

And so when you have a meeting, you either get this into the seats before the meeting, that's what I usually do, they need something to do before the meeting starts, you can then refer to it, because if you don't refer to it, probably they won't use it. It's the way people are. And if you can't do that, some churches you can't do that, you need to ask permission, then give it out at the door as they leave.

And believe me, if in this work, you and I would just use this kind of hook, sometimes some people have used just an index card, we have an index card. Sometimes when I've forgotten all my OM free material or I didn't have any, which is very, very, very seldom, I grabbed a pack of index cards, and I gave that out, and I said if there's anybody who wants anything, they want a prayer letter, you have a question, use it, call it Operation Feedback. I tell you, we have people on OM today because of that, much less prayer partners.

In your own field, make sure whenever you go out to spread the vision, you've got some hooks, a card, a coupon, and that you, of course, get the hook out where the fish are, where the people are, not packed away in the box. And believe me, a lot can come from this, because a lot of people have said to me, the OM prayer letter, which is a challenge letter, has been one of the greatest spiritual blessings that has come into their home, to see what God is doing. We've been on OM a long time, we're hardened to this, you know, we've got so much news.

I go through an average of 300 reports to 500 reports a week. I mean, I'm saturated, I'm ignitable in a sense of news, but that is not the state of the average evangelical Christian. He is in his newspaper, he's doing crossword puzzles, he's reading The Little Orphan Annie, he's waiting to see if Doctor Who is coming back on TV.

And you've got to get in there, we have competition, whether it's Doctor Who, or James Bond, or Lily Cadilly, whoever it is, we've got to push them out of the way by faith, and get our message in there and say, this is priority. I hope we'll see a little bit of that, because we need more prayer warriors. Some of our best prayer partners, like Mr. Clapp, John Beatman, they're with the Lord.

And we need new people that God raises up, and that somehow are brought in contact. So many people have said to me after getting excited about this work, why didn't anybody tell me? Where have you been hiding? And a lot of people, even in Britain, even in Sweden, two countries where OM is most known, even in Germany, they don't know anything about it, don't know anything about it. Let's spread the vision, not in an obnoxious way, not in a pushy way, but in an active, disciplined, compassionate way, knowing that we, when we plug people into this kind of news and information, we are generally plugging them into a blessing, a big blessing.

And it all starts with that first contact. And the same is true of your own personal prayer letter. The lack of initiative in the area of most OMers in going after personal prayer partners, it just, you know, I think sometimes I must be a weirdo.

I know, in some ways, I probably am. But from the earliest days of OM, when I was 19, looking for the first prayer partners, I went about it seemingly with about 10 times or 5 times as much effort as most people that I watch today, so that before I left for Mexico in 1957, at 19 years of age, almost a babe in Christ, I had 200 men and women, names on paper, committed, and I started sending my prayer letter to them, and I've been writing it every single month, minus a few months when I've delegated it, for those 23 years. And those people have appreciated, and some who signed up for that letter 23 years ago are still getting it.

I think of one businessman who was getting it, I remember him picking me up in his Cadillac, saying, oh, Brother George, the Lord's provided this Cadillac, got a bad back. I never want to judge people. I don't remember what I said to him.

He was showing me various buttons. He got our prayer letter, he got a little bit involved. You know what happened to that man? He put his whole construction business up for sale together with his Cadillac.

Can you imagine that? That big, beautiful Cadillac down the street, for sale, hallelujah, that could bring revival. He sold his construction business, and at 50 years of age, he and his wife went to South America, were mightily used of God, and he gave his life, flying missionaries back into the jungles for Jesus Christ. It starts often just with a prayer letter, just with a little communication, and yet so oftentimes, we just lack

the initiative to just go that extra bit.

And I never go anywhere, hardly in the world, without that little black bag. I had a real beat-up one. When I got to Singapore, it was an embarrassment.

You know, Singapore, they're very, you know, very sophisticated, and I had this terrible looking black bag. They brought me this brand new thing, it has a lock on it. I got locked out of it the other day.

My daughter was playing games with it. But I always have a section in there for OM free material. Sometimes, I'm about to witness to a man on the train, and give him some tracks, I discover he's a believer.

He doesn't need tracks. He's ready for recruiting. You think God's put him on that train just to go to Glasgow? So, you just say, well, I just happen to have this little leaflet about the ship, Dulles, and you take out the picture.

That always attracts him. Pictures are louder than words. And then, you know, you don't take the application form out immediately.

Usually, something more casual. I use my family prayer letter. Old pictures makes us look at least half human, and God goes from there.

Well, I hope that you will take that seriously, because I believe it's important. And, you know, if we fill our heads with all kinds of knowledge at this Leader's Conference, and we don't get out of here, when we do leave, with a little God-given initiative, and vision, and action, we've wasted the week in many ways, because it's so easy to fill your head with principles, and policies, and in-depth concepts. And, you know, if some of this doesn't get down to your feet, it's going to go sour somewhere between your head and your feet.

Now, picking up from yesterday morning, let's finish yesterday morning's message, and then go into something that's really on my heart. I was talking about the local church, and got a bit sidetracked about why we work with such a wide range of churches, and how we see God working in such a wonderful way through many different groups. I feel we touched on a lot of important areas, and I hope it was helpful.

Then we talked a little bit about OM's history, and how this movement was very much born through the direct and the indirect influence of especially a local church, and a dynamic ministry, which was born in New Jersey, but had its roots back into a para-church so-called operation by one of the most wildcat preachers in all history, Billy Sunday. You all know the more widely known aspect of the OM history, the woman who prayed, and sent me a Gospel of John. But it was that group, that local church, and they were starting another local church, that hired the bus that took me into the Billy Graham meeting, where I was converted.

And I shared how that little group, as they were starting another church, branching out from that Lutheran Gospel Church, they were starting another church, which became a Wyckoff Baptist Church, which is still standing with us in prayer, and where they first prayed for us, and in a sense commended us out to Mexico. Though at the same time, because they had so much involvement, they of course let us get on with the job. Most of the original members of the Board of Trustees, some of whom are with us to this day, came from that local church.

Almost all of them were influenced by God's working through the Lutheran Gospel Church, and things that already had, you know, branched off from there. Including, of course, God working in the high school where I was attending. And then I went on a little bit about Mexico, a little bit about our linking up with men like William MacDonald and Dale Roton's linking very, very much with the local churches.

Have you ever read Dale Roton's controversial booklet, *Divisions in the Church*? It's almost considered not reprintable in the more balanced stage that OM has evolved into. Dale Roton was absolutely adamant about the place of the local church. Do you think that Dale would have thrown his whole life into this thing for 20 years if OM was not a movement so totally linked with the local church? And also, of course, seeing local churches planted.

I tried to stress that through the history of OM, there have been the two ministries. The planting of new local churches, as took place in Spain and took place in Italy, though we always pulled our name out of it, and in France, and a few other places. And the other side in which we have been training men in basic spiritual life, who then have gone into, in a vast majority of cases, local church ministries.

Quite a few ex-OMers now are pastors. I was just with one recently. In fact, we had the great blessing of playing 18 holes of golf together.

First time I've had much enough time to play 18 holes of golf. Now, at this point, I could give you my lecture on the dynamics of golf, but that definitely would be a sidetrack. But here he is, a pastor in that local church.

A number of men, many, many, many hundreds, who have been on OM today are involved in church planting. But their roots, their initial vision in this, their training, their understanding of the local church, a lot of it can be traced back to OM. Now, this is not equally emphasized in every field.

And if you don't keep your ears open, and if you don't get to understand the total OM picture, and see what the Holy Spirit is doing, in some places in OM, like being on the ship, or maybe being on a blitz team in India, you would possibly miss what God is doing in this area. And so, man, because of lack of discernment, and the inability to see the whole picture, and very few people have the ability to see the big picture. It's so much easier to see, you know, where we are.

And so they haven't seen that what looked like a superficial training program was actually preparing a young man to launch eventually into church planting, or into helping bring a dead church into life. That is the other side of the picture that we want to emphasize, that as we, in some cases, have worked to see new churches established, in many ways, our greater commitment has been the existing churches, which so often have been in need of renewal, or revival, or training. Something that they felt OM could help them with.

It's as simple as that. No matter of us coming in with the total answer to some local church's problem. But the pastors, the leaders, felt OM had something to offer.

And so they invited us in, and we have cooperated with thousands and thousands of local churches in this way. And they have appreciated. And we're seeing an increased number of pastors.

We have several thousand pastors who are heart-linked to this work. And we're seeing an increase of these men actually wanting to come on OM. Another one just wrote me from another town in UK.

Tony Sargent has been with us several times to India. He'll be at the conference in the last week. But another pastor down the road, he's just written, I want to go to India as soon as possible.

I've got about 12 people in England right now, pastors or evangelists, all praying about getting out to India, at least for a period of time. Which is just one of many, many programs in which our relationship is strengthened with local churches, and in which people can really get to know the work out in India. When they go to India, they don't always just minister to the OM team.

They minister and help build up the local churches. We have always said that the main key to world evangelism is the local church. And we, having been sent out by our local churches to one degree or the other, not always true of people who come into OM in their very earliest stage, right out of university.

We sent out from our churches, prayed for by our churches, to a large degree supported by our churches. It's the local churches who are providing the lion's share of the finance that keeps OM going. It may not be, in a sense, much more than, say, 50%, but it's probably around that.

Because the other big thing would be Christian businessmen, Christian men who God has touched to give larger gifts. But if they're active in a local church, to me, making all these divisions is ridiculous. And a church getting upset because this Christian businessman sent his money direct to buy Bibles in China.

Why didn't you give that to our church? Didn't you know we're planning to buy a new organ here and that this is a priority? And, of course, the churches that generally are working together with us, and we with them, have a little more vision than that. There's not time to go into more details. But I hope and pray that you somehow will be able to get the balance and to keep the unity in your thinking between the team operation, the group that started the church in Antioch, and the Antioch operation, the local church who obeyed God and sent out some more teams.

In our day, we desperately need one another. The groups like OM that are on the move, that have structure out in the regions beyond, that have the training and the machinery and the equipment, and the years of experience, and the people who know the language and a lot of other things, plus a lot of weaknesses and failures, and the local churches that have the roots and often the resources into the local people, many of whom want to do something for God. If we can link together the local church and this ongoing advance in the world of evangelism, I will tell you the devil will be losing many, many more battles than he is right now.

What are some of the results when we overemphasize the local church? OM could have become a local church way back in its early days. If it had done that, it would be a denomination. There is no way that you actually become a local church without then becoming a denomination.

If you're going to maintain any fellowship, if you're only one church because everything else fails, you're okay. Or if you're one independent church in a community and your burden isn't to plant other churches all over the place, you'll be just accepted as an independent evangelical church. But in a movement of this momentum, there suddenly would have been 20 churches, 50 churches, 100 churches, especially if we had stayed in our home countries where it's much easier to plant a church.

But we moved on in obedience to the Lord, and we also have this principle that where there is a lot of structure, as in the United States, we don't want to add more structure. Start an OM church down the road where there's six other evangelical churches in the town. This is being done.

This is where the lion's share, the larger share of effort in the United States today, is still in church planting. More than spreading the gospel out to the regions beyond, especially with a number of groups. There are new churches being born in the United States every day.

House groups and churches. People are leaving their existing churches. Old churches die.

They have problems. People leave. They join the new thing.

They have problems. People leave. And on it goes.

The house group movement in the United States is a phenomenon. No one has even written a really comprehensive book on the subject. One of the big movements in the United States right now is a movement under the leadership of Jim McConner.

You talk to the average American, he hasn't even ever heard of it. They've planted over a hundred assemblies. It's probably the strongest movement in the United States among students.

Not the biggest. Certainly one of the strongest. Based in Ames, Iowa, they now have a Christian student newspaper that goes out to a quarter of a million to a half million students.

And it's moving. Jim McConner got some of his training with William McDonald. Some of it in an OM conference.

A leadership conference just like this. Some of it in other places. He has sort of broken with the standard brethren assemblies.

And they're the ones attacking him the most right now. The book has been written against him. That's normal.

It hasn't been published, which is good. A number of people have been upset because their assemblies have sort of a strong leadership. And he is a pretty strong leader.

And a little sometimes maybe overemphasis on submission. So there's been splits. There's been excommunications.

They seem to be following a little bit the exclusive brethren line about excommunication. But it's still growing. They just had a huge conference in New York City.

Their burden is to plant a living church in every university town in America. And it looks like they'll do it. It's a new movement.

But there's almost nothing about it yet in any of our evangelical books or magazines. Maybe magazines have touched on it. Why? Of course, America is a huge place.

And there is so much happening. I try to stay on top of researching Britain. And I feel sometimes I'm near on top of it.

But the United States, you try to keep up on what the Holy Spirit is doing in the United States. And it's like getting on a roller coaster, sitting on some kind of pillow. It's an interesting experience.

But you can do what you can. So I feel very, very strongly that OM has taken the right course. I've been talking to Jim McConner for 12 years about sending workers out.

He will not send workers into OM because we are a mixed multitude. You can imagine. Pardon? We are a mixed multitude.

That's a term from the Old Testament. Buck Singh also accuses us of being a mixed multitude. This means that we are mixed.

Pentecostals and Brethren Baptists, people of Arminian theology and Calvinistic theology, people who are premillennial and some who are amillennial and some who are nonmillennial and some who don't even know what it is. And, of course, a local church movement of that type, a new movement with strong doctrines, with definite answers on every issue, would find something like OM difficult. However, in their case, they, and we've challenged them and believe they're in error on this, believe that evangelism must be Jerusalem first.

And they are in Jerusalem. They haven't gotten out of Jerusalem yet. They may be in Judea.

And so in my negotiations with Jim, by the way, Dale Roton belongs to or is somewhat commended out by one of their assemblies in Kansas City, which is one of the more independent groups. And they got linked with Dale and myself. And so Dale is linked with them, though he's also linked with the more traditional Brethren assemblies.

But they have not yet, after 12 years or more, sent hardly a single person to the foreign mission field. Now, it's not for me to judge them. I've told them what I think.

But the very fact that so many movements are born, local church movements, movements that have life, they're from God, they have been born and remain in their own country, is 10 more reasons why I believe we have obeyed God to launch out and to go to the lands where hardly anyone is going. And by the very nature of doing this on a worldwide level and an interdenominational level, of course, we will be classified as parachurch and therefore rejected immediately by a large number of people who are very, very heavy on the local church. This is so ridiculous because now what some of these groups are doing are sending out their own missionaries.

They will not work through missionary societies, they're not scriptural. So they send out their own missionaries. That may sound good back at home, but what happens when they arrive to the field? Who do they work with? Who trains them? Who helps them make, keeps them from making the same mistakes others have been making for the 20 years before them? It's incredibly difficult for a church in California to guide a full-scale missionary operation from start to finish in the Middle East.

So what happens now? Even people like Jim McConner comes to me and he wants us to give him our umbrella when he comes to Europe. This gets incredibly complex. The Bible Speaks wanted us to do that when they came and they were an extremist operation.

Christ is the Answer, which is just almost split in two, wanted us to give them our umbrella when they hit Europe. And when we discovered their extremism, we said, we love you brothers, we admire some of your zeal, we'll pray for you, we had a big Jerusalem meeting, but we cannot go along with this teaching. Number one, that everybody in a secular job is still in the system and is not a disciple.

And I've noticed they have had a very checkered history with many of their leaders leaving and heartbreak over the past two or three years. Their work in the Philippines, where I was recently, is almost diminished. So many, many groups that are strong in their home country and can build up a very nationalistic local church situation in their own country when they move out to the regions beyond, it is a total fiasco.

And they are rejected by local believers as Christ is the Answer was and the Bible Speaks has been in Europe and classified as a cult and then they react because generally they're not cults and it's just one big mess. And I try to beg some of these people, why can't you send people out with the WEC, with the European Christian Mission, with OM, with YOM, groups that have roots, groups that have swept for 20 years, are linked to the churches and also want to plant churches. But no, because people so easily get in their narrow framework, they see their own way, they get into super spirituality, they feel they have greater enlightenment, they have deeper truths, higher truths, and a subtle ability to belittle anything that's interdenominational or that does not practice their favorite things in the area of doctrine.

And I can tell you in Europe it is going to get more complex. Sorry to say. What are some of the other results of an overemphasis or extremist view on the local church? I've already mentioned how the exclusive brethren went more and more extreme.

The open brethren divided. Some went extreme, some became open. And today many open brethren assemblies, they fellowship with other groups, they're leaders often in interdenominational things like Moody Bible Institute.

Many, many brethren there. And people like Harry Ironside of the brethren became the pastor of Moody Church. Quite interesting since one of the strongest roots of the brethren movement was anti-clericalism.

I noticed one of the fastest growing brethren assemblies in Canada had a full-time paid pastor who graduated from Dallas Seminary. Things are certainly changing. The exclusive brethren, however, divided and divided and subdivided, especially after Darby's death, so that now in a place like Greater London, I'm told, they have over 80 different streams of exclusive brethren.

They're actually not so relevant outwardly to us. We hardly ever meet them. There are some good believers among them.

They're quite strong actually in Egypt. We've had some fellowship with some of the leaders, but you would have to have a very special letter to break bread in most of their assemblies. The most extreme group was the Taylorite group.

It was the father, Jim Taylor, who held Watchman Nee spellbound and led the whole Watchman Nee movement largely into an exclusive position. This did not come from some Chinese vision. It came through the terrific knowledge of the Bible in its exclusive brethren way, of Jim Taylor, who brought Watchman Nee out of China, disciplined him.

It was only when Watchman Nee ended up breaking bread at another group, the Honor Oak Fellowship, which in its day was considered extremist and heretical, but not today, as it's more or less just a local church, and it was when Witness Lee broke bread there, he was excommunicated worldwide by the exclusive brethren and stories were spread about him that are spread until this day. We have not heard the end of the history of Watchman Nee. New things that have come out recently are very interesting.

Watchman Nee even attended the Keswick Convention. But exclusivism remained a very basic part of many Watchman Nee assemblies. And they had this very strong principle of church ground.

One locality, one church. And this is very appealing to the young Christian. He sees the Lutheran Church here, the Baptist Church here, the Brethren here, the Pentecostals here, and he begins to feed on this one church and church ground principle, and it sounds so wonderful.

It sounds like the total answer to what seems to be chaotic. And the young, immature mind grabs it. And that particular teaching has taken a number of ex-OMers, sorry to say.

Perhaps seeing them miss all the different churches when they were in OM and some of the problems, the reality, because you're in OM, you see it. And you just hear about these other things. In OM, it's a seven-day-a-week thing.

For the local church, it's once or twice a week. You're living separately. You're there in church.

It's much easier to have love and everything that it takes to impress a young Christian two or three times a week. Or in a very small operation where that is your main goal. That is your main goal.

To win and to proselytize a few people and get them into your stream. And so some, by the extra effort these people have been able to make, have taken a few OMers. That is not my greatest concern.

My greater concern are the people that get into these exclusive groups, whether it's Witness Lee or some other exclusive group. They get into a state of hyper-spirituality, the total answer, in which everybody else is belittled. But when that finally caves in, they fall out with their leadership or they have problems or some other mess.

Where do they go from there? The letters I could show you from people who have been destroyed by exclusivism, neo-exclusivism, local church extremism, especially when it has heavy teaching on submission. Most of them have to. It's the only way they maintain the thing.

If I could share with you some of the letters that I've had, you wouldn't believe it. People totally crushed. People having mental breakdowns.

People that can no longer relate to any other Christians. Even people who have come out of the Taylorite movement. The son of Taylor was a very weird fellow.

He got on to alcohol. He became a dictator. He got on to the immorality thing, because sex and the extremist groups always run very, very closely.

And the whole thing was finally exposed in Scotland. It hit the press. It hit television.

There are many, many people in Britain today that would never touch any kind of small fellowship, because they would think it's similar to the exclusive brethren, which was exposed by TV twice, by books, and by the press. An unbelievable story. Tape recordings of Jim Taylor in his final days.

Yet, though there's been a great exodus from this Taylorite extremist group, many have remained because their mail is censored, they're controlled, they don't hear what's happening in the outside world, and they're simply brainwashed that it's all lies, fabricated by the enemy to destroy the faith. This is the same group that teaches that you must separate from your wife. If she is not in total fellowship with the

assembly, not baptized in the assembly, does not follow with your line of teaching, you must separate from your wife.

And many wives and husbands have been separated. Sons separated from fathers. You wonder why a few of us, like Tozer's little quotation, that developed a little bit of reverent skepticism in our day, is very, very helpful.

And Tozer's quotation that says, the more keen Christian is more easily led astray. We will be hearing more of the Witness-Lee movement that has its base in California, and that has especially been spreading across the states, even though there have been a number of divisions, there are now even churches of ex-Witness-Lee movement people. Just as in Houston, Texas, you have churches of ex-Bob Thiem people.

Is it Bob Thiem? Another man who must have the most high opinion of himself imaginable, whose pictures in the back of his books have all of his military credentials, and who was so right-wing that he considered Roosevelt the greatest traitor America has ever known, and wanted to destroy and kill everybody in Vietnam, including all the hippies. And if you listen to some of his tapes, you will think this man is the greatest Bible teacher you have ever heard. He knows the Greek, he knows the Hebrew, some of his messages are fantastic, but as you listen in, or if you dare walk into his church with long hair and blue jeans, you will discover a very interesting situation.

And so now there are churches of ex-Thiemites, who somehow scarred and wounded are trying to find spiritual balance. Let's move on to a few other results of over-emphasis on the local church. By the way, Bob Thiem didn't believe in any mission societies.

He didn't even believe in missionaries. He believed in his church and in Bible teaching. Everything would be saved through Bible doctrine.

What he meant was his doctrine. And then he signed up a million missionaries, his tapes, and his tapes went out across the world, and people left their churches. I remember this when it hit Milwaukee, and on Sunday morning they would gather around a cassette recorder and listen to Bob Thiem, who was God's answer to all the ailments of the American church.

I trust that when you go out from this conference, you will never fall prey to anybody who is all of God's answer to anything, except the Lord Jesus Himself, because usually it's a mark of a cult, when somebody has all the answers. Another mark of a cult is when they have always some insinuation about the other groups and the other churches, and all that kind of thing. One of the other results of the over-emphasis on the local churches is a slowing down of world evangelism.

If you're caught up with endless church controversy, endless divisions, endless indoctrination trying to get people to believe everything right down to whether they should have a dog or not, the Exclusive Brethren, they all had dogs for a while, and then they had a revelation that dogs were not from God. The Exclusive Brethren have a telephone link up that would make the IBM Corporation look slow. With one phone call in New York City, Jim Taylor had the whole movement warned, worldwide dogs are out, and people by the hundreds took their dogs to the pound and to the gas chambers, and thousands of dogs were liquidated and annihilated.

If you think these things are new, or they only happen every second quarter of a century, you've never studied religion. If you think that what Jim Jones dragged 900 people into in Guyana, was something new, you just haven't studied. And I don't recommend studying much of this.

I don't spend that much time. It builds up over the years. I meet all kinds of people.

I've always been the kind of person who asks lots of questions. My teachers used to get very upset back at school and ask me if I would not ask so many questions. And I got in the flesh doing that sometimes.

Even at Moody Bible Institute, I was a bit of a rebel at times, and I wanted more prayer, and I was upset. Why aren't we praying? This missionary was up there, and he opened for questions, and I said, Do missionaries any longer believe in intercessory prayer? And of course he was very embarrassed, and he reacted to this, and he reported it to the head of the missions department. And the head of the missions department gave a lecture to our students that someone had highly embarrassed the visiting missionaries.

They have suffered to come here and teach and preach to us at Moody. And of course, unfortunately, he was right, and it was a very humbling experience to stand up in my missions class and admit that I had been in the flesh, and that I shouldn't have said that, and to repent, especially since that was the first day I ever brought my fiancé to class with me. And she's now my wife.

She sat next to me, you know, looking, Oh, boy. Some of you pray for me, and if you don't have a lot of time to pray for me, just pray for one major thing. It's simple.

Mouth control. Not self-control. Mouth control.

If I got that, I tell you, I think most things would fall into shape, except the eyes sometimes also give some difficulty. So, so often, through getting all involved in these internal problems, endless arguments, like the split that I mentioned yesterday, the first Protestants that broke away from the Anglican church upon arriving in Amsterdam, blew into pieces, arguing over lace on their clothing. And as you know, when Lenin sprung the communist revolution in the Soviet Union, it was supposedly during the same week that the hierarchy was having a week's discussion or a day's discussion on the color and the type of frock or clothing that the bishops should wear in the church.

Church history is so exciting. God raised up the China Inland Mission. Call it parachurch.

Call it what you want. God raised it up. Missionaries were linked with the church, but back in those days, the churches did not believe to any degree in world evangelism.

When William Carey spoke out about world evangelism, the tradition of that day among many was, if God wants to evangelize the pagans, He will do it Himself in His good time. And William Carey, you can sit down. You have to be almost ignorant of missionary history and therefore church history if you think that it's mainly been the local church that has done the job.

And it's these avant-garde missionary movements, Wycliffe, Africa Inland Mission, China Inland Mission, World Evangelization Crusade, in a sense, out in front of the local churches, often criticized by the local churches, but at the same time, backed by other living local churches. It's these groups, and I could give you a hundred on that list, that have brought to pass the evangelization of that part of the world which is evangelized so far. And they have been, this is the real catch, they have been the biggest church planting movements in history.

Who planted the churches in Africa? And how ridiculous it is when a church is planted by a group called a parachurch group to then go extreme and deny their very parentage and say, well, yes, I admit the Lord used you, but now we have really come in to the fuller truth. It's heartbreaking when people go into that extreme. And I'm reminded of those words in Corinthians by Paul that says, you have many teachers, but not many fathers.

The African Inland Mission, WECC, the China Inland Mission, many, many other groups have been the spiritual parents of thousands of churches. That alone is ample proof of what I am so feebly trying to set forth in this presentation. And those churches have multiplied and in some cases the mission was able to completely withdraw and when we look at those dynamic movements today, we think, wow, that proves what the local church can do! No! That proves what the local church together with dynamic missionary work can do.

Because it was dynamic, avant-garde, so-called parachurch missions that started most of those local churches in the first place. There's a lot more I could say on that, but we've run out of time. Another one of the results of overemphasis is defense.

Defensism, I call it, or becoming over-defensive. When you become a strong local church and you are criticizing others, you are going to be criticized. Now, isn't this ridiculous what's happening with the Witnessly Friends? They go down the streets of California with t-shirts, down with the church, burn the church, religions of the devil, all kinds of things they say against the church.

Often through subtle insinuation. Then some of the churches finally get a little upset. And so they write some books.

And the Witnessly people got so upset by these books that they started to run full-page ads in the major California newspapers setting forth the truth about their wonderful movement. And those newspaper ads are the best way to be convinced that they're extreme. In fact, they lost some people doing that.

They had a number of key people leave. Now they are suing one man in the United States for \$30,000 because of a chapter in his book against their movement. But the Bible says the judgment you give is the judgment you get.

If you go around running down all the churches, they eventually, they're human, they're going to turn and run you down. And they may have stronger forces like the media and television. And it becomes very ugly.

It seems to me because one of the things the Witnessly people say is that they are believers and want to be treated as believers and they say we are believers, we are believers in error, but we are believers. They generally will at least concede that much to us. Then why are they disobeying the Scripture which says that we should not take a brother to law? Could not these things be settled outside of court? Outside of court, which brings public scandal and often brings the name of Jesus into disrepute.

So what happens? Any one of these extremist local churches has to become defensive. They end up writing endless letters. They end up in a very defensive situation and therefore can do very, very little for world evangelism.

Sometimes when they do finally launch out into world evangelism, it's in order to prove that they also believe in world evangelism. Not really the greatest motive, though praise God, at least they get going. And if that's the way they have to get to the mission field, maybe it would help, except when they're in

extreme error and heretical, then I'm glad they do stay home and I'm so happy that basically the exclusive brethren have more or less stopped evangelizing.

That's what's very helpful about them in comparison to witness liaison which is so similar, but which is very much on the march and by the way, a very big thing here in Germany right now. And they had two legal cases here in Germany because of a book exposing them here. And then, another one of the results of the overemphasis is unbelief in others.

The unbelief it produces in other people. Thinking people who say if this is Christianity, so narrow, and now it's more than ever linked with Jim Jones. Anything like this is linked with Jim Jones.

And it produces an enormous amount of unbelief. It really is a major enemy of the spreading of the gospel. Extreme forms of Christianity that just turn people off, that make them... You wonder why some people don't take tracks from you in the streets? They have been turned off by the cults.

They don't know that basically you're a relatively normal person who would love to share Christ but the last thing you want to do is push them into something or make them into some kind of weirdo. They don't know that. They think you're a moonie.

They think you're a cultist. They're scared. People are scared of the doors more than ever before in some countries.

It's getting more complex. The Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, the moonies, and other extremist groups have done a lot of harm. Dare we even go into the ugly history of the family of love, the children of God.

Born almost partly at second birth on our doorstep in Bromley, Kent. We warned our people in a very leadership conference before anyone else was opposed to them. We warned our people and said, look, we think they're believers but it's extreme.

Steer clear. And yet others, naive, not only brought them in, financed them, gave people to them. One of the top leaders in the navigator movement in England joined the children of God and never came out of it.

Praise God, the thing has really crumbled in the last year. Hundreds and hundreds have come out. Leaders have left.

Some of the closest associates of David Moses Berg who is, among other things, a very immoral person. Many similar comparisons to the Jim Jones crisis. This brings me to another important thing just to insert here very quickly.

Is that we must be more careful than ever in OM to avoid anything that's cultic in appearance. Anything that borders on manipulation. Anything that borders on over-control or brainwashing or other things that I've once written down but I can't think of them right now.

You can help in this. You can help in regard to communication to your parents. And there are many, many ways that you can clearly distinguish between something like OM and any kind of a false cult or even extremist group.

In fact, this particular message I think would clearly, especially yesterday, show that in no way are we some little special new revelation group that has appeared in these days. But are people linked with the

historic churches which people do tend to at least understand and accept. And we are facing difficulty in some countries because we have not been able to overcome prejudice and prove to people that we are not a cult or a sect.

Of course, in a place like Austria this is very, very difficult. And the Catholic Church in some cities in Austria has come down upon us as a sect because, of course, we are not Roman Catholics. That is a different situation.

And no matter how much we avoid being cultic or be looking like some kind of extremist group, of course, some people are going to think we are. You can't do anything without that happening. Some of your parents, even if they found out everything about OM and all the balanced things and the people that have been through OM and are now back by the thousands in normal secular jobs doing probably the same things they are doing.

Driving their car, playing golf, in love with their wives, sailboating with their children. And if they heard all the rest that I could give, maybe they still would think you are in something dangerous. But let's at least communicate what we can.

And then, lastly, on this particular thing, or just two final things, total answerism. This, of course, is very much linked with this. And the people who get sucked into extremism of whatever form, often it's because they are looking for a total answer.

Often it's because they have emotional problems and spiritual problems that they have not been able to resolve. And so they keep going from group to group and place to place. Of course, as they get older, some of these things get resolved.

If simultaneously some of their major problems get resolved, with their discovery of a new group, they will mix in their mind just basic growing up in life with what this group is giving and therefore feel they have found the total answer. Being on OM at 18, when it was much more difficult to find an answer to some of these things that they found an answer to when they were 26, they decided that certainly OM wasn't really the answer. They got some blessing and some encouragement and often they're very thankful.

We don't have many people who are sort of that bitter against OM, even those who join sort of exclusive or extremist groups. Because for most, OM has been such a rich experience. But they want more than that.

They want a total answer. They want to know why there are so many different churches and problems in the church. And people come along with some of the most naive and yet subtle talk about unity.

There are people that actually believe we're going to somehow in the next few years all come into unity. Now, of course, God can somehow force us to do that. He hasn't done it in 2,000 years.

And I think to think that we're all going to come into some kind of unity before heaven is to deny the humanity of man, the facts of history, and the clear teaching of the New Testament. And unity will be in the midst of diversity. And when I was at the Keswick Convention some weeks ago breaking bread on the Friday evening with 5,000 people of many different churches and denominations, I realized that as believers we have unity.

Even though we love our own churches and we have convictions about certain doctrinal issues which will cause us to go to this group rather than that group. And every time a group comes in with a total answer in

regard to unity, some people fall for it, some don't fall for it, and so instead of more unity, you have two more groups. And soon you'll have four.

Because once you divide once, the second division is incredibly easy. Unless you really are spiritually mature, and that division has really been a division from God because of true heresy or liberalism or something worse than that. Beware of the cult of total answerism which is often linked with hyper-idealism.

The endless streams of books on sanctification, some of which are good, some of which are extreme, have helped many, and praise God for them, but the very sensitive soul who's wanting total spirituality, who's wanting to be a reincarnation of Andrew Murray, D.L. Moody, F.B. Myers, Watchman Nee, and a few other people, all in one. For those people, I recommend they don't read too many of that kind of book. They might want to try a little Tim LaHaye or a little bit of Eugenia Price.

They might even want to try a few good secular books or a novel or Charles Dickens or maybe even go off and watch a film that I recently saw that challenged me and caused me to get some new ideas how Bugs Bunny took the West. Why do I say that? Because super-spirituality and hyper-spirituality is the open door to twenty other extremes. As Tozer said, the man who's hungry for more of God more easily grabs on to whatever comes, especially if it's given out by someone who has a pleasing personality.

And Jim Jones, as you could see on the film, if it was a true report, had a relatively pleasing personality as a young man and won the hearts of those black people and was in some ways in the beginning seemingly a sincere, somewhat unselfish man, especially before he got his counsel from Father Divine who told him how to milk the people and how to use his immoral impulses and just let them flow rather than try to discipline his life and end up in frustration. Hyper-idealism, super-spirituality will never cease to be one of Satan's methods to destroy and hinder the church. Now, I can't get to that other message.

And I've had wrestlings as to what I should give in my limited times with you. The reason I gave these two lectures with all the many sidelines that I've tried to bring you is because some of the other messages I can give next week because they're for everyone. And so I've saved some of my stronger burdens and more basic challenges and OM messages, New Testament messages for next week.

Only a few of you are leaving this week and I hope you perhaps will pick up some of the other tapes available to just bring some of what I said this morning into balance because basically my main thrust is not what I'm talking about this morning. In fact, it's the first time I've covered it in 18 years. So this is not my main thrust.

But you know, as you're attending OM conferences for 19 years and preaching for 24 years, you like to launch into new things. It's for my own health. And there are a number of people also that are not here who want this material which is available on cassette and may be put into modified form in a written way.

So it's not that this is our main thing. The many other burdens, some of which you've already had, many of which you've had in the summer conferences, in a sense are far more important. The positive thrust, world evangelism, the all-sufficiency of Christ, spiritual balance, which of course we've touched on, the lordship of Christ, the cross, second coming, all these things.

To me, that's the greatest burden, the victorious life. And I do believe, as the word says, we should not be ignorant of Satan's devices. And it seems that Satan has a subtle plan to take one of the most beautiful doctrines in the Bible, the teaching of the local church, the universal church, the local church, and to

somehow twist it and get people extreme, and get more divisions, more divisions, so that the task of world evangelism slowly, at least in many people's lives, grinds to a halt.

Or even worse, when these things hit the field, the mission field, and literally blows the work into pieces, as happened in some countries. Let's pray. Father, we think of those words in the New Testament when Paul said, he went around to the churches in much exhortation.

And we believe this is exhortation that we need in the day in which we live. Especially if we are going to continue in a balanced way, working with the local church, and having our roots in the local church, and working with such a wide range of churches that You have raised up over these hundreds of years. Give us wisdom and discernment, we pray.

Open our eyes that we may have that like-mindedness and that unity, and that oneness of heart as they had in the Book of Acts. And yet not expect everybody to be some little carbon copy of ourselves or of our group. Lead us forth into battle, even today.

We thank You. We praise You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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