

Vision for Recruiting

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, friendship, and pioneering in recruiting workers for the overall work of God.

Duration: 31:23

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:35-37, Romans 10:15

Topics: "World Missions", "Time Management"

Description

In this sermon, George Verwer emphasizes the importance of using our time wisely and not allowing television to consume our lives. He shares his personal experience of breaking the inertia in his own ministry and starting from scratch. Verwer highlights the power of personal testimonies and written materials in reaching others with the gospel, even more so than flashy audiovisual presentations. He also discusses the need for more workers in world missions, referencing Matthew 9:35-38, where Jesus expresses compassion for the multitudes and the scarcity of workers in the harvest.

Transcript

Let's turn to Matthew chapter 9, a very familiar territory. Matthew chapter 9, I want to share something that's really on my heart. For the whole body of OM, the conferences are shorter, the opportunities I have to share are naturally less, so some of the tapes that I make here and the messages I share here that go out all over the world are my only way of being able to share to the whole body of OM that which is on my heart.

And I want to share this burden about a strategy for workers, a strategy for recruits. How can we get the recruits for world missions that we need, not only for the OM burden and vision that God has given us, but for other missionary agencies? Reading from Matthew 9, Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing every sickness and every disease among the people. When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they were faint and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Then said he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the workers are few. Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest. It's very easy to talk about the recruit situation.

It looks like the number of recruits for the year program may be down. We don't know. Back doors on both ships are wide open and people are coming in very quickly.

There are so many different recruiting arms in OM, so much happening, no one knows all that's going on. Now, even our European conferences represent less of a percentage of all that's happening within OM. It used to be that at one of the conferences, you could get a pretty big picture of all that was happening.

Now, with one ship in Canada, another ship in Africa, with the size of the India work, with the rapid growth in South America, when we go to the conference, we're only seeing part of what's happening in OM. Needless to say, there is an enormous need in God's work for workers. I think one of the beautiful things and great privileges we have in OM is to be as excited about other people's ministries to some degree as we are about our own.

Our burden for workers is not just to get workers for OM. It is to get workers for the overall work of God. I have quite a few people come to me now and write to me.

They say, God really touched me through your ministry and I've joined YWAM. Hallelujah. And far more people that have been touched in the OM ministry have never joined OM than have joined OM.

You need to realize that. OM's main thrust isn't to get people to join OM. Many people, when they are spoken to by God's Spirit, are led to remain where they are.

They're not led to join some training program. Let's not think, you know, OM or whoever else is the only way to train disciples. The local church is still one of God's best ways to train disciples.

I'm in the midst of reading a very thick book just published on eldership in the local church. And again, I've just been reminded of what God is doing and how much more God wants to do in that sphere. This means we cannot measure, you know, all that's happening through our ministry by the number of people.

I've always said this in the Western world, neurotic about numbers. God is still big on quality. And I'm sure you realize that.

On a practical level, what can we do? You may say, and I'd appreciate you writing a few of these things down, because I have, what can, ask yourself this question, what can I do as an individual to recruit for OM? And let's be really blunt, really honest. If we don't see some breakthroughs in recruits, certain sections of OM will have to close. We are not afraid to close things down.

If you want a list right back from the 60s of things we have closed down, I could draw one up because we have that flexibility and adaptability. We don't want monuments. And we know that we cannot move ahead without people, and to some degree, the right people.

And one of the greatest dangers right now in OM, in the area of recruits, is we presume someone else is doing the recruiting. That is the big mistake. And especially dangerous in a day when our leaders have been thrust with more administrative responsibilities.

The very day that budgeting came in, the very day that democracy, in a sense, got on the increase, we were never sort of anti-democracy, but there have been changes in OM. Many of them have been good, but it has increased the administrative load on many of our leaders at a time when also their families were growing, when at times also very strong messages were coming on us, like ordering your private world

and taking care of your family, in which men had to pull back from some of the work, take less meetings, including myself, and give themselves to other things. So a dangerous presumption is that someone else is doing the recruiting.

Now, we know the bottom line in getting recruits is found here in Matthew 9. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth workers into the harvest. And I believe this prayer burden should come in to as many of our prayer meetings as possible. It should be a vital part of our own personal devotions.

I don't think there's anything wrong with having lists of people. I've heard all the anti-messages. I'm always listening to anti-messages.

There's nothing that we can do that someone doesn't have an anti-message about. I just listened to a real heavy message on prayer from a particular character. I mean, he just knocked out all kinds of things that I think have a place in prayer.

I know they get off balance. Lists get out of control. And, you know, with a lack of burden and real spirit, we're just going through a grocery list.

That doesn't have to happen. You can have a list of names. You can have other ways of remembering people and praying for their basic spiritual life.

Praying that they'd be willing to go into the harvest somewhere overseas if the Lord would lead on the basis of this passage of scripture. Don't just pray vague prayers that the Lord would send workers. Pray for churches, that they would be sending churches.

And do be involved in distributing that book, 10 Sending Churches, because unless we see sending churches, it's going to be hard to see the individuals sent out into the harvest field. How shall they go? How shall they preach? Romans chapter 10, unless they be sent. If the first key word is prayer, then the second key word is share.

Recruiting is often a grassroots operation. Do not think that I walk into some big meeting and walk out of there with recruits. I may have in that meeting 200 people that make a commitment, that stand to ask Christ to be Lord of their life.

And if I get one or two OM recruits out of that, that would be good. Life isn't that way. These people, when they recommit their life to Christ in my meetings, or they're filled with the Spirit, or they make a commitment, don't automatically think, oh, now I should join OM.

Some people, when I speak, don't even connect me with OM. And so if we're going to recruit for OM, it's not something that George Burwell is just going to do, or even Jonathan McCroskey or other leaders who take a lot of me, it's a grassroots operation. And our surveys, which are not complete, show that the biggest thing leading other people to come on OM is a friend who has been on OM.

Remember that. And not necessarily a hyper gifted person, not necessarily someone who had a perfect time on OM, not necessarily a person who is even a gifted communicator. Friendship is a very important thing.

Prayer is first. Share is second. Sharing with your friends.

It may be a letter. It may be a phone call. It may be a postcard.

It may be a tape. We don't begin to use cassette tapes the way we could. They're down to 30 pence a tape for a 60-minute tape.

And just think of what it would mean to a friend of yours to get a tape with you and maybe two or three of your friends. An ad hoc tape. We make a big mistake if we think it's sophisticated audiovisuals that bring people into Christian work.

Forget it. That can be used. You put together your own little ad hoc audiovisual tape, you and your friends, and get the dog to bark and share what God is doing.

You send that to your friends, to your church. That is going to cut more ice often than some sophisticated 25,000-pound audiovisual. Even in university campuses lately, this started some time ago, they discovered that university students were more prone to read a mimeographed, duplicated, photocopied sheet about some revolutionary thought than something that had glossy pictures.

Things change. There's a place for the lovely leaflet with glossy pictures, but there's a place also for something that you put together. Of course, that doesn't mean you should throw quality down the tube for sure.

I've written here, your own life, of course, is the greatest weapon that God can use to touch other people. You may not understand what I'm going to try to say at this point, but I believe there is a danger, however, to overemphasize this. Quite a few messages that I've heard in some of the books I've read over the years, they overemphasize quality of life to the point that anybody that doesn't feel they really are some kind of mini Andrew Murray really feels quite intimidated about really doing anything.

And one of the reasons I sometimes speak so openly about my problems and failures and sins is to just bring into balance a lot of the messages that give the idea that the Christian leaders really have it all together, because I tell you, they didn't. And the biographers, when those biographies were written, did not write on negative things, and they certainly never touched on the sex issue. And sometimes even the whole Hudson Taylor story beautifully brought into balance a little bit by Hudson Taylor and Maria, a later biography, that managed to get a little bit of reality into it.

So don't think, you know, until you have your life sort of all together and you're Mr. Holiness or Miss Holiness and you've got the one hour prayer time under one arm and the power and witnessing on every corner and the track distribution machine going and total love for all of your enemies and the other 68 areas of spiritual reality that eventually you hear something about in OM and other groups, you can't really be used. I will tell you, in some cases, people I've seen used in recruiting were people actually eased out of OM because they didn't have their act together. Now that doesn't happen to that many people, but it's amazing who God uses in this area of recruiting and all of us can be involved.

And it's so exciting when someone you've witnessed to, someone you've shared with, gets excited about God, comes on OM and launches out into Christian service simply because you've given a bit of yourself. Love, of course, is number one and it's one of my greatest burdens, as you know, that we may be a more loving fellowship. You know something? Things I said years ago that challenged people in OM, I can say the same thing today, people get defensive.

We're very defensive at times in OM. Someone accuses us of lack of love or someone says, hey, you know, you're lacking a little bit in your hospitality, you're lacking a little bit in your care of your vehicles, you

get really defensive. I know, I've done it.

And I have to be five times more careful what I say. I mean, as I go over to speak to the OM leaders next week, I can't get away with saying things I said 20 years ago. They'll have me in the loo at the end of the meeting.

You've got to go with steaming and you've got to go telling them how wonderful they are and how great everything's going and then slowly bring in the hand grenade, you know, covered with chocolate and throw it in and run. Someone said to me some time ago, give us the old-fashioned Verwer messages. But if you give one and it happens to touch one of their raw nerves, often they don't come and talk to you about it.

They talk to somebody else about it. And the lack of sensitivity and, you know, what's, didn't Verwer get enough sleep last night? Is his hostility factor running loose again? Probably the hostility factor was a factor in some of those early messages. But we do want, by God's grace, to demonstrate more of his love.

And that costs, that costs. I've just written a few other things here as I watch the clock. We just need to go through them quickly.

I think of how God does use letters. You know, I'm getting the feedback that quite a few OMers now in the evenings, I think this was from another country actually, probably happens here, but quite a few OMers in the evening are sitting around watching TV. You know, TV was not even allowed up to a couple of years ago.

I don't think it's even officially yet allowed among the single trainees, but it's there. And I don't think any of us have the energy to fight it. I think we've got to learn to live with it.

But it just blows my mind if young, filled with energy people are spending excess of hours sitting around watching television. Because let me just tell you, I've already run the race 32 years. I might be able to afford.

People are trying to urge me to sit around a little more. And the rumor is out, of course, that George Burwell watches television. And of course I do.

The amount of total time at the end of the year, I will tell you, it would be very, very small. And I'm not against you watching some television, but that little machine can rob you of time. You can't generally write letters when you're doing it.

It's hard to talk on the phone when you're watching. I've tried that. You know, when you're young, you're just starting in your ministry.

You have to break the inertia. I have broken the inertia in my life. My life is half passed.

You are just laying the foundation in your life. That takes more effort. When I arrived at Moody Bible Institute, I'd been to Mexico once.

No one was planning to go back with me to Mexico. Dale had left and gone to Wheaton. We didn't know whether we'd ever see each other again.

I had to start from zero. And of course, this is why I became perhaps so extreme. This is why there was nothing hardly in my life except the vision, the work, letters, phone calls, meetings, slides, etc, etc, etc.

And there's a danger in OM today. You must understand this. You may not think it.

OM does too much for you. You actually think you're joining an organization and basically the organization is taking care of you. They provide the accommodation.

They arrange for the food. You walk in, how about a car? And you know, literature. And one of the reasons that I became what I became is because I had to do it all myself, cast upon God.

Of course, soon I had people. But those people that you win, the very, you know, when I got one brother, two brothers, five brothers total of us that went to Mexico that next summer. Hours with each one of those persons.

Hours, many, many hours. Many, many letters to the original board that I was trying to get going in New Jersey. The people that were supporting and giving their money.

Do you think those people would have given their second gift if they never heard from me after they gave their first one? And back then, OM was zero. It was nothing. We were only just giving it a name.

And in your life, we don't want to rob you of the privilege of pioneering. And that's not easy when there is now such a structure and such an establishment and such a mentality. And this is a great burden on my heart.

We need to see the spirit and vision of OM born again in each person, each year. Stop thinking the machinery is going to produce the people. We know we need some top quality people in STL.

In God's work, you don't just put a coin in the executive recruiting machine and expect them to walk in the door. There are many things about a spiritual movement that are basically obnoxious to worldly minded people. And the way the world operates is by salary, by perks, by money, by homes, by a lot of interesting things.

I don't know how much you've studied. And in our work, we have got to see a work of the Holy Spirit in people's hearts. And if I tell you we have open doors in the university, we have open doors even among professional people, but it takes work.

And it takes that extra letter, that extra phone call, that extra turning away often from what you want to do to that which can bring results for the kingdom of God. For some, as you go on in more regular recruiting, if you have a gift in that area, increasing your communication skills can be an enormous help. You know, I'm on the phone with the man who's in charge of the Dale Carnegie Foundation work and lining up a public speaking course.

I'd love to put some people through that because it's very hard to learn public speaking among Christians. They won't tell you what you're doing wrong. We are not courageous in confronting people about their communication weaknesses.

We are not courageous in confronting people about their communication weaknesses. My brother communicated very poorly here some weeks ago and praise God for a leader who had the courage to take him in the side room and talk to him about his communication right here, but not many people have that courage and so we flounder on. And this is why sometimes a secular communication course like Carnegie's or somebody else's can help us.

I'm speaking there now more of a person who is a public speaker and a public communicator. It's interesting that I recommended Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in the leadership manual and yet probably less than 50% of the leaders today have ever read it. Just a basic book.

Every Christian ought to be able to do better than that book. He robbed it from the New Testament, secularized it, put it back to us and made millions. It's one of the highest fastest selling books in history.

Of course, some Christians, you know, written by non-Christians. What can we learn from non-Christians? It's interesting that if you discover who are the Christian leaders in the world today, you discover most of them have learned quite a bit from non-Christians. Most of them have studied at secular universities and colleges.

There are plenty of beautiful exceptions. Another thing that will help us in the ongoing task in recruiting and please slip out early if you have to go is to avoid negative statements about the work, especially in general public. I don't have a total answer to this because I'm not totally against people making negative statements.

We want to be honest. I've written right here. How do we keep this in balance? But let me just tell you, the stuff we may say under pressure that's negative say about STL ultimately bounces back and keeps us from getting the people we want.

That's why many months ago, when there was a lot of negative vibrations going out, it takes any negative vibration that goes out of Brownlee, take two years to get it back, you know, recover. It just goes. And the word can get out.

We saw this in a number of teams, even within OM, the word gets out. Hey, don't go on that team. The word was out.

Hey, don't go to Danzig Street to play. You know, women are being mugged in the streets. It's a lousy accommodation, blah, blah, blah.

We had trouble getting people to go to Danzig Street. Now the Quinta image is basically positive. Quinta, wow, fresh air, nice place.

That doesn't mean the recruits will be parachuting out of the trees. Boy, do you see the way those Marines parachuted the other day? That was pretty good. Anyway, I hope we will understand the importance of being careful about what we say.

Let's not hang all of our dirty laundry out in the street to wave it to, you know, the people that go by because it creates negative impressions. Now, OM is continually battling negative impressions. I just read a letter from a brother in Asia said a major Christian leader is out there in Singapore just taking heavy pop shots again at short-term work.

For some, short-term is synonymous with OM. You know that? Say short-term, OM. And of course, they don't understand that OM is both.

And boy, I tell you, there's a lot of people that would be on OM today, humanly speaking, if it wasn't for some of the negative stuff, some of which is not true. Other items, if they were brought into balance, they'd

be on OM today. Greater use of literature.

We have so much literature that God can use. And we continue to hear of cases of people that came on OM or got involved in missions because of one piece of literature. It's not always a big thick book like Operation World, though we're certainly excited about that.

Sometimes it's just one page because I tell you today, the average young person is not reading. Don't think the average person is reading Operation World. The average young person is listening, maybe to Amy Grant, maybe to Keith Green.

They may read a one page tract or leaflet with pictures geared to them. And we have to fight. I don't know if you heard my tape on keeping OM youthful.

They are absolutely basic principles. If we fail to work toward keeping OM youthful to varying degrees, and that is not firstly linked with age, it's linked with adaptability, it's linked with flexibility, it's linked with willingness to change, it's linked with staying plugged into where this generation is. It's a pluralistic generation.

And so there's scope for all kinds of people, conservatives, liberals, anti-music, music. You know, there's plenty of scope. This is why I read many different youth magazines and try to listen to young people.

And to me, it's exciting that we, some of us who are older now, have the privilege of being involved with young people, using literature, linking people up. Wayne shared with me the other day, a girl who wanted to come on OM, she wrote to the Quinta what? She got a negative, right? Because she was interested in a particular field. She got some kind of a negative.

We got on the phone, guess where that girl is right now? She's out in that field. And, you know, don't be intimidated and don't let your person you're trying to recruit be intimidated by the machinery or by the structure. If they don't get through, you know, they get a letter back saying, well, we don't think, you know, it'll be possible.

Now, where leaders used to handle a lot of this, now it's directors of personnel. Some directors of personnel are new. They're not necessarily gifted recruiters.

They may be administrators. And so we got to realize that that personal linking, and I will tell you, if you know a recruit, and you think a phone call or a letter from me would bring them on OM, you'd better get their name and address to me real quick. Because, you know, that's my bread and butter.

That's my sleep, dream, wake up recruits. You know, when I'm jogging, if I see a potential recruit, you know, I stop and go. And, well, I have a couple other words.

I know I'm over time. This is going to produce, I hope, some results for STL, so they'll be happy. Sanctified imagination.

Spreading the overall vision. There are times when we're specifically recruiting. There are times just spreading the overall vision.

God will bring in the workers. You don't have to have heavy-handed, manipulative type of recruiting. We don't want that.

Spread the vision. Share the need. On the other hand, a specific challenge is one of the best ways to get recruits.

Don't tell somebody, you know, God has given me a word of the Lord for you. You know, I got this word for you. You're to go on OM.

Hey, we don't want that. But, brother, I think you ought to really pray about going OM. You may want to even say a particular field.

I challenge people to join the ships. I think people are screwing in the head not to consider joining those ships. It is an open door of the century to be able to live one or two years on a ship, traveling around the world, seeing different people, evangelizing, serving Christ.

The fact that more people can't get excited about this proves that this is a generation with generally low blood pressure and general lack of vision and lack of spirit of adventure. And it just, it amazes me. So don't be afraid to give people something specific to pray about.

You don't say, God told me. But you just share it because people need a specific challenge. Be sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying.

Some people need to be actually urged to stay at home, to be a sender, to get more rooted in their local church, not to immediately join OM. We actually prefer people to have a year after conversion at least in being grounded before they come on OM. Winning pastors, elders, missionary committee chairman, these key people, writing them, encouraging them.

It means all the difference in the world. One of our main ministries in ICT is maintaining relationships with pastors, Christian leaders all over the world. I tell you, I don't like to use the expression, but I'll use it anyway.

It pays big dividends. You get one pastor, one group of elders in a church excited and linked with you, answer their questions. They all have questions.

Believe me, you may see a steady stream of recruits coming from that church for 20 years. We've seen it again and again. And then I think we need to realize God doesn't want us to be sectarian.

And in our own thinking, we need to praise the Lord when someone whose life we touch joins some other fellowship or some other group. I don't think we should groan that maybe we had a few less short term in OM this summer. I think the overall numbers counting Latin America and all the other places is probably about the same.

Because in fact, there are more people, as far as we can see, out serving Christ this summer, short term than ever before in history. Our bigger burden should be how to channel more of those people long term. But even as we think of that, let's not just think in terms of Anglo-Saxon missions.

We may have less foreigners in India than ever before, but we have a similar number of Indians and we have many that seem to want to join. We can't even handle them all. And so God is working in many, many different ways.

And in the midst of the battle, in the midst of some of the setbacks and the heartbreaks, when we don't get a particular person we're praying for, or we find ourselves short staffed, which has generally been true in

the history of missions. And we are aligned with mission rather than with the, you know, executive corporation down in the center of London. And they have enormous staff problems as well.

So in an age of 10% or more unemployment, there's no problem getting bodies. But getting quality committed people is another story. Let's pray.

Father, we just thank you for this opportunity to think together about this all important issue. And right now we pray, oh God, Lord of the harvest, send forth laborers into STL, into ICT, into the ships, out to India and the subcontinent, into greater Europe and Europe, into OM, into YWAM, into UCCF, into WEC and CLC and BMMF, into overseas missionary fellowship, into child evangelism, into these different radio ministries, into other literature ministries. Raise up armies to get into these Bible colleges and get some necessary training.

Raise them up out of the universities. Raise up those who are willing to work behind the scenes, such a crisis at this time. Raise up those who are willing to go out and pioneer church planting among the unreached people.

And keep us of one heart and of one mind as we go. Lord, deliver us from anything less than the best in our own lives. Help us to control things that are robbing us of time.

Maybe it's television. Maybe it's excessive recreation. Maybe it's idle talk.

Maybe it's too much sleep. Maybe it's too much food. Maybe it's something else.

Lord, You know that in these things we never find perfect balance. The struggle is endless. And we thank You that great vision and great faith and great accomplishment is not in the absence of struggle and questions, even doubts.

But it's as we battle through together based on Your Word, praying to You that You would do the work. And Father, we just thank You for the amount of energy and strength that You're giving us in this work. We think of this whole area of pastoral care and caring for those who are in preparation and who already are on OM, that they may be able to make it through to that second year, that they may be able to make it through to join a mission society.

We know this is a whole area which is so absolutely strategic. And Father, when we think of it, we don't want to be overwhelmed, but we want to be challenged to go the extra mile, to be willing to pay the price in prayer, in discipline, in letter writing, in phoning, in sharing, in opening our lives, in increasing our communication skills. We ask You to give us strength as we go forward in these things.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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