

Human Factor in Discipleship

by Greg Livingstone

Greg Livingstone's sermon emphasizes the critical role of personal commitment and prayer in reaching the Muslim world for Christ.

Duration: 1:06:37

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:31, 1 Corinthians 1:27, 2 Corinthians 4:7, Ephesians 6:12, Revelation 7:9

Topics: "Discipleship", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing personal anecdotes about hiking and listening to cassette tapes. He then focuses on the scripture passage from 2 Corinthians 4:7, emphasizing the importance of recognizing that the power we possess comes from God and not ourselves. The speaker mentions the challenge of reaching out to the 800 million Muslims who are without Christ and shares a story about a team from O.M. who were arrested in Libya for distributing the Gospel. The team used Bible studies and a movie called 'The Jesus Film' to share the message of Christianity with the people in Libya. The sermon concludes with a quote from C.S. Lewis about the importance of not being swayed by our emotions and instead relying on the grace of God.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles with you, will you turn to 2nd Corinthians, chapter 10. I want to congratulate all of you who are on your way to OM, because I believe that the people here are people who are hungry, hungry for reality, hungry for what God wants to do in your life, hungry to be used by Him to make a significant contribution in accomplishing His purposes in this generation. And Jesus said, blessed are the hungry.

And so you're blessed, you're to be congratulated. I think very much you're in the right place, you're doing the right thing. I remember when I first got involved with this movement in 1959, I had no intention whatsoever of becoming a missionary.

I didn't know what a missionary was, but I knew I didn't want to be one. I just wasn't the type. I didn't want to marry a girl that had her hair up in a bun with a doily on the top and didn't like snakes and spiders, was a red, white, blue American who thought maybe he should be a lawyer and I was headed for law school.

But at the last minute I heard about this Wheaton College where there were a thousand Christian girls. And I felt strangely led to go there. But I still had no conviction whatsoever of the ministry.

But I was walking across Wheaton's campus and Dale Roton, who's now the interim director of the ship's ministry, came up to me and said, Greg, how would you like to go to an all-night prayer meeting? I said, why? What have you got to pray about that takes all night? At my little Baptist church we had prayer meetings which were really Bible studies, you know, with ten minutes of prayer tacked on the end. Those prayer requests were usually the weekly medical bulletin. You know, is anybody got any requests? Yeah, Joe, your grandfather's hip.

Okay, Joe's got anything else? Yeah, Susie, you've had the flu. Okay. And we sort of, you know, hit the requests like swatting flies.

You know, boom, one request, two, three. We didn't expect anything to happen. In fact, if Joe's grandfather got up and said he was healed, we'd have kicked him out, of course.

But this was my concept of prayer. So I wondered, what do you have to pray about that takes all night? And he said, the Muslim world. Have you ever had that experience when nothing, I mean, nothing comes on your computer screen? I mean, Muslim, Muslim, isn't that a white cheesecloth or what is a Muslim? I had no idea that one out of every five people in the world was a Muslim that went on in life day after day after day in 44 countries of the world without a clue that God's ever visited the earth.

And more out of pride than anything else, thinking, well, I can pray as long as he can, I went down to this prayer meeting at Moody Bible Institute, and this skinny guy named George Verwer stuck his finger in my face, and he said, what country are you claiming, brother? Well, I wasn't even claiming my tuition, much less a country. I didn't know what claiming meant, but I didn't want him to know that, so I said, well, what's left? And he said, Libya. You got Libya.

So I'm thinking, let's see, Libya must be one of those islands off Florida. You know, it's got to be out there somewhere. Well, I found out that night, as I opened up my heart to what was on God's heart, I found out about Libya.

I found out that here was an entire country without one known baptized believer among the Libyans. I found out about Turkey with maybe four or ten Muslims who had come to Christ, and Afghanistan with maybe four, and Mauritania with no known believers, and country after country after country, and the more I let God speak to me about these lands where His name is not honored. It was kind of like that commercial, I don't know if you have it up here in Canada, where the guy is shaving and he goes, gotcha.

Because I had been captured for a challenge that was exceedingly beyond anything I'd ever thought about doing. I suddenly realized that God wanted me to do something about 800 million Muslims going into a Christless eternity. Well, some years later, in OM, we sent a team to Libya.

In 1972, they were out distributing Gospels, and they were arrested and put into prison and sentenced to eight years in prison for distributing anti-state propaganda, the Gospel of Luke. So I'm sure that any of you are ready to follow in their steps. You're just delighted to be in a dirty, filthy, Middle Eastern prison for Christ.

But strangely enough, since that time, we haven't been able to find hardly anybody else that wants to go to Libya. Until we went away from the Bible schools and away from the Christian colleges to Penn State University and found some Christian students that were so dumb, they didn't know that God couldn't answer prayer and couldn't get them into Libya. You know what the worst missionary disease is? It's not

malaria, you get that in black Africa, that's bad enough.

It's not filaria, you get that out in India. I've got filaria, that's worms in the blood, that's why I wiggle around a lot. But that isn't the worst disease a missionary can get.

The worst disease a missionary can get, and it seems to have crept somehow into North America as well, is not malaria or filaria, but dullaria. And the way you can discern that you have dullaria is if you no longer are excited about the promises of the Word of God. You're living by your experiences instead of by the promises.

And when you see the promises, you say to this mountain, get up and go into the sea, you say, well, yes, that's a nice devotional, but I think we need to be practical. And I just stand before you and praise God for His grace in my life that I'm just as convinced at 44 that God can answer prayer and open up doors in places like Libya as I was at 19 in that prayer meeting. And I pray that God will use you as another generation to keep coming and coming and coming at the missionaries that are already on the field and bring back conviction and faith and hanging on to the promises until we see the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ become a reality in the Muslim world.

Because the giant that we face, that I want to share with you in just a few minutes tonight instead of Thursday because my wife decides she'd like me home a little more often, is the giant of Islam. When I was with North Africa Mission, we would have candidates come in and the candidate committee would quiz them and say, where did you get your vision for Muslims? They'd say, Mexico. And the candidate committee was scratching their head, wait a minute, how can you get a vision for Muslims in Mexico? Of course I knew.

It was on Operation Mobilization. And God is going to continue to enlarge your heart for the world, including the Muslim world, although you have your time on OM. And I pray that it will be a disease that will never leave you until you're part of that force that's going to believe Him to see tens of thousands and thousands and thousands of Muslims vowing not to Mecca, but to the Messiah, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And may God give us conviction that it really is going to happen. I don't think for one minute the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven tonight scratching His head, talking to the apostles and prophets and great missionaries of the past, saying, well guys, we did pretty well in black Africa and Latin America, and not too bad in Korea, they got those nice big prayer meetings, and North America, there's been some good things happening, but I don't know what to do with those Muslims. Anybody have any ideas? Maybe we should just write them off.

You can't win them all. But we act like that. But surely, in fact we know, because you can peek in the back of the book, find out how it ends up.

And we read there in Revelation 7, verse 9, that there are going to be people from all nations, every people, every tongue, worshipping the Lamb, so we know there's going to be a breakthrough among the Muslim peoples of the world, that God is going to open their eyes. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, they're not of the human level, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. Picture, from West Africa, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and 80 million Muslims below the Sahara Desert, and across the Middle East, and across Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and 80 million Muslims in India, and Bangladesh, and beyond into Malaysia, and Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Picture these fortresses, where they have locked Muslims in the darkness. Muslims who are taught from the smallest age, that Jesus isn't God, Jesus didn't die on the cross. Wicked Jews changed the Old Testament.

Wicked Christians changed the New Testament. So God had to send the final revelation in the Quran, which has no savior. Picture these fortresses, and then remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail.

Now that doesn't mean what most people think it means, oh boy, the devil isn't going to get me, the gates of hell won't prevail. You ever been attacked by a gate? Gates don't attack people. No, Jesus is referring to these fortresses, where people are held in darkness, where people are closed out by the fact that missionaries aren't allowed.

And he says, as we go after it, as we obey him, and we ram the gates, and ram the gates, and ram the gates, the gates will not prevail, they will go down. We will be able to enter, and take up residence, and dwell in the land, and do good, and love them, and demonstrate the loveliness of Jesus Christ, and Muslims will come to him, and form into vital, worshiping, witnessing congregations, if we don't grow weary, and faith not. You know, I can't find in this Bible anywhere, that Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations, if you can get a missionary visa.

I don't think he said, go and make disciples of all nations, if it's safe. It's not a New Testament question. It's not safe.

It's not easy. Islam is triumphalistic. It believes that it is going to bring the kingdom of God to earth.

It must reign, not Christianity. We are on a collision course with Islam. There's no question about it.

And they've just closed down another church in Saudi Arabia. They've just killed an Indian brother who went to the Maldives, to preach Christ. And they're trying to slam out the gospel, in place, after place, after place.

And we say, oh dear, that's too bad. Tis, tis, it must be closed. We'll have to go somewhere else.

But it seems to me that God wants to raise up people once again, like Peter and John of old, who were commanded not to speak in this name of Jesus anymore. And they said, excuse me sir, could I ask you a question? We need your advice. You're a religious ruler.

Should we obey God or man? What's a Muslim leader going to say if you ask him that? Should we obey God or man? Well, you better obey God. Thank you very much. I agree with you.

And God told me to come here, to Kuwait, and he didn't tell me to leave. Well, if you don't leave, we're going to put you in prison. Well, sir, if that's what you think you need to do, you do what you think you need to do.

But I feel we ought to warn you that at least once in history, when somebody did that, the whole jail was destroyed. Brother Andrew, God smuggler, says he doesn't believe that Muslims are going to come to Christ until they see Western Christians willing to suffer, willing to go to prison, willing to do whatever it takes, until they say, wow, you are really serious about this. You're not just a Christian out of convenience.

And then when we are willing to suffer, national believers, Arabs and Iranians and Turks and others, as it says in Philippians 1, will be more bold. But it has no good to scold them to witness. We're going to have to show them that Muslims can be transformed by the good news of Jesus Christ.

And I think that his calling us to send many, 10, 20 armies, frontiers, is just one. This little band of people that we're pulling together to send out 200 church planting teams across the Muslim world, is just one of the regiments of God's army that's going to come from every flank until there are hundreds and hundreds of disciple makers permeating these Muslim fortresses. Everywhere they turn, they're meeting someone who loves the Lord Jesus, who refuses to stop speaking in his name until those churches become a reality across the Muslim world.

This is the dream that God has given me. And I pray that he'll give it to many of you. Well, we went to Penn State University, as I started to say, and said, would anybody go to Libya? And I was beginning to get dull, Larry, and I didn't think anybody would ever respond to that.

But four fellows who were graduating in a month or so came forward and said, we'll go to Libya. I said, you will? We better have breakfast and make a plan. So we got together the next day and we made a plan.

Plan A was to go to London, where the Libyans were advertising jobs. So they went to London, they applied for the jobs, they were told these jobs are not for Americans. So they quit and came home.

Yes? No. They went on to the next step. They went to the island of Malta, where there were some 3,500 Libyans.

And they began to live with them and speak with them and make friends with them, finding out about opportunities in Libya and about the schools there, and finally praying all the time, claiming the promises that they were going to get into Libya. They wrote off to some colleges and in answer to prayer got a telegram back to all four of them that said, we want you to be our English faculty in a certain university. We'll give you \$17,000 a year, free room, free board, free trip home to North America.

You just come. The problem was, however, how could they get inside the embassy to get a visa? Well, they showed their telegram to the guard, finally he let them in. They went to see the man who gave out the visas and he was very cold because of the political distance of the two countries of Libya and America.

And as they were standing there saying, Lord, you got us this far, you've got to keep us going. Another man walked in and said hello to them and said, where are you from? They said, Pennsylvania. He said, really? This Libyan man said, I have a son in Pennsylvania.

They said, really, where? At Penn State University. They said, we're from Penn State University. What's his name? Mohammed so-and-so.

We just had lunch with him. Well, if you know anything about Middle Eastern people, suddenly the whole chemistry of the place had changed. The man who gave out the visas called in for coffee as these were friends of his friend's son and everything was a different story.

And in 15 minutes, well, actually an hour, 45 minutes for coffee, 15 minutes for the visa. They got on the plane, flew into Libya, were met with a chauffeur, taken to the university and the administrator said, I'm sorry, but we've got a problem. We don't have any place for you to live.

Would you mind living with the 290 men in the men's dormitory? They said, well, okay. Did they have an opportunity to share Christ? They didn't have an opportunity for privacy. Day after day after day, Libyan students were in the room.

What is the Injil? That's the New Testament. Teach about this. What do Christians believe about that? What do you do about this? And they had Bible studies every single day explaining their view of life.

The only time they weren't having Bible studies was on the holidays. And of course, there are many holidays in the Middle East. And so what did they do then? They went to the parents of their students.

Now, when you go to a home in Libya, you don't bring flowers or candy if you want to be popular. You bring a video cassette movie. See, they all have VCRs.

They're tired of the one television station with Gaddafi's harangue. And so they all have VCRs and they smuggle in movies. That's one of the problems because they have their view of Christianity from Hollywood.

But our guys had a movie on VCR called The Jesus Film in Arabic. They said, yeah, we got a new movie. Hey, all right, come on in.

Called in the neighbors. Got a new movie. They showed this film in home after home after home.

Everybody made a copy of it, of course. They don't respect copyrights, you know. And now at once were they told to stop.

In Libya. Do you see how easily we are bluffed into deciding what God can do and what He cannot do? God wants to train you this summer. And by the way, you might stay around longer than the summer.

I feel my other warning. The first warning was stay away from these extended times of prayer because God's going to get you. It's going to be like the mafia.

You know too much. And the other thing I want to warn you about these summer programs because God's going to speak to a lot of you about staying the year. My wife and I, we were so generous with the Lord.

We offered a whole year to Him when we first came on OM. We got home 12 years later. Sure did shoot down a wonderful medical and law career.

But you know, if there's any one word that sums up our time with OM, it's the word significant. Significant. We thank God.

I owe my spiritual heritage to OM and the brothers and sisters who taught me the principles of warfare and love and unity and the messages you're going to be going through again and again and again of brokenness, of international fellowship. And I may not be in OM today, but like they say, you can take the boy out of OM, but you can't take OM out of the boy. And I thank God for my heritage and the way that God used the people in OM to disciple me.

But I pray that as you are about the Father's business in OM, that you'll let Him keep enlarging your heart and that it'll bother you something awful that some 400,000 Iranians have been killed, according to Time magazine, and some 400,000 Iranians, according to the Bible, have gone into a Christless eternity. And you'll say, God, whatever way you lead me, use my life to see you honored among the peoples of Islam.

Let's pray together.

Take just a few seconds to speak to the Lord yourself and ask Him to move you with compassion for those 800 million Muslims for whom Christ has died. And tell Him that you're hungry to be used. If there's anything I've learned in OM is that God uses not the most gifted people, but those who want to be used badly enough.

Tell Him that you want to be a different person, a bigger person, with an enlarged heart by the end of this summer. Father, You know our hearts. You know how we love You.

You know how we desire You. You know how we don't want to miss anything of what You're doing in our generation. And our hearts hunger to so get involved in Your purposes that we might hear You say, Well done, Thou good and faithful servant.

Lord, use us, even us, to be part of the team that penetrates those fortresses and sees beautiful Muslims for whom You've died, liberated, worshiping the Lamb forever and ever. We ask it in His name who has all authority to do it. Well, I don't know if the theory about the new wine coming at the end is valid, but some of you, I don't believe in it.

You don't even believe in wine, so it may not help. We are so happy for those of you who have come. It's the most difficult night in church life, except for a church I was recently at in Worthing, England, where Monday night is a midweek prayer meeting.

When I arrived there, there were about a hundred to maybe a few more people waiting on God for a couple of hours. That was encouraging. And what a vision that little church has for world missions.

Tonight in this final message, we're going to be considering the human factor. I was going to write a book by this title, and then Grant Green, the famous secular writer, churned out a book called The Human Factor. So I figured it wasn't from the Lord to write a book on that subject.

But I'm excited about this message because I haven't shared this message in this way before, though I have been talking on this subject to some degree for many years. And I believe that if you miss what I'm going to share with you tonight, a lot of other things you hear in OM will never make sense. You know, OM has produced some very extreme people at times.

And not all good. Not all good. I remember once preaching on forsaking all in Holland.

A young woman walked out of the meeting. She had things mixed up in her mind because she didn't listen to the whole message. She went home, took her possessions out to the nearby canal and dumped them.

I heard later she was in a mental institution. Satan is a professional at getting the Lawrence people into some kind of a cul-de-sac or into some extremism. And the emphasis in the Word of God on the human factor is such a beautifully balancing aspect of God's truth.

And I'm really excited about it. Now, there's several books that fit into this. And we're short on time tonight.

And we're counting on the books to do the real work. I'll just get you started. But there's a book that a lot of people have missed called How Come It's Taking So Long to Get Better.

You get a free study book with it. And we're doing something very, very special tonight on this book. The story of Lane Adams, the man who was a minister and had enough courage to seek even psychiatric help when things started falling apart.

The human factor. And a book that touches the human factor on every page. Charles Colson's Life Sentence.

Before you read Loving God, you may want to read this. Far better than his first book, Being Born Again. This is an outstanding book.

When I picked it up, I could hardly lay it down until I'd read every page. I should say almost every page because usually when I write a book, read a book, I jump a page. This one even has pictures.

It's not what you think it is. And tonight, if you buy How Come It's Taking So Long to Get Better, you get Life Sentence as a free gift. The two books for the price of one.

Only till the supply lasts. I commend those to you and I can assure you you will get material in here that will be, you know, far superior to anything that I can share with you in our remaining minutes. When you buy those two, you get the study book free, you get personal revival free, and if you go over to the bonus table, you can get Ralph Shallis' From Now On, a fantastic book.

A lot of people have paid four dollars for it. All of this for the price of this one book. We'd like the visitors to get the priority.

You owe everyone to just relax a little bit. You've got enough reading material already to last you through the millennium. But we hope that you will take advantage of that.

One of the ministries of Operation Mobilization in the literature side of our work is research. We are constantly researching as much as possible books that are coming off the press in many nations, even in India. New book on disciplines just published in India by an exoemer is not even available in the western world.

And in our research, we came across one of the most devastating books ever written by a woman. It's called God Wants You Rich. God Wants You Rich.

And other enticing false doctrines. A closer look at some popular teaching in the church today. Prosperity.

Name it, claim it. Praise God for everything. Inner healing.

After death experiences. Submissionism. Shepherding.

Visits with angels. It's wild. And it's one of the hottest books in the OM arsenal this year.

God Wants You Rich and other enticing doctrines. A greatly needed book. And lastly, Healing for Damaged Emotions.

The book I have pushed the most next to Lloyd-Jones's Spiritual Depression. And after you read that, you often need this book. Healing for Damaged Emotions.

Another book. Very much tying together beautiful truths. And one of the most widely read books in OM this year.

So many people have written to me. And they said thank you for pushing that book. The follow-up book, Give Up Your Childish Ways, is also now available.

You may not be able to get all these books tonight. Write down the titles. I think you OMers know that we're not here for a summer little glorified Bible camp.

We're here for intensive training and orientation to prepare you for difficult cross-cultural work overseas. And even little things that you miss in the orientation, you can pay big. You can pay big.

Six months from now. In fact, I have seen people, just because they miss certain things in the orientation, end up with a disastrous time on OM. You know why? The devil has a special way of taking little things, doesn't he? And just getting him so confused.

And I pray that you'll not miss some of the little things as well as the big things we share in this time together. Now I want you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians 4, 7. I can honestly say in many ways my preference would be to let Brother Greg Livingston share this whole evening. The Lord knows one of the reasons I'm not going to the summer conference in Europe is because I got tired of speaking in the evenings.

I used to always have two speakers. I got outvoted on that policy. And so now it's one speaker and they want me to speak most nights.

I feel generally terrible about that. And so I've solved that problem this summer in Europe. I won't be there.

And I'm hilariously happy about it. We've got enough preachers in Europe to have a preacher-a preacher-thon. But it's hard for me with men like Greg and others who are here to come.

And if I just didn't sense in my soul that God wants me to deliver this message the sentimental side of me and the human side of me would take over and I'd gone off somewhere else and just wouldn't even be here. But this message is on my heart. It will go on to videotape.

It will go on to audio tape. And it will go on to far more people than are here this evening. I cannot tell you how much I believe in cassette tapes.

I don't just say that to get you to listen to my tapes. No. I listen to other people's tapes all the time.

I'll be doing a lot of hiking. Taking a little vacation a few days this summer. Go hiking.

Sometimes cover 20-30 miles in a day. Well, I think 22 is the most. Down the bottom of Grand Canyon and back in one day.

It's a nice little trek. And listening to cassette tapes and different messages. If you have a tape, some of your personal preaching, any of you into yodeling, give it to me for my hiking this summer.

Of course, I must be honest, sometimes I get tired of the messages and put on my music. That's even better. Beethoven in the bottom of the Grand Canyon is enough to blow every circuit in your head.

Anyway, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Now, it's so easy to pay lip service to particular doctrines, isn't it? And we read this and we say, oh, that's nice. You know the message I would love to share with you this

evening? Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

But I'm sure most of you have never heard a message on that. I'm sure most of you have read a book on that. Ephesians chapter 5. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And I wonder how many of you, when you were filled with God's Spirit, whether by crisis or by process, you discover later on that didn't destroy the human factor. Some of the weirdest people I've ever fellowshiped with are Spirit-filled people. Say, hey, man, I don't understand that.

It's because you don't understand the human factor. You don't realize that when you're filled with the Spirit, God doesn't change the color of your eyes. God doesn't change your voice.

Have you ever been in a meeting where people, when they pray, feel they need a more spiritual voice? You know, you see a big rough guy comes in from a farm. And in a prayer meeting, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Instead of a look at him, he wonderfully swallows some gospel marbles.

Or lost his. Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not destroy the human factor. I gave a message to our teams in Lahore, Pakistan.

My wife and I were out there for a couple of months. The highlight of the year. If you want to get into a country where something is happening, almost a breaking point, then you pray about Pakistan.

She has worked her way up to almost the top of the list of O.M. growth fields. In fact, we just had to turn down her growth plan that she submitted to the area leaders of O.M. last month. Of course, India is far bigger than Pakistan and is an equal challenge and they very much work together, especially for Americans.

Canadians can go to Pakistan and stay, or India and stay, but Americans need to go on eastward bound. That's six months India and then over to Pakistan for a little six month vacation. Book selling, soul winning, church renewal.

Trying to relate to Muslims. And when you get tired of that, you go to Nepal and repair vehicles. Or trek across the Himalayas distributing the word of God.

Oh, how I'd love to talk to you about the subcontinent, but I haven't got any permission for that tonight. The human factor. One of my human factors is that when I start preaching down a main road, there's a guarantee I will not be on the road very long.

Somebody said some time ago, I get more on your side roads than you do on your main road. Somebody said, who said it? I couldn't think of it. Actually, I think it was me.

But... This treasure is in a northern mess. The sooner you accept that, the happier you'll be. You know, God wants you happy.

We always get a few long faced recruits. This really bugs me. The long faced recruits.

The tomato, you know, what do you say over here? The ketchup bottle crowd. Got a face that hangs like a ketchup bottle. And... They've come on OM because they believe somehow in disobeying God most of their life.

They've got to go through some kind of purgatory to get sort of back on the right road. And they looked around for the lousiest, the worst, the toughest program. And they found OM and joined.

This is not God's way. We're looking for happy people. Holy people.

Happy people. Heaven bound people. And we don't believe that discipleship is some kind of purgatory.

And we want you to go, as it says in Habakkuk, with the joy of the Lord in your heart. I want to ask you, are you filled with the Holy Spirit? This is God's will for every believer. This doesn't mean you're suddenly going to leap in the air.

It doesn't mean your voice is going to change. I was sharing with you when I got on a side road about how I was speaking to the Pakistan team about seven things OM could never do for you. I remember when I started the message, you know, they sort of looked at me.

And it's amazing how much people expect when they join something like OM. You know, God's training program. You're going to be disappointed.

There's a lot of things OM can't do for you. Now, OM trained Greg Livingston for how many years, Greg? Fourteen years. There's many things.

Oh, I never did Greg Livingston. He's smiling. He's getting nervous.

No. We never changed his personality. And I'm glad we didn't.

And OM's never changed mine. It tried to. I got all these Andrew Murray books.

I was getting more nervous by the minute. I thought everybody who was spiritual was quiet. And should be English, actually.

And, you know, here I was living in London, loud mouth, big nosed American. And I was reading, you know, Andrew Murray, and then Watchman Nee, and then these F.B. Meyer books. And then, have you ever read these books by this guy, Gordon? Not Flash Gordon.

There's a guy named Gordon who wrote books. All of them are called Quiet Talks. We have another godly man in Britain called George Duncan.

We became great friends. His messages are generally never more than 20 minutes. They're always very quiet.

And when he's done, the Holy Spirit just, whoo! And I was just thinking, Lord, you know, I am really messed up. I need, I was reading S.D. Gordon Quiet Talks on the Christian Life. And I thought, you know, this, to be spiritual, is to be quiet, and just to, you know, let the Holy Spirit do the work.

Be quiet. Don't push me. God.

And, you know, it was like praying, Lord, I want to be, I want to be quiet. This is my greatest desire. God, I want to be quiet! Suddenly it dawned on me.

Suddenly it dawned on me that I was on a tangent, trying to be someone else, trying to be someone else. I'll tell you, one of the most glorious experiences in my life, as real and as important as being filled with the

Spirit, something I've experienced many times, is when I finally really accepted George Verwood. The nose, the mouth, the outspokenness, that doesn't mean I ever excused sin at something else.

And I believe, if you're going to be a faithful cross-cultural communicator for Christ, you've got to accept yourself. I'm not going to lay a heavy psychology trip. I'm aware of a counter-message against too much psychology in the Christian Church.

I don't think that's the problem with the average person attracted to this activist, hyper-pragmatic movement. And I believe this is the kind of message we need, where Dr. Seamans talks about this problem of low esteem. So many people on OM have a very low esteem of themselves.

And he also talks about this problem of perfectionism. Symptoms of perfectionism. Chapter 7. It's brilliant! This was one of the problems in my life.

It probably still is there to some degree. I don't claim that I have arrived in all these things. But, oh my, how perfectionism can just destroy your spiritual vitality, rob you of your joy, and leave you in a place that's less than best in God's work.

Yes, you can have high aims. You can have high goals. But it's going to take time.

It's not a matter of a quick summer discipleship program. OM is not a shortcut to foreign missionary work. OM, as far as I can see in my research, is one of the longest term training efforts to get people eventually to apostolic, biblical, cross-cultural missionary work on the frontiers of world evangelism.

We've often said 5, 10 to 15 years to prepare a man for that kind of front-line training. I hope you will take what I've said seriously about reading this book, how come it's taking so long. Have you ever gone out into a forest? I'm going out to San Francisco to do some preaching and I'm going to go out to see those big redwood trees.

There's something about that, those woods, that challenges me, those big trees. You know, if I go out there and I see someone standing by one of those redwood trees and I say, what are you doing? And he says to me, I'm watching this tree grow. You know, I'm clearing out.

And yet you and I know that those trees are growing. Some of you are caught up in operation introspection. You're always looking at yourself.

Why aren't I stronger? And sometimes you compare yourself with your neighbor. Oh, he's now such a good speaker and I can barely give my testimony. Wow, did you hear her pray that dynamic, earth-shaking, church-shaking prayer? And I can barely fumble out my few adjectives.

And we get trapped. We get trapped because we fail to accept the human factor, the earthen vessel. Where are some areas where the human factor comes into play in Christian work? By the way, I believe this message is more important today than it was ten years ago because recently some books have come out.

I'd love to give the titles and the authors, but it would get me in trouble. Some books have come out in calling us to excellency that are going to make neurotics out of anybody but the most highly educated, gifted, spiritual wizards who exist. And I'm not sure they do exist.

Beware of the over-emphasis in our culture on excellency. It's deadly if it gets out of control. And this whole idea, nothing but the best, and if you carry that too far, then no one can ever write another track, nobody can ever come up with any gospel music, no one can ever come up with any gospel drama, nobody can ever write a script or do anything because, let's face it, in the process of learning how to do these things, you're not going to come up with the best.

And preachers, most of them will go away depressed. And it's my belief, it's my conviction that God is able to use our feeble efforts. Of course we try our best, that's something else, of course we try our best, we prepare, we put time into it.

But when we give it, even if it doesn't come out the best, God can use it. If I didn't believe that, I'd be finished. I've seen too much.

Thirty years of it, including some of the best, who when you get with them, you discover they've got their warts, they've got their problems, and sometimes it's even bigger than the one who apparently has problems. I want to share a message, I don't have it for this conference, it's going to take me some more time to get it ready, on the Satan's Ministry of Intimidation. How easily as Christians, if we're sensitive, we're intimidated.

We're intimidated by the big intellectual, we're intimidated by the great preacher, we're intimidated by hyper-spiritual books, we're intimidated by the great managers, we're intimidated by people who may be more gifted than us. We're intimidated when people point out mistakes in our lives as if they will have no mistakes. Beware of Satan's clever method of intimidation.

Learn how to see something you've done wrong and bounce back without being intimidated and drained spiritually. Now what are some specific areas where we've got to remember the human factor in Christian work? Number one, in prayer. Can you believe that OM has got into tangents on the area of prayer? Prayer can be this great spiritual badge.

The highest calling in some people's minds is to be called a man of prayer. Prayer is a difficult area. Some of the books on prayer are fantastic, but they don't give the whole picture because prayer is not the whole Christian life.

When you're in OM, you hear strong messages on prayer. We all get guilty about our prayer life, right? That's the normal purgatory tour of OM. We all get guilty about our prayer life.

We all go to nights of prayer and sit there even though we want to leave. We're wrestling with all kinds of things. We know that somehow we've been thrust into an environment that represents a spirituality that seems to be up here and we seem to be down here and we've got all kinds of emotional difficulties.

You know, here's something that's so beautiful. God understands all that. God understands those struggles you have in that prayer meeting.

I still have them. God understands your rebellion. I've rebelled against God when I've heard the call to prayer, especially when it's from the local minaret.

I want to start screaming. I don't think you caught that one. But believe me, God is calling us to prayer and we must not allow the human factor falling asleep in the prayer meeting.

This is what really turns the OMers on. This gives them the excitement of the year when they see Verwer not off about midnight in the prayer meeting. They all go into orbit and ready to pray for hours.

The next day on the team, that's the big conversation. I can see it on my secretary's face when she walks in the door. It's a smile as big as Grand Canyon.

She saw me fall asleep in prayer. It's great. I don't know what's the big deal.

I've been falling asleep in prayer meetings for 29 years. The human factor that the body craves sleep. Now, I've generally got a little higher score lately through various methods.

I walk around when I pray. This bothers people in some of the prayer meetings, clumping around during the meeting. But I'll tell you, have you ever tried to sleep walking around? I've heard of some people, sleepwalkers.

The human factor will never be absent even from prayer and worship and communion with God. You have a great worship meeting and the music is out of tune. You have a great worship meeting and something else goes wrong.

I know people that are trying to create lovely, quiet, beautiful, worshipful atmosphere. And they feel when they have that, people will be able to worship better. And here everybody is in quiet, this atmosphere, trying to feel the worship and somebody belches.

I was in a church some time ago and a dog came prancing down, came forward, it wasn't even an invitation. Or suddenly, suddenly a window slams shut and that causes a disturbance when a guy's hand is in it. Everywhere in our life, every move, every time we get in a car, every time we seem to try to go through the day, the human factor is there.

We've got to learn to live with it. We've got to be more mature about life. You would think that dynamic spiritual people would make naturally good drivers.

Billy Graham wrote a leaflet, Highway Safety, A Spiritual Problem. I think history will show that naturally spiritual, strong intercessors and dynamic Christians make generally lousy drivers. I've learned over the years, I prefer to go by train, the human factor.

One of our greatest evangelists in Britain, late at night, just hit two women on the side of the road, and when both of them were killed, he lost the case in court. Why? Was he in the flesh? Was he sinning against God? Is this God's judgment? Too quickly we think God is judging us. When these things are just part of that biblical truth, it rains on the just and on the unjust.

And you can be struck with lightning in the middle of a golf course, as well as an unconverted person. Read Edith Schaeffer's book, Affliction. What a beautiful book.

I don't even know if we have it. People that set up book tables, I'm known as the book table nightmare. I always mention some book, somehow, that they don't have.

But she comes to my mind as I was just on the phone with her a few days ago. Dr. Schaeffer has gone on to glory, and this woman is carrying on in terrific courage. And you read that book, Affliction.

The same thing is brought out from a person of very different theological view. And God wants you rich. The human factor in prayer, it's going to take time to learn how to pray.

Don't get discouraged. Keep battling on. You try your first oral prayer in a fairly large-sized pyramid.

That's a big thing to some people. Some people have never done it. And you forget.

You get completely mixed up. The words get completely bowled up. And you feel terrible.

Have you ever had that experience? It's only normal. The greatest men and women of God have had these same experiences. Praying the wrong thing, saying the wrong thing.

You've got to learn to accept that. Keep trying to improve. Keep polishing.

Keep pressing on. Don't be intimidated by people who are more gifted or who may seem more spiritual. Secondly, the human factor in our witnessing.

Have you ever turned anybody off in your witnessing? How many of you have ever turned anybody off in your witnessing? Most of you. Some of you don't witness. I started taking courses on how to witness when I was only 17.

And I recommend to study books on witnessing. I read Torrey's great book on how to work for Christ when I was just a babe in the Lord. What a help.

What a help. I took another correspondence course on how to witness. And I spent most of my early days not in literature evangelism, in personal evangelism.

And I learned by my mistakes. And I believe that you're going to learn by some of your mistakes this summer. You're not going to try to make them.

If I didn't believe God could overrule some of my mistakes in witnessing, I don't know if I'd ever witness again. I've turned people off. I remember witnessing to a fellow, I think he was on a drug trip up in Kathmandu.

I was really praying and I got some new vocabulary to talk to these guys in drugs. I came zooming in, you know. He just looked at me.

I'll never forget this. A little crummy pot, smoke-filled place in Kathmandu. He looked over at me.

He said, Marry your vibrations. That was the end. That was a big... Do you remember those days when everybody was vibrating? You didn't try to witness to people.

You sort of... Often when I'm feeling frustrated intimidated, frightened, I go to Joshua. Moses' words to Joshua. Be thou courageous.

When I get a little concerned and fearful and I look out over a congregation of people, I think of those words, I think it's in Jeremiah. Be not afraid of their faces. It's also good for just right above the mirror.

You're going to make mistakes in your witnessing. If a sovereign God can't turn even some of your mistakes and use them for his glory, if he cannot overrule some of the things we do wrong, then let's give up. You know one of the reasons India has become one of the greatest O.M. fields? Greg was one of the

pioneer founders of O.M. India.

He could tell you a lot of stories. I could tell a few about him as well. He mainly got sick.

Not... No, God used him in a very real way. But one thing he and I discovered in those early days in India is that India was a great place for O.M. Because we knew we'd make mistakes. But I'll tell you, the Indian church was already making so many mistakes that there was no way O.M. would ever catch up.

That's right. And the same is true in Pakistan right now. The problems in the church in Pakistan make anything we have in O.M. look small.

And that's why the churches in Pakistan have rolled out the red carpet for O.M. I've never fellowshipped with so many bishops as when I was in Pakistan. And some of these bishops are born-again men. And they want to reach Muslims.

And they want O.M. in Pakistan. And they want our books. And I was just asked to speak at almost the largest convention in the entire nation.

Don't worry so much about those mistakes. You keep working on them. Make a list.

Learn everything you can learn. Try not to make the same mistake twice. No, you will.

The human factor. The human factor in prayer. The human factor in witnessing.

The human factor in... I bet you guessed. Relationships. I want to guarantee this summer you're going to have some sticky, icky, goozy, woozy, whammo relationships.

You're going to meet people that in yourself you can't stand. Now isn't that a blessing? Some of these dear, lovely Europeans for the first time are going to be in intimate close sleeping in the same room packed into the back of the same van with the first gum-chewing, loud-mouthed, aggressive, double-hyper, over-spoken American woman in their life. Everything is alright until she ends up finding the chewing gum underneath her trousers.

Maybe we're exaggerating a little bit, but I think you're getting the point. We are so idealistic about relationships. We get teams.

We're not going in evangelism until we have perfect unity. Forget it. Go back home and pack sardines.

Don't come on OM. Look in your Bible. Look in the 1st Corinthians.

Look in the 2nd Corinthians. Yes, we want unity. Disunity will hinder the team, but to say God can't do anything until there's perfect unity, that's extremism.

That's denying 2,000 years of history since Pentecost. God is going to use your team even when things aren't as good as they should be. You know a key motto for OM? Write it in your notes if you haven't written anything else.

Don't panic. Don't panic. The team leader is frying stones instead of eggs.

He's sending you out in evangelism with thorns instead of books. The assistant team leader has just gone off and fallen in love and broken every social rule that OM's ever created. It's starting to rain and you don't

have any tents.

You're sleeping in the open air. The vehicles have all been robbed by the local drug band. Don't panic.

It could get a lot worse. This is the thing that has helped people in OM. Really.

I've had this motto for years. It's really helped me in a lot of situations. It could be worse.

You think it's warm here right now? Believe me, when we get you out to Pakistan in May, you'll remember that cold, chilly night when Verwer spoke on The Human Factor. Most of us want friendship, don't we? I mean, there may be some different people here tonight. You never know.

We get a wide span of people. There may be somebody Now, I know some of you behave like that, but I don't think that's your goal. We want friends.

And yet often, making friends and maintaining friendship is not as easy as we thought. Things go wrong. I once remember speaking to the OM leaders some years ago and I think some of them thought perhaps I was joking because we had so many beautiful relationships among the leaders.

And I said in that meeting, I sense that every major relationship in OM will be tested. Within the next three years, some of the strongest relationships in OM were tested and some of them almost broke. The Human Factor.

Things go wrong. Gossip. Misunderstandings.

And unless we learn how to handle these things, we get thrown off course and then things do, really do go wrong. We get discouraged. And one of the primary attacks of Satan this summer is going to be to get you discouraged.

Some of you, if you're honest, you already are discouraged. And one of the purposes of this conference, by God's grace, is to bring you out of that discouragement to a place of rejoicing in the Lord. That's going to mean getting tough at times with your own sentiments.

One of the books that we have been recommending very strongly is this book, *Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Its Cure*. Because he brings forth, in this book, a basic philosophy of discipleship that is greatly missing in 20th century evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Learning what it is to really buffet the body and bring it into subjection.

C.S. Lewis emphasized this in his own unique way. Here's the quote of the night. This is hot.

Getting ready? Quote of the night. We got eight minutes to go. C.S. Lewis.

Business of heaven. Here's what he said. Unless you can teach your moods, I love this terminology, where they can get off, you will never either be a sound Christian or even a sound atheist.

I don't think any of you are into that. Just a creature dithering to and fro with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and on the state of its digestion. Ooh.

I just love that. Because apart from the grace of God, that's where I'd be. Just somehow dithering to and fro.

Blown about by lust one minute, impatience the next minute, irritability the next minute, fear the next minute, intimidation the next minute. But in Jesus Christ, I am going to stand on God's promises. And I'm not going to be blown away when I fall on my face.

I'm going to get up and I'm going to get clean and I'm going to get back into the battle because I don't mind losing a few battles, but I'm not going to lose a war. And I know I'm not going to lose because Jesus Christ has already won it and I can live in His power, His authority, His grace, and His strength. Yes, the human factor is very real.

My wife has been living with my human factors for 24 years. She's a scarred woman because of it. I don't say that carelessly.

But because we've come to understand one another, how different we are, we've learned to roll with the punches. We've learned to just begin and forgive. This idea that, you know, if He comes to me, this person, he's hurt me, right? We all get hurt by somebody sooner or later.

If he comes and he apologizes, I'll definitely forgive him. Oh, you big hearted gospel cowboy. Bless your heart.

You've been well trained through Hollywood television. That's not Christianity. Christianity is when he slaps one cheek, you turn the other.

Christianity is you're forgiving, even as it's happening, even in the moment of pain, you're forgiving. The love of Christ is coming out, though it may be mingled with certain emotions in the human factor. You may not feel that you're forgiving him, but you stand on God's word and you obey God, rather than be blown about by this mood or that mood, by this emotion or that emotion.

Unless someone come up to you and say, your emotions aren't important. Just stand on the promise of God and eat those emotions. You say, yeah, I've been eating them for many years, that's why I've got migraines and stomach trouble.

I believe your emotions are important. Your emotions are important. We're concerned with how you feel.

If you feel really miserable tonight, I'd like to know, I'd like to pray for you. God's concerned about your emotions. God cares for my emotions.

And it's a matter of keeping it in balance, keeping it in perspective. It cannot become, it must not become, the dominant thing in our life. The word, the mind of Christ, the will of God, the obedience that Colson talks about in his amazing book, Loving God.

That's the priority. Emotions, however, are not something you pretend, do not exist. One of the reasons I think I've had such a fulfilled and to some degree happy life, is because I've learned to live with my emotions.

You know, an embarrassing thing happened to me at my son's wedding. The great dynamic speaker, George Miller, we had it all planned that I would not speak. I get emotional at weddings, funerals.

I get emotional even at birthday parties. I cry easy at certain events. I don't understand the psychological makeup.

It's the human factor. And so, I didn't want to preach at my son's wedding. I didn't want to do anything.

I finally agreed to give a little thank you prayer at the reception, a formal, formal, proper British wedding reception. I was fine. There were tears there, but I was, you know, keeping them down in the lower tanks.

And then I saw my son Benjamin give a speech. Now, I know my son Benjamin. The last thing he wants to do is speak publicly anywhere at his wedding.

They put him on the spot. And when he started speaking, I started coming apart. I'm about to come apart in a minute, but I've only got a couple minutes so there won't be any rivers.

And then my son Daniel started to speak and I could see he does have a gift to speak. And then the father-in-law spoke. Three speeches.

Supposed to be finished. Going home now. People were all looking at me now.

You know, naturally. I mean, how do you come to these three speak and, you know, Loudmouth Incorporated is sitting in there eating cherries. So, uh, they said they all different people look to me.

What about you? They expected me to pop up. You know, Mr. Spontaneous. Well, I just happen to have this little word here tonight.

Let me get the book table. Bring you the book table. But, uh, No, no, no, no.

We don't have any time for that. I will tell you, I was shaking. I just started to weep.

I just started to weep and shake. I don't mind the weeping, but the shaking. My shoes are old and they start coming apart.

And I just put my head down and the chairman of the O.M. board of the directors was a real proper Englishman and a miracle how he ever got an O.M. And, uh, he, he said, Well, George is praying. And he shared, he shared a little bit. And then Jonathan, Jonathan was there, he's mobilizing around in his wheelchair.

And he said, Yeah, why aren't there more speeches? Because some of the O.M. receptions, we have, you know, endless exhortation speeches. There, Wotan got up at my wedding and preached on acceptance for sake all. You can't be a disciple.

Proceeded to tell the guests that we would be selling all the wedding gifts within the next few days. A lot of them unconverted people. Really impressed.

So, I don't remember what happened, but I said, I think I mumbled out Jonathan, you speak. And I wept for ten minutes. One man wrote to me.

He said, It's the first time I've ever seen you speechless in I don't know how many years. I never did say anything. The wedding finished.

I went out in the field and cried and cried. I don't know why I was crying. I actually cry more when I'm, when something is very happy.

I cried at my own wedding. I mean, let's face it. I mean, that was a miracle, wasn't it? I saw Drina walk through the door.

I was in a gymnasium. I was under the basketball ring. And she walked, and I just started crying.

The human factor. Do you ever cry when you don't want to cry? Do you ever get hurt when you don't want to be hurt? Do you ever feel hostile when you want to feel sanctified? Do you ever feel like hitting someone who's preaching out to you? The human factor. Don't condemn yourselves.

Don't think you're some special case. You're just human. God wants to fill you, but not destroy you.

God wants to use you, but not obliterate you. We're all different. Other people I talk to have a problem that they never cry.

They want to cry. They want to cry, and they can't cry. They've got to learn to live with that.

We're all different. Beware through reading too many books of entering sort of a spiritual Disneyland in which you never somehow get to all the events because the queues are too long and it starts to rain. Learn to be patient with yourself.

Learn to find God's will for your life, God's plan for your life.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16078.mp3>

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