

7 Lacks of Literature 7.11.85

by George Verwer

The speaker emphasizes the importance of literature in OM and identifies seven lacks that need to be addressed in order to effectively spread the word of God.

Duration: 39:13

Scripture: Proverbs 29:18, John 14:6, Romans 10:14

Topics: "Literature"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the lack of vision among believers and the need for a greater understanding of the purpose and mission of spreading the gospel. The speaker shares their own experience of starting a book-selling business and the challenges they faced. They emphasize the importance of having a clear vision and direction in ministry and the need for financial support to produce and distribute literature. The speaker encourages believers to trust in God and share their vision with others in order to receive support and resources for their mission.

Transcript

I'm always asking the Lord for new messages, as you may know, some people, when they listen to a message, they like to have an outline. They like to be able to remember something. And the last couple of years, I've been in my sevens.

And I have another seven. And it's called the Seven Literature Lacks. Now, that may not make sense.

Seven Literature Lacks, or you can say Seven Lacks, in the area of literature. And I cannot express how much this has been on my heart on this trip. And as I continue to read reports and sit through endless OM meetings, people often ask me, what's your biggest burden for OM? And people around the world somehow think that I'm involved with OM.

So they ask me, what's your big burden for OM? And of course, one of my greatest burdens is that we don't lack vision. I'll tell you, this work here in Bromley, and I guess I've been involved in Bromley now for 20 years. My roots in STL actually are deeper than my roots in ICT, because ICT is a relatively recent thing.

Whereas STL goes right back to the very earliest days, when we first came to Britain. But I know one thing, that the work here in Bromley, if you don't have a vision, can really become a pain in the neck. And

become real drudgery.

And this, it's easy for us to see our weaknesses and our needs and our struggles here. I have the interesting task of seeing these weaknesses and struggles in every OM field right across the world, because I visit all of them. Not every year any longer, I used to.

And every field in OM is struggling. Every field has people who are not happy. Every field has people who are, you know, not making it.

Maybe have lost their enthusiasm. Or something else along that line. And I think, of course, a movement like OM, and especially when we're in a specialized task as STL and ICT to a degree, of course, our vision has to be renewed again and again.

I think the Lord is putting together here in Bromley a tremendous team of people who are committed to the vision of Christian literature, which was a large part of the original vision of OM before short-term training, before ships, of course, by many, many years, before a lot of things. If you ever listen to the early tapes, Bob Rose claims he has one of the earliest tapes in the history of OM. He wants to sell it to me for a thousand dollars.

But you will know that we were, of course, very strong on literature, so strong that that image still sticks with us. OM is no longer mainly a literature distribution agency. OM is many things.

For many it's a short-term training program. For many others it's a church planting program. For many others it's a church renewal leadership training program.

Don't want to get into that tonight. That will get me on a sidetrack. But I think especially for those of us here in Bromley, and the only reason ICT is in Bromley is because STL is in Bromley.

We wouldn't have chose Bromley. I was here in order to work with STL. I arrived back here, I remember that year when John Watts, the director of STL, was killed, and most people felt it was finished.

Gary Davey was in Spain, a very unlikely candidate for this job in the minds of many. And it was, you know, since the British director had been killed in the same accident, it didn't look too good. I had been living previous to this in Belgium, in Zaventem, involved in the European work.

This is when I wasn't in India. I'd be in India half a year and then I'd come back for the summer. So this is why I ended up in Bromley.

I think of the words of the Lord Jesus where he said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to his Father but by me. And I think of the words of that hymn, Publish the Tidings, Tidings of Peace, and a lot of other great hymns that clearly tell us that we should be distributing the word of God, publishing the word of God, preaching the word of God throughout the world.

I had the joy a couple of weeks ago of being at the bedside of Dr. Oswald J. Smith. He will be 96 years of age and he is weak. No man in North America influenced world missions as much as Oswald J. Smith, except maybe Billy Graham, because of Billy Graham's just huge impact in every possible direction.

Billy Graham is already lined up, I understand, to preach at OJ's funeral. Dr. Smith is very, very weak. He's 96.

Doesn't seem to have anything wrong with him except he's weak. Some of you already had that at 26. But what a challenge to just be with this man.

I told him about what was going on with his books. We are involved in distributing his books. I have some challenging news for Neil Brinkley, since he coordinates all this.

Dr. Paul Smith, now in charge of that literature, is seriously considering turning the whole of OJ's literature over to you. To coordinate with your little computer and your wonderful wife. And Allison can help and Paul and Robert.

But anyway, we'll talk about that another time. But this man, Oswald J. Smith, has a major influence in my life through his book, *Passion for Soul*. We cannot measure how God uses that book.

It's been rewritten in different forms. I think the *Challenge of Missions* now has some of the chapters. Oswald Smith is always dividing up his chapters and putting them in different forms.

Amazing man. Paul Smith has carried that people's church. And though the church has gone down a bit in attendance, because the competition, the number of churches in Toronto, and all the new things, because that's an old one.

It's quite amazing. And yet with that church decreasing in attendance, they saw \$1,300,000 come in for world missions last year. That's Canadian dollars.

That's like a million American dollars. They're not a church full of wealthy people. We're talking about many ordinary Canadian people.

What a great testimony. But I think the thing that marked the life of Oswald J. Smith was vision. And Paul told me the last thing that Oswald J. Smith ever gave up, long after he gave up his pulpit, gave up preaching, the last thing he would ever surrender was his books.

He was still writing people about his books and challenging them to get them back into print. And we've had the joy of seeing some of those books reprinted. And I told OJ about the magazine books.

I'm not sure if it quite got to him. But I said, you know, we had done 50 or 100,000. And he said, 100,000? No, I don't think he had heard of that big of a number before of his particular books.

Vision. And that's what I want to just talk a little bit about. There are many other scriptures I would like to give.

You know, sometimes you get people and feel the only thing we can talk about is the word and the only thing that we should do is expound the word. Well, if I had followed that course, O.M., humanly speaking, would not exist. The word is the foundation.

The word is the guide. But I didn't find a strategy for Mexico leaving, you know, in the book of Ephesians. I found the foundation.

I found the truth for my life. I found the inspiration. But I believe it's extreme to say that God never speaks to us beyond his word.

I mean, are you getting guidance about who you should marry in the word? Watch out for these one-verse things. Expecting your first year. But I think God does, of course, speak beyond his word.

But he doesn't contradict his word. He doesn't go against his word. So we don't add to the word of God.

But the Lord leads us in terms of particular things we're going to do. We are living 2,000 years since the last scriptures were given to us. And one of the greatest challenges of the Christian life is to contextualize, to take that which we receive from the word of God and make it work.

Down in, you know, down in the IBM company or in the stock exchange or out in the merchant navy or in the army or wherever. Isn't that the great challenge today? We all say we believe it. But so many are saying to me, it doesn't work.

That's why I think, together with the Bible teaching and the messages that we need here and the Bible study, we also need to know where are we going as a movement? Where are we going in STL? My concern for literature must go beyond STL. STL is only part, a major part, a crucial part, but only part of the overall literature vision. And so what I'm sharing here as it goes on cassette tape is not just for STL, but for everybody in OM.

And one of our greatest burdens in OM has been able to show non-literature groups how they can use literature. Even the radio people. And traditionally there's been tension between radio and literature people.

Even the radio people eventually realized they had to use literature. And they came to us, some of them, we went to them, and they said, look, we'd like you to distribute this million leaflets so the people know how to find the program on the radio. And I feel that whatever your ministry may be in the future, literature can be part of it.

And it's unfortunate now that even within OM, there's a bit of departmentalization in that we think, oh, STL and Thoreau and, you know, Philip Mars and, you know, this is literature. Oh, yeah, Dave Brown, it's literature. This other section, well, this is church planting.

Where do most of these people get their visions of church planting? I tell you, most of them read about it in books. There's not that many original thinkers falling out of the trees these days. There's a lot of people who read.

I think that literature is a vital part of church planting. Spreading the vision and then, of course, we're the believers, the people who come to Christ and all that kind of thing. Well, what are the seven areas of need or the seven lacks? I only chose lacks.

Something is lacking because it's linked with literature. Number one, the lack of vision. I've already touched on that.

I wonder if you'd pray a prayer when we bring this message to a close and ask God to give you a greater vision of even what this is all about. Much harder for you than it was for us when we began this. When the first boxes arrived at my doorstep on the west end of London and we started selling books in the British Isles, it was pretty exciting.

It was nothing. O.M. was nothing. The name had only been born a few months before that.

It is more difficult for the second generation. And STL is in a time of transition as a man who carried the vision for so many years is being led into other aspects of ministry. And let's ask God to increase our vision.

Not just for evangelistic literature but literature that's needed to build up the church. Now you may not feel the British church is that healthy. My view is that the British church is one of the healthiest churches at least in the 50 nations I've visited.

The church will always have its weaknesses. It will always be struggling. There will always be backsliders.

There will always be churches up the creek. There will always be churches that are extreme. There will always be churches of all kinds.

But you know, unless you've traveled in some of these other countries, you'll never have grasped the heritage we have in this country. And I'm not British so maybe I can speak more openly about the British. I'm not British.

But I tell you the heritage of this country and it's linked to literature. It is impossible to separate British history from literature. Right back to the Bible.

Right back to Witness. And Tyndale. And the English Bible.

I mean even to this day in Western Canada you have groups that believe the King James Bible is the only true word of God. I had a head-on collision with these people on the most negative letter I've had. Vera attacked the answer today.

From one of these people who believe the King James Bible is the only true word of God. In an audience of two and a half thousand I absolutely torpedoed them with everything I could pull out but obviously didn't do much. Vision.

So how God can use literature like for example the literature Philip Morris is trying to get into the hands of pastors around India. Commentaries, Bible dictionaries. You know if it wasn't for Haley's handbook and Joseph Free's book Archaeology in the Bible I'm not sure I'd even be a Christian today.

I hope I don't want to step on your eternal security toes in that theological sense. So you can take that with a grain of salt. But the fact is that I was wrestling for my very faith in an unbelieving school where biblical Christianity was being attacked.

And it was getting Haley's handbook and getting Joseph Free's book in Archaeology and one or two other books. I mean there weren't many apologetic books around at that time that I knew about that just saved me. Because people were just trying to destroy my faith.

And I just hope I hope and pray that wherever this message is being listened to we'll search our hearts are we losing this vision that was such a hallmark of O.M. concerning literature. Evangelistic literature, literature for believers books that will challenge people books that will educate people all kinds of literature. So it grieved me that in some fields in O.M. they narrowed down the number of books they take door to door perhaps overreacting to the approach we had years ago when we took too many different titles.

But we're dealing with all kinds of people. One of the best ways in the home and door to door work is children's books. It's a natural.

And children need Jesus. And often the parents read the children's books. I understand one of the hottest books in the communist countries is this children's book by Ken Taylor a book that I think I started selling door to door even in Spanish 27 years ago.

Now I understand it's a just a book in great demand. We never had enough money to get more editions of that book into the communist block. Other times we need a book you know that's geared towards suffering.

Most people are suffering. Why aren't we in our door to door work using C.S. Lewis' problem? C.S. Lewis is probably one of the greatest Christian writers of all time. Didn't cross his T's exactly where every Bible thumper crosses his T's.

But again and again I meet people whose lives have been just helped through C.S. Lewis. And on and on I could go I don't have time. But let's pray for a renewed vision.

In the whole of O.M. those doing door to door work which is really the toughest aspect sometimes in literature of answers is the thing that people found the most obnoxious about O.M. in the early days was door to door. Many wouldn't even touch it. Just the thought of going door to door.

Especially the women. Some of them ended up the best door to door people we ever had. I've discovered very few continuing door to door evangelism.

It's just too much for most people's nerves. I've had to back down from some of my early teaching on door to door because it intimidated people beyond the point of sanity at times. But I thank God there are still people maybe like the Marine Corps where people can only handle it for a couple of years.

But praise God that's 25 reasons why I want to be in short term work. If they're the ones that can handle door to door short term people then that's the group that I want to be with. Praise God in places like India it goes way beyond the second year as brothers have been doing this kind of work for many many years.

On and on I could go. The vision for literature. Tracks.

I would say that if we took a survey in O.M. on how many people are regularly giving out tracks we would have the all time low in the history of the work. I won't take the survey. I've got enough areas where I'm struggling with depression.

But it's just natural isn't it? After the years go by the vision weakens. A moment that was almost unheard of. You know we were extreme.

Everybody had tracks. Everybody was giving out tracks. The people were and they got six tracks on one street from six different O.M. people.

And now of course young people in O.M. it's hard for me to believe but it's true they don't even have tracks with them. They don't even have tracks with them. If someone came up to them and asked them could I have a gospel track so that I could be saved they'd say well I work with S.T.L. that's the Christian Literature Agency but I don't ever carry any literature with me.

That really adds up to me. Adds up that something's wrong. The second lack and probably this is the reason for part of the problem in the first area the second lack is a lack of training.

I've been challenging jury to perhaps get involved in this area different parts of the world. Literature committee sits down has great discussions and comes up with great conclusions and it's difficult to implement because O.M. is into so many different things. We have to fight at the general the September conference is getting shorter every year it's getting shorter.

It's just about 24 more years it won't exist at all. And you just have to battle there. Fortunately there is some good training on a national level.

Some very positive things on a national level. And maybe that's the best way to do it. But we've seen out in India one of our great needs is to train people how to give out tracts how to sell a book how to even loan a book how to even get the conversation going so that you can even get around to any of that in a way that's acceptable.

So really pray let us know what ideas you have on how we can increase the training. There's nothing better of course than on the job training when it comes to this kind of thing. And I know some of you are in that right here and that's exciting.

And then number three the sheer lack of literature. You know this is one of say twenty or thirty things that's influenced me to the slight modifications we've made in the OM financial policy and a statement will be going out about that in the next parallel. Some of you have been working hard to send that out to the leaders in the last two days through the post.

Let's really pray as that statement goes into the parallel. That's the first thing and most prayer partners have even heard about this. You know we all know that there's some changes.

The average prayer partner knows almost nothing. Quite a few of course people very close to the work have heard my financial crisis paper. So let's pray as that paragraph goes out.

But you know one of the things that pressed me to make that paper which eventually led to a united decision was the fact that people no matter how much we pray to make finance for literature people generally do not give unless they have some information. And I don't think it's God's will for you to just go in a corner don't tell anybody you're trusting God for a million tracts you're not going to tell anybody what kind of tracts you're going to produce where you're going to distribute them you're not just going to tell God and you expect him to touch somebody on the head to send you six thousand dollars as somebody recently did for another million tracts. From the earliest days of OM I can assure you information has been going out.

And when you see information going out now about some project that is nothing new. But it has generally been done by me or by a few of us who sort of work behind the scenes we had the contacts we knew the funny rules of the OM game and they are of course the people that have printed the tracts many of the tracts that were produced in India have been produced by Mr. Sampson of Deo Gloria. Hasn't done any tracts much lately but over the years millions and millions and millions of tracts.

He's the man we knew and so we were able to share with him the burden quite openly sometime and therefore he came up with the mega bucks to do and the money to give dollars, pounds, whatever to print the tracts. Another man is a millionaire over in the United States. He's not a man that has much cash

around.

He gives a huge amount of money to his own literature ministry. He's a man that just provided \$12,000 for two million tracts in India. These people don't give us money.

Just a bird flies by their ear during their quiet time. They want information. They're businessmen.

In fact, this particular man when he sent \$6,000 in for the first million wrote a rather strong letter saying don't ever dare go ahead again without my full permission. And fortunately we had in our files a letter signed by him he's getting a little old showing that he had given us permission and I talked to him on the phone and sent him a copy of the letter and the next \$6,000 came within a few days. But there is still an enormous lot of Christian literature.

We have so much in English and yet we know even in English many British people many British people have never had a single book that's in that warehouse. Not one. I wouldn't want to give you a percentage.

The average person is not reading hardly any Christian books. So we see the need is still here for English. Praise God that such a high percentage of the books going out of the warehouse now are actually going all over the world.

People are reading English all over the world. We've seen that of course with both ships as well. Let's pray that we may be able to supply more and better literature for India.

There are 700 million people there. There are a lot of churches and Indians are more open to giving out literature than the average person. I'm talking about committed Christians.

What a shame when we don't supply the tools to do the job. And of course as you know the whole vision of selling books door to door in English in countries like England the birth of STL has its roots back in this is what we call the two punch strategy. That one punch is we get books out here and people need books here.

If STL never made a profit this would be a valid powerful benefit here and in other English speaking countries. So that's the first punch. And we've had to work on that one a little harder lately.

The second punch is that when we sell books here because of the way the whole publishing operation is structured as a business beginning publishing in general profit comes from those books and so those profits produce the literature in English. Now sometimes that actual cash in STL doesn't produce literature at that time because we have found that in some months out in India in some years more money is coming in for literature but no money is coming in to keep you know the general thing and general wheels going. Either way it has been the STL money that has been a major factor in keeping the whole India operation going where literature still is such a big part of the work together with of course now so many different ministries.

Number four the fourth lack is the lack of finance. You know what blows my mind I'm being real honest with you this is my home scene. I can't understand people being in O.M. for a couple years and not wanting to pour all the money in the world of English.

This is a real problem. I know I was extreme in the early days and I sent a lot of people around to Ben most of them came back. I can't understand how people can understand there is a need for Bibles there is

a need for tracts there is a need for Gospels and not want to just you know get everything for that purpose.

What are we waiting for? Are we waiting for Jesus to die on the cross again and announce that salvation is here and tell all the world about it? And this was a mark on this movement. From the early days we believed that scripture should be published tracts should be printed and of course we made mistakes. I'll never forget publishing 15,000 of that book Science Speaks in Spanish.

La Ciencia Habla. I got so excited about that book. I think I told you the story already.

If some of you are new that's a great story. But I remember when I found this book standing in the streets of Chicago. I thought this book was going to shake Chicago.

I was so naive. And I stood in the middle of the streets in the center of Chicago. New book proves Bible to be the word of God.

I thought all the agnostics were going to stop. At least buy a copy. I tell you I was deeply blown away through that Chicago.

But I thought the Mexicans were more interested. And we printed 15,000 copies. No research, no planning, pure inspiration and vision.

It took many, many, many years to sell 15,000 copies of Ciencia Habla. A book that made such an impact in my own life. Now when you see the age of balance it's a deadly dangerous thing.

It gets more frightening as we go along. But remember our definition of balance is that it's the right combination of different extremes. Let's give what we have for finance.

Every one of you working here without salary trusting God for your own finance. You are giving. And I hope that you experience joy and satisfaction in doing that.

It's because people working for STL over the years have been able to trust God for finance, live sacrificially, cut corners. We know today with inflation some of us wonder if sacrificial living is possible any longer. Once you've got several, once you have a family and children.

I remember Richard Wormbrow specially warning me to never allow O.N.'s children to be forced into poverty. He said, you know, he thought that we were into poverty. And I tried explaining that it was a volunteer basis.

He said, well, a volunteer, but how do you handle that with your children? It's a difficult one and it is a difficult one and it difficult one and it is a one and it is a difficult one and one and it and it is a difficult one and it is a difficult one and and theologians are dealing with and talking about together with church growth and yet if you study both of those important subjects you'll discover that literature is absolutely in the center. So I don't believe we should play the follow-up ministry against the evangelistic ministry but I think we need both and I think in a lot of the projects that OM has launched we've not been able to follow up as much because of a whole number of factors and let's not get disturbed. And then the last lap is the lap of prayer.

The lap of prayer. Praying over these books. There's nothing wrong with laying hands.

I mean you believe in the laying on of hands. Laying hands on those parcels as they go out. Praying.

You don't want a circus act down here, right? Laying hands on that parcel of books or praying around, I'm sure you're already doing this, praying around one of those containers or skids of books before they go out and asking God to use his word. Praying that it will even get there. And believe me, it's prayer that puts a cutting edge on what we're doing.

And all of us in this ministry have to continually search our hearts in regard to our own prayer life. It's so easy when you've got to get here at 8 o'clock in the morning for study. It's so easy to let that prayer life slip.

Life seems to rush by and sometimes we seem to be rushing in the middle of the rush. Don't let that prayer life slip. You're never going to get prayer life all that you want.

I never have. So you don't want to fall in that trap. But battle to get that time with God.

Because brothers and sisters, here in this warehouse, I'm not a privilege that God has given us here. It's so easy to take all this for granted. You're looking at a movement that, you know, I know I look old, but I'm not that old.

Not long ago we were just operating out of the closet almost. I just met a whole group of STL people Sunday night. They all remember that little house in Auguston where STL was based.

I think it must have been for maybe a couple, two years or something. By the time in the West End was only a couple months and the East End was exactly more months than Kidwell, that maybe was a year, then it shifted north to Auguston. And they remember OM was in Bolton and STL was in Auguston.

And they were very, very close. A number of those couples I met, they all met one another when they were packing books. One of the women said to me, this was 22 years later, she said, you know, we were absolutely petrified of you.

Not a lot, they were petrified of you back then. I guess I was more extreme now, nobody's scared of me anymore. But I remember them packing books.

I was in a little office up there in Auguston for a while. God has blessed this ministry so much. Given us this tremendous warehouse and this garage across the road.

And the bookshop, which I understand is, I'm forgetting, is not big enough yet, but I hear very good things. The bookshop is bigger and selling more. And of course now we're expanded over to West Wickham and other places.

The vision of this ministry has to be reborn in the heart of every new retreat. If you just come thinking, oh, it's just something already going on, you're just joining for a year, you're just going to come and do your little thing and go, that's just a trick of the devil. You are a vital part, especially since we're all so short staffed, you are a vital part of what God wants to do.

I wonder how you're doing in those seven areas. Take your heart. Don't ever think that Operation Mobilization is a group of leaders.

Operation Mobilization is every person on the team carrying their weight. I was challenged out of my socks watching part of the World Series. I was a baseball nut as a kid.

I've almost forgotten the game hardly exists 25 years away from my own country. And I was there in Canada and of course everybody in Canada is talking about the Blue Jays. I didn't even know the Canadians had a baseball team.

Then I discovered no Canadians on the team. They're all Americans playing on the Toronto Blue Jays. They almost got into the World Series.

I've been lost against the Kansas City Royals. I didn't even know they had a baseball team in Kansas City. It was a bad day, I can assure you.

But I was a Yankee fan. But I watched the last part of the second-to-last game. If St. Louis had won, and I know this is meaningless to many of you cricket nuts, I apologize to Peter Manion if he's listening to this tape.

But if St. Louis had won that game, the World Series would have been finished. And last minute, last minute, the guy got a base hit and scored. And you know if you watch baseball, you watch football, you watch cricket, watch any of these sports, what does it say? It speaks of excellence, it speaks of teamwork, it speaks of sacrifice, it speaks of hard work, it speaks of sticking to it.

Many of the attributes we need in this world, sports people have. And to me it's a rebuke. And it's also a comment.

But I'm in something that's 100 times more important than football, baseball, and cricket, and rugby all combined, even played together on the same field. That's taking the gospel of Jesus Christ. And you know if Operation Mobilization ever had to divide, then all those who are going to do in-depth church planting, who are going to do in-depth this and in-depth that, and all these different ministries we're involved in that I believe in, if they all went one way, and the literature in that case went the other way, I tell you, forgive me for being old-fashioned, I'm going to go with the literature.

Because I believe those of us committed to Christian literature are the ones that determine what happens in all these other areas, directly and indirectly. Fortunately, you know Em, we've married these two things together permanently, and even put a ship on top, like a big cherry, two cherries, and we believe it can go forward together. Let's pray.

Lord, you know the lack of vision so easily comes into our hearts. We go around talking about hell, talking about commitment. We go on in our little Bible studies, scoring it up in our heads, and it somehow never gets to our heart, or to our feet.

And your words say, blessed are the feet of those that preach the gospel. We think of Martin Luther, the number of tracts he wrote, we think of John Wesley going up and down this country on his horse, writing, publishing, distributing literature, reading even when he was traveling on his horse. We think of the influence of Oswald J. Smith, we think of the writings of so many great men and women that have influenced the church, that have influenced all of history.

We think of Billy Graham's books that have gone to more people, perhaps than he's even been able to preach to, at least face to face. And Father, we don't want to leave this vision, I don't want to leave this

vision. We believe there can be changes, we believe there must be growth.

We don't have all the answers. We're inundated with English books, we don't even know how we can even look at them all, much less to figure them all. We think of millions that haven't had their first tract, millions that don't have a Bible, don't have a New Testament, hundreds of millions, don't have anything.

Lord, we want to do something about this, and we believe that as we move together in obedience and discipline, a vision, that a lot can be done. Guide us now as we pray about these things, in Jesus' name, amen.

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