

# Cd Gv113 10 Harsh Reality

by George Verwer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of facing harsh realities in life and being proactive in ministry, rather than building unrealistic expectations and ignoring the challenges of ministry.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Spiritual Discipline", "Kingdom Living"

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## Description

In this video, the speaker reflects on their experience at Urbana, a significant event for the kingdom of God. They mention the intense preparation and fear they felt before delivering their message, but ultimately, God took control and gave them a different message to share. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of controlling what we watch, particularly on television, as it is much easier to fall into pornography in the present day. They urge viewers to be honest about the power of money and express compassion for those who are poor and suffering.

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## Transcript

Let's just pray. Lord, this isn't Urbana or Campus Crusade or the local church down the road. This isn't the new recruits conference.

This isn't Jacoe or the 40th anniversary in Oregon. This is us, long-term bonded close friends and people who are new being bonded into this group. It is special and it is a privilege that we have to gather in this way.

We know someday it may no longer be possible. So we thank you for this opportunity and we avail ourselves of all that we're called into doing during these days. Just speak to us now from your word, from history, from reality.

May we go from here tonight a little wiser, a little more discerning, a little more proactive, a little more motivated to do the work that you've given us. And may we somehow be able to see what you've done in our lives, in all of its weakness, in all of its ragamuffin-ness, multiplied in the lives of many others who will go to others who will go to others. This tidal wave of blessing that exploded through the prayers of Mrs. Clapp 45 years ago may continue to impact the nations of the world.

And someday we will in glory understand what it's all about. Minister to those who have special needs, who are carrying special burdens, who can't even maybe concentrate on what's going on because the

burden is heavy and the need is great and the hurt is real. That they may know the power of your grace and your forgiveness to set them free from anything that Satan would put around their neck, no matter how heavy, no matter how wild.

Grant us the grace to appropriate all that you have for us in the battle. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Amen. Well, thank you for your prayers over these past days. Certainly one of the tougher challenges in my life that started over a year ago was preparation for the Urbana meetings.

Preparation being far, far more difficult than giving the message. That was just a wild, total, free celebration. But the preparation was a one-year trauma, writing out a message, a lot of it handwritten, submitting it in fear and trembling, studying it, reading it, putting it on tape, which I was going to play back to myself, which I never did, getting a tremendous sale of notes based on the message in big bold print so I didn't have to use my glasses, and on my way to visit Randy Lawler's team.

The Lord just took it from me. Forgot it, and gave me what he wanted me to share at Urbana. So, praise God.

And more people will probably hear and see that message by videocassette than ever were there at Urbana. And soon you'll be able to get both of those messages on video and PAL and other formats. So if you want more, it's available.

I'm sure many of you definitely will not want to watch that video. I was really wrestling with God about what to share here and in some ways it's even more important. And in a similar way, it doesn't always happen this way, God just began to just hit me with some thoughts and I wrote them down and then I rewrote them in a little bigger type.

I probably still will have to use my glasses. Before I go into that, I'd like to just mention that Urbana I believe was a great breakthrough for the Kingdom of God totally regardless of my involvement. I've just done a cassette report about that at our night of prayer back in Forrest Hill.

That will go out, maybe be back in your office when you get there. 19,200 plus actually registered. That's not one of these exaggerated figures that we're so accustomed to in the church, but those people registered.

About a thousand of those were exhibition and missionaries. Eight or nine hundred were pastors. I'm not positive of that statistic.

So they were not all students. On the fourth night when I had the awesome, scary task of giving the invitation and I asked special permission to not just give this paper invitation when they fill out the form but to call people to stand and I was given that permission, something that Urbana has debated for many decades. I guess about one fourth of the whole audience stood after some pretty strong words, not just mine, but over a couple of days.

One of the most outstanding speakers was a missionary from Afghanistan, absolute opposite of me. He just quietly gave the message of the cost of discipleship in a very quiet way that people would never forget. It was very much a ministry team.

When it came to those forms, the woman after me who led them through this decision form, 9,000 signed a commitment to go, short or long term over the next few years. Altogether, 15,000 made decisions. I think the same number made decisions to pray.

And I don't think we can ever underestimate that. Keep in mind the team of people that have worked for three years to make this happen. It's a very highly professional conference in my viewpoint.

Highly committed and motivated people. So it was their tears and toil and sweat and the tears of God's people around the world that made it happen and I could easily talk for several hours about Urbana because it's just such an overwhelming life transforming event for so many. I haven't even taken my registration bracelet off yet because I just feel the continual power surging.

Better not believe that. I also wanted to just say a word about the literature. We don't have that much literature on display here just because we've been so tied up with Urbana and other things we never got a big shipment here for you.

There are some books that belong to O.M. Sweden over here they need to be paid for. There are some brilliant books there. So take a look at those books.

You might just find not a big armful, perhaps like other conferences, but a couple of gems. I noticed David Seaman's book on the whole subject of forgiveness and shifting the blame. Absolutely brilliant.

I noticed Charles Marsh's biography. A man we owe a lot to in O.M. It would be wonderful to read his story. This is a book Special Projects put some finance into.

When Heaven is Silent. This is in Swedish. I believe one of the most significant books in Swedish in the last ten years to bring many other books into power.

There's Barbara Jordan's Splashes of Joy. One of the wild books in my life in 1996. Over on this table where you meet my new traveling partner, Nate.

He's the son of Lou Williams. O.M. are from the 60s. You'll find all kinds of other material and tapes.

John Piper's book that I'll be referring to. A whole album full of cassettes that you can choose from. We cannot this year give them free.

Just to control the flow, we ask you to give some kind of donation or a field leader sign, an I.O.U. At least look at these and see if there's some that you want. When you get back home, if you want, you can request them free. But if you want them here, we need just a little bit of a donation.

We do have one free book for everyone which came from our brothers and sisters in the States. Everyone who's a field leader. We're sorry, misled you.

It's about the praying through the window challenge, number three, the unreached people. And if you are a field leader, again, we're limited by quantity, please pick one of these up free of charge. So there is something free.

And there are other leaflets and smaller items that are available there free of charge. The message that I sense the Lord gave me for tonight, and by the way, I don't speak on the last day because I'm gone by then. That's a long story.

I won't bore you with it, but I can't be here right to the end. So my other speaking thing has been moved to some other day. But I'm always, when I'm speaking to people like yourself who've listened to me a lot over the years, and I want to thank you for your loyalty and for your commitment.

I'm sure that I have tested your faith and your patience at various times. And it is a humbling thing to attempt to even be part of the leadership team of this amazing movement. But I always feel when I'm trying to share with people who have listened to me a lot over the years, I should try to come up at least with something, something new, something fresh, something different.

And this certainly is, I think, along those lines. Though it is, at least the first part of it is a little bit more negative than generally I'm known to be over at least the last five years, when the Grace Awakening has made me a little more tolerable, listenable, whatever. But I share this with all my heart.

If you and I sitting in this room don't think we can make phenomenally big mistakes in the next few years, that will completely change the course of our life and even our movement, then we are very naive. And so though the first part of this may come out a little strong, some of the wording may be strong, it comes from my heart, it comes from 40 years in the trench, 42 really, since my conversion, it comes from a hunger for reality. So many people came to me in Urbana, and it's true for the last 20 years or more, and have shared with me that the message I shared on reality in Urbana in 1967 radically changed their lives.

It's quite an encouragement. John Piper and I recently got together on the phone, and he's written me a couple of letters, and he mentioned that his life was changed at Urbana in 1967 when I spoke, and it was changed not by my message, but by my challenging people to read Dr. Lloyd-Jones' book or books on the Sermon on the Mount. John Piper dug into those books, and he was never, ever the same.

Some of you realize he's become one of God's outstanding Bible expositors with an outstanding church in Minneapolis. He blessed Frontiers at DeBron just before we rolled in, and his book has been the book of 1996 in my life. It was this book, more than any other book apart from the Bible, that prepared me for my ministry at Urbana, that gave me the grace and courage to lay aside those written messages which predated this book in my life.

Tony Sargent wrote, urging me to read this book, other people urged me to read this book, but it was Gordon Abraham's letter that in accident I came across somewhere and re-read, and he was urging me to read this book. I'd already purchased 50 copies to get other people to read it, and so I started into John Piper's brilliant book *On the Supremacy of God in Missions, Let the Nations Be Glad*, and I believe it's destined to become probably one of the best-selling books in the 90s in *Operation Mobilization*. His book especially speaks in a very powerful and realistic way about suffering, and in a sense this message is tied into that, but it's being presented in somewhat of a different way.

The title of the first half of the message, and I'm going to have to speak quickly and I feel bad about that, is *Ten Harsh Realities of Life*. Harsh is not a word I use very much. It's a strong word, but I want somehow this to get into our hearts.

I sometimes go back to Bible colleges and I speak this message, *Seven Things They Didn't Teach Me at Bible College*, and believe me, the response is overwhelming because there is a sense on the part of thinking people that a lot of things are being missed in our general training of young people in Bible college, and that can be true of O.M. And I think it's great to emphasize the positive things. We have endless books on positive thinking, praying positively, thinking positively, and even the whole message of

Grace Awakening has a very positive appeal to it, words like proactive perhaps being overused in my vocabulary. So in a sense, I had an argument with God when he began to put these thoughts on my heart because I felt it was too negative and I'm negative enough as it is.

Somewhat this message comes from what I have struggled with all of these years and continue to struggle with. But I believe if we're going to count the cost, and one of my passages that I have in mind tonight is Luke 14, counting the cost. Most of you have all heard me speak on that passage, but just keep it in mind because it is so significant.

The first harsh reality we must face is the phenomenal dimension of suffering in the world. I really get upset when I hear people belittle suffering. When I hear people tell about a nation where tens of thousands have been slaughtered, they pass over that in two sentences and tell about all the wonderful things that God has done.

I beg of you, for my sake, please don't do that anymore when I'm around. Forgive me. Because I do get angry and I'm liable someday to rush right up in a pulpit and pounce you right in the face.

And I believe because I've been mentored by Peter Maiden that anger is very important in my ministry. And I get angry when people just paint suffering in such a belittling or small way and instead of weeping with those that weep and crying out against war and against sin and against suffering we give some little sovereignty of God cliché and tell about somebody getting saved in the middle of it. I want to ask you, if that were your family slaughtered, my dear OM leader, would you be coming out with that cliché anymore? I don't think you would.

In fact, some of you probably would be knocked out of ministry and that may be true of me because I've had very little raw suffering in my life like I see in history and like I see across the world. And I believe one of the reasons Christians are getting knocked out by sometimes even minor suffering is because we've not faced this harsh reality of life. This fallen planet and what has happened between the Tutsi and the Hutu people is that how you pronounce it? Is continually in my mind.

I'm not morotic. I'm not sick. I'm just human.

And I don't believe that war is right. And I don't believe that people should be killing other people. And I think it is normal for some of us if not all of us to feel these things in a deeper dimension.

God has spared me from visiting some of these countries probably because I would not be able to handle it. I don't really think I could handle going around southern Sudan. Just reading of Sudan is enough to almost finish me off.

But somehow as I look at this dimension of suffering as I have the privilege of so much ministry as I have these other realities the ten mega life changing blessings which we hope to get to little unlikely the way I'm going right now I press on. The second harsh reality is the scarcity of leadership in the present day world. The secular people are now acknowledging a phenomenal scarcity of leadership.

Have you followed what's gone on in the United Nations in their attempt to find their new leader? Have we followed what's gone on in the North America scene? Has the United States attempted to find one man of integrity and reality and honesty that could be the President of the United States? As people tend to pick on the United States they should perhaps take a world survey and maybe they could write me on how many outstanding godly men or women of integrity are leading present political parties or governments.

We also are hearing from many Christian leaders the scarcity of leadership. Some of us in this room know that the only reason we're in leadership is because of the scarcity of Christian leaders.

And God has just somehow in his grace looked around and seen some unlikely soul with a glove discipleship over his head and just grabbed him. It's a mystery how the likes of some of us are in leadership and I think I have to include myself. The third reality is the abundance of disunity.

Again, I find it very difficult to sit in meetings where people are talking about the tremendous unity in the body of Christ that is sweeping the world. I find it just as difficult when I hear someone telling me about the revival that is sweeping the world. And there is a tendency among God's people to exaggerate and I believe it is wrong.

And I believe sometimes we need to be bold and we need to speak out or we need to get on the phone and challenge that person about what they are saying or what they are putting in print because at the end of the day it drags the name of our Lord Jesus down and it discredits the church of Jesus Christ. How sad it is that the very word evangelical means now exaggeration. Where in the world has the church gotten to? We speak of evangelistically speaking.

It's not right. We shouldn't laugh at it. Of course, we do.

But we should understand and be realistic. I guess I confess after all these years if I sum up one of my greatest passages it's just to be real. It's just to be real.

And as I mingle with many young people and there's a great mixture of young people and I don't want to exaggerate about them, I think this next generation more than most they want reality. They don't want the things that used to be looked on so highly back in the 60s. There are some exceptions.

They want reality. They want people who are real. They want people who are honest.

If we've got immorality in the church they want us to be honest about it. And unless there's a greater ring of reality in the church of Jesus Christ which I believe will help us be set free from the chains of legalism which are so extremely detrimental in building the kingdom, then I don't have really that much hope on a human level. The church is permanently divided.

It is not going to change that much. Individuals, yes. Individual churches, yes.

Individual agencies, yes. Certain towns and cities, yes. But overall with 25 denominations across the world with all kinds of new networks I was stunned as I got involved in the AD2000 movement to discover the tremendous hostility and all the opposition, far more opposition I found than I have found proactive let's go for it.

Of course there are beautiful exceptions, especially in certain countries. And it's because there are so many doctrinal factors, there are so many strategy factors, there are so many complexities. Yet somehow we decide to be proactive and keep on keeping on.

I believe you can be more biblically proactive after counting the cost than if you somehow go along with a wrong foundation which develops sort of a fantasy, sort of a Pollyanna view of life. And I've had a number of leaders that I've been involved with, sharing with and discussing admit to me they had a fantasy view of what life was all about. And that's why in some cases it fell completely apart.

Completely apart. Tied into that is often the danger of building up some such unrealistic expectation. I fear that in O.M. right now.

With our dreams, with our plans, with our core curriculum, with global action, all the things that we're wanting to tell the young people and we aren't telling the young people. Our dream for greater pastoral care which of course we need. Life has a way of backfiring.

If that's only me then maybe write me about it. But as you get involved in pastoral care I would ask you as someone who's walked with Jesus every day for 42 years, you better tell them when they leave O.M. When they leave O.M. they're not going to get much pastoral care. They're going to get kicked in the stomach.

They're going to get walked on especially if they're black or if they're women or if they're some other minority group in some city whether it's London or Los Angeles. Light is playing hardball. Light is drool.

When they moved in on the churches in Rwanda and machined on the people in the churches praying for protection, brothers and sisters, that is beyond what my mind can measure. And when they moved in on Saint James Church a few weeks after I preached there on this very subject of suffering and how God allows so much suffering and many, many were dead and others were wounded. It's an awful thing.

It's an awesome thing. And you and I somehow have to be, even though we never are fully, we have to be prepared for that. And as we teach people in OM, we cannot give them anymore the hope that they will be in full-time Christian work the rest of their life.

You don't have that hope because the economic environment, the church environment is shaking because post-Christian Europe is becoming more post-Christian by the week. And to think the huge amounts of money it takes to support the likes of you and I to keep us in full-time ministry is just going to continue to flow is a dream. And some of us here are going to be back working in the factories and working in the offices or driving taxis.

My heart goes out to the ex-OMers or former OMers who when they left our wonderful little world of Christian service, they got smacked right in the nose by the unpredictable things that happened along life's road. So let us care for our people, let us love them, let us bond with them, let us be their friends and in some cases I hope that is a lifetime friendship. And this message in some way is born out of a lifetime friendship with hundreds of people who I love and who I pray for and sometimes weep with over the telephone and when I meet them.

The abundance of this unity, we want to talk about it no more. We'll get to the positives in a few moments. The fourth harsh reality is the power of money.

Why are we so uptight about admitting the failures we had as a movement in the 60s and the 70s? It's no big deal with God. He loved us all during those years. Why do we have to defend some completely cuckoo things we did back in 1962 all in the name of faith and love and whatever? It's quite normal that as you go along life's road, you grow and you change and you become more mature.

You also can take some lapses back in your immaturity. That's what makes it so interesting. But I thank God for the realistic view of money in O.M. in 1996.

I thank God we can talk to business people in a whole different way than we did before and esteem them as better than ourselves. And I thank God that we can be honest about the problem of debt and a shortfall of support. It took me 20 years to get the courage to make a tape, Does the Lack of Finance Hinder God's Work? I'm so excited about that tape I think I'll even listen to it again myself.

Though I know some of you will definitely not like it. That's okay. That's what O.M. is today.

We agree to disagree and press on to evangelize the world. We're never going to all agree anymore. You don't have to be uptight if you don't agree with me on a number of issues.

My wife doesn't agree with me on a number of issues. Big deal. In a few days we celebrate our 37th wedding anniversary.

Swindle has a whole chapter on the subject and if you haven't eaten it yet, why don't you write your own chapter? The only way ahead is we have to agree to disagree. Somehow hang on to those basics, especially those basic doctrines and go forward in the name of the Lord to touch lives across the globe. But let us be honest about money.

Money is power. People are bought and sold in this world like you and I might buy an ice cream and deli in May. And my heart goes out to those who are poor.

My heart goes out to those who have no place to sleep tonight. People have nothing proper to eat. All those refugee children.

We don't only see it in New Delhi and out in some of the Asian cities. We see it in New York, Chicago, and London. And we must understand the economic system and the lostness of mankind or humankind is all tied into this.

And I would love to give you many hours on my thoughts, but I don't have time for We must move on. But a realistic view of money, a realistic view of wealth, and the ability to handle a certain amount of wealth for God's kingdom to me is just so significant. The fifth harsh reality is the subtleness of lust.

I don't ask for it. I don't look for it. I perhaps did back in the 60s.

I tried to run away from it. But everywhere I go, I'm told of another Christian leader, you can't be involved in depth with the churches as we are. Christian leaders are being knocked out by immorality.

Even here, I wonder if we'd be honest to talk about the immorality of people who sat with us here only a few years ago. We'd rather just not talk about it, right? It's so unpleasant, and we're taught to be more positive. The fact of the matter is you and I are targets of the enemy.

And since the fiery dart of immorality is one of the more subtle, one of the more proven, one of the more Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction. Since the fiery dart of immorality is one of the more subtle, one of the more proven, it is probably going to happen that a number of us in this room are going to have very subtle attacks on our marriages, on our minds, and on this whole area of moral purity.

Please, I beg of you, don't play games in this area. If you're having struggles and you're experiencing some failure, get some kind of help before it's too late. You say, you mean to tell me sometimes it's too late? Yes, it's too late to ever get your ministry back where God had it at a particular time.

I'm dealing with one man now for four or five years, a brilliant Bible teacher. He only had a small moral failure, if that's possible. Everything went bizarre after that, though, praise God, his family stayed together.

But he basically had ministry now for four years and he's one of the greatest men of the Word of God and knowledge of the Word of God and the ability to expound the Word that I have known personally in my lifetime. Serious. It is maybe better to have the risk of walking in the light and maybe somebody sharing that with someone else and your reputation being slightly damaged.

I'd rather live with that risk than the problem of so many other people who have got trapped, trapped by this area. I would urge you to control the video recorder. I would beg of you to control what you watch on television.

It is five times easier to get in pornography, no, 50 times easier to get into pornography in the 90s than it was for me in the 60s. And I was hooked on pornography, well, that was way back in '56, '55. But now, with the computer and porno on the computer and with the video cassette and especially now that OM is committed to freedom, we don't believe in freedom that's wrong to watch a film.

We believe there's a place, the place of culture in the Christian life, the place of the arts. We will preach that. It's risky.

I'm not going to back off, but I will tell you it's a very, very tricky road. Everybody is different, but we all need to be careful. That's really not what I want to speak at.

So let me move on to the sixth harsh reality, the predominance of pride. How hard it is to admit that many of our problems are linked with pride. Christian leaders generally acknowledge they find criticism difficult.

I'm sure that that is linked with pride. It certainly was in my own life, so subtle sometimes I didn't even realize it. The predominance of pride in the work of God, the word arrogant is one of the words I hate the most, but sometimes Christians who don't even mean to come across in an arrogant way, and it should break our hearts.

It should break our hearts. The harsh reality, number seven, of the complexity, the complexity of our society and the church. Even operation mobilization, forgive me the complexity of it, which is far easier for my brother Peter Maiden to handle.

The complexity of operation mobilization is beyond me. It is beyond me. That's why I thank God that it's a team of people leading this work, not me.

Yes, I'm the international leader and in our society and even in God's work, such a thing is acceptable, but it has to be brought into balance by the team and by the checks and balances, and we haven't got it all perfect. We've got a lot to learn and a lot of ways where we constantly have to fine-tune and bring in old William McDonald's corrective lenses, but I thank God for the reality and the unity and the decision-making mechanism that we have in OM. With all of its struggle, with all of its weaknesses, with its weakness and sometimes with its slowness, and I thank God he can give me grace somehow to live with operation mobilization as long as he wants me to, and I hope you'll not be intimidated when there are things you don't understand.

Do we all understand global action perfectly? To show the variety of global action, we will probably soon have an abundance of T-shirts. I got my free Finnish T-shirt. Within one hour, I was given actually a much

more attractive T-shirt from a but I decided to esteem Finland since it's closer.

Some may get upset by that. It doesn't bother me to the least. I don't care if you come out with 40 different T-shirts and global underwear to match.

To me, these things, these are not issues. We proved ourselves to be incredibly silly at times with our various arguments over various subjects. OM is headed for greater diversity.

You will not turn the clock back. Even if you're a strong-minded, dig your heels in loud mouth, you will die in the process. It's not worth it.

So what do I suggest? Shoot elephants. I bet our guests are wondering, what is this about? That's figuratively speaking. In other words, don't spend a lot of time, a lot of effort, and your big Holy Ghost cannon, which may not be a Holy Ghost cannon, shooting little things.

You can discuss them. We're allowed to discuss the tiniest details. God has a great sense of humor.

But somehow save your passion for the bigger issues. God broke my heart a month ago as I re-read Tozer's little article about having fire in the furnace, but keep the chimney cool. And please forgive me, brothers and sisters, for the times when my fire in my furnace, which has burned hot for 42 years, has spread to my chimney and I've said something stupid or outlandish or hurtful to you or your wife or anyone else.

But I tell you, if you have a heathen hot furnace, it is difficult sometimes to stop all the chimneys fires. And that's why you need firefighters like Peter Maiden and Roton and my wife and others who can help you along the way. Eighthly, the frustration of our limitations.

The frustration of our limitations. I often feel in leading OM and in my other responsibilities that I'm driving a brand new Mercedes Benz down a German motorway at 15 miles an hour. Have you ever tried that? You will be in serious difficulty, I can assure you, unless you at least get on the side of the road.

Do you ever find yourself so struggling with frustration, especially if you don't have secretaries and partners to help you in spreading your vision or doing what you feel you should be doing? How we should thank God for those partners and helpers we have on an endless level and esteem them and empower them and lay down our lives for them, that they may also have a cutting-edge ministry. For in the case of kingdom of God, the newest worker in the door is just as important as the brother who has been there for 40 years. And we can learn from them, and I love that word, empowering, if it's kept in balance.

We have to learn to live with frustration, especially if we are relational in what we are attempting to do. It's a harsh reality. We feel it in our family, we feel it in the time capsule that we live in.

And as our health may begin to deteriorate, that frustration may become even greater. Especially if we are people of purpose and people of passion. And then ninthly, the sensitivity and the vulnerability of people in general, and of God's people.

God's people are sometimes more sensitive, more easily hurt than non-Christians. And I've discovered this in my friendship with non-Christians, which is a fair number of people. They, of course, also have their failures in this area, we all know that.

So be careful of just, you know, putting down Christians and putting up the non-Christian, because it's not that simple. But I know this, all of us who are in leadership here in this room, we are vulnerable, I am vulnerable. Sometimes I'm downright scared stiff.

I cry at the most amazing moments, and I laugh at other moments. But if God can keep me with all this vulnerability and all this weakness, all my doubts and fears, if he can keep me every day for forty-two years, maybe you could write me your five excuses. We could look at them, and maybe we'll write you back.

The keeping power of God, the grace of God, we'll get to it in a few moments. Let us understand that important harsh reality about people. Let us be a little easier on those who are weak and who are struggling.

Let us leaders be incredibly careful what we say to people when they have upset us, or when we think they have sinned, or they have broken a rule. That is a moment when there must be compassion and love and listening. We all need to be better listeners.

Yes, there are moments when we have to be firm. But I don't think as leaders we should be strong and hard and firm until we have generally prayed about it with other leaders. There's a far better chance you're going to get a more balanced solution if you've held back in love and compassion and spoken in a more quiet, spirit-controlled atmosphere before you come with some hard or strong statement.

Surely my great sins in the past and to this day are when I've spoken out strongly and firmly. I thought I was doing the right thing, but it lacked the sensitivity of Jesus. It lacked the balance of the Spirit.

By God's grace, I could go back and attempt to put it right, but sometimes it doesn't happen. Then you have to just put it in the hands of God or it can overwhelm you and knock you right out of the ring. For as leaders, we have to be strong, and that means we have to be able to handle our own sins and failures and get up and back in the race and press on.

And then number ten, the lostness, the harsh reality of the lostness of humankind. John Piper has given one of the strongest statements I've ever read in a book about the lostness of humankind and about hell. Amazing.

Not everybody will agree with what he says. Every book has its straw, has its human factor. But I believe, and praise God, Urbana and the leaders of Urbana felt this.

The lostness of people is still a major motivating factor in our lives. It isn't the only factor. We all know the love of Christ constrains us factor and we've preached on it.

But how can we be human and be godly and not respond to the lostness of people? Even if you have a different view about hell than, say, someone else whose book you're reading. Any form of hell is bad enough. Just people lost while they're alive.

And this is a harsh reality and I guess I'll wrestle with it with continued agony until I'm with the Lord. To move into the ten mega-truths and blessings that somehow help us survive in the midst of these harsh realities of life, I will try to be quick because I think most of you have preached on these subjects. So this is just in the way of remembrance.

Number one, the reality of God himself. A God of grace, a God of mercy. When I describe 1996 and what God's done in O.M. and in the body of Christ, my big word is mercy.

God is so merciful to us. I don't understand his mercy. I don't understand why a brother I'm so close to has a wife who's dying of terminal cancer and I and my wife are relatively healthy and more or less enjoying life.

I met with Roberto and Ralph Winter just a few days ago. I just went, I can't handle that. I don't know what to do.

I don't know how to handle that. It's getting worse with her. And I don't know how to handle some of the things God's people say either when all this kind of thing starts coming in.

I spent a lot of time on the phone in the last month. I mean a lot of time. One out of every three persons I talked to was living in a circle of suffering.

One out of every three. Bernie Huber, our dear friend, his wife has cancer breaking out of every part of her body. Another dear brother Basil, another dear brother.

He's just out of the blue I called him. I only call him once every other year. His wife was laying in a coma ready to go any minute when my phone call came through.

The Jesus people in Chicago just have one of their tender disciples that's been with them a number of years commit suicide. And I called another brother right in Norway and he shared he's here today that his wife's sister's husband, isn't that right, just committed suicide. It's all wrapped up.

I guess that's partly why I wanted to share that first part of this message. But the reality of God is bigger than all of us and all of this. There is an ultimate plan.

We will never fully grasp it. And I just hope that as you read this book or just read the word of God, you will be gripped as I have been with the supremacy of God in missions. He is supreme and he's more concerned about all this and his glory than we are.

And I just hope that you have to read some sections in this book twice. The second mega blessing or truth is the greatness of our salvation. Let us not be afraid to emphasize this basic.

We are saved by grace. We're on the way to heaven. We don't fully understand what that is about.

What is eternity? I've been listening to some heavy tapes on eschatology and there is a lot in the Bible on eschatology. I don't think we in OM, because we don't emphasize that, should make fun of people who are serious about prophecy. Some of them are very serious and very sensitive and it means a lot in their faith.

There can be an ugliness in interdenominationalness in that we sort of feel we're a little one up on this other poor brother that hasn't been quite set free from over-dwelling on what we feel is trivia. Beware. Walk with humility.

Try to understand why he believes that. The whole pre-millennial teaching, so profound, so prevalent in the United States is incredibly important to many American Christians. I don't want to stomp on what they believe lightly any more actually than I would want to stomp insensitively on what a Muslim or a Hindu or a Buddhist believes and don't misunderstand that.

It's just part of our desire as God's workers to be sensitive to culture and to people's beliefs and to people's religion. I believe we will win more through grace and love than we will through sarcasm or belittling people because we don't believe that. Many of the young people took it in to some degree.

Fourthly, the fourth mega blessing that takes us through all this harshness and all this hurt is the trustworthiness of his Word. I love all these new translations, I'm always using them. I now big into the message.

But on occasion I go back to my old Bible and I think I got in Bombay the day Greg Livingston left the ship or shortly after that because that was the day I lost the Bible I was using. And this Bible is very meaningful to me, but whatever translation you have, it's trustworthy. O.M. is built on this.

We must never move from this. There are things we don't understand. The trustworthiness of his word.

The fifth mega-motivating truth and blessing is something I've seldom talked about, and I apologize to you and to God. It's sometimes referred by the old Puritans as the blessed hope. The blessed hope.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this room we would never get agreement on eschatology, but hopefully we could get agreement at least that Jesus Christ will return. I was listening to a question-and-answer session on what will happen here on the planet during the millennial reign.

And I can assure you after this question-and-answer session, which the answers were given by one of the greatest Bible expositors in America, I was surely more confused than I ever was before I heard the answers to the questions. It is such a mystery to me, and I promised myself and another good friend who's written a book on this subject that I would be more diligent in studying this subject in the future. So hang in there, brothers and sisters.

Maybe at some future time, George Burwell will come up with a mighty revelation based on God's word about eschatology. Meanwhile, I believe he will come. And I even go as far as to believe that he might come tonight.

Now some people get upset when you say that because according to their theory, a lot of things have to happen first. And I simply say to them, look, will you be humble enough to admit you may be wrong? And if you're wrong, then Jesus could come tonight. That's all it takes.

The sixth mega blessing that takes us down this bumpy road in the spiritual minefield in which we all stand as spiritual warriors is the proactiveness of prayer. I tried to combine some old and new words. The new ones are getting old.

The power of prayer, the reality of prayer. And I would beg of you really with all my heart to read Ronald Dunn's book, *When Heaven is Silent*, or Philip Yancey's book, *Disappointment with God*. In the light of all the things that are being promised Christians in these days, I believe people who are realistic owe it to God and ourselves to distribute the other side of the story.

If everybody was distributing those books, you know me, I would start distributing some of the other books. I do anyway. But I feel that at times with some of the things we say and teach, we create unrealistic expectation.

We know so many stories of miraculous healings. Praise God for those stories. But you and I all know for everyone who is terminally ill or seriously ill that gets healed, there's dozens who die.

Praise God for some people willing to write books about what may seem to be unanswered prayer. Nevertheless, the Word of God teaches the power of prayer, the reality of prayer, the importance of prayer. And we have 40 years of history proving this true.

We dare not hold back in this area. In my interviewing of many, many people over these years, including quite a few Christian leaders, I find that a high percentage struggle with their personal prayer life. Maybe you're in that camp.

And I would say this, you'll probably never get over that struggle. We all will struggle to some degree. But you probably will never have a really effective personal prayer life until you decide prayerlessness is no longer an option in my life.

When you make that decision, just as I made a decision, fornication has never been an option. Bank robbery has never been an option. I get a whole bunch of things in my life that are not options.

And as a teenager, somehow I said, prayer is going to be there by God's grace every day of my life, even if I have no breakfast or whatever else I miss. It's sometimes very weak. It sometimes doesn't even exist during at least a certain time of the day, like in the morning when we would hope to have it.

By God's grace, I learned as a teenager that it's really not that hard to have a daily time with God. Don't let this thing get blown out of proportion. In some ways, it can be fun.

We need a little more creativity. Maybe on how we pray. Maybe you are somewhat of a boring person.

Don't hold that against God, but perhaps you could work on your creative side. For surely, as someone said this morning, living for God and being God's people, and even prayer and worship has an element of fun to it. And that is a megatruth in itself.

Seventhly, the wonder of worship. That we can worship God. We've again, from way back in the sixties, said that worship was the highest calling of the Christian.

And we need to continue to emphasize that. And then, eighthly, the synergy of relationships. We have it right here in this room.

As you and I come together, as we agree to work together, as we agree to go the extra mile and love one another and continue dreaming dreams and launching visions, the synergy of just two or three people in this room deciding to go together is awesome. And if you don't know that new word, I'm sure you can find out easily over a cup of coffee, because my time really is finished. And ninthly, the freedom of forgiveness.

I've just come from another situation, ministering on a Sunday morning to a church that was split with as much hurt as any church situation I've been in over many years. And that Sunday together was, in their minds, from what they said, the beginning of a new step forward. But it was really scary.

And the man in that church who's coming to just temporarily teach there, not going to be the pastor, but temporarily has come to teach, gave me this book. And this is one of my books on the top of my list for 1997. It's Forgiveness, the Power and the Puzzle.

If you don't think there are any puzzles in this forgiveness thing, I don't think you've studied it. I don't think you've been in leadership very long. And I'd encourage you to make a study on forgiveness, because I believe without increasing wisdom and discernment in OM about forgiveness, we're going to have many hindrances, whatever great program we may launch.

We've all been hurt in the battle. We've hurt one another. And we need to know how to forgive and how to maintain that without necessarily compromising some other aspect of our walk with God.

I'm convinced, I hope I'm not wrong, that God has given OM a dynamic, cutting-edge message of grace and discipline that the church needs in our day. We have often received it from the church. So it's not a statement of arrogance.

Some at Urbana were going around with a little button, one of my few original statements. Probably find out later it's not original because someone else said it. But I think it came from my own head.

Grace minus discipline equals disgrace. Beware of it in the present great emphasis of grace in Operation Mobilization. And realize the freedom of forgiveness.

Firstly, that God has forgiven you even of the sins you may have committed last evening because of the blood of Christ and because of Calvary. That doesn't exclude repentance. But I believe with all my heart, we need to emphasize more the freedom of forgiveness.

Many of the young people at Urbana rushed into a seminar, 2,000 strong on sexual healing. Others went to other seminars that were ministering along those lines. And praise God for that ministry that goes on within OM, at Rill and across the whole world and at our conferences.

We need more of it. But we have to constantly work to keep it in balance and keep it in line with those harsh realities of life that we have touched on tonight. And then tenthly, the rewards of faith.

The rewards of faith. We don't get many messages on rewards. I've never been able to figure out that doctrine and probably need to drop out and study it.

But it seems to me there are great rewards of faith even here. I cannot explain the joy I've experienced in the past 10 years as by faith and God's grace I managed to win the victory over almost a paranoia on air travel and many other things in my life. As I've taken the steps of faith in fear and trembling, seeing more of my doubts and my lack of faith, somehow I have been rewarded.

Even here, much less when I get to glory. We have been called to walk by faith. We have been called to live by faith.

We cannot get the future all neat and tidy so we all feel comfortable. I believe the church will continue to be messier in the 90s. I believe OM will continue to be messier.

Certainly in ICT we've taken some real giant steps forward in the past couple of years, but at the same time it seems to be getting a little more messy on ICT. In OM, I don't think we're going to have the privilege of choosing to be tidy or to evangelize the world. I'm for tidying things up as much as possible in a balanced way.

I believe the present OM, unity in the midst of diversity will mean a certain amount of mess. If you study secular companies, if you study what's going on in the computer world, the sports world, the business

world, you realize the whole planet seems to be one big endless series of messes. We as God's people know that our God in answer to prayer keeps breaking into our messes.

We're not excusing sin and I'm not excusing things that I do wrong around my house like leaving a mess that my wife has to cope with. That's not really what I'm on about, though I praise God for his mercy as one of his ragamuffins that really doesn't have his act together and yet experiences the power and the grace of God. Yes, ragamuffin became the big word in OM in 1996.

Anna Urbana, it went right off the charts. There were even badges being worn. Ragamuffin now.

Brennan Manning, the author, must be really happy, but it's getting messy as some people have written me that there's heresy in the book. And when I saw Rotan in the early days of this conference, he was concerned about my pushing ragamuffin gospel because he, Mr. Eagle Eye Theologian, has spotted a number of areas that could bring trouble, especially with some prayer partners. Maybe he was thinking of donors as he seems to be a bit into that in these days.

Let's pray.

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