

Cd Gv266 Spiritual Leadership

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of focusing on God and the Holy Spirit in spiritual leadership, highlighting the need for holiness and community engagement.

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:6, Acts 5:5, Romans 15:20, 2 Corinthians 10:16

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Church Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of training people for all aspects of life, regardless of their circumstances. They mention examples such as Wang Ming Dao, who spent 22 years in prison, and individuals working in secular jobs. The speaker highlights the significance of prayer and prayer meetings, urging attendees to prioritize them. They also discuss the themes of boldness, readiness to suffer, and the role of the local church. The sermon concludes with a mention of the 13 key aspects found in the book of Acts, including witness, world vision, and the reality of life beyond conferences.

Transcript

I'd like to just add my welcome to Fritz's. We want to focus on the Lord himself. I think there's a danger, even in using this very title, Leadership Conference, in that it leads us to focus on ourselves.

How can I train to be a leader? This is the normal way of doing things in our day. And in a sense, I'm not wanting to get into a semantic jungle and I don't like to criticize people for the way they go about things. But I do sense that so often in our conferences, the conferences become man-centered.

They become strategy-centered. They become organizational-centered and ultimately lead to, I believe, something less than what God would have. That doesn't mean God doesn't use it.

God uses a wide range of things. And our burden is not, firstly, whether God is going to use us or not, but our burden, I believe, is to do the will of God in all things and to know God in a greater way. So our first burden as we come here, I believe, is God himself.

And with that holiness of life, it may not be God's will for you to be some leader. The best thing for you may be not to be in any leadership. If anything I've seen in OM, I've seen people go into leadership too quickly and seen them wiped out.

There are people that were at this conference 17 years ago that today are not even walking with Jesus Christ. Today are divorced and living with other women. Could it be that they got into leadership too

quickly? I don't think actually that was the case.

I think it was more that they somehow failed to keep on that armor in that time of testing, in that time of difficulty. When I think of the Apostle Paul saying, I buffet my body and bring it into subjection, lest after preaching to others I become a reprobate. We can only do so much in a conference.

Though one of the things I'm excited about for this month is that it's not just a conference. We're here to demonstrate Jesus Christ in Germany. We're gonna be involved every weekend in evangelism and with churches.

This is so wonderful to break the unreality of conference life. Because conferences, no matter what, are not real situations. It's not the way you live the rest of your life.

Surrounded by people, prayer meetings, praise sessions, exhortations, Bible studies, five hours a day. Life isn't like that. One of our greatest burdens, as you know, is to train people for life, whatever life may hold for them.

Whether it's 22 years in prison, like Wang Mingdao, or whether it's a secular job with the Mercedes-Benz Corporation, or a terminal illness, whatever life may have for you, and you don't know, we hope that this conference will be a foundation. What you receive here will be a foundation. And I'm convinced that the opportunities to get out and be doers, especially on the weekends, the opportunities to volunteer, to do the dishes, or to make the breakfast so utterly early in the morning, because 7 o'clock here, for those of us who've come from England, 7 is 6 o'clock.

And our bodies are not all leaping in the air at 6 o'clock in the morning. And 6 o'clock is 5 o'clock in England. Then we're really in difficulty.

And I believe that it's important to see these distinctives of this month together. Because there is a sense in which a month, just totally apart from all that needs to be done in the world, there is a sense in which it's not justified. I was reading from a man named William Barclay, not known as a great evangelical, but a man with an unbelievable knowledge of the Word of God.

He's dead now. And he had this little quotation in his book, Rules for Life. He said, Nearly all great men have been haunted by the sense of the shortness of time and the uncertainty of time.

That really encouraged me, because I don't even know what this word great men means, but I know something of being haunted by the lack of time. There's so many things we can be doing. And I know this month, many, many meetings, some of them very large, some of them very unique, that I've had to turn down in order to be here.

And in some of those meetings, I know people would be converted to Jesus Christ. And that means a lot, because one more man going to heaven, who can put a premium on that? And I've wrestled with the fact that I have to give another month of my life to this conference. And it's difficult in that I know so many other leaders are here that certainly I could be somewhere else.

I was sharing with George Miley why I don't feel burdened to go to the Operation World Conference, and the reason I don't feel burdened to go to the ship so much, because I sense that often in OM situations, we're spoiled. We have so many men with us who can minister. Some of them end up just sitting, because there are so many different ones.

Every time I see Dr. Homer Paine sitting in my meetings, I get a sort of a funny feeling, because this man has got so much to give. Why should he be sitting in another OM meeting in which generally I'm sure he's heard that which has already been given. But the thing that's helped me come with all my heart to this month, and to forget about all these other things, is that this isn't just a conference of meetings.

It's much more than that. It's being welded together. It's doing battle, in the name of the Lord, in prayer, and I'll tell you, it's worth me canceling any number of meetings to get more time in prayer, because that's the greatest need in my life.

And if I lunge into all these so-called big meetings, without the reality of prayer, of what value will it be? However, it's been an encouragement also in thinking about this conference, to realize we're going to, in the evening, starting next Tuesday evening, have the public in our midst. I think that's so good. And on the weekends, we're going to be out working with the churches.

And there will just be many, many other aspects of this conference that will, in more ways than one, justify the use of time in this way. And we are accountable for our time. And I feel very, very strongly that this conference is the backbone of Operation Mobilization.

I do not believe it would exist as a movement without these times of coming together. It would be dissipated. It would be divided.

It would degenerate into just another organization. That doesn't mean God wouldn't continue to use it. I never cease to be amazed at God's graciousness in using all kinds of things, but it wouldn't be what God would have it.

I've seen this in church history. One of my favorite subjects is church history. And in the history of the church, every spiritual movement has had its conferences.

Even in Britain, within the past months, the Assembly of God, one of the strong movements in Britain, had their huge conference. I think they rent the whole of Butlin's Holiday Camp and Minehead. The Elam have their conference.

Some of you know that in July, I was at the Keswick Convention. 104 years, that Keswick Convention has gone on and has been one of the greatest forces for God in British Evangelical Christian faith. And it's spread all over the world.

Perhaps I've learned the most about such conferences during my time of working and living together with Bhaktsingh of India. The backbone of their movement is their holy convocation. When over 10,000 come and live on one compound, not all of them, some of them live out.

I've never seen 5,000 people. It wasn't so many when I was there, but it's up to 10,000 or more now. I've never seen so many people fed so quickly.

And if we can only do it this way here, just a banana leaf, sit on the floor in lines all over the compound. And you sit and you wait. You wait a long time.

And you, if you're a Westerner, will learn patience in that fellowship like you've never learned it around the LM where we don't give you such opportunities much. And then they come along with a little rice and then someone comes along with a giant bucket and pours a little whatever on top of the rice. No utensils, so

that saves the washing up.

You just dig in with your right hand, not your left hand, but your right hand. And it's all over very, very quickly and then you go wash your hand. And in sitting in some of those convocations, sometimes the ministry, the way people judge in the West has been very, very weak.

Sometimes it's been very strong. But regardless of what was happening in the pulpit, the Holy Spirit was working in the hearts. There were often 24-hour prayer chains going on during the night, during the day.

And it was just amazing to see God work in those meetings. Not in perfection. And Westerners have gone in and some of them after one year have actually not only split with Brother Bucksing, they've even opposed him.

One great missionary in India who's a dear man, has been in the last 10 years opposing the whole movement. Others, even Indians, have gone. I think of Zak Poonen.

He was ministering at the convocations that I went to. A few years later he split off from Bucksing and went his own way and they've never really been in fellowship. So there's problems.

One of the leaders of one of their assemblies when I was in India committed suicide. Other assemblies split and left, started their own movement. Plenty of problems and yet that movement has just gone forward.

So now over 300 assemblies have been formed. And if you trace it and you study it, you'll see the roots go back to those holy convocations. The times behind the scenes that Bucksing is going day and night is having with his leaders exhorting, removing, encouraging.

It's really an amazing event that I hope some of you will have the opportunity to attend. So it's been my experience in studying spiritual movements of God to see the importance of coming apart for prayer, for the word, for ministry, for exhortation and all that can be done during these days. Fifty percent of everything that God is doing at a conference like this will not be seen.

It's behind the scenes. Personal meetings, small meetings, personal fellowship, people getting right with one another. And it's just so important.

For this first session, I wanted to spend some time looking at principles of spiritual leadership in the Book of Acts. We've all looked at the Book of Acts before and my burden, of course, is to try to bring out some things that have not been brought out before, though in review we may touch on some things that have been brought out before. Again, keeping in mind that our first goal is not leadership as much as godliness, which is, in a sense, the most important qualification for leadership.

I think one of the great steps, and I'm sure somewhere else will say this, and needs to be said more than once, on the road to leadership is the willingness to be nobody. Willingness to be a nobody. Let's start in chapter 1, verse 8, a verse that I hope most of you who share from the Word of God can preach on.

If you're ever stuck for a verse and you're going out to take a church meeting, I tell you there's enough in Acts 1-8 for anybody with the O.M. vision to go for an hour without any difficulty, especially as you get to the uttermost parts of the earth. You show them 2 Corinthians 10-16, Romans 15-20, two verses that most Christians have never even looked at. You take out your prayer cards.

You start talking about Pakistan, Mongolia, China. You take out your map of China, which I just happen to have with me, and you start presenting them something about the regions beyond, and then when you get done with that, you can take the map of the world, which I just happen to carry around. I have two of them actually because I usually give one away, and you can talk about Mauritania, you can talk about Afghanistan, and you can present the uttermost parts of the earth, and you never get past Acts 1-8.

Well, we're not going to do that this morning because you already have that message. There is something I want to say. From this verse, from other verses that you already know because some things are in the way of remembrance.

There is no leadership without the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. You can have every training program in the world. Go to Navigators, then join Campus Crusade, flip over to YWAM, come to OM, leave here and go on to Dallas Theological Seminary, and then go on to the Graduate School of Theology from Cucabugu, and go on.

Get every training course in the world. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, you're zero. And oh, how we need to be reminded of this in this age of conferences, in this age of strategy, in this age of missiology, in this age in which there is endless study and endless books, that without the power of the Holy Spirit, we are not going to accomplish much for God.

That's why they were told to wait at Jerusalem. But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you. And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth.

The most exciting part of the Keswick Convention for me was the research I did before going there. Going back into the history of Keswick and discovering that people like R.A. Torrey of the Moody Bible Institute, a very conservative Bible school, went to Keswick and spoke on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I don't think he was ever invited back.

And a number of other men who are not thought of by conservative evangelicals of our day, who are not thought of as people who teach a second blessing. And in OM, as you know, we're just divided completely down the middle. And if we ask all those who've had a definite second blessing of some kind in their life, and I'm not speaking about those who say, like I often do, yes, I've had the second, third, fourth, fifth, but I'm talking about the kind of thing the Salvation Army people preach and the charismatic people preach and the Methodists preach and R. A. Torrey was preaching and D. L. Moody later preached.

If they all went on one side of the auditorium and all those who have sort of a different type of belief about the Holy Spirit went on the other side of this room, we'd probably have 50% here and 50% there. And during the year, there'd be a great crossing back and forth. We have tended to grab on to Billy Graham's quotation when we've talked about the Holy Spirit in O.M. and said, we don't care how you get it, just get it.

As you know, when you speak about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and this is one of the reasons that generally throughout the year in our communication to the public, we don't use that term. Generally, in our day, it just creates an explosion because there are so many different viewpoints. And what R. A. Torrey was teaching at Keswick, I don't know how many years ago, is not what other people would mean today.

And what they mean is not what someone else means. And so, especially in an interdenominational movement like O.M., not in any way to belittle someone's experience or to belittle what your church may

teach you about that and the very real experience you may have had. We have tended to speak about the fullness of the Holy Spirit or the reality of the Holy Spirit or life in the Spirit.

This is a very important thing for us as leaders in this fellowship in a day in which division after division is taking place in this area. And I believe with all my heart that God does work in different ways in different people. And you don't have to agree with that.

It's not, in a sense, the law of the Medes and the Persians. But I think that O.M. and many other fellowships have been a proof that God works in different ways in different people. Just as in conversion, there are many who know the time, they know the date.

Some of them, they know the hour. In India, they often know it right down to the hour of when the Lord saved them. Probably get to Heaven to discover it was a half hour before that.

So there are many others who don't even know the time and the date of their conversion. Yet they know they're saved. They may be more sure of their own salvation and be experiencing it in a greater way than this one who knows the time and the hour.

So it is with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says in John, the wind bloweth where it will, ye hear not the sound thereof. There are many who know in a very real way that time when they had a special deep experience with the Holy Spirit.

Call it whatever they may call it. However, there are many others who may not know the time and the hour and the date, but they know that God has filled them with His Holy Spirit. One of the greatest miracles in this work is that somehow people with different viewpoints on this crucial issue have been able to function together in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you. And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. I want to ask you, are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you know the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life? We're going to see as we continue in the Book of Acts what the Holy Spirit produces.

And to me, the great evidence of the Holy Spirit is not firstly some sign. The great evidence is holiness of life. And that, by the way, is what the early Methodists stood for, and the Salvation Army, and R.A. Torrey, many who were preaching very strongly about the Holy Spirit even before the birth of the modern charismatic movement.

They believed very strongly, and many modern charismatics would agree as well, that the great mark of the invasion of the Holy Spirit into the life is holiness. We see this as we turn through the pages of the Book of Acts. As I've talked to so many people who have been on O.M., the thing that has often impressed them about their leader is his life.

I recently got some communication from someone who left O.M. in not such a very happy way. When he got back to his home country and was sharing his problems and his grievances about that particular field, he had to admit that the leader over him had the life. And among his many complaints, he didn't have any complaint about that leader because the leader had the life.

We're not going to go into detail about the whole thing of world evangelism, which is Acts 1.8, because we've done that before. We want to go on. And in case I don't get very far, let me just give you my 11

areas of reality I've found in the Book of Acts, just in case I don't get to them all, which I don't think I will looking at the watch.

These are... Did I say 11? 13. These are just 13 things that just jump out of the Book of Acts. Number one, witness and world vision.

You're going to have to study this on your own. Number two, prayer and prayer meetings. Prayer and prayer meetings.

A little more specific. And one of the most important events at this conference are the prayer meetings. And some of you leaders who have other responsibilities and are overwhelmed with things to do and you have to miss some sessions, well, try not to miss the prayer meeting.

Miss some of the other sessions. Try to get in on the prayer meetings. Number three, boldness and readiness to suffer.

Boldness and readiness to suffer. We're going to see these things. Let me just give them in advance.

Number four, the local church. I've prepared one of the strongest words ever on the subject of the local church. I had a seven-page letter attacking O.M. about our so-called neglected emphasis on the local church.

And so rather than answer the letter, I thought, you know, just one person. It's not worth all the effort. I thought I would speak on that subject and send the dear brother the tape.

So I'm looking forward to that opportunity. I don't know when it will come. But I believe there's ample proof that O.M. from its beginning has been totally linked with the local church.

I was sent out from the very beginning before I ever went to Mexico. I was prayed for and sent out by the local church in my hometown. And those men became the board.

They were part of the church. And we've seen down through the history of O.M. that one of the keys in a movement like this, there are many keys, has been our relationship with the local church. And I believe that's important.

We see that in the book of Acts. Number four. Number five, teamwork.

We see the importance of teams. And there are two main groups that we see God using in the book of Acts. The local church and teams.

To argue which came first is arguing which came first, the chicken or the egg. But it was a team of men that we can't figure out exactly where they came from who started the church at Antioch. Who then commended out the apostle Paul and others.

So we see the biblical basis of teamwork. Number six, handling problems. We see a good emphasis in the book of Acts on handling problems.

Even practical things like some not getting enough food. And murmuring among the women. I think that was linked with the food.

Then number seven, preaching. Especially the message of the resurrection. An unusual emphasis in the book of Acts on the resurrection.

Which is good, of course, biblical. Preaching the resurrection or the emphasis on preaching is what I wanted to bring out. Number eight, flexibility, mobility and adaptability.

The Bible reading at the Keswick Convention was given by Donald English. A spirit-filled, balanced Methodist. And if we had even a few dozen like him in Britain, the Methodist movement in that nation would be altered.

And some of you may not agree with this, but he brought it out and I've seen many other men of God bring it out. And it's very much, I think, what most of us in OM would sense. That there is no one pattern of leadership in the book of Acts and in the New Testament.

This is why we have major New Testament movements brought about in different sections of history with totally different leadership styles. And today, men who love Jesus Christ with all their heart and know the word of God, including the Greek and Hebrew, with totally different teaching on leadership. And one of the miracles, again in OM, is that people come in OM from all these different backgrounds of teaching about leaders and what leaders should be called, bishops, deacons, elders, overseers, shepherds.

There's about 15 other terms being used in the churches today. And somehow we manage to survive pulling our own terms like coordinator out of the bag and changing it to leader and then going back to director and then ending up in a dead-end street and starting over again. But there is no one stereotyped, easy-to-find pattern of church leadership in the book of Acts.

Number nine, the Holy Spirit, especially brought out so wonderfully in Acts 4.31, and when they prayed, the place where they were gathered together was shaken. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They went forth and spoke the Word of God with boldness.

Number ten, leadership. We see God raising up leaders. We see an emphasis on leaders.

We see leaders being appointed, whatever they may be called. Eleven, unity. Incredibly strong emphasis on unity.

Number twelve, growth. We're privileged at this conference to have the visit of one of the great authorities in the world on church growth. I guess some thought such a man would never be at an O.M. conference.

I'll tell you, if at any time you think there's a certain man that'll never be at an O.M. conference, just let me know his name. You may discover that he'll be there the next year. I can tell you there's many in extreme Calvinist that did a flip in Britain when Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones was the main speaker at the conference a couple of years ago.

This year, we're privileged to have Dr. Donald McGovern with us. We see that principle of church growth in the Book of Acts. And then thirteen, the supernatural.

There are many more principles, of course, in the Book of Acts. The emphasis on baptism cannot be neglected. And many other principles that you will see.

Now, let's see how many verses we can look at that bring forth some of these principles. In Acts 1.14, we see a number of these principles. We see the importance on the prayer meeting.

These all continue with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren. I have a special message prepared for, about the women's ministry within OM and the place of women. Again, I don't know if I'm going to get to it because we have a lot to put in to this conference.

But all how we need to understand, though they may not be always out in the forefront, there is no question that at least 50% of the whole impetus of OM has come from women. God has many ways of working. And I can tell you that without my wife and her love for Jesus Christ and her commitment and her willingness to go the extra mile, I wouldn't even be here.

And many other leaders wouldn't even be here. And those of us who are married, we are one with our wives. We are teams.

There are times when they want to be with us in a particular meeting. There are other times when they don't want to, but whether they're with us physically or not, they are with us because we are one. And we see in the book of Acts when perhaps women played even less of an outward role than in our 20th century, the importance of the ministry of prayer in the life of a woman.

This movement was born through the prayers of a woman. And some of you may know her husband, who she always submitted to, even though she was perhaps outwardly more active than him. I didn't even know hardly he existed.

He has just gone to be with the Lord. And as so often it is in these days, she continues to move forward in the ministry, especially of prayer. When I think of her own family, every one of her children, godly men or women, that is a challenge that just shakes me right to my very roots.

So we see the emphasis on prayer. We see the union of men and women together in prayer. And we see the like-mindedness.

They continued with one accord. Isn't that amazing? One of the purposes of this conference is to bring us into one accord. One of the reasons as country leaders, field leaders, we're meeting each night is to talk about areas where there's difficulty, where there's some differences of opinion, and to pray together and to be brought into this kind of like-mindedness.

Then in chapter 2, we have, of course, Pentecost. As you know, part of the controversy about the Holy Spirit is that some feel that this Pentecost experience, as it is outlined here, must happen again and again in every believer. Others feel strongly and expound that this was a historical experience.

And now that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, it's a matter of appropriating what you already have and of being filled with the Spirit. It's interesting that even in verse 4, it uses that terminology. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

And they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews devout men out of every nation under heaven. Isn't that amazing? We think we have an international delegation.

I think we can have quite a controversy if we wanted to be higher critics on this every nation under heaven because I don't think every, what's the term they're using these days? People group was represented in that meeting. And I think there's a number of places in Scripture where we have to understand what is

being said in the context of that culture. I don't think the Aztec Indian tribe was represented in that meeting or other peoples, but at least as far as that world was known in that day in the context of that culture, every nation under heaven was there.

Of course, no one really knows who was there. So who knows? Some people may have been there from distant places that we never dreamed of. That God could bring such a wide range of people into unity is one of the greatest miracles in the New Testament.

And then in Acts chapter 2, the last verses which we often expound even in the general conference, we find at least 50% of those principles emphasized in those verses. Church growth. 3,000 people converted on the one day.

Verse 47. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. One of the extremist things that comes in when we emphasize or overemphasize local church is that soon the local church becomes almost God.

And everything is thought of in terms of that local church. This is what the Witness Lee Movement has done. Where all spiritual life, everything is measured in terms of the local church.

This movement has just spread to England. And when I finished my message at the Keswick tent, they were at the door. Five of them to charge at me.

Not because I said anything at Keswick, but because I have said some things about this extremist movement which some classify as a cult. I tend to think of it as an extremist Christian group who have this overemphasis. So the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Many other principles are brought out in that important passage. The unselfishness of these believers as they sold their possessions. The unity, the sound doctrine, the worship, the prayer brought out in verse 42.

We don't want to just teach these things. We want to see this kind of reality operating in our midst. We long for this.

We have seen much of it. We can see more. And I trust you'll study that more on your own.

Then going on to chapter 3, of course, we have the emphasis on the supernatural. And if we take that out of the book of Acts, we don't have much left. It's one of the most difficult areas today, let's face it, the supernatural.

Because some have been so determined to see the supernatural that they have created it. One of the earliest young men I ever was involved in discipling, 24 years ago. His name was Peter.

He was growing in the Lord. He was very shy. Little did I dream he'd eventually go in the Air Force and study to be a lawyer and is now the Deputy District Attorney in one of America's cities.

Only now beginning to rethink spiritual things as we met together a year ago or so. But he shared with me how eventually he decided to throw the whole Christian thing. He went to a healing meeting and he couldn't believe what was going on.

He went behind the tent and he saw people who had been healed, paid off for their act. As was seen in the Jim Jones film, which if we can get our video equipment together, we're hoping to show you part one of

the Jim Jones, Jonestown Crisis film. This just so shook his faith that he overthrew the Christian position.

It's my prayer that somehow in this conference there will be some messages on the area of apologetics. And if some of you leaders have something on apologetics, I'd like to know it because it has been a weak link in some of our conferences. And we have people in our midst who are doubting basic things about the Christian faith.

We have a number of XOMers, praise God, not many, but some who have gone into agnosticism, who have denied the Christian faith. And I believe in some cases it's because they were not given enough answers to their intellectual questions. More often that is not the case.

It's more subjective and more complicated. But praise God for men like Dr. Schaeffer, and we never forget when he was with us for three days at a time once, who are willing to give honest answers to honest questions. I think of the number of people that have in fact turned away from Christian groups in America because of the Jonestown Crisis.

They just felt that that group, which might have been a good Christian group, maybe with a few extremes, they turned away from it for fear. It was just all the same thing. Let us understand that today in the midst of much evangelism, even in North America, there is a tremendous kickback taking place.

There's a tremendous reaction. People putting on stickers on their cars to counter, here's life stickers, or to counter, I found it stickers. Everybody was putting I found it stickers on their cars.

And this tremendous kickback against all this, people put stickers on their cars. I was sharing with you last night how I'm reading right now in church history the birth of the free church in Britain. And it was actually secular writers who tore some of the bishops apart that brought the church into such discredit in that day, which in one sense helped the birth of the free church, but in the other sense brought, of course, a loss of reality within the existing church.

Incredible history. Incredible piece of history. We see the supernatural in the book of Acts.

And though there are extremes, though there is misuse, though it has become one of the most complex problems today for the really sincere young man who wants the best from God, we must not allow the supernatural to be taken out of our faith. The miraculous can take place and does take place. And to keep that in balance, well, I can't think of anything more difficult.

It's one I've been working on for two and a half decades. Peter didn't have any silver or gold, verse 6, but he had power and he said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And, of course, that's exactly what happened.

Another emphasis in the book of Acts that I don't even think I gave you in that list, as I said it was a partial list, is the emphasis on repentance. Verse 19, repent therefore, this is in Peter's sermon, his second sermon, repent therefore and be converted that your sins be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. I think this is another area where God in His mercy has given us the balance to preach repentance and yet not to say no one is converted unless they know specifically of that moment when there's been deep conviction and definite repentance.

I think we've acknowledged, I hope we'll continue to acknowledge that God is working in such a wide range of ways. There are people who are beautifully converted who were not overly aware of the

conviction of sin and repentance at that particular moment. Probably were more afterward.

I have always been blessed by the ministry of George Duncan. He came to Moody when I was a student. No one could minister in a different style from my own ministry than George Duncan.

That's why it's so refreshing. He's very short, he's very quiet. He's a Scotsman.

I'm not sure what he and I have in common except Jesus and quite a few principles of God's word. And being with him and fellowshiping with him personally at Keswick and I know he would love to be at one of our conferences was very, very refreshing. And he said something that I'll never forget.

He said there's only one way to God, that's Jesus Christ. But he said there's many ways to Jesus Christ. And how true that is.

A Hindu converted in India through looking at a gospel text. People that have been converted like a Presbyterian minister converted here in Germany and became a very Bible-believing Presbyterian leader in New Jersey because he got converted walking by a church here in Germany and when he heard the bell toll in this church and this is something very normal in Germany is the tolling of bells. By the way, when I heard, you know, Mosbox, a small town, I started to think in terms of a small English village.

For those of you of English background, I think you will consider that this place is more like a medium-sized metropolis. 26,000 people in all the industry and everything in Germany it takes to keep 26,000 going. I was certainly surprised at the size of the place.

But he was converted walking by a church hearing the church bell. And as I have especially listened to so many conversion stories over the years, I have been amazed the way people come to Christ. One way to God, Jesus Christ.

He said, I am the way, the truth and the life. But there are many ways to Jesus and in a sense there are many ways to spiritual reality. There's a noisy way.

There's the emotional way. There's the quiet way. And this is also true in almost every aspect of spiritual life and spiritual leadership.

Needless to say, there is an emphasis on repentance in the preaching of the early church. And then we see in chapter 4 the emphasis on persecution, on suffering, how they were beaten and yet even after they were beaten they went back and preached the gospel. Verse 42, chapter 5. Daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to preach and teach Jesus Christ.

And oh, there's something we've just got to reaffirm in our hearts in these days together. And that's this whole issue that we as leaders, if the Holy Spirit is filling us and working in us, we are going to be involved in evangelism. Even Stephen, who was chosen to be a practical man there in chapter 6 and how much we could learn in chapter 6, it's a chapter we could expound easily at any leadership conference.

The main leaders wanted to give themselves more to prayer and the word and so they chose seven men. Verse 3, of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, just as we've been emphasizing this morning and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.

And so they were chosen. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. And yet Stephen, the first thing he does as a practical worker behind the scenes is go out and take an open air meeting and he never did get to serve many tables.

Praise God for the tremendous emphasis on Lagos right now, on evangelism and getting out into the open air and in other forms of evangelism. Don't immediately come into a guilt trip because you're a practical person and you haven't been out in open air because I'm sure not everybody is a Stephen. But certainly you cannot read the book of Acts without seeing this emphasis on evangelism, on getting out.

It probably for many of you will not be the major thing you're doing. Some of you of course are already in the position of those men who have to give themselves much to prayer and the word and the oversight of your particular field. But to take evangelism out of the leader's life would leave you a long way from the book of Acts.

And I know in my own life that one of the things that has helped me to continue functioning realistically is to get out regularly in different kinds of evangelism. Some of the greatest blessings I've had this year have been out in the door-to-door work. Among other things, it's so humbling.

And I need all the humility I can get because it's far from one of my strong points. I don't even claim to understand it. But to get away from the OM people and from those who esteem you as a leader and go out on the doors and have the doors slammed in your face or be considered a religious cult or receive abuse in other ways standing on the street corners trying to witness for Jesus Christ is one of the best experiences we can have.

And it will help us stay out of OM unreality which comes in many different forms. When do we close? I'm mixed up on the time. Oh, thank you.

I was thinking for a minute. It was 20 after. I still have 23 after 9. I've got to change this watch.

Captain Isaacson gave me this and I don't know how to work it. One of these modern watches. Maybe someone knows.

Anyway, it's 9.24 in London and 10.24 here. And so we have chapter 6 with so many of these principles emphasized. And notice the kind of church growth they had.

Verse 1, the number of disciples was multiplied. Verse 7, the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem. Though I keep preaching this every year, every year as OMers we go back and make the same mistake.

I'm not that bothered by it but I still hold fast that I don't think we should say when a man makes a profession of faith that he has been converted. I don't think we should say seven people were saved last night in the meeting simply because seven people went forward and had some kind of counseling. I believe this is to diminish the meaning of the word saved.

It's already a difficult word as it is. And until there is some evidence of fruit in a person's life, I think we need to be cautious about what we claim. Not the number of decisions multiplied in Jerusalem but the number of disciples.

At least use the word decision. If 10 people made a decision, OK. I generally when I say that clarify what I mean.

I feel in so much of what we communicate today we need a few extra sentences to clarify what we mean. There's nothing wrong with counting people. I think it's the open air campaigners who have this motto that we count people because people count.

That's helpful. People do count. But we can get so caught up with statistics.

Of course there's a danger that we'll move into the other extreme and we'll always be afraid to try to get anyone to make a decision for Jesus Christ. And of course there's danger in that direction as well. Decisions as we've discovered again this summer especially in some countries like for example Columbia are easy to get.

But disciples, not so. And that must be our goal. As hard as it may be.

So Stephen went forth making disciples. In chapter 8 we have that beautiful example of personal evangelism on the part of Philip. It was so encouraging to be in a worship meeting Sunday morning in the local church.

I wasn't ministering, I was just there worshiping and breaking bread. And one of the elders, I believe he was an elder in that assembly shared how God had just given him the opportunity to lead some other people personally to Jesus Christ. I tell you, that's encouraging.

Went around the breaking of bread service some dear elderly saint and he was well on. Bubbling over like a little kid. Child.

Because he's just had the privilege of leading someone to Jesus Christ. I don't believe he was trying to just get attention. It's difficult.

Sometimes if you get caught up in the motivation thing to say anything. Because there's always a fear someone's going to think you're boasting. Well, if you get into that mentality you'll never want to study the Apostle Paul.

Because you'll think he's the most vain boaster you've ever read about. And one of the favorite targets of liberal Christians has been the Apostle Paul. Whole books exposing Paul.

And liberals taught that Paul, some liberals, twisted the whole Christian faith. It's never been the same since. Unbelievable.

There are whole books written countering that argument as well. And Paul's so-called boasting must be understood in the context of his concern for the churches. His concern for unity.

His concern to keep people from false doctrine. Even so he was willing to in a sense lay open his whole life in order to bring people back to truth. And to keep them from wandering into heresy.

What a beautiful thing. What a beautiful thing. When a man can be on in years and still have that love for souls.

That to me is the mark of Joy Ridderhoff. The founder of the gospel recordings movement. She's really getting to the end of our road.

Her health is gone. And yet I saw her in California seven, eight months ago. She had some special treatment.

She's turned over the leadership to a young man, Larry Allman. And that work continues to go on. We had a tremendous sort of half day of prayer with him.

And one of the things that marks her as she ran the race right to the end. An organizer, an administrator. Unbelievable what she did in administration.

She was always out winning souls. I wonder if there's a leader here this morning. If you're honest, you've given up personally trying to lead people to Jesus Christ.

You don't think that's your thing. You feel you're behind the scenes, man. You're an administrator.

You've got a teacher. And so many Christians I meet who are gifted, they feel their job is to teach the saints. Very few feel called to evangelism.

In fact, one leading evangelist told me that evangelism and the art of evangelism is dying. It's dying. I don't believe that.

And I'm convinced that no matter what our job is, that God wants us to have a personal interest in people. What about your own relatives? You're going to refuse the opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to lead one of your own relatives to Jesus Christ because you don't feel personal evangelism is your gift? What about your own children if they ask you how to be saved? You're going to say to them, well, personal evangelism is my gift. I'm an administrator.

I teach only believers. Son, you become a Christian down the road and then I'll teach you. Little Johnny said, but Daddy, I want to be saved right now.

Not now. No. That's not my gift.

All of us, to one degree or the other, can be involved in personal evangelism. And we see that in the book of Acts. We see it in Philip as he was miraculously led in his experience with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Notice also the wide range of ways that God works in the book of Acts. It's almost impossible to even describe. They did all just rush out, overwhelmed with a burden for world evangelism.

And one of the areas that God has had to really help me is trying to understand people and understanding the church. And not thinking that the church today is so, so far from what it was in the New Testament. This is often the marks of an extremist group that they more or less paint all the churches today as being 100 miles from the New Testament.

And their church is the New Testament church. That is generally false. And if you follow their new New Testament church, you'll discover within, usually about 5 or 10 years, they get a lot of the same problems, the same nonsense, including the immorality, that the churches they initially condemned.

And I'm not talking now about heretical churches and modernist and liberal churches, but I'm talking about evangelical churches that may be having their struggles and may not be alive as this person may think life comes. And to think that all the people in the book of Acts were all just automatically rushing off to evangelize the world. They were all just so alive and they all had world vision.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. You haven't read your New Testament. And in fact, to get a lot of these people out preaching the word, God had to allow persecution.

Verse 3, As for Saul, who became Paul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, hailing men and women, committed them to prison. It's persecution that started a lot of the evangelism and the church growth. They didn't have a world congress on evangelism.

They had a world catastrophe of persecution. And that's not saying, I don't say that to put down world congresses on evangelism. But you can go to congresses and conferences, including this one, the rest of your life, and because you're a person, a normal earthbound human being, God may have to use circumstances to get you going.

Isn't he gracious? He has plan 1, go yourself. Plan 2, you'll go anyway. So we read verse 4, Therefore they were scattered abroad.

They went everywhere preaching the word. Do you think all the Indians witnessing for Jesus Christ in the Persian Gulf got scattered to the Persian Gulf because they met in a night of prayer and the Lord thrust them out to Kuwait? I will dare tell you the Indians are in the Persian Gulf because of economic problems in India and family problems and millions and tens of millions unemployed and a lot of money and a lot of jobs in the Gulf and so they went. And when they got there, the Lord used them.

There's many a man that's got out of God's will. I'm not saying all those people are out of God's will. I'm saying only half.

There's many men who got out of God's will and yet when he got to where he was, out of God's will, God used him. And it's so beautiful to see how God can often work through our failures. There's many a church thriving today that was born out of division.

That's right. Born out of personality clashes. It wasn't a great prayer meeting and they sense the Lord is leading us to go down the road and plant a new church.

Many churches were not born that way. They were born in the midst of conflict, personality, division. But when the church got started and especially when they're willing to acknowledge failure, they don't always, the Lord blessed.

God is working even through man's folly. They went everywhere preaching the Word of God. One of the things I so want us to see this morning is the wide range of ways that God works.

You know it bothers me when I hear of leaders who have been on OM for a couple of years and then they leave OM and they're working with some other group and they're not able to adjust to their new job. Because they took with them some of the OM fetishes. Some of the little holy cows of OM.

And they didn't have the flexibility. They didn't have the adaptability. Now here again, we're all different and I'm not asking people to compromise deep convictions.

And let's remember some of the convictions that keep people from working with others when they leave OM are not convictions they got from OM. They're convictions they had before they ever came with us. I tried to explain to some Christian leaders in some missions who wonder why they don't get more XOMers in their particular mission.

I said, look, a lot of the young people who come into OM, the kind of movement we are, are not the kind who would ever end up in your type of mission. It has nothing to do with OM. If anything, we probably would help some maybe end up in your mission.

Many people, and you need to understand this as a leader, are already set in many of their convictions before they ever get to us. This is why it's so good that I don't know so many of the things that happen on OM during the year. I mean, I just, when I pick up some of the stuff that happens, I just, it just, if I couldn't go out and play another nine holes of golf, I think I'd weep.

This is why I've had to in my middle years do more relaxing things. I cannot handle it. The things that happen in this work.

It is so upsetting. And I have come to the place where really, before God, I have given this work to Jesus. The way some people witness in OM.

Some of the methods used are obnoxious. The way some people sell books. If I had to watch it or televise it, I think I would just, you know, I don't know what I would do.

And I've seen that this is normal. Every spiritual movement will be filled with this kind of difficulty. We are not going to force everyone to use the same method.

We're not going to force everyone to do anything. We, of course, continually try to improve. That's why we have conferences like this.

But ultimately, a lot of people before they ever get to OM, they have their way. They have their vocabulary. They have their convictions.

We will change some of them, especially if they stay around a while. We trust the Holy Spirit will change some of them. Not into conformity to what we believe, but into conformity with the Word of God.

And that whatever they do, it will be with love, and it will be with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. But we're not going to change all of them. And it's exciting to see how God can work, even through our failures.

I thought of something just the other day. I think I've said it for the first time, that in some ways working among Indians in England is the worst possible preparation to work in India with Operation Mobilization. That's a new one for you, isn't it? Write that one down.

Let's wait. Ooh, he just lost half his team. Not really, because the work in England, the work among Indians is totally justified, one million percent totally apart from OM India.

Those people need Christ. But the fact is that in England, we are dealing with a totally different mentality among the Indian people. And in one way, we're dealing with a certain type of Indian.

And the main thing, and we're very good at getting the Word of God out. It's our strongest point in our work. But getting these people to actually become devout followers of Jesus Christ in the midst of the British cultural situation is ten times more difficult than the work we're doing in India, where there's just such far greater scope and far greater opportunity.

And someone who may fail to be a dynamic soul winner among Punjabis in Southall might be the most valuable team member on a team banging in the back of the truck in Bihar. And I pray if you find someone

discouraged in their work among immigrants that you in no way will allow them, therefore, to think they could not be used in India. I personally don't think I could work among immigrants in Britain.

I don't think that's my calling. I don't have enough patience. I don't have enough of whatever you need for that kind of work.

But I'm sure that I could function in India and have a ministry and see many come to Jesus Christ. I've already seen it. And it's so important, and this is a little sideline and our time is really up.

It's so important to find people in this conference as they come in next week who may be discouraged and not allow that to totally cause them to think they cannot go to this field or that field or do this work or do that work. Because there's such a wide range of the kinds of work we're involved in. God worked in a wide range of ways here in the book of Acts.

We've only just begun to get a glimpse. Later on we get into some of the problem solving. And when you get into the epistles, which are closely linked with the book of Acts, and find that most of the epistles are written to correct error and problems, then we will not be surprised if in these days together we have to spend a fair amount of time, especially as main leaders, correcting problems, discussing things.

I would prefer to be out in evangelism, out taking meetings among new people, my own preference, than sitting in three hour field leader sessions discussing problems. But from the book of Acts I have learned that the coming together of leaders, like the Jerusalem meeting and many other meetings in the book of Acts, are part of New Testament Christian faith. It's not just in the marketplace that the New Testament church functioned in power but it was in the conference room.

It was in the Jerusalem meetings and in the controversial sessions they had and in situations that Paul found himself in when he was sort of not accepted by the other Christian leaders. That we can know something of New Testament Christian living. I challenge you to study the book of Acts and those principles that we've outlined.

Our Father we thank you for the reality we see in the book of Acts. We thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit and we long for that to be our reality. We thank you that we can walk in the Spirit and therefore not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Do not allow us to just be caught up with this thing of leadership but first of all to be caught up with yourself. Help us Lord to see the wide range of ways that you work even in the very earliest churches when things were incredibly simple compared to what they are today and to give us the broad mindedness and yet the narrow mindedness at the same time to walk your road in compassion and love. God we thank you that this unity we see in these pages can be ours.

We thank you that this unselfishness we read about can be ours. This spirit of evangelism this reality in prayer can be ours. This willingness to deal and battle with problems can be ours.

And all these other Biblical principles Oh Lord we praise you for the way you work through men through women in the book of Acts and we look forward to that in our own lives.

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