

# Crisis

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, grace, and forgiveness in navigating crises in life.*

**Duration:** 1:07:51

**Scripture:** Exodus 14:17, 2 Samuel 11:1-4, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:36, Mark 4:1-20, Acts 12:5, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Crisis"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the Christian life as a life of grace, not driven by the law or false guilt. He encourages believers to rest in the Lord and cast their burdens upon Him. The preacher also highlights the need to respond to crises, such as the death of people in the snow, with love, humility, and prayer. He warns against being indifferent and encourages the development of a sanctified imagination to find ways to help in difficult situations. The sermon also touches on the parable of the sower and the different responses to the Gospel, emphasizing the importance of genuine belief and surrender to Christ.

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## Transcript

Let us pray. Our God, we just praise your name for the privilege of giving. We thank you that it is more blessed to give than receive, and we thank you that that's not a cliché, but a divine burning reality in our hearts and our lives.

As we long to give more and more and more, to accomplish your purposes, to send your gospel across the world, and we look to you to direct and guide us, even during this Christmas season, that we may know what it is to walk with you in the power of the Holy Spirit through this unique time of the year. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I praise the Lord for the privilege of being back with you again. This has sort of been a regular occurrence now the last 15 or 20 years. I also want to thank you for all of your help and prayers in connection with the visit of Lagos II.

It's hard to believe that ship right now has just arrived in West Africa, and will be ministering in West Africa for a couple of months. It was a very good response in Spain and in the Canary Islands and also in the Azores, very, very unreached Portuguese-speaking islands, with very, very little witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are also some disappointments, as Dulas has not been able to right now go to Vietnam, has

had an extra port in Thailand, is now going on to another port in Malaysia.

Do keep praying that in God's timing, we may be able to get one of the ships back into Vietnam. Many other things that are on my heart to share. We've also brought just a few extra books since you have such a great book exhibition.

We literally in about 8 minutes grabbed a few extra books and put them in a suitcase. And especially a relatively new book that in my life has been the most significant book in the last 10 years or so. And I read a lot of books.

It's a book called The Grace Awakening. It's been my conviction for a long time that one of the greatest problems in my own ministry of Operation Mobilization has been the lack of grace, God's grace working through people, whether they're under pressure, whether they're in their own country, or whether they're witnessing off in India or China. And I just got so excited as I read this book.

In fact, I called the president of the company and asked him if he could give me a good deal if I bought 1,000 copies, which he agreed to. And so we have a lot of copies of this book. And if you get this book, and it's just been published, in America you can't even get it in paperback.

You've got to pay 7 pounds sterling to get this book. And it's selling so fast, they won't put it in paperback. But in Britain, since Charles Swindoll, the author, isn't so well known, they bypass the hardback and put it in paperback.

Grace Awakening is about God's grace toward us, salvation by grace, and all that that means. And then what does that mean as we become ministers of grace? Instead of ministers of the law, Galatians, trapped back under the law, what does it mean to have a ministry of grace? And I'm excited about this book, sending it to Christian leaders all over the world. So this is your opportunity.

If you get this book, if it doesn't bless you, I will be very embarrassed. You can write to me, I will apologize and send you 20 free books with my apology. So that's a little bit of a risk.

Of course, you have to read it, and we trust you to be honest. So Grace Awakening is the book of the evening. And whatever book you get, on any one of the book displays, we'd like you to pick up free of charge.

These little prayer cards are actually worth over a pound fifty these days, but we want to give you a set of these free. These cards present 50 or 60 of the most needy, forgotten countries in the world, unreached areas of the world. Many of them are Muslim countries.

They're taken from this book, Operation World, and I would ask prayer for Patrick Johnson's wife, Jill, who is extremely ill and in hospital right now. She's actually pressing on with a children's edition of Operation World. He's pressing on with a new edition of Operation World.

We have a few copies of this, this great missionary church. I'm sure most of you already have five copies. But if you don't have one, you can get one, or at least these little prayer cards you can pick up free with any other book that you purchase.

Another great burden that has been on my heart lately is the subject of forgiveness. I've been counseling people, writing to people, who are having trouble forgiving people. And this seems to be much more

common than I ever envisaged.

Now, I have so many problems in my life, I can't have them all. Praise God. And I've never had too much problem forgiving people.

But I still am reading this book because I want to learn more, even on areas where I may think I'm strong, because I don't trust myself. This is a book about forgiveness. Again, it sold a huge number of copies in its original hardback edition.

Two hundred thousand, actually. Now you can pay a fraction of that and get the same book. Luis Smitty's book, *Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*.

Have you ever been hurt and you felt you didn't deserve it? Ever? There's a book just for you. So that's available in this new paperback edition. I actually had to bring those over from the States in my suitcase because you can't get this book in this country.

Another great book that we're pushing in our ministry is Gordon McDonald's *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. So many people in our society have had broken world experiences. Do you know that for Christmas, many people will have mainly pain? Do you know that? Because Christmas is a time of terrible memories.

A woman I just had lunch with this week on Boxing Day a few years ago, just married, a wonderful marriage, so in love with this man it would be hard to put it into terms. On Boxing Day, they slid on the ice in Sweden and he was crushed to death in front of her. How's she going to handle Boxing Day? Think it's going to be all mince pies and a big smile? It's going to be painful.

A lot of people have had broken world experiences. Here's a book that you could give someone that might help them battle through a painful Christmas. *Rebuilding Your Broken World*.

A new book about world missions. *Priority One. The Lagos story*.

The amazing story. I just wrote my first letter to John Major this week. I was always writing Maggie.

The last book I ever sent her was called *Faith in the Dark* and I'm sure she's got time to read it now. So, I sent her this book as well, *Lagos Story*, and I sent it to John Major this week. Probably he won't have time to read it, but maybe he'll pass it on to someone who's interested in ships.

It's amazing how any jerk can send anybody a great book. How many of you send out books to people? Give books away. Good, good, that's great.

So, pick up a few extra copies of this, because we don't want to carry them back to London, and give them away. And you will find you have a ministry through giving away books. Now, there's a lot of other literature that there's not time to mention.

There's the *Lagos for children*. A new report about *Love Europe*, just off the press. What did God do this summer? Some of you are praying about getting involved in *Love Europe*.

Bristol was part of *Love Europe*. And you may want to pick up the new *Love Europe Leaflet 91* and get involved in this important event. And there's a reprint of a Christian news article about the visit that was referred to tonight of *Lagos II to Eastern Europe*.

Quite an amazing story. Thank you for praying. Operation Mobilization.

There's now 2,000 of us full-time. It's your ministry. It's not easy to find churches like this that go into sort of an in-depth, ongoing partnership with a missionary fellowship.

And I know that it's not easy to find the balance between ministry at home, ministry in the church, ministry around the world. It will always be a struggle. But I praise God for your great efforts in that area.

I was really crying out to the Lord as to what I should share with you this evening. And the Lord put it on my heart to speak to you on the subject of crisis. How do we as God's people respond to what's happening in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq right now? Now, we have been responding.

I hope so, because the worst thing as God's people is to be indifferent. And we realize that many of those hostages, the remaining hostages, hopefully, some of them are on their way back right now, landing out in the airports. Others will be back in the coming days for Christmas.

Now, brothers and sisters, maybe you don't see it this way, but I believe we have again seen a clear-cut answer to prayer in bringing these people back. A lot of prayer has been going on. One of the very first hostages ever to be released was a young man, the son of a missionary to Bangladesh.

I knew him. He was the first one to be released. And there were more people praying for that young man than probably any of the other hostages.

You say, ah, just coincidence. It's okay. If you say it's coincidence, I can relate to you.

Because I'm also skeptic. I'm a cynic. I'm a doubting Thomas.

I don't know how I ever got saved in the first place. And God is very merciful with me. That's why I appreciate this book about grace.

Because that's what it is in my life. It's just God's grace. There may be someone here tonight, you have a big crisis.

Your crisis you may not be aware of. You may not be aware of. Your crisis is that you're going to hell.

It's a pretty big one, isn't it? That's the last thing you want to admit because you feel that's old-fashioned religion that went out with the last century. But Jesus Christ spoke of hell. The Bible speaks of hell.

And if you're here tonight and you've not experienced God's forgiveness and God's grace through what was done on the cross, then you're on the broad road. You're on the road to hell. And the only answer to your crisis is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Now, I come here about once every year and a half. I have a great privilege.

Only a few churches in the whole of Britain can extend me this privilege. One is Worthing Tabernacle in Worthing, which makes sense. And the other is Pippin Jay.

This special privilege is that I have an open invitation, provided there's not some other guest speaker that everybody's waiting to hear. I have an open invitation to phone up and come here to preach. Isn't that humbling? And I only discovered I had this night free about 10 days ago.

And we phoned up and here I am. And Malcolm went off to preach somewhere in the jungle or in Wales. He's probably stuck in a snow drift.

We need to pray for those who are in that crisis. But I know every time I come here, there are some people who are new. So maybe I could just share my own testimony.

I didn't fly in Concord from New York just to take this meeting. I've been in England for the last 28 years. I haven't learned a language because if I did, my children would all accuse me of being a phony.

And I've got enough problems without that one. So I continue with my original language. But it was 30 years ago that God sent my wife and I to Spain after a time in Mexico.

The Lord then sent me to the Soviet Union where I was arrested by the secret police. And it was through that fiasco and a lot of other interesting things that God sent me to Britain. Still trying to figure out how it all happened.

But to understand really what's happened, you need to go back to Madison Square Garden, New York City, March 4th, 1955, the year they emphasize in that film Back to the Future. I went there partly out of curiosity to hear Billy Graham. I wasn't a Christian.

I was a skeptic. My parents were not Christians. My grandfather was an atheist from the Netherlands.

My father was a materialist from the Netherlands, though he was beginning to seek God. And a lady had put my name on her hit list. There's a little bit about this story in the book Lagos Story.

She put my name on her prayer list and she began to pray for me, not only that I would be converted, but that I would become a missionary. Imagine that. No discussion.

No dialogue. Just name it. Claim it.

And then she sent me a Gospel of John through the post. And as I read this Gospel, God really spoke to my heart. I was only 16 years of age, just about to be 17, just about to go up to university.

And then Billy Graham came to New York City just one night. We know a lot of people that go forward in a Billy Graham meeting are not dynamically converted. Billy Graham explains this.

The New Testament explains this. The wheat and the tares. Actually, my friend Matthew Elliott, who you can meet at the book table, was at a church this morning where they baptized someone who made a commitment to Christ in the Billy Graham meeting in London.

So people are converted in these meetings. But we know for others it's just a mental ascent. We know the wheat is with the tares.

We know also that some seed, after it falls into the ground, brings fruit. Other seed is snatched or destroyed or there's the deceitfulness of riches. It's quite amazing.

Quite a good parable. I recommend it. It's in the New Testament.

But that night when I heard Billy Graham preaching the Gospel, I believed with all my heart. I believed and I surrendered to Christ and the grace of God expressed on Calvary exploded in my heart and I can share without exaggeration that that saving grace which saved me from my sin that night and began to save me

from myself has been a reality every single day ever since. Not in the absence of problems and struggles and tears and doubts and precipice walks with agnosticism but in the midst of those things.

Any of you struggle with doubts? I heard from some Christians that in their church you weren't allowed to talk about doubt. Good way to get a nervous breakdown. Praise God we don't have to pretend.

And great faith is not in the absence of doubt or questions or heartaches or tears. It's often in the midst of those things. So I'm here tonight by the grace of God.

I think since the last time I was here I became a grandfather. That's always an amazing event. Yes, it's great to be a little bit older because for years in my life I couldn't even get in churches because I was written off as just a big pile of Yankee youthful zeal.

Some of the greatest churches in this country I still can't get in the door. They're waiting until I get a little older, a little more mature. I think some of them are waiting until I'm less loud.

People get bothered by my loudness. I was speaking in a church in, where was it? Cambridge, yeah it was a funny church, round church. And I got a little note.

Dear sir, you don't need to shout. We Anglicans are not deaf. Well they may not be deaf but most of them behave like they're deaf.

So perhaps sometimes I should shout. I long for revival. And I pray for more freedom of the Holy Spirit.

And I thank God for this church and the freedom that you have in Jesus Christ. Maybe occasionally you go over the top. How can you be free in Christ and not occasionally go over the top? Glory to God.

You can always crawl back again, repent and start over. And I just praise God for this witness among all these sailors. And usually when I come here I meet people from different countries who are on these ships.

I just think that ministry is so important. Now as I wanted to speak to you on the subject of crisis, a number of other crises came to my mind that are recorded in the Word of God. We read about one.

We could point out a hundred crises. We read about Peter. He was in prison.

How did the church respond to the crisis? Prayer. So that's lesson one. Prayer.

Prayer meeting. And Peter was released. But I want to go back into the Old Testament and look at something a little more intense.

You heard that story about President Bush. President Bush got to heaven and he wanted to talk to Moses because he heard and knew that Moses was very heavy on Middle East affairs and Sinai fighting. So he sent this angel over to Moses and tried to book an appointment.

And Moses sent a note back to President Bush and said he wouldn't speak to him. Bush was really quite shocked. Sent a note back, don't you know who I am? I'm the President of the United States.

Moses sent another note back saying he wouldn't speak to him because the last time he got involved with the Bush he spent 40 years in the wilderness. But I'd like us to go back and I think I've got a little bit of a crisis because I've lost my way. I'd like us to go back to the book of Exodus.

The book of Exodus. The crossing of the Red Sea. And we don't have time to go into all the plagues and Pharaoh's decision to let the people go but we want to look at verse 17.

Just help me, I've got to find my way here. I took my marker out. I want to read where Pharaoh let the people go and they got to the Red Sea but then Pharaoh pursued them.

You find that for me. 14. Did you say 14? In what verse? Here it is.

He took 600 chariots. Let's try verse 7 for size. He took 600 of the best chariots along with all the other chariots of Egypt with the officers over all of them.

And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so he pursued the Israelites who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops, pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi-Har-Hirath opposite Baal-Siphum. And Pharaoh approached the Israelites, looked up, and there the Egyptians were marching after them.

And they were terrified and cried out to the Lord. Now here's a response to the crisis. Normal response, right? They were terrified.

They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. And they said, Moses, was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us here in the desert to die? They were terrified and they panicked and they began to turn against their own leader. What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? That's another thing we do when we get in a crisis.

Blame the leader. Look for a scapegoat. Leave us alone.

Let us serve the Egyptians. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert. Moses answered the people, Do not be afraid.

Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.

The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still. Let's just pray again.

Lord, you know our hearts. You know our needs tonight. We're all different.

We thank you for your grace. We thank you for the gift of salvation. And oh Father, if there's someone here tonight that has never experienced this salvation may they take that step of faith even this very evening.

Help us Lord to know how to be more Christian, more intelligent, more mature the next time a crisis breaks into our life or as we face the crisis situations across the world. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now I'm sure there's some of you that may be facing a crisis at this time in your life. Maybe a health crisis. Maybe the sudden death of a loved one.

Especially an unconverted loved one can be an extreme crisis to say the least. Maybe unemployment has hit you. Maybe there's a broken relationship or a massive misunderstanding.

And I want to share just some thoughts from 35 years of what God has been teaching me in the battle about dealing with crisis. I faced a few. Like when I received a phone call that this ship that I had given a

large part of my effort and time to for 17 years was sinking off the coast of South America.

Or the phone call I received a few months ago that this new purpose-built warehouse one of the largest literature warehouses in the world suddenly was on fire and burning to the ground. We had just moved our main literature operation STL from Bromley Kent where it had been since the mid-60s up to Carlisle to save money on housing. Somehow either some vandals set the place alight we haven't been able to prove that or something else happened in the part of the warehouse that we were renting out because we didn't need it yet.

We had only paid for 80% of this warehouse. A fire started and probably the biggest fire of Christian books in the history of the church took place. Some publishers like Kingsway lost everything they had true of STL publishers as well.

Fortunately, unlike in the ship situation we had very big insurance and everything was more than covered. In our work with 2,000 people spread out across the world we figure a crisis a week. And now with a fax machine together with a telex machine and a telephone mine's down there on the pew, I turned it off during this hour of preaching we can figure that every week we have something big to wrestle with.

It was about a year ago one of our young men working among Afghan refugees suddenly disappeared. Though we have mobilized prayer all over the world for this young man, John Tarswell he's never been found his wife gave birth to his third son shortly after his disappearance and is living in the midst of a perpetual crisis. I remember being at a conference about the same time we were facing a crisis of two young men killed in front of a hospital in Bangladesh when a truck went out of control and ran them down, just a freak weird accident.

At that same time I was with one of the leaders of OMF who had to pick up from the telephone that someone had been stabbed to death by a burglar in the Philippines. Now actually as I look out across the world the disappearance of one person like John Tarswell the death of two in Bangladesh the loss of a ship when there was no loss of life doesn't really seem like that big a crisis. Now it is because I know those people so it's closer to me.

What I'm going to be appealing for tonight is something that is not possible unless you are a spiritually mature person. It's not possible unless you're willing to become a visionary become a missionary become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a brilliant book on the table called True Discipleship.

You might want to pick it up. Now in 30 languages it's almost a classic. Because the crisis that I want to speak about tonight are crises that are not so near us.

Therefore we are not able to feel them very much. We watch it on television we hear about it but in fact we don't feel it very deeply. Now some people do and I'm going to touch on that in a few moments as I speak about how we as individuals respond to crises.

Because we certainly respond in different ways. And this is where to me the message of grace is so important. Because so easily in our failure to understand God's grace in another person we become judgmental of them when they are in a time of crisis.

We're shaking, we're weeping over something they seem very blasé we get angry and we lay a guilt trip on them. I think for example of the crisis of the Middle East that we are facing right now. I've ministered in Kuwait many times.

Not quite as many times as Pip and Jay but certainly quite a few times. I actually spent Christmas in Kuwait once living in the back of a bus trying to get a visa through Saudi Arabia that very place where those soldiers are to minister down in Dubai and in Oman and then go over to Pakistan. So I'm very familiar with that part of the world and very concerned for some of my friends had to run for their lives out of Kuwait.

Some of them spent quite some time there at the border trying to get into Jordan. We responded to that crisis by mobilizing people in Jordan to minister to those refugees. And we saw hundreds of them profess faith in Jesus Christ.

How are you responding to the crisis of the Middle East? The answers to prayer were not over yet. We're closer to perhaps at least some possible negotiation for a peace settlement than we have been for a couple of months. But we need to increase the prayer.

We respond to a crisis like this with prayer, not only prayer and we'll get to that in a moment. What about the crisis in Sri Lanka which just goes on and on and on with bloodshed and death and people being destroyed? How do we respond to that? What about the crisis in Afghanistan? Year after year, civil war, bombings, death, 3 million refugees, starvation, confusion. How do you respond to that? The other evening again I think they had something on television about the Kurds.

How do we respond to the crisis of the Kurdish people? They have no nation. They're persecuted. They've been killed even with chemical warfare.

That's how we found out that Iraq had and would use such chemicals which are now such an important part of the thinking concerning the Middle East crisis. What's our crisis to Campuchia which just goes on and on and on with so much death, so much confusion and even the possibility of Pol Pot and mini-Hitler somehow getting back into power. What about the crisis of 15 million refugees? It's interesting that even on Wogan's program they introduced some priest about those refugees.

We do in our modern society, in our high-tech society get exposed to crisis more than ever before in the history of the world. And I dare to say that because of that many of us become hardened. We become hardened.

Again, we'll get back to that in a moment. What about the crisis of the children of the world? There was recently a World Congress on Children. And this World Congress on Children took place in New York and then a magazine report in one of our Sunday magazines came out about those children.

How many read that report about the 100 million children of the world who are in a form of slavery? Did any of you read that? I don't even know what newspaper it was with because someone just sent me the actual clipping through the post. But this report and we've heard similar things brought out that there are approximately 100 million children in the world who are in slave labor. Forced labor.

Some of them in Thailand, a few million. Most of them are in India. They have the most incredible jobs.

They are in factories. They are shortening their lifespan. Many of them are under 10.

They're under 10. Are you a songwriter? I just love your ministry. Are you a songwriter? Could you write a song about the children of the world? You pray about that.

100 million children. Some of them work from early morning to late night and they get paid 10 pence per day for 9 hours work. They are bused back to their villages.

They get a few hours sleep. The stories of these children begging and begging their parents not to go back but the parents in the social economic pressure send them back for another day of slave labor. How do we respond to these things? The South African crisis.

Now the first thing I want to say in speaking on how to respond to these worldwide crises and there can be comparisons in how to respond to personal crises is that we must first of all take our place as God's people who believe God's word. Therefore our response is not purely emotional. All of us are different emotionally.

My wife and I are very different emotionally. What causes her to respond doesn't always cause me to respond. What causes me to respond doesn't always cause her to respond.

And we've got 30 years with each other figuring out how this works. We're all very different. I was listening just two days ago to a tape by A.W. Tozer, one of my favorite writers.

And Tozer shared how a particular situation brought tears to his eyes but he went on to share that he's a person who didn't easily cry. I'm a moderate person when it comes to crying. I cry moderately easily.

Not as easy as some but I'm certainly not in the camp. I usually have one good cry about every other week. That's 25 really good cries a year.

And out of that, only five would be extreme, really. Like when my mother died into the woods, half an hour, weeping, crying, screaming, letting it all out. Now, I know some people teach here in Britain we're not supposed to do this here in England.

Americans are all very emotional. We have a stiff British upper lip. People die all around us.

We go to the funeral, very blasé. Some of us haven't wept so long. If we wept, we thought we'd think we'd have a nervous breakdown.

But Tozer went on to share that he finds it very hard to weep and so he spoke about just with his heart responding. And I can't remember how he exactly explained it, but it's something that I have also believed over these years that if you can't cry outwardly, at least acknowledge your sadness, acknowledge grief, acknowledge anger. How can it be that some people never get angry? I can't even begin to comprehend someone doesn't get angry.

Someone's probably saying right now, you seem angry. I am angry. What's wrong with a little anger? Says don't let the sun go down upon your anger.

Of course, that's a problem in the winter. Maybe I should only come to Pip and Jang in the summer. How can we look at injustice in the world? How can we look at so much killing in the world? How can we look at situations in our nation, the injustice, the poverty, the racism, and not be angry? I can assure you I'm not angry at Pip and Jang.

I'm not particularly angry at you, but I'm angry at Satan. I'm angry about injustice. Now I must confess that I do get angry about the indifference and the lukewarmness among God's people.

And in trying to figure out what to do with that anger, I studied the Bible and I found an interesting verse. Maybe it's one of your favorites. It says, Be ye hot or be ye cold, for if you are lukewarm, I'll spew you out of my mouth.

It's a nice little pleasant verse. Who said it? Probably Apostle Paul. It's probably Daniel in the Lion's Den.

It's probably one of these prophets. Jeremiah or Elijah. These characters who shouted at the people and frightened them.

No. It was Jesus meek and mild. Jesus.

Be ye hot. Be ye cold. If you are lukewarm, I will spew you out of my mouth.

So as we respond to a crisis, whether it's the King's Cross crisis or the Lockerbie explosion or the Middle East crisis, and now with television and high tech and soon there'll be satellite and cable television about to blow us right out of our own homes, we have to determine that in the midst of it we are going to be biblical. And whether we can respond emotionally or not, we are going to be biblical people and therefore as much as lieth within us by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will respond. We will not be indifferent.

We will not be prayerless. If tonight we watch television and the news reports the death of more people in the snow and some have died in the snow, we will not hug no hearts. We will not just say, oh, too bad.

We will not just think, oh, I'm glad I don't live up in the north. Never did want to live up there anyway. No.

We will respond in love. We will respond in humility. We will take a moment.

We are moving too fast. Most of us are moving too fast. Do you know how some Americans watch television? They have 20, 30 channels.

They don't watch one program. It's boring. They watch three, four programs at once.

It's channel popping. Call it channel popping. I've done it.

And you just, for an hour, pop channels and just sort of get blown away through different pictures of the latest rock music. Madonna, one minute. Clint Eastwood, the next minute.

The Long Ranger, the next minute. Robert Shuler's Crystal Cathedral and some kind of gospel band the next minute. Just pop channels for an hour.

It's going to happen here. Cable television. Satellite television.

People are bored. Who wants to just watch Dallas? Let's watch Dallas. And what's this new thing just come in from the States? What is it called? It's evil, but anyway, it's come in.

Now you can pop channels and mix it all together. No more straight drinks. This is the age of cocktails.

Society is sick. I don't watch much television. Some that I watch, I have to turn off very quickly because it is really sick.

And if this woman, Madonna, the little I've ever seen, if she is to be the heroine of our young women in our society, if she is to be a role model and she actually believes she is, then we are very, very sick. But brothers and sisters, we must not harden our hearts. We must be biblical people.

It says in Matthew chapter 9, Jesus saw the multitudes. As he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion. The verse before that says that Jesus went from village to village preaching and teaching.

In the heat of the day, there in modern, what is today Israel, the Lord Jesus went from place to place. Moved with compassion. I remember when I first lived in Spain in one of the very first OM conferences in the history of our work, a man who greatly influenced my life and we've been together in this work 33 years, Dale Roton, who now coordinates the ship ministry, was sharing a message and it was on the sin of David.

After David sinned with Bathsheba and the main point of the message was that as Christians, when we sin, when we fail, we should never harden our heart. I have a young man who calls me for counseling from the Netherlands. He calls me from the Netherlands because he hasn't been able to find someone in his own country that can counsel him.

Whenever he tells somebody about his problem, he seems to get preached at or condemned. And he's wanting to go into the ministry, into full-time ministry. And he calls me because though I condemn his sin and try to point the way of victory, I respond in grace and I share my own struggle with the same problem.

His problem is pornography. By the way, I estimate that out of a million evangelicals in Britain, a half a million would be men approximately, and I would estimate that 10% of those men at least are having heavy struggles with pornography. And with the age of the videocassette, we're having a greater problem than ever because men were restrained.

A lot of Christian men didn't want to go in and wouldn't go in to one of these places where they were showing these films. And now it is so easy for a couple of pounds. I haven't done it.

I haven't had the experience. I don't want the experience to pick up a pornographic video and at the right moment just pop it in the video recorder. It is a plague.

I know some women may be surprised by this. And I just want to say this. I don't want to offend you women, but a lot of Christian women are extremely naive and it does disturb me because women need to be praying for men and women need to be protesting against some of this pornography because it's your body that's being used in a wrong way to seduce.

That doesn't excuse any man. He has no excuse for sin. And I thank God, once I went in to get an ice cream in a little shop in London and there was the pornography, I just walked out.

I sent my wife in. My wife's a very quiet, shy person. But I tell you, she walked into that shop and said a word about this pornography.

I believe we should protest pornography wherever and whenever we can. And I'm ashamed that so often I myself and my cowardice fail to say very much. It is a plague and it does destroy people and it is often a bigger problem for Christians than non-Christians.

Why? Because Christians are trying to live in victory. Because Christians are trying to keep their minds pure. Non-Christians, it is no problem.

They're into free sex. They're into free pornography. What's the problem for the non-Christian? And if we don't think this is connected with the AIDS epidemic, the promiscuity of our day, we are living in cloud cuckoo land.

AIDS is now spreading among heterosexual people at an unprecedented rate. Brothers and sisters, whatever crisis may be facing us, and on the train I was reading about the AIDS problem in Africa and it was just, it was just gripping my heart. Whether we're reading about a crisis of huge proportion like the Middle East possible war and all the death that that may bring.

Whether we're re-reading something about World War II and where 6 million Jews and 6 million Gentiles were destroyed and now that there's perestroika and the Soviet Union, we're reading about things that have happened there over the past 40 years that are almost impossible to grasp. I'm sure some of you have read and other books. It's just incredible, isn't it? So my plea is first of all, don't harden your heart.

Just as Brother Dale wrote down in that message 30 years ago or 29 in Madrid, speaking on the sin of David, spoke from that verse about having a broken spirit and a contrite heart and urging us in our battle against sin, and my battle at that time was still against pornography, and urging us in our battle against sin, and my battle at that time was still against pornography, not to harden our heart. So in any crisis, be it a personal crisis or a national or international crisis, the first step is don't harden your heart. Respond.

A prayer. A sigh. A moment of silence.

Silence is beautiful. Turn off the television. Stop.

And pray. The Kurds. The Afghans.

The latest murder in Ulster. Do you know how many murders? Do you ever pray for the United States? How many pray for the United States, the land of my birth? They pray for you over there a lot. You pray for the United States? I guess you figure they don't need any prayer.

They're so Christian. The Bible says that the way is narrow and few there be that find it. The vast majority of people in the United States are not Christian.

In fact, the United States, as far as I can see, has more anti-Christian people than any country in the world. It's a very big country. Do you have any idea how many murders there were in the United States? Could you even guess? I couldn't have even guessed until I read this article recently.

Eighteen thousand murders in 1989 in the United States. It's unbelievable. Many of them among relatives, friends, and family.

High percentage drug-related. Do you see anything on television or read anything about drugs? And when you do, do you respond? Does something cry out in you against this massive plan right from hell to destroy people and families? Drugs. Or do you just say, well, what can we do about that? Brothers and sisters, we must not, we must not allow ourselves to become lukewarm.

We must not harden our heart against evil, against sin. In Great Britain, the problem of alcohol is almost as great as the problem of drugs. I found myself hardening myself against alcoholics.

Because my grandfather died an alcoholic. The marriage broke in two. As I came out of Victoria Station a few hours ago, there was a drunk trying to help people into the taxis.

These people didn't want to be helped by a drunk into the taxis. And he walked up to me and I found, because I've lived and worked with alcoholics as a young Christian, I found my heart hardening a bit. I found myself saying instantly, I don't want to get involved with him.

Of course, in this case, it would have been difficult to be involved with him and to get here. What is your response to the crisis? What is your response to sin? What is your response to 15 million refugees, 100 million children in some kind of slavery? Well, let me just share with you a few of the things that I've written down. I want to share four or five ways that I don't believe we should respond.

Number one, do not respond with panic and fear. Now that was the response of the people as the army of Pharaoh began to catch up with them and they were facing the Red Sea, they began to panic, they began to fear. And we have to make, we have to make a particular decision, and I speak to myself because I am not here as someone who has arrived.

I will tell you, you're looking at a struggler, you're looking at someone who's just grabbing onto this book about God's grace, hoping I may get some new little help to carry me through 1991. You're looking at someone who in my Christian life, sometimes I feel I'm underwater, drowning, and all I got is a straw. All I have is a straw.

Have you ever felt that way in your Christian life? I have difficulty relating to these super victorious people who are always abounding and praising the Lord and every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. With me, it's struggle, it's a little oxygen through the straw, I'm under the water, it's along the precipice of agnosticism. Not only does the Christian life sometimes frighten me, life frightens me.

Just life. So I have determined to stand on the promises of God, on the moment of impact, whatever may be the next crisis, to not panic. Not panic.

How would you handle being stuck in a snowdrift right now up in Northumbria? A friend of mine made the fatal mistake in a snowdrift 30 years ago. She was headed with OM to Mexico. She made a mistake in Minnesota, a much bigger state than we're dealing with in this situation.

She made the mistake of getting out of her car and trying to get to the next town. She died in the snow. They constantly remind us here, don't they, on the radio, stay in your car.

Stay in your car. You may be cold, you may be frightened, stay in your car. Don't panic.

Don't get out of your car in the Pennines and start to hike to the next village. And yet people every year do it. Maybe not here, but in the United States.

Don't panic. The moment of impact, the moment of crisis, the moment the war breaks out, the moment something goes wrong. Number two, beware of responding with depression and fatalism.

Brother Andrew has a new book on fatalism. It's the most controversial of all the books he has ever written. I was just with him in California.

And this book's upsetting, especially more extreme Calvinistic friends, which he has a few over there in the Netherlands where he's from. But he deals a strong blow to Christian fatalism. Brothers and sisters,

we can do something about these situations.

I don't know how much you know about Pip and Jay. Maybe you're a visitor. But this is a church that has taken a non-fatalistic position.

This is a church that says when there's a crisis, there's a problem, there's a need, we can do something. We're doing something about Christmas with Christmas Unwrapped. We've got a restaurant where you get a little meal and pay big bucks.

Great. Everybody should go there. Or just don't eat at all and send the money you save.

At least for a day or so. We can do something. And let me share something again.

I don't want to frighten you. But after 30-some years in the battle, my temptation is to give up. Have any of you been tempted to just quit? Just quit.

The church, missions, trying to help people, trying to evangelize the world, I just get to a point, I don't stay there long, praise God, but I get there, I'm sorry to say, total despair overcomes me. Despair, depression, fear, confusion, you name it, I get it. And somehow it's only by the grace of God I crawl back to the cross.

I remember what Elijah went through after the big victory and he wanted to take his own life under that tree. I remember what Jonah went through after he saw a revival at Nineveh and he got out in the wilderness and said, God, I want to die. And I realized that's a dead end.

I can't go down that road. And I turn back. Repentance is not penance.

I turn back. I enact a faith and I go back to God in worship, in prayer, and I stand on His promises. Beware of depression.

Beware of fatalism. Number three, and this is an unlikely response for a Christian, but it is a response of some people. It's a hedonistic response.

What can we really do? We might as well forget about it, live our own life, have a happy Christmas, eat, drink, and be merry. Now we wouldn't do that as Christians, but we get a little near that, don't we? We get a little bit near that at times, especially around Christmas. We have all our parties.

We have some really wonderful times enjoying ourselves. I'm not against that. But I'm against it if it leads to unreality, if it leads to fantasy, if it leads to us going day after day forgetting all the suffering and all the lostness and all the needs in the world.

A party, a time of fun, a special restaurant together is part of ministering to our human factor. We are human beings. We need fellowship.

We have to live our life. We have to bloom where we are. We're not robots.

And it's basically good. I'm going to come back to that in a moment. But if it develops a fantasy world where we become hedonistic, where we become selfish, then it is wrong.

Beware of that reaction. Number four is we react with a lot of wrong or false guilt. Now I believe this is the problem of some of us as Christians.

And we get into a syndrome and I think it can happen in a great church like this where we never feel we're doing enough. There's always so many activities. There's always so many things to give your money to.

There's always a challenge about helping refugees or giving money to the poor or going to a restaurant perhaps, spending money for a small meal, all of which can be good. But in the process of it we forget that we are limited, weak human beings. Now did you ever expect George Burr to say that? George Burr, Mr. Faith.

I once was described as a combination of C.T. Studge, George Mueller, E.T. and somebody else. I forget. Somebody thought I was going to get a submarine for evangelism in depth.

Then somebody else thought I was going to claim a jumbo jet for Jesus. Somebody thought I just walked down to the ocean when we need a new ship in the name of Jesus. One more ship.

Thank you, Jesus. No. I'm a struggler.

I'm a doubter. It's not easy. And I tell you one of the reasons I'm still here is I have learned to live within my God-given limits.

There's a lot of guilt put on us who are living in the suburbs. I live in the sort of London suburbs. It's not a bad place to live.

I got a rent-free house up until a few months ago. Beggars can't be choosers. And now all of us who live in the suburbs, sooner or later we think, well, if we're not living in the inner city, if we're not living in Brixton or the East End, we're not really on the cutting edge of where it's at.

And people are moving out of the suburbs into the ghettos so that they can really get in city ministry. Everybody's talking about city ministry. Now, I've lived in ghettos.

I've lived in the ghettos of Bangkok. I've lived in the ghettos of Bombay. I've lived in the ghettos of a number of cities.

But now to attempt to coordinate operation mobilization worldwide, take 400 meetings a year, one-third of my time away from my home or more, it would be foolish to move my wife into the inner city. I move her into the inner city in a little shack, and then I go off and take meetings around the world. Real great.

She'd really appreciate that. I know that if I move into the inner city to plant churches and win souls, then I've got to stop doing a lot of other things, including perhaps visits to Pip and Jay, and give myself to that. If I'm going to work among alcoholics and druggies, I'm going to have to give myself to that.

If I'm going to work among prisons, and I do occasionally preach in prisons, but if I'm going to get in-depth involved with prisoners and especially ex-prisoners, then I'm going to have to give myself to that. If I'm going to become a vicar in an Anglican church which the Anglicans were never allowed, then I'm going to realize that is a full-time job. I'm going to have to give myself to that.

Get the point? We are weak, feeble, limited human beings, and there's a danger as we respond to crisis, as we receive challenge after challenge, that we will try to do too much. We will overextend ourselves. We will bypass our God-given limitations.

Instead of being led by the Spirit, we'll be led by false guilt. We'll be led by intimidation. We'll be led by various struggles from within, and we'll make a big mess.

And we wonder why quite a few Christians are having nervous breakdowns. That's the wrong response to the crisis. False guilt, hyper-activism, trying to do too much, going beyond your limitations, pretending you're a Rolls-Royce when you're only a Volkswagen, trying to behave like a ten-cylinder Christian or a ten-talented Christian when you're only a two-cylinder Christian or a two-talented Christian.

Praise God, He doesn't hold you responsible for gifts that He's given to other people. He holds you responsible for what He has given you. Praise God, you don't have to compete with the personalities and the giftedness of other believers.

Have you ever stood sort of awed at very gifted people? A very gifted person is Charles Swindoll. He pastors a church of four thousand people. He writes books that when I read, I say, Lord, I will never ever write a book again.

He is so brilliant. I get intimidated by these people. Praise God, I have learned to accept myself.

I don't have a high IQ. We played an IQ game at the ICT, that's my team, International Coordinating Team. We had an IQ little thing on an overhead projector.

And a new recruit on the team got 24 answers. Bang, bang, bang, bang. 24 answers.

I got seven. Brothers and sisters, it is incredibly liberating when we understand the Christian life is a life of grace. It's not the law.

It's not trying to do this and trying to do that. It's not false guilt propelling you along. We are called people, not driven people.

We have to rest in the Lord. We have to cast these burdens upon Him. Yes, we read about the Gulf.

Our hearts are broken. We pray. We perhaps begin to think if there's something we can do.

Surely we could write a letter to a British soldier who's there. Surely we could perhaps challenge other people to pray. That leads me to a couple of the positive things we should do in the midst of this crisis or any crisis.

We've already talked about this whole thing of prayer and faith. Another thing we can do is ask God and take steps to develop a sanctified imagination. There's always something we can do.

Now we have a new Prime Minister. I hope we're praying for him. But I wonder how many of us would stop and sit down and write a letter to 10 Downing Street.

It's incredibly easy. And congratulate him. And let him know that we're concerned as he has a huge job in a country that has many, many complex problems.

I believe as we face various challenges, crises, difficulties, there's usually something we can do. It may be very small. But if all of God's people around the world and there are hundreds of millions of us, if we all begin to do small things, a book, a letter, a phone call, a small amount of money, a prayer, a spreading of the word, can you imagine, can you imagine the buildup of spiritual energy and power and service that

would build up throughout the world? Most people are not doing much at all about world missions.

This church is. Written up in this brilliant book that you can get a copy tonight of a reduced, at a reduction. And it's a great book.

But the average person is not giving much thought to 100 million Muslims. Have you ever prayed for that? 100 million Muslims in North India and around India where the church doesn't yet exist. Often when I start speaking about missions, people immediately get intimidated, and it's probably my poor method of communication, and begin to tell me how important need is in Bristol.

Now brothers and sisters, let's be honest. I've watched Bristol for 28 years. You are one of the most evangelized cities in the whole world.

That's right. I didn't say Christian city. That's a bit of a battle yet.

But as far as evangelism, Bristol has had as much as most cities in the world. You need more? Press on. Don't be discouraged.

But surely, people who know Jesus Christ in Bristol have some time, some energy, some money, some time for prayer for the other people of the world. The Muslims of India, the Kurds of Iraq, and Turkey and Iran, the Baluch of Pakistan, the Uyghurs of China, the unreached people where the church doesn't exist. Has anybody counted up the number of gospel preaching churches in Bristol, and assemblies, little house churches? Send me the statistic.

I'll use it next time when I come. And here we have millions and millions of people, and I'm not going to take much longer, where the church doesn't exist. How are you going to respond to that? Are you going to be defensive? Say, hey, Verwer, you don't understand the problems I've got right here in Bristol.

Hey, you don't know the problems we have right in our own church. We're not having the same crowds we had a couple of years ago. Hey, you don't realize, well, yeah, I do realize some of those things.

That's why I've come here. But I believe, I believe, as God's people, all of us could do just a little more this Christmas about the unreached people. We could do a little more about the millions that have never had the Gospel.

We could do a little more about this huge open door in Eastern Europe. What is our response to the crisis, to the challenge, to the impossible situations we see around the world? It's one of faith. It's one of love.

Jesus was moved with compassion. It's one of determination to become a better disciple. And we can all become stronger.

We can all become more trained, more experienced in spiritual warfare. It's one of sanctified imagination. It's one of willingness to make sacrifices without going beyond our limitations.

It's one of wanting to get involved. Sometimes, when I preach in a church, all I ask is that they write me a letter. That's all.

They can tell when they listen to me that I'm a man of great struggle, a man of great burden and great vision. And I've lived every way, every day, in varying degrees this way since my conversion. And so probably they can sense, well, maybe I ought to write to them and just say, hey, that message touched my

heart.

I'm going to pray for these people because of what you said. I'm going to consider going on Love Europe because of what you said. Or I'm going to get involved in the local prison or among the people on the ships.

Or I'm going to go and get involved in Christmas Unwrapped because of what you said. But the fact is, with many of God's people, even writing one letter is a big thing. Do you know why? They always tell me.

They always tell me, Brother, Brother George, I don't write letters. I don't write letters. This is the answer.

This is the answer after much prayer, after being filled with the Spirit, after two hours of praise. I don't answer. I don't write letters.

I'm glad the Apostle Paul didn't say he didn't write letters. Brothers and sisters, I'm not saying you should start a prolific letter writing ministry. But I am saying that unless you and I are willing to change and do some things we haven't done before and develop some new habits, and Billy Graham said that Christian life is basically habits, then I doubt if we ultimately are going to make this impact among the unreached people.

As we are faithful in a little thing. It may be a pound. It may be a letter.

It may be one book given away. It may be turning off one television program and giving one extra half hour to prayer. As we become faithful in little things, God will give us big things.

My life, in those early days, when this work was being founded, was all little things. All little things. And then God, after the years, gave me a ship and another ship.

A lot of people in that army of people have given the Gospel to 450 million souls across the world and trained 52,000 people in some kind of evangelism. But basically, it all happened because of little things. I'm so glad I'm now in these middle years and that I'm a grandfather.

And you can ask anybody who knows me, I'm changing. I'm changing. I'm not going to grow stale.

I'm not going to become some kind of old, musty O.M.'er stuck in the 70's. By God's grace, I'm going to grow. I'm going to learn more about His grace.

That's why I'm reading this book. I'm going to learn how to be a better husband and a better father and way, now, a better grandfather. But the last thing I want is to be some kind of old, spiritual, rigamortous case sitting in church on Sunday, growing dusty and old and never doing anything new or anything different for the Kingdom of God.

Brothers and sisters, let's respond. Let's respond to the big crises and the little crises. Let's do the will of God, whatever the cost.

Let us pray. Our God and Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for this beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ moved with compassion and going out from village to village.

Deliver us, Lord, from our excuses and yet at the same time keep us from wrong reactions, all kinds of false guilt, all kinds of intimidation, things that if we're not careful will push us beyond those limitations that

You have given us into the zone of foolishness and religious weirdoism. Oh God, we thank You that the Christian life is a healthy, down-to-earth, balanced, biblical walk with You. That as we follow You with all of our hearts and with all of our minds, as we respond to Your Spirit, we don't become religious weirdos, out of step, totally with our society, but we become people who can attract other people to this great way of life and this gift of salvation.

We thank You, our Lord, and we give You all the praise and we give You all the glory through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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