

# Discipleship

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon on discipleship addresses the critical intersection of emotional health and spiritual life in a modern context of fear and tension.*

**Duration:** 26:28

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:1-3, Hebrews 4:8-11

**Topics:** "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of loneliness in the world. He mentions the song 'Eleanor Rigby' by the Beatles, which he believes reflects the increasing loneliness in society. The speaker emphasizes the importance of learning how to live with oneself and with others, including enemies, in a world filled with demons and the power of Satan. He also mentions the challenges faced by Operation Mobilization (OM) and the need for a rest of faith, as mentioned in Hebrews 4. The sermon concludes with a reminder that getting involved in reaching the world can lead to frustration, but it is important to persevere.

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## Transcript

Discipleship in the midst of an age of tension and fear. I believe with all my heart that oftentimes the Church has neglected to give a clear message concerning the many emotional problems, the many stresses, the many difficulties that are upon us in modern society. There's a few people that say we overemphasize this, but I don't think we've hardly had a message on this yet at this conference, and I've been waiting, wondering if someone else would bring something along this line.

Sometimes our messages can repeat themselves. I know some of mine do. Dedicate our lives, surrender all, follow Christ, witness, pray, read the Bible, and you get to hear these things again and again and again and again, especially, I don't know, in conference.

Yet some of you are not finding this easy at all. Some of you have been on OM for a year. You have no real prayer life.

You're not reading the Bible, finding it great reality. And this is true of a lot of people today, if we're honest. And I believe that one of the greatest barriers to spiritual reality are emotional and mental problems.

And to me, anyone living in this world and not facing up to this is trying to push aside what many leaders have said is the number one problem of the twentieth century. We've got cures for most of the major diseases, but mental illness and emotional problems of large and small proportion are taking their tolls at an unprecedented rate. Christians can be the most unrealistic.

This is why many books are now being written, even one recently called *Neurotics in the Church*, because they've discovered that there are quite a few in the Church, not just a mild neurotic, probably many of us would come into that category, but people with serious emotional disorders. I can name ten books that are very, very popular on this subject. If people aren't having difficulties in this area, then why are these books selling at such a tremendous rate? Some of the most spiritual people have had some of the most earth-shaking emotional and mental experiences and total breakdowns.

No one knows the figures, but a good percentage of missionaries have to leave the field within their first term because of emotional breakdown or something else along that line. We can praise God that within O.M. there are a number of built-in factors that keep the percentage of people we have facing such problems at a very, very low proportion, much, much lower than general missionary statistics. These factors are such things as the fact that we work on teams, rather than throwing people out alone.

There is an emphasis on sharing, and most people do find at least someone on their team that they can share with. It being a short-term program, of course, is another factor. The fact that many of us are young and most of us go to the field before we're married is another major factor.

Too many people go to the mission field after they're very set in their ways, married, children, and they get out there and they hit the new culture and they hit all this at once, and they never adapt. They just, especially the women, crack up. There are other factors, I believe, on emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ.

I believe the importance we put on fellowship, the importance we put on counseling and sharing and walking in the light, many of these things help. Needless to say, we probably will be facing greater battles in the coming years, and I believe that we need to understand what the Bible says. I don't believe there's anything more important in Scripture, on the positive side in this subject, than what we have often talked about in Hebrews 4, the rest of faith, and what we've often talked about in other portions of Scripture, the sufficiency of Christ.

I believe that these two great truths are the anchor that can keep us from so many of the emotional problems that come our way. I think it's very important that we become more real about our feelings, more real about the real problems. Don't come to me with a line that we need deliverance and a faith healer, because a high percentage of them, if you study it, or are objective enough to study it, a good percentage of them have had nervous breakdowns themselves.

So though I believe in praying for the sick, I believe there is such a thing as deliverance, and my scope is very broad. I would not even oppose some people who would go about it in a very different way than I would. I don't believe that cuts out such things as counseling, such things as learning basic factors about ourselves, learning to adjust to our environment, and learning the secret of Hebrews 4 about the rest of faith, and the great message of the New Testament concerning the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

We spoke briefly yesterday about Indonesia, the country with all the miracles, where a high percentage of the leaders have fallen into moral sin, witchcraft, and you name it, you name it, it's there. A high

percentage of the leaders in the Indonesian revival are total reprobates tonight, and it's because so often we're willing to take the more spectacular aspects of what God wants to do, but not get down to the basics of how to live a normal, balanced Christian life. I want miracles.

I want to see anything and everything within the scope of God's work, but I also want to see people going on for more than a few years. I want to see people who have learned how to live with themselves, that's not as easy as you think, with others, including their enemies, and who can exist in this horrible, lost world that we are thrown into, with all of the demons and with all of the power of Satan running so loose everywhere. And some of you in the fields you're going are going to see the devil work like never before.

You're going to see the demon possessed. You're going to see those that are enslaved to spiritism. You're going to see those that have been just absolutely destroyed, seemingly, by the powers of darkness.

A lonely, lonely, lonely world. Can I read a song for you that I believe speaks loud to this generation? It's called Eleanor Rigby, sung by the Beatles, Lennon and McCartney. Here it is.

You've probably heard it. Maybe the words can give us just a little idea of how this lonely world is getting lonelier and lonelier. And you can be in O.M. in the midst of 400 people and be as lonely as an iceberg in the middle of the ocean.

The lonely people peep through curtain lace, opening their doors for a brief look at the outside world. I have to go slow because of the translators. Then quickly retreat into a web-like microcosm of self.

They make it all alone. That's the introduction. Here's the song.

Oh, look at all the lonely people. Ah, look at all the lonely people. Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been, lives in a dream, waits at the window wearing a face that she keeps in a jar by the door.

Who is it for? All the lonely people. Where do they all come from? All the lonely people, where do they all belong? Father McKenzie, writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear. No one comes near.

Look at him working, darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there. What does he care? All the lonely people, where do they all come from? All the lonely people, where do they all belong? Ah, look at all the lonely people. Ah, look at all the lonely people.

Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name. Nobody came. Father McKenzie wiping the dirt from his hands as he walked from the grave.

No one was saved. All the lonely people, where do they all come from? Ah, look at all the lonely people. All the lonely people, where do they all belong? Ah, look at all the lonely people.

Psychiatrists have stated that loneliness and boredom is one of the greatest problems in the 20th century. Maybe this is one of the reasons most people stay healthy. I know him.

Not exactly a boring situation, and even a bit difficult to be lonely. But let me say something before I go any further. And it's very important to remember that mental illness or an emotional breakdown need never be the end of the line.

In fact, it can be the beginning of a new life. You see, God loves us, and he may even allow some of us to go as far as a nervous breakdown to bring us to our senses and to a new way of life. So if some of you in life, and some of you will, and I may be among the number, have a nervous breakdown, don't give up.

I know many people have bounced back from nervous breakdowns of various kinds and are being used of God. My prayer has been not so much that the Lord would keep me from a nervous breakdown, though I pray that, but that if I have one, it'll be over quick and I can get back into the battle soon. And I think Christians at times have been unfair to those who have emotional problems.

Missionary societies especially have been extremely ruthless at times. They give you these fantastic tests, and if you happen to prove that you're a little bit unstable, boy, a lot of societies, you just haven't got a chance. I don't know if that's what they thought was wrong with Gladys Ullward.

If you don't know her name, your education's a bit incomplete. There's many a man that was classified, unstable, emotional problems, dangerous, who turned out to be a mighty man of God. John's son was one of them.

They put him in a mental institution in New York. So don't think that emotional and mental problems are the end of the line. At the same time, be realistic in your approach.

Loneliness. Together with loneliness in this society and boredom, there's a tremendous amount of frustration. And you may face some of this, you know.

I do, every day. The world has become so complicated. We've got more people in Great Britain than was in the whole known world of the Apostle Paul.

Just Britain. Just little Britain. What do you do with seven million refugees? What do you do with 80 million people in Uttar Pradesh? What do you do with 800 million in China? Talk about frustration.

The zealot in 1971 and 72 who wants to reach the whole world for Christ, he's either got to be a dreamer, an idiot, or an o-ver. Because it really is impossible. It really is impossible.

And so those of us who get involved in wanting to reach this world, and we come up with these dream projects like Belgium next summer, and Italy in the next three summers, when we haven't got the men, we haven't got the money, we haven't got the literature, we haven't got the vehicles, we haven't got the know-how, we haven't got the organizers. I'm not sure what we do have. We've got Giovanni, praise God.

And if you happen to get into this movement, and quite a few of you are, you're going to face frustration. Too many letters, too many bills, too many people, too much to do, and too little time, in too many places all at once. Vehicles that don't work, stamps that don't have their glue, phones that are broken down, drivers who can't drive, secretaries who can't type, leaders who can't lead, followers who can't follow.

This is all the potential of Operation Mobilization. And interpreters who can't interpret fast enough. And speakers who speak twice as fast as they should.

And to me, to get into OM and not know something of this rest of faith is dangerous. I don't recommend it. Look at Hebrews 4. I know you've read it before, but let's look at it again.

The word rest is mentioned 12 times. Twelve times. Let us therefore fear, lest the promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, as I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest, although the works which finish from the foundation of the world. Going down to save time, verse 8, for if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not have afterwards spoken of another day.

There, verse 9, remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

There is a rest of faith where you cease from your own works. A high percentage of emotional problems among Christians come from them refusing to cease from their own works. You're working so hard, you're going so hard to do the job, and you're worrying about your problems and everybody else's problems, instead of really resting on the Lord and doing, as Peter says, casting all your care upon him.

Have you done it? Are you doing it today? What's bugging you today? What's bothering you today? Have you cast it on the Lord? Are you doing it every day? So basic, so simple, and yet, beloved, I tell you it's revolutionary, and it works. You say, well, I cast something on the Lord, but it always comes back, or I cast it again. I'll be very honest, the particular burden that was on my heart today, I must have cast it twenty times.

Twenty times. I have a streak of unbelief in me. I have fear.

I have various anxieties. I suffer a lot from sense of failure, and although other people don't understand this, I do, to some degree. And my greatest help in Jesus Christ is this thing of being able to cast the burden upon him.

Because if I start running around trying to carry the burdens of this movement, I'll go down very, very quick. The rest of faith, it's a reality. It's a truth.

You must not just think about it. You must not just say, isn't that nice? But you must appropriate it, and you must appropriate it daily by casting all your burden upon the Lord, and believing in his sovereign power to overrule mistakes, to overrule error, to overrule even sin, and to straighten things out in the long run. I believe if we knew the rest of faith to a deeper degree, in the long run, we'd be able to run harder and faster for Jesus.

I could never work the hours I work if I didn't know the rest of faith. There's many a night when I haven't been really appropriating this rest. I'm exhausted at an early hour.

In other days, when I really have been casting it more fully on the Lord and moving along in his strength and keeping the burden on him, I've been able to go longer and harder at much less effort. In the rest of faith, you can do five times as much with five times less effort as just burning out your own very, very small resources. Frustration can be overcome.

I go to bed every night with so many things undone, so many problems, so many just endless things not done, failures, people I missed interviewing, letters that weren't answered, telegrams not even answered, checks that were not written, people I failed to witness to, literature I failed to get, so many things undone. It never bothered me. I lay down in that bed and that's it, gone, until next morning when I can get up and race again.

That does more for me than I can ever tell you. You see, it's one thing to be under the burden spiritually. There's nothing wrong with that.

But if you're under burden spiritually, then you can turn it off any time you want. You can turn off from worry and on to Jesus, or off from the burden and on to Jesus, off from the burden, on to sleep, off from the burden, on to some recreation. I can switch everything off and go off and do something with my children, switch everything off and do something with my wife, switch everything off, sit down and read a good book.

Now, I don't get the opportunity to do that as much as I would like, but I can, and I do. Worry you can't switch off. Some of you want to know the difference between, you know, having a sensible burden and being concerned.

Nothing wrong with concern. I'm concerned about those boys in that, in jail, in Libya, but if I start worrying about it, boy, what if they get killed and what will people think of O.M.? What about the criticisms and what about their parents? Man, I can name you fifteen major areas of worry, just about four boys in a prison in Libya. And the way O.M.ers are moving into prisons these days, I'll be cracked up in a couple of months, just with prison worries.

Worry you find difficult turning off. It somehow gets a rut in your mind and it keeps going through, going through. And every time you worry about it, the rut gets deeper and the harder it is to get to victory.

That's why the sooner you start in dealing with worry as a young person, the better chances you're not going to end up a worrier. Worry can take many years off your life. Worry can destroy your health.

Isn't it amazing? All the Christians are up excited about drugs. I want to tell you something, beloved brethren who may not like heroin, LSD, pot, and all the rest. Worry does more harm in this world than drugs.

Absolutely. Worry is destroying more bodies, destroying more minds, bringing more sicknesses, crippling more homes, destroying more children than all the drugs that are being taken. No, I hate drugs and I believe it's a problem.

The worry problem is much greater. And I would say that worry is probably the second or third biggest enemy in the whole of Operation Mobilization. Fear from within.

Fear from without. Pressure from within. Pressure from without.

One man, many years ago, once said, we have nothing to fear but fear itself. How true. How true that is.

Some of you young men will have ulcers at 40. Some of you will be having heart attacks perhaps not long after that. And a lot of other things that come because of the age of tension and fear and stress that you and I live in.

Frustration. Learning to live in the midst of it is not so simple. Do you think that we as leaders are so naive as to think the main thing is to get you giving out tracts and winning souls this year? Do you think this is the purpose of OM? To get you for a year, to get one little year out of your life that you can go do some work in Iran? We would be completely stupid to form such a strategy.

Our burden for you is a lifetime experience, a lifetime reality. I'd rather see you fail this year and live the rest of your life balanced, happy, healthy, effective, with a testimony than to have a great flare this year of evangelical activity and collapse next year when you go back to a secular society that's rough and tough and brutal and boring and filled with frustration and hatred and loneliness. Your experience on OM must be integrated into a total life experience.

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