

Doulosministry March 1982

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the ship ministry and its role in training individuals for life and evangelism.

Duration: 33:21

Scripture: Proverbs 11:30, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 9:22, Ephesians 4:11-12, Colossians 4:5-6, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experience with a close friend who showed him the incredible capabilities of a computer. He also mentions the success of the book exhibition ministry, which has planted Christian books in Mexico. Despite a fire destroying equipment in India, the speaker emphasizes that there is still a significant amount of literature, films, and projectors spread throughout the country. The use of films and slides in evangelism is highlighted as an effective tool for reaching tens of thousands of people with the gospel.

Transcript

Let me say a few more words about the do-lost, because I think it's important for people within OM to be able to answer questions about the ship ministry. If a Christian leader, and you have contact with Christian leaders, maybe your own pastor, or elders, or whoever, asks you to tell about the ship ministry, what does the ship do, what do you say to them? Oh, they sell books. Or they have pastor's conferences.

I think it's important, when we're talking about the ship ministries, to be able to explain that it is a multiple, it's many ministries based on ship. It's not just one thing. There are about ten different major ministries based on that ship.

And in a sense, just any one of those ministries alone would not justify the enormous expense, the number of people, and all that's involved in a ship ministry. We're not just going to have a ship to go around selling books. Well, that's a very big ministry, and the book sales in Latin America have just been phenomenal.

The figures for Mexico are so huge, that though we on one hand think about the huge fire in Bombay that's taken a quarter of a million dollars, the profit from the sale of books in Mexico has been higher than that in the past month and a half. The profit, because the book sales were over three quarters of a million dollars. Now, I don't say that everywhere I go, and outside of O.M., if I say that, I've got to do a lot of explaining.

Because people are pre-tuned to think small. That's why the world's not going to be evangelized. And it's not going to be.

Despite all the optimists with their little computers in California, the way we are going with our small thinking, and our Donald Duck methods, and our Mickey Mouse prayers, the world is not going to be evangelized, so forget it. If that's your goal, just forget it. Either that, or join with some of us who want to see some radical changes.

And one of those things that's going to be radical change is to think a little bigger. I was a little bit concerned yesterday when I read what it's costing to light up Tampa, Florida. Not my favorite place for the ship to visit.

But it came into balance when I was talking with Sheila Walsh at tea yesterday afternoon, and heard that for one weekend of meetings at Wimbledon, they're paying 10,000 pounds to rent Wimbledon. 10,000 pounds just to have one more meeting in London, where we have more meetings than almost any city in the world outside of the United States. We have Joni this month, we have Luis Palau preparation meetings with several people this month.

You know, London, it's just night after night. You have to book some of these famous Christian venues, places, you know, a year or two in advance. 10,000 pounds to rent Wimbledon for a weekend of meetings, mainly music and a few messages thrown in.

And people pay. 5,000 people have already written in and sent a couple of quid each to get the tickets to be there. And I just believe that the Lord wants us to be able to trust Him for greater things as we press on in this huge task.

What are some of the ministries of Dumas? Just very quickly, we've mentioned the book exhibition. Both Christian and educational books, and the educational side of the ministry is a legitimate ministry. It's not a con, it's not a cover-up.

It's a legitimate social work, relief work, that gives us the kind of favor we need to get in to these countries. It is a huge task to get this shit in to these countries. And of course, it also is legitimate tent making.

But in Mexico, 25% of the book sales were Christian books. It's an enormous amount of literature, especially because often when they purchase an educational book, they get a Christian book free. I don't know if you've ever been on Dumas when the exhibition was going full scale.

It is really something. It is really something. Three or four or five cash registers.

We went over the Humber Bridge yesterday, the great white elephant of Northern England. They only had one cash register operating to handle the traffic. They had three or four booths, and they only had one.

I think of the Dumas, they handled the traffic coming through the book exhibition. They often had four or five cash registers operating. This is all computerized now.

So the sister who is working the cash desk, when she punches in a code number, it goes on to the computer and tells the warehouse people, eventually through a printout, what they need to restock the exhibition. I mean, this is a tremendous thing. And to be with Mike Cook, I spent more time with him than anybody, because he is a close personal friend among other things.

And to see the computer in operation. I sent them a lot of video cassettes to the ship. They put all this on the computer, and while we were talking, he punched a couple of buttons, and a huge readout of every single video cassette they have on the ship, and its content, and tiny, comes whipping out of this computer.

It really is amazing. Pray for those who work on the computer. So the book exhibition, of course, is very much the front line ministry.

It's that which the public sees. It's that which gets us into a port. And it's going very, very well.

It takes a lot of work. A lot of work. Pray for this mountain of Christian books that have been planted in Mexico.

You know, many Christians in Latin America have never seen these Christian books. Have never seen them. Or they may have seen 5% of them.

Christians in Latin America don't read Christian books to any great degree. And now with the invasion of television, you know what we're up against. And one of the things about the ship, it doesn't just sell books, it creates what I call book fever.

Now, some of you probably don't have book fever. You're supposed to get book fever when you come to the LN. It's a fever you catch from other people in which you want to read Christian books.

I think the most anti-reading person I've ever met is my son, Benjamin. He's so proud. He hasn't read a book in several years.

And he has what's called a reactionary fever from his brother and sister who live in books. And he's a carpenter. He's the working class.

He doesn't want to be identified with all these middle class university snobs. And so he's dug his heels in. He's not reading.

He does read Hot Rod and custom car magazines. But as he was on this trip, the book fever even caught him. And he read right through completely a Christian book.

And he's doing a lot of reading now that he's stuck out in LN Pakistan and LN India. But book fever hits the city when the ship comes in and many people start to read Christian books. Another main ministry of the ship I've already mentioned are the pastor's conferences or should we say the conference ministry.

The conference ministry in itself is many things. And in fact, if you think of the ship like a hotel, and in a hotel, each room has to pay. Each room has the capacity or what they call earning capacity.

If you don't put people in the rooms, the hotel is going out of business. And in a sense, those lounges on the ship, that's our earning capacity. To get people in there and to invest in them spiritually.

And so really, I feel that the conference ministry is equally important as the book exhibition ministry. Pastor's conferences, women's conferences, married couples conferences, conferences about the cults. You name it, they have conferences about it.

That brings people, when the people leave the conferences, they go up and buy books. They have a very good book display in the conference area. They now also have the large screen, not the large screen, but big TV sets so that all the audiovisual material can be relayed to the whole lounge, to several hundred people sitting in the lounge through this television network.

And they've been very slow to purchase this because of the tremendous struggle in finance. They've literally waited a couple of years. But they finally got this, and it's very, very powerful and helpful in communicating.

Whenever you pray for the ship, and you should be able to pray for the ship ministry even if you haven't had a ship report in a year, because it's so basic, you know what the ministries are, you know they're always having pastor's conferences, they're always having some of these other conferences. The speakers need prayer as they minister, sometimes through interpretation, etc. The third big ministry, I think, of the ship is the ministry to the people who are on the ship.

This is, in a sense, what makes the whole thing a very sane, down-to-earth program. You know, if all these people on the ship were professional people who could in the world earn normal salaries, I would say, you know, this ship is an awful lot of people and a lot of money to keep this thing going. But that ship is being run largely by volunteers.

And it provides them, as they're running the ship, from the computer to the book exhibition, to many, many of the other aspects, of course the people in the engine room, and the deck, number of other areas are professional people. But usually the officers, the people under them often are volunteers learning those skills. And so for everybody on the ship, it's a training program.

A valuable, once-in-a-lifetime, for most people, training program in which they're learning to relate to other people. That's certainly one of the biggest things you learn on the ship. They're learning how to live in difficult, pressurized circumstances.

And people might say, well, isn't that a little unreal? I don't think it is. Because I think the pressure that comes on those young people, when later they get married and fit back into society, is greater than any pressure we can put on them in OM. You may feel at times you have a lot of pressure even living here.

This is largely because you are very young and still probably a little naive about what life's about. The pressure's ahead long after you're out of OM and probably even forgotten to renew your prayer letter, and many ex-OMers don't even get prayer letters because it's just a forgotten experience in their past. And they've got so many present pressures, they're so battling for survival where they are now, they're not going to worry about what happened 10 years ago on OM.

And I have a lot of contact with ex-OMers, and most of them say it's tougher when you leave than when you're on. And that frightens some people, because when they're on OM, they're barely making it. Much less when they get married and they discover their husband, who seemed to be such a sanctified, loving, wonderful bloke, ends up to be a bit of a contentious, hung-up, emotional case who needs a lot of tender, loving care if he's going to make it through life.

And here this woman is trying to minister to this neurotic husband, a lot of them are, and then she's got three children also to cope with, and then the children want a dog, and then the children also have their friends, some of whom want to go to bed with them, and then some of the other children want to get into

this thing or that thing, and when they get older, one wants a motorcycle, the other one wants a hand glider, the other one wants to go to California in a spaceship, and life really begins to get complex. Oh, I often sit back and dream of the single life. I really appreciated these three days on the bus.

I was going to go back to London. That's why I wasn't sure I was going to be here. I was going to dodge back to London.

I just so enjoyed it. I forget London. I get to stay right here on the bus.

Of course, life, as you get married, as you get children, and all that's involved with that gets incredibly complex. Incredibly complex. Your home, after you once have a family, can become a pressure cooker that will make that OM team look like small play.

My home has its arms. I realize not everybody is going to be like the Verwer family. We're heavy on energy, heavy on mouth activity, highly strung, emotional, temperamental, moody.

That makes the whole family. And having a meal at the Verwer family can be equivalent to some kind of travel through a space movie. Anyway, I won't get into that.

I don't want to scare you away from marriage. But I just have such a burden that OM train people for life. It's not training for missionary work.

That is not the first goal. It's training for life. Even many missionaries.

Even Michael Griffiths, who often has a go at us, at least our short-term work, he likes the long-term. Well, he's not out there anymore. He's not in Bible college.

He had to settle down. He left OMF because he needed and wanted a more settled life with his children and his family. And so he took that job.

So even if you go out as a missionary, you're probably not going to remain out there all of your life. It's so beautiful to have to relate to different kinds of people. And you know, this is one of the dangers in OM.

Every spiritual training program has built within it the seeds of its own destruction. Built within OM are the seeds of its own destruction. Because if some of the things we believe so strongly get out of control, they are very destructive.

This is why you always hear me banging the gong of balance. Because this kind of thing that we teach in OM without balance can be very ugly. It certainly could have been very ugly in my family and very ugly for my wife if I hadn't come into some degree of balance.

So one of the great ministries I feel on the Dulas, and it's true in OM we hope in general, is that everybody's in training. One of the things about Dulas is they often throw different people in different jobs. And in one way this seems a little insane, but in another way it stretches people.

And here's a man like Michael Boshart. I had a lovely time with him. He took me out and bought me one of these beautiful ice creams.

I hadn't even been off the ship in three days. So we went off and had an ice cream. He started in the engine room.

And when someone suggested he go into lineup work, you know, you could hear the murmurings. And yet now he's one of the longest term lineup men. This very unique Swiss brother.

And you know, to me that's one of the beautiful things about this fellowship. That God has called us into his wide range of people. Politically and in his thinking, Michael Boshart when he came into OM, with his long hair and his unique form of dress, was mildly left.

Joe Blow, Californian right wing, short haired American, probably would have considered him far left. And yet to see that brother settle into an environment that does at times get dominated a little bit by right wing, more straight types of individuals. It's a miracle.

It's a miracle. And you know, if the body of Christ had more of this, and some places it does, just a wider range of acceptability of people. Letting love cover the differences.

Not feeling we've got to change everybody to get them to believe just as we believe. You know, I believe the church would be going a lot further. And we wouldn't be so hung up on secondary issues.

So I get excited when I see that inbuilt training program. Even God allowing that storm, people seasick all over the place. Praise the Lord, this is what life's about.

Life consists of getting sick. None of you that have never been sick, I'm not talking about seasickness, any kind of sickness. Life can be such a picnic until you lose your health.

You never appreciate your health until you don't have it. So you're lying in a hospital bed wondering if you have cancer, or wonder whether you're going to die of a heart attack. Life can suddenly take on a very different turn.

And that little taste of getting sick, the Lord can use even that. Next time you have to go to the dentist, and some people around, however, you'll probably be all afraid to open your mouth today, they really need to go to the dentist. Really.

It doesn't cost that much. Owen's willing to finance it, it's part of your support. Even if you don't have support, we'd like you to go to the dentist.

Because, you know, it's really not very pleasant if you're sitting in a meal one day and suddenly a tooth falls out of the guy's mouth and lands in his soup. That's it. On the Dumas, they have their own dentist.

And I challenge people to go to the dentist. And you know, when you're at the dentist and you get a little bit of pain, praise the Lord. I always praise the Lord at the dentist when I get pain.

Not because I'm a masochist, not because I like pain, I don't. But because I need that kind of exposure to reality. My life's been a little bit too easy.

Compared to a lot of the people I read about. Compared to people who had to live through the war. My life's been relatively easy.

And any little bit of pain, no. In one sense, of course, I don't want it. On the other hand, I thank the Lord for that reminder of what a lot of people are in permanently.

In prisons all over the world. In hospitals all over the world. A tremendous thing for some of you to get into hospital ministry.

Hospital ministry, ministry in jails, ministry among drunkards. Three major things that helped form my whole frame and lifestyle before O.M. was ever born. And exposed me to some of the things that I had not seen in my little sheltered, middle class, North American, suburban background.

And it was a great challenge. Another ministry of the Dumas, of course, is the ministry of taking the word to the people. We have the ministry of all those coming to the ship.

The conferences, the book exhibition, we might add to that. We have another ministry, the ministry of evangelism on the ship. They have evangelistic meetings on the ship.

They have evangelistic film shows on the ship. Sometimes people go right from the exhibition into a lounge and they have an evangelistic presentation. It's fantastic.

But then there's the ministry of going off the ship. The open air, that's waned a little since Ray Lynch has left the ship. And then the ministry of literature distribution.

The ministry with churches, taking them out in evangelism. And then, of course, the ministry, it's another whole separate ministry, if you're making a list, the ministry of teaching and challenge in the churches. Sometimes on Sunday, 30, 40, 50 or more meetings.

And the amazing thing is that while taking those meetings, many young people are getting the opportunity to give their testimony for the first time. They're getting the opportunity to learn how to handle book tables. They're getting the opportunity to, in some cases, preach.

And the ships have been turning out quite a few people who have learned how to minister while being involved in those church meetings. A lot of other things go on on shore. Sometimes the teams go into the interior.

The Lagos around India, a lot of the activity has been in the interior. And people are often thrown into the deep end. You know that expression.

Some of you don't know English as a first language. You must die with the expressions we have in the English language. What does it mean to be thrown into the deep end? Well, it's simple.

There's a swimming pool. The shallow end is for the children. The deep end is for those that know how to swim.

So you don't jump off the diving board in the deep end if you don't know how to swim. Unless you're in Operation Mobilization. If you're in Operation Mobilization, they'll push you off the diving board into the deep end.

And you either swim or you sink. And it seems that nine out of ten do swim. And of course we have the rescue program just before the person drowns.

The tenth person, we go get him and pump the water out of him and encourage him and counsel him and then push him in again. So that's an exciting ministry. Another ministry that goes on on the ship is the ministry with films.

If you read on reports, I went through about a hundred yesterday, you know that one of the things that God is using are these films. Team after team, all over the world, the film, the use of films and slides getting in openings. And we're presenting the gospel to tens of thousands of people through films.

That Dr. Schaeffer series that I sent to the duos in Spanish, I don't know how many times, they've shown the entire series. And whereas in some fields, it's difficult to organize the audiovisual, the equipment, in India it's a miracle. We've never been able to organize it.

And as you know, about \$40,000 of equipment was destroyed in that fire. But praise the Lord, there's more than that out on the fields. Don't think that all the literature equipment was destroyed in the Bombay fire because India is very decentralized, very decentralized.

So a lot of it was spread all over the country on the teams, literature, films, and projectors, and it's going on. It's going on. The backup from Bombay, that has been destroyed.

And of course, with a ship, they can do so much more in audiovisuals. You know, I remember when I first launched this Super 8 film vision, it was almost unheard of. It was another one of those little brainstorms that came.

People said, it won't work. I can remember Moody Institute of Science writing me, the big film people. No way.

And yet, that Super 8 ministry has taken off and is being greatly used. It's interesting that on the British airway jets, the jumbo jets between New York and London, they show you a film, Super 8. They're using Super 8 films on a lot of the jets for the films they show you when you fly long distance flights. So the world, they sometimes are way ahead of us in some of these things.

There are other ministries that go on aboard the ship, the ministry of counseling, never-ending counseling people on an individual basis. One of the values of the ship ministry is that you have a number of highly qualified leaders who are generally available most of the time. Now that doesn't mean everybody gets their share of fellowship.

Nowhere, in a sense, are there enough leaders and enough gifted people to give everybody everything that they want in the way of counseling and fellowship. And that's always a great struggle. But these men are living there.

Their wives are living there. Because they are serving one another, all the women don't have to go cook their own food and all that kind of thing, people often have more time. Far more man hours are available on a ship because of the way they function than in normal life.

Because in a sense, it takes as much time to prepare food for, say, 20 people as it would be almost to prepare food as they're often preparing it for 500 people when they're feeding one of the pastor's conferences. There's a lot of time available that can be used for counseling, fellowship, and that is an important ministry in itself. Well, I didn't mean to say so much about the doulos and about the ships.

And maybe some of that's just repetition. But I think it is incredibly important that you, as the backup office for this ministry and the whole ministry of OM, really understand, as we say on gut level, what it's all about. Because sometimes I pick up feedback of people who are trying to explain this ministry to a pastor and a Christian leader, and believe me, it is a greatly misunderstood ministry.

And there is over-opposition in this ministry. Our close friend Michael Griffiths, some of you may know, wrote me a letter explaining that he doesn't believe in this ship ministry. And if he, with his understanding of missions, has his questions, you can imagine the many questions and doubts other people of that type have about this ship full of young people.

Some people think we just sort of come into a port, and we all rush down the gangway, and we distribute gospel tracts. And, of course, we do give out tracts. Probably represents 2%, maybe 2% of the ministry of the ship.

As you pray for the ship, remember the enormous financial mountain that has to be moved. Despite the book sales, 60%, between 50% and 60% of the money still has to come in through your office, and New Jersey, and Mosbach, gifts. You see, if you don't see the gifts, you don't buy the books in the first place.

When you sell the books, you may make 30% or 40%, but if you don't have the gifts, you can't buy the books in the first place. The 30% and 40%, all of that, all of that is spent day by day running. Part of the 60%, the investment in the books, a large part of that goes back to pay for books.

But not enough, not enough. And all they need is a 10-day period in which they're not selling books, and you will see the whole economic scene within LM go through vibrations. Because they often distribute more books on one day than the entire budget of places like Pakistan or Bangladesh in a whole year.

And one of the struggles we're facing within LM is the huge size of the ship ministry in comparison to the very tiny size of LM Israel, LM Arab World, LM Bangladesh, LM Pakistan. Now put all that together, it's pretty big. Throw India in, it's bigger than the ship.

But those fields operate independently. They tell us, can we have \$1,000? Now they're crying out for \$1,000. Where over in Duas, they're crying out for \$100,000 so that they can pay the next avalanche of book bills or fuel bill or dry docking.

Dry docking often is \$50,000 to \$70,000, just dry docking. Lagos is dry docking right now in a month or two. Duas is dry docking and the pipeline finance needs to be kept open through intercessory prayer.

The future of the ship, the Duas is uncertain. Remain in Latin America, come back to Europe for a short time, go to Asia. This has not been settled.

If you've heard rumors it's settled, well you're doing better than I am on the gallery telegraph system. We just want the Lord's mind. Some of us, I guess I'm in that camp, really would prefer it to move on, whether via Europe or Africa to Asia.

But it's not my decision. It has to come more from the people who are committed to that ministry. They've got to have the faith for that.

Financially, we're still not ready for that move. At least that's the way one or two ship leaders that I spoke about feel. We need to just wait upon the Lord and trust the Lord to show what his plan is.

You know they had some great problems with the generators. That's still not totally resolved. And those generator problems, as big as they were, that's small compared to what can happen on an old, old ship.

You know I was amazed as I went down into the bowels of the ship and that one whole section of cabins was torn out. The amount of work just blows my mind. Because after they fixed the steel underneath it,

they had to rebuild those cabins piece after piece, washbasin after washbasin, vents, everything had to be rebuilt.

They're running two months behind schedule. In a sense it was taking just that much longer because it's just so much work. Why are they doing that? Some other problem takes place and some other steel has to be there.

And to meet some of these people who are doing the physical work on the ship, men like Randy Jury and Brian Jury, who have been on the ship almost from the beginning, welders, just really speaks to my own heart. Routine, hard, difficult work. You know some kind of jobs, a lot of things I do, in an hour or two hours a job is done.

I have a meeting, one hour it's over, it's a sense, wow, finished. Some of their jobs take them weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks before you see the end. Just that one job.

And I think we need to train more for the people on the physical side, the physical side of the ship work. And the officers, the whole area of safety. Alfie Franks, in sharing about the fire, we'll talk about India in a little while, he said it never even came to his mind in the past years that a fire would ever take place.

Never came to his mind. Man, never had a fire before. He's been there 17 years, why should he all of a sudden start thinking about fires? But you know on the ship they think fire, they think safety.

Instead of one fire station on Dulas, they have four fire stations. Whereas the Bombay Fire Department did not arrive with oxygen equipment, we have full oxygen equipment, perhaps two sets or more on the Dulas. They're ready to fight a fire.

And I think it's good for people in O.N. to know that that ship is a safe ship that's gone through all the inspections, that's going through all the necessary process to be as much as possible a safe ship where we can rest at ease in one sense to send our friends or our children or whoever to go there and to travel and to work and to live. Let's just spend a few minutes in prayer.

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