

# Ex Omers

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, support, and collaboration in overcoming challenges faced by Operation Mobilization in its mission work.*

**Duration:** 54:37

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 4:2, 1 Timothy 6:10, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:7

**Topics:** "Missions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experience of preaching in different churches and the importance of prayer partners. He mentions that he had a successful meeting in Bournemouth where many people signed up for his prayer letter. The speaker also talks about the challenges faced in the ministry, such as difficulties in recruiting and financial support. He emphasizes the faithfulness of God in sustaining the ministry and mentions the new challenge of reaching northern Spain.

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## Transcript

I wonder if we can just take a few minutes right now, because we want this to be an informal time, and I certainly don't want to mainly preach at you. I do want to share something from my own experience and from the word. But I just wonder, before I do that, is there anything you would like to ask about OM? Where is OM going in 1984? Maybe you've heard this, you've heard that.

You'd like to ask something. I'm a great believer in question-answer sessions. You remember the question-answer sessions, usually on sex, but we won't go into that tonight.

But it's good if we could just give you that opportunity to ask any question that you want. Anything at all. Really feel free.

Dulles, of course, came back to Europe partly because of economic difficulties in South America. That changed the whole picture in regard to book sales. As most of you know, the ship is supported largely by the gifts of God's people, but also by the book sales.

Sometimes it's 30% books and 70% gifts in answer to prayer, though we believe book sales also is an answer to prayer. Sometimes 40-60. This past year, of course, the book sales greatly dropped, which threw the ship into a very difficult, different type of situation.

Also, we found that in recruiting many Latin Americans, their support would often come for the first couple of months, and then suddenly there was no support, or we couldn't get it out of the country, or it devalued from this to this. Many, many other complications that have made this a hard year for Dulles. And yet we can say, and tonight is a good night to look back on the faithfulness of God, that he has kept this ministry going.

Not at the same level outwardly, but he has kept it going. And in some ways, through this providential situation, has brought the ship into a whole new challenge, the challenge of northern Spain and the challenge of being back here. You know, as someone who has to give a lot of my time to the home countries, I can only say to the person who thinks it's a waste of time for Dulles to be in England, that I take that actually very personally.

Because then it's even more of a waste of time, in my book, for people like Roton and Maiden and myself and Hicks, you know, to be back ministering in these home countries. In many ways, we don't want to be. But until the church is obedient to this book and comes into revival and obedience, and there must not just be revival, there must be revival and obedience.

Until that day, a lot of things aren't going to be what we would idealistically hope for. And just to get one individual, much less one church, just to get one individual on fire for God, and obedient to his word, is no small task. In fact, when I launched out in my Christian life, and in the early days of OM, and if I had seen how hard it was going to be, I probably would have given up before I ever left Mexico or the United States.

And so, we believe in the providence of God. He's put both ships back here in Europe. Only for a short time they'll be together in Britain, because of a number of other factors.

And we believe the Lord is just wanting to build up the foundation. In some ways, Lagos is already getting ready to launch out again. Though, as we met yesterday, the board of directors of Lagos, we don't feel Lagos is quite there.

And the Lagos schedule may be changed again. You know, some of our best prayer partners have actually gone to be with the Lord. I was at the funeral of another one just a few weeks ago.

And, you know, this is not exactly a praying generation. I don't know about your church. Is the strong point of your church intercessory prayer? Tearing down the strongholds of Turkey, Afghanistan, the Muslim world, the Hindu world, the unreached people, the 25 million Kurds, the Baluchis, the Patans? You talk to some Christians about these things, they think you're talking about a new sandwich.

But, in fact, these are unreached people's groups. And we feel, therefore, that not only the ships, but also some of us as leaders, as much as we find it at times a pain and a strain, that we've got to continue to work toward laying a solid foundation. And that's where we are right now with the ship ministry.

Lagos has gone 13 years. Doulos, what is it, six? Or is it pushing seven? Six. And very little time to consolidate in the home countries.

You know, it was sort of a... I mean, the Lagos, I was living on it. I can remember sitting down with the chief engineer in Rotterdam and getting a strategy that would have put the hair up on some people to get that ship out to India as quick as possible. We bought Lagos in October, and by February we were sailing with this very old ship toward India.

And two months later we were there, two or three months. So it is a time of consolidation. What does that mean? We're looking for prayer partners.

That's not easy. People are slow even to commit themselves to get our prayer letter. They feel, I already get two or three missionary prayer letters.

How can they get one more? You see, that's the kind of small vision people have. And I was in a church where I'd already preached a couple of years ago, ministering with Lagos two weeks ago in Bournemouth. A tremendous weekend.

They thought it was great. But when I took a survey there two weeks ago and found out how many had the prayer letter, very few. And so I really, you know, poured out my heart, and that night 75 people signed for the prayer letter, more than I've ever had in a meeting that I can remember.

I guess I came on a bit strong. But sometimes one of my problems is being too vague. You may not think so, but some people do.

So that was an encouragement. So we're looking for prayer partners who will pray. We know some of those people will give.

Some of them may not give. Some are already committed in their giving. No problem.

But as they pray, God will work. And that's one of the most important ministries we have. Now at the same time when the ship comes in to do this kind of consolidation work, a lot of the other ministries all go on as usual.

Evangelistic meetings. We had one in Bournemouth with Lagos. A thousand people were there.

You know, not many OM meetings we attract a thousand people to. I'll tell you, we usually need a ship to do that. And I was there the next night.

We didn't have that many, but it was a challenging meeting. So all the other ministries go on, not always at the same proportion. Very few people can grasp all that's happening through the ships.

In fact, I find the actual people living on the ship don't even know what's happening on the ship. They're all working away in their department, and there's plenty of work on the ship. And that's why sometimes we get accused of being workaholics.

But there is a lot of work on the ship. And they're working away, and they can't get in on all the blessings. They can't sit in on all the meetings.

There are people down in the engine room right now. They don't have this message piped in. They've got to listen to any funny sounds that may come in the generators that tend to hiccup.

Others are working in other aspects of the ship. No doubt somebody's doing dishes right now, that monster dish-breaking machine, washing machine. And it's just really quite amazing when you do sit down.

And I just recently read again that four-and-a-half-year report of South America. I think you'll find some on the free literature stand. You check and see if that's there, Benjamin.

But they print that right here on the ship. That's another thing going on on the ship, printing literature. So we're consolidating, yet we're not sitting around.

We're evangelizing. We're having pastors' conferences, leaders' conferences, every kind of conference you can think of, even some you've never thought of. And I've been involved in both ships almost every single week now for the last six, seven, eight weeks.

And I tell you, it has challenged me. You go find some of those, Benjamin. See if you can find some of those.

Spanish, run out. Oh, I brought some. They're out in my bus.

Anyway, how many do you have there? Oh, they're in the pack? Let's check, because they may not be in all the packs. I don't think they're in all the packs. Anyway, don't worry about that.

If you'd like it, we'll send it to you. But as I read through that, four-and-a-half years in South America, I was just amazed. And we're encouraged.

And then recently, we've seen a large gift. This is the leaf that I was just referring to and trying to get some preps. We've had a large gift, meeting almost one-half the cost of a new generator for this ship, that, according to our Marine Superintendent, Mike Pointer, will use heavy oil, which is much cheaper, and save \$7,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 every month.

You see, we don't use our main engines much, but this power, it takes generators. And so we've seen a breakthrough equal to half the price of that generator. That generator, when we pray the whole thing in, will cost more than the entire ship Logos.

So we're dealing with a big item. And that's another reason the Lord's brought us back here. In fact, the generator we have our eyes on is up in Finland, and that's probably where we will install it.

It's a huge undertaking, and it needs a lot of prayer. The original thought I've heard of was that you have to cut a hole in the side of the ship to put it in. Now they're taking measurements, and there's some thought it can come in from above, not on angels' wings, but on a crane, and it's a huge undertaking.

So we're encouraged. There's a long way to go. We're also aware now that there's not just two ships at sea.

Youth with a Mission has a ship bigger than this out in the Pacific. They just got another ship, a 1,000-ton coaster. That didn't add to the fleet, because the famous missionary ship Ebenezer was just sunk off the coast of Indonesia.

A heart-breaking experience. But all on board, Captain Nyambola, is a small old World War II minesweeper. They all got to the lifeboats at three in the morning, and they're all safe.

But the famous Ebenezer, which predates Lagos as a ministry, is in the bottom of the ocean. What a reminder that operating ships is a serious business. That's why we don't mind slowing down a while.

We also need more people. And let me just lay it to you straight, because I think ex-OMers know this. Only half the problem today is getting the people.

The bigger half, 51%, is for them to see the breakthrough for support. Because I tell you, the churches often, with their building programs and their new organs, and all the things they're into, gymnasiums in America, bowling alleys, swimming pools, the works, the missionary budget is not a high priority. And I feel greatly embarrassed that in some ways I challenge so many young people to launch out, and so often the adults, and the people who have this world's goods, contrary to 1 John 3.16, have not been willing to invest that to send forth the labor.

So we got to preach both messages. You know, as one member suffers, we all suffer. And as the church suffers from lack of vision, and lack of motivation in regard to world missions, and I'm very sympathetic toward pastors.

I just spoke on this ship to a pastor's conference. In fact, I had three pastor's conferences in one week. One in Merseyside, in advance of the ship.

One on Lagos in Poole. One here in Swansea. And I don't know if you realize what the average pastor's up against.

Probably one out of ten people in his church are on the verge of divorce. Probably, you know, another one out of ten are on the verge of a mental or emotional problem. In fact, in the United States now, pastors have fallen into the fourth group, according to a recent survey, for divorce.

Pastors. So not only are they dealing with divorce in their church, they are maybe on the verge of divorce themselves. Then there's those with emotional problems.

Then there's this problem and that problem. So, you know, we have to be patient in working with the churches in why they don't have such a vision for the Muslim world. And why they're not sending out, you know, ten more laborers next year to India.

And the enemy is literally attacking on every side. And the secret of OM has been, in some ways, our deep relationship with the local churches, which has been built on, yes, a strong message, but also much patience and understanding to build together. Well, I'm terrible at answering questions, you see.

You ask a strategic question like that, and I'm off to the races. But there it is. I'll stop right there.

Who has another question? Yes, John. That's a good question. I'm sure it is affecting OM.

There's no question. We are working in dialogue with new groups all the time to convince them that we can work together in world evangelism. We are not the local church.

And if you study the Book of Acts, you'll see that evangelism was carried on by teams. And those teams eventually led to the establishment of churches. Now, one of the major churches in California was moving that way.

You know, we're going to do our own thing. We're going to send out cassette tapes. They're going to be our missionaries.

And through biblical study, I've just received an invitation to preach in that church, and they have just moved their position back and realized they need to work together with biblical parachurch organizations. I don't like the word parachurch, but at least people know what that means. Groups like OMF, WEC, Youth with a Mission, OM, are classified as parachurch, because they're not a local church.

And so, actually, we're seeing a swing in the pendulum right now in a lot of strong local churches realizing if the job is going to be done, they need parachurch agencies who have expertise, who know the language, who are strong, abiding, permanent forces in a country. OM has been in Turkey 17 years. To bypass OM Turkey and just go into Turkey would be as foolish as me going next to your local church and just forgetting you ever existed and start a new church, appoint some apostles or something else, which sometimes actually happens.

But, praise the Lord, there has been that tendency, but quite a few are swinging back. And there's dialogue and there's discussion. Now, new mission boards are also being created.

Greg Livingston is pioneering a new mission board called Frontiers. And they are far more avant-garde. It's far easier to get with them and get going.

It's sort of a combination of OM principles and other Livingston principles and biblical principles. He's praying about 2,000 people for the Muslim world. So there are new structures that the Holy Spirit is raising up.

I believe, of course, that if the Lord leads a church to have its own missionary sending agency, that's what the Brethren Assemblies eventually did. When they got very big, they saw all the problems of local churches just doing their own thing. What did they do? They created echoes of service just down the road here and back to provide structure so that things could be done decently and in order.

And all the other things that have to take place, very few people understand what an ongoing missionary work takes. And so maybe some of these new denominations, like, for example, the Bradford Denomination, they don't like to be called a denomination, but it's got every single feature of any denomination in 2,000 years of history, and they shouldn't be ashamed of that. They are creating a structure and will probably have a mission society full-fledged probably within the next 10 years.

Now, praise the Lord, we've seen in past history interdenominational missionary structures like OM, OMF, and we've seen denominational missionary structures, the Elam Church, echoes of service, hallelujah! The main thing is that the Word gets preached and that people go out and that churches get planted. And you know, when it comes to planting churches among the Kurds, 25 million precious souls with hardly a single church, you know, though I have my own beliefs, personally, I don't care if it's a Pentecostal church or a Brethren Assembly or a Baptist church or even a Bradford House church, hallelujah! Anybody who can plant a church among the Kurds, I'm going to give them a prize or ask the Lord to when they get to heaven. And these people have such a church-planting vision, I say, why plant a church right next to somebody else's church, if it's a live church? Though, you know, you never stop them from doing that and I believe there's a place for church-planting in Britain because there's church-growth in Britain.

But boy, it'd be great if we had a few church-planters for the Kurds and the Patans and the Baluchis and about 1,000 other unreached people's groups. You know, recently, this is a beautiful thing, the Bible Presbyterians of Singapore are very strong local church people. And one of their churches launched an article against parachurch groups, including OM.

And their church called all their people back, including some on this ship. And they tried to influence the entire Bible Presbyterian denomination in Singapore. It's a very strong work, very conservative work.

And you know, the denomination just met together and they decided not to accept this one church's decision as a denominational decision. And so the Bible Presbyterians, we don't know what will happen next year, at least for one more year, they're still moving with us. And they are one of the strongest local church-type fellowships.

That's a great encouragement to us because we believe that when OM, with all the experience God has given us now for a quarter of a century, the contacts, the language learning, when we can team up with these strong local churches who have the manpower, who have the resources, who have often expertise on a local level, when we can get that combination together, that is hard for the devil to stop. Each one on their own. I've seen the enemy stop them cold.

But that combination together, very hard to stop. Someone else. Keep an eye on the watch here.

Yes. Not in a big way. We're just stretched in so many ways, OM right now, in so many different visions.

I don't think OM is being led into big, longer-term rural development relief. We feel Afghans are special. They were the top of our list as an unreached people's group from the very founding days of OM.

And so for Afghans, we would do what we would not necessarily do for the Italians, the Spanish, or even the Turks. We praise God for other groups in rural development. We believe the greatest hope for OM's vision is within ex-OMers.

There's only 1,600 OMers, plus a lot of children. Hundreds. An average of one baby every five and a half days.

Especially with an avalanche of twins. But we believe the key manpower source of OM is actually with the ex-OMers. Many of them get with groups that are in social work and rural development.

And that's great. That's great. But I'm not sure we have the mandate, that's the word we're using around OM lately, a mandate from the Lord to start up in a big way in that area.

Actually, we are quite concerned to keep our growth slow and steady because we don't want to lose the personal touch and the personal family spirit that still exists within OM. It's more difficult now that there's so many people. It's more difficult on this ship than Longos.

But it is possible. Because in any case, even in a church, even a small church, you don't get an in-depth relationship with everybody. You only get so many in-depth relationships.

That's all you need, in a sense. How many did Jesus have? But you can have love and compassion and a degree of personal touch for a wider range, of course, of people by the grace of God. Someone else? I think we'll have one more question.

One of the greatest areas of exo-emer work where we're trying to do something. Let's understand that some exo-emers, there's nothing that we can do except pray. I mean, they don't necessarily need us.

Some may not even want us to be involved with them. We don't want to presume that we're going to set up some great alumni association, as the Americans call it. But we want to be available and we want to pray.

And I get dozens and dozens of prayer letters from exo-emers, and use them in prayer time. Excuse me. But within India, there's a greater need to help the exo-emers.

It's harder for them to get their feet on the ground in a new ministry. And so we're more involved in supplying literature, sometimes supplying finance, in a small way. We would ask you to really pray for the thousands of exo-emers in India, some of whom are really struggling in difficult situations.

Living on a very small income. Maybe praying for weeks, the Lord would, maybe months, give them a bicycle. You know, back here, you get somebody praying that the Lord will take them from the Ford Escort category to the Rolls Royce category.

I don't even know, understand cars that well. Which ones are the good ones? But, you know, out there, they're often praying for a bicycle. And we feel very, very committed to the exo-emers in India.

My wife and I, and she's with me on the ship today, and my son Daniel, we are headed out to Pakistan. Pakistan has become our substitute for India. Our heart's in India, but we still can't get a visa.

We go to Pakistan. Do you know how many people we have in Pakistan? Ninety-four million. I would say that's more than enough for George Ver and his wife to keep pretty busy for the rest of their life.

And we got ninety-four million in Bangladesh as well. And temporarily, we've made a number of interesting moves in O.M. We've increased our efforts on the area leadership basis. Dr. Alan Adams is the area leader for East Asia, Singapore onward.

Jonathan continues, Macrosti is the leader in Europe. Dennis Alexander, based in Lebanon, the leader for the Middle East. They're working closely with Bertil, the leader for the Arab world, which is like an area.

And now David Hicks is the leader for North America. And I've dumped a lot of my responsibilities in connection with Mexico and Canada on to David Hicks. And I am the temporary leader looking very, very much for my replacement of the subcontinent.

Because in the subcontinent, we now not only have India, we have Bangladesh, a growing work among Muslims. Pakistan with one of our, I feel, one of our really gifted leaders, Mike Wakely, as well as a very small work in Nepal and Sri Lanka. And you know, in that area, where I'll be going for two months.

Appreciate your prayers. We have a billion souls. One thousand million, you say over here.

What a challenge. What a challenge. One of the reasons now I can get more time for that part of the world is because Peter Maiden, who still is the British director, is also the associate international leader of OM.

And is taking a lot of my load, especially finance. In terms of, you know, when people want money or they got a complaint or unpaid bills, all that kind of thing, they call Peter Maiden. They don't bother me with all that anymore.

I'll help pray it in, let him spend it. But it really has been one of the greatest answers of prayer in my life that God has raised up. Someone like Peter, willing to work closely with the likes of me.

Difficult, loud mouth, the worst type of temperament, choleric, emotionally unstable, subject to various problems. It's so good to have someone like him. And my burden actually is to be able to give myself at least more time to evangelism and evangelistic preaching.

And I saw this in Poland last year. I saw it in Pakistan. Though I try to worm out of it.

I try to get out of it. Because evangelistic preaching is five times harder than preaching to believers. You sometimes feel the enemy is just right there, about to put his teeth in your nose.

My nose is quite sensitive and long. And I just felt when I was in Poland, also when I was in the Soviet Union, and when I was in Pakistan, that I must take a certain amount of my time and give it to evangelistic ministry. And taking people with me, so they can learn how to do it at the same time.

And believers will get turned on as well. Oswald J. Smith, I think, taught me that. And in one of his books, he says, you want to see somebody really grow in their faith, take them with you in evangelism.

Let them see souls coming to Christ. Let them see answers to prayer. Let them see you in action, rather than just listening to you talk.

And they will be stirred on. You know, Oswald J. Smith practiced that. He had a little vision for missions.

He had the evangelism and the missions, you know, together. He's still alive, by the way. He's 90 plus.

I wonder how he'll be doing at that age. It's been a blessing to have with me on this trip an old friend who came to Christ out in India and got linked with O.M. in a special way, Tal Brook. And I'm going to ask Tal if he would come now and just share whatever's on his heart, really, Tal.

But maybe some of the ways you see how a person who's not in O.M. full time can still, you know, be 100 percent linked with this burden and with this vision. Thank you, Tal. It's a horrible idea to think that we backslide when we get out of O.M. or we've lost our salvation.

I think in a lot of... you know, that's a horrible thing. I think in a lot of Christian groups, you all know, having been in O.M. for years, I mean, for a long time, a lot of you I know, that you can get into this mentality where you're afraid of the outside or dealing with the outer world. You know, you're here and you're doing this righteous thing and there's an intimidation and a fear regarding, quote, the outside.

And the thing that the Lord has pressed on me, right now I'm at Princeton, after being a writer for ten years, God opened up a scholarship at Princeton, so I'm back there at Princeton University Seminary. So, what I find is that it's an absolute joy for me to be able to mingle with the world on all sorts of levels. In a seminary with some very orthodox evangelicals, he's got a problem.

And, you know, and with some extremely liberal people who to me comprise the enemy. The question is, do we become turtles and do we go underground in that sort of milieu? Or do we somehow try to address the need at the moment? And I think if we're to be sought in this world, if we're to have any effectiveness whatsoever, without any apologies or fear, we participate in the full thrust of life wherever God has us, where we're useful and we meet people on their level, we learn to dialogue with the world. And this is what I pray to the Lord I can do the rest of my life.

Our assignment, I mean, in a sense, I feel OM for life. And that's why, in a sense, I think of myself as associate staff for life. I probably am unless I backslide.

Wherever we are, we have got to meet people and we're going to have the chance to meet people in all kinds of situations. I'm meeting people at Princeton that I never would have met in OM. And yet I tell you that when Peter Conlon came through and spoke at Princeton, he had a very large turnout due to

George's speaking at Vision 82 in the area due to my having known already half the seminary.

I know a lot of people there. God has opened one door after another. And some of these are extremely talented people who God can use in different contexts.

I've got a vision for cinema, for people who are Christians to do quality movies on the par of Chariots of Fire. I have a vision as a writer of seeing raised up people of equal gifts of some of the large secular minds. Some of the people whose best sellers flood the market and have been doing so for decades and whose books have more impact on the secular world than we can ever imagine.

And a lot of our Christian publishing attempts are impotent in comparison with some of these things. So we're in a full scale war that's multi-level. We can't be simplistic.

But the important thing to do, and I try to do this in my own life, is a minute to minute checking your heart. Is your life on the compass? Are we on the right track? And we can't have a defeat mentality. This is where we need to encourage each other.

I stay in fairly close contact with George and that of course helps me all the time. As a brother, to feel, as he does with many different groups, the nerve endings of what God is doing on the world. George is not just obsessed with O.N. He's very interested with many other groups and different leaders because you have a sense of what's happening on the fringe, globally.

What's going on? Where in India are conversions beginning to happen? Why? What sort of polemical message is turning the Hindus? Is it something that Donald McGavern thought of from his church growth idea? His years in India? Are we dealing with something new, a new twist? Is the Marxism in Bengal creating atheists who are then open to becoming Christians? What's the chemistry? And this is the sort of thing we need to be aware of and in continual dialogue. My feeling is that, as I said, I feel like O.N. for life. I don't give up on friendships.

I have a friendship with George. It's a very deep one. I've got that with Peter Conlon, with Nigel Lee, with many people in O.N. You never give up on that.

I feel plugged into these people for life. What they do concerns me. So whether I'm at Princeton or the Lord moves me over here, that has no bearing on the connection and we should all feel similarly.

This is true in a family situation. You always feel that connection with your family. That doesn't change, hopefully.

And I think if I have a message, it's that and just to encourage us as we go into different secular occupations to feel that you haven't sold out or things haven't changed. God can greatly use you there and He may draw you back into O.M. I'm no judge of that. But then wherever we are, we can be dynamically used.

We do not need to carry with us a sort of semi-children of God cult sense that I'm out of the Lord's will because I'm not doing full-time Christian work. That's an illusion. Some of the most powerful people I know who are doing Christian work are right there in the middle of it all in the world.

And their voices in the marketplace wouldn't be heard otherwise. So let me just share that with you and if there's anything you want to talk about later, please ask me. So, give it back to George.

Thanks, Tal. I do, some of you want to talk to him, get a hold of him, be around tonight. Maybe I'll just mention the books now because then when I finish the message we'll just close in prayer.

This little book section here has some very special books and I'd like to mention a couple of books that we may have been pushing when you were on OM. Depends how far back you go. But there are some new books that really have meant a lot.

I think most of you recognize that OM, in its early days, had some extremes and the Lord, somehow, in His mercy, with those extremes, kept driving home to us 1 Corinthians 13. That was never missing from OM's earliest days. And the other extremes kept being brought into perspective and into balance by 1 Corinthians 13.

And every time there was a new book on love, I'd circulate it around to the OM leaders. And I don't know where OM would be today. I dare to say it could be quite ugly if it wasn't for 1 Corinthians 13.

The message of love and all that that means. And that's why we keep looking for new books. And one that made an impact on OM in the last three years is Love Covers.

And if you've been on OM recently, you know all about this book. But if you haven't been around, there it is. Love Covers.

Showing how different kinds of Christians from different backgrounds can work together, respect one another, grow together. We're never all going to agree. Bill Heimer is 80, 81 years of age.

Still worshiping Jesus. He's written Destined for the Throne. Don't Waste Your Sorrows.

So there's a brilliant book that some of you may want to get tonight. A book that we've been pushing all along, way, way back. Spiritual Leadership, Oswald Saunders.

In fact, all who are trained in leadership in OM, generally, they are required to read this. Now the sequel of this book has just been published this year. And we've waited a long time.

Paul the Leader. Paul the Leader. So if you have already this one, then get Paul the Leader.

A Vision of Christian Leadership Today. I wish I could take a day off and finish reading it. I started, haven't finished.

Another beautiful book that I just think is so significant. It was given quite a famous award, the Writer of the Year Award, is Celebration of Discipline. I notice that continually in Christian magazines they are taking chapters from this book.

It is a goldmine. And one or two things in it that perhaps some of us wouldn't be so happy about. One or two of his ideas on meditation.

But most of the book is just really powerful. I would suggest perhaps if you don't get any other book tonight, you get this. I know it will minister to you.

And those of us who are somewhat, we feel we may be somewhat O-M-ish. You like that term? I don't actually. But you know, evangelism, prayer, discipline, you know, that's half the O-M story.

That half without the other half actually gets pretty pretty gross. But on the other hand, the other half, the love, the balance, the patience, sensitivity, that without this becomes insipid. You need both.

You need both. So those of us who sometimes are a little strong on evangelism and work, what's everybody sitting around for? We need to sit down and read books like this. Celebration of Discipline.

And his section here on solitude, very strong in my heart. His section on simplicity, meditation, a beautiful book. Lastly, how many of you are married? Many, many O-M'ers get married.

How many of you are married? Raise your hand. Please raise your hand. How many are married? Well, about 50%.

I made a lot of mistakes in my marriage. I had very little training, you know. At Moody Bible Institute there wasn't one single course, not one single hour given to the subject of marriage that I can remember.

We spent time studying a lot of things that I never ever used in my ministry. Maybe it's my fault. You know, all the stopping places in Sinai.

All the kings of Israel and what they did. And I just wish someone had given me... I had one book on marriage back then. It helped me a lot.

But I'm amazed at some of these books. And I just strongly recommend the writing to Norman Wright. This is his second or third book.

Communication Key to Your Marriage. And it is. And I learned, for example, a little bit late and I'm still learning it, what a very poor listener I am if my wife is doing a speaking.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones on a cassette tape, no problem. Billy Graham on a cassette tape, no problem. One of my leaders is upset about something, no problem.

I'm listening. Tune in. But my dear wife, there's something psychological, maybe I need psychiatric help, that I can be looking at her and not hearing anything that she's saying.

And I'm so phony that when she asks me if I'm listening, I say, of course I'm listening. That's why I've written another book called No Turning Back. Because the truth is when I've looked at some of my failures in my life, a lot of them little things that other people don't even know about, I have really been tempted right to the very core of my toes to pack it all in.

Just throw it all in. OM, marriage, the Christian life, everything. And if you know anything about psychology, you know that I have the perfect temperament for throwing it all in.

And as I've watched some people in my temperament, and I've seen their marriages explode, and I've seen their lives explode, I thought, wow, the main thing in my life isn't how much I accomplish. The main thing in my life is somehow survival. I got a lot of other stable people in OM, a lot of other steady people like Rotan.

I've just watched him take over like a Swiss clock now for 27 years. He's just off to India to take my place. I've just realized I've got a lot of men, they're going to get all kinds of visions, OM is going to grow, and my need is to survive.

Because I'm such a vulnerable target of the enemy. So I've written a book, No Turning Back, and that's the burden of my life, and that's what I want to share a little bit about right now. Let me look at my computer report again here.

I'm going to finish it. Now that we've got the book reviews, 2020, don't think it's actually that bad. I just thought it would be good because I hear some music going on in the background, I don't know whether the troopers are going to come in here any minute or what.

They have another meeting going over there, which is part of ship life, so don't worry about it, I won't let it bother me. Turn quickly to the book of Habakkuk. One of my burdens is to pace myself and slow down, give more time to intercessory prayer, correspondence, not take so many meetings, so I've really cut back on meetings, and this night is the final meetings of this year.

I used to take about 900 meetings a year, now I'm down around 500, and I hope I can cut it even more, because also I see that it's not the number of meetings you take, that's for sure, but the quality, and even tonight I just pray that somehow we'll get what the Lord wants to give in these closing moments together. I want you to look at the book of Habakkuk, the last chapter. The subject that I'm sharing with you, I preach on quite often.

The message will be a little bit different, I hope geared to those of you who have been on OM, and may now be out in some other ministry, and I want to talk about dealing with discouragement. Of all the messages I've shared on, lately, this is the one that brings almost the greatest feedback. I think it may even bypass the sex message feedback.

I don't preach so much on sex anymore, I let younger men get up and speak to this generation on that. Though it is amazing, the requests, I had huge meetings in Switzerland some months ago, they insisted I take a seminar on what the German Radio System is, and I started on the road of discipline in this area, and lo and behold I found they just broadcasted this seminar over the whole German Trans World Radio System, as someone was driving down the road and suddenly George Burr comes beaming in on his car radio on sex. Well, the Lord is merciful.

I'd rather preach really on dealing with discouragement, though there is a slight overlapping, because if there's anything that discourages some of God's people is when they have a failure in the area of sex. It seems that people can bounce back from almost any kind of failure. You get Mr. Hothead, he loses his temper, no problem, next day he's back in the Bible.

You get Mr. Irritability, he gets irritated, says something really ugly, somehow he repents, sleeps on it, next day he's back in the Bible. Pride, I mean, most people have trouble with pride. A lot of Christian leaders have trouble with pride, but, you know, somehow they repent, say, Lord, I'm sorry, forgive me, boom, they're back in the Bible.

But I'll tell you, when the fiery dart of impurity strikes at a man's soul or a woman's heart, often it's months, and sometimes years, before they ever recover. It's so devastating to a Christian with his high ideals, when this difficulty comes into their life, and therefore many are discouraged. Many young people have recommitted their life this summer, in our Christian camps, they're already sleeping with their girlfriends by now, and there's no way they can completely turn the voice of their conscience off when they do that.

They try. This generation is especially trying hard. And they'll watch James Bond until he falls out of bed, and their conscience will still bother them, because they know what the Word of God says, and if the Holy Spirit is in their hearts, there will be a witness by the Holy Spirit that they are into impurity, and that what they are doing is wrong.

So what happens? They get into discouragement, they feel their total failures, they feel God can no longer use them. In fact, we have found it's quite normal among exilers. After two years of semi-monastic life, sailing around the seven seas, with an overly strict social policy, they arrive back in their hometown, and little Johnny come lucky, dazzles little Sally Sue with his bright eyes, and they're off to watch James Bond or Clint Eastwood, and after the film they get carried away, and they're not just eating pizza.

And what happens? They're devastated. All their ideals, all their goals, everything they've been taught for two years, in one night, gone. And so we find, of course, that people like OM people, who have been exposed to the front lines of spiritual combat, are more vulnerable than many who have never gone forth to war.

And in any war there will be casualties, and those who don't go to war don't become war casualties. And so what happens? One OM-er backslides, maybe nine in that particular town go on for the Lord, but one backslides. What's the one we hear about in that town, by the churches in that town? We hear about the one who backslides, not the nine who go on.

And, of course, nobody is taking surveys about those who never go. There's all kinds of surveys being taken to missionaries. Missionary casualties, those who go one term, those who go two terms.

You know, it's now with the computer, it's coming out in fine print. When are we going to have a survey on those who've never gone? How many of those who've never gone on OM are divorced today, or are casualties today, or whatever other kind of crazy statistic you want to produce? So there is an overlapping in these two burdens that I often share about. Let's read these verses.

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, verse 17, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, the field shall yield no food, that's pretty heavy, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. That's where you and I must stay, right there, on verse 18. That's the only way to live.

And if you don't choose that road, sooner or later you will be discouraged, sooner or later you will be a casualty. You get your eyes on the fold, you get your eyes on the fruit, you get your eyes on other things, and sooner or later you're going to be discouraged. But if you take that as your motto, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Verse 19, give us the reason for this. It doesn't leave us dangling. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hind's feet, like a deer's foot, and He will make me walk upon mine high places to the chief singer of my string instruments.

You know, almost from the moment of my conversion, people were predicting my departure from the faith. It's always interesting to hear about that. People wouldn't generally directly say it to me.

They would say it to someone else. And then in a conversation, somehow it would come up, the person would say, oh well, yeah, so and so just believes the way you're living is impossible, and that you're just going to be wiped out by the end of the year. So it's a very encouraging ministry.

Anybody prophesying over you like that? And really, to be quite honest, I can understand, a lot of people were afraid of O.M. in the early days, largely because they were afraid of me. And I don't, I don't have, I've never had the problem of holding anything against anybody. But Lord knows, I've got so many other problems.

You can't have them all, isn't that good? I've just never had this problem of, uh, I'd better be careful, take heed, lest you fall, maybe I'm going to have this one this year. But I've never had this problem of holding things against people. And, uh, I can understand people being afraid of O.M. I mean, think of when this thing first arrived in England.

I mean, really, it was way out. I mean, within after a month of being here, we were, we were, we were talking about reaching 25 million with the Word of God that summer. You know, here were some missionary societies hadn't yet read, met, reached 25 million in 50 years of hard, sincere, dedicated work.

And along comes this little, skinny, long-nosed, loud-mouthed gospel pipsqueak, says, we're going to reach 25 million souls this summer. I mean, they wanted to stone me. One missionary leader just talking to me, I could see his blood vessels, you know.

And he, I've never seen that man since. I tried to win his friendship, it just didn't work. I think he thought that I was, because somebody wrote that I had distributed pornography, that he was thinking that I believed that my distribution of pornography, which I never did that much, I thank the Lord, were my credentials for being into Christian literature.

Because I had never said that nor believed it. But he read this into this newspaper article and was very much upset. And he expressed it to me, which is good, most people never did come to me face to face.

But I can understand. And I just realized that if God can keep someone like myself, it's now almost 30 years. And I know I have a long way to go.

And that's why I will not allow the publication of my biography, because, you know, I just feel that I have just so much yet to learn. And that my life has been littered with failures, though they may be small in the minds of some and don't produce any scandalous articles in the local gospel gazette. They have been heart-breaking to me, very heart-breaking to me.

And I know that if God can keep someone so weak, who's had so much failure as he has kept me, that he can keep all of you right to the end of the race. And really, this is why we wanted you to come here today. We didn't brought you here so we can get you wound up again on OM.

That's not our first burden. You know us better than that. You can't even get an OM newsletter without, you know, writing in and sometimes chasing the office down.

We're not here to sign you all up. We're not going to take some big, you know, alumni special offering for George Verro's Retirement Center at the end of the meeting. Our burden in bringing you here today and inviting you to be here is that somehow this may be a blessing to you, that somehow as you go into 1984 it will be a year for much more.

That's a poem. I was never too good at poems. I've written my wife one or two of my nervous moments.

And I believe that one of the most important concepts that we must have in our spiritual life is right here in Habakkuk. The Lord God is my strength. The Lord God is my strength.

When my friends fail, when organizations fail and they will, when my local church fails and it will, when I even fail myself because we do fail ourselves, we fail to live up to our own promises, the Lord is still there. And that has been more than anything else that which has kept me going. Sometimes people say or ask, you know, what is it that's kept you going these years in the work? I generally say it's not any one thing.

I say that because I feel that part of the human nature is to look for the total easy answer. That's part of us. And I see people popping from here to there, jumping from church to church, from group to group, from theory to theory, from sanctification convention to sanctification convention, looking for the total final answer that's finally going to set them free from whatever may be bothering them.

And I feel that's one of the great mistakes, even of our generation today. Some came into OM thinking, really, it was the total answer. Maybe you came that way.

There's the New Testament Movement. Boy, these people, they got it together. They know how to pray.

They're into evangelism. They're into the disciplined life. Well, you see them at 630 in the morning doing exercises.

These people are dying to self. And probably by the end of your first year on OM, if you're normal, some of you are still trying to figure that out, you were disappointed. You were disappointed.

Because you discovered that OM is part of God's New Testament plan. It's far from perfect. The human factor is there on every corner.

Inconsistencies exist despite every desire we have to be consistent, to be ethical, to be pure before God, to be totally honest in all that we do, to be open, to be above board, to walk in the light. Somehow inconsistencies take place, somehow by the very flukes of human behavior. In fact, in some cases, in the process of trying to help one person, we neglected someone else.

That's why some people come into OM and it's one of the greatest experiences of their life, and some people go home at the end of the summer, and it's the worst experience they've had in their life. I don't know many in that category, but there have been some. So I don't think it's any one little thing that's going to keep us going and keep us from discouragement.

And I think as we grow older, and I'm thrilled to be in these middle years, I tell you, this is great. My battery is not only charged, it's been overcharging, and some of the acid has actually poured out on my wife. Pray for her.

But really, it's so good to be in these middle years. Some of you look like you're getting there. Right, some of you have leaped past it.

But you see, so many years, I always had people laying the youthful zeal trip on me. Have you ever had that laid on you? You know, you do something for Christ, you give out some literature, you preach, you're moving for God, and somebody says, that's not the Holy Spirit, it's just youthful zeal. Wait till he becomes a man.

You know, wait till he has a few hairs on his chest. You know, he's got a wife and a couple of kids in there. He'll lay off all this hot gospel.

That's a term I first heard when I came to England. I never heard that one. Hot gospel.

As if there was some kind of cold gospel. The Bible does say our God is a consuming fire. Consuming fire.

And, I don't believe it was youthful zeal even when I was 17.

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