

Future of Forest Hill

by George Verwer

George Verwer shares his thoughts on the future of Forest Hill, emphasizing the importance of being a service team, taking ownership of special projects, and having a significant voice in the world.

Duration: 31:26

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Report"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the lack of Christian presence in the world of video games and the potential impact it could have on reaching young people. They mention meeting a leading Christian in the video game industry and express excitement about the possibility of creating Christian games. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of personal letters and phone calls in their ministry, as well as the effectiveness of including DVDs and other materials in their correspondence. They express a desire for breakthrough in their Operation DVD vision and discuss the challenges of obtaining audiovisual materials at affordable prices.

Transcript

Initially Resham Raj was going to have a third session, but that wasn't possible. So we've extended this fellowship time. And now I'm just going to take some time just to share something that I think is incredibly important for all of us.

Just a statement about where are we going as a fellowship? What's happening? Where are we going at Forest Hill? I think we know the end of last summer when we were looking at things and I gave reports to the board, it looked actually a little grim that the Forest Hill side, not the fellowship, may not be able to continue. And there were a couple of pretty important meetings about that. And I think we've seen some significant breakthroughs since then that have been a help to try to see our way forward.

But I think we're still going more or less one year at a time. But I've been encouraged that we've been able to especially rent office space out and make that adjustment, the people who work there. And we especially really like to honor the Kenny Gann family and Chaco Thomas family who really carry, together with Fauzia, the weight there at Forest Hill.

We're very grateful also that Molly and Rosemary didn't suddenly move out. There was some thought of that for a while, as they do have a ministry house on the other side of the river. And maybe we can pray

about that sometime.

And the fact that also the ship team, of course, came along to operate out of our building was a major encouragement. And even though that's short term, it's an indication that there may be other short-term things for this tremendous facility. We still have people ask the question, well, what are we? And I was thinking about that and realizing how fortunate I've been in my life.

I can never remember a day in which I didn't know what I was supposed to do and have a vision to do it. And I a long time ago acknowledged that a lot of people are not that way. They have to have it more spelled out or they need an environment that is more friendly or more compatible with what they're trying to do.

And if they don't have that environment, they get disoriented. And my heart greatly goes out to anybody who suffers from depression. And I have lived for many years with a fear of depression because I saw the most unpredictable depressions come, including my own wife for a year.

And other people, I'd rather not quote their names, just out of the blue. And we're dealing with one NOM right now that's taken our movement, I think, quite a shock. But it's never happened to me.

And I think part of the reason, of course, there are depressions that are almost totally medical. That can happen to me. And I hope whatever you do, if I get either depression or Alzheimer's or something else, you'll not go around feeling sorry for me, even though when you look at me you might feel bad because I've had such a tremendous life, such a tremendous life.

I'm 70 years of age. Some of my best friends are gone to heaven. And all of us who get to this age wonder, why are we still around? Others are gone.

You know, why is Ted Davey gone and Jerry Davey here? I'm sure that's entered your head, hasn't it, Jerry? We all have those kind of thoughts. And I always look at the Daily Telegraph obituaries. I never seem to know most of those people, which reminds me of one of my weaknesses, that I'm such a generalist.

There's no one country that I really know in depth as a person would who just lived in that country their whole life. And I honor people, people in the political world that have lived their whole life in their country. They know these people.

They look at the obituary and they know who they are. And I thank the Lord for what I do know and have to accept the strengths and the weaknesses of the ministry I believe God's called me into. But I think we can be a happier fellowship, especially at Forest Hill, if we just realize our limitations and realize that for present, the main ministry of Forest Hill is a service.

It's a service team. It is a ministry as well with a small m. But there's no dream plan to turn, you know, Forest Hill into a global missiological center. Anything that's done in Forest Hill in connection with UK has to come from OMK.

It cannot come from me. I mean, I can make my comments. And that has not happened, though there has been talk of that, putting a team.

Kenny is still the main OM rep for the whole of London. We all know that's not enough. But often you have to live with what you have while your dream comes true.

There's actually only 15 fields in the whole of OM that are bigger than special projects, Forest Hill, Southeast London Fellowship. So we should be able to relate fields with five people, offices with, you know, three people. We keep going on that we're 5,500 people.

What is it, 110 nations? We got the exact reminder of that recently, and I probably got it wrong. But I think it's 110 because someone in an official document that I read this morning said it was 96. So Peter's trying to get the statistics.

And that sounds good, and we praise the Lord. But many of those nations are really struggling far more than we are here. I mean, we look like a spaceship that's launched compared to some of these situations.

And people are discouraged. A lot of people in OM are discouraged. People on the ship, some of them are discouraged.

Some of them are demoralized because it's taken so long. And they've had a huge boost now. But quite a few people left the ship before it was ever launched.

It's been five years. And it'd be interesting to survey those people that have been through this, some who expected to sail and never sailed. Fortunately, some of them went off and sailed quickly.

We'd love us to. So I feel it's just good to accept what we have. And the fact that other people are now using the building is a help because our operation at Forest Hill is small.

At the same time, if we didn't have that building and tried to rent separate space just for the small operation we have, we would end up probably paying a lot more money than what we're paying for Forest Hill. And if we even dreamed of trying to sell Forest Hill, which we talked about, we realized at this board-level meeting that that's quite complicated as the church honor rope fellowship has a, how many years, 999-year lease? And also first option in terms of the building. Of course, the market down, other factors would make it difficult.

So if you want to just write that little word into your heart that Forest Hill is largely a service team, servicing the various speakers who take meetings all over the world, servicing special projects. And I feel if you're going to stay motivated in this fellowship, especially the Forest Hill group, and I think West Wickham as well, of course, we need to just have a little more understanding of special projects, which I seldom talk about, especially internationally. When I go to a place like Switzerland, special projects is not even in the map.

All the money, a lot of money we raised on that weekend has all gone to the Dalits and the Swiss office. I don't even charge them for my air ticket. Same as this weekend we just had in Sweden.

The leader, Martin Strom, comes to me that the big thing is to raise money for the Dalits. The Swedish government may actually match the money. I don't even charge them for our air ticket.

So we're not out there promoting special projects. Special projects is promoted to people that I'm very close to, long-term relationships, and it's mainly one-to-one or by letter, thank you to those who typed the letter, or email, or phone, because there are certain people that special projects really attracts them. They

are a small minority group, especially with all these other things, and it's a fine line that I walk because I do have a passion for these projects, not for special projects, but for the projects.

Special projects is a means to the projects, and I really believe with the years of experience that Vera and Jerry and Dave White and Pam, all of us put together, that we know how to invest money. We know how to get big mileage out of our pounds. We also know how to operate, with some degree of failure, making sure the money given goes where it's supposed to go and does not sit in some bank account for ten years.

And believe me, in a movement the size of OM, huge money coming for designated projects and massive complications in making sure that it gets into those projects. So we, of course, being somewhat of a mom-and-pop operation, knowing personally almost everyone we give to, not everyone, we have a tremendous advantage. The Lord, in His mercy and answer to prayer, commits to us about one million pounds a year, and it's probably spelled out, outlined and listed more than any field in the world.

Thanks again to Vera's computer and her skill combined with Pam. And our board, a little sub-board which is responsible to the main board, actually see a list of all those projects except some bulk literature purchases in which we just give out literature here, there and everywhere. Those kind of projects are a little hard to break down into bite-sized pieces.

So I believe if we're to stay motivated in Forrest Till, we need to realize Forrest Till is the hub of special projects. Of course, we have West Wickham, which is the other satellite, and it's not an either-or, but it's those two bases. My wife, a key person in all this, works in her house.

And I believe we have something that really is significant for the kingdom. I believe that our voice through literature, through DVD, through my own ministry about 300 times a year, through the other people involved in this fellowship, all speaking out to some degree about these issues, all representing OM, all representing the ships, it is a very significant ministry. And it is strongly acknowledged by Peter Maiden.

And I've had e-mails from him more than once. And the very fact that we've stayed out of the International Coordinating Team's hair, not have burdened them financially. In fact, we bless them financially.

You know, makes them relatively happy campers about Forrest Till, which was once the base for the International Coordinating Team. So I just share that. And on top of that, wanted to just urge you to just try to take ownership a little bit of this special projects, which is based there in the building.

And one of the ways you can do that, if there's a project that you know about somewhere in the world, usually between 1,000 and 5,000 pounds, or maybe something smaller, let us know about it. And the very fact that you have confidence in that, probably we'd be willing to release some finance as we're able. We have one of our best years yet last year, which really was encouraging.

We had some very unusual large gifts. We had a lot of small gifts, which is a huge amount of work for Vera and everybody to process. We had the unusual practice.

I'm not sure if any field has this, but it's that every single donor has personal contact with us by phone, email, or letter. Many of them showed up for our 70th birthday party. And it's very, very encouraging because a lot of the people that we're in touch with, they actually have something in common.

They all need money. Do not think we are mainly a fundraising ministry. That is part of our ministry.

We're a ministry ministry. We're ministering to people wherever they are. We want to know where they itch, and then we'll scratch there.

And a lot of the people we're in touch with are in serious financial challenges. Many of them have debt. Some of them, they don't own their own house, and they're not sure where they're going to live next month.

Some are in prison. We're also a main voice of OM and network that ties us in with other ministries. Different parts of OM have not been able to do this as much as they would like because they have so much on their plate.

And so we are very, very involved with other ministries. Some of you may know I've been asked to serve on the board of trustees of the United Broadcasting Company, UB. Yeah, I keep getting it mixed up.

Give the name. United... I don't believe God wants me to be a trustee. That is a very serious responsibility.

I've accepted an honorary position with them. But through the books we distribute, the ministry many of us have, including OM's most famous writer, Debbie Miroff. She probably doesn't like me to say that, but it's true.

I don't think she feels intense competition within OM, but there are some other writers. We have a voice. And if you're reading a lot of modern articles, you will understand that voice is a big thing in our culture.

For us to have a voice in a valid situation, even non-Christians see that as significant. And so we're a voice. We're an influence.

Sometimes when we see the negative influence, it's so great in the world we just want to pack it in. I mean, I get unbelievably discouraged. Just the Da'fur alone is enough to finish me off.

300,000 dead, I read again this morning. But I believe with all my heart, we have a voice. God puts that together with all the other voices, Christian and non-Christian, for certain situations.

Like the unborn. Did we ever dream that this little fellowship would have such a huge voice into the world of the unborn? Becoming one of the major distributors outside of the United States of literature about the unborn. Partly because so few are doing that.

And thanks to Randy Alcorn's book and for some outstanding DVDs. I do not believe that even OM would be very proactive on some of these issues if we were not here pushing out the DVDs, having literature displays at OM conferences. I noticed in Brazil, because I decided not to set a literature display in Brazil, that Brazil had almost no literature displays.

So people ask me, why aren't we here? Well, we were not asked to set up anything there. It's very expensive to do that in Brazil. I thought for one year I'm just going to leave it.

Because also sometimes people just take these literature displays where they can get books at 90% reduction. They take them for granted. Have you bought any Christian books in a bookshop lately? Notice the price of even a small paper pack? So the fact that we are giving away probably close to 100,000 free books a year, I believe is also a message, it's a voice.

When you go to the book exhibit on the Lagos Hope, you walk in there, you will not know what book to get. I mean, there's just so many books. But we are there with big quantity of books that are being distributed either free or low price.

And so we have a big outlet through the ships, both ships, to get books that we believe are proven transformational books, books that change people's lives. And one of those books, of course, is Calvary Road. We just thank the Lord that we are supplying tens of thousands of Calvary Roads to OM all over the place and letting them generally keep the money.

Now, if that isn't win-win, maybe you could send me a memo of what you think is win-win, because I'm very interested in that philosophy. So let's try to take ownership of all this and realize we're part of it. I'm so grateful for Sheila and Moira and Carolee in the States that are continuing.

See, it took three people to take your place. This is amazing. They are part-time, but Sheila, of course, is putting a lot of time into this.

And we are so grateful because the more email I do, the more convinced I am that letters and phone calls are actually often more effective. With letters, I can put a DVD. My letter might be fairly boring.

Right, Sheila? Some pretty boring letters. Put a DVD, put a leaflet, put something about Teen Street. And we get a lot of people thanking us for these gift packs that arrive.

Also, people are getting less and less personal signed letters from anybody. And so they get a letter from us. It's not always signed by me, but often.

And it means something. And we are seeing a lot of things happen with the people in our network. As we move forward, I would ask prayer for this one vision that I still have not seen the breakthrough.

And that is Operation DVD. Just try to listen to me for a few more minutes and we are going to go to lunch. We are stuck in the old paradigm in OM.

We are still stuck in the book paradigm. I love it. I believe in books.

I believe in SDL. But a lot of people are not reading books. And most of them are all watching films.

Amen! Thank you. And I don't know why you haven't influenced us more. Maybe you are so contentious.

What are we trying? What's that? Seeker friendly. Something like that. But we praise God.

Dave and Matilda are pioneers. Unsung heroes. Pioneers.

And I thank them for their influence on me. And I've been slow because I am so committed to books. But again, I've seen this pasture.

I've been surveying everywhere I go. People are into film. This generation especially.

Can you imagine one of the biggest thing young people are in are video games. What are they called? What are the games? Internet games. What's the other word they have for that? Nintendo.

Oh, there's a bigger word that covers the whole area. Anyway, we all know what I'm talking about. Christians have done next to nothing in terms of the interactive world of games.

And in God's providence, when I met Philip Yancey on that flight, we met a leading man who had been a Christian, top man in the video game world, but which they believe will bypass Hollywood. Can you imagine that? That may not happen, but boy, it is. Hundreds of millions and a large percentage of them are anti-Christian and violent.

Only in the last months I've heard of Christians starting to think about launching Christian games to watch on the Internet. In fact, in God's providence, I was with someone who gave me a comic, which I don't think is that great, that they're planning to put into a video game. And it's my prayer that when I set up a big book table, it's probably going to take a couple more years, when you look at my table, one third of everything on the table will be audio-visual.

The biggest obstacle is in the audio-visual world, the prices are very high. The discounts are small. And I have allowed that to be a block which is a mistake.

So I'm going to be getting to purchase more DVDs even if they won't give me a good price. And we're going to find them on the ships. We already have some on the ships.

And we also realize that for things like the Unborn Challenge, the HIV Challenge, the Dalit Challenge, which has been one of our number one video distributions, has been the Dalit DVDs. I think we've got over a thousand. When you say we've distributed, it should be a hundred thousand.

The USA is being bombarded with outstanding Christian film. Most of it is not getting beyond the States. They cannot get through the prejudice of getting outstanding Christian film.

Fireproof is the hottest Christian film in America right now. It's not been seen in any cinema outside the United States that I know of. I trust that I'm wrong.

They're the same group that produced the Giant film. I just met with Paul Eshleman, former head of the Jesus Project. Some of you who follow film know that the second Narnia film, Prince Caspian, did not make any money.

So they cancelled the making of the third Narnia film. All those people have lost their jobs. And they're being recruited by a Christian group that want to produce what they believe is going to be the best Christian film ever, going from Genesis right through the life of Jesus.

They're budgeting \$100 million for that film. When I hear these things, there's a lot of a mixed emotion. But I just try to be positive.

And that's of course way down the line. Even the film The Passion, which is such a powerful film, especially in the Muslim world, the DVDs have never gone down in price. The main DVD that's gone down in price is the Jesus film.

But I noticed in Australia they're still paying several pounds for a copy, when in America the unlimited Jesus film is completely free, because there's been a financial breakthrough. We also have the Dreams film, which you probably have seen, and we're having trouble keeping enough of those on hand. And one of the reasons is we can get it for a pound.

So please pray that we could see a breakthrough Number one, funds to buy DVDs even at the regular price, and we will sell those. We will give those free. Maybe we can sell them as we sail into the West

Indies, get the price down, at least to where the average person can afford it.

Amazing Grace, what a tremendous film. We've all had the privilege of seeing it. The average person across the world will never see Amazing Grace, unless you and I, and groups like Special Projects, make it happen.

We're thrilled when other people make it happen. We've got more than enough to do. And I tell you, you're looking at someone that constantly rejoices when people do more than us, better than us, and see more souls come to Christ than us.

As long as I can do the small part that God wants me to do. So we have something really, really significant going on here. In the midst of all of our messiness, and some of you know, if I write another book, it's going to be messiology.

Everywhere I go, I see the messes on the things that I hear. It's sometimes very discouraging. And then I realize, God is still working.

God is still working. One of my favorite groups to support is Starfish. Because to have a man of such quality, handling a relatively small amount of money, who probably knows every single project, probably knows people, I tell you that's where I want to put my money.

And I'd love to put another hundred thousand into Starfish if the Lord would so increase the money that comes in. Seems all a bit crazy since we're now in a global financial struggle, and quite a few of our donors can't give. But I'm motivated.

I just feel when things get tougher, then the tough in us, God in us, we've got to be tougher yet. So I'm actually motivated by this global crisis, so every day I feel discouraged, angry, frustrated, sometimes feel another one of my fears. I've got lots of fears, by the way.

Then I'm going to totally lose my faith. That would be quite a tragedy. How many believe that that could be a bit tragic if George Verwin in his final years loses his faith? Yet the pressure that comes on us sometimes with the way things are going on on the planet and why don't we see God intervene more, and then what's even more upsetting than that, you meet some Christian who's really not doing that much, he seems like really lukewarm, but he has an answer to that situation.

That really does disturb me. So, hallelujah, we're going forward as far as still, Lord willing, at least another year. The coming of Lagos Hope to me is such a huge thing.

All of us should be excited about that, motivated about that, getting our non-Christian friends to go. In Holland, many of the visitors were all non-Christians. And to get behind that little lineup team who have an impossible job, really, and to really believe Him for great things.

We have brought some books, and they are a gift to you. We bring these especially to give to the staff because we know you have so many books. We are still pushing these books, Footsteps in the Sea, Rider in the Storm, because a lot of people, the new generation, they don't even know what these are.

And they don't know who Debbie Meroff is, they don't know who George Verwer is, they don't know who Debbie Meroff is. By the way, they took a survey, the message I gave at Teen Street among the teenagers. I only got this feedback two years later.

It was the highest rated message. And the feedback says, you know, the message from the older guy. That was rated number one.

Some of you don't even know. You don't even know Billy Jones. But boy, he's one of the most amazing out-of-the-box persons to make me seem like I'm sleeping.

He almost went into sinless perfection, Billy, and I helped him on that one of my ministries. And another guy whose biography is coming out, I've just spent a lot of time with him, is Ray Lynch. We don't have that here yet.

This is another great book. You know, anybody that's hurting, been through divorce, broken experience, kids going bananas, rebuilding your broken world, take one as a gift. The time is up on selling this.

It's now available free at Forrest Hill. Not generally around the globe. Drops from a leaking tap.

I may talk about that some other session, but pick up a free copy. And then, very few who actually are on our fellowship here understand what I'm saying to the general public. It isn't the same thing I say at an OM meeting.

So go to the Ickles Fellowship and get George Verwer a large... Yes, let's have a word about this, Matilda. And if Matilda says that, what about Dave, Mr. Negative? Available free at our book table in the back. Let's pray and let's give thanks for the food here and then you just go in there and eat.

Father, we thank and praise you for this phenomenal place. We thank you for Oklahoma. Thank you for the phenomenal funding they've given recently to special projects, which is quite amazing when they have their own ministry in Serbia and other places.

Lord, just help us. So easy for us to see our problems, to see the complexity of our fellowship, to see how impossible it is even to ever get together in one place. And some of the challenges we've had in Forest Hill, some of the empty offices.

Help us to see, Lord, the positives far outweigh the negatives, at least at this present time. We thank you for Kenny and B. Lee. We've hung into the leadership there for quite a few years, when at times they surely dreamed about other places.

And so, bless us as we go forward together. Keep, Lord, supplying our financial needs. And Lord, if you could bring our budget beyond a million so we can bless and help more other people, so be it.

That would be our dream, that would be our passion. More books, more DVDs, more help in crisis situations, more wedding gifts, more scholarships for Teen Street and MTL, and so many other things that we have financial requests for. We ask you now your blessing upon the food, in Jesus' name, Amen.

So please just go in, if food's there, serve yourself.

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