

Getting Into the Race

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of spiritual balance, teamwork, and self-control in evangelism and challenges people to pray for all nations.

Duration: 1:07:47

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:24, 1 Corinthians 9:26, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of being committed to the race of life and not giving up. He mentions a film about two Cambridge men in the 20s, one of them being Jewish, who made a significant impact at the Olympics. The speaker also talks about the world's obsession with sports and running, comparing it to America's space shuttle program. He emphasizes the need for believers to befriend and love foreigners before sharing the gospel with them. Additionally, the speaker mentions the importance of prayer and the reality of suffering in the world.

Transcript

Most people do not remain in OM. We, in no way, are looking for, as our first goal, lifetime OMs. One of my great ministries is challenging people to leave OM, and in fact some of the leaders don't totally agree with me.

There are 22,000 people have been trained in OM. There are only 1,500 in OM right now, and only 500 of those are longer-term people. And we are really just part of the Body of Christ, and are linked in a very deep way with over 100 other organizations.

And if we do at times get a little excited in wanting to see you get some training, it is firstly that you may later serve in the Body of Christ with another fellowship, with another organization, preferably sent out from your own church. And I think the reason God has given us linkings with so many local churches. The local church I was in this morning, one of the most active in London, this is my third or fourth time back there.

And I'll be there again tonight. If any of you are free, come along at the Kensington Temple, the most cosmopolitan church I've ever been in, in London. It's just really amazing.

Seems every nationality explainable comes together there. And I think that if we can only realize, though we may be in OM, or WEC, or IVF, or Campus Crusade, or with Elam, or with Dick Lucas's Anglican Church down in the other side of London. Just had a lovely letter from him.

He says he wants two top-qualified men right away. You know, just, I think, oh, I'm just, let me just crank them out. Here's one more.

You know, you cannot mass-produce men and women of God. Some seminaries have tried it. The results haven't always been exceedingly overwhelming.

We're all members of the Body of Christ. And I think when you're able to point this out, people see. When I go door-to-door here in England, I try to find out when I can what church they're from.

And then I share with them the roots I have in that church. I've had, I've tried to develop roots in about 20 different denominations. And I was, what do they call it? Sprinkled as a Methodist.

My wife's a Baptist. And I was baptized in a Brethren assembly. And my great-grandfather was an atheist.

So I try to, I try to relate to everybody. And I feel that in evangelism today, 50% of the battle really is breaking down the prejudice. Breaking down the prejudice.

I was just this morning with my dear friend Victor Khalil. His family is one of the really committed families out in Jordan, where I've just come from. He's here in London.

And he has a fellowship among Arabs. And what a blessing just to share with him this morning. Here's something where we've arranged to get together somehow sometime.

What God is doing among Arabs. Our burden for our Arab team in London is not to promote some little OM thing in London. It's to promote the Gospel.

It's to see the Body of Christ growing. We don't care, you know, in a sense, where the blessing flows. Let it flow wherever.

We don't want this conference to be an OM leaders conference. Of course, our burden, our vision will come into it. There's another great conference going on simultaneously with InterVarsity right now.

And we're just thrilled with that. We had to turn people away. We need several conferences like this.

There's been some talk of amalgamating. We'd love to do that. Where do you find the place? And will it, you know, some of the conferences are getting a little expensive these days.

There are poor man's conferences. Here you are. There are rich man's conferences.

And God, you know, He's so big, so great, He can just barge in wherever you want. By the way, this is a historical conference. Not hysterical.

Historical. I've never been in an OM conference where I came to lunch and got Kentucky Fried Chicken. And again, I think we have to watch out for these American influences coming in.

Anyway, you seem to be in an interesting mood. I don't want to take too long, and I know some are afraid of that. I have another meeting tonight, so you have some protection.

I think most of you know my favorite story, but some of you look new, so let me use it. But I was ministering in Germany, and I'm known on the continent to be a rather long speaker, because when you have an interpreter, you know, it really adds. He's taking half of all the time.

And I was in Germany, and it was an OM organized meeting, and when I'm a guest in an Anglican church, and they tell me 19 minutes, I usually try to stick by it. I managed to get the book reviews done. But I was in Germany.

It was an OM organized meeting, so I felt quite free. And after an hour and a half, most of the young people were, you know, taking it in. But one older man obviously wanted to get home to watch television or something else strategic.

He wanted to get me to shut up, and so he borrowed a watch from the man next to him. I think he did anyway. It might have been his own watch, and he held it up.

And I was really going strong at that point. It's amazing on discipleship and world evangelism, forsaking all. And I saw this watch go up, and I said, praise the Lord, that man's getting his wristwatch for world evangelism.

It really does bother me, in fact, that in the West we often are such punctuality slaves, but we do try to learn to identify with the nationals whenever we go to a foreign land. It wouldn't be fair to my conscience if I didn't take some moments to mention some books. I know you've had books mentioned.

I had people write to me as a result of this Leaders Conference, thanked me specifically for mentioning these books. And believe me, our concern is to get the message out. And a lot of the literature we distribute all over the world is given out absolutely free.

In fact, our literature distribution figure has gone over 300 million, and that's without any exaggeration. And a lot of that was free. Perhaps 200 million or more of that was free.

So it isn't trying to get an extra pound out of you. But we want these books to go out. If you would like some books to really read them, and don't have the money, I personally would be happy to stand for you to somehow pay for the books later on.

So just charge it to me, but get the books. I'd like to mention some books you may not be able to read in the midst of all your studies, but if at least you get them on your list. And if you write to me, I'll send you my two lists of books I'd like every Christian to read.

It's called Mini-Book Reviews Part 1, Mini-Book Reviews Part 2. It's a lot easier for those that practice reincarnation, because it takes you two lives to read all these books. But if you're a good reader, you might be able to do it in one. You know in O.M. we have these lovely book bags, often made by refugees or people in special need in third-world countries.

So you may want to get one, and they're good to use in your door-to-door work. I believe the book of the year is The Celebration of Discipline. It's a new book.

It is a book about spiritual balance. You won't agree with everything in it. This man has done an enormous amount of research.

It makes my book, *Hunger for Reality*, look like, you know, a literary disaster. God, of course, can use all kinds of books. This is a book that needs to be read.

Celebration of Discipline. Maybe get a copy to send to someone on the mission field. All right, a missionary, just write me.

Send me this book. You must have heard about it. *Celebration of Discipline*, covering the discipline of meditation, discipline of prayer, fasting, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, and a lot of other basic areas.

It's by Richard Foster, relatively unknown person, at least in my sphere. One of my favorite books that has helped me, as I tend to be such an extremist, is a book called *The Wider Place*, formerly known as *Where God Offers Freedom*. Some of you know her book, *No Easy Answer*.

This is a book especially for women. That's why every man needs to read it. That, I think, covers most of you.

I had a very heartbreaking letter. I think I read it on the tube last night. It's great reality therapy when you're involved with people on a very close level as we are.

Our main ministry is not preaching. For every hour in preaching, many of us spend five and six hours in correspondence and personal counseling. And it's therapy.

And this was a woman who was deeply touched at Keswick, didn't have much help after she made a deeper surrender of her life. I think she was just coming back to the Lord. Went overboard, enthusiasm, zeal, the whole thing, without much guidance, and had a nervous breakdown.

Of course, her parents blamed it all on religion. And she's written back to me, not in a bitter way. She's doing a lot better now.

People wonder why sometimes I don't like to go and speak just one time. I don't like to give out the challenge about missions, discipleship, commitment, without bringing in the basics about survivalship, spiritual growth, and balance, some of the things I hope to touch on a little bit this afternoon. That's why these books are so valuable.

And Eugenia Price, a very balanced woman, probably wouldn't agree with everything we do in OM. But her books have been an enormous blessing. And I'm convinced if people like that woman who just wrote me, and maybe some of you would read material like this, *The Wider Place*, *Freedom*, you wouldn't find some of the extremes coming in.

There are so many other great books. I think other speakers have mentioned *Operation World*. I saw a whole selection of books.

I don't know why or how they're doing this. They're brand new books, and they've just reduced them to half price. And I would challenge you to just take a look at some of those that are at half price.

How many of you have one of these world maps already from previous conference? Raise your hand. That is amazing. But for those of you who have missed the simple little map of the world, why have this map? To pray intelligently for all these nations.

To pray intelligently for these nations. You know, one thing I think some people don't realize, that in a movement like OM, it is not a matter of you joining to see how much you're going to contribute. You will contribute.

But most of the people who leave OM, and a lot of them write to me, they don't think so much in terms of what they gained, though they did give. They're thrilled with what they have received. I think of some on the OM program on the Logos right now, as a bonus, are being given, paid for by us, I don't know where, just seeing how much it's going to cost, a free tour of China.

It's just sort of part of their particular, in God's province, bonus for being on the Logos when she goes to China next month. And our burden, even though we often fail, we know we fail, it's one of the things I live with literally every waking hour. I very seldom meditate too much on the successes.

I try to keep my eyes on the Lord and I do think of the victories. But my particular job is to work at the failures. And I really believe, though we've failed many times, that most people who have gone through this training have come out feeling they have received.

They have received, and we hope this will be true of this Leaders Conference as well. I think our motives before God are pure in having this conference. And I hope you've received something.

If there's any misunderstanding, any extreme statement that was made, maybe last night was too strong. I've already grabbed the tape and will not allow it to be reproduced until I pray through it. Maybe I was just, you know, too strong.

But you'll let other messages bring that into balance. And even other things I said last night, which you may not have even heard, so hit by the strong thing, which may be linked with also some of your own struggles, you missed some of the things that would have brought that into balance. Back to this map, I really believe that we should pray for all these countries.

I don't feel it's extreme to follow the commands of Jesus in connection with world evangelism. And I pray that from this weekend there will be people, there will be people going out to most of these lands. Somebody who was here last night, I had to leave at the last one minute of the prayer meeting, and I missed him, so I got through to him at the airport today.

He went right from this conference last night directly to Saudi Arabia to work as an engineer. So already somebody from this conference is on the way. He's been with OM many times before.

I don't know whether he got any of those ideas from us, but it doesn't matter. There he goes. And his father's a missionary.

And that's beautiful and could lead me to a whole separate message, because people think that, you know, if you were reared in a Christian home, and your father was a missionary and your mother preached to you from the age of five, that you can't possibly have the same zeal and the same fire of someone who's plucked, you know, from the New Jersey beaches. But that's not true. Some of the men in our work who are the most on fire, and they're certainly more stable than I am, they come from Christian homes.

And that young man headed for Saudi Arabia is from a Christian home. His father's one of the leaders in the Bible Society. Jonathan McCrosty, our leader for Europe, one of these plotting types, just to survive with me more than a year, takes enough plotting.

And he has been leading the work in Europe for 19 years. He was reared on the mission field. He and I are so different.

I remember sharing notes about our social life. From the age five till I was converted, and a little time afterward, all I did was kiss girls. At 20, he hadn't kissed one yet.

You can't get a difference greater than that. I don't know what that has to do with a map of the world. Two other books.

Born for Battle. On the other side of the wider place, an extreme book. One of these OMF, living by faith types, died in an airplane crash.

And he wrote this book that really has had a go at me lately, 31 Studies on Spiritual Warfare. How many have read this book? Let me see if you're a literary or a literate group. Raise your hand.

Look at that. Even the OMers haven't read this. OMers are usually about two years behind the times, but they are catching up.

And this really should be required reading in OM, except they already have so many books. If you had to read them all to go on OM, you wouldn't go. So don't let that discourage you.

Affliction by Edith Schaefer. It's a bit long. It will be an affliction to read the whole thing.

But there's so much confusion on the subject of suffering. Hallelujah, this clock stopped at two minutes to three or something. Anyway, I've got to watch.

But there's so much confusion on the subject of suffering that I feel books like this are needed. I don't know what the price is, but we've just reduced it to half price. And if you paid full price, go back and get a bonus equal to the other half that you paid.

I think it must be at half price. We bought the whole edition out. It was too expensive, I think, to sell.

So we bought the whole thing out. I think now they'll produce a cheaper one. What a wonderful ministry.

Let's have prayer. Did anyone else preach on 1 Corinthians 9? Thank you. That confirms my text.

1 Corinthians 9. Don't worry. As Peter Maiden often tells me, I won't stay there long. We have all kinds of preachers in OM, those like Maiden who stay with the text, though he has become a little more liberated in recent years.

And those like myself. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you have called all kinds of people into your work, not just OM, but all these different groups, all these different fellowships, plus the IVF fellowship, plus them right out of their socks.

May they just be jumping as they go out of that conference, filled with vision and love, and other conferences that are going on. We thank you that there's unity in the midst of diversity. There's a reality in the midst of even disagreements.

And we thank you that even today, we may not agree with everything, but we can go out of here of one heart and one mind. Whether we're ever involved with OM ever again the rest of our life, we can be of one heart and one mind, and we will be in heaven together to rejoice over the victories that are won here on

earth. We thank you for this.

We praise you. And Lord, we in OM acknowledge an enormous amount of failure. We just need a fresh touch, and we need wisdom and discernment, discipline to back up some of the things we talk about.

Guide us now, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 24.

Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is tempered. That's the key word.

Self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway, or a reprobate. I think closer to the Greek meaning would be disapproved. Disapproved.

This weekend has been a weekend of two big races here in Britain, I think I mentioned last night. I don't know who won the Grand National, and I don't really care too much. Thirty million pounds approximately was put down on that race.

It's unbelievable, isn't it? But Oxford did again beat Cambridge in the rowing. And I was talking to someone on the tube last night, obviously a Cambridge fan, and he quickly explained why Oxford won. He said, they import Americans.

It's amazing how excited people again about all kinds of races. I remember speaking up at Durham University a couple of years ago, and watching some of the men practice this rowing, this team rowing. It really is exciting just to watch.

And there's a, it seems to me, a whole group of talents that are combined to accomplish this. Teamwork, tremendous training, tremendous discipline, and balance. Also obeying orders, and the Oxford person giving out the orders, I believe, was a woman.

I think they called the Coxwain or something like that. And I believe that if we're going to evangelize the world, there needs to be more teamwork. And I'm challenged by this scripture, where we are described as people who are in a race.

Now this morning, after my Bible reading, I had my magazine reading, while I was trying to grab something to eat in a little cafe near the church. And I came across this incredible article about the London Marathon. I wonder if any of you were in the London Marathon.

Would you raise your hand? Anyone at all? Well, there were 5,300 who finished the London Marathon. Marathon running has become incredibly popular in America. They had over 20,000.

When they ran over this one bridge, it's a miracle it didn't break. And they're going to have this again next year. They're thinking it may become one of the largest sporting events in Britain.

Very different from other sporting events, in that anybody can enter. Almost anybody. I think you have to apply early, because they got more applicants than they were able to take.

I think they only took six or seven thousand people. They ran 26 miles through London. And there's a picture here of a man, age 66, finishing the race.

There's another picture of a man who, to advertise his particular career, I think as a restaurant owner, he's an American, he ran the 26 miles balancing a bottle. Here's a picture. I'm running by the Cutty Sock with his bottle on some kind of little trench.

26 miles. 5,300 ordinary English people. No one will classify them as loonies, or moonies.

No one will classify them as fanatics. They will go back to their little surrounding group of friends, and in some ways be considered a little bit of a hero. 5,300 finished the race.

And they'll have many more next year. And it's interesting that the Apostle Paul in Corinthians says we are in a race. And in Hebrews chapter 12, you can look at another scripture where we are told to lay aside every weight, and to run the race looking on to Jesus.

And I want to ask you, as we're about to leave and finish this conference, as a potential leader, are you in God's race? Are you in God's arena? It says in Hebrews 12 that we're surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses. I often read Hebrews chapter 11. It's one of my favorite chapters.

And to think of those men who gave their lives. So many have suffered. When I was in Syria, I received news of another exoemir, a man from Lebanon who would not stop witnessing.

And the enemy planted a piece of dynamite behind his neck and blew his head off, and his body was just found under a bridge in Lebanon. Beloved, we are in a warfare. When are we going to realize that? So many of the good things that we are involved in will soon really look ridiculous when we understand that we are in a warfare.

We have called this conference not because we're looking for more work. I actually, though I may not appear it, am very tired, personally very overwhelmed with the problems that we have in O.M. at this present time. And we have called this conference because we actually believe there is a warfare.

And I can tell you in the midst of a warfare, when men have to go out and give themselves in the extra mile, it is often the women who have to suffer more. And I've seen this in my own wife's life, how much she has to, in a sense, suffer because I have signed up as a soldier in the army of God. We're all told that Sunday is a day of rest.

It would be great, especially after 50 meetings and 8,000 miles, to have a restful Sunday. And sometimes I do, I can assure you. But that wasn't this Sunday.

It's not so hard for me because this is the lifestyle I have chosen. I'm used to it. I know how to draw upon the grace to somehow get through.

When people sometimes think George Burwell is just overwhelmingly sort of leaping over the wall, inside, George Burwell is screaming and crying and agonizing with some of the weirdest doubts and struggles that perhaps any person has ever wrestled with. If I didn't know other Christians have the same struggle, I would sign up perhaps for some kind of medical help. Because the great struggles in the 20th century are often not the outward struggles.

They are the inward struggles. The struggle you go through, as I went through last night, when a totally drunken tramp came up to me with his shoes torn off his feet and the smell of alcohol on him so strong I almost passed out, and asked me for a little bit of money, supposedly to buy shoes or food, in which I knew would be just for alcohol or drugs. Just that experience last night, with my type of sensitivity, which I've never understood, is enough to depress me for a day.

Just looking at the film advertisements in the London Tube is enough to frighten me right out of my shoes. Yes, we are in the world. We are not of the world, we are in the world.

And as Tozer said, the whole world is an emergency area. It's a disaster area. I remember reading about the Italian earthquake again recently.

Just overwhelming. And I hope that some of you who have difficulty with the area of affliction or suffering will in fact read this little book called Affliction. Because there are answers.

There are answers. Not total answers, not easy answers, but there are answers. And I want to address myself to a minute, for a minute, to any of you who have intellectual doubts about the Christian faith.

Because that has, over the years, especially in my early Christian life, and then with reassuring, unpredictable counter-attacks, often been the greatest struggle in my faith, or in my life. And it hit me as I was reading a cinema ad, and I noticed that this late film, just hit London, is by Charles Templeton. And Charles Templeton was the most anointed evangelist in America, 25 years ago, just before my conversion.

I heard him speak once. He was supposedly as gifted and as powerful as Billy Graham. And yet somehow, through intellectual problems and other struggles in his life, which usually are the bigger factor, not the intellectual ones, the personal struggles, he overthrew the Christian faith, and has been one of the great attackers on the Christian faith ever since.

That's hard. That's very hard. It doesn't happen to many, but it does happen.

And it may happen to some of your friends. And if you are going to be trained for leadership, you must be able to help people with their intellectual problems. You must not throw out simple little answers, like, oh, this is just of the devil, or if so-and-so believed it, you should believe it.

But you should, through studying the Word of God, through reading great books, like Evidence That Demands a Verdict, or some of Michael Green's books, or John Stott's books, or F.F. Bruce's books. I once had a list of 200 apologetic books. That list is out of print.

We produce so many memos and lists in OM, we can't keep them all in print. But I believe, as a leader, you must be able to answer people's intellectual questions. I have a little message I used to give, 20 reasons, reasons why I'm still a follower of Christ.

With a subtitle, though, I find it incredibly difficult. Mentally and emotionally, I don't think religion or Christianity is my thing. We're all very complex, and I'm sure in other ways it is my thing.

Forgive the slang. But there are many aspects of the Christian life that seem very confusing to me, especially the behavior of God's people. That has never ceased to amaze me.

God's chosen people, so often God's frozen people, has driven me into more depressions, mild ones, fortunately, than I would like to talk about. And if any of you have serious intellectual questions or doubts, I'd be happy to correspond with you, not in a super-intellectual way, but perhaps recommend some books. And I have my little card, it's a calendar with my address.

I'd be happy to give to you that we could correspond. And there are many OM leaders and others here today that would be happy to speak with you or to correspond with you personally. If OM cannot have a ministry of counseling with those who come to be trained, then I personally don't want to be in it.

The biggest controversy raging right now in OM is how big we should be. And I am clearly on one side and believe that OM has become too big, should reduce its numbers or at least hold its line, or we will not be able to fulfill the personal counseling ministry, and in-depth training ministry, and leadership training, and everything else that goes with this kind of spiritual revolution. And all the day we degenerate and become something less than a spiritual revolution.

I feel that if it ever gets to that point, we might be able to take a few more people and still do that, then I myself, well, I just don't know what I would do. I feel the great problem in Christian faith or in Christian organizations is that they are neurotic about growing big. This especially is true in America.

People run around all the time quoting their statistics about how big their church is, how many. And often I notice the first thing people ask me about OM is, how many people are there? How many countries are we in? Very few say, do you feel you're making an effective impact in that nation for Christ? Very few ask me that. Very few ask me, do you feel most people in OM are living in revival? I'm glad they don't ask me that.

Beloved, as a leader, the emphasis, I believe, must be on quality. And first of all, the quality of your own life. As a leader, you must be a counselor.

As a leader, you must be a compassionate person willing to listen to others, whether they're interested in your big vision or not. It was a disheartening experience for me to minister the Word of God two weeks ago on Sunday morning to five Turkish believers in Ankara, Turkey. That's all they could get together.

They sometimes get a few more. We have been laboring in Ankara, and there's some here who have been there. I won't give their names.

They may want to go back. Some have been there for nine years. OM has been there for 17 years.

These are people who know the language. These are people who know something of prayer. These are people who have laid their lives on the line.

Eighteen years of our work in Ankara, and there may be half a dozen believers, perhaps a few more. Sure, more have professed the Lord, and there have been other encouragements. On the positive side, the fact that there are a dozen or more witnessing people in Ankara right now, that in itself is a miracle.

That there's been so much literature in Turkish, that's a miracle. Sure, there are many positive things. But when you've been praying for Turkey, as I have, in nights of prayer almost every week for 23 years, you cannot deceive yourself.

We have not seen a major breakthrough in Turkey. That doesn't discourage me, at least once I get through the initial discouragement, because I know that often this is the way God works. There is the

sowing, and we are in the ministry of sowing.

There is the giving of our lives, as it was in Africa, when so many gave their lives and died. Half of all the missionaries in West Africa, probably. Among other things, I made a film on this trip, just a simple amateur Super 8 film to use in prayer meetings.

It'll be available in about two months. Just basically prayer requests, nothing spectacular. But we made a two-and-a-half-minute scene there in Adana, where I also went.

There's even less believers there. One of the main couples that we were sort of hoping would go on for Christ have just committed fornication and have to be disciplined. And we went out to the graveside of David Goodman, this young man who in the middle of his quiet time opened the door of his home and was gunned down and murdered by terrorists just a year and some months ago.

Yes, beloved, we are in a warfare. And I feel, forgive me if I don't say it with enough balance, I really feel that most of the young people in Britain are just playing around. I really feel it.

And if you were ever drafted up for a wartime military experience with the British Army, I will tell you, you would go through training that would make OM look like a Sunday school picnic. And if you think this weekend is hard, it is because you are incredibly naive about life. And when you get married someday, and your wife is trying to bring up two or three little children, and everything seems to be going wrong, and then you'll understand why so many marriages end in a divorce court, including an amazing number of Christian leaders, maybe by then your naive view of life will start to go out the window.

But it would be a help if some of it could start to go this weekend. And if this weekend somehow would just deliver us a little bit from the playing around, from the immaturity, from the naive view of life, and of the Christian life, from the failure to understand God and the spiritual warfare, the way God works, and what the world is all about, it would be well worth it. And we wouldn't care if we ever heard from you again.

In fact, people tell me all over the world it's very hard to get on the OM prayer letter list. It encourages me. Because we are not just running around looking for names.

And I don't think people automatically, at least it used to be the policy, things change very quickly in OM, that people ever were added automatically to the actual prayer letter list. Now, and that's still a policy. So that when Peter talks about having your name, that is maybe to next year send you one letter to invite you to a conference, not to send you OM prayer material.

If you don't want OM prayer material, you will have any problem. In fact, to get it, you're gonna have to put your name down on a piece of paper and sign and say, I really would like to get some prayer requests. Our burden is not OM.

It's the glory of God. It's His Word. It's the whole ministry.

And I just feel that's just so important. Now, we're in this race. We're in this emergency area.

We're in God's arena. It seems to me that one of the dangers today in the church is that we have formed a brand of spectatorism, a word I coined this morning. Spectatorism.

That most Christians are basically spectators. We bring in the latest converted gospel singer, whether it's Bob Dylan or Johnny Cash or whoever, and praise God for the ministry of some of these men. What a thrill

that they know Christ.

I don't understand everything. I don't understand so many things in life. One more thing isn't gonna bother me much.

And you can fill the largest auditorium in London, and they'll pay five pound a head. And I feel that Christianity in England has become very entertainment oriented. This whole Greenbelt Festival, which plunged somebody 20, 30 grand into the hole this year.

Unbelievable! These masses of people go out and sit in the fields for endless hours of what can be entertainment. Not necessarily. And I respect some of these converted musicians.

Don't misunderstand me. I minister together with Larry Norman in Norway, and to me he is a real person. More than a real person.

Watch that English cynicism. It's very dangerous. And yet you see that which is good can become enemy of the best.

We have our Spring Harvest. I will be there next week. You'd better pray for me.

And I feel that God uses these events. I'm not against them. There are so many events going on in London on every one, any one weekend.

It's just unbelievable. Try to understand when you come back from countries where they have nothing going on for Christ on the weekend, where most of these people never go to, because the whole economy of Western Christianity is a very big factor in all this. Very big factor.

That which we often think in America is a great blessing, is a purely economic, matter-of-economic gymnastics. Fortunately, God still breaks into it. That's wonderful.

And I don't like to point my fingers at any nationality, even my own, too much. But somehow, if we're not careful, it can lead to spectatorism. Like all the people who lined the Thames yesterday, all watching as these two teams, with all their strength and all their power, after months of training, just gave themselves to trying to win that race.

And it says so clearly, they go for a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I was thinking at times that I get tired, I get tired of teamwork. OM is an unbelievable network of teams.

And if you're on one team, and you can mainly relate to that team and work with that team, probably you can survive. But when you've been in it from the beginning, and the whole thing is getting bigger and bigger, and you fear it's sometimes getting out of control, and you know about some of the problems that no one else reads about, you somehow wish that the Lord would call you to an itinerant ministry. What a miracle that someone like Peter Maiden, even willing to come into OM.

People actually warned him, didn't they? Stay away! Because they said to him, you already have a Bible teaching ministry. You already have a Bible ministry. You don't want to get drawn in OM and get caught up with all these people, and all these problems.

And administration, that's a dirty word among some of our super spiritual types. Administration, you know, sit behind a desk, growing fat. You can see how administration has just, you know.

But how in the world can we challenge people to do what we're not doing ourselves? How can we challenge people to commit their lives to Christ, and then not be willing to get involved with them, when they're defeated, when they're down, when they're confused? And this means teamwork. And if you've ever had the desire to run away from teamwork, or run away from your local church, that can become a very sticky place. It's not just a place of blessing and worship, it's a place of involvement.

And with involvement come church problems. Church problems. They had them in the book of Acts.

Plenty of them. Most of the epistles, in fact, are corrective epistles. This is why I believe not only in the ministry of exposition of Scripture, I believe in the ministry of exhortation, exhorting people to obey all of the Scripture.

Read volume 1 and volume 2 of George Whitfield's amazing biography, and you will see that in his day, all of his men who worked with him, what a revolutionary band they were. If there were ever a group of extremists in Britain, they were them. They were extremists.

They were called exhorters. They were called exhorters. We don't have this anymore.

The ministry of exhortation is often non-existent, or not accepted. And I believe that God wants to give some of you as leaders a ministry of exhortation. You may not be a great Bible expositor.

You may not be able to wrestle with a Greek and a Hebrew. But God can lead you in your church to, at times, stand up and in love and brokenness, exhort others. On a one-by-one basis, we can exhort one another.

If it wasn't for brothers like Dale Roton, who somehow, somehow we've been together 24 years. That's even longer than my marriage. He had the ministry of exhortation toward me.

He exhorted me over my extreme statements. I don't know what he would have done last night. He probably would have had a bit of a go at me.

Maybe not. He's become a little more extreme himself lately. But I really believe that we need to exhort one another.

Iron sharpens iron. We need teamwork. We need to commit ourselves into running the race together, even though that also does not destroy our individuality.

Nigel Lee is a team member within OM, but as an evangelist and as a Bible teacher, it's clear that the Lord has given him individual gifts that could be used totally apart from anything we have in OM. God is not out to destroy your individuality, but to work through it. But we need one another.

This is why I so strongly believe in the Christian unions. The university is a unique situation in the world, barely existed in the days of Paul, and God has raised up a unique fellowship, a fighting guerrilla force, loving fellowship in these universities called the Christian Union, in order to make an effective penetration that is generally not possible by most local churches. And how my heart aches when somebody comes along and tells me the Christian unions aren't really scriptural.

That teaching is going around. And the Witness Lee crowd, who have now opened up shop in Blackpool, I just got another letter from them, they want to have a big meeting with me. I've decided not to call them a cult, because it's very, very offensive, and so I've classified them as a very, very extremist Christian, and

I'm still waiting to talk to them to see what my further definition should be.

But it is very, very extreme when any group comes along and feels they are the only true local church. When you hear people start talking like that, get on your skateboard and get going downhill as fast as you can. Because one of the most important biblical principles is that we are one body.

There are many local churches. They're not all going to be the same. That's clear even in the New Testament.

And now, two thousand years later, to deny all the previous movements of the Holy Spirit, and come along and claim that you are the final revelation, and that everybody else is apostate. They even go parading in America with big placards, down with Christianity, down with the Church. Unbelievable things have been happening.

Fortunately they are a minute group in England. The British, I think, are a little, just a little too sane to handle this particular group. I don't know why it's spreading so quickly in Germany, but that is of some concern to me.

We are in this race together. If you're a Calvinist, you may not agree with your Arminian friend, but you are in the same race. Now how a Calvinist man at the oars is going to listen to an Arminian coxswain, I don't know yet.

But in O.M., it has been proven for twenty-four years, that people of these different persuasions, all evangelical, all basically holding to the main doctrines of the faith, held by so many for two thousand years, but with great variety in eschatology, views about eschatology, and views about hermeneutics, and views about a lot of other things, can work together, yea, even on the same ship. That's interesting. I'll never forget in the early days, when we had a Pentecostal captain and a brethren chief engineer.

I would need at least two hours to begin that dialogue, and so I will leave it. The chief engineer, a dear man of God, is with Jesus now, and I saw God break those men and bring them together. But it was not after much crucifixion.

And in your church, your Christian Union, your growth is not going to be without pain. On your O.M. team, your growth is not going to be without pain. There will be the crucifixions, there will be the hard experiences, there will be the hurt feelings.

That, that's what life is about. And if you think it will get any easier after you leave O.M., you must be very naive. This is why we desperately need training programs, where things are a little harder, where we learn something about discipline, where we learn something about exerting ourself a little more, to go the extra mile.

Are you willing to go the extra mile for Jesus, in your C.U.? The greatest challenge I've had in my Christian life lately is to go the extra mile with my own family. My own three teenagers, one now twenty. Not because we've had some huge catastrophic problems, because they all love the Lord, but because they all seem to be slightly radical, at least two of them.

They all seem believably verbal, I don't know how that happened. And we seem to have a fair number of collisions on the most unbelievably minor issues. And God has been teaching me some new aspects of the cross, and showing me, in a harder way, I've seen them before, in a harder way, some of the areas of

weakness that are so deeply ingrained in my whole emotional and mental makeup.

And I will tell you, it's a painful experience. But hallelujah, there's no gain without pain. And if this conference has been a little painful for you, if the Spirit has been exposing some uncrucified areas of the self-life, praise Him.

There will be no gain without pain. Yes, we're in God's arena. We're in the race.

There are many aspects to this race. The aspect of witness. Would you commit yourself to something definite as a result of being here? You know, as evangelicals, we have a great gift in being vague.

We can take in so much. Just about ten days ago, I walked on that very spot where Jesus walked in Capernaum. And what an experience it was.

In all my visits to Israel, I've always laid that aside. It is part of my extremist reaction to tourism. I visited Israel, went to the OM team, had prayer meetings, counseled, preached, never went touring.

And God used my wife and others to make me willing to look around a little bit in Israel. How can anybody be so stupid to go to Israel and not look around? I didn't even realize, and you can learn so much about the Bible if you open your eyes a little bit, I didn't even realize how important Galilee was, and Capernaum, that whole area, in the life of Jesus. I can't go into that now.

But oh my, what a challenge to think of the Lord Jesus. And it was Jesus who set the example for us in this area of witness. And if we go away from our conferences, and we don't witness more, we don't share Christ, we don't go out, give out literature, not necessarily in mass, but spontaneously as the Lord leads.

I say something's wrong. I say we're not in the race. I say we're somehow, at least in that area, we're spectators.

We're watching others do it. We may be even willing to give to what they're doing, but we're not in the race ourselves. Have you ever led anyone to Christ? Would you pray that the Lord would help you win someone to Christ? Or help you be on a team that leads someone to Christ? Winning people to Christ in England is relatively easy compared to most countries I've been in, especially lately.

It's not that easy, as you well know, many of you who are witnessing. But I feel that before we leave, we must somehow make sure we are in this race, in the area of witnessing. Will you do it? Will you pray a prayer as we close, Lord, I want to run the race in the area of witnessing.

It may be hard. We generally don't feel like going out door-to-door. I've been doing door-to-door work for 25 years.

I still don't feel like doing it most of the time. But oh, the blessing to see and to win people to Jesus Christ. Those of us who have a gift to preach, we have a great advantage.

Everywhere we go, at least in certain countries, people come to Christ. This very much warms our batteries, I can tell you. And you need to see that personal evangelism is just as important as preaching.

Personal counseling, personal ministry, personal follow-up. Are you in the race? Witness. Not in a neurotic way.

I don't witness to everybody I see. I don't give out tracts all the time. I don't carry great bundles of books on my back through the London Tube.

But I believe in being sensitive in this area and trying each day, certainly each week, usually each day, to share Christ at least with someone by letter, by literature, by phone. And it's amazing how God just puts people in your lap. God sends them to you.

If you're willing, you're open and you're prayerful, God will send some. You have to go after others. We got off the ferry in Brindisi.

A man walks up to me. I don't generally pick up hitchhikers too much anymore for a number of reasons. And he came up to me and he said, can you give me a ride? His name was Peter.

And I thought, well, it seems to be of God. We gave him a ride. We got a new friend.

Before you win a soul, you win a friend. He couldn't believe it. He was with us two minutes and we gave him a full-course meal.

By the way, one of the best quick meals you can get in England. You can carry them all over the world. These little plastic things with noodles in.

You just put boiling water in. Really fantastic. I really believe in that, but I can't give that message because the time is up.

So we want a friend. And we need to befriend these foreigners who are coming. Before we try to push our literature down their throats, before we try to give them our 25 spiritual laws or whatever else you're into these days, we need to befriend them.

We need to love them. We need to lay down our lives and open our homes, which one philosopher said for an Englishman is his castle. Are you in the race in the area of prayer? This has been stressed enough, I won't dwell on it.

Read books on prayer. They've helped me so much. Get back and be involved in those prayer meetings at your Christian union.

If you're in an OM prayer group, there aren't many of them. We're so thrilled about that. Don't just pray for OM pray for everything you possibly can pray for.

Get Operation World. I am re-praying. It's one of my goals for this next couple of months.

I've decided to re-pray through this book, this time skipping nothing. Every line I want to go through in this great book. And what a challenge it's already been.

I'm marking it so I know where I've been, because I don't like to read beginning to end. I like to jump in to different countries as the Lord leads. If I'm in that country, I like to read about it.

Are you in the race in the area of prayer? There may be at times a strain. That's why it's described as a race. You don't want to go to a night of prayer.

You don't want to lose that precious hour of sleep. You don't want to skip that meal. But you're in the race.

You're running. You're one of God's Olympic champions. Another new film has just come out.

I saw it advertised. It looks like a decent film, about these two Cambridge men back in the 20s. One of them Jewish, who just shook Britain by his unbelievable feat at the Olympics.

And they made a whole film just about this unbelievable story. I believe his girlfriend was his daughter, or the other man who raced against him was a son of a Scottish missionary. And you know, it seems that the world is so committed to running and to sports, so willing to almost die on the move, so to speak.

Think of America, about to throw into orbit. This space shuttle. Have you read about that? It's good to read the newspapers once in a while.

You may then find out when Britain has been taken over by some strange force or something. The discipline, the excellency, the study, the training that goes in to launching the first major space shuttle in history. And the training of those astronauts, and now women astronauts.

Doesn't that somehow challenge you, when you open the pages of Scripture and read 1 Corinthians chapter 9? I therefore so run, not as uncertainly. So fight I, not as one that beateth the air. Are you in the race in the area of prayer? Are you in the race in the area of loving others? Outdoing one another in good works.

Philippians 2, esteeming one another better than yourself. I'd like to rename this conference and call it Servants Conference. The only reason we don't do it is it would communicate to some a sort of super-spirituality.

We try to choose names that have less, in a sense, controversy. Servants Conference. I know one group that did this, and it ended up that the leader of the movement was called God's Servant.

All the rest were servants, and he was God's Servant. They thought it was going to be a more humble title, and it became our exalting title. You can easily, in your Christian life, get into a jungle of semantics and vocabulary hopscotches.

So don't worry about what people are calling the leaders. Elders, deacons, presbyters, all kinds of different names. They all have verses in one language, rather, Latin, Greek, or Armenian, to defend what they're teaching.

But it is true that as leaders we are servants. Most of you are in stage one leadership. Your leadership should be by serving, by serving.

My children are not impressed with my leading. They're not impressed, at least they haven't told me. They do get amazed at my serving, and over the years I've become a little weak in that area.

I'm not heavy on washing the dishes. They're not impressed with my telephone ministry. They're not overwhelmed with my letter-writing neurosis.

But they stand aghast when they see me helping my wife around the house. Are you in the race, in the area of love and service, serving, giving, laying your life down? In this you'll know that they are my disciples because they love one another. That's what it's all about.

And if you miss that, whatever else you get out of this conference, it's zero. God's mathematics, anything minus love equals zero. We love it.

I think it's a good closing place. Are you in the race, as a leader, as a follower? That doesn't matter so much. In witness, in prayer, in love, in service, determined to run to the end, having put your hands on the plow, even though you feel exhausted, I often do, by God's grace you will not turn back.

Looking on to Jesus, therefore, as he says in Hebrews 12, laying aside every weight, the good so often enemy of the best, you have committed yourself to run in God's marathon, to row on God's team with God's Church. And you will arrive someday, and He will say, the Lord will say, well done, my good and faithful servant. God bless you.

Let us pray. I think there needs to be a moment in a conference like this, for people to openly recommit their lives to Christ. You don't have to do this.

Some of you in the past months have done it. And just quietly in your own seat, you can just acknowledge, Lord, I'm in the race. I may be falling on my face sometime, but I'm still going on.

My heart broke as I saw that picture of Ronald Reagan and of his, of his partner laying on the pavement in the United States with a bullet in his head. Some of you may have caught one of the devil's bullets over the past months, and somehow it got through the armor, because maybe you weren't wearing it properly, and you've fallen flat on your face. And Jesus is reaching out to you, and He's saying, get up.

I forgive you. I love you. There is no Christian race without a few spills, a few failures.

And Nigel, I'm sure, has aptly spoke on that. And I believe it's good at the end of a conference like this, to have a moment of recommitting, to stand up, if that will help, and it often does, or to remain seated, and recommit your life in a fresh way to Christ. If somehow you're doubtful about whether you're really filled with the Spirit, to clinch that, to finalize that by simple faith, just as you did your initial salvation, and believe that God will fill you, and has filled you, with His Holy Spirit.

Without that power, that strength, it's impossible to run in God's race. With that strength, it is more than possible. So I'd like to just give a moment, without any music, or any necessary or special effects, to give this opportunity.

If you want to recommit your life to Christ, in total surrender, put your hands on the plow, and follow Him wherever He leads, then I'd like you just quiet, as a milestone, perhaps, in this great marathon, to stand up where you are, and to say, Lord, I'm yours. I'll follow you, wherever you lead me. Just take these few minutes, for people to openly make that commitment to the Lord Jesus, in a fresh way, even as we're all just praying together.

It's an outward expression of an inward transaction, and I found, just the practicality of it, it helps seal the step of faith you're taking. It says in Hebrews, the word preached was of little value. It was not mixed with faith.

And so I'm asking you to act, in a sense, to get out of the grandstands, into the arena, into the action, and by standing, say, Lord, I'm in the race. I'm going to the end, by your grace. I shall not turn back.

If you feel that will be of benefit, and minister, and help this to be a real moment of decision, then I'd like you to stand up, right now. And we can have a moment of prayer, of dedication. I wish I could go to each one, and just shake your hand, and say, God bless you.

I can't. But God can minister to you, personally, as you simply stand, and say, Lord, it's all the way. I've counted the cost, over the past weeks, the past months, and this weekend, and I'm going all the way.

He loves you. We've seen, clearly, some of the areas of balance. He's not taking you on a purgatory trip, but He wants total commitment, and surrender, and He promises to those who will do this by faith, His filling, as it was in Acts 4 31, when they prayed, the place was shaken, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

And so I know, as you surrender, and if the specific sin, it can be confessed, and cleansed, and brought unto the blood, that He will fill you. So, let's just have this prayer of dedication, especially for those that are making this specific commitment. God bless you.

Anyone else? Many are praying for this conference, and I just sense, God does want to do something special. If we take away the supernatural from the Christian faith, there is nothing left, and God can do a supernatural work in you. Not to turn you into some kind of evangelical computer, or robot, but as an act of the will, as you surrender, He meets you, and there's the supernatural infusion, whatever term you want to put on it.

Praise the Lord. Anyone else? God bless you. God bless you.

The Lord knows. Some of you have been running away from leadership. You know your failures.

You feel inadequate. You've run away from leadership. Maybe this commitment is your willingness to take on a position of responsibility, among students, or in your church.

However small and humble it may be, maybe you need to stand and say, Lord, you've dealt with me in that area. I acknowledge my inadequacy as your opportunity. I'll do your will, wherever it leads, whether it means no leadership whatsoever, or whether it means some responsibility.

I'll do your will. Yes, praise God. Lord our God, you have met with us in this place.

You are meeting our personal needs. You have been answering questions that are longing in our minds and hearts, and we thank you. And Lord, we just want to make sure that we are in this race, as soldiers of your Son, Jesus Christ, that we have our hands on the plow, that we are not turning back.

And God, we ask by faith that you would fill us afresh with your Holy Spirit, that we might never be the same, and that we may move forward in the midst of the battle, the struggles, the failures, the problems, that we may know the way of spiritual balance. And we'll give you all the praise, and all the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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