

House Group Movement in the Uk

by George Verwer

George Verwer discusses the significance of the House Group Movement in the UK, emphasizing unity, collaboration, and the challenges faced in traditional missions.

Duration: 26:48

Scripture: Exodus 33:18, Psalm 18:6-20, Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 26:26-28, John 11:40, John 12:27-28

Topics: "House Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares about a conference where they had a communion service and a meeting with other believers. During the meeting, one of the attendees, Peter Hill, expressed his deep burden for the Ethiopian food crisis. They made a phone call to someone in Germany who is connected to the rebels in Ethiopia, hoping to find a solution to deliver food to those in need. The speaker emphasizes the importance of personal integrity and honesty, using the example of not lying to one another. They also mention the message of the cross and enduring hardships as followers of Jesus Christ. The speaker concludes by expressing gratitude for the attendees' desire to grow in wisdom and knowledge and their willingness to acknowledge their own mistakes.

Transcript

My name and O.M. kept coming up, almost every other speaker, usually positive, and as an affirmation of their desire somehow to be united with us and others. The head of O.M.F., John Wallace, was there. Patrick Johnson was there.

The head of the Bible Society was there. The head of Scripture Union was there. The head of CLC or his deputy was there.

This was no one-sided thing. And they also shared messages. Patrick Johnson, the first night, gave one of his brilliant, you know, statistic messages, all his acetates.

I will tell you, when that man stood in front of that crowd and just openly shared that way, you know, the Lord just took the meeting one step further. And so he then said, you know, if you want to break bread with someone, you come up and take the bread and take the cup and you go to that person and you offer them the bread and you offer them the cup. And, you know, I had never seen anything like this.

And, of course, it meant, as it teaches in Matthew, you know, if you have something against your brother, if you're going to come to him and personally offer him the bread and the wine, you better be right with him. Can you imagine us trying to do something like this in certain places? Because, brothers and sisters, we know, I tell you, we know in O.M., people that are barely speaking to each other. People can barely look at each other without negative vibrations.

We don't have enough of it in O.M., we don't have much of it in O.M., but we have enough of it that if it spreads, it'll kill this work. And if we don't think we can disintegrate and God just go down and work, you know, on the other end of the block with a group that we may think is dead or sleepy, then we don't know much about history. And I'll tell you, I'll be one of the first to move out and go down to the other end of the block and fellowship where the Holy Ghost is working.

You know, whether they stand on the chairs or they pray on their knees, I want to be where God is working. Anyway, to make a long story short, as we see the old clock up on the wall, I was just, you know, sitting there, standing there in a state of emotion, and suddenly I had a little queue of people in front of me, all wanting to break bread and give me wine. I'm number one, I can't handle much wine.

I'm a teetotaler if there ever was one. But, you know, I won't give the names of the people who came to me, and it was only ultimately about five or six or seven because the meeting had to end. I'm sure there were others circulating around, and I'm sure while this was happening with me, it was happening all over the room with other people.

You know, it wasn't that I became the dominant person in this, so I probably was the biggest, you know, the biggest mouth. I think they would acknowledge that through a few things that I, through outbursts. I mean, it's amazing when the group of people are largely charismatic and Pentecostal.

I was the only one saying amen and hallelujah during the ministry. It seems they're still very English when it comes to the ministry, and the tremendous ministry, and everybody's basically quiet. And one time, you know, I said hallelujah, and the man speaking said, thank you, George, thank you.

I was not a main speaker. People did realize that somehow I was present. I didn't even have a book table.

There was no literature allowed except what went in the packets. The only thing we had in the packet was seven major emphases, a packet that thick. All of them had this flashy, beautiful material, and we had seven major emphases, which may have had a message in itself because we were not there to promote OM, and certainly we will not come out thought of in that conference as just been promoting OM.

The only book they allowed really was Patrick Johnson's Operation World, and he and I pushed that together, and they were going ten at a time at what Patrick Johnson calls a special price. I had a great talk with him about that. And what a dear saint that man is.

Well, I was weeping during most of that communion service as these different people came to me, a number of them ex-OMers. There was nothing ugly. There was nothing that bad in one sense, but it was beautiful.

At the end, I was able to have a personal time of prayer with Terry Virgo, a man who I've appreciated from a distance, but very much from a distance. I've had also some misunderstandings, one of which I was able to talk to him about. Before that, I had a very emotional time of prayer with Michael Harper who really wants to see more of us.

All these people, of course, are very controversial, and I'm not saying there's no problem. In fact, their leaders are very much pointing out that if the house groups are to work the traditional missions, they're speaking more of groups like OMF. We are somewhere in the middle there.

They're trying to figure out actually where we are. We're still trying to figure out where we are. But the things they talk about that are barriers in traditional missions are often nonexistent in OM and YWAM.

YWAM was also represented, though Len Green had to leave on that last day, which was just, I guess, inevitable. People are busy. But, you know, these men aren't changing.

We must understand that. We aren't changing. These men, and women, there were women there, aren't changing.

And they are saying, now that doesn't mean the whole house new church movement is saying this, but a significant number of them are saying the priority now must be evangelism and world missions. They don't want to lose their distinctives. We had a lot of talk about that in our small groups.

They don't want to lose their distinctives. But they have matured. They have seen the reality of spiritual warfare and the problems that come and all the rest.

And they want to be involved in missions. Now, they already are sending out leaders, sending out workers, and these house groups are involved more in missions than is seen on the surface. Some of them are incredibly generous and giving quite large sums of money to help in the third world.

Now, we, in our work in the third world, we, of course, pick up negatives about some of this. We see even divisiveness. But what I have been saying all along, and that's what I believe, when many years ago I went to Bradford, the Bradford group and a number of the people in the South now have separated themselves from Bradford.

Bradford and Bryn Jones does not have an overall control over what we're talking about here. They were represented. Bryn wasn't there.

I don't think they were very strongly represented, but they were there. And two men in the South Coast groups that were linked with Bradford share with me how they more or less now operate on their own. There's a relationship, but they're more or less operating on their own.

I share with one of the main ones from Southampton. It's one of the strongest. An experience where someone had one foot in their camp and one foot in the Christian Union five years ago, and because they were anti-Christian Union, he moved out of that fellowship and aligned himself with the Christian Union.

He shared how they've changed in their attitude. The young man who's the president of that Christian Union is a member of their fellowship. This is exciting.

We can't afford the divisions that it looked like we had in all of this five years ago. And we have a long way to go. They openly shared as leaders that some of their people have left because of the changes they're making.

There is a drive, by the way, toward the kind of honesty and integrity that Neil referred to this morning. And not just reporting things that they don't actually have. And I would just, in closing, any of you who are hearing this tape, and this report is only partial, and those of us in this room, to really pray, as certainly it

will be a main task now for us to maintain what God did in that conference.

I believe there's going to be open doors for us to administer in these groups. I've already had open doors. I don't have many free weekends, but I'm praying that Brother Viv, and maybe others in this room, will be able to take some of the invitations.

They want teaching about missions. They're openly pushing Mission 2000. I mean, this alone is a breakthrough, because these groups in the past, some of them, they wouldn't touch this kind of interdenominational event.

They have spoken against the word parachurch. And openly, one of the main leaders said, Look, ON, YWAM, they are the church. They may have even a more stronger interpretation of us being the church than we do.

But they said, Look, this is the church. And he gave some explanation, but I wasn't fast enough to catch the vocabulary. But it looks like the walls are coming down, and it's going to be a long, hard road to maintain these relationships and to try to deal with the misunderstandings which are everywhere.

They now have a book, look at that book, of the addresses of their fellowships. Now, not all new churches in Britain are charismatic. The bigger section is certainly linked with charismatic, strong on the gifts, the signs and wonders.

But there are new churches, like the one I was in this weekend, that are not necessarily charismatic technically. Wherever the Holy Spirit is working, there is charisma. And someone even acknowledged the possibility of a spirit-filled person being beyond charismatic in this interesting conference.

Body book. One of the fastest growing franchises in Britain, I was with a man who is into franchises this weekend, are the Body Shops. This has nothing to do with that franchise.

This is the House Fellowship Movement. Probably they'll change the title on the next book. Very strong in the body life.

In fact, I'd love to be able to share, and I may at a future date, the strengths of the House Fellowship and the New Church Movement, and what we can learn. We have been learning because we've been watching. We don't want to miss anything.

We've been watching. We've been reading. I might say the conference ended up with the rock star from the Soviet Union, Valerie.

I was staying with Danny Smith. I was commuting and then staying with Danny Smith. By the way, they asked me to lead a night of prayer.

It went from 10 to 2 in the morning. Everybody stayed. And I had free run.

When I opened for worship, of course, a couple of times I thought it was going maybe out of control. But, hallelujah, I said, Amen! Praise the Lord! And everybody sat down. And we got back to intercessory prayer.

But, really, I wish you could have all been in that unusual prayer meeting. You know, when you get in a prayer meeting with these people, and we let them share. I didn't do a lot of sharing.

We just let them share. And Patrick Johnson had his overheads and all kinds of things. But I went back that night and stayed with Danny Smith.

And Danny Smith's main involvement, he's an ex-OMer who's the founder of Jubilee Ministry, has been with Valerie Baranoff, who's just come out of the Soviet Union. Maggie Thatcher was involved with that, members of Parliament. It's big.

It's been on TV, national news. I haven't seen it, to the surprise of Danny. And we had him come at the very end.

And, of course, I mean, when I met him, I'd been praying for him for three years, listening to his music, introducing him to the rock festival in Chicago. So, when I saw him, I was already, you know, really coming apart. And I just wept the entire time with him in my arms.

The guy must have thought he really met somebody who's way out. Then he went up to the front and he gave a brief, brief testimony and sang. And that's how, after the communion service, this unusual conference finished.

Probably more was happening behind the scenes than we could even see. Meeting with people, it was a large chunk of time given. We had a little meeting of ex-OMers out in the hallway.

During that, Peter Hill was deeply burdened for the Ethiopian food crisis. Len Green was there. And we immediately made a phone call.

I think they all had kicks out of my cell phone. I was the only one with a cell phone. But we immediately made, I tried to keep it out of the way.

I didn't until the end. But we made this very strategic call to a man in Germany who's linked with the rebels in Ethiopia. We didn't get through.

And then we prayed, all of us united, that a miracle would take place to let the food get through. If the food doesn't get through, there is food there now. They always need more.

But there is food. The problem is they cannot get through the rebels. The rebels are destroying the trucks.

This has come over in national news. Others have stated the same thing. And I hope we can be praying about that this week.

Because thousands and thousands and thousands will die. I believe God wants to give this team a very significant input into the worldwide relief situation. We have unbelievable contacts.

We have, how can you say, we have a degree, because of what God has done, we have a degree of authority that if we called up certain people or we worked through other people, just like I worked together with Len Green who made the phone call to his contact, that could possibly do something. We need peacemakers. We need spiritual Terry Waits to go down and break these barriers down.

And we want to be involved. I don't think the Lord is calling OM into main actual involvement in relief. We've always felt we should be training relief workers and helping in every possible way.

And I'm really wrestling with this. Actually, one of Roger Molstead's mandates when he took on his job years ago was responsible for relief within OM, which was a linking type of thing, a catalyst type of thing. And some things did happen.

But that was just one of the exciting little subgroups that took place during that conference. And may something come from it. So let's bring this to a close in Thanksgiving.

Let's pray for this movement with all of their struggles, just like us. We were born at the same time. We're running parallel.

We're in dialogue. There is overlapping. And above all else, we need wisdom from above.

You know, we're not going to leave our roots in order to do these things. In fact, these are people, some of their leaders were telling us, you know, don't leave your roots. And even as I tried to apologize for areas where we felt we made mistakes, one or two of them said, look, you don't need to apologize.

One of them said, look, he thought we weren't paying much attention to them 20 years ago, this particular leader, that we actually were, maybe more than he knows. He said, I'm glad you didn't pay attention to us. You got on with what needed to be done.

Some of these people actually admire OM. And I'm sure that's after knowing our weaknesses. But let's pray that the Lord will do a mighty work, especially as they go back and share this with their congregations.

Because just like the brethren were 25 years ago, there's hardliners in every congregation. And the message of the cross, which strongly came out. The message of enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ came out.

The example of Hudson Taylor was one of the most widely used examples by the speakers. That this kind of stick-to-it, you know, forward-driving message and lifestyle is needed today. And that is very much, you know, very much comes through groups like IFAS who have a wider range, a wider model of all that they would like to see done.

Let's pray. Lord, we just never have enough time to share all the things that are on our hearts. But we believe we have shared enough.

And we thank you for these men and women. We thank you for the way you have worked through them. We thank you for their desire to grow in wisdom and knowledge and maturity.

To take truth in from different quarters. For their willingness to acknowledge their own mistakes, their own extremes. And Lord, we have had to acknowledge our mistakes and our extremes.

We thank you for these great parachurch agencies which we don't really want to call that anymore. Like OMF and CLC and WEC and many others that were involved in this conference. We thank you that this represents answer to the prayers of, I believe, hundreds of thousands of people.

That this whole movement may not become more extreme but may be welded in to the main flow of biblical, evangelical, charismatic, whatever people call it, Christianity. Lord, we know it's not going to be easy as we move forward together. There are things that different groups do that turn other people off and frighten them and make them feel uneasy.

There's controversy about the gifts and the use of the gifts and how far to go here and there. There's a lot of hurt people out there who have discovered there's no total answer in any assembly, any church. And we just pray there'll be great healing, a great breaking down of barriers.

And we pray that within OM there'll be great healing, great breaking down of barriers. Leaders who have perhaps not had a deep union with one another, have not openly talked with one another and confessed and prayed together and really broken bread together in unity and reality and humility might find that the next time they're breaking bread and taking of the cup, that pride would be crucified and that you, Lord Jesus, would be magnified. And there might be a few tears around this movement that we may know what it is to be the fulfillment, spiritually and practically, of what your son, the Lord Jesus, prayed for in John chapter 17, that we may be one.

Oh Lord, put a watchman on our mouths, especially mine, oh God. Give us strength to speak the truth with love, to flee gossip as we would run from an AIDS epidemic and to engage in Holy Ghost intercession. Lord, even as we on this team make transition and go through change and there's evidence that we don't have complete unity on many different issues, that somehow your Holy Spirit would restrain and control and move through us to touch many, many lives.

As some of these leaders come to visit us in Forest Hill and in Bromley, that we may be able to welcome them and pray with them and learn from them. And maybe we have some of them sharing in our meetings. And as we share in their meetings and as we attempt to have ongoing dialogue, to look for solutions in some of the real tough, nitty-gritty problems, we believe you're going to raise up other mission societies.

We believe some of these movements will have their own mission societies. They already do. Their own sending agents.

We're happy for the pluralization. We believe unity is in the midst of diversity. But Lord, if there's a greater part that we are to play as a fellowship, then we want to be open and willing.

We see Love Europe as part of that. We see the Exo-Emers reunion as an ongoing part of that. And as many people are praying about coming there and being reunited with friends they haven't seen for 10, 20 years.

Grant these things, we pray, in humility, with a great sense of need and yet a great security in yourself. We thank you for our roots. But we want the tree to grow strong.

And we want more fruit on every branch. In Jesus' name. Amen.

During his talk, George mentioned remarks that Neil Porter had made earlier in the meeting. So to fill the rest of the tape, here is what Neil had to say. Through these verses I've noticed the theme has been running is the glory of God.

You know, like Moses says show me now thy glory. Jesus, when he's in a state of kind of depression in the garden, says now is my soul troubled. And then he says Father, glorify thy name.

And in the situation with Lazarus, he says, did not I say that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? It's just that sort of thought I want to leave before you. To keep the glory of God in your mind in all that you're doing. I feel at times we kind of try to counterfeit the glory of God or try to concoct it.

I, being a cynic by nature, I sometimes question the prayer letters I see or little things that are said about what God did. Sometimes you hear how it actually was worked out by men all the way through. In a sense, God didn't have anything to do with it, you might say.

But the glory of God is supposed to be the business of the servants of God. And we should be seeing how God has glorified our own lives and also in our praying and in his special promises to us as individuals that we wait upon him to allow himself to glorify himself. He doesn't need anybody to work it out for him, in a sense, that he can do without us.

And I suppose in that line I think very much of Abraham having just been reading that story how God promised to make him a father of many nations and how he tried to work it out. He got impatient, didn't want to wait on God and so he tried to work it out with Hagar and blew it. And you know, the Arab-Israeli conflict really starts way back then.

But I guess we won't all have that effect if we disobey God on human history. But that's how, by not waiting on God, not waiting, allowing God to work and not praying with an expectant spirit, you know, God's glory doesn't come out or he doesn't give that opportunity so we can blow it. So that has been very much on my mind and gives me a kind of sense of expectation for the future.

Another thing which isn't related to any verses, there are very few verses on the subject, but the other thing which in a sense is related to the glory of God is personal integrity. And this is in our speech. Our speech obviously is the way most people analyze what kind of person we are.

That's the best way. One of the main ways is how we communicate, what we say, is how people judge us. And we've got to remember getting back to our prayer letters and reports and so on, whether we report in the prayer meeting or otherwise.

People receiving them in the world outside are people who are cynics by nature, a lot of them, like myself. And there are people out there who are income tax inspectors and customs inspectors, you know, they don't take anything at face value. And they question what we say and they question what we do.

And I also at times question what people say to me. And I'm in an interesting situation a few weeks ago when somebody told me what he'd been doing so many hours of work and I wasn't even asking, I wanted him to know. A few hours later I didn't even ask questions, I just accepted.

Somebody else told me that he'd spent so many hours with that person the day before and you think, well, somebody had a 36 hour day or God stopped the sun for the third time in history or something like that. And so I also question, but this whole thing of personal integrity comes to me and being honest in our reports, not padding them or embellishing them or not trying to do it, you know, if something goes wrong that we just honestly say, well, I made a mistake or I did it the wrong way. Instead of sort of trying to place the blame onto the situation so it helps that our image doesn't get tarnished.

It was interesting to me last week, I'm doing a nurture course with the Chapadour Church and I was a little bit concerned. Has this guy really come to salvation? Is God really working in his life? So I asked him, I said, he works in the building trade, I said to him, Wally, that's his name, I said, Wally, what do you think the Lord has changed in your life since you made this commitment to Christ? And you know, his first thing was in the area of one's speech, but he said, it wasn't bad language, it was the way he reports things now. He's a foreman, they have a deadline to finish this new Barclays Bank in Surbiton by the 29th of this

month.

So he says, any time there's a holdup or stoppage, the directors are on to him or the management, they want to know why, why, why. And he says, I no longer give them a whole story, I tell them exactly what happened. And I thought, well that's, you know, obviously God's doing something and I'm just reading Essay Colossians 3 now and it says, do not lie to one another, put off the old nature.

So that's part of the process. I asked him about language, when it comes to bad language, he says, well actually, that's getting even worse. I said, are you sure it's not your conscience that's becoming more, you know, alive to that problem? But he said, no, he didn't think so.

But at least I felt, well God is doing something in his life, that he's not trying to cover his reports, not trying to protect his reputation, he's just telling the boss how it was. And that's what I, subject to personal integrity. Just taking from Psalm 18, it's been a favourite with mine, I preached on it and it's interesting, the last Sunday before we joined the Logos, just over 10 years ago, and it's often come back to me and been encouragement.

But David is writing this sort of towards the end of his life when most of his victories are all over and he's, you know, he's really on top of the world. But he says, the cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me, the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me. That's how his situation was.

In my distress, I called upon the Lord to my God, I cried for help. From His temple, He heard my voice and my cry to Him reached His ears. That's the situation is, he calls on God in an expectant way and then we read later on in verse 20, The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands He recompensed me.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His ordinances were before me and His statutes I did not put away from me. I was blameless before Him and I kept myself from guilt.

Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness. He had a real image of His own personal integrity. When you think of David's life, we know his sins, it's interesting, but how at the end he could claim that kind of righteousness to where that he wasn't guilty and yet somehow he had maintained that kind of personal integrity before God and that's why God responded to him.

And so when I talk about the glory of God, I say on one hand it's not dependent on us at all, on the other hand it is in a sense for God to respond to us. It's the kind of lives we're living that we're open and honest in all that we do. We don't try and mislead people or even try to deceive them in the way we talk and how we report things.

So those are just two thoughts that have been very much on my mind in the last few months. Thank you very much George.

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