

How to Avoid Spiritual Burnout

by George Verwer

To avoid spiritual burnout, it is essential to develop deep faith and trust in God, handle criticism and stress, spend time with God, and maintain a healthy relationship with Him.

Duration: 57:05

Topics: "Spiritual Burnout", "False Teaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the importance of shepherding the church of God and warns about the coming of savage wolves who will try to harm the flock. He emphasizes the need to be alert and vigilant, as false teachers will arise from within the church, speaking perverse things to draw disciples away. The speaker shares his personal experience of tirelessly admonishing and teaching the believers for three years, with tears. He then commends the listeners to God and the word of His grace, which has the power to build them up and give them an inheritance among the sanctified. The sermon concludes with a heartfelt prayer and emotional farewell between the speaker and the congregation.

Transcript

Acts, chapter 20, passage that we're very familiar with. I think when we deal with the subject of staying on the cutting edge, of avoiding spiritual burnout or even going further in talking about avoiding backsliding, that the Apostle Paul is certainly a person to look at. And Acts 20 is one of those beautiful glimpses of the Apostle Paul.

Let's start at verse 24. When I was a young Christian heading across the United States, the year before we went to Mexico, distributing Gospels in America, and I was still selling firefighting equipment. I got in Pittsburgh, and it was in Pittsburgh.

It's interesting, these Tozer tapes I'm listening to, he gave in Pittsburgh. I was challenged on the subject of baptism. That drove me to read through the whole book of Acts that night.

And at that reading of the book of Acts, I made this sort of my life verse, at least at that time. And that's where I want to start reading tonight. Acts 20, 24.

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I might finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that all of you, among whom I have went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no

more. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. And that's true for most of you.

To shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves, men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years, I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears. That became one of the most motivating verses that I've ever studied. Let me read it again.

Therefore, be on the alert. Remembering that night and day for a period of three years, I did not cease to admonish each one of you or each one with tears. Talk about an extreme verse.

And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourself know that these hands minister to my own needs and to the men who were with me.

In everything, I showed you that by working hard in this manner, you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive. When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

And they began to weep aloud and embrace Paul and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship. I really was very much seeking the Lord.

I had been for months. In fact, I started to seek the Lord about the message for the General Council about the time we finish this General Council because I consider it such a privilege, such an important opportunity. And I have all kinds of notes of messages to give at these conferences.

I thought I would read a little bit of one that I don't have time to give. I'll probably give next week, but I didn't find it. And I think that's the Lord's providence.

It would go too long. But these thoughts came together just a night or two ago. And I wrote them down on this little piece of scrap paper.

In other words, often I have, I come here with maybe 30 or 40 different messages and burdens and I have to, you know, narrow it down. And I think this is the one the Lord wants me to share. And I've called it how to stay fresh.

How to stay on the cutting edge of what the Holy Spirit is doing in our day. Or if you want to use other terminology, how to avoid spiritual burnout. This is a term that is being thrown around a lot.

And I think we must acknowledge the fact that in OM we have an ongoing problem with semantics. Someone said the other day, I think words aren't that important. I'm sure he didn't mean it the way it came out or maybe I didn't understand it.

But I think we all know words are incredibly important. You as a leader, now that OM has a much higher profile, with one sentence, you could set OM back many, many years in your country. And let us not think that some of the things that have happened to other organizations and other fellowships and other Christian leaders cannot happen to us.

Our words are incredibly important. And we think of the peace talks going on right now there in Geneva between Iraq and Iran. The other day they weren't even looking at each other yet.

Just starting, looking off to the side. But let's be praying for those peace talks. And we know as these people meet together, what they say is incredibly important.

What we say here, what we put into our policy manual is important. People will read this manual 10, 15 years from now, if the Lord doesn't come, and they will make decisions based on the words we put. Not the feeling we get here or what we sense it may mean, but the actual words that have gone.

Of course, we hope they will never become legalistic slaves to that manual, and that is not the purpose of it. So the word burnout means different things to different people. Perhaps a number of the things I say will mean different things to different people, and that's why I've discovered that preaching and teaching is a lot harder than I thought.

And I have increased my study in the last two years on how to communicate and how to understand people. And I've had some brilliant books lately. I have a new book from a secular company that produces books about culture that I wish every one of us Americans could have read before we left the United States.

It's absolutely brilliant. The problems we have when we go overseas. I would have a thousand of those here, except they are very, you know, I don't have that kind of money.

I hope we can increase our orientation in that area. How to communicate, how to be sensitive, how to live in cross-cultural situations. We are faced with some staggering living situations, you know, not only on the ships.

In fact, often living in a flat four or five women from four or five different nationalities with different languages can be more difficult than living on a big ship. We generally learn on the ship in the old days, maybe it's changed, that there are ways that you can avoid people, except the ones in your own cabin, more difficult. But I know some who are quite professional at avoiding even the ones in their own cabin.

We're dealing with a big subject, and I want to say as I start with, I don't want any of this to sound simplistic. There may be someone who has a physical burnout problem. They are not well.

And they need a doctor. They may need medication. What I say tonight is probably not going to resolve their situation.

It may help, especially after they get better. It may help them to press on. I just said on the radio two days ago that it has been proven.

You know what they mean by that? I don't. It has been proven in hospital cases if they will play tapes while people are recovering under the anesthetic about you're going to feel better, all that kind of positive thing. In their studies, it's shown that these people who listen to the tapes when they're unconscious,

half-conscious or whatever, get well much quicker than those who don't listen to the subconscious tapes.

You probably don't agree with that. I'm just telling you what I heard on the radio. Now, as I look at this passage of Scripture and as I think about the Apostle Paul, I think he is an example of a man who stayed on the cutting edge.

I appreciate the testimony of Cliff Richards, but I think since I get more about Paul, I will stick to him. We see him going on for three years warning people night and day with tears, verse 31. We have many other examples of how Paul persevered.

He also wrote to Timothy and he said, fight the good fight. One of the tapes on that table, a very new message I hadn't given in that form before, is about being a spiritual fighter. I was asked to speak at Spring Harvest two years ago on being a fighter, so I've been using that terminology and I must confess I like it.

I had the privilege some years ago of touring with Sheila Walsh for 21 days and was quite excited when her biography came out and she said, God put a fighter within me. Then Graham Kendrick came up with a whole tremendous series of songs about being a fighter. And I think one of the reasons that people get knocked out of the battle is they don't develop that ability to fight.

Now again, we've got a semantic problem. I don't mean with my fists. I don't mean, you know, anger and losing your temper and shouting at your wife.

No. I'm talking about that inward be steadfast, unmovable, that ability to say, you know, here I stand. Everything is going wrong.

I'm intimidated. I'm discouraged. I see only clouds, but, you know, I'm going on.

I am going on. Now we've seen this come down upon the Lagos people almost like a miraculous baptism. By the way, I'm developing a new message on Elijah.

I'll just give you a little advance about this. Oh, I can't wait to where I go. I don't know where I'm going to give it.

Maybe Spring Harvest, 1998. But Elijah, they're praying down the fire on the altar. The power, that's the power of ministry.

And the field leaders, you know, we got into the power of ministry. Beautiful. We need it.

But what happened to Elijah after the power of ministry? He's under the tree, said, I want to die. And what do we find? We find God ministering to him with some food, God ministering through some sleep. Then we find him going out in the wilderness.

And then there's some more power ministry, lightning, thunder, wind. But how did God minister to Elijah? Remember out in the desert? Still, small voice. What a fantastic comparison.

Look, you can study those scriptures, get your own message. I don't have a copyright on that. I'll give it to you.

There's a lot there in the Old Testament to get excited about. And the 90s, among other things, is going to be the decade of women's liberation in Operation Mobilization. Hallelujah.

How many women believe you need more freedom in Operation Mobilization? Say amen. Oh man, I am disappointed. We are not against women preachers.

We have a few biases that we're working on. It seems in OM we let any old man, any old character get up and preach. But for a woman to preach, she's got to really be good.

So we hope some of you women will learn how to share the word. If some are upset with your preaching, we'll call in an extended testimony. What's the problem? So we're dealing with probably one of the most important, crucial issues we could ever talk about.

We have the Apostle Paul as an example. We have right in this passage, in fact, if someone else were preaching this message, they could get a number, most of the points I'm going to share with you, they could get them from this passage, just expounding the passage. But that's not my approach.

I like to see the passage, read the passage. I like to find the hand grenades that I find in the passage and just throw them at people. Some people have expository ministry.

Other people have explosive ministry. God can use it all. And praise the Lord for this passage.

One of the things we certainly see, and I have it as my first point, that's going to keep us from burnout, that's going to keep us fresh, is deep faith and trust in the living God. Proverbs 3, 5 and 6, we all memorize that. Trust the Lord with all your heart.

Lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him. He'll direct your paths.

We need to develop that deep trust. We see that in the Apostle Paul. We see him standing firm when things are going wrong.

We see his great faith. Dullness, spiritual dullness and burnout are often caused by worry, frustration, and failure to handle various forms of stress, especially criticism. You've heard me say this before.

Some of you are new. I don't want to go into it in detail. But brothers and sisters, you can't be a leader in God's work unless you learn to handle criticism.

You can't live on this planet and do anything without criticism. And Christian leader after Christian leader that I fellowship with between this time last year and now, I probably talked in face-to-face fellowship with 200 Christian leaders from all over the world, some of them pastors of giant churches, one church in Canada, one night commended 200 workers out. I'd been there a year ago.

They wanted to start their own type of short-term work patterned after OM. I suggested they do it within their own church and not get involved with us. And they did it.

I was invited to their valedictory meeting and sent 200 workers. The pastor was so excited. I think he was nervous before the meeting.

He made me speak all about it the next morning on Huntley Street, which, by the way, you can get a copy of, an interview that went right across Canada on Huntley Street. And these men all face criticism. They all

face criticism.

And yet I know that is often the greatest source of stress among Christian leaders, feeling you're misunderstood, especially by a close friend. Maybe you've even gone the extra mile to show some love, to sort out that situation, and you feel you have been misunderstood. You feel you may even be the fall guy in a complicated situation.

If you're learning English and I say something you don't understand, you write that down and you ask somebody what it means. That is what you'll do if you're serious about learning English. Does that make you feel bad? What to do? You can't preach without somebody feeling bad.

I would ask you to spend time every day in the Psalms. I would ask you to read some of A.W. Tozer. I would ask you to search your own heart and ask yourself at this weekend whether you are really spending enough time alone with God.

As I listened to that Alan Redpath message today, it was in a sense the final confirmation that this was the Lord's message for me to share. Because Alan gave one of those traditional Redpath messages in which he warned people of getting too busy. It's busyness that so often leads to burnout.

You can be busy. There's nothing wrong with being busy. There are brilliant books in the defense of being active and being busy.

But you cannot be too busy to wait upon God. You cannot be too busy so that your Bible is put to one side, your prayer life is in shambles, and you can't even remember when you last had a half a day alone with a living God on your face in the woods or in your prayer closet to seek his power and to seek his face. That's the message of Ravenhill.

That's the message of Tozer. That's the message of Redpath. That's the message of George Duncan.

That's the message of David Wilkerson. That's the message of a hundred other men and women of God who have affected this movement. And if we depart from that message, whatever else we have, we will be producing wood, hay and stubble.

And yet it's so easy, you know, isn't it? There's always another phone call to make. There's always somebody seemingly at the door. There's always another project.

There's always another vision. There are always people in need. But don't we realize that if we are not filled with God's power, if we are not moving in the Spirit, even our attempts to help people will only be human attempts, when if we are going to help people, we need that supernatural power and that supernatural touch upon our lives.

So spending extra time with God, extra time seeking his face, extra time in the Word and in worship, is not going to hinder your ministry, it's going to help your ministry. Wasn't it Luther who said, I have so much to do today, I must spend three hours in prayer before I start the day. Or was that somebody else? Who was it? Luther, thank you.

What a challenge. I'm sure he didn't do that every single day of his life. And probably without electricity he may have gone to bed a little earlier, like Wesley.

But still, let's not have an excuse. I believe it is important, as we consider this subject and related subjects, to understand that most of our problems are linked with our relationship with God. I'm going to get into a lot of other practical things.

But I want to get the foundation. Now I want to say something I don't think I've ever said before about this whole thing of when people leave OM. OM, I think, is developing a guilt complex.

Or maybe it's just me. Forgive me if I lead you into the wrong thing again. But we feel so concerned about an ex-OMer if he leaves and he's unhappy.

And we write memos and we search our hearts and we repent and we phone people and write people and we make new policies. It's everything to try so that when people leave, they're rejoicing, they're happy, they believe OM is a good thing. And let's be willing to continue to search our hearts.

Let's be willing to continue to take some of the blame. But isn't it interesting? Try to bear with me a minute. When people first get started in their Christian life, we're given all these strong messages about what's going to happen if you don't stay close to the Lord, if you don't stay in the Word and prayer, if you don't repent, if you don't discipline your life.

All the message in the beginning are all these strong, very biblical principles. And we say, if you don't do these things, you're going to get in trouble, this is going to happen, the enemy's going to get in. But when people leave, we seldom are willing or have the courage to say, look, this guy let down his armor.

He failed to repent on this issue. He let the enemy in. He stopped having his quiet time.

He let a root of bitterness in. He let cynicism. We shift over and become very human in our thinking when we look at these people who leave because we don't want to be unloving.

And it would be unloving to point to somebody and say, you know, you're basically backslidden. Let's face it, OM's not your problem. The ship isn't your problem.

And I've had some pretty heavy letters from people that have been hurt on our ships in India and Pakistan and Europe. But I think the bottom line to a lot of this is the fact that people come in OM and as they're serving during that year, they get away from Jesus. Otherwise, the message we are preaching needs to be changed in the first place.

Let's not talk about all the Holy Spirit, dedication, spiritual warfare, crucified living, and warn people that if they don't move this way and live this way, they're in big trouble. But when they get in the big trouble, we back down and we pat them on the back and we think, well, it's this, it's that, we're sorry we failed you. And we are really bad guys and we don't love enough and we do have cliques here and we do.

They may be factors. And I am not defending OM's sins or my own sins. But I am trying to drive home a point that the bottom line is God.

And OM will never make you spiritual. And envidulas will never make you spiritual. And sweating it out in the deserts of Rajasthan will never make you spiritual.

Fellowship with the living God, worshipping Him, breathing what He wants to give you, that is what will make you spiritual. And if you can't find it in OM, then get out as fast as you can. And the Word is so clear on that.

So clear. And yet, Satan is so subtle. He always wants us to blame somebody else.

It's my leader. He wasn't just really loving enough. He didn't set the example.

He didn't lead the Bible studies. He went on too many journeys. Or it was my wife.

That was the big thing, right? Your wife kept making you wash the dishes and it was robbing you of your quiet time. It's amazing how many excuses we have when we get our life into a mess. And if we really think that some of these messes are going to be sorted out just by taking a month holiday, then we must be very naive because I tell you the devil is a professional at knocking people out during the holidays.

And Satan doesn't retire on a holiday. One of my close friends took a holiday recently and I am pro-holiday. And we'll get a few days next month.

And this man went on a holiday on the beaches of New Jersey and his son on the holiday was run over by a bus and killed last month. To me that makes some of my problems look pretty small. I hope when you do go on a holiday and we need this holiday policy that you will be able to get time to seek God.

But if that seeking of God can then not be brought back into your workplace because most people in the world are working in order to live. And I'm glad that OM is known as a movement where people work hard. I hope it is always that way because what did Paul say in this very passage? He said that he in fact had to go the extra mile and work to support himself with his own hands.

A devotional life that is a devotional life of power, a prayer life, a knowledge of God and there's so many brilliant books on this. It's incredible these days will function whether you're on a holiday or whether you're back working in a secular job or in Christian work. So that's my foundational point.

That's my most important point. I know you've all heard it before and you've heard it in clearer terms than I am able to give and I would appreciate your prayers that this which has been the strength of my life since my conversion would never become otherwise. The second point I've written down on how to stay fresh and stay on the cutting edge is the need for biblical fellowship, for walking in the light, for being open and honest with other people.

I'm glad that O.M. never took a stereotyped approach to this and told you exactly how you should do it. Some of you may not feel you want to just go up to somebody in the next couple of days and unload everything, but I wonder if during the next couple of days you could just try to pray with a few more people, just pray with them, just pray an honest prayer. I often find out something I wasn't planning on saying, when I pray it comes out and the brother hears it, then he prays, then you pray again.

What a beautiful thing if along this river and in these woods and in these many different rooms of this building complex there could be more just one-on-one personal sharing and fellowship. Now, I know that is going on. In fact, I believe that is the heartbeat of this conference that's gone on every year since 1961.

It's the individual fellowship. And people getting right with one another, approving their relationships, getting to know one another, it's a beautiful thing. And we are, I believe that OM continues to be a relationship-centered movement.

Of course, there's unlimited scope for improvement, something that's grown so big so fast because many of our deep relationships are with people who have left OM and they are with pastors and they are with all

kinds of people. And so naturally, as we've reached out and we've tried to be very non-exclusive, within the fellowship we often don't know one another. And I don't think we should get under a ton of guilt about it, but I think we should be open.

And can I just throw one word, if you haven't written anything down up to now, please write initiative. Please write initiative. You know, even a person in my situation struggle with who I'm supposed to be fellowshiping with.

As you know, I invite different people to come and talk with me, as many as I can squeeze into. I tell you, the ex-OMers reunion, that was some event. But, you know, if I knew that there was actually someone that wanted to fellowship with me, I mean, somebody that actually wanted to meet with, you know, Mr. Big Mouth who's liable to frighten you right out of the end of the bus when he opens his mouth, that would sure help me make my decision sometime.

Because the truth is that in OM today, many of us don't know where we stand anymore with one another. Because we've heard this rumor, we've heard that rumor. We've heard this criticism, we've heard that criticism.

Some of it probably never even been stated. You know, I have a lie dream every night. I'm getting confused sometimes what's in the dreams and what's in the reality.

And I prayed over so many pictures. And now I'm getting confused sometimes whether I've just prayed over that picture or whether I prayed to that person, you know, face to face. Wow, the human mind, what a challenge.

Initiative is so often the key. Not many of these new recruits will get time with me because I'm committed and have different levels of commitment. Some will, and I'll call some in, but I tell you there won't be a single new recruit there that asks to see me, that won't see me.

Now, I don't know how I fit it in every year, but somehow God puts it together. Don't go and announce that, please, in the tent. Just let the Lord work in His own beautiful way.

Somebody just listened to an old Tozer message on a phonograph record. Incredible, that was really old. But the Lord still used it.

I think a high percentage of people in OM are on the cutting edge. This message, because I thought you were all backslidden. I have an ability to deliver oranges even to Florida.

But I believe that all of us who know something about staying on the cutting edge, know something about avoiding spiritual dullness, want to learn more. I learned something through this message, so you might as well. I believe most people in OM are widely read people.

I am stunned at the reading many people do. I don't know how Gary Dean reads so many magazines and articles. He certainly seems to send me quite a few of them.

And I think it's exciting that you meet workers in the middle of Nepal, in the middle of somewhere else, and you find that they've got a bunch of powerful books in their suitcase, and they're reading quite widely, and they're listening to tapes. And I think this is healthy. I think it's good.

If any of you are missing out on that, be a little open-minded to make a few changes. Somebody said to me, I never listen to tapes. Do you think that attitude pleases God? What if I had a tape, you know, by A.W. Tozer, that brought 10,000 people to a deeper knowledge of the living God? Do you think you'd be humble enough to listen to that tape? I think we ought to make use of the cassette tape.

We are busy people. We live in a busy world. How much time do you sit in that car when you could be listening simultaneously to Elizabeth Elliott, to A.W. Tozer? It's amazing, the tapes that are available.

And I think tapes, magazines, books are not competing with one another. I'm amazed at the lack of reading of Christian periodicals in O.M. Maybe because of the cutbacks. Everybody canceled their subscriptions.

You say, what's the purpose of reading Christian periodicals? I read the Word of God. That's enough. Let me just say that if you've got that mentality, you may be in the wrong fellowship.

I don't like to make anybody feel not at home. Because usually behind that mentality is an overdose of spiritual pride. We need to learn from other men and women of God.

We, in our kind of movement, cannot afford not to know what is going on in the church. We need to know what's going on in the church of the country we live in. I live in Britain.

I read many British secular and Christian periodicals. And it helps me know who all these different people are. What are all these different organizations? What in the world is happening? So that when I go into a church and preach, I have a little idea of what people are thinking.

What are the big issues and what are some of the big problems? Do you not think there's any strong mounted criticism against OM? If you don't, then you are living, you know, really in a fairyland. There is strong criticism against OM in Scandinavia, and it is affecting our recruits. I will not accept that it is not.

Now, we have many victories in Scandinavia as well. But don't think if people are saying strong things against us, and it's getting in print, it's getting talked about, that is not going to affect. One of the reasons we are getting so many recruits is because the average young person who wants to come on OM, when he goes back to his church, the church says, Great! We'll send you.

I tell you, if it wasn't for that, a lot of these people wouldn't be here next week. Those relationships built over 30 years. The ex-OMer who is now a pastor.

The man who had a strong question but sat down with David Hicks and got the question beautifully answered. These are the people that are fighting for us sometimes more than we are fighting for ourselves. In fact, I was stunned listening to this message by Alan Redpath, preaching at Moody Church Founders Week 1982.

Used me as his major illustration of God finding a man, and somehow filling him and using him, sending him out of Moody to do a few things. I seldom hear what people say about me, except the negative things. It must be quite awesome.

I guess I have a lot to learn in that area. I will tell you, we cannot measure what men like Charles Stanley in Atlanta, like men that each one of you know in your country who are speaking favorably of this work, who are putting down criticism, we cannot measure how much they are helping us. Of course, even the

word says, don't speak about yourself.

Let someone else. Let someone else. Let someone else say OM is a great work.

Let someone else say OM is a good thing for you to join. Isn't it exciting to see so many ex-OMers sending their sons and daughters back into the work? I tell you, that roars my engine. Study, reading, I think we are in agreement.

We got a little dialogue about this at the field leaders meeting, but we have always basically believed it's a beautiful thing when people are let out of OM for a time of study. Many have done it. Others have gone through correspondence courses.

Others have gone to short term seminars. And I hope we'll continue to do this as the Lord enables, as we have the finance, the new school at Rill, and other similar things like the study program at Lucknow, and all kinds of opportunities we have in the area of study and reading and spiritual refreshment, going to courses on counseling, going to courses on business management, going to this course and that course. I try to send as many people as I can up to Rill, and I hope that that ministry can be a part of God's program to keep people fresh and on the cutting edge of what the Holy Spirit is doing.

The fourth thing I just listed is work. Developing a positive attitude toward our work, learning how to turn some of the work to play. I remember an Indian who had listened to way too many Verwoerd tapes came up to Kathmandu once and to really watch me.

You know, when we had these leadership schools in Kathmandu back in the late 60s. He came up to watch this Verwoerd, and I was really fussed. And when he left, I took him to the airport.

And that's always a beautiful thing. Whenever you have the opportunity to drive one of your Timothys to the airport, that's always a good thing to do. You don't always give somebody else the privilege to drive the guy to the airport.

We got a driver. That's his ministry. He drives everybody to the airport.

Don't give him all the privileges, huh? And don't give him all the blessings. Because I tell you, when you drive someone to an airport, and you embrace them and say goodbye to them, you'll often remember that. And you might have even won a friend.

And he might decide that you're no longer the leader up in the ivory tower who tells everybody what to do, but that you're a servant. And the servant leadership is what we're committed to. It doesn't mean you have to do it every time.

Work. Positive attitude toward work. This brother, as I took him to the airport, I said, what did you learn from your time in Katlandu? He looked me in the face.

He said, I learned that you know how to convert the work into play. Now, if you don't enjoy, I mean in yourself as a human being, if you don't enjoy any aspect of life on OM, you need counseling. Oh, really? You need counseling.

Because you can't function that way. This is not some kind of punishment to it. This is not some kind of extended purgatory for non-Roman Catholics.

And I know there are many things in OM that I find hard. I'm not the greatest fan of sitting in conferences, but I've spent a fourth of my entire life in the last 25 years, approximately a fourth of my entire life in meetings and conferences. You've got to learn to convert some of that work to play.

Now, one of the things that may help that is if you develop a little more ability to laugh at yourself. If you can't laugh at yourself, you may also need some counseling. Some of us, we do, we get very uptight about ourselves.

And when somebody points out some little quirk, we take offense. What do you mean? What do you mean my nose is long? What about your nose? Shrunken and shriveled little piece of flesh. Let's go to the next point.

Another thing that will keep you on the cutting edge is finding a balance in your ministry. You figured I'd get to that word sooner or later. Forgive me.

Do you have definite goals? I find I must have something ahead of me that I'm aiming at, that helps me to press on, both in the spiritual realm and in the human factor realm. You know what I've been looking forward to for several months? Can you believe this? I'm looking forward to being with my friend John Wright after the meetings in San Francisco, driving from San Francisco, getting out of there as early as we can on Monday morning. The next meeting, no meeting until the next Friday night.

And we are going to drive, and I'm going to sit in the motorhome and make phone calls and dictate letters, and then I'm going to visit either Zion National Park or Grand Canyon, the two places I find the most interesting, almost, in the world, now that I'm not allowed back in India. Now that's way down the road, but I have that to look forward to. It's something I enjoy.

Grand Canyon is where I made a very deep recommitment to Jesus Christ in 1956, the year before we went to Mexico. Every time I see it, I just space out. I put my music on.

In fact, I went down the canyon up again one day. I'm not supposed to do that. It's dangerous.

But the place just blows me away. Now, another thing that I'm looking forward to is roller coasters. I've got completely hooked on roller coasters.

Thirty-five years of fear of roller coasters. Wouldn't go on one. Went to Disney World.

The kids all, Come on, Dad, let's go on a roller coaster. Not me. Not me.

This isn't from the Lord. And I had the privilege this year of going to Australia. What a beautiful country.

And I was with this fellow, and he says, Let's go on a roller coaster. And he didn't know the Lord. Let's go on a roller coaster.

What was I going to say to him? Dedicated spiritual leader of Operation Mobilization. Come on, let's go on a roller coaster. So I went.

Kind of turned you upside down three times at high speed. I want to tell you, That is greater than a night of prayer. Well, you know, Don't misunderstand that.

I was interceding the whole time. Anyway, I went on. I went on it nine times because you pay, you know, it's one.

That's why I like these new amusement parks. You just pay at the gate. Everything else is free.

It's so beautiful. And it's like, you know, anyway, I couldn't wait till I got to Cornerstone in Chicago for my music ministry this summer. Because right around the corner is great America.

Five of the toughest roller coasters in the world. I went on all five of them twice for my birthday celebration. I don't play much golf, but I look forward to the next time I can play a little golf.

I hardly pick up my tennis racket anymore. I carry it around with me as a symbol of freedom. I can do it if I want it.

Now, we're all different. For you, it may be collecting stamps. For some of you, it's still a childish thing of pulling out the intestines of a frog.

We're all different. But you must not forget the human side of you. That needs creativity.

It needs a change. It needs some recreation. It needs a little fun.

Because that is going to help you mentally and physically and emotionally. And if you're mentally, physically and emotionally on the ball, you're going to do much more for God than if you're discouraged, depressed, confused, burned out, tired, bored with everything. I must confess two fears I've had for 20 years.

One is boredom. The bigger one is getting depressed. Why? I've counseled depressed people.

And I've seen my wife in a year of depression. Now, probably my kind of depression would be different. I'm bordered on it.

Just bordering on depression has scared me. And I want and have a strategy to keep from getting depressed. And I don't care if I get misjudged, even by my OM friends.

My sanity is more important than my reputation, at least to some point. I'm open, of course, to anybody's rebukes or corrections. And I believe that's all these things.

We will wrestle all of our life where to draw the line. Anybody who followed me around in the last year would probably say the one thing I haven't had enough of is recreation and rest and a break, as people think. But it is an ongoing battle.

Your ministry, of course, is often difficult. It is often demanding. And there is a lot of plotting.

And there's not enough time to do all the things you want to do. And that's why I have no quick answer other than the cross. Jesus said, if any man come after me, let him deny himself.

Take up the cross and follow me. We've got to be able to do those things we don't like to do. We've got to be able to break through in prayer and persevere in prayer.

And certainly, no matter what practical thing we may have for survival, we're still going to find the way ahead is rough and tough. And so don't let me give you any false impressions. This takes me right into my

sixth point, which I call the human factor.

And I've already got into that somehow. But I wanted to just mention the need for giving a little more consideration to the arts, to the whole area of art. I remember in the first conference of this type in 1961 in Madrid, we had a speaker named Doug Coe, who's still alive.

He's had an enormous ministry in Washington and around the world among politicians. And his message, I don't know if any of you remember it. I don't know, Dale, do you remember it? It was just about emphasizing Jesus Christ only.

Don't add. All these other things are good. But don't add to the centrality of Jesus Christ.

That was an impact. Because I had so many things that I was fighting for, and it just helped me to realize all these other things next to the centrality of Jesus. It's something I read again from Cliff Richards this afternoon.

Just the centrality of Jesus Christ. And I hope that we won't see the arts as something that necessarily subtracts from that. I remember in that same conference, I gave a message that I've never given before.

It was a message on the importance of general education. And I exhorted people to study about 25 different subjects, everything from stars to math to geography to the environment. I never preached a similar message hardly ever since.

I just felt that as God's people, we need to know as much as we can about all these things. Perhaps it's the result of liberal arts education. I don't know.

Some of you also know that it took me several years after that to come to any degree of balance on the place of culture. I'm greatly indebted to Dr. Schaeffer. I'm greatly indebted to a man named Jack Taylor who wrote those books on the disciplined life.

Remember the book originally was called *The Cult of the Slob*. What a book! *The Cult of the Slob*. I gave one of those books to the young man who worked as my helper this year.

He's quite a strong young man in the area of doctrine, conservative. He read that book which came from someone of a different doctrinal background and he said, this book should be read by every young person today. You get back to some of those books on culture by that man named Taylor.

They are so good for us in O.M. John White's *Cost of Commitment*. I am grateful to God that I had the privilege two weeks ago of being right here in these grounds speaking to 1,200 artists, and sculptors, and dancers, and singers, and violinists. This was not just a jamboree for musicians.

This represented the whole spectrum of arts. Right out here we had our afternoon meeting. They had a drama on abortion, I tell you, that just froze some people right where they were.

And I am grateful that there is increasing networking of O.M. with people in the world of arts. They perhaps can learn something from us. We surely can learn something from them.

We do not have to compromise our message on commitment, discipleship, the basics that this movement stands for. We do not have to compromise those things in order to be able to fellowship more widely, to be bigger hearted, to be more involved in a wider spectrum of cultural experiences and ways of

communicating the gospel. I wish I could give a seminar on this rather than point six in a message.

And then lastly, the whole importance of family, the church, and friends. We have discovered that it is not so easy to get long-standing friends. The devil has such a subtle way of breaking up friendships.

And I think of many of you that I have been friends with for years, and perhaps because we do not see each other so much, maybe you feel that friendship has dwindled, but I do not believe it has spiritually. Maybe we will have more time in heaven to go into a whole deeper dimension of friendship as we coordinate galaxies and stars and all these different things. I do not know what we are going to do there.

I know we are going to worship. But I also know that Satan has tried to destroy some very beautiful friendships that exist even in this moment. Misunderstandings, different ways of expressing things.

I think Dale and I can be honest in saying together that Satan tried to destroy our friendship. I remember one time years ago. I mean, we were talking about really ancient history.

Dale wrote me a letter. I was so hurt by that letter. And we agreed to meet in Geneva.

I have hardly ever been in Geneva. This must have been around 1963. We wrote, Tom, meet in Geneva.

The whole work is praying. These two bullheads come together. Barely took five minutes for the problems to be solved.

We just started to pray. I don't know what happened, but I know that the problems were solved. How Satan would have loved to have blown Dale and I apart there in Geneva in 1963.

I can remember similar things with quite a few of you. I won't name you and embarrass you. Things I did that maybe hurt you.

You had the courage to come to me. And I repented or we talked it out or whatever. And the fellowship was renewed.

I certainly have no excuse for not being on the cutting edge with the kind of encouragement and friendship that I have received from so many of you and many others. I am a very indebted person. And I believe that all of us want to go from this conference committed to ministering to one another.

Perhaps if we're less worried about our own spiritual condition and ministering more to others, encouraging others, we actually will find revival flowing in our own hearts. We do tend to get a little bit introspective. And sometimes I know I have got in that.

When we just begin looking out at others and ministering and sharing, the whole situation can so easily change. I gave an exhortation to the field leaders. I want to repeat here.

It somewhat fits into this. But I feel it is very important in this transition period of OM to make sure that we do not prejudge people before we have met them and to make sure that we do not mistreat people because when we first meet them, there's something that doesn't quite hit us right. That is so worldly.

That is so worldly. And we know in OM that we can avoid things that are outwardly worldly, right? Nobody's heading into whiskey here this weekend. Nobody's shooting heroin.

Nobody's going down to a local bank and robbing any money. You know, this place outwardly could look fairly holy. But you and I know that some of the forms of worldliness that get in OM are as ugly as these outward things.

And brothers and sisters, it is wrong the way we have treated some of the new people who have come into this world. And some of us who are senior OMers, who have been around, who think we know so much more, we have been the most guilty. I'm not asking for perfection.

You're not going to get that with the likes of us. But let's make a greater effort to believe the best. The Word teaches that.

We draw from a wide range of people, a wide range of denominations. We are committed to that. If you are not committed to that, then, you know, you need to seek another fellowship.

Plus, we accept people who don't have a lot of education. We accept people with handicaps. We are drawing a wide range of people.

And it is my prayer that every one of those persons, when they come into our midst, on the ship, in my office, wherever it may be, they may sense the love of Jesus Christ flowing through us. Otherwise, what in the world is it all about? What in the world is it all about? And when we don't, and I sometimes fail, then as fast as a dog can catch up with a cat, we need to repent. Alan Redpath said in this message, I just heard, he was looking out, extremely hot day in Chicago, and he saw this dog chasing this cat.

And they were both walking. But somehow, we need to be quick. Even when the heat is on, and we're under pressure, we need to be quick and repent.

And I want to say this, that if I have hurt any of you in something I have said, something on a tape, something as we pass the long life's road that has hurt you in any way, I want to repent, I want to apologize. If I have neglected you, if you have heard that I have said something about you that's negative, but you're afraid to come back to me and find out if it's true, just forgive me. Where in the world do we have the basis for deciding we're going to forgive someone when they come and put things right? We cannot practice this anymore.

We cannot sit back in our coldness, in our dullness, in our lack of revival and power, and say, if he comes to me, then I will forgive him. We must just forgive. We live in a perpetual state of forgiveness.

Forgiving people. Now, of course, if that person comes back to you, your fellowship will be greater. And we can get out of fellowship with one another, and that may not get back where it should be until we get together and talk.

But we can forgive that person before we get back. I offended or hurt a particular leader, and thank God he wrote me and he said, look, you're forgiven. You're forgiven before you wrote, but now let's try to sort out this little problem we have.

I just have such a burden for this, and I don't want to go on and on. I have such a burden that OM be a more loving fellowship. It so hurts me when it comes back, and it comes back every month.

That doesn't mean it's a lot. It doesn't mean it's a lot. That somehow people had an unloving welcome in OM.

There's no purpose in having love Europe, my dear friends, my younger generation, if when the people come there they aren't going to feel the love. This thing will be shouting at us in the judgment day. Love Europe.

What do you mean love? Love Europe means love people. We're not going to love maps. You can get Europe maps and kiss them all you want.

It's not going to impress God. Love people. Love that Yugoslavian who maybe doesn't have that much education.

Love that Polish person who's maybe never been out of Poland and doesn't know what 21st Christianity is. Or who Petra is. Or who Stuart McAllister is.

Or somebody who comes from a church where they really are committed, full-scale charismatics, and they're not going to know all the little OM rules. So the guy jumps on a chair in the middle of the meeting. Woo! Woo-hoo! Praise the Lord! Somebody looks at him.

Ooh! Some kind of an invasion. You know what old brother Andrew, who will be coming here in a few nights to speak at us, said, It's easier to cool down a fanatic than warm up a corpse. And I'd rather have a lot of charismatic fanatics than I can work on cooling down than a bunch of overly orthodox corpses that no one will ever raise up.

That's original. You don't even have to write it down. Let's pray.

Lord, it's good that we can laugh because in OM it's either a lot of laughing or a lot of crying. And Lord, You know my heart. And You know that anything I share, there's always some very worst straw.

But help us to lay that straw aside and get the wheat of this message. And to get upon our faces in these woods and on this day tomorrow. And to seek Your face.

And to repent. And to deal with sin. And to deal with pride.

And to meet with people and pray with them and get relationships sorted out before we all go out of here to try to love Europe. Lord, shake us up. Break us up.

That we may be Your people. That we may go where You want us to go and do what You want us to do. That we may stay on the cutting edge.

Lord, if Cliff Richards, in his ministry with that pressure and the complexity of what he is trying to do, if he can stay 30 years without much spiritual dryness, then we don't have much excuse in this world. Oh Lord, deliver us from those excuses. And if we feel we have special problems that are not easily dealt with, then help us to get the counseling that we need.

We're not looking for total answers and most of us are going to be battling and struggling, all of us, all of our life. Oh God, keep us from the cult of easy answers. But we thank You, Lord, that there are answers.

There are biblical principles. There is a cross that we can take up to follow You. There is a Holy Spirit that enlives us and that can fill us again and again and give us the fruit and the grace and the gifts to do the job.

And Father, we are committed to this by Your power and Your grace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/17/SID17495.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-verwer/how-to-avoid-spiritual-burnout/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net