

Ict+stl Devotions Revolution of Love 16.4.82

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon discusses the necessity of self-discipline, understanding individual needs, and fostering unity within a diverse ministry team.

Duration: 37:50

Scripture: Matthew 18:15

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of discipline within the church community. While the church does enforce policies and disciplines, the ultimate spiritual growth and discipline must come from the individuals themselves. The speaker emphasizes that each person should be treated individually according to their needs, whether it be physical, financial, or emotional. The sermon also highlights the importance of understanding and accepting misunderstandings within the church community, and encourages open discussion without judgment or criticism.

Transcript

I would like to pick up where I left off about two Fridays ago when we were dealing with some of the questions that people are asking around Bromley in our own team. Some of the difficult areas where we're constantly having discussion, sometimes disagreement, and we're trying to, in a sense, clarify the direction that we are going in. We talked about this problem of discipline and how we enforce discipline.

As I thought back over this, I hope I didn't give the idea that we make no effort to enforce the OM disciplines and policies. Of course, we do, but what I'm talking about is in the ultimate, spiritual reality will not come from us enforcing policies. It has to come from you, and especially the really more significant issues.

For instance, there's been quite a rally to enforce the parking policy. Of course, that kind of thing is easily measurable. If your car is parked on top of somebody else's car, you can see that, and you can say you're not supposed to park your car on top of other people's car, someone else's car.

But we cannot see, whether you're having your quiet time, we cannot very easily measure evangelism. We allow a lot of freedom. Some do it with their churches.

Some do it in other ways. There are, of course, especially as we're honest and we fellowship with one another, these things are found out. But what I was trying to say is that in the long run, it's self-discipline that's going to make this thing move in the way that it should.

Even as we attempt to try to encourage people to keep the policies and enforce the policies, we can't keep up with it all. There's so many people, there's so many complications, there's so many, when you start investigating something, what actually happened, some of us have had that privilege, and you find out all the different ramifications. You can throw your whole day away and give yourself to trying to figure out one particular situation.

There are some things, sometimes as leaders we have to say, Lord, you know, we've done what we can, we have to leave the rest with you. Well, I hope you understand that. Certainly we believe that in the work of God, and I believe this is true in the church, there must be discipline for serious sin and disobedience.

Do not think for a moment that someone is going to commit fornication within O.N. and not be disciplined and dealt with. Here again, things can happen that we don't know anything about. I had someone write me seven years after committing an act of impurity in O.N., seven or eight years, he was on his conscience all that time, because he knew he was walking in darkness.

It wasn't in a sense that the sin wasn't forgiven, because that was the moment he repented before God, but he felt he had been living in deception toward the leaders because he had given the wrong impression. This didn't need to be brought into public, it never got any further than my own desk. The Lord has a way of convicting and convincing.

Then we spoke about the enemy's effort to bring disunity between different age groups, and that some of our problems here are based on the wide range of people, different ages. And we dealt, I hope, with a very important issue of trying to understand the situation of the married woman in O.N. And I don't want to repeat what I've said because it is available, I believe, on tape, but I think it's such an important issue. Sensitivity toward the married women who often have a very unrewarding job, behind the scenes, more easily misunderstood, and it's easy for people to misjudge.

And we talked about the danger of misjudging people and generalizations coming in. Now I don't know if I got to the next point of speaking about the complexity of having so many older O.M.ers and new O.M.ers all together on the same team. I don't think I did.

But I think this is something that's very, very important. In the work we have tried, with the help of the Lord, not to be a respecter of persons. We don't have little badges we give out for so many years on O.M. There's not an official seniority ruling.

There are, however, differences between a person who is coming with his wife and children for longer term commitment to a work and somebody on a year program. Now I know that on the ships they have had to face these differences because to live on a ship for a year, most people can do that. You know, they say in the psychology books you can endure almost anything for a short period.

In fact, you're constantly encouraged as you think of the day that you're going to leave and the benefits you'll have after that or the bigger place you'll be living in after that. Certainly, I, after a period of time on the ship, came to appreciate land and woods and a little more space than ever before in my life. I developed that to some degree in India as well.

And especially when children come into the scene, O.M. has not faced up enough. We have to some degree, but we've not faced up enough. I tried to speak on this once to a group of leaders and I felt no one was even really catching what I was trying to say.

The whole thing got sidetracked and people started arguing over something that wasn't even related to what I was trying to say. I was trying to talk about teenagers, but so few of the leaders had any teenagers, it got sidetracked into something else. You'll never be able to talk to people about teenagers, don't have them.

When an evangelical leader finds his little daughter walks in and tells daddy she's pregnant or that she's on pot or she finds out some other way. It's very common and very common among evangelical Christian leaders' children. Then he'll wake up.

You know, one of the funniest films I've ever seen, it just blew me apart, was *The Great Santini*. I saw it in an airplane. And this guy was an extreme choleric Air Force pilot and he loved his son.

His son, Ben, he was trying to make his son into a little junior of himself. It was just horrible. I was weeping one minute and laughing the next.

But he had one daughter who was totally neglected. She couldn't get five minutes out of the father. And of course he was a southerner, American Air Force pilot.

She was desperate, she wanted to get a conversation with his father. So she finally came up one day, she was going out of the house, said dad, dad, I'm pregnant. He didn't bat an eyelash, he was too busy.

Dad, dad, he's black. He didn't bat an eyelash. Then he stopped.

I forget what happened. None of those things were true. She just wanted somehow to get some attention from her father.

And it's my burden that with NOM, somehow there can be this maximum understanding of people within their different situations and an effort to try to understand why people are doing what they're doing. Rather than coming down with an immediate judgment or an immediate appropriation of values, we try to understand the complicated situations that people are in. Especially as they have children, though there are people who are not married and who are without children, who also have very complicated situations in their families.

And again and again in the work we've tried to maintain flexibility. We've tried to move on the basis of freedom. Of course, suppose we talk to somebody and after counseling with them we feel they need a couple of extra days off.

They may not outwardly look like the kind that need that. They may not be married, they may not have children because of Easter holiday. We can understand so and so has to be with his children.

That we can understand, I hope. Here's maybe just a single person. Everybody's under the strain of the work.

Some people are being challenged maybe to put in extra hours. Suddenly Susie Q has got two days off. That is a moment when we must ask God to give us love and compassion and maturity.

It is not the privilege of someone else in the team to suddenly make a judgment. Oh, he or she's a favorite. Oh, why is he getting a day off? And I haven't had a day off in months or I asked for a day off and I didn't get it.

That could actually happen because we are not computers. The leaders are not computers. We're human beings constantly wrestling sometime in one day up to 30, 40, 50 decisions.

And one minute we may evaluate something and we may challenge you. Well, look, you wanted that day off but could you hold up on that a couple of weeks? Maybe if that person had come back and re-explained it, the next day the leader would change his mind and say, well, yeah, I rethought that, maybe you should take it. It's the privilege of every person to change his or her mind.

In fact, it's when you push for quick, instant decisions, sometimes you don't always get the best one because the person didn't have a chance to think or pray about it. But often when we've given a particular privilege or whatever, it's because we've tried to think through that and we've tried to sense a person's individual needs. Why has Jerry Smith suddenly flown back to America? I can tell you a few years ago that kind of move would have immediately brought several telephone calls to me.

America was considered a long ways away. You didn't fly back there for 14 day trips. But here's an older man with a family.

The Atlantic now and flying over the Atlantic is not much more costly than flying up to Sweden. And you know, there are cases, I'm not saying in his case now, where we either give that freedom and take that special step. Usually the person has to see the funds come in for it.

Sometimes in emergency that is not even considered, at least at the time. If we don't give that kind of freedom and make that kind of decision, then some of these people, they're just not going to be able to be with us. It's as simple as that.

One of the reasons quite a few people have stayed with this movement longer term is because they know of our concern for them and their personal needs and their families. Yes, we have failed in this. Yes, if you want to be literal, we have been inconsistent.

Who is perfectly consistent in all of these things when you're dealing with such a huge number of people? But I think as we see this and see that everybody to some degree must be given individual personal treatment. We don't have an equality rule. Everybody eats the same food.

This is nonsense. Everybody is going to drive the same age car in the same condition. That's impossible.

Everybody is going to live in the same size house. It's impossible. And our teaching, foundation teaching, was each person according to the need.

And years ago the Lord showed us this wasn't just physical need or financial need, it was emotional need. Some people are not as strong emotionally. I know people in L.A. who are just strong as a rock emotionally.

I've never seen them in an emotional tither, if you know that word. Others, you know, if a pigeon flies over their head and you know says cuckoo, they're in a crisis. Much less if it dropped its load.

I'll never forget when that happened in Paris. Many of you have heard this story. And Mike Evans said, well praise God elephants don't fly.

Let's move on. Another area, problem area that we're wrestling with is the fact that different people have different priorities. Different people have priorities.

Now this is good, but again it can create disunity. I've noticed those who make prayer their big priority. Now that's good.

It is not the only priority in the Christian life. Prayer without love is worth very little as far as I can see in my New Testament. And C.T. Studd used to be really heavy.

That prayer was often a cop-out. In his day, probably true today, prayer was a cop-out for obedience. I would say that today praise has become a cop-out for obedience.

One of the main things Christians do and feel that they should do is sit in little groups just praising the Lord. There's nothing wrong with that, but that must lead to action. That must lead to obedience.

It must lead to change lives, to holiness or otherwise. It's similar to what C.T. Studd said. And I think it's possible to take even the very best things like prayer and become extreme.

It certainly is possible to do it with fasting, but we must respect one another's priority. Here's a brother that really feels extra prayer is now needed, and he wants to pray in every prayer meeting to the end. I've never been overwhelmed by that crowd, but there there he is.

Here's someone else. Evangelism is a greater priority to him. And of course, when all people of these two different priorities get on the team, it's easy to judge one another.

But if we think they're the only two things that people get carried away with or feel are the priorities, we haven't been around long. What about the man who feels that organization, management, getting things done decently in order, getting your work, this is the priority. And then you get the person who comes along and says, look, this is all great, but fellowship is the priority.

Now each one can give a tremendous message. And at times when we get a heavy message on one subject, we all, you know, the cloud of guilt comes over and the rain starts coming down. And we get somebody's priority is fellowship.

And he's got some of these interesting quotations. And we're told we don't know anything about fellowship and we're all unloving. And to some degree, it's always true.

We measure ourselves next to Jesus. Then the next week, somebody with a prayer priority comes down on us. The next week, somebody with an evangelism priority comes down upon us.

And then Mr. Management, his priority comes upon us. I tell you, myself, after that I'm finished. I no longer know whether I'm coming or going.

Because it is impossible to emphasize all of these things all of the time. It's just impossible. The greatest men of God you're reading about didn't live that way.

Forget it. You think you know the story of Whitefield and Wesley and Hudson Taylor, D.L. Moody, you name them, probably you only know part of the story. And I think, therefore, we have to see how different members of the body make different contributions.

And we all need these things to some degree. That's agreed upon. Christian life should consist of prayer and evangelism, fellowship, love, organization, discipline.

But different members of the body will be stronger. We're all growing. And I think it's so important to see that the key thing isn't the triumph of individualism, each one of us cutting our own way, each one of us trying to be a man or a woman of God.

But to somehow also see we're one body. Maybe one person cannot pray on into the night. I know my own wife, it's just impossible for her to go into the ends of these nights of prayer.

But maybe someone else can. Maybe someone is weaker in evangelism and they need to be taken by the hand and encouraged and protected in a sense as they go or be given a lower dosage. Someone else is stronger in that.

Maybe someone is having difficulty in communicating. Relating to people is not easy. I feel very concerned when people quickly wipe a church off as being dead.

We often do this without knowing what really is that church situation. It could be that the people over the years have become very introverted, very quiet, very shy. Maybe they've been hurt more than we ever know.

So when you go in that church, they're not all bubbling all over. They had several that did bubble over. One of them is down in the mental institution down the road.

The other one committed suicide and the other one did something else. People have had hard experiences with the effervescent bubbly type extroverts. They are often people who go so long and then explode.

Like this man in the great Santini. So I think we need to understand why people may be a little reserved. Why they may be a little quiet.

Some of them may have tried to relate more. Some of them may have tried different kinds of evangelism. They may have tried throwing themselves intensely into some kind of a prayer circle or some kind of a revival group and they've been hurt.

They've been burned. We're dealing with a church today, congregations of people who have been hurt. They have been burned.

They at times have been misled and they have seen false zeal because we're not dealing with people often who have been living as Christians 10 years. We're dealing with people who have been Christians 10, 15, 20, 30, 40 years. Therefore, working with the church, there has to be a high degree of sensitivity.

And if that is true within the church, it's also true here. Beware, I've said this before, but I say it again, beware of seeing your strong points in comparison to someone's weak points. The thing that has helped revolutionize my life and I have a long way to go is again and again the Lord has shown me my weak points.

They're just always there. Again and again that has shut my mouth. When I was about to read the riot act, even with my own wife or some other brother, come down heavily in some situation, I just saw my own weaknesses.

And again and again that has helped me to be patient with other people. I would say that's probably saved my marriage. I would probably say that God has used even my sins, the sins I've committed with my eyes, the lust of the flesh, which I in no way excuse.

But I will tell you because of my failure with my eyes, I got a long way to go on humility, I'm not even sure what it is. But I know that without those failures, I might be a very obnoxious person because I was so idealistic, so perfectionistic. I just somehow yearn that within OM there could be just a little more humility.

I'm not asking for a half a ton. You might not be able to handle that, people would think you've gone crazy. But a little more humility, I think would solve, if this is an exaggeration, forgive me, but I would say would solve 25% at least of all of our difficulties around Bromley and other parts of the world as well.

The next point I've written here is how easy it is to misjudge people when we're trying to accomplish so much. So much is happening. We're trying to, and I haven't got time to go into this, reach the whole world with the gospel of Christ in the midst of an exploding population.

We've got the long term work, the short term work, we've got the ships, we've got the literature, we've got the cassettes, we've got the audio visuals. We've got all kinds of just general ministry meetings. When I leave here, I go all the way to Fife, Scotland and return tomorrow morning.

It's an 800 mile round trip. And the secretaries know when I go on a trip like that, that triples their workload when I get back. And I've wrestled with this, Lord, are we going too fast? I have slowed down, O.M. has slowed down in some areas, but we still have the command upon us to go into all the world, to pray forth labors into the harvest field.

And we have this sense, we have this sense that we may not have so much longer to do this kind of work. I don't have the easy answer to this, but I do know one thing, when we're moving at this speed, trying to do so much, there are bound to be a never-ending stream of misunderstandings. We've got to learn to live with some of these misunderstandings, how to think our way through them, how to cast them upon the Lord, how to openly discuss them without becoming critical, cynical, judgmental, or anything else along that line.

We don't know what's happening behind the scenes. I'll never forget someone coming to me on the ship in the early years and saying, you know, nobody's getting any personal attention here, all the leaders are just running around. And as I talked, I realized this person didn't see the leaders very much, and when he saw them, they seemed to be just going from point A to point B. And as we talked it out, we realized that the leader was going to point A, where he just spent two hours with one brother, to point B, where he's just spending another hour or two with another brother.

And the reason this person had the image of just a person going here to there, is because you don't do counseling in public. I don't, you know, park myself out in front of 9 London Road, or here at 1 Sherman Road, in a little box in front, and put a counseling, George Brown Counseling, and there I sit, counseling people, and you're all by, wow, boy, what a sensitive, compassionate brother giving himself, look who he's counseling, we gave up on him years ago, wow. Counseling is something you just do in private.

And it's so easy to misjudge people. On the early days of the ship, anybody who wasn't working on the deck of the engine and sweating in overalls, you know, people looked at him, what's his ministry, what's he doing? You just dare bring someone to the ship in those days, probably changing now, who would be classified as a pastor, forget it, they didn't want pastors, they wanted engineers. They wanted men who could work, and if we brought a pastor in those days, and of course a lot of us were doing pastoral ministry all the time, if you brought a pastor in, you'd have to bring him in like the Catholics, a working priest.

You know, the Catholic Church decided to invade industry, and they mobilized thousands of working priests. They went right in, they were engineers, they were workers, and yet their main work was to be a priest. And we have, in O.M., working priests.

We don't use that term, of course, but they're men who have jobs, and they're working a fair number of hours a day in a particular job, but they have a pastor's heart, and they are involved in that ministry. More, many of us will ever know. Of course, more needs to be done.

And I would like every one of you to read Selwyn Hughes' book on people helping. And he points out how every Christian is a counselor. He doesn't like that term, he uses the word people helper.

And I'd like Gary to arrange for everybody to get a copy of that book. STL. Handles it.

Going on to the next point, I've written here, sometimes when I write these things down, and then it comes weeks later I'm speaking on it, what I had in my mind then, I can't figure out now, because I only have just a few reminders, so I can end up with a totally different statement. But I've written here, failure to confront. Now confronting people, I think is one of the hardest tasks we have, isn't it? I think it's more difficult than evangelism.

For me, when I know I should confront someone, to slip out to Bromley South and give out tracts would be a cop-out. But I think we've got to mature in this area. We know Matthew 18, we know other scriptures.

Let's just look at Matthew 18. Some people would be unhappy if I didn't read at least something from the scriptures. Though I believe everything I'm talking about is based on what the Bible teaches.

I would love you to write me and quote me one scripture that would prove otherwise. Verse 15, moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him. Tell him his fault between thee and him alone.

Alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee three, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be as unto thee as a heathen man and a tax collector. I believe that we are called to confront people in love.

I think of those words, the scripture I'm thinking of where you are spiritual among you. Let's look at Galatians. It used to be just here before Ephesians.

Chapter 6 verse 1, brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual. That's of course where a lot of people drop out. I'm not spiritual, thank you very much.

Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. We need a Bible study on the word meekness. I've been listening to a lot of the study program material lately.

In fact, I just had Randy Wilson, I'm a little behind. It's interesting to just listen to all the various teaching that you're receiving here. But I don't know if we've covered this word meekness.

Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bury one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Immediately in my mind come the words of A.W. Tozer that the greatest need in the church is discernment.

Because we have to discern that which is clearly a sinful wrong thing that needs to be confronted, needs to be corrected and that which may be a misunderstanding or maybe an area of weakness where obviously the brother is already working on it and is aware of it and doesn't necessarily need one more person to pounce on him. Often it's not what we say but how we say it. That's been a great failure often in my life.

People of choleric temperament have a way of communicating harshly even when they're not aware of it, especially if they're preachers. And one of the greatest problems I've had is as someone who used to take 900 meetings a year, come back into my home and try to communicate to my children in a non-preachy way, without raising my voice, without thinking I was calling them to the altar for repentance. And I have failed many times because I get so hyped up.

And the Lord has had to deal very strongly with me in this. But we must learn to confront. That doesn't mean as a person walks out of the warehouse you come beelining down the road, park yourself in front of him with others watching and rebuke him in the name of the Lord.

If anybody does that I would like to know about it because I would like to confront privately, lovingly, walking through the woods. I often take people on walks when I want to lay something on them. I also walk people when I don't have anything to say, just want to listen to them.

So if I asked you to go for a walk, unless you're a sister don't worry about it. I really believe we've got to increase this practice of talking to people. And one of the keys, and we're trying to teach you things here that will be valuable to you all your life.

One of the keys is not to accuse but to ask questions. You don't go to a brother and say, you were breaking the social rule when you walked that girl out of Bromley South Station. That is not the way to do it.

You approach him and say, oh brother was your sister visiting you yesterday? Something similar to that. Linked with this there must be the willingness to forgive people if they confront you wrongly. That's all part of the growing procedure.

If you're going to learn to confront you're going to make mistakes. You're going to confront people and have your facts wrong. That's why asking questions.

Getting the facts first is so important. But even after that at times you may be on the end of being confronted for something that even though you try you just can't see where you went wrong. Praise the Lord for that opportunity.

You're in God's work because you're in God's work you're exposed to some of these things and I believe if you're confronted or corrected wrongly that there's a degree of growth and privilege that comes with that. Just very, very quickly I've written here the whole problem of us not getting enough fellowship. There is a

sense, I could give a whole message on this, that in OM you get too much fellowship.

Some people. Not most. Why do I say that? Because I've been all over the world and I've talked to Christians who have gone on for years with almost no fellowship with anybody.

We are in the western world especially with all the emphasis on counseling. Psychiatrists, every minister getting some training in this. It's a very big thing in our culture.

Counseling and fellowship and all that kind of thing. And I think it's good. I think it's good.

I'm for more of it so don't misunderstand me. But when some of you leave OM you're not going to get it. You're not going to get it.

Some of you will. You'll get more than you had with us. That's why the house groups are growing faster than the established churches.

Because they are so strong on this. But if you think they're so strong on it, you may want to list next to it their weaknesses. Because we're talking about the whole counsel of God.

And of course a little house group of 40 people that has 7 leaders, who don't engage in evangelism, don't have world vision, and don't do a lot of these other things, they have a lot of time to give to their people. And I think the Lord is to some degree using that. But it's not the total answer.

Because in our working with people, if we don't really ultimately get them cast upon God and used to harder situations and more difficult times, when the heavy winds of testing come, they will go down. And some of these people are already going down. And personally I would lean a little more toward the Lloyd-Jones approach to some of these things.

Discipline, dying to self, learning how to press on in the midst of loneliness and problems. Do you know they did a study in inter-varsity in America and showed that after the students come out of these inter-varsity groups, because they get so much good ministry and so much challenge in prayer, and I tell you the people that I have rating inter-varsity wouldn't say that the average university group in America was that strong, but they found they cannot adjust to their churches. Because their churches just don't have the same kind of input, prayer meetings, special speakers, John Stotts or banner conventions.

They go back to their own church, here's a preacher that's just barely learned how to communicate, here are a lot of other problems, and they can't handle the local church scene. We have this on OM all the time. People come on a summer crusade, they get a taste of these hot prayer meetings, maybe you don't think they're so hot, but compared to what they come from, they are hot, they get a taste of relationship, of fellowship, and they cannot adjust back into their own church, and many OMerS, ex-OMerS are leaders in house fellowship.

Another church recently split, I noticed the ex-OMer went off with the split. Pastor went too. Well the time is gone, but I hope these miscellaneous burdens, exhortations, that come from my feeble observance of what's happening around here, will help you in your attempt, the greatest single goal that I trust you have, to become more Christ-like.

Search the pictures and see if these things can stop. Read those seminary chapters that every OMer is supposed to memorize. Listen in your discipleship, manual, a book that perhaps you want to pull back off

the shelf, and re-read the old one before the new one comes, because the new one is, I understand, quite tame, compared to the old discipleship manual.

I don't think it's heresy, but it's been tamed down in order to keep us from looking like a cult. There are a few things in the old manual that could have been misunderstood, and kept in the hands of just everybody and anybody that, you know, was some kind of a cult. So we just try to adjust things, and to communicate some of the truths in it, in a clearer way.

Then let's just pray. Father, we thank you that we have the privilege of even meeting like this, and to think through some of these things.

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