

Knowing God

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth, forgiveness, and community in the Christian life, and encourages listeners to be patient and trust God's process.

Duration: 55:23

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of perseverance and spiritual growth amidst struggles and failures. It shares personal experiences of battling fears, worries, lust, ego, extremism, doubts, and discouragement, highlighting the need for continuous learning and reliance on God's grace. The speaker encourages self-acceptance, developing biblical strategies for overcoming sin, and embracing a journey of growth in faith.

Transcript

Reality has brought me 18,000 letters, more than 18,000 personal letters. Of course, that's over 25 years. So that's not so many.

So I look forward to your letters. I wonder how many of you are really prepared for going out on these teams. It's very important to be organized properly.

I've got some of my key organizational apparatus here in my shoulder bag. Ich habe hier in meiner Schultertasche einiges für die Organisation in meinem Team. Was du wahrscheinlich bei dir hast ist so Walkman.

Die größte Erfindung seit der Druckmaschine. Da hast du jemanden in deinem Team und der redet und redet und redet. Du möchtest beten, du willst gern deine Bibel lesen.

Nimm das über deine beiden Ohren und schon hast du es still. Ich glaube, ich werde noch Geschäftsmann und verkaufe diese Geräte. Dann als Zurüstung weiter Gebet für die Welt und das Buch.

So kannst du durch Gebet für die Welt systematisch gezielt beten. Dann hast du da dein Büchlein mit den wichtigen Adressen drin. Du weißt dann wie telefonieren aus der Ferne.

Dann sind noch manche andere Dinge, die wir jetzt nicht im Einzelnen nennen können. Aber ganz besonders musst du bei dir haben eine Taschenlampe. Wenn du die Zeit für Jesus nutzen willst, ganz hinten im Fahrzeug und es ist dunkel.

Dann willst du dein Land in Gebet für die Welt weiterlesen. Denn die Bibel sagt ja, kaufe die Zeit aus. Nun wird es schwierig, wenn du Notizen machen willst vom Gelesenen.

25 Jahre lang kenne ich diesen Kampf. Ich habe alles versucht, um gleichzeitig zu lesen, zu schreiben und die Taschenlampe zu halten. Ich habe versucht, die Taschenlampe zwischen die Zähne zu klemmen.

Dann kamen natürlich modernere Taschenlampen heraus. Das Jahrzehnt der Taschenlampe, die 70er Jahre. Mit Fluoreszenzröhre.

So richtig quer zwischen die Zähne. Aber noch war ich immer nicht zufrieden. Ich bin nie zufrieden.

Ich bete immer um neue Verfahren, neue Methoden, um besser den Dienst voranzutreiben. Und dann kam die großartige Zeit der 80er Jahre. Mit erstaunlichen Durchbrüchen im Bereich der Taschenlampen.

Und als Antwort auf meine Begegnung bekam ich die ultimative Taschenlampe. Das ist unglaublich. Das ist unglaublich.

Danke, ich verstehe. Ich bin mir sicher, dass in Zukunft jeder Beatenberger Bibelschulstudent eine dieser Taschenlampen bekommt. Besonders wenn du an einem Ort bist, wo sie dir sagen, früh ins Bett zu gehen und die Lichter auszutauschen.

Das ist die Antwort. Lasst uns jetzt in die Worte Gottes gehen. Zu einigen Versen, die bereits erwähnt wurden.

Ich wusste nicht, dass Peter Kahneman diese Worte erwähnen würde. Im Buch der Korinther. Kapitel 12.

2. Korinther, Kapitel 12. Wo Paul dreimal den Herrn gebetet hat, um dieses Schweinefleisch, diesen Messenger von Satan, den er in Vers 7 spricht, wegzunehmen. Vers 7, der mich mit Fäusten schlagen soll.

Und dann bekommt er die Antwort vom Herrn zu seinem Problem, zu seiner Schwierigkeit, was immer ihn belastet. Der Herr antwortet ihm, meine Knade genügt dir, denn meine Kraft ist in den Schwachen mächtig, drum will ich mich am allerliebsten rühmen meiner Schwachheit, damit die Kraft Christi bei mir wohne. Und nun Vers 10.

Darum bin ich guten Mutes in Schwachheit, Misshandlungen, Nöten, Verfolgungen, Ängsten und Christi willen, denn wenn ich schwach bin, so bin ich stark. Wir wollen beten. Herr, es ist unser letzter Abend in dieser Gemeinschaft.

Gewiss will unser Gott jetzt uns noch ein besonderes geben. Und wir wollen im Glauben bitten. Herr, wir danken dir für alles, was du in dieser Woche gewirkt hast.

Der Zuruf an unsere Herzen ist sehr intensiv, sehr tief gewesen. Viele von uns sind aufgestanden, haben in mancher Weise dir ein neues Jahr gegeben. Und wir danken für die Botschaft von deiner Liebe zuerst.

Und wir danken, dass diese Liebe, die wir kennengelernt haben, weitergehen kann unser Leben lang. Aber nun bitten wir, dass du uns auch biblische Wege zur Ausdauer zeigst. So, dass wir den Reichtum der Botschaft aus deinem Wort wirklich hineinleiten in unsere Situation, in unsere Herausforderung.

Und das alles beten wir im Namen Jesu. Liebe, die weiter dauert. Wir haben wahrlich Gottes Liebe gekannt in diesen Tagen.

Es sind hunderte in jenes Zelt gegangen für Seelsorge. Sie haben gebetet und auch erfahren neue Aspekte von Befreiung von Segen in diesen Stunden. Wir haben tiefe und starke Botschaften von verschiedensten Leuten gehört.

Gottes Liebe stand im Vordergrund. Und die Priorität, dass Jesus Herr sei im Leben. Das Thema, das mir am meisten auf dem Herzen brennt, ist in meinen meisten Schriften.

Wie halten wir durch? Wie haben wir Durchstehvermögen mit dem im ganzen Leben? Wir wissen, dass im Dienst oft betont wird, dass es den geistlichen Höhepunkt geben soll. Wir rufen Leute auf, aufzustehen. Wir fordern auf, zu tiefem Gebet Buße, Beugung, Bekennen.

Und das ist in Ordnung so. Und ich appelliere auch und fordere auf. Ich habe die Feedback-Papiere von tausenden Leuten gelesen, sogar in den vergangenen Jahren.

Aber ich will etwas sagen, das sehr wichtig ist. Die Krise muss von Gottes Prozess gefoltert werden. In Gottes Erziehungsschule.

Da geht es um das geistliche Wachstum. Das ist ein zentrales Wort im Wortschatz der Kinder Gottes. Wachstum.

Ich weiß, für manche ist es vielleicht nicht so dramatisch. Und wir hören selten eine Botschaft speziell über das Wunder des geistlichen Wachstums. Ich habe Bäume, Bäume sehr gern.

Und jede Woche, wenn es mir möglich ist, gehe ich irgendwo in einen Wald und bete an vor dem Schöpfer dort unter den Bäumen. Bruder Andrew, Gottes Schmuggler. Ein großartiger Servant des Herrn.

Heute hast du Bruder George, Gottes Bungler. Als ich zuerst nach Europa kam, lebte ich in Spanien. Als ich zuerst nach Europa kam, lebte ich noch in Spanien und fing an, Russisch zu lernen.

Der Name Operation Mobilisation existierte noch nicht. Wir waren einige Studenten und hatten den Namen gewählt, Sende das Licht. Wir hatten als Bibelschulleute in Mexiko mit der Arbeit begonnen.

Und wir hatten als Last auf den Herzen die islamische Welt und die kommunistische Welt, nicht Westeuropa. Wir wollten dorthin, wo andere nicht hingingen, in geschlossene Länder. And after a year in Europe, my goal was the Soviet Union.

That was very, very difficult at that time to bring the Bibles into this closed zone. But I hid the Bibles in the car walls and in the cornflakes boxes. I even had a little printing press hidden under the dashboard of the car.

Roger Molstead, who is here at this conference, he was with me, he can tell you this is true. On the second or third day, due to my own stupid mistake, not Roger's, my mistake, we were arrested by the secret police. We never got to Moscow.

They thought we were maybe spies and were offering us free holiday in Siberia, all expenses paid. And after days of questioning, a day or two of questioning, they decided we were religious fanatics and gave us a submachine gun escort out of the country. We did have great opportunities to share our faith with many officials.

And after that experience, we went together for a day of prayer in the mountains, not so far from here. And as I often did in those days, I climbed to the top of a very big tree to worship the Lord. And I thought of the great land of Germany.

I thought of the war because my wife's father had been killed in the war. I thought of the great power of hatred, how armies mobilized, driven by ego and by hatred. And a word came to my mind.

Mobilize. Maybe we should think about Western Europe. Maybe God wanted to do something big in Western Europe and let Western Europeans move into the Soviet countries and to the Muslim countries and to the other lands because they were so close to those countries.

And there in the top of that tree, for the first time in my life, I shouted out, Operation Mobilization. And God gave me the chance to see Englishmen and Germans and French and Spanish and Italians working together to make an impact on Europe for Jesus Christ and to see it spread to the rest of the world. And God gave me the chance to see Englishmen and Germans and French and Spanish and Italians working together to make an impact on Europe for Jesus Christ and to see it spread to the rest of the world.

I went back and shared that vision with a few Spaniards in a prayer retreat for a weekend outside of Madrid. We wanted God in that weekend of prayer and fasting to confirm whether this was from him or just from George Verwer. And they agreed to move forward in Operation Mobilization.

A month later, a small number of Americans arrived from different colleges and we met and waited upon God in Madrid, Spain. And God heard our prayers. By next summer, he gave us 200 people.

Our main focus in those days was reaching the masses through literature. And almost 25 million pieces of Christian literature went out in that one summer. Incredible story.

And we began to pray for Operation Mobilization Part 2. There were many problems. We made mistakes. But we were committed to be learners and disciples of Jesus Christ.

We were committed to work with local churches and other biblical organizations, no matter how hard it might be. In an amazing way, in the next summer, God gave us 2,000. By then, we were using more books and Bibles, and also film.

We began to use a heavy emphasis on film, gospel film ministry. There's not time to say more about that. Needless to say, I love trees.

If you go out into the woods and you see someone sitting there next to a tree, and you say, excuse me, what are you doing here looking at this tree? And he says, I'm watching the tree grow. Wait a minute, you're watching it grow? How long have you been here? You see, you don't see a tree grow. Some time ago, I stood by one of those giant redwood trees in California.

It would take 20 people to put our arms around the base of that tree. Brothers and sisters, that is a miracle of God. And as you grow strong in God over the next weeks and months and years, that is a great work of

God.

I beg of you to be patient with your own spiritual growth rate. Some of you are too down on yourself. Some of you live in perpetual guilt and sometimes perpetual false guilt.

I believe many people today have false ideas about true spirituality. They fail to understand that God works in different people in different ways. We also have a lot of funny ideas about missionaries and Christian leaders.

Ralph Chalice, now with the Lord, was one of the most regular speakers at OM conferences for over 20 years. Many of you have read his book from now on with its great emphasis on spiritual growth. How to grow strong in God.

In other terms, how to experience that continuing love of God all of your life. When I was a young Christian, 17, 18, I had many struggles, many failures. I was strong on zeal, but I was weak on wisdom.

I was a very intensive person and became a natural extremist. And I would experience great heights of emotion. And I became discouraged.

And I was ready to quit. And sometimes when a strong message was given, instead of encouraging me, it would just break me to pieces as I thought, Lord, I can never be, I can never be that kind of person. After a lot of agony and a lot of prayer about what I should share tonight, as an encouragement to press on in the midst of your struggles and failures and difficulties, I want to share just a few thoughts which are not easy for me to share.

It sometimes has been called the confessions of a weak, struggling missionary. The Bible says, confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. As I have shared in the past, some of my struggles and failures, literally hundreds, hundreds of young people have written or have come to me and said, was that sharing that helped them to press on? Now often we speak about past failures.

And then we tell how the Lord has wonderfully delivered us. And I'm sure some of you are expecting more from God in the coming few days than God is going to give. Because you're all excited.

Most of you have stood up or raised your hand. Some of you have stood up every night. Praise the Lord.

God knows your heart. God knows what we wrestle with each time there's an open invitation. But maybe the next time an invitation is given for recommitment, you'll trust God for the power of the Holy Spirit to remain seated.

Because what many of us need now is not another crisis, but we need to be ready for three years, five years, ten years of God's process of spiritual growth. And though we don't like it, some of the lessons we are going to have to learn will only be learned through failure and difficulty. I guess my greatest failure when I was 17 or 18 that almost demolished me when I hitchhiked along the highway alone for hundreds of miles to a particular city.

And I was always giving out tracts. I was always witnessing. And I went there also to see a particular girl.

And when I got there, she was unable to see me. She had a date. So I went out in the streets of that city giving out tracts.

Oh, praise the Lord, I can handle this. You see, since the age of I don't know when, so small, I battled with this area of lust. But before my conversion, there were some things I wanted to do, but I didn't do because I thought people would find out.

I really wanted to go to one of these striptease places in New York City and see a woman take it all off. That was my thing. But I was a good boy.

I never did it. But I could do it in my mind. And I felt very guilty about it.

But now I was a Christian. And a Spirit-filled Christian. I was winning people to Christ all over the place.

One meeting in my high school, 125 people stood up to accept Christ as their Savior. That night, in that moment of weakness and confusion, I put those tracts in my pocket and I walked into one of these places. And there I sat and I was miserable.

In about five minutes, I ran out of that place. I felt absolutely condemned. I had failed God in such a terrible way.

I had done something I didn't even do before I was a Christian. But somehow I knew the Word of God. That there was forgiveness for sinners.

First John, chapter 2, verse 1, says, Sin not. After that it says, If you sin, you have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous. I rushed into a telephone booth and picked up a phone.

This is the way that I used to pray to get alone somewhere. Because in America in those days we had these phone books. You pushed the door closed and you got in there and nobody bothered you if you were on the phone.

And I prayed and I prayed and I prayed that God would forgive me. But I did not feel forgiven. I felt like quitting.

The devil says when we sin like this, he often says, You're no good. You're not changed. You're a hypocrite.

The Bible says Satan is the accuser of the brethren. But I will never forget this. I walked out of that telephone booth believing that I was God's child and that I was forgiven.

This was in a crowded bus station and in an amazing way a man walked up to me and I was astonished how a man came up to me. I have hardly ever had this experience before or since. He came up to me and he said, What must I do to be saved from my sins? What did you say? And he began to open his heart.

His marriage was coming apart. Something about his wife coming to know Jesus. Sometime later we met at a famous memorial in that city and he prayed the sinner's prayer to receive Christ as his Savior.

I don't recommend that experience. But I recommend that you understand the forgiveness and the grace and the love that is available at the moment of failure, at the moment of difficulty, at the moment of sin. But it's not unusual to talk about past failures.

Sometimes we talk about it too much. Of course now, 30 years as a missionary, leader of Operation Mobilization, speaking to thousands of people how to live the Christian life, surely we don't have these

problems anymore. We have learned how to wear the whole armor of God.

So whatever fiery dark comes our way, just bounces off by the great armor that we are wearing. Let me just in closing share a few things that I'm still struggling with, just to keep the balance. In fact, these five or six things I've struggled with all of my life.

I don't know if any of you feel you can be classified as a struggler. I don't know what the word is in German. I don't believe the fullness of the Spirit means you don't struggle anymore.

I believe in holiness, you know that. I believe in the victorious life. I believe we can see more and more freedom through prayer and through God's means of grace.

But I also believe that great Christian faith and great growth is not in the absence of struggles and doubts and sins, but it is in the midst of those things. Look, for example, just at 2 Corinthians 7.5, just for one of many, many pictures. Here's an interesting picture of the Apostle Paul that we often forget.

Verse 4 and verse 5. I'll just read in English. Great is my boldness of speech towards you. Great is my glorying of you.

I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulations. For when we were come unto Macedonia, our flesh had no rest.

But we were troubled on every side. Without were fightings. Within were fears.

The Apostle Paul. And that's one of my great struggles. Fear and worry.

There's not time to give examples of how again and again I have almost been paralyzed by my fear and by worry of one form or another. For 17 years I had struggle concerning the ship perhaps someday having an accident. And then it happened.

And now already we have purchased another ship. I, being perhaps one of the more fearful of the OM leaders, felt we should go a little bit slower in getting another ship. The truth is in myself I don't want any more ships.

And this is a beautiful thing about the family that I'm part of in God. Is that they accept me as I am with my failures and my struggles. I'm more than happy to resign from the leadership.

In fact they can meet together after the meeting, the leaders, and I can resign tonight. But again as it has been so often these past 30 years since I met him, Brother Dale Roton came alongside and encouraged me to get deliverance from this fear and pray for a second ship. When I just step on one of the OM ships usually within one hour, especially if I go to the engine room, I just start uncontrolled weeping.

Now I know some of you can't understand that because you're a different temperament. Some of us are more emotional than others. I've known my good friend Peter from Switzerland for many years.

He has a different temperament than me. I pray he will never try to be like me and please don't ask me to be like you. In OM Switzerland we have a similar person named Paul Stilley.

Even his name gives sort of a quiet, dull feeling. When I read Tim LaHaye's book about temperaments it was one of the greatest blessings in my Christian life. When I read Eugenia Price, a great woman writer's

book about freedom, it began to change my life.

I began to be more comfortable in living with George Verwerf. The struggle goes on. Fear.

Worry. Each day we have to battle often these things. But God gives grace.

All my life I have struggled with my big mouth and my irritability and my bad temper. Through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, all the means of grace. There has been greater and greater victory.

But it's been a long road. Long after you get victory over temper you will battle with irritability, you will battle with wrong attitudes, you will battle with dispositional sins. And the struggle against lust.

Oh yes, in answer to prayer, God's grace has kept me from doing something foolish that would drag the name of O.M. into the mud. But the battle with those magazines that people leave in the toilets, they leave on the train tables, you don't get a second to think and the arrow of lust is in your side. I developed a 20-point strategy just to battle against lust and I hope you have a strategy from God's Word to battle against lust or any other sin in your life.

I present this in my books which are in many languages. 2 Timothy 2 says, flee, run away from youthful lust which can so destroy you. Then there has been the struggle against ego.

The self and pride As a young man, I thought I was really getting strong after reading Calvary Road and really dealing with the self-life. But pride and self-ism and self-centeredness is a subtle area that we will have to deal with each day the rest of our life. And then there was extremism.

I would hear messages like last night. They would explode in my mind and I would immediately run out and do extreme things. The amazing thing is that God would sometimes use these things.

But ultimately they were hurtful. They were confusing. And if God had not given me this message of balance from His Word, I know I would not be living the Christian life today.

I would be out of the race. I thank God for my dear wife, faithful to me these 29 years. She could tell you of the extremism that I brought into our marriage.

The extremism that I brought into the movement as it was being born. I wanted all money to be used for the poor and for world evangelism. Once before we were married, we went out by the beach and I would not spend any money for lunch to even buy my wife, she was my fiancée, a sandwich.

We can fast, we can wait. The Bible College will give us the food later free. But it seemed that maybe she was hungry.

Some people sat behind us and they opened their sandwiches and began to eat. Then they threw their bags in the rubbish bin and they went off. I went to the rubbish bin and took out the bag and gave the sandwich to my fiancée.

That is one of the more mild, gentle stories that I could tell you. Brothers and sisters, in the name of Jesus, I beg of you to get a balance of truth from the Word of God and that will take time. There are the struggles with doubts.

I am sorry to say we have not spoken much here about the intellectual reasons for our Christian faith and we certainly will be doing that in our September Conference and I hope next summer. I hope we someday can bring my good friend Josh McDowell to Love Europe because praise be to God there are honest answers to honest questions and we don't need to be afraid of our doubts. I have wrestled with doubts and questions about the Christian faith and the Bible all of my Christian life to this very day.

Often these doubts, these questions, these struggles are the anvil that God can make great faith upon. Then there is the battle against discouragement. If any of you battle discouragement this summer really heavy, write me a letter. Because I know myself and I know in August I will be battling discouragement every day.

Now maybe, maybe you have your life all together. I don't want to project my problems on you. You don't have these problems.

You're filled with the Spirit moving in concord supersonic speed across the Christian world and the nation. I stand in admiration of you. Really, I would like you to autograph my Bible.

I have a special section that says hypocrites sign here. And I simply close with this statement. If God can cause a character like me to experience this continuing love every day these 32 years then I know there is great hope for every one of you here tonight no matter what your failure, what your sin or what your problem. Let us go forward together as sinners saved by grace growing in grace and experiencing that continuing love every day of our life.

Let us pray. Just going to have a moment of silent prayer which you can just worship the Lord in your heart. You can confess some particular area that perhaps you've been struggling with.

You can make a decision to develop a strategy from the Bible to deal with that area no matter how many times it keeps popping up. In a biblical way, I would ask you to pray for a deeper acceptance of yourself and your own temperament. That God will not destroy your personality but He will work through you to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ.

I want you to make a decision to be ready for 5, 10, 15, 20 years of continuous learning and growth by God's grace through Jesus Christ. I know that God will use you. God has a great plan for your life.

He can use a little bit of a character like me and us in this work. He can and will use you in a mighty way. Pray your own prayer.

Our God and Father, You know everything about us and You love us still. We thank You for that love, we thank You for that grace, we thank You for that forgiveness. And we commit ourselves for many years of growing stronger and stronger in Your Son, Jesus Christ.

In His name we pray. Amen. God bless you.

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