

Lancaster Ctn Bookshop

by George Verwer

The speaker emphasizes the importance of Christian literature and bookshops in spreading the Gospel and promoting spiritual growth and development.

Duration: 33:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 6:16, Philippians 3:14, James 1:22, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of actively participating in the race of faith rather than being a passive spectator. He encourages the use of literature in ministry, such as distributing books door to door or setting up church book tables. The speaker also dedicates a Christian bookshop to God, praying for its impact in bringing people to know Jesus. He reminds the audience of the need to deny oneself, take up the cross, and follow Jesus daily in order to experience ongoing ministry and victory over the enemy.

Transcript

It's a tremendous privilege to have you all here. And as I look around now and see so many different people from different denominations, different backgrounds, all sharing together in what is a very happy occasion. I wasn't sure that that was quite the noise that we should say at that particular moment.

Very happy occasion. I'm privileged to be involved in this setup here in Lancaster. We are particularly privileged, too, to welcome George Verwer here today.

Those of you who weren't here earlier won't have perhaps heard that he was in Belgium yesterday. He got back about midnight last night. He rang me at 7.30 this morning to say he was here, and there was great relief, and many prayers were answered, and British Rail got him here at 5.32, spot on time.

And the Lord has brought you all here. Right at the beginning of this short time now, I'd like to ask Dr. Redpath to come here. Dr. Redpath has been a personal friend for a number of years. He's been a man in this area whom God has blessed amazingly, and who has been used for the blessing of so many other people.

And it is a real joy to have him here today. He's made a special journey to come. And I'd like to ask him to dedicate this building to God in prayer.

Let's pray together, shall we? We're so overwhelmed, Lord, in your presence. We would be still and recognize that you are God. The Lord God Omnipotent reigns.

And this has only occurred and been brought about because we know our sovereign Lord, and he has released the Spirit of God in order that the ministry might be exercised here in this place, which will greatly magnify our wonderful Savior and cause great discomfort to the devil. We praise you for all the potential of a place like this. Thank you indeed for the hundreds of people who, guided and directed by your Holy Spirit, have stood with Peter in the plans and the arrangements and all that has had to be done.

And we just say thank you with all our hearts, Lord Jesus. Thank you for Peter and raising him up to be the man of your choice for this place. Thank you for the spiritual leadership he's exercised under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for this demonstration that when the Holy Spirit is free to move, he works miracles. And this can only be accounted for on the basis of miracle. And therefore a work which has begun on that dimension is meant to continue in that way.

Lord, deliver us from ever just becoming a commercial event, but grant continually that the river of life may flow this way, the wind of God may blow this way, and every book that goes out of this place may bear the authority of the Spirit of God. And multitudes may come to know Jesus as Lord, as the outcome of the ministry of this shop. We therefore commit it all to you and dedicate this place to you in Jesus' name and trust you for a great outpouring on the meeting this evening.

Thank you for bringing George here. Thank you for the years of fellowship he and I have had together and praise you for all that it means to all of us here to know him, whom to know is life eternal, and to be brought time and time again, shattered to our knees, broken in helplessness and hopelessness in ourselves, there to find we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. We've been reminded time and time again, Lord, that the way to any leadership at all is just by wet eyes and bent knees and a broken heart.

I want to go that way continually. Lord, teach us to go down that you might be exalted in our lives. And grant that tonight your hand may be upon your servant in Holy Spirit authority and in power as he ministers the word to us.

And may this just be the beginning of a great movement of the Spirit of God in this area through Mission England and all the various fellowships and churches connected and interested and concerned. And we would covenant, all of us, to be with this work in prayer, in holding up the hands of your servant and grant that continually the prayer of a righteous man may avail much. And here this may be what wins the victory time and time again.

So we commit it all into your hands with faith and joy and thanksgiving for all that's gone in excitement, for all that's going to take place till Jesus comes. And praise you, praise you for the multitudes who come to know him as Lord and Master of their lives through the ministry of this place. Hear our prayer as we commit it all to you in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Could I now ask Edgar Pye to come and share with us a few words. Edgar is the Chairman of the Trustees of the Northwest Evangelistic Trust who has been responsible for the work at Carnforth, at the Warehouse, for so many years.

And he's going to share a few words with us. Well, thank you, Peter. I do appreciate the privilege of just a word because the opening of this bookshop marks a very lovely and wonderful milestone in the way in which God has been leading Christians who've had a burden for the spread of the Gospel through Christian literature over the years.

In the Warehouse, as many of you know, we've had a Christian bookshop for many years. God clearly led us to use part of the premises for that purpose. But all the time we had the feeling that one day there should be a Christian bookshop in Lancaster.

And there have been a number of attempts if you like to at least start or initiate such a venture and God has seemed to block each one until this time. And this bookshop, as far as those of us at Carnforth are concerned, has really been born out of many hours of heart-searching and praying together. And I want to say publicly how much we at the Warehouse have appreciated the way in which Peter has been willing to share his burden and we've been able to talk things over so openly.

And in the Warehouse work, as many of you know, we've been led into new initiatives in the last year or two, particularly, but not exclusively, in our school's work, which is growing quite remarkably and for which we really do give praise and thanks to God. Tremendous blessing through the school's work and if I dare put a plug in when this is really about the Christian bookshop here, we'd value your prayers and support for that exciting work. We do need it very much.

But as God has been leading us on into more and more of this outreach work, it became clear that we were not the people to continue in the business of a Christian bookshop and that Peter's obvious opportunity and the leading of the Holy Spirit for him and Margaret to open this shop here was God's answer to that particular situation. So we are rejoicing, really rejoicing in this day and this opening of the Christian bookshop in Lancaster and I believe it's going to be the beginning of much blessing in this city. And so it's with our prayers and our goodwill and prayers that God will wonderfully bless Peter and Margaret and John and all who serve here in this ministry that we say God bless you and we'll continue to be praying for one another and working in partnership.

Thank you. Thank you, Edgar. Before we listen to George Vowa speak to us and let him pronounce the official opening formalities, we're just going to sing together that chorus, He is Lord.

Greg's going to lead us. He is Lord He is Lord He is risen from the dead And He is Lord Every knee shall bow Every tongue confess That Jesus Christ is Lord He is Lord He is Lord He is risen from the dead And He is Lord Every knee shall bow Every tongue confess That Jesus Christ is Lord Well, certainly the privilege is mine to be able to come and open this bookshop in each port that our ship Doulos right now in Spain and Lagos go into. Lagos is in Edinburgh where I'll be going on Saturday night.

I haven't sailed with Lagos in probably seven or eight years so I'm going to sail from Scotland to England on the ship Lagos. But we always have an official opening of the exhibition. I've never had the privilege yet to do that.

We always get some dignitary. So I'm very humbled at the opportunity to open this bookshop. Another reason I'm happy to be here is because it's to me tremendous when God's people of different churches come together.

If you know anything about books, you know there are books in the shop that absolutely can contradict one book from the other. You get into Christian books and you'll discover how Christians don't agree. And probably you have some of that maybe even here in Lancaster.

Different Christians believing different things. There's some going the house group way. Others go the cathedral way.

Some like to stand and shout. Others like to sit and be quiet. Some are dancing.

Some are sleeping. All kinds of things going on in the church. And there is an ongoing process of polarization of Christians criticizing one another and going their different ways.

And so it's an encouragement to be here and to meet people from different churches. Not that I'm the world's greatest ecumenicalist. I'm probably not.

But I do believe that if a person knows Christ personally and has put his faith in God and what Christ did on the cross for his salvation, that he's my brother or my sister and that's very, very important. Very, very important. So it's a joy to be in a place, a meeting, where people are here from different churches and different backgrounds.

Another reason it's a very happy occasion for me is I love to be among the books. I will share my testimony in the meeting tonight, but I'm not from a Christian background. Never saw my father read a Christian book in all my childhood.

His father was an atheist from the Netherlands. And really it's just the mercy of God that I was converted, which I'll tell a little bit about tonight, because it was because of a mission. But I think it was the greatest miracle I ever went on because I'm just such a skeptic, such a cynic, got such a wicked heart and mouth.

At nine years of age I was going to produce a dictionary of curses, blasphemies and filthy stories, which I had been using ever since age six. And God saved me and then God brought into my hands Christian books. No one ever followed up on me.

I guess the Lord knew that if anybody tried they would have probably got into difficulty, so he just sent books my way. Even to this very day I can say that through Christian books I've received perhaps the greatest help in my Christian life. Another reason I'm happy to be here is because I believe in this kind of ministry.

This is a ministry. Don't think of this as a commercial operation. Don't let rumors get circulated as sometimes it does.

If it does go well, they're making a bomb down there. They may for a few months, but there's hardly any Christian bookshops in Britain that are not having it tough. When my wife and I first came to Britain 23 years ago we lived in, of course, the most important county, Lancashire, and we opened a bookshop in Bolton.

And I tell you, we almost closed it last year. They probably don't know that in Bolton because it's such a battle. But we kept praying and praying, and instead it seems that we're going to have to take over the Freehold.

We started in 86 Deansgate, right in the heart. It's now a secular bookshop. And very few people realize it was in that converted pub that was a Christian bookshop that the whole vision for the ship and then the ships was actually born when my wife and I were living there.

So we love to be among the books, but also we believe in this kind of ministry. The ministry of Christian literature is not widely appreciated in our day. Even if you move among Christian leaders, the big thing in our day is in-depth discipleship, or it's in building the kingdom, whatever that means.

There's a half a dozen new books on it. Or church planting. Those of us in missionary work, church planting.

In the 60s, literature was given a lot greater esteem in missionary work, but now it's not so much. Because so often, the ministry of literature is behind the scenes. It isn't the book that necessarily brings the man right to that moment of conversion.

Often it is an evangelist. Often it is someone praying with a person, or a meeting, or a Christian camp. But behind the scenes, very few people that know Jesus Christ have not been either helped before conversion or certainly after conversion by Christian books.

And it is one of the most needed ministries in Great Britain today. Because we notice the moment a person comes to Christ, the enemy tries to get them into false doctrines or into extremes, or into something like the children of God, now the family of love, which eventually taught immorality in the name of Jesus. And I think one of the reasons God kept our work, which was in its early days somewhat extreme and radical.

We were a bit fed up with the status quo. We felt God's people were sleeping. We got in trouble in some of our Bible colleges.

But I think one of the reasons we didn't go completely off into a cult or something weird, was the influence of Christian literature. And I hope that all of us here today, this won't just be a formality, but somehow we'll recommit our lives. Firstly, of course, to the Lord.

We want to talk about that tonight. But also to the distribution of Christian books. Many unconverted people, I don't know in a place like Lancaster, but in London where I live now, most unconverted people aren't going to go to a bookshop.

I was going door to door in Bromley where I live. We've had a bookshop in Bromley for almost 20 years. A very, very good Christian bookshop.

Though the Lord led us many years, a little bit like he's led Edgar, to leave Christian bookshops to others and give ourselves more to the training of nationals and evangelism and all kinds of other things that we're involved in all over the world. So we don't have so many Christian bookshops. We always have a motto in OM, let CLC do it when it comes to bookshops or let someone else.

But we have that shop there in Bromley because when we first started there, OM is still in the north, but our literature division moved to the south, at least the publishing and the wholesale side. But when I was going door to door there in Bromley, I found that most of the people on the doors, they didn't even know this shop existed. To get a good place right on the high street of Bromley is a lot of money.

Our place is just a little bit up. You know how these high streets, they have sort of a low section, you know, where nobody goes. And that's a good place, but it's just out of that main center of traffic.

And so a lot of people live in Bromley don't know anything about it. And if this bookshop is going to have the impact I'm sure God wants it to have all over this part of Lancashire, it really hinges on you. Becoming a book agent or getting books in quantity, seeing it as a ministry and doing everything you can in your church.

Many, many people, the place where they have got Christian books is their own church, that little church bookstall. If you have one, make sure who's ever in charge of it is enthusiastic, knows how to smile, has got a vision, has got some fuel in his tank and is doing something because there's nothing like a half-dead church bookstall agent to kill the ministry of Christian literature. So really I consider it a great privilege, maybe at this point I could just mention a few of my favorite books.

I was going to come up in an old, I have sort of a converted coach, converted into a bookmobile, which I go all over the world in. Though I didn't get quite as far as Pakistan, I had to turn back at the Gulf, because the ferry was too expensive. But I had a whole lot of extra books that I was going to bring up just in case we ran out.

But I can see there's no problem to run out. The STL van is also here outside. They've just brought in some more books.

But sometimes when I go to a church and I push books, I get criticized. It's a miracle I don't get criticized more than I do. But usually if I get criticized, it's on the pushing books.

They want you to mention books in a church. They like to keep it to one minute. It's not easy when there's so many great books.

But let me just take some moments, because this is an appropriate place to mention some of the books you need to get that are here. I just took a quick glance around the shelves and almost jumped out of my shoes at some of the exciting titles. A man that's influenced my life since my days in Chicago, from some providence of God, happens to be here.

And that's Alan Redpath. And if you haven't read some of his books, they're directly across from where I'm standing right now. And I especially recommend you start with this one, *The Making of a Man of God*.

Alan has moved to Birmingham, so you may not see him as much up here anymore. But you can get his books. And I hope you'll get some even today.

Another book that I've just been reading is this book, *Strike the Original Match*. Now, he doesn't have many copies, but as a good bookshop, he'll be willing to take your order. Every married couple, every family should read this book.

I think he is one of the most gifted communicators I've ever read. His other book, *Improving Your Serve*. My own daughter, who doesn't read many Christian books, very, very busy type, read right through this entire book.

Nineteen-year-old daughter. *Improving Your Serve*. It's not talking about tennis.

It's talking about being a servant. So there's just two books that you may not know about that are just so powerful and will be such a blessing in your marriage and in your church work. You know, of all the books I've examined in the last twenty-nine years since I've become a Christian, I had to decide, well, what do I feel is the best book? Now, the Bible is the best second to nothing.

And the way we evaluate a Christian book is whether it's really faithful to the Word of God. That's one of the main ways we judge a Christian book. But I think one of the greatest books in the last one hundred years is this little book, *Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Cure*.

We have some here on the counter. I don't say that lightly. I've said it all over the world for five or I don't know how many years, that of all the books, if this is the one I had to take with me, you know, on an island with only my Bible, this is the one I would take.

The title turns people off. It's a sad title because it's not about depression. It's just about a Christian life.

It's about discipline. It's about dealing with trials, hassles, heartache, sin. And I just recommend Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Cure*, still at a relatively low price for a book of three hundred pages, if you know about how the prices are going.

There's a whole big section of A.W. Tozer. If you're not into this man's writings, you must be very new to the Christian book world. That's all right.

We don't want anybody to feel bad, too bad. Tozer will just be a great encouragement to you. Sometimes, because STL is based in London, people here in the North think that OM, you know, neglects the North.

But in fact, OM is based in Manchester. And our new international associate coordinator, we now work together in the worldwide leadership of OM, actually lives in Carlisle. And his name is Peter May, and that's his book, *Take My Silver*, just published.

Charles Marsh, Muslim world for 45 years, into action, and then a new book published on whether there is a hell, God, that's not fair. An amazing and needed book. Ralph Shallis, another man that always comes along to the OM conferences, I've just come from a month of conference, prayer and training, has written from now on.

And we even have George Verwer books here. How do you push your own books? It's very difficult. But I got 14,000 letters as a result of this little book.

And so I allowed this one just to go into print in July. And I'm already now getting a lot of letters from that book, which somehow the Lord is using. I wanted to just read this scripture for you to think about as you go.

And before we just pronounce this bookshop opened, or declare it opened, or whatever you want to do. I don't know where we're all going to leap at that time. We're going to jump on the floor.

But let me just read these verses that have been a continual challenge for me. I, at times, find the Christian life very difficult. I'm just not naturally a Christian.

I'm naturally a pagan. I've got a pagan heart, a pagan mind. I always say if God could keep me 29 years, and He's kept me every day these 29 years, He can keep anybody.

Anybody. And, you know, in any one day, my emotions can go up and down even up to 15, 20 times. And I feel so unworthy.

I don't have a big hang-up about it. I'm too bull-headed and overconfident in some ways to be that way. But I am just amazed at God's mercy toward me and my wife and my three children.

I've had many failures in my life. Not the big scandalous thing anyone writes about, but the kind of thing that God's grieved about. And God's Holy Spirit's grieved about.

And yet, somehow, through much failure and fear and unbelief, I find the Lord is still able to work. And I've taken, really, as my life principle from the Bible, these words that are found in several places, but I'll just read it from Mark. When He had called the people to Him, verse 34, with His disciples also, He said to them, Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospels will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whosoever is ashamed of Me, in My words, in this adulterous and sinful generation of him, the Son of Man, also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father and with His holy angels. I wish we had an hour to look at that passage because it's just so powerful.

So powerful. This ministry and this bookshop won't be any stronger than the Christians who are involved with it. And it's a great danger in our Christian thinking that we separate different ministries.

I know people do that to us in OM. OM, oh, we're over here. If you're interested in ships or if you're interested in unreached people or Muslims, well, maybe OM would be interested.

Well, hardly anybody's interested in that. So you can figure what an uphill climb we're facing just to keep going. And then, well, Christian bookshops.

Yeah, well, you know, those folk down there. Is this the High Street? The Bank Street. Yeah, the Bank Street.

You know, they're in Christian literature. Oh, well, Bible schools. Oh, yeah, Cape and Reem.

Well, they're into that. And everybody gets into different things. And of course, to some degree, we have to do that.

We understand that. But how important it is for us to realize this is our ministry. This is a place being dedicated to the work of God.

If this fails, it's not for the Christians to sit back. Oh, well, you know what they did the other day? I saw that book. Did you realize they were selling books by that particular author who we all know is not really straight on his doctrine? Christian bookshop is an impossible ministry.

People come in looking for books that don't even exist. People come in looking for a book and they find a book by an author they consider heretic. Or, you know, there's about 100 things people can come and complain.

And let me just tell the personnel. Very few people last more than three years in a bookshop ministry. Because behind the till.

And I've been in it for 26 years. Because they are a primary target of the enemy. And because a lot of the work isn't glamorous like today with a great herd of all kinds of interesting people piling through the doors and snacking and eating and piling out again.

But it's boring. It's routine. It's people complaining.

It's God's chosen people. So often God's frozen people coming in, going on about some twiddly little thing that has about as much significance as a grasshopper in Alaska. And I would just really beg of you as we consider this bookshop now opened and in action, to consider it your responsibility to pray.

Satan will counterattack this ministry. He'll counterattack the people in this ministry. My heart broke as I went back to Germany a few days ago and found another major Christian leader in Germany who had somewhat of a literature ministry, a fantastic ministry to drug addicts, right in the heart of the city rescuing all kinds of dropouts to discover that he's wiped out.

He's wiped out. He's had to be removed from leadership in the church. His family is breaking in two.

He's running around with another woman. You know, one year ago he was going strong. His ministry was recognized as one of the outstanding in northern Germany.

And I really feel, my beloved brothers and sisters, we're a little bit naive about what the whole Christian life is about. It's a battle. And if we're not denying ourself and taking up the cross, if we're not interceding and praying for one another and exhorting one another and loving one another, many will go down.

And even as we see new ones come to Christ in Mission England, we'll see old ones falling out of the saddle, zapped by enemy arrows, because we so easily fail to obey literally passages like this and daily deny self when those subtle temptations come and daily deny self when the temptation to gossip or to make generalizations comes and to daily turn away from all that is not from God. It is a battle. We do fail, and we know that when we fail, God forgives us.

So I would just say that if we really want this to be an ongoing ministry, not one or two years. This is one of the last large cities in Britain or towns. Is it a town or a city? You have a cathedral? City, yes.

Wow. To have a Christian bookshop. The little villages in Britain have Christian bookshops.

So praise the Lord. Finally, as we say in America, you got your act together. The Lord bless you.

But now, let's hold that shield of faith because the enemy is going to attack. The enemy knows that through this shop hundreds could come to know Christ. The enemy knows that through this shop, through some of the powerful books here, Christians could come into balance and revival.

Some may even start loving one another. And one thing surely every minister knows is that a Christian bookshop is a brother, a sister, a helper in the huge and most important task of the local church. So it's a great joy to be here but it's also an awesome responsibility because I know this is a spiritual ministry.

There are spiritual men who love Jesus behind it. We're dealing with holy things. Also, it's filled with complications because there are so many books and it's very difficult to know where to draw the line.

A bookshop can't just have, generally speaking, only one type of theological book. That's not fair to the Christian community. And yet when you broaden out a bit, even in an evangelical bookshop, somebody is

sure to start throwing rocks, if not through the window, at least spiritually speaking.

So I feel a real linking with you and we in OM, we want to pray for this ministry. We want to do anything we can to help you. I don't think we can bring the ship in here.

We still have some docks. Yeah. It just is a great privilege.

And maybe we could just right now cut the tape. Do you have a tape? On our ship, we always have a tape. We'll cut the tape and you can go into the exhibition.

You're already in it. And just perhaps give thanks to the Lord. Let's just pray.

Father, we thank You for Your Word and we're not here by accident today. We haven't just come here for a reception and to wish our blessing on our brothers and sisters who are in this ministry. But we're here in Your providence.

I know I am. And we believe You want to challenge our hearts about our own lives. About whether we're really involved or whether we're somewhere just in the grandstands watching other people sweat and run and work.

Lord, we don't believe there's any grandstand spectator Christians. If we know You, we're in the race. And we want to run with all of our hearts.

Show us how we can be using literature in our own ministry. Show us how we can be perhaps going door to door or have a church book table or take literature to places where it doesn't usually go. Maybe some of these villages scattered around Lancashire.

We thank You for other literature ministries and we thank You for the many publishers represented in this shop. We thank You for the grace, Your grace and Your mercy that has made it possible to have a shop right here in the center of this strategic city. Use it for Your glory.

We give it to You. And we praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you so much, George, for your challenging words. I think John, who's the manager of the shop here, was perhaps quaking a little at the three-year prospect. I know he believes he's here for a lot longer than three years.

He hasn't been in the bookshop ministry before. He's got a lot of business experience and he's going to need your loving support and help and encouragement during these early days. But very quickly, he'll be on top of all that's necessary in this work.

So please encourage him and support him when you do come in. The shop here will be open until 7.30 tonight. At 7.30, the Mission England meeting will begin in St. Thomas' Church, which is about 400 or 500 yards in that direction, those who have not been there before.

There will be an introductory time of music, so I doubt we'll get underway precisely at 7.30, so don't worry if you're a little late. And at that meeting, George will be speaking further to us and his subject is the challenge of Mission England. But as you'll appreciate, that's a subject which really he can say what he likes.

And I'm sure he will anyway. In addition to the books that he has recommended, we do have quite a lot of George Bowie's books and there's also some cassettes of his ministry which you can put into your car. He will sign them too.

Is that right? Yes, he will. Whatever you say, sir. Right.

So thank you so much, everybody, for coming. It's great to have you here and we look forward to seeing you many, many times in the future. God bless you all.

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