

# Leader's Survival

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer emphasizes the challenges of Christian leadership and offers practical strategies for survival and effectiveness in ministry.*

**Duration:** 55:26

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 6:1

**Topics:** "Leadership"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker, George Wermer, shares about his personal journey and struggles as a Christian leader. He acknowledges his natural temperament and the challenges it brings, particularly in the area of sexual temptation. He emphasizes the importance of having accountability and support from others in order to overcome these challenges. Wermer also encourages listeners to press on in their faith, reminding them of God's forgiveness, restoration, and multiple plans for their lives. He concludes by highlighting the need for individualized spiritual growth and cautioning against expecting a one-size-fits-all training program for discipleship.

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## Transcript

Alright, let's just look a little bit at the Apostle Paul just to get an idea of the pressure he was under. And I don't think it necessarily is going to be any less for the contemporary Christian leader or pastor or youth worker because the enemy uses the same tactics. He's been practicing for several thousand years and he's got some very subtle tactics.

Let's look at verse 19. He had just reminded the Ephesian elders of his manner of life. That was the key in the Apostle Paul.

His life. And then verse 19. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.

Humility of mind. With many tears and trials which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. Because remember there was a little group that said they wouldn't eat until Paul was dead.

Do you have any of those down the road from you? They've sent you a letter lately. Little group. Don't like you and they've said we're not going to eat until you're dead.

I'm sure you'd find that quite an interesting reading. That's what Paul had. That's what Paul had.

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but I've shown you and I've taught you publicly and from house to house. Paul went all out. Dale Roton, a dear co-worker who's been a great encouragement in my life said this is 20-20 vision.

Acts 20-20. The public ministry. The house to house ministry.

Testifying both the Jews and also the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. What does he get in reward for this faithful service? This 20-20 vision doing God's will. What does he get in reward? He gets a promise.

You know so many times when we do something right we want a reward. I guess this goes back to our childhood when we did something right. We got some sweets and as Christians we can be very immature and we mainly work with the thought that somebody's going to say wow that was a good sermon or oh the Lord's really using you or some other little encouragement.

Well Paul had a promise as a result of his faithfulness. What was promised? There it is. And now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me except that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

There's the bonds and affliction promise. You get a lot of God's people have these little promise boxes they go poking through them getting promises and we now have groups that tell us all who are spiritual are going to just prosper and they're going to have everything they need. But Paul had a sort of different system.

He went and had direct witness from the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him. What was his reaction to that interesting promise? But none of these things moved me. He didn't care.

And in some ways the Christian leader has to be a careless man. Careless in the sense of not being too worried about the difficulties that are going to come as he plows up the fallow ground in the name of the Lord. None of these things moved me saying neither can I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And he goes on and speaks about giving the whole counsel of God. Verse 27, he says in verse 28 Take heed therefore, he's speaking to these Ephesian elders Take heed therefore unto yourselves of all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. And I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock.

Now so often times Christians speak with astonishment about the cults and astonishment about some of the extremist groups. None of these things should astonish us if we read our Bibles. Just normal cults, extremist groups young Christians going astray false doctrines, false prophets it's been going on for two thousand years.

That's why a Christian leader has to be grounded in the word that's why he needs of course to have discernment A.W. Tozer said the greatest gift needed in the church today was discernment, wisdom. And then he said therefore watch and remember that for the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears. Quite an active ministry.

Night and day ministry for three years. Went on to speak how he coveted no man's silver and gold apparel. He had to even work with his own hands.

Verse 34. What a challenge. Well let's just look at two other passages.

We could spend easily all morning just looking at Paul but I only want this in the way of introduction. Let's look over at Corinthians. Let's try 1 Corinthians chapter 4. This is a unique passage and I think I'll just read it from this living Bible.

Just to have a little bit of a change. I've been reading from the authorized. But let's just see how this sounds.

1 Corinthians chapter 4. Let's start at verse 9. Sometimes I think God has put us apostles at the very end of the line. Like prisoners soon to be killed. Put on display at the end of a victor's parade.

To be stared at by men and angels alike. Religion has made us foolish and you say but of course you are all such wise and sensible Christians. We are weak but not you.

You are well thought of while we are laughed at. To this very hour we have gone hungry and thirsty. Without even enough clothes to keep warm.

We have been kicked around without homes of our own. We have worked wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We have blessed those who cursed us.

We have been patient with those who injured us. We have replied quietly when evil things have been said about us. Yet right up to this present moment we are like dirt underfoot.

Like garbage. Well those are strong words. You may feel the living Bible is too blunt.

But if you read it in the authorized it is just as blunt. He goes on to say by the way in verse 16. Wherefore I beseech you the followers of me.

If it wasn't for the 16th verse we might be able to worm away from that strong passage which I have heard very few people preach on. We just say well Paul he was the beginning apostle. I mean we don't expect people to live like this today.

But he turns around to these weak struggling Corinthian Christians who had even had immorality in the church. And an enormous amount of divisiveness and schism in the church. And he says be followers of me.

And that is a challenge for us this morning. As we think of the life of this man. One other passage I think we will go back to the authorized.

2 Corinthians chapter 6. This is one of the best passages we could ever study at a Christian leaders seminar. Because it is written specifically seemingly for those in the ministry. We then as workers together with him.

Beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he said I have heard thee in a time accepted. And in the day of salvation I have helped thee.

Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation. Giving no offense in anything that the ministry be not blamed.

We don't want our ministry to be blamed. How can we do that? Here is a list. But in all things commending ourselves as the ministers of God.

In much patience. In afflictions. In necessities.

In distresses. Interesting list isn't it? In stripes. In imprisonments.

In torments. In labors. In watching.

In fasting. By pureness. By knowledge.

By long suffering. By kindness. By the Holy Spirit.

By love unfamed or genuine or unhypocritical. By the word of truth. By the power of God.

By the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. By honor and dishonor. By evil report and good report.

As deceivers yet true. As unknown yet well known. As dying and behold we live.

As chastened and not killed. As sorrowful yet always rejoicing. As poor yet making many rich.

As having nothing and yet possessing all things. There is real Christianity. There is the kind of reality.

The kind of leadership. The kind of example that we should be giving to God's people in our day. Jesus Christ we always sing it.

The same yesterday, today and forever more. There's a lot of other things we could read about that it would indicate very clearly that a Christian leader is a man who is, and woman, under tremendous pressure. In a very unusual way I was thrown into leadership in the body of Christ.

Strange as it may sound at the age of 17. Because young people need leadership and sometimes God raises up young people to help lead other young people. And the Holy Spirit saved me and thrust me into my own secondary school where I had been elected sort of around the same time I was converted as the president of the student government.

And so in this position of leadership I also had the opportunity to witness for the Lord, to have a campaign distributing Gospels around the school, to organize campaigns and films and then to organize an organization to go door to door with literature and all kinds of things. I was thrust into leadership before I was even 18. By 19 I was on my way to Mexico.

And I was forced to learn how to survive in a position of responsibility, how to lead people, encourage people. My first team was only three, we didn't even have a leader on that team. The second team that went to Mexico was five.

And I had asked a group of men, all twice my age, to join and become a board of reference, a board of directors for this newly born movement that later was called Operation Mobilization. So I had to learn how to relate to these men. Many people in their leadership, the greatest problem they have is relating to those

who are over them.

For you it may be your elders, it may be the church council or the trustees. And there's very little training given in seminary on how to relate to these people. We get our heads filled with theology and we get very little understanding about understanding people, relating to people, living with people, loving people.

So of course the great problems in the church are all relationship problems. They're not firstly theological problems, there are plenty of those as well. They're relationship problems.

Even men who feel called together to work in the same work, two years later they're not getting along with each other. And no wonder the work begins to suffer. Because I tell you, when the leaders are having shaky relationships, you can be sure the people there or in the church can feel it and know about it.

So I was forced to learn a lot of things and I did a lot of reading, a lot of extra reading. And whenever I was near a Christian leader I would be asking him more questions than he would want to answer. I left university where I was during the summers, the University of Mexico, and after two years of secular brainwashing decided to go to a Bible college.

It was a disastrous thing in my family, among my relatives, even my parents, that I would leave university studies to go to a Bible school that doesn't even give a degree. Give a diploma, which actually I lost a week after I got it. But I thank God for that decision because there at Moody Bible Institute I was exposed to men like Alan Redpath preaching down at Moody Church.

I was exposed to some Christian leaders and I was able to talk to these people. And with this plus going back to Mexico every Christmas and every summer, the reality burst upon me that this is a battle for survival. I remember Chuck Templeton who together with Billy Graham was a great preacher of his day.

I remember just hearing about him being completely wiped out and becoming an agnostic. He even began writing anti-Christian material. And it just more and more was impressed on me that leadership is a battle for survival.

It's not a matter of us all becoming Apostle Pauls. It's not a matter of us trying to be Hudson Taylor or whoever you aspire to. For many of us, especially the likes of me, it's survival just to get through.

Just two years later to still be breathing spiritually, to still have my sanity and my wife and my children. So, rather than teach you how to climb mountains this morning, I thought I would give you some basic pointers on how to survive. Because probably if you do survive, you will be able to climb some mountains.

And you will be able to do many of the things that you've already read about, you've already aspired to. And I've written this strategy for survival here in the back of my Bible, and I refer to it all the time. I found in my Bible a lot of blank pages, so I figured there must be something that belonged there.

So here is my strategy for survival. Some of this is very, very basic. And I hope you already have it in your life, so it will just be in the way of remembrance to keep on keeping on.

Some of these things you already have them in your life, then I think you're going in the right direction. Just praise the Lord and press on. There may be some new light on some old areas.

There may be some new areas that you haven't thought so much about. I am a natural disaster case. I had people prophesy this ever since I was converted, that I wouldn't go past three years.

At the end of three years, they extended it. Because my temperament, the choleric, loud-mouthed, aggressive, semi-hostile, highly sexed temperament is dangerous. It's dangerous.

We had one evangelist like this in America, left nine girls pregnant in one campaign. One campaign. And believe me, the sex emotion and the religious emotion, they can run so close.

And things happen even within the churches in this area that no one ever talks about. I've had perhaps the opportunity to read some books that don't get into the normal libraries on how the enemy uses sexual promiscuity even within the church. But I think because I developed a strategy for survival, which includes, by the way, having people around you who will watch you and exhort you and encourage you.

A Nathan. Every man needs a Nathan. A fearless guy who doesn't care who you are.

And if he sees you fiddling around with little Susie Bell down the road, he's going to come in with all guns firing. And you'd rather just not bother if you're going to have this guy coming in the front room exhorting you as Nathan took on David. And so I found that the Lord has kept me not only from catastrophe in that area that has taken so many Christian leaders down, but in the many, many other areas.

Here's my simple strategy for survival. Number one, to really bathe in God's forgiveness. My wife criticizes me for not taking enough showers.

It is one of my weak points. I'm so skinny when I turn on the water, most of it misses me. But we need to learn how to bathe in God's forgiveness.

The reference that I often think on is Ephesians 1.6. You are accepted in the beloved. Even after 10 or 20 years of Christian leadership, it's possible to be very insecure, not really drawing enough upon the acceptance you have in the Lord. And if you're not drawing enough upon the acceptance you have in the Lord, then you keep looking for acceptance from other people.

And you get blown to and fro, depending on whether people are accepting you, appreciating you, and all this kind of thing. There's no Christian leader that's not going to make mistakes, not say the wrong thing at certain times, and bring some rejection with it. So knowing we are accepted, knowing we are forgiven, is absolutely basic.

And I think we need to dwell on it quite often. Number two, casting every care upon Him. 1 Peter 5.7. Philippians 4.6. All verses we know.

I hope you are memorizing the Word of God. And that was one of the things that helped me the most as a young Christian leader, to memorize the Word of God. Cleansing the subconscious, giving strength in the battle, casting every care upon Him, for He careth for you, is a verse everybody should have in their heart.

1 Peter 5.7. I have to continually do this. Continually do this. So many things, that as leaders we're exposed to.

So many people. And if we're sensitive and we get involved with people. One of my problems as a young Christian leader was over-involvement with people.

You say, is that possible? Yes. We don't recognize our limits. There's a new book out, written by a theological teacher from Fuller.

I think his name is Smedes, called Love Within Limits. He points out how if we don't know that in our loving, in our giving ourselves to other people, we have limits. We will eventually just burn out.

We'll eventually just be drained out. Just three or four really needy people, drug addicts as I was working a little bit with, but more with alcoholics. Just two or three people of that type, are enough to drain you completely.

You don't need any other ministry. And I had to learn how to really leave these people with the Lord. Do what I could.

Encourage, phone, write. Leave them with God. I cannot play God.

I am not the total answer to the alcoholics in my community. Or to all the divorce cases. Or to all the mentally ill.

That alone, I got involved in early years with the mentally ill. And emotionally ill. That alone, can be a full-time ministry.

Just five, six people who are mentally disturbed can drain you of your time, your resources, and it'll be the end to your ministry. We go into ministry often very naive. And we just feel we can do so much.

We've got our scriptures, soon we're running out of steam. The number of Christian leaders, men and women, who have nervous breakdowns, is quite amazing. I haven't had one myself, and if it comes, I don't believe it's the end of the road.

I don't remember even getting near that, that kind of situation. Therefore, I probably can do, and push myself, more than someone else. Everybody has to know their limits.

I always try to warn people, not to try to literally copy some other Christian leader, in terms of what you do, in terms of your scheduling, scheduling, and whatever else. We're all so different. My wife told me the other day, she said, it makes her tired.

She's been relatively tired for 23 years, since the wedding. And we had to discover the hard way, that we were very, very different. And as we got older, we became almost more different.

Though we've had a wonderful 23 years of marriage. And I've already been on the phone with her three times since coming here. We keep close contact.

But it's amazing. It's amazing how different we can all be. And we pick up these little Christian books, like, you know, Praying Hard.

You know, his heart moved. He prayed so much. And so you get little, little junior Christian leader trying to pray, and praying, and praying under the knife, trying to get his heart to move over to the other side.

Oftentimes, in these old biographies, we only hear the good about these Christian leaders. We don't hear stories like the man who helped to start Keswick. The founder of the great Keswick Convention actually never went.

Because in an unwise moment, he put his arm around a girl in Bristol. And of course, in those days, that would be sort of equivalent to, you know... But he put his arm around and he realized this was wrong and it

got all confusing. He felt guilty.

He never recovered from that experience. He had a mental breakdown. He's the husband of Hannah Whitehall Smith who wrote the great book *The Secret of the Christian Life*.

I myself must confess over the last 20 years, I've become a little more skeptical about the total sanctification books. Because the more biographies I've read, the more research I've done, the more I discover that people are human and they all fail. Every Christian leader has had failure in his life.

Most of them in fairly serious areas. Now, some failure is easier to cover. For instance, a lot of Christian leaders have trouble with temper.

That's a little easier to cover. You know, A.B. Simpson almost threw a guy down the stairs. D.L. Moody had a little trouble in this area as well, much less Martin Luther or C.T. Studd or General William Booth who threw his own wife his own daughter out of the Salvation Army.

But others, you know, other sins are not so easy to cover, especially immorality. But we manage to do that as well. I notice one man has been living in immorality a lot.

He's on his second or third wife. He's just republished another big book and everybody's out buying it. You know, we seem to be able to cover these things quite well.

Number three, making God your goal. I think that's so important. We get in church work and our church becomes the goal.

We become almost neurotic. The number of people in the church, what's happening in the church, the new building program, the new budget, the extension, the outreach, the number of missionaries. Our whole life becomes dominated by projects and goals and plans and accomplishments and we easily get caught up into a syndrome where we're actually being motivated by the fear of failure.

The fear of failure. What if my church fails? What if my group fails? What if we launch this evangelistic campaign and it doesn't work? It's a very legitimate fear because we are human. But if God is our goal, first, and these other things have their place, of course, then whatever else may happen, we don't get shaken.

So if plan one gets destroyed because our goal is God himself and we're enjoying his fellowship and we're communing with him even when our little plan collapses, then we can easily shift to plan B. Life isn't one plan. Life is many plans. And you say, well, what if plan B collapses? Well, you move to plan C. What if plan C collapses? Well, there's lots of letters in the alphabet.

There's terrific scope. Terrific scope. Making God your goal.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. It may seem unusual, but as a very young Christian before I ever left for overseas except my trips to Mexico, I just saw that OM could not be my goal. This work I was involved in, it wasn't called OM at that time, it was called *Send the Light*, that it couldn't be my goal.

My goal had to be God himself. Knowing God. Deeper understanding of Christ.

And that's been an enormous help to me. Even when my faith has been under attack. Have you ever had your very faith under attack? You begin to even doubt? I have found that when my faith is under attack, one of the ways I can battle back is to pull back into a more simple faith and start in the beginning.

In the beginning, God. Now that's one thing that I'm very, very sure of. I have a lot of other doubts about different things.

But that one thing, I'm pretty unshakable on that. In the beginning, God. So I just think about God and his creation and his love.

Then I move on. And of course pretty soon I'm back believing the whole Bible, where I belong. God.

God-centered faith. This is why I like the writings of A.W. Tozer. Dr. Lloyd-Jones.

Then number four. Learning how to be hurt. That's unusual, isn't it? That's why I like this book, Healing for Damaged Emotions.

We know the Lord Jesus was hurt. We know the Apostle Paul was misunderstood, criticized. He had just moved out of Thessalonica.

In moved the gossipers. In moved the back biters. Oh, he was just after your money.

Oh, the Apostle Paul, this and that. That's why I wrote the first and second epistles. Thessalonians.

And I just believe we, as Christian leaders, we've got to learn to be hurt. There's just no way that we can get through life without being hurt. And sometimes a Christian leader, when he gets hurt, he becomes preoccupied with his hurts.

And pretty soon, into a lot of his messages, he's always talking about the pain he's going through and the hurts he's going through. This is no big deal. This is a normal Christian life.

Don't make too much of it. Learn how to be hurt. Don't think you're the only one being hurt in the battle.

You may have hurt some people yourself. I hurt my own children. I hurt my own wife.

Often the ones we love the most are the ones we hurt the most. Because it's one thing to maintain a relationship with a pen pal 6,000 miles away writing every other month and sending tracts to each other. It's another thing to live under the same roof with three wildcat teenagers and a tired wife and a dog and whoever else you've moved into the place.

Maybe a budgie. Somebody's just dreamed up a new film in which people are massacred by an invasion of budgies. I don't want to see it.

But the littlest things can really go out of control. And a lot of that which we talk about in church never becomes a reality in our homes. We actually become schizophrenic.

And we're talking about high sounding sanctification theories in church but actually in the home we can hardly get through making a pot of tea without some type of a crisis. Learn how to be hurt. Don't hold things against people.

The word of God in Hebrews warns us against any root of bitterness. Joyce Landau, a brilliant writer, has written a new book called Irregular Person. In her book she points out that most people have at least one irregular person in their life.

Often a relative. Sometimes in the same family. An irregular person is someone that after many, many efforts to get on with and to understand and to love, it just doesn't work.

It's somehow neutrons and protons are not going in the right direction. The harder you try to love the irregular person the more they misunderstand or the more problems come and it's just so difficult. I've counseled many young people and it's obvious their mother or father is their irregular person.

There's many a mother who has a daughter who seems to be an irregular person. The more they try to relate and understand and win, the worse the whole thing gets. Quite an amazing book.

I actually haven't finished it so I can't tell you the total solution to your irregular person but at least I think I can convince you that these situations do exist. And there is a way out but it's not an easy way. It does take a lot of understanding and a lot of patience.

One thing that's come to my mind is that we have to learn how to relax in our relationships. We have different relationships with different people and as Christian leaders we never want to be jealous about another person's relationship. If somebody you've poured your life into somehow leaves your church and goes to join a church down the road, even maybe after you talk to them and fellowship with them, leave it with God.

Leave it with God. Don't become bitter. Now of course if it's a false cult there's a great difference between a false cult and a Christian group that you may not agree with.

There are Christian groups all over Britain that I don't agree with but I still love them. And we have a number of exoemers that have joined fellowships where I personally wouldn't be happy but I just praise the Lord. If they're going on for Christ and they're walking with Jesus, that's the first thing.

Nobody has perfect doctrine anyway. And most people have at least a few kinks or a few extremes. And I just feel it's not worth getting bitter about.

It's not worth getting upset about. It's not worth losing sleep about. And yet so often as leaders we become small minded.

We could be out winning many more and accomplishing so much but instead we get pushed into a corner on some little issue or some little relationship and it just drains us. It just drains us so that we're not able to meet the need. I know a number of churches that have had fairly serious divisions and instead of becoming bitter they said well let's just get on with it.

Let's learn from this situation and let's get on with it. I think there's scope in Britain today for many different kinds of groups to grow. There are many different streams in which God is working.

He's very gracious. He's never limited himself to any one Christian stream. And it's exciting to see various kinds of Christian growth and to see that some of the divisions some of them were unfortunate.

We never excuse sin or carnality. No. And people will stand before God for some of the things that have taken place.

But there's no purpose in being bitter. Let's get on with the job. There's a nation to be won for Christ.

There are millions out there that don't know anything about these theological arguments. They haven't yet heard what Jesus says. And I think it's so important to not allow ourselves to become bitter or to become hurt and end up somehow on the shelf as a result of that.

And then number five, learning the reality of praise and thanksgiving. Learning the reality of praise and thanksgiving. This is so important in the life of the Christian and of course the Christian leader and it's been taught so much lately I won't spend too much time on it.

But I have found that when things are going wrong it's great to just stop and praise the Lord. There are always other things that are going right. There are always many many blessings and I love that little song, count your many blessings name them one by one.

Too many of God's people are counting their problems. Even our prayer meetings become long negative syndromes of things going wrong. People who are ill, maybe we ought to have special praise for those who are healthy in the next prayer meeting rather than on and on and on about those who are ill.

You become ill listening to the reports about the ill. It needs to be brought into balance. And I think it's so important to emphasize praise and thanksgiving.

Number six, learning to live in the rest of faith. It's a controversial passage Hebrews chapter four, but I think it's worth studying. And I believe that this is a lifestyle.

Some enter into this by crisis. I had some crises in my life in which I was all caught up in worry and then somehow just through crying out to the Lord he just brought me into a place of rest. And in a movement like OM with many many problems every single day, every single day.

You have to know how to really rest in the Lord. Otherwise you just lose a lot of energy. It's a beautiful principle, study Hebrews four.

And then number seven, realizing God is easy to live with. I took that from Tozer. He marks even a cup of cold water given in his name.

Some people as Tozer puts it, become religiously jumpy because they know God sees their every action. I'm definitely a potential for that type of thing. Very sensitive about what God is thinking of me.

God is watching me all the time and God knows the thoughts. God knows my thoughts. You can really become neurotic just thinking about God stalking behind you with a big club waiting for you to look at one piece of pornography in the local newsstand the moment you do.

You already got a headache the rest of the day until you go through some kind of evangelical purgatory. God is looking at even the simplest thing done in his name. When we battle through some of these temptations it's very meaningful to God.

Our love is important. He loves us and he is in the full sense easy to live with. We are his child.

Number eight, accepting God's growth pattern. I read an amazing book by Layne Adams, a pastor who had no short amount of problems. Ended up going to a psychiatrist but at least he was honest enough to face his problems.

Uncounseling a man now in a marriage situation up in Scotland is just unbelievable. He is a minister. It's just unbelievable.

One of the greatest problems is that he and his wife had never been willing to go for any kind of marriage counseling. Pride is one of the greatest pitfalls in the Christian ministry. My wife and I went for some help when we were going through a difficult period.

She went into a year of depression. We didn't know whether it was physical. We went to the doctor.

It was spiritual. She had hepatitis in India. She had two major surgeries.

A whole mid-life thing. We thank God for the help other people gave us. Don't be too proud to seek help and realize as you seek help they may be wrong.

You can get wrong advice. That's the risk. At least you can evaluate that advice, search the scriptures, read some of these great books and then move accordingly.

I think that's very, very important. Accepting God's growth pattern. We're all growing at different speeds.

Laine Adams brings out in his book that people who have severe emotional damage in their lives will grow much slower in their Christian faith. All of you have those kind of people in your youth group or in your church. They've got serious damaged emotions and hurts and it's just going to take time and we need patience.

So important to know the message of grace found in Galatians. Different people are progressing at different speeds. Philippians 1.6 is a verse you can claim in that connection.

Then number 9 the freedom of a disciplined and ordered life. We need to be able to show our young people that the way of discipline is a way of freedom. That self discipline of course is the key.

Perhaps one of the most important words I'll come to it again later on is balance. And certainly in learning the disciplined life there needs to be a lot of balance. We have found that our own work was greatly hindered by false ideas of spirituality.

By looking too much at the outward. Here's a man that gets up early. Here's a man that always has his quiet time.

Here's a man that gives out tracts at every opportunity. Here's a man that buttons whole people and tells them about Christ every chance. He's in every night of prayer to the end.

He does what his leader tells him. He finishes his study program. We have all these things in O.M. The end of the year, spiritual man? No.

You can't mass produce spiritual people. Hopefully you may have learned something through all that, of course. But spirituality is intrinsically linked with Jesus Christ.

And Jesus Christ has a unique way of working in different people. And it cannot be mass produced. We learned the hard way in O.M. That there's no one training program that is going to produce strong disciples.

We have graduated casualties like every other movement in history. And I hope that in your church when there are casualties and heartaches and people that backslide, you'll not allow that to discourage you. It is normal.

In the best of churches it is normal. In the best of Christian unions it's normal. It happens on the mission field even to missionaries.

So you shouldn't be surprised it's happening in your little local congregation. And the last thing we want to do as Christian leaders is to allow that fiery dart of discouragement to somehow get through our shield of faith to a vulnerable area where we become discouraged and therefore we can do even less to resolve some of these situations and to help produce spiritual men and women. And then number 10 learning to refuel and to relax.

And not neglecting the human side of your life. We are human. That sounds very basic but it took a long time for the full truth of that to get to me and I'm still learning.

There are some things that are classified as worldly which in fact may be battery chargers. They may be battery chargers that will in fact help that person be more effective. I found myself as I moved into the mid years subject to depression.

Subject to confusion. Subject to a lot of things I didn't experience in my 20s. And I decided that anything that was legitimate that would just help me keep the zest in my life was worth it because there was just at times such a cloud coming over me.

What was life? How could we possibly evangelize the whole world? As you can guess those of us at OM have chosen rather large goals like all the unreached people and all the Muslim world and all India and a few other goals which is enough to depress any thinking person. Fortunately some of our people don't think much so they keep moving. But as they come into the mid years they usually face some type of crisis.

I have at least ten of my leaders facing a fairly significant crisis right now. And so I changed a little bit. Nothing wrong with change.

Things that I wouldn't think of when I was 20 now I do. Like golf. I took up golf.

My father was a golfer. My wife's father was a golfer. They were putting the pressure on.

I got an old pair of golf clubs very cheap. Actually free. And away I went.

I found out I can play this game. I can hit the ball straight and break 100. And I hardly get much time to play but when I play it's very exhilarating.

I hadn't played for a month and a half. It was just getting on my mind more and more and I was arguing with Jesus. Am I free to play golf? I have always so many letters.

I have so many people. So many phone calls. Somebody sees me going to the golf course surely they'll talk about it.

There's George Verma. He used to be so on fire for Christ's sake. So I got my little golf clubs.

I didn't have much time. Zoomed over to the golf course the other day. They've lowered the rates for the winter season.

I got 9 holes of golf in about 50 minutes. Now if you play golf you know that's not possible. But I jogged.

I hadn't done my jogging that day. So I ran between the holes. It was late in the afternoon.

No one was playing because it was getting dark. But I just so enjoyed. Now we're all different.

Maybe for you it's like my wife. Plants. My wife likes plants around the house.

Maybe it's music. I get encouraged by music as well. Maybe it's walks.

I love to walk. But the human side of our life can't be neglected. Some call it recreation.

Recreation. I call it battery charging. I call it facing the fact of your humanity.

Just like food. No one goes around saying you can't eat. So it's just as crazy to say you can't exercise.

You can't have any recreation. You can't do something that you enjoy. Nobody tells us anymore in our marriages you can't have sex.

That's something that really brings balance because in most cases it's a great pleasure. It used to be, especially the Catholic Church would teach that that's wrong. And you only get married if you can't quite make the A league.

And then you go to the B division and you get married. And the fact is that pleasure is part of God's purpose. And if that pleasure is part of God's purpose, then other pleasures like a nice meal or a walk at sunset time or nice music or some other creative thing that you're into is part of God's plan.

It's not in opposition to full commitment to Christ. It's part of it. And if we don't see that we generally don't run the race very long.

Because we become lopsided and off balance. Freedom of the discipline and order of life, number 10. Learning to refuel and to relax.

Number 11, the value of real fellowship. In depth fellowship. Many verses about this like Hebrews 10.25. And I know that in my own life if when I was at times and I was really under pressure I couldn't share that with someone.

I don't know. I don't know if I would have made it. The pressure got so unbearing at times in this work.

And it's through that I learned to really be honest with people and really share my struggles and my failures and to pray together. And I commend that with all my heart to you. Number 12, keeping a positive attitude and lifestyle.

That's based on Philippians 4.8. And if you have a negative streak as I do and if you have a cynical streak as I do and if you have a depressive streak as I do and if you get upset at little things easily as I do and if you have hostility as I do and a bad temper as I do, you may want to meditate on Philippians 4.8. Of course, if you don't have any of those problems then you could just take the whole chapter. But Philippians 4.8 is especially important for people like me. And to just major more on the positive.

Because there's always so many negative things. Do you ever listen to the news? 90% negative. Newspapers.

90% negative. And we just keep taking all this in. We take all this in.

When you have conversation doesn't it usually often end up somebody saying something negative about something or somebody so easily conversation locks over to the negative. It takes a revolutionary radical thinker to be able to keep pushing the positive. And I think it's very important for spiritual survival as a Christian leader.

Doesn't mean we're unrealistic. Doesn't mean we never talk about anything negative because then we could lapse into the naive. And that's a danger as well.

Number 13. Let's try to wind this down. Remain constant in the word of prayer.

The Apostle Paul said, I buffet my body. Bring it into subjection. That's after preaching to others I become a reprobate.

I'd be put up on the shelf. I'm just working on a new message called How to Get on the Shelf Easy. And I hope to give that someday to Christian leaders.

And number 14. Keep active in his service with your eyes upon him. We know there is a danger of hyper activism.

There is a danger of Christian leaders becoming workaholics. We need to watch that. But at the same time we should not be afraid of a full and active life.

A full active life I know has kept me from many pitfalls for 29 years. A lot of the things the devil is trying to entice me into, I just don't have time. Not even to go explore the road, much less fall down in the ditch at the end.

I remember the words of Dr. Lloyd Jones who said, nothing is more obvious about the teaching of the New Testament than this. That the Christian life is a life of activity, a life of vigor, a life of exertion. The strength is given to us by the Lord, but we must act.

We are active. We don't have a lot of free time. Just lounge around and watch whatever may be on the television or whatever may be happening.

We're committed. Our diaries are relatively full. We keep of course open spaces because the Holy Spirit leads in different ways.

I of course don't have a tight diary. I don't believe in a tight diary. I wouldn't have been able to come here if I had a tight diary.

I have different types of timings in a sense. I do different things at different times. Some things I book way in advance.

Some things I leave open. If I hadn't left a lot open for November and December of this year, I wouldn't be able to get involved in every port that the ship is going to, which I'm now planning to do because the ship didn't have this plan even worked out. It's quite amazing how the Lord can put these things together.

In fact it looks like in a few weeks time both ships will be here in England. I have more open spaces in my diary in December than any month in this past year. Of course, there's just as a Christian always so much to do.

There's always so many ways to help people. Writing letters, making phone calls, visiting people. You can walk out into the street and say, Lord just lead me to someone I can witness to.

The Christian life is so exciting. It's so challenging. I can't understand when Christians lack zeal and enthusiasm.

They're playing into the hands of the enemy. And then just a couple of other items. Number 15, not neglecting the family.

This includes a time of a little fun, a few laughs. Rearing children has been the greatest challenge in my Christian life. More difficult than leading Operation Mobilization for a quarter of a century.

The greatest victory that my family knows is the fact that our three children, 121, another 21 next week, no 122, 121 next week, 119, two boys and a girl, that they love the Lord Jesus Christ. I never point my finger at anybody who has children that don't love the Lord Jesus Christ because even as Christian leaders very few are scoring 100%. And I can tell you we're not out of the woods yet because the enemy I know will have further tactics to try to waylay one of my children in the coming years.

I just believe that these principles of survivalship are valuable both for ministry in the church and ministry in the home. And if we had a little more balance, we had a little more of this ingredient in our home life, I believe we would avoid some of the pitfalls. I strongly commend to you and your church the Dobson films which are being very widely used by the Holy Spirit in family life.

At the same time I would warn you of the stereotyped approach to the family and marriage. It's good to read books but don't try to pattern your life after one particular book because life isn't that way. You can learn things from different books and your situation will be unique.

16, keeping the balance whatever the cost. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 13. Remember without the fruit of the Spirit there's always trouble.

If you have an opportunity, I'd be encouraged if some of you would follow up this lecture by reading my own book on the subject of balance. My new book No Turning Back also deals a lot with the subject of balance and survival. And then number 17, always go back to the basics.

And number 18, remember struggle is normal. Even after you get all these biblical points woven into the fiber of your spiritual life there will still be struggle. Some of us seem to be greater strugglers than others.

Some of that's linked with our temperament. People who often accomplish a lot often have a lot of struggle in the process. People who are often the phlegmatic follow-up people laying foundations sometimes don't have as many struggles.

Peter Maiden, my associate international leader of OM now, he seems to have far less struggle than I do. He's just very phlegmatic and he told me the other day he's sometimes a little, jealous isn't the right word but he just desires more of this enthusiasm and zeal and energy and drive and strong, strongness of character or the spoken word that I sometimes have. I in turn would long for more of his calmness more of

his balance, more of his evenness and lack of struggle that he seems to know as a reality, though I'm sure he has some struggles like all human beings.

We're all different. We're all different. And one of the things that has helped me the most is to realize that struggle is normal.

Great faith is not made in the absence of doubt. It's made as we battle through it. Great faith is not made in the absence of fiery arrows coming at your soul.

It's made as you get the armor on and put the shield up and stop them. And when one goes through them we go to 1 John chapter 2 for healing and cleansing and for the help of our lawyer, the Lord Jesus Christ. These are some principles that I have been learning for 29 years.

I have to learn them and relearn them. And you're tested in different areas when you're 30 and then different areas when you're 40 and then different areas when you're 50. Don't think that Christian life is always just going on higher and higher and higher and higher.

Yeah, that's true in a sense. But sometimes we have to relearn things. Sometimes we go back one step in order to go forward two steps.

Sometimes there are dips and there are valleys and there are deserts. It doesn't mean God has deserted you. And this concept that, oh, I've missed the Lord's will in my life.

Now I'm in trouble. I'll never get back. We had a girl, a friend of mine recently committed suicide on the basis of that kind of thinking.

Not really very far from here. At least I think that was part of her problem. The sense that God had deserted her.

He had missed his will. God's will is not like that. It's not like a little alley in the middle of a gigantic city and if you don't get on that one alley, you've had it.

You're going to get the wrong wife in the wrong house, the wrong dog in the wrong season of the year, eating the wrong food, going to the wrong bathroom. Nonsense. God is a sovereign almighty God who can overrule almost any blunder you're gifted enough to make.

Even if you marry the wrong woman. Wrong woman. Some people, some places that's what happens.

You repent and put it right and God can make that marriage as happy and as purposeful as marrying the right one. The other side works as well that if you marry the right woman and you get away from Jesus and disobey his word, that can be an absolute disaster. The will of God isn't some little tiny hole in the top of a needle you have to somehow throw a piece of string through it 30 feet.

God is great. God forgives. God restores.

God has plan B, plan C, plan D. Don't purpose in your heart to fail at plan A. That's not what we're saying. But if you do, God hasn't died. Merciful, loving, almighty, tender Father is caring for you as a Christian leader and he will keep resurrecting and restoring and using you according to his purposes.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for just this opportunity to give these practical exhortations from scripture and from these almost 30 years of experience on the front lines of spiritual combat.

Lord, I know I have much more to learn and many things to relearn, but I believe that this biblical way is your way to go forward and to be abounding and to be pressing on even in the midst of pressure and difficulty and problems and whatever else may be assailing our soul from the arsenal of Satan. Lord, we praise you for the shield of faith. We praise you for your whole armor and more than anything else for your indwelling Holy Spirit in us that can live out these biblical principles day by day.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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