

# Leadership in Acts

by George Verwer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of leadership in the early Christian church, highlighting the need for authority, reality, and boldness in leadership.*

**Duration:** 59:15

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 3:6-8, Acts 4:31, Acts 5:1-11, Acts 6:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:22

**Topics:** "Leadership"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of accepting the miraculous book of God and pressing on from there. The leader is highlighted as someone who is bold and filled with the Holy Spirit. The need for continuous filling of the Holy Spirit is emphasized, regardless of one's background or previous experiences. The sermon also discusses practical aspects of leadership, such as getting involved in practical tasks and choosing individuals with an honest report for such work. The story of Stephen is mentioned as a source of learning, and the importance of speaking the straightforward truth is emphasized.

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## Transcript

In a series of messages by George Verler on leadership from the Book of Acts given at the All India Leaders Conference in Nepal, 4th of March 1977. Book of Acts chapter 3. Now here we begin to get a picture of two of the specific leaders that we find throughout the Book of Acts. Peter and John.

They were going up to pray and they met this man asking for alms, asking for money. Peter gave this great testimony. Verse 6. Peter said, silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

He took him by the right hand and lifted him up and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength and he leaping up, stood and walked and entered with them into the temple walking, leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. I guess most of us wouldn't mind having more power in our ministry of this kind.

And it is exciting to see that God still does heal in our day. But I never found very much emphasis on people being willing to have this testimony that I believe was part of Peter's total reality. Silver and gold have I none.

And when I think of some of the people who go around healing, especially in North America and Europe, they certainly don't have this testimony, silver and gold have I none. Because usually the bigger part of the meeting is the offering. And the love offering.

And these men, especially in certain countries of the world, the whole ministry of healing has been so marred and so scarred by crooks that, you know, you wonder just who to believe and what to believe. In fact, in the United States, there was a man who from childhood learned to preach at about four. And he grew up and became a childhood preacher and then became a healer.

And after he had tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands convinced, he announced publicly that he was a fraud. He had planned it as a fraud from his childhood. And he made a film called Marjoy.

This film has even been shown in Britain. And I think David Wilkerson in some of his writings has referred to this because it's just so sinister in lumping everybody together. It's because there's one man who's a phony and a fraud.

Therefore, everybody who does that, this is the way the world wants to think. Everybody who does that is a fraud, which of course is not true. Of course, they lump Billy Graham in with it.

The world is so clever. I was in the States just for a very brief visit. And I hardly ever even look at television.

I was looking at a news broadcast. And they had a news broadcast of an extremist group in Minneapolis. People were jumping into the air and screaming, yelling, running all over the place.

And of course, everybody watching that is just mocking. This is religion. This is Christian religion.

I mean, it was really extreme, believe me. And then at the end, as the two commentators were chatting, they mentioned that Billy Graham was also in Minneapolis. I believe it was Minneapolis.

And well, more or less, it's the same thing. More or less, it's the same thing. Just a little more sophisticated perhaps.

And so the fact that there have been some frauds and the fact that the love of money, I was just reading in Timothy this morning and meditating on it, the love of money, the root of all evil, has deceived some. It makes this whole thing far more problematic than it was in these first early days. And I yearn to have both of these testimonies, silver and gold have I none, and also greater authority, not only healing people physically, but in healing people spiritually.

I think something that is sometimes forgotten in the ministry of healing, another very controversial problem for some people, is to notice what we had just read back in chapter 2 in verse 43. And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. By the apostles.

It was not all the new converts, and you can study this right through Acts, all the new converts, all the junior recruits who were running out and performing these great miracles. God is a little more careful with his power. And again and again, you'll see these things were done by the hands of the apostles.

This is what, of course, brought some of the controversy. Some people think, say, well, these things really went out with the apostolic age. That leads to another controversy.

Do we have apostles today? That is a major thing going on right now. Are there apostles today? As we go through these lectures and studies, I am mentioning some of these controversies, because whether we like it or not, all these controversies are going on in the church. Maybe some of you have been sheltered from these.

You've been bouncing along in the back of the truck often in the regions beyond, and you didn't realize how many problems there were. But leaders who know about these things ahead of times are not thrown off guard when these problems do come, especially in your inter-church relationships. But certainly we can sum up from this that there are two attributes we need to see in a leader.

One, he needs to know the power of God. He needs to have authority. Not every leader, as far as I can understand, is going to have the same degree of power and authority.

But he also needs to know what it is to be poor for the sake of Jesus. Not poverty, not that which is a bad testimony, because God says he will supply all of our needs. But he needs to be able to say to some degree, I believe, as Peter Silver and Gold have, I none.

There's a story about a great saint, I don't know which one it was, talking to the Pope years ago. And the Pope was referring to this verse and said, well, we certainly can't say as Peter and John Silver and Gold have, we none, as he pointed out the riches of the Vatican. Millions and millions and millions of parents in the Vatican.

This saint of God turned to the Pope and said, neither can you say to the poor, rise up and walk. Something I've never forgotten. As we continue on in the book of Acts, going on to chapter four, we have something that perhaps isn't directly related to leadership, but I feel burdened to mention it at this time.

And it's summed up in verse 12. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given among men, whereby we must be saved. This triggers off one of the truly important doctrines that O.M. very much stands for.

Someone brought a very good point up to me yesterday in a discussion. That if we emphasize balance and we emphasize avoiding certain controversial things, won't we end up in a situation where truth is relative? But I think it's important to understand that O.M. has a very firm, unmovable stand, I'd say at least on 25 major doctrines. And far more firmer stand than most groups that I deal with, and I'm in contact with an awful lot of groups.

And one of them is on this very important issue, that we stand very firmly that the heathen are lost. You see, we're not in any way hedging on that, even though it's a little controversial in some circles, because to us it's so clear, it's so basic, and it is not controversial among most men and women who really are out and out for the Lord Jesus Christ. The controversies that we find a problem are controversies that remain controversies between men who are in both sides out and out for the Lord.

But in most cases, we find liberalism undermining this whole concept of men being lost. We find neo-orthodoxy creeping in, and every kind of existential theology that we can think of. When we speak of existential theology and the whole problem of existentialism, which may be a new word for some of you, to be very simple, it's a theology that emphasizes experience rather than truth.

This is why Dr. Schaefer says, he calls it truth-truth, because today everything is changing. All the words are becoming relative, and a lot of people will talk about having an experience with Jesus. And it can be

something very similar to a drug trip.

We're not interested in just giving people an experience with Jesus. You see, Gandhi said that it doesn't matter whether Krishna ever lived in history or not. We still must make him our idol and our ideal.

And he went on to say it doesn't matter whether Jesus Christ ever existed in history or not. The whole essence of it, the experience that you can have through believing in Christ is that which is important. That he existed in history is not so important.

And this, of course, is in a sense part of the existential theology of our day. And when you get out of the area of theology, you get into the area of philosophy. Of course, you get to a point where people talk about the leap, and people talk about having the experience.

That's why so many people went into drugs. And it's amazing how closely Hinduism is related to the existential theology and philosophy that is so present in the West in these days. Well, that's a little bit of a sidetrack, but I want to emphasize that I don't believe a person should be in leadership in OM if they don't believe that men are lost.

And all men outside of Christ are lost. Neither is there salvation in any other. Jesus also said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man cometh to the Father but by me. And there are many other verses. There are books, one by Hillis written on this subject, What is the State of the Heathen? Another one by Oswald Sanders on this subject.

Dale Roton wrote his thesis at college when he discovered quite a few Christian teachers at the college really didn't believe that the heathen were lost. I think he ended up writing a paper on the subject since the teachers would have to read it as part of correcting it and giving him his degree. This is a very, very important issue, one of the most crucial issues.

We find two extremes. We find that people have a lot of doubt about this. But then we have another extreme of people take it very, very lightly.

Oh, well, sure, I learned that at Bible school. No problem with that doctrine. No thinking man can't have some problem with that doctrine.

You can't just lightly throw off most of China and most of India into eternal separation from God with sort of a big grin across your face. I learned that first year of Bible school. I'm an Orthodox Christian, therefore I believe that.

One of the most ugly things to God are Orthodox people who believe all these doctrines and have never counted the cost of what it involves to really believe it. As you've probably often heard me say in some of my meetings, if we believe this roof was going to fall in right now, I really doubt if we'd sit here and teach one another choruses about falling roofs or the theological implications of a roof falling in on your head. We get out the door.

And if we believe that men are lost across India today, we are going to commit ourselves to this task and we are going to be willing to sweat and die and pray and fast. Otherwise, let's admit that it's not the truth. Let's admit that the heathen are not lost and join the liberals.

At least they're honest. And I don't find that honesty among Orthodox evangelicals. I find people who can one minute sing choruses about everybody being lost and the other minute spend most of their time dwindling away on secondary things, hardly concerned that all around them 150,000 or 200,000 souls a day go into a crisis.

And soon we'll have another Congress on Evangelism to discuss it all and decide that we're all Orthodox and we'll draw up a big long sheet about that long and we'll all sign the end of it, declaring that we're evangelical, we're Orthodox. God measures your Orthodoxy by your reality, not by what kind of a signature you can put on a document, though I'm not opposed to that if it's backed by life and by reality. And we are finding it harder in Europe and even in the United States to stand firm on this because the masses are not, even sometimes among evangelical people.

And the biggest problem with our seminaries is most of them are not standing firm on this issue. Many of the teachers hedge on this issue and talk about second chance. You know what destroyed Methodism almost completely? Universalism, the concept that eventually everyone will somehow be converted.

I think this doctrine may have even infiltrated the head of dear Sadhu Sundar Singh. Just because he's your little idol and we show his film doesn't mean that he also could not err from the word of God. And some of his books personally I will not distribute because they're so wishy-washy on this issue.

Of course, we're all weak and I just would yearn personally that I had more of the reality of Sadhu Sundar Singh, even if I can't perhaps agree with him on this point. The Bible is filled with teaching on the subject of hell. You know the one who taught it the most? Jesus.

Boy, that's hard. I tried to run away from this hell doctrine. Doesn't appeal to my sentimentality or anything else.

But it's Jesus who teaches about hell. And this is something that ultimately we have to leave with God. You can't figure this out.

You can't sit down in OM or anywhere else and figure out the temperatures of hell or how long is hell. These mysteries belong to God. How long is eternity? How long is eternity? And this is where our mind eventually stops.

We have to save God from here on. It's you. To me, I think the definition of hell by a great man of God is helpful that hell is first of all basically separation from God.

The degree of consciousness in hell for all of eternity. People are discussing this. Endless theories.

I personally don't like to get involved. I like to be a little more simple and take God and his word and get on in utter obedience to do what he has commanded me to do. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them from pity, from sin and the grave.

Not get too caught up on how conscious people will be in hell and whether there is a reduction of the consciousness and all these other interesting things that try to make it seem not quite as bad. So that our little puny little minds can somehow tuck it into our theological pocket and feel more comfortable. I think once you start moving along this road, there are so many crazy things.

There are so many miraculous and impossible to understand things in the Bible. You're finished. That's why when the liberals pulled the miraculous out of the Bible, all they had was confetti to use at the wedding.

There's nothing left. It's a miraculous book and we've got to accept it and press on from there. Well, perhaps at this conference someone will have a whole message on this subject.

And I think as leaders, we must take our stand and we must be very, very firm. Chapter four is filled with lessons for leadership. The greatest perhaps is the lesson that the leader is a man who is bold.

He's filled with the spirit. We talked about that the other day and that will lead to boldness. Verse 31.

When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Whatever initial experience they had of the Holy Spirit, it seems here they were filled again. Whatever your background and whatever you have received from the Holy Spirit, there's always that great need to be filled again.

And when they were filled, they spoke the word of God with boldness. And I tell you, when people come and talk to me about the Holy Spirit working in their church or assembly, and I don't see boldness as a witness. You forgive me if I'm a skeptic.

It's part of my nature. Because in the book of Acts, the Holy Ghost brought a Holy Ghost. And when people just have a Holy Ghost who brings a holy huddle, something has gone wrong.

And I wonder if it is the Holy Ghost at all. I wonder if it may be their own imagination. I wonder if they may be experiencing what Buddhists can experience, Hindus can experience, false cults can experience, religious emotion, nice feelings.

All religions have that. The Holy Ghost of God as spoken about in the book of Acts brings a holy boldness. Doesn't mean everyone will be the same.

Doesn't mean that everybody's going to be an open-air preacher. But it does mean that everyone will witness. And everyone will be and have a certain amount of fearlessness and witness how easy it is to water down the verses that are hard.

And I just can't believe how many excuses people give for not being a witness. And you get this little story, we believe that witnessing is with our life. You know, the way our society is, you could live in an area for a long time with only witnessing with your life.

And I can assure you, no one would ever get converted to Christ. Because there are unsaved people who have lives that are quite amazing. There are moral people outwardly.

They may be motivated by pride. They may have an ego the size of the Titanic. But how can you see that outwardly? Can't you say that some of the unsaved people you've met in life seem to be better behaved than some of the saved ones? Everyone in L.A. knows that story.

Especially when you have to live so close to the saved ones that you can look at the unsaved ones from a distance. So I believe that witness is not just with the life. I'm sure you agree with that.

But it's with our mouth as we bear witness, as we share. It's both. Don't play one against the other.

So they were filled with the Holy Spirit and went forth to speak the word of God with boldness. Notice chapter 1352, just to give a little further emphasis on that. 1352, and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

These are the disciples. They'd already been at Acts 431. Here they are again, being filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Notice a few other important points about the early church. The multitude of those that believed were of one heart and one soul. Neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own.

They had all things common. And great power, and with great power, gave the apostles witness of the resurrection. And great grace was upon them.

This is not a minor point. We do not just preach a crucified Christ, but we preach a resurrected Christ. And in the book of Acts, the resurrection was a very important part of their preaching.

I hope you're including the resurrection in your preaching, in the open air, wherever it is. These men preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the resurrection.

You know, there's so many major doctrines that people hardly talk about. They're not controversial enough. They're not controversial enough.

And we get people that think, O.N. does not teach doctrine. I How many people get excited about the doctrine of the resurrection? When is the last time you heard a real straightforward sermon on the resurrection of Jesus Christ? One of the most mentioned subjects. And there's just so many other major doctrines like that, that we're united on.

And that we should be excited about. And when we get united and we're excited about these major doctrines, then we won't be so preoccupied with some of the controversial things that are somewhat hard to understand. Though God, nor I, for sure, are opposed to people getting their personal convictions.

And so the apostles and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they went forth speaking the word of God with fullness. This also was backed up by compassionate giving, compassionate living, and the preaching of the resurrection. And of course, we even have people like Barnabas selling their land and giving it to the apostles' feet.

I wonder how many cases you've witnessed here in India. And India is a place where everybody likes to get eventually their little plot of land. An Indian, like many people in the world, would much rather have a little plot of land than put money in one of these banks that basically down under he doesn't trust.

What an amazing thing if the Spirit of God moved across the church, and people even started to sell some of their land for the sake of the gospel. You know the tendency among Christian workers? I'll tell you what it is. It's to stash away a little secret money and buy a little chunk of land that nobody knows.

Just for a rainy day. Would you show me the rainy day theory in the word of God? It's not there. And it has been a plague, not just in India, all over the world, that Christian workers, instead of really trusting God, feel they must spend part of their time storing up for the rainy day.

And of course, sometimes they do it through illegitimate methods. If not, at least they operate in the dark. God doesn't operate in the dark.

And the trouble that has come, the gossip that gets going, people eventually find out. And you may live in Bombay or Delhi or Kathmandu, but if you're stashing away a little money to buy your coconut grove in Kerala, you'll be sure the guy living next to your grove knows how to talk. By the time the story gets back up to Kathmandu, the grove will be 500 acres larger than the one you purchased.

In fact, you may have only purchased one tree. The Bible says that we should avoid all appearance of evil. And as leaders, I believe one of the things that will help us avoid appearance of evil is to be open in all of our dealings.

Open in all of our dealings. And we've had brothers that were afraid to be open. One particular brother, he had a definite need for a little bit of finance.

Instead of being open, he was afraid to go to the leader. He decided just to pop a little bit of a book sale. It's easy to justify, isn't it? I worked.

I sold the books. I'm desirous of my commission. Well, why don't you tell your leader you're desirous of your commission? You're operating in the dark.

And this gets very interesting because we're going into chapter 5. In chapter 5, we enter a story, one of the most frightening stories in the whole New Testament. Ananias and Sapphira. I won't read the whole story because you've all read it many times.

But this morning I was meditating on Psalm 25. And I'd like you to turn there, keeping Ananias and Sapphira in your mind. I'd like you to look at Psalm 25, verse 21.

Because this word is especially on my heart. It's one of the most beautiful words in the English language. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.

26, verse 1. Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity. I have trusted also in the Lord, therefore I shall not fly. Verse 11.

That as for me, I will walk in mine integrity. Redeem me and be merciful unto me. The word integrity is one of the strongest words in the English language.

And I believe it's one of the most important virtues or realities that a man can ever have. And if there's any single word that would describe the kind of man we need in our work in India, it's the word integrity. More important than zeal, more important than almost anything I can think of.

Integrity. Why? Because integrity includes a lot. I feel that one of our emphasis at this conference should be truthfulness.

That we learn in all occasions to speak the truth. So often the truth hurts. So often when we're pinned in a corner, even by someone on our team, huh? This is where leaders get in some of their biggest tangles.

They're pinned in the corner by a team member, and instead of speaking the straightforward truth, they just hedge on the truth a little bit. Let me give you an example of this. Maybe you did something for a particular reason.

You took a van down into the center of town for a particular reason. Someone questions you, why did you do that? Instead of giving them that particular reason, you immediately think of some other reasons. Even

if those reasons were true, they were not the reasons you took the truck down down.

So you cannot be a man of integrity and use those reasons that you thought of later on to defend your case, to present your case to him. And you think that through. You think in the future days sometimes when you get in some kind of difficulty.

I have personally done this. Someone pinned me on something and said, why did you do that? Well, I had more time to think about it. Once they were asking me, my mind, which goes a little bit fast, I mustered a whole load of reasons.

But I didn't have any of those reasons when I did it. I just did it because I did it. Now, to make me honest, all I would have to do is say, well, since I sent the truck, I've thought of these other things as well.

Why? You see, that would make it truthful. Sometimes one word, one sentence changes something from untruth to truth. And it's amazing how Satan can try to catch us as leaders.

And then eventually when the team does see it, our testimony with them, our effectiveness with them, the respect we need from them will go down. And it's an enormous hindrance to the work of God. We have this picture of Ananias and Sapphira.

Not as an emphasis, as some might think, to urge us all to sell our possessions. That wasn't their sin. Sin wasn't that she didn't sell and they didn't sell all their possessions.

The sin was that they were not being honest about what they did. They were not being honest about what they did. They gave a false impression.

As leaders, we are going to be tempted to give false impressions. It's so easy. I find myself walking along the road, I'm tired, I don't feel like jogging.

I see an oyster out of the corner of my eye and I start jogging. It gives an impression. Wow, there's George Burry.

Is that a job? Boy, what a disciplined life. Of course, probably most people don't think that. It's just probably a Twitter in my own thick head.

Needless to say, it's a false impression. And the heart, the Bible says, is deceitful and desperately wicked. And if we think that we left this heart totally back somewhere behind our conversion, we're going to be in for a lot of surprises.

I believe that truly as we identify with Christ, as we appropriate the reality of the cross, as Christians we are dead. I believe that. But I also believe that is a reality by faith.

It is a reality by faith. And it must be appropriated on. It doesn't rob us of the privilege of obedience, dying to self, being honest, all the other aspects of the Christian life.

It puts us in a position to be more honest. This will be an ever-ending battle and the last thing I want to do is drop you into the cauldron of introspection. Some of you spend too much time in there as it is.

But I believe, as Billy Graham said, the greatest obstacle, oftentimes to our sanctification, is our unwillingness to see ourselves as we really are. And this is very, very important. So, Ananias and

Sapphira ended up two corpses.

My own conviction is that God doesn't work this way generally. God, in a sense, brought this judgment on them as a warning for us. God can do this.

Legitimately, he can do this anytime he wants. But God is merciful. God is long-suffering.

And we are living in the age of grace. We get some brothers on O-M that like to see how much they can get away with before God hits them on the head. Then they repent.

But that's not God's way. And this, to me, is a great lesson for leaders. There's a lesson here for leaders as well in that we see that Peter was willing to confront.

And the hardest job you have as a leader is to confront people about sin. I don't know. I find it harder as the years go on.

I know how everything can get so incredibly tangled up. And sometimes when I know I should confront someone about something, I say, well, Lord, you know, you handle that one. Peter was not afraid to confront.

And you as a leader must not be afraid to confront in love. Esteeming the other better than yourself. Making sure of your facts.

As we talked about, some of us, just the other day. You better make sure you get the total picture before you make your declaration. And until you have the total picture, be as the wise lawyer and ask questions.

Don't make statements. Some of you as team leaders, you know how many mistakes you've made. Because sometimes you open your mouth before you plug your brain in.

And it's an amazing thing what some of our team members have to live through. Let me tell you, many of the team members deserve badges for survival under a low level of leadership. Leaders who manage with tremendous insight to keep their team confused most of the time.

So we have to confront. But before we confront, we need to get the facts. And the best way to confront is to sit down with a man and say, look, you know, I'm probably wrong.

But as I see it in my feeble position, it seems to me that you've done something here. Perhaps someone could misunderstand. Have your further statements as, you know, carefully worded as possible.

The whole world can fall or stand on the basis of words. You notice if some government leader anywhere in the world just misplaces a few words, the press leaps like a group of 16-headed octopuses to devour him. And it's a real testimony to me, these people, how they keep going.

You know, I would probably just quit or end up choking someone from the press. I've never had a great infatuation with the press myself. But we need to, as Christian leaders, learn to be very careful with our words.

Very careful with our words. Because oftentimes we do have at least one brother on the team who's in the flesh. Just one brother on that team who's in the flesh, who's, you know, who's gunning for you.

Boy, I tell you, he can give you an ulcer in six months. And personally, in my early years of leading teams, I've had situations where I came to a brother and said, look, I just can't handle you anymore. I'm not saying it's your fault.

It may be more my fault. But I just don't have the wisdom and the grace to handle you. And I want to write to my superior and recommend that you go to another team.

You know, it's amazing the victories I've seen through that little presentation. I tell you, when that little team member thinks that he's going to be going back to Ranchi to look Ron Penny straight in the eye, he may play a different tune. In fact, he may be even frightened enough of Gopal Hembrin or some other more... I think it's important, as a leader, to confront and to be fearless in love, to confront, just as Peter said unto her, verse 9, How is it that you've agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord? See, use the question method.

No more than a question. Behold, the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at thy door, and shall carry thee out. Some of you think your team leader's been a little bit strong.

Can you imagine that? Well, this is a lesson. May we learn it. The second persecution comes, and we find again the disciples in prison.

There are many prison incidents in the Book of Acts. I think there are four of them, maybe more. I think the four are right offhand.

Lay their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. Here's another lesson for leaders. Now, as leaders, we've got to be ready for suffering.

We've got to pray that the Lord will give us a mind to suffer. I find that hard, personally. I'm not the kind of person out looking for suffering.

I'm a softy by my background, and just the thought of suffering, you know, I find very difficult. Enduring a little hardness, that's no problem. Suffering, pain.

But you know, the Lord doesn't expect us to meditate on that. Get all caught up and worried about what's going to happen in the future. In fact, He commands us not to do that.

And I think what we've got to do is realize that God is only going to give us grace for that suffering and that experience when the actual experience comes. He's not going to give you grace for it now. I can't even imagine what it will be when my own father dies.

I've tried to imagine that. I'm very close to my father. And I can't imagine what it will be when my own father dies.

Well, God's not going to give me grace now. My father's alive. When my father dies, and some of you have been through that experience, He will make that grace available.

Of course, I have to reach out and take it, and force it down my throat. Don't try to get grace now for the experiences of next year. Some of the girls try to get grace for when they're going to have their first baby.

You need grace for not when you're going to have your first baby, you need grace for right here. How are you going to get through this conference? And the fear of childbirth is a very big thing for some people. A

lot of people never talk about it.

I had a fear of operation. I had to go for an operation just the last time I left you. When I left Vizag, I went to Singapore.

I went to the doctor, he looked down my throat, he said, hey, you've got something growing down there. It could be cancer. That's not the most pleasant thing to hear.

Within a few months, I was back in Britain, and I was on the operating table. There was apprehension. And there was fear.

This guy going down my throat, we're going to do it by a microscope. Going down there, carving around. No one's ever done that before.

Even the worst of the leaders have never tried that. I actually found, and I say this quite truthfully, I found that a very rich experience. I found not only did God give grace, He gave a double portion of grace, and I was enjoying the whole thing.

They say everybody who's had an operation has to tell you about the operation. It's just part of humanity. So I'll quickly tell you about this.

The main thing I remember is the nurse. She came in, and she sent me this little pill. Because I was dictating letters the whole time.

They were worried that I was all emotional. So she came in and sent me this little nicky, this pill. I was dictating these letters, and I had taken the pill.

And I was starting to roll on the bed. The next thing I remember, they were wheeling me on this. They have these terrific, they're like these Indian banana cars.

And I was taken into the operating theater, and I just barely, they haven't even given me yet. The anesthetic put me asleep with this other pill. And I just barely woke up.

And I remember this nurse looking at me, and I was talking about the ship. I was like, the second ship. And she said, yes.

And then they just slipped this little thing And the next thing I knew, I was back on the bed, where all the patients are. And of course, because of this kind of operation, whatever I do, I must not speak for 48 hours. No words.

The first thing as I woke up, I started arguing with the nurse. That nothing had happened to me. Because there was so little involved.

Well, I found that a great experience. I don't know what experiences are ahead of you. Similar to that.

God will not give grace for that experience now. He will give grace for that experience when it comes. If it's jail, he'll give that experience when it comes.

Now you need grace for what may seem like a common jail. But in fact, even in the night, you can get up and walk out. And it's a great thing if you're finding it difficult to sleep at night.

Get up and walk around. Sometimes your energy maybe hasn't escaped in the day. You go do 30, 40 push-ups.

Run in place for 20 minutes. Go back to bed. You'll probably fall asleep quite well.

Well, it's a challenge. They're in prison. The angel of the Lord, by night, opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

Another point I want to emphasize here is that as leaders, at times, we are going to have to break the laws of men. We're going to evangelize the world. Basically, we don't have this problem in India because India is a free country to preach the gospel.

You can preach in the open air. You can do almost anything. But in other countries that we are involved in, the only way we can get the word of God into that country is breaking the law of men.

We believe that we should submit to the law of men. One thing that bothers me on this subject is the little easy answer some people try to throw out. It's a very deep, complicated problem.

If suddenly a revolution takes place in a country that you belong to and there's a new government, which government are you going to be loyal to? The new revolutionary government or the old government? And there may, even to this day, there exist two Chinas. There exists nationalist China with proper leaders and there exists the communist China. And so, in this great controversy between about obeying the government, breaking the laws of men, is an area where I personally am still learning.

I've read Brother Andrew's book on the ethics of smuggling. I've heard him lecture on the subject. I've read attacks against him.

But basically, we take a stand that there are some cases when we have to break the laws of men in order to get the gospel into a country. And that this is from God. It's a difficult thing for people to live today in some of these communist, closed countries.

You cannot know the pressure on these people. And when we sit in the West and give these little, quick, easy theological answers as to how they can handle the whole thing, it proves that we are spiritually naïve. One of the greatest books that has helped me as a leader is a book by a woman called No Pat Answers by Eugenia Price.

Because I have such a mentality, who wants to get all the answers, that it was a major frustration in my life. I'm a continuous reader. The more you read sometimes, the more confused you get.

And I came to the place that I can't get answers to everything. And some of the problems in connection with closed countries, living in those closed countries, should a Christian like Barnhofer ever get involved in something that is violent. Barnhofer, a great disciple, wrote a book called The Cost of Discipleship.

He was very, very evangelical in his early years. They say later, through Union Theological Seminary, he became somewhat liberal. That's another controversy, was Barnhofer liberal or evangelical? But his book Cost of Discipleship is certainly a powerful book.

But he got involved in the planned overthrow of Hitler. I think he was even involved in the possible plan for Hitler to be killed. Can a Christian ever be involved in such things? You may quickly say no, you may quickly say yes.

Some people have debated such things for many years. And I believe certainly there are cases when people have to break the laws of man. Now this angel, seemingly, did not have permission for this particular event.

And so here we have God himself sending an angel to break the law of man. The law was that these people should remain in prison. They were put in prison by the authorities.

And so they should wait their time or pay bail or whatever else. But somehow this angel broke in. I don't have an easy answer to that.

Especially since angels throughout the whole book of Acts keep breaking open prison doors. The amount of money and expenditure involved in putting these prisons back together is an elapsed rupees. Well, some of you, many of you, have not yet had your first prison experience.

But when you do pray for the angel to come down and open the door, I hope you'll not be depressed when you wake up in the morning at the center of the prison. Notice verse 29. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than man.

That sort of backs up this particular thought. And I think it's very important. You see, they had been strictly commanded, verse 28, that they should not teach or preach in the name of Jesus.

And yet they have filled Jerusalem with their doctrine and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. And of course, at the end of chapter 5, the apostles get beaten. That's worse than being in prison.

In fact, my type of temperament, you know, I wouldn't mind prison so much, especially if I could have my dictaphone. But this beating, this does not appeal to me. This does not appeal to me.

They commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council. Notice this.

Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple and every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. I think as leaders, we need to be very honest.

We need to admit if we're in an area where there's a possibility of being beaten, we need to admit that we don't find this easy. There's apprehension. And yet, we're going out, maybe shaking, but trusting God.

Trusting God. One of the greatest qualities that God wants to build up in our lives is trust. Deep trust.

That has been so important in my life. I get so shaken, so rattled by certain things, and the word trust just comes to me. Just trust me.

Trust, to me, is a stronger word than believe. It may not be for you, but trust seems to just be putting everything in God's hands. We're trusting you, Lord.

We don't know the answer. We don't understand some of these problems. We're cast down, says one place in the New Testament.

And that's very, very important. So these men with terrific trust went back right into the temple, house to house, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. I tell you, I cannot help but admire these early men, though I feel a long way from them.

This is my goal. This is the direction I want to move. And I thank God for the few privileges I've had to know just a little of this.

As we get into chapter six, we see a very important emphasis that we try to stress on OM. We see that the number of the disciples was multiplied. It's not the number of decisions.

We're trying to emphasize throughout OM worldwide, we always have, but people sometimes don't listen, even leaders. We try to emphasize that we do not want to count decisions. If we do, it's better to use the word professional.

So many people profess the Lord. That makes it very clear that they may or may not have really trusted Christ. If we say so many made a decision, I think we should have another sentence put in with it saying we're hoping that some of these will truly be converted.

So that, because what happens, people jump from the word decision to the word saved, and they say seven were saved. Eight were saved. So many were saved.

Later on we find none of those people in existence. So I think we should be very low profile in speaking about numbers of people coming to Christ, being saved, because later on it bounces back. I'll tell you about a specific incident.

A number of very dedicated leaders of a particular organization in a country not so far from here, they made some tremendous statements about the number of people from a non-Christian background who were saved and come to Christ. Within a year or two none of them could be found. This put this group of leaders into depression.

Why? What went wrong? That led them into extremes in the area of prophecy and other things. They went into extremes and the whole group just ripped in two and folded up. The leader came in from overseas and never started up in that country again.

The root of it can be traced back to the making a vain boast about the number of people who supposedly were saved, especially out of a non-Christian background, because many out of a non-Christian background will make a profession and then will go totally back and only God knows truly what has happened. Our joy in his work, of course we get joy when people even make a profession. We don't want to be negative.

We don't want to go into the extreme of being cynical and doubtful. And yet our joy comes from the Holy Spirit himself, more than from the results of our campaigns. It's easy to engage in dishonesty in our reports to make it sound a little better.

It's easy to engage in dishonesty in standing before a group, even sometimes giving our own testimony. You know, we add just a little bit of touch. I regret in some ways ever having mentioned in my testimony that I was involved in the sale of pornographic literature.

Actually, it was a very minor thing. And it was just the very beginning stages. Whenever I mention it now, I always say that.

But I don't know if I did years ago. And boy, somebody grabbed onto that and made me sound like the hottest peddler of porno that ever hit New York City. It was ridiculous.

How do these things grow? And I have to admit it's partly my fault because, of course, it's a loaded thing. Those spicy little things about your testimony, they grow. They don't hear anything else.

They hear that little bit of spice, that little bit of adventure. And you were contemplating suicide. Look, surveys would show that a vast percentage of all people contemplate suicide.

So don't come up with a suicide testimony unless it really was something that you were thinking about, you know, in a very, very serious way. I contemplate suicide. It seems like a terrific way out of this.

But it doesn't, you know, it's just something that comes into my head and, you know, I'm just not courageous enough for that. So I'm going to stay here on the planet and plot along. It's a concern to me.

Throughout the movement, it touches, again, honesty, integrity. The number of disciples was multiplied. Verse 7, the same thing.

The number of disciples was multiplied. I believe it's a false doctrine to teach that some people are saved and then later on they become disciples. I think it's a false thing.

I may have helped that doctrine actually because I think I wasn't sure about this in the early days. I don't remember now. But in studying the word as far as I can see, the word disciple is a low-profile word.

It's not some supersonic word that speaks of Christians who are, you know, just extra dedicated. Everyone who was truly converted was a disciple. A learner, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Now, he may not have been a very good disciple. It seems to me he could have even been a carnal disciple. So really doesn't deserve to have the word disciple.

But again and again in scriptures, the word disciple is used for all those. And I think that this is something that we should preach. And we should of course realize that people sometimes who are not disciples and have no reality in their life, they just haven't been converted at all.

They've just never been saved at all. And I think some people who think in their life they get a second blessing. Even in our meetings, people have recommitted their lives or come into the counseling room when I preached about the Holy Spirit to be filled with the Spirit.

I'm convinced they got converted. And I've had people write me. They got converted door to door.

Saving faith in when God moves in the heart of man sometimes can be the mystery of all mysteries. And it's an amazing thing to watch. And then we have the story of Stephen and we can learn a lot from Stephen.

But we have a lot more about leadership here in chapter six and you're going to have to study it on your own. First of all, you notice that they have these problems. People not getting a fair amount of food.

And we notice that leaders have to get involved in practical things. And then we notice that some men were chosen out especially for practical work. Serve tables.

This is very interesting. Notice the kind of men they chose for the practical work. Verse three, Wherefore, brethren, look among you for seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit.

Requirement one for practical work. Not just for preaching. Practical work.

The man working in the kitchen here needs to be filled with the Spirit. He's a believer. If you're in charge of working as a secretary in an office, you need to be filled with the Spirit.

Not just the preachers. If your wife has to stay home and work in the kitchen and work with the children, she needs to be more filled with the Spirit than you do in the streets. The way the children and the families seem to be going in the world today.

So, that is a basic requirement for leadership. Wisdom. Oh, wisdom.

If you pray any prayer, don't pray for power before wisdom. Pray for wisdom.

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