

Lifestyle of Light

by George Verwer

The Christian lifestyle is a committed, loving, and passionate lifestyle that prioritizes living for Christ and seeking to follow His will.

Duration: 44:23

Scripture: Romans 12:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a committed Christian lifestyle. He uses the example of athletes in the Winter Olympics who risk their lives for their sport to illustrate the admiration for total commitment. The preacher also shares a personal anecdote about a man giving his watch as a symbol of his commitment to world evangelism. He describes the Christian lifestyle as being characterized by love, faith, hope, passion, purpose, and determination. The sermon also highlights the need for repentance and the role of Jesus Christ as an advocate for believers who sin.

Transcript

Well, it certainly is a privilege for me to have this opportunity to share. I tend to go to a lot of places. You know, I'm not too famous for that.

I was over in Germany speaking some time ago. It was going on. And since it was an RN meeting, I felt more free.

If I'm just a guest, I always try to stick to the time. And I was going on about an hour and a half, with the hook sitting in the way in the back of his lunch, hoping I would catch the hint. And I was talking, of course, about discipleship and world evangelism, getting on just about that time to Luke 14.33, forsaking all.

So I stopped, and I said, oh, praise the Lord. Here's a man already giving his watch to world evangelism. My heart is full because he's given me the privilege of just, in another month, living a quarter of a century.

And I feel very indebted to the work of Navigators. I'm sure most of you don't know this story. But my own conversion was in New York City in 1955, in March.

The meeting was sponsored by Jack Woodson and the Word of Life ministry, the people that have the famous camp at Screw Lake, where on that very year that I was born again, Dawson Trotman gave his life trying to rescue someone in that lake. The same organization that was running that camp sponsored a

meeting in March for Billy Graham to be the guest speaker just for one night. And in that meeting, I came to know Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.

Perhaps I could just sum up a little bit about my testimony. It may help you understand what I'm trying to say. I'm not from a Christian home.

I just came from my grandfather's hometown, Glasgow. He was a drunkard and so badly beat up by grandmother that she finally divorced him, which was not a very popular thing back in those days. My other grandfather was from the Netherlands.

He was an atheist. He went to America with my own father. And there they settled into a very materialistic way of life.

So I was born just outside of New York City. And even by the age of 14, 15, 16, became very much involved in the nightlife of New York City and in very materialistic pursuits. It was a woman who had the kind of lifestyle we're talking about this morning.

She just didn't talk about it. She walked it. And she started to pray for me.

She had been praying for the grammar school near her home, we call it a high school, for 15 years. Not only that people would be converted, but that they would go around the world preaching and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's quite an amazing prayer to pray for an ungodly grammar school where sometimes a third of the students were drunk on the weekends.

She persevered and prayed for 15 years and then she began to pray for me. And she sent me a gospel of John. In fact, that gospel was posted supposedly from Spring Lake because her son was working at that same camp.

And her other son was an outstanding Christian violinist who worked at that same camp. And I read this gospel of John for over two years and the Lord used his word to prepare me for that meeting in Madison Square Garden where in spirit of trembling, almost totally ignorant of the gospel, had never heard this kind of thing before, especially I'd never seen anyone give an invitation for people to repent or to come to Christ or anything along that line. Among the people that I knew, the sort of middle class, bourgeois, snob set, you know, you just didn't do that type of thing.

I did go to church, but you can be sure there was nothing like that going on in this church. There wasn't much going on at all in this church. And if anybody made a noise, it was usually someone snoring when they fell asleep.

But that night I met the living Christ. And I just share this with some of you maybe young Christians and the devil may come buzzing in your ear and say, oh, well, this is just an emotional trip or it's just a late adolescent religious thing. You know, you need crutches.

You've had your girlfriend broke up with you or some other heartbreak. And so now you've got into the religious scene for a few years. And when you get more educated and you get on and, you know, learn more about life, you'll be able to throw away the crutches and be able to, you know, be mature.

And you'll, you know, start drinking or taking acid or, you know, one of these non-crutch crutches. I thank God that this is real. And I thank God and I said this really for over 24 years all over the world for the

tremendous work of the Navigators.

And I can assure you that hadn't brought me here to say that because I hadn't got a clue very much about the influence that the Navigators had in my own life. I went back to that school and I started to evangelize and started to share Christ with my friends. And we gave out Gospels in the school and about a thousand students promised to read the Gospel.

So 15 years of that lady's prayers just suddenly started to bring the results. I remember being in one meeting sharing with students shortly after I finished at that school and almost a little more at that meeting than here. And 125 in that one meeting came for counseling to accept and take Christ as their Savior.

I, of course, was only about 19 at that time. One of the things that hit me is, you know, what happened to all these people? I remember my first year of college going with a little band of fools for Christ. I got warned the moment I got in this college.

It had been a Christian college about 10 years before I got there. And I'd been warned about this fellow Dale Woton. I was just with him last night.

We've been together now 24 years. Dale was one of those the Lord used to disciple me and help me get my life straight. But I was warned about Dale when I got to this school that he was baptizing people in the shower, that he was a religious fanatic.

And so being a bit of a radical myself, he was one of the first persons I saw out. And I'll never forget going into this first room in here. It was, you know, first year of college, fear and trembling.

Dale was a second-year person. And I went into this prayer meeting, and for the first time in a prayer meeting, I heard someone say, Amen, or Praise God. And I said, Wow! Someone else said, Hallelujah.

I thought, Woo! These people are really, you know, extreme. And of course, I discovered they just had a little more love for Jesus than I had. And I'll never forget going to the home of a missionary near that college and listening one night to a tape of a man that I hardly had ever heard of, the testimony of Dawson Trox.

And that tape was one of, say, ten. My life has been a life of many influences, but it was one of, say, ten major influences because I had already led many people to Christ and was trying to figure out where they were. And Dawson gives this testimony of how he picked up this hitchhiker.

I always assumed every navigator's heard of this tape six times, you know. This is the wrong impression you get if you're in the other movement, you know. But he gives this testimony of picking up this hitchhiker, leading him to Christ.

The guy's life was really a mess. And then he picks him up seven months or a year later as the same fellow that he had led to Christ, and his life, of course, still a mess. But nothing's happened.

And how this hit Dawson, and how his whole life began to change in terms of discipling individuals and giving himself to individuals. I think this is one of the things that very few people know and understand about O.M. because we have the literature image, we have the ship image, we have the big crusade image, but the whole work of O.M. was built on the principle we got off that tape. In fact, Al Roton, who has been together with me now for 24 years, or I with him, he's now the leader of the second ship, he wrote a

little booklet called Christian Strategy just to weave in what we got from that little booklet, Born to Reproduce, which I think is still one of the greatest booklets in the world.

And up until a few years ago it was required reading. You couldn't even come out of it if you didn't read Dawson Trotman's Born to Reproduce. And then, of course, Dale just took it and showed how this principle would lead to the evangelization of the world.

So we in O.M., there's now about 1,200 of us full-time in 35 nations, and God's given us the privilege of reaching 250 million people with his word, 150 million in India alone. All of it can be traced back to that praying lady, to that Gospel of John, to that evangelistic rally, to a number of other influences that there's not time to tell you about, and to a cassette tape that helped us see that evangelism had to be second and that relationships had to be first. Perhaps in O.M. our greatest work has not even been discipleship as much as it has just been relationship and building relationships.

Those the Lord led together 20 years ago, many of us are still together. And even though we challenge most people to leave O.M. and join a better mission or get on with their local church, the Lord has led some to stay together to keep these principles as the heartbeat of the movement. It was just about 10 months ago I was in Singapore and we had a united crusade with the Navigators in Singapore, which is really one of the greatest Navigator works I know of in the world today.

Just an amazing work there in Singapore. And we had an Operation World Conference. I think the Navigators did all the footwork and a lot of the organization and O.M. did all the, you know.

At least in Singapore, with me there, we had the bigger mouth. So I did a lot of the speaking together with Patrick Johnson. And we had 1,600 Singaporeans there for the entire day, presenting world vision.

And, you know, we cannot measure what God did in that one day. There are Singaporeans, over 400, recommitted their lives to Jesus Christ on that day and committed themselves to begin moving toward world evangelism. It is now our fastest growing recruiting field at O.M. Malaysia and Singapore have over 125 full time from those two countries.

That's why I leave for Hong Kong the day after tomorrow and that part of the world. It's exciting and I just think it's a great thing when different fellowships who have sometimes different approaches and different fields of work unite together as we're doing today. And I hope you'll take the time to go and visit both of the literature displays.

The Navigator display and also the O.M. display. I guess we became almost extreme in the area of literature and when we got to Singapore and discovered we could buy these growing in discipleship Navigator books for a third of the price that you can get them here. I think we must distribute a ton at a time of design.

And so I would just commend you were meant to be. Needs in the church so desperately needs leadership. Our Christian union, that's another one, needs leadership.

Everywhere you go you see this need for leadership and that's a book. You can probably put the book table right in front of the door. And we want to give you one of these free.

These are Humility by Mrs. Intermission by the way. I've given half of a book. It takes you weeks to finish all 50 years without any question.

In my depression you may not agree with everything but this is a classic book of this century. And I would commend it to you to read it slowly over a period of say six months because otherwise you'll get depressed reading it. I cannot say enough about those books.

In fact, just to give you a hint. This is what we want to think about this morning. And I want you to turn with me to a couple of passages of Scripture starting at Romans chapter 12, one that you all know.

And then we're going to look at one other one in Thessalonians. Romans 12 verse 1 and 2. I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

I think it's J.B. Phillips who said about that second verse don't let yourself be squeezed into the mold of this world. Perhaps these are my two most favorite verses in the whole Bible. Romans 12, 1 and 2. And then first Thessalonians.

First Thessalonians chapter 1. Paul is speaking and he writes Verse 5. Let's have it in this context. Verse 2. We give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father. For our gospel came not unto you in word only.

This is the key. But also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance as you knew what manner of men we were among you for your sake. You can easily paraphrase that and say you knew our style of life.

You knew our lifestyle. It's not what you say, it's what you are that counts with God. And this has been actually the greatest burden of my Christian life almost from the beginning.

I'm just in the midst of reading one of your recent books. Just starting it. The Pursuit of Holiness.

And as I went through it without even reading it my alarms went off that God has given us another great book. This is the will of God. Holiness of life.

Yet A.W. Tozer said, the more keen, enthusiastic Christian is more easily led astray. So that the person, often, who has a greater desire for holiness and a greater hunger to get on with God and to know greater reality is more easily led astray. This is why I wrote a book or allowed a book to be printed called Spiritual Balance.

Because I'm convinced it is one of the most needed messages among God's people today. Spiritual Balance. It seems that Satan's first strategy is to keep you from a Romans 12-1 experience.

Total surrender, committing your life. Then Satan's second strategy seems to be after you commit your life to get you into a sidetrack. To get you into an extreme.

To get you into some kind of false dock. One of the first persons I ever met here in Britain and I'm reminded of this because when I arrived in Britain one of the first things I tried to do was to go to a Bible study at the Navigators. Now back in those days I don't think they were as organized as today but I never got to this Bible study.

The address was wrong or I was wrong. I ended up in their office and the Bible study wasn't there and I went to near where I was living at that time. This is 1962 and I couldn't find it.

So anyway, I'm sure that never happens anymore and you always find the Bible study. But what a challenge. And what a burden it is when we think of this whole thing of lifestyle.

But I remember one of the first persons I met in those days I challenged him about being a witness, getting involved with us. He's a very intellectual type and he said, oh no, I think I need to wait and get more knowledge and see, I'll get, you know, doing things. He sort of wiped us off as many did in those days and sort of an activist group of teenagers who want to go home.

So he went to the perhaps leading Bible college in this country and within two years he became a Mormon. Today he is a Mormon prophet. That is hard for some people to believe but it is 100% true, I can assure you.

It is not enough to have an intellectual knowledge. It is not enough to have a desire for more intellectual knowledge. There must be also that reality.

It says in the book of Hebrews that our God is a consuming fire and one of the questions that I'm led to ask you this morning is are you on fire for Christ? Do you have that reality that the Bible talks about that you read in every chapter of the book of Acts? I love to speak on the book of Acts. If I were here for a week I'd speak on the book of Acts. I was in a church some time ago and I'm appalled how little study there is in many places of the book of Acts.

I said we're going to study the book of Acts and I want you to open to Acts chapter 29. Everybody is turning the Bible, the pastor is turning the Bible. Of course you all knew there are only 28 chapters in the book of Acts.

We are Acts chapter 29. The Holy Spirit has not ceased to work in the same beautiful and wonderful way. And in the pages of the book of Acts we see men that not only were receiving daily more of a knowledge of the word of God but they were on fire.

It was real, prayer was real, witnessing was real. The revolution of unselfishness and love was real as we see in Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4. There was the process of spiritual growth going on but it led to the reality and the fire. Hebrews, our God is a consuming fire.

One of the greatest winners of men to Jesus Christ was a man named Samuel Logan Ringgold. And in his book Resurrection Life and Power he gave this definition of fire. See if it describes your life.

What is fire? It is love, it is faith, it is hope, it is passion, purpose and determination. It is utter devotion. It is divine discontent with formality, ceremonialism, lukewarmness, indifference, sham, noise, parade and spiritual death.

It is singleness of eye and a consecration unto death. It is God the Holy Ghost burning in and through a humble, holy, faithful man. This is the Christian lifestyle.

Some people when you share the message of God with them like to have an outline and so I decided I should have an outline. And so for those of you who like outlines let us now begin the outline. The Christian lifestyle.

It is a committed lifestyle. Number one, we have to have numbers. A lot of people these days like these overhead projectors.

I'm such an awkward character. If I use an overhead projector I almost end up in a wrestling match. But when you use your own eyes and imagination and that will be our first point.

And it's true. The Christian lifestyle is a committed lifestyle. We sort of admire people when our toe leaks will begin.

Everybody will be sitting around their tube watching these fanatic people going down and everybody thinks it's great. Skiing they call. I just come from the Alps watching these people go around the hills on these pieces of wood.

Amazing. Number of necks broken each year. Think of that man who climbed Mount Everest.

He went up Mount Everest the hard way. You don't want to go up the easy way. So often the Christians finish that book reading it on the ship.

I remember reading about one team that had a Mormon on the team who didn't like smoking. Then another guy on the team, you know, it's because we have no big gold. Now I'm selling what \$700 in arrows.

How much money do you put into gold? Well, we've got an investment in heaven I will tell you that makes gold investment like it's going backward on a skateboard downhill. So that kind of thing. Yes, in every area of life we seem to accept that people are committed.

Think of these McDonald's people. Don't these Americans make you nervous? I've been over here 20 years now. Americans now make me nervous.

McDonald's comes here. Everybody says it won't work. No British people.

Cleaning, working, drilling. I yearn to see and I believe with all my heart that this is a major part of the Christian life. Our lifestyle, zeal, enthusiasm.

These are not words of any one culture. These are words that come out of the New Testament before most of the modern cultures we know about even existed. And I pray that our lifestyle may be a committed lifestyle.

Secondly, the Christian lifestyle is a loving lifestyle. Love has been the greatest challenge in my Christian life. I'm a natural extremist.

I was super idealistic. I think the word would be hyper-idealistic. And God had to use books on the subject of love.

Theodore F's book, Love is the Answer. Drummond's book, Greatest Thing in the World. Eugenia Price's book, Make Love Your Aim.

And other books like some of these writings of Tim LaHaye. God used these things to get my commitment or keep my commitment from going extreme. Love helps commitment stay on the right road.

1 Corinthians 13. And there's a lot more I'd love to say on that, but I'm afraid there won't be time. So you'll have to study that on your own.

The third point is the Christian lifestyle is a balanced lifestyle. I like to keep some notes and some outlines that are very, very precious to me in the back of my Bible. I'll give you a little practical pointer, see.

I ran out of blank pages. All these outlines. I have two full pages, over 36 points on spiritual balance.

Often I give a whole series on this. I recently did a film on this. Spiritual balance.

I'm so convinced about this. In fact, there's a danger that I'm becoming extreme on the area of balance. Anyway, when I ran out of blank pages, I remember that I hardly ever use these maps in the back of my Bible.

And so I put all the outlines on top of the maps. And you can find them easily. Some are in the Sinai.

Some are in Turkey. In every area. He's always trying to get us spiritually kinky, spiritually off.

Use whatever word you want. And when I think of some of the extremism that's running loose in Britain today, it frightens me. Some of the extremism in the area of submission.

The Word of God teaches that we should learn how to submit to our leaders as those over us in the Lord. Thessalonians, Hebrews, some good verses. It's a biblical principle.

To keep that in balance, however, the Bible also says we should submit. And to keep that in balance, to help the leaders from becoming little spiritual dictators, Extremist teaching about submission. Manipulated people.

It's actually a mark of the faith. A.W. Tozer said, We long for the power of the Holy Spirit. We long for the fruit.

The greatest gift needed today, he said, was discernment. I will tell you, in our own work, with a wide range of people we draw from, large numbers of people from Brethren, Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, Pentecostal, and about twenty other denominations, almost one you've never heard of, and some I'm sure you've never heard of, all coming together. If God had not given our leaders discernment, and the discipline and the balance that goes with it, our movement would have blown apart.

And the devil is out to destroy every Bible study group, every Christian union, every spiritual movement. We are in a spiritual warfare. There is no lifestyle.

And this is important to remember. Yes, the Christian lifestyle is a balanced lifestyle. There's an endless series of points I would love to touch on.

The balance between the crisis and the process. I never despise a man's crisis experience, but if your crisis is not followed by a process, it will become an absence, and not one you can take to the dentist, I can assure you. We have hundreds of thousands of people in Britain who claim to have all kinds of crisis experiences.

Where are they when it comes to looking for candidates for the mission field? Where are they when it comes to looking for mature leaders to carry on the Lord's work? I believe with all my heart that spiritual

growth is one of the things that's on the heart of God the most. We want shortcuts, but there is no shortcut to spiritual growth. And probably all of us know that expression, and it's a good one.

There is no gain without pain. And then the Christian lifestyle is an ongoing lifestyle. An ongoing lifestyle.

One of God's greatest burdens for us is perseverance. Perseverance, pressing on. Keep on keeping on.

Many times I've been discouraged in my faith. I try and never let it go by five minutes. You know, sometimes when you hear a lot of testimonies, you get the idea that every Christian has to backslide.

Have you ever got this idea, you hear so many backsliders' testimonies, they got converted, they got away from the Lord, and then somehow they fell into a pond, or someone hit them on the head, and they came back to the Lord. And these are great to hear, these testimonies. I am not against the backsliders' testimony.

But I am against people getting the idea this is the normal Christian life. And I just share this, just for balance, that from the day of my conversion to today, 25 years later, every day I've known His grace. Every day I've walked with Him.

There have been the minutes, sometimes up to an hour. There's a battle in my mind, especially with lust, or my bad temper, or one of my other 15 major problems which you won't get into, I don't want you to get depressed. But you see, the Christian life is not just our first goal of not sinning.

Of course that's our aim. 1 John 2, verse 1, If you sin, you have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ, the righteous. And I dare to say there may be some here this morning who in your Christian life, you're basically discouraged, even though you're here at this meeting.

Because you haven't really learned how to repent. You haven't really learned how to bounce back. And I pray if somehow you are away from the Lord, even a little bit, that this morning, today, you'll come back to Him and pray in His cleansing blood and know that you are on that solid rock in full fellowship with Him.

That's not on the basis of your spiritual push-ups. That's on the basis of sovereign mercy and grace. And if you're already walking with the Lord, of course we always need to grow.

But determine in your heart that by His grace you'll never go back. By His grace you'll not give the devil more than a few minutes and you'll try to cut that down as well. And I believe there's provision in God's Word for that.

The Christian lifestyle is an ongoing lifestyle. Constantly climbing, constantly moving. Our hands are on the plow and we will, by God's grace, let all hell turn loose on us.

And the Christian life is filled with fiery, vicious, even fistfights with the very enemy. We will not turn back. There might be those moments of depression.

Somebody once said to me, it really helped me never get off the train when it's in the tunnel. Just keep plodding on and soon you'll come out into the light again and you'll rejoice in His grace. And then the Christian lifestyle is a sharing lifestyle, which is what we're going to talk about this afternoon.

And then next, the Christian lifestyle is the unselfish lifestyle. How the enemy seems to have us fogged in by materialism. The love for things.

Despite exhortations in John's epistle, they say love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loved the world, it would have been for more unpleasant persons. But unless we realistically, as William McDonald talks about in these two books, face the entanglement of materialism, perhaps even better expressed in John Wright's new book, *The Golden Cow*, we are never going to be the church and the people.

Just look at the lifestyle of the Apostle Paul, who said, we are poor, making many rich. And we yearn for practical reality in this area. And then, the Christian lifestyle is the pure lifestyle.

I commend to you another John Wright book called *Eros Defiled*. And there are some excellent books on the NAV book table on the subject of purity. Three hundred verses in the Bible on the subject of sex, but we hardly hear much about it.

And yet, so many seem to be tripped up in this area. Christian lifestyle is a pure lifestyle, but linked to that, it's an open and it's an honest lifestyle. Perhaps today will be the day that some of us will take off our little evangelical mask, maybe even our navigator mask.

With OM, we have OM masks. I don't know if you have any navigator masks. And somehow, face yourself.

Billy Graham said, the greatest obstacle to... And then to have a systematic program to do something about it. Yes, it's a pure lifestyle, but it's an open, honest lifestyle, where we face ourselves, where we accept ourselves. God, says what one said, knows all about us, and he loves us still.

That motivates me in moments of failure, moments when I'm ashamed of what I've just said, or what I've just thought with my mind. God knows all about me, and loves me still, and our motivation is not the law, the rules. It's his grace, his love, that causes us to keep coming back to that fountain of living water that never runs dry.

And then lastly, you know, Christian lifestyle is a disciplined lifestyle. I think that's one of the things the Nabs and Noam have a lot in common, this strong belief about discipline. There are many ways to go about it.

It's not a narrow stereotype thing, where you all come out, you know, like some kind of a biscuit-making machine. But every believer knows something of discipline in the word. We got accused of being in bondage.

We were a quiet time in bondage movement. We get accused of that, I don't know what the Nabs get accused of. People say, you know, just because you have to have your quiet time every morning, this is a permissive society.

But to love and serve one another, beloved, we are free to be disciplined. This is just a small part of God's lifestyle. And I hope it's your lifestyle.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for so many verses that clearly show that this is the way. And we long with all of our hearts to know this kind of disciplined and committed, free-sharing, unselfish lifestyle.

Lord, we long to be men on fire, women on fire for you. And we believe that today, that fire can grow a little hotter, a little warmer, as we recommit our lives to you, and determine to go more in your direction,

whatever the cost. For we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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