

Logos 2 and Doulos Visit

by George Verwer

The ship ministry is a vital part of Operation Mobilization's mission to train and equip people for frontline ministry, but it is often misunderstood and under-supported.

Duration: 55:24

Scripture: Proverbs 4:18, Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Mission Field"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need to market and promote the project of spreading the word of God more effectively. They mention the existence of numerous videos that most people, including those on OM (presumably referring to Operation Mobilization), have never seen. The speaker expresses excitement about an audio tape that can be listened to in the car, acknowledging the difficulty of watching a video while driving. They also highlight the effectiveness of evangelism on the ship called Lagos, which has an extra auditorium and is constructed in a way that allows for more outreach. The ship's impact is demonstrated through media coverage, radio, television, and front-page testimonies, leading to people recommitting their lives to Jesus Christ. The speaker acknowledges some weaknesses, such as language barriers and limited time for in-depth relationships with volunteers, but emphasizes the positive response and interest from people who witness the ship's work. The sermon concludes by highlighting the growing missionary movement in Latin America and Asia and the need for everyone to receive and embrace the vision of spreading the gospel.

Transcript

We thank you for the privilege of being involved, some of us from the very beginning, of this unique and distinct ministry that has stirred so many millions to deeper commitment to yourself or to some step of faith, however small that may have been. And Lord, as we look back over 20 years of ship ministry, we realize that it's easy for this to just be something very old and even become something rather stale in our thinking, in our minds, in our praying. And Lord, we would ask that the vision for world evangelism and the ship ministry somehow may be reborn in many of us.

Lord, I just thank you for the privilege of visiting those two ships last month. And the way that you dealt with me and the way that you renewed my vision for that ministry to continue and to be even more effective in the 90s than it has ever been before. We thank you for replacing Lagos with a far more effective and better equipped ship.

And yet, Lord, we know the key is not in steel, but the key is in our own hearts and in our attitude and in our prayers. And we ask, Lord, that our vision may somehow may be increased as a result of this sharing together. We thank you for all those that have come to know you.

The joy of seeing many of them go on for you, some of them in key places in leadership in their own country. Thank you for ministries that have been born, that trace their roots back to some experience when the ship came to their port. And Lord, we honor you now as we attempt to see this whole ministry continue in a way that will bring glory to you in port after port around the world, city after city, and nation after nation.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, certainly it was a highlight of 1991 for me to be able to visit both ships. I joined Lagos II in Uruguay.

The plan was changed because there was a delay in getting into the dry dock in Uruguay. And so one of the goals of going on Lagos II to see Lagos never came to pass. And in fact, the ship itself eventually had to go through the Straits of Magellan instead of the Beagles in order to get to Punta Arenas on time, and also not to cancel Port Mundren.

It would have been difficult to cancel Port Mundren since that port is where they were waiting for Lagos to come. And so that never happened. So if Lagos II decided in the light of this dry docking in order to go see Lagos, they'd miss Port Mundren.

It would have really left a difficult situation in that small port. Needless to say, in the three or four days we were in Port Mundren, we had 19,000 visitors. We had many, many conferences and evangelistic activities going on the whole time.

Many people made various kinds of commitments. I had the privilege of ministering many times, mainly all in Spanish. The Lord gave great grace.

And we also saw about \$50,000 worth of books go out on that one weekend. And on top of that, an enormous amount of free literature. So I'm glad we didn't miss that port.

And I think that was more important than perhaps our historic experience we wanted to have passing Lagos. Still on the rock there in the Beagle Channel. As we think about the ministry of the ship, I think we need to realize it's now 20 years.

Two decades of almost nonstop ministry. Both ships were actually, considering their condition when we purchased them, were considered, were launched rather quickly. And a lot of repair work on Dulos and Lagos and alterations were done as we went along.

When we launched Lagos II, we had learned from the other two ships. And so we got the ship largely in the condition we wanted it when we launched. And that has proven to be very, very helpful.

I want to take a moment to thank those of you who've prayed for me on this trip. I went rather reluctantly. The Heathrow experience of saying goodbye to my wife is getting more difficult.

But somehow the Lord gave the grace and I never had any doubt that I was in the Lord's will as I made this trip, which took me right around the entire world. I especially want to thank people who may be listening to this cassette who have prayed for this ministry even six years before we had any ship at all.

Sometimes we forget that this vision had six years of laying a foundation before it was launched.

I think it's important to be reminded of that because sometimes people get excited when they see the ministry of the ship and it causes them to launch into some ministry and they want to see their goals obtained in one year and they get discouraged when it doesn't happen. And we know previous to the six years when we specifically worked toward getting Lagos, looking for crew, trusting God for finance, that there was six or more years before that in which God was laying the foundation for the whole movement. And I believe one of the reasons that Operation Mobilization, moving toward its 35th year from its very, very early beginnings, has stood against the heavy storms and the trials and all the things that hit any spiritual movement is because of those deep roots.

And I hope that we in our own lives will not be impatient. I personally believe a great mistake is being made in the church today with all the hype and with all the messages about the unreached people. I think we have a lot of people who are running into unreached people's groups with very little roots, very little experience, and we're seeing a lot of them return after the first year, second or third year, and they're not going back.

It's not everybody who can run off to Mongolia and plant a church. There has to be that spiritual preparation. There has to be that deepening of one's roots.

And I'm convinced that if we're going to see the unreached people evangelized and churches established as we want to do, as we have many high goals, there has to be a deepening of those roots in regard to coming into greater maturity, being strengthened in our own character, our ability to persevere, our ability to handle disappointments and heartaches and the fiery darts of the enemy that will come. And I think one of the things that God is doing on the two ships is preparing people for future ministry among the unreached people. I was amazed, again, interviewing so many individuals to see how many want to get into front-line situations in the Muslim world or into some area of world missions.

And again, I saw there doesn't seem to be a lack of people wanting to get into missionary work. I know, in fact, we know we always need more. But how to get these people from where they are now out to where they want to go? Where is the money going to come from? Where is the prayer? And that is very much on my heart, and I will not be answering that question, I'm afraid, very much in this particular session.

We might ask ourself, with this great ministry and God's hand upon it, why we're not seeing more people? People are asking me that question. So if people listen to this tape, it will save me from answering that question so many times as I travel around the world. I think number one is the fact that it is 20 years old, and there are plenty of negative stories.

I've never found a church yet, and I've been in 50 nations ministering in churches where I couldn't find a negative story, and churches suffer from that. I don't think there's any ministry where we're not going to find negative stories. But since the ship is a rather high-profile ministry, the stories sometimes get a rather high profile.

Do you know the number one thing people share with me why they're not going to the ship? You want to know what it is? Seasickness. It's the truth. People are frightened to death of seasickness, and especially people who have just been on a ship once or twice, maybe just crossing the channel in a storm, got sick, and determined, shits, we're not for them.

I also got seasick. The first time I ever sailed on a ship, the old Queen Elizabeth, when I first came to Europe in 1960. That certainly dates me.

And I think I got seasick again when I sailed back to the States on that same ship and back to Europe again on that ship, and it probably was through those journeys on the Queen Elizabeth that the initial seeds were born. We also had a fire on the Queen Elizabeth when I was on it. I was rooming with a priest, which was a nice experience.

We both had to evacuate because there was a fire in our section of the ship. Fortunately, it didn't spread. So there are a lot of misunderstandings.

There are negative stories. We hear of people like Typhoon Tom, which is Tom Dyer, who on Douglas has been through a number of major storms. And during my time on Lagos, too, with Tom off and up on the bridge, not doing anything but watching, by the way, maybe dictating a few letters in the corner, we also went through a storm and had 20 degree rolls, lots of people seasick.

But I think most of those people at the end of the storm were thanking God for that experience, because in itself it's part of God's training program. Let's face it, a lot of our commitment, a lot of our zeal, a lot of our prayers, it's never been tested. We all have preached for years, endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

But I will tell you, when you get on that ship and you're in a hard situation, you discover that some of that theology is only in the head. And I thank God for the hard experiences, not only on this trip, but through many of the years of my own life. Also, I just believe a lot of people don't know what it's about.

There are so many visions now, even in OM, there are so many challenges. People come to me all the time, even on radio and television, what is the one major focus of OM right now? How can I answer that? I'll offend some OM leader if I don't answer that one properly, because as the leader of this international evangelistic and training thrust across the world, I need to be concerned about all the ministries. Do you think I can abandon Western Europe? Do you think I cannot be committed in a very strong way to the Soviet Union and Central Asia? Do I suddenly lay aside the Indian vision? Do I try to pretend that Latin America doesn't exist or that the Far East and all that's happening there, probably the most rapid growth area in OM, that somehow this is of secondary importance.

Operation Mobilization is a multi-pronged thrust. It's not one thing. That's why we can emphasize somehow all of these ministries and different people will give different amounts of their time and energy to different ministries, which is absolutely acceptable.

I believe there are plenty of recruits out there for the ships that we can go after without necessarily jeopardizing other fields. I personally think some other fields would benefit from challenging some of the people who come to them to spend a year or two on the ship first before they went into some of these other incredibly difficult frontline experiences that sometimes people are thrown into an OM on their very first year. I tell you sometimes if we add up the people who are coming back from these very, very difficult experiences during their very first year, it would be an interesting statistic.

Keep in mind it used to be that a high number of people had a conference in June and then a summer campaign. This was preceded by eight orientation tapes, ten books. Then they had a one month intensive training experience.

And even then they often would go on a team or on the ships or in something that certainly would not be classified as a frontline church planting experience. More of a training experience before they launched into longer term with OM. We now seem to have people who want to go to the most difficult situation in their very first year and not having even gone through a summer campaign or more than ten days of conference.

So I am convinced and have been reconvinced that we can give the ship a greater emphasis and that the ship, which it's already proven itself to be able to do, can be involved in recruiting, exposing, training, helping people get to know what OM is all about, what this vision is all about, and then see them thrust into many other fields. That's happening. Just look around the OM world and you'll see and it could happen even more.

So I believe, and that's one of the reasons for this message, we need to get out there. If you want to use a word that's going around these days, we need to market this project better. Now we have a lot of videos, but I can assure you most people have never seen them.

Even people on OM have never seen them. These tremendous videos and more money is being put into that than ever before. I'm perhaps excited about this particular audio tape because I know that a lot of people only listen to tapes when they're in their car and it is difficult to watch a video tape in your car, though perhaps some of you have tried it, maybe in the back seat in your limousine.

Who knows where this tape will go. Again, I think we just have to face the fact that the ship ministry is a ministry that's easily misunderstood. There are some very strong critics of the ship ministry, some of them in seminaries, because the ship ministry looks like the ocean-going gospel blimp.

And in the very early days here in Britain, a leading Christian wrote an article against the ship describing it as a gospel blimp, saying that I was going to soon get a submarine for evangelism in depth. And it is interesting, when that man visited the ship in London, he wrote one of the most brilliant apologies I've ever seen in print about any aspect of Operation Mobilization. There are now misunderstandings as a result of the two people who were killed through the bomb attack in the Philippines.

Not all the publicity about that has been positive. Not all of it has been true. One Christian paper in the Philippines accused us of parachute evangelism.

And I tell you, they put the knife in very deep. And a lot of people have read that. And that gets in other periodicals in other parts of the world.

Phil Parshall wrote a brilliant answer on our behalf to that particular magazine in the Philippines. I also eventually wrote the man. Because the fact is that OM, before going in with Dulas in this particular Zamboanga ministry, has had a track record, fairly good, of 20 years in the Philippines.

It wasn't a matter of parachuting in. We were invited by the Filipino churches. The Filipinos are the ones who have founded OM in the Philippines, now a permanent ministry.

And though we're not defending any mistake that may have been made on our behalf, and it's impossible to evangelize the world or do anything without making mistakes, we have already seen how the hand of God has worked through and overruled that very traumatic and difficult experience. It was a joy to spend time on Dulas with people who were wounded in that attack. Over 30 were wounded.

Especially, I talked to some who were very seriously wounded. And to just see what God has built into their lives through that experience is very encouraging. Though not, of course, without pain.

It's interesting that the sister of Karen from New Zealand who was killed has now volunteered to serve on Dulas. And the reports we get from the parents and how they've responded to this crisis has been very encouraging. What's the ship ministry all about? I think if we understand this better we'll be able to pray better.

We'll be able to recruit better. We'll be more motivated in what we're trying to do. We'll be able to keep the problems of the ministry in the right perspective.

Because, of course, there are problems. There are built-in weaknesses to that ministry. We became very aware of that.

I think before we even sailed from Rotterdam, when my wife and I lived on the ship 20 years ago. Let me just list a few, however, of the basics concerning the ministry of the ship. I put down as number one on the job training.

We need situations where we can train people, where we can give people exposure, where we can give people opportunities to grow where basically they are having to work. Work does seem to be an unpopular word in many places in these days. And we know that the ship can create workaholics.

There's nothing more difficult on the ship than the fact that it just takes so much work just to keep the ship going. And that's always been something we have struggled with. I am convinced more than ever after this visit that all the work and all the time and all the effort, all the money, including the weaknesses, is worth it in the light of what God is doing.

But I believe that the on-the-job training we offer, not only there, but in many parts of the OM world, is one of our strongest distinctives. OM is quite distinct from some movements that you look at in the last 50 years in that we were born and ran parallel with the Bible College movement. I had the privilege of two years at Bible College, which I've never despised.

And God now has given us a linking with over 250 Bible colleges, seminaries, and Christian institutions around the world. A high percentage of OMers either go to these places before they come or they go after. The amazing number of ex-OMers or OMers right now who are out studying somewhere to get a degree is quite amazing.

And we have encouraged this, we've even helped finance this, so that our strong point when people are on OM is not academic, though people do grow academically on OM. If they have initiative tapes, books, visiting speakers, I can list 20 ways just like that, where anybody who's really plugged into things and is a man of initiative can grow academically on OM. But that's not our major thrust.

It's on-the-job training. That involves, of course, learning how to work together with people. That's one of the toughest challenges on that ship.

Working together on the deck department. They now have two women on the deck department and log-offs on log-offs too. I thought that was one of the most exciting things of the entire trip, especially as I got to meet these two dynamic, both Dutch, of course.

It's a little expression in some places. If you're not Dutch, you're not much. But anyway, these two Dutch women on the deck department provided quite an inspiration to many.

They're now discussing it on the doulou, especially the captain. But learning to work together down in the heat of the engine room, out on the deck, in the galley, it's rough and it's tough. And I can see why some people may want to run the other way when they find out what this is about.

The word gets out, of course, and it's been true of other aspects of OM, that the ship just, you know, works you to death, uses you, and drops you off at the end of two years. Most people, when they leave the ship, do not feel that way. Some do.

Some of it may be the ship's fault. Some of it might be their own fault, especially if they never worked a day their entire life until they got to the ship. Let us face it.

We are not exactly the generation that is specializing in enduring hardship. There are some exceptions. And it's amazing how two people on the ship have different experiences.

One comes out negative and the other comes out transformed and positive. A little bit what life's about, isn't it? But I'm convinced we've got one of the best on-the-job training programs going anywhere in the world. And I think it's partly a deception of the enemy that's causing so few young people to consider this as a viable option to give one or two years of their life.

Again, I can't help but think of these cults. One cult in America that has 50,000 out in very difficult propagation of their false teaching. I think of how many countries require a couple of years.

They require a couple of years of military service. It's actually one of the reasons we can't get men from certain countries very much. Could it not be that there's more people willing to give one or two years in God's Navy in a training program that could lay a foundation for them, whether they go back to so-called secular work, which we believe is sacred when God's in it, or whether they go into full-time missionary service.

I don't think we should be disappointed that many of our graduates are not necessarily in full-time service in the present worldwide climate because we need people back in our churches and in secular work. Some people call them laymen, just as much as we need key people in full-time ministry. When I think of the tapes on the ship, the books, the conferences, all the different training programs they have going, I couldn't even count them up.

There seem to be so many. Small group training, fellowship group training. There has been a continued growth in quality on the ship, though, of course, at the same time, some things are lost and perhaps need to be reinstated in the future.

I was a bit shocked. I'm too lost to discover they only had six copies of Calvary Road on the entire ship and that only 20% of the people even knew what this book was about or hadn't read it. Now, maybe there's substitute books just as good.

Grace Awakening certainly might come near that, but I personally would like to see on the ships and in the whole of the work, us continuing to emphasize the message of Calvary Road and I think there is general agreement about that. Another one of the major ministries of the ship is stirring up and working with the church. If the church that we have contact with in a particular port is lukewarm and there's difficulty and

they don't have a vision, then our ministry in much weakness will be to stir them up, to bring some degree of renewal, to increase vision.

Tens of thousands of ministers and leaders around the world have testified or shared that in one way or the other, the visit of the ship increased their vision. You know, we often have things that we take for granted. It might be a map of the world, it may be prayer cards, it may be exposure to nights of prayer every Tuesday for a year.

We have things that we just take for granted that even Christian leaders in other places do not have. It doesn't mean we're better than them because we are responsible for the truth we have and I believe the great sin among many of us is to simply not live up to the light that God has given us. They're pointing their finger at somebody else who maybe hasn't had as much light and they're not living up to the light that God has given them.

Of course if the church is a great visionary church with lots of zeal and commitment, it's not a matter of us stirring them, they stir us. Wonderful. Men of God come from churches onto the ship and they minister the word of God.

We had a pastor or a Christian leader from a large church in Buenos Aires traveling with us. He was sharing in small groups, he shared in the devotions. God used him to stir people up and of course we need stirring and we need renewal.

And so the ship isn't a matter of us coming with this great message and ministry and books and just helping the poor struggling church. It may be in some cases it's partnership. The advanced teams that go ahead of the ship are one of the most vital factors in the whole ministry.

Prayer meetings begin. I know I was in Brazil before the ship came and the enthusiasm, the radio broadcasts that opened to me, the meetings that opened to me, a lot of it connected with the ship was really phenomenal. And so it's that partnership that begins before the ship even comes.

That also brings a spirit of enthusiasm and expectation. And often in some of these ports they don't have Billy Graham visiting them. They don't have these well-known evangelists.

And the coming in of this ship is the largest Christian event in the history of their small city. That's especially true in smaller ports. And praise God with the draft on our ships we can often get in even to some of the smaller ports.

The ministry to the churches, the partnership, the stirring, the envisioning, a lot of other things is much, much bigger than we can realize. And let's face it, if this doesn't happen we're not going to reach the unreached people. It's interesting that the greatest voice that has helped people catch a vision for the unreached people is basically an institution that's in California that's cost a lot of money.

And a lot of people have been in and out of there and there's been a lot of heartaches and there's been a lot of problems and a lot of the people who got that vision never went to the unreached people. Even some of the leaders have never worked among the unreached people. But we know God has used that place.

The U.S. Center for World Missions, God has used that place in California. And the church needed that place and needed that message. And they have centers in many parts of the world.

And though it may seem expensive, it may seem like a waste of manpower. What are all these people doing around here? Why aren't they out there planting churches? We've got to face the reality of where the church is. Where the church was before the U.S. Center for World Missions came into being and before Ralph Winter started to shoot his arrows at all of us.

Praise be to God. It may seem expensive. It may seem even at times slow.

But we've got to face the reality of the situation and understand just how important it is to move the church first. Not complete. We're not going to wait until the whole church is moved in regard to the unreached people.

But we've got to see a significant segment of the church moved. Vision, prayer, commitment, spirituality, if we're going to complete this job. This is why I do not see that we should have competition between those who are launching out into direct church planting among the unreached people, which many of our people are doing, and those who are called to stir, to partner, to lay foundations, to find finance, to look for recruits, all that kind of thing which is going on almost every day through the ship ministry and of course many other ministries.

The next item I've listed is that the ship ministry demonstrates what biblical Christianity is all about. When I was a young Christian the word models was being thrown around. We needed more models.

And I believe that's true. And I'm convinced that the ship is a model. Now the enemy hates that.

And he wants to bring scandal. He wants people to get in trouble on shore and make a mess. It is a miracle we have had so little of that.

I will tell you it's in God's grace. And that in most cases the testimony left behind, the impact is very, very real. At the same time, one of the abilities of God's people throughout the world, not just those of us from the States or England, one of the abilities God's people seem to have is to be critical.

One of the reasons I'm so excited about the Grace Awakening is because I know that I had a critical spirit. I probably still have that temptation. It's so easy to criticize, so easy to see the negative.

It's a difficult area because there are times when we have to speak out against sin. And we have to say things. But I'm convinced that some of the criticism against the ship in certain ports lacks maturity, lacks balance.

An example of one of the number one criticisms, a team goes out to take a meeting and the one who preaches really isn't that great a preacher. Now cannot a mature church handle that problem? I dare to say any mature church that is training any young people is going to give those young people a chance to preach in their own church. And sometimes it's not going to go over very well.

I thank God for people that gave me the chance to preach when I was 17 years of age. And I'm sure sometimes it wasn't very good. But God overruled.

Now I believe we need to give more training to those going out in public ministry. We need to give these churches the best we have. But at the same time, if a church is caught up in a pride trip, if a church is caught up in an anti-interdenominational feeling, that's another major problem.

That sometimes if your group is interdenominational, it's not from your denomination, you are on the edge. You're ready to pounce. People have prejudices.

Some of these teams that go off the ship, and it's true of some of us here as well, we don't have a chance the moment we step in the door. They've got prejudice. And we know we get criticized for being too charismatic.

We get criticized for not being charismatic. We have, of course, many, many different criticisms that can come. I don't think we should be intimidated by that.

It has been proven in port after port that the overall impact is positive. People are converted. People recommit their lives.

Even in my short time on both ships, I saw many ministers standing to their feet to recommit their lives to Jesus Christ. And I think it was in my final night, one of the meetings in the lounge on the Doulos, similar on Lagos too, I think half the audience stood to recommit their lives to Jesus Christ. I don't think they do that because they're trying to encourage us.

That may be true in some cultures because it's not that kind of invitation. The unity, the prayer life, the vision, the hard work, the perseverance of the ship ministry is a Catholicic bomb that is being dropped on port after port around the world. And it is exciting.

And we should be excited about it and therefore motivated to go out and find the prayer partners and find the people that are needed. In South America right now, they're having whole nights of prayer right through to five or six in the morning. When I heard this, I thought, well, let's face it, who's going to stay for that? People are staying right through in Brazil, in Argentina.

And it's an experience they will never forget. Sometimes for the people on the ship, of course, the adventure of it all, it wears off. The nights of prayer can become boring.

Things can become routine. But I will tell you to the average person who comes from shore and gets involved for a few days, it is an unforgettable and often life-changing experience. That's why as we look back over these 20 years, we discover that the ship has been used to birth many new ministries, probably over 100 ministries in these various ports, some of them quite small, would trace their birth back to their visit to Lagos.

That would include churches. I know again I heard in India of a church that was born through an evangelistic team from the ship that labored in that particular section of the city. People criticize the ship because it's just there for a while and has to move on.

I would challenge such people that they don't know and understand modern missions. They don't understand a variety of ways that God works. Billy Graham never stayed anywhere in his life except Montreat, North Carolina in the hills.

What about Akbar Haq? I could name hundreds and it's interesting. This is quite a thing now in the house fellowship movement here in this country. Hundreds of Christian leaders who have never lived on the mission field, they're living at home, some within LM, and yet have had dynamic, lasting ministries overseas.

If someone can travel from Chicago and have a powerful ministry in India even though he's there only two weeks, how much more can a ship, working with people who know the language, working with those volunteers who come from shore, have a powerful, long-lasting ministry even though they sail on? In fact, in many ways it's better that we sail on because it preaches a message as we sail out of port. I must confess, as I look back, 35 years of living for Jesus, a little more than that now, one of the most emotional experiences I've had at a number of times is to see the ship sail away. To be with those people on shore, I can't even speak about it without getting emotional, but to see those people on shore there at Port Maunder and to be with them as the ship pulled away, and it takes a long time when they got two anchors to pull up, got lots of photos of it, is a powerful experience, and it's an experience that often changes people's lives.

People are standing on that wharf recommitting their lives to Jesus Christ. People are saying, if this bunch of young people, and they know that many are young and are in training, from 30 nations, if they can do what we've seen, because they see the ship, they see what happens in the port, even though some of them would be quick to see the problems. I met with the volunteers.

They, in Spanish, they immediately pulled up what they felt were some of the problems because it was a short visit, and they were hoping to get more in-depth relationships with more of the crew, not easily in a three-day visit when there's a language barrier. That's a weakness, but as I answered their questions, you could just see them saying, that's it, that's it, and brothers and sisters who are here this morning and who are listening to this tape, we need to be equipped to answer the questions people are asking, not just about the ship, about Owen, about world missions, about whether hell exists, about whether Jesus Christ really means for us to go to the whole world and evangelize, and that's part of the training that we, of course, are going through even when we're involved in such a ministry. Maybe more research will be done someday about the many ministries that have been born as a result of the visit of the ship.

Often, ministries have multiple roots, so we don't want to claim this has happened because of Owen. We want to be careful of how we phrase such things. Many are telling us today, and we have many books about it, some books about it, that nationals are the key to doing the job.

Maybe that's a good reason why some of us should be involved, not necessarily in the church planting ministry, in the long-term ministry, but rather in stirring nationals to do the job in their own country, in equipping them, in training them, in providing inspiration, catalysts, finance, and the tools. I believe Owen's commitment to nationals, like the work we have in India and other countries, and our commitment to internationals, it can go on simultaneously. God will lead different people in different ways.

I just think that's so exciting. I don't think, however, we really would have these two ships if it wasn't also for our vision to reach the masses. Now, let's be honest in operation mobilization.

In many of our fields, we are no longer reaching masses with the gospel. We have had to sacrifice that in order to go deeper, in order to get into church planting, and in some cases, in order to try to help in people's physical needs. In a number of our fields, we are able to do both, but other fields, it's proving to be very difficult.

The statistics are there, and I praise God that we can maintain the balance in this difficult area. But one of the things I must say that warms my batteries about the ship ministry is that it's reaching millions. We live in a world of five or six billion.

We now have only a small number of ministries that are really giving top priority to reaching the masses. Billy Graham is still one of them. There are a number of others, and it is not going to be easy for OM in the 90s to do all these other things we want to do with our tremendous ideals and to still reach the masses with the word of God.

Of course, in my excitement as usual, I make mistakes. I like to see everybody, when they get off the ship, given a gospel tract, and I saw there was no one at the gangway doing it except M. Namuco. That wasn't his job, and then he stopped.

So when he stopped, I jumped in by the gangway and started giving out tracts. Then a young man from that country came to me and he said, I'm actually doing this job. He was on the other end of the gangway and suddenly wondered why all the people coming off the ship were over the end of the gospel tract.

So much for misplaced versus zeal. But what a thrill to see so many people receiving something of the gospel. One of the very exciting things now about Lagos II, and it's also true of Dulux, is they have that separate auditorium so that when there are conferences going on, conferences about almost every subject you can imagine, and the conference ministry is one of the major ministries on the ship that fits in almost every one of these goals and aims and areas that I'm sharing with you.

But while that's happening in that other lounge, people are just going in for 25 minutes, getting a ship presentation, having the gospel often shared with them, and then they're out again. The same thing is often happening at the coffee bar. So there's a lot more evangelism on Lagos II than we could ever have on Lagos because of the size, the extra auditorium, and the way the ship is constructed.

It really is exciting. I must confess you have to see it in action to get the full impact of it. That's why I'm urging people to watch the videos.

I've also urged the people who produce these videos because most of the videos are low profile because they often get on secular television. And I've asked that there might someday be a ship video that isn't so low profile that really shows what a spiritual evangelistic battleship this thing is and how many people are coming to Christ or being reached with the gospel simultaneously with all the other things that are happening. One of the things that helps us reach so many people with the gospel is the fact that the ship breaks into the media, radio, television, front page.

Often testimony in the gospel comes into this. You say, well, was this one of the original visions of OM? Did you know that in 1962 when we launched into 63, the big campaign, it may have been before 62, I was so idealistic that my burden was that as the teams hit the towns and cities of France that it would hit the press and the gospel would go to millions of people because of the impact made by these teams that would get into the newspapers. It actually never happened very much.

There were a few exceptions. And so now here we are many years later where we're having this phenomenal press coverage. I gave so many interviews to magazines and newspapers, even during my short time on Logos 2. It was quite amazing.

And some of them were secular magazines. They want testimonies. They want the story of how this man came to Christ.

Just the testimony of our captains and other officers is spiritual dynamite in the secular, unbelieving world that we're often working in. I've also written down here, I had these points numbered but I didn't bother to

give you the numbers, impacting a nation. You say, is that statement over the top? Probably in some ways it is.

We have a movement now called DAWN, Discipling Whole Nations. Talk about an over-the-top statement. Come on, Discipling Whole Nations.

We're having trouble discipling a local church, much less a whole nation. But it's still a good name. And it's one of the most amazing movements in the world today, DAWN.

And if other people can use some of these great, high-sounding, challenging terms, then I don't think there's any problem for us to have as a goal, when that ship comes in, impacting a nation. Sometimes the government leaders are there the first day. Sometimes things get into the newspaper that go out and television through the whole nation.

Now it often seems that the forces of darkness and evil are so great that our attempt to impact a nation soon is overwhelmed. That's something I've struggled with all my life. After Billy Graham comes, or Luis Palau comes, or whatever we do in the church, it seems a year later there's not always so much left.

Have you ever felt that? But God may have a different way of measuring. And maybe it's a matter of definition. I think it's something we ought to think about more and pray about more.

And lastly, in terms of goals and aims and what the ship's doing, of course, spreading the vision. The vision of world evangelism, the international nights, the Operation World Conferences. There's a dozen different ways that we're spreading the vision.

I've barely taken time to speak in depth about the literature ministry. But you can be sure that the book exhibition, everything connected with it, the ministry to the whole man through the educational books, or just the testimony that we believe in the whole person because we sell general books, I think is more significant than we may realize. And it says something even to the Christians who come on board.

The spreading of the vision through literature, through audio tape. The ship distributes more audio tapes than any other part. Perhaps all the rest of ON put together.

A number of people, even after I shared, who raised their hand to get a copy of the message within an hour. I was quite amazed. I wish we could do this in more places.

And I'm convinced as we look at Latin America, as we look at Asia, we see a modern missionary movement. The church is beginning to catch the vision. There are major national missionary conferences.

Workers are beginning to go out. We, with the ships and through prayer, and that means every prayer partner and every supporter of this work, have been involved in depth in what God has been doing in that new movement. What's our response? We need to receive this vision.

Maybe listen to this tape again. We need to receive this vision. We need to, if necessary as I did when I was on the ships a few weeks ago, make a specific recommitment to the ships, to the vision of the ship.

Of course, I've never lost my commitment to the ship, but commitment has many different levels that it functions at. And I must confess that I needed to recommit myself to the people, to the vision. I've already begun to make bookings to get back there in 1992 to do my little part.

Secondly, I believe we need to pray more for the ships. You know, I have prayer meetings which seem to be getting shorter in some places. We actually have more to pray about.

And so we don't pray for the ships as much as we used to in those prayer meetings. Now, the other side of the story is I believe there are more people praying than ever before. In fact, I estimate there might be up to a quarter of a million people praying for the ship.

No wonder it's such a Catholic bomb when it comes into a port. Perhaps when we get to heaven, we'll discover that it in fact was those prayer partners who were the real key to the ministry of Lagos and Doulos and other ships like Anastasis as well. What a joy it was to have Lagos II and Anastasis together in Africa.

In fact, on Lagos II, I saw this very new T-shirt. It's an Anastasis Lagos II T-shirt. What a testimony to God's unity in the midst of diversity.

Let's pray more and let's commit ourselves to mobilizing more prayer. We need people who are going to talk about this vision. Many video cassettes about the ship are sitting on shelves.

They need to be taken out. They need to be shown. Some of them are only nine minutes.

You can show that even in a church meeting. And God, I believe, wants to use us right here on this team and every other team in OM to be involved in varying degrees. Thirdly, I believe more of us ought to get some time on the ship.

Now, I know that's more easily said than done, but I was amazed when Burt Volker shared with me how many leaders he invites to the ship and how few accept the invitation. Is OM bored with the ships? Maybe we're afraid of being seasick. Maybe the invitations need a thousand-pound check with them.

I don't know. But I would like to see more people in OM getting some time on the ships. I'd like to see more prayer partners and Christian leaders.

That is happening. But we've agreed in general it could happen more. It takes organizing.

And, of course, there will be disappointments because this isn't a perfect ministry. Fourthly, I believe all of us could get involved in recruiting for the ships, not seeing it if our field is somewhere else in the world as some kind of opposition, but seeing it more as a basic training. I was just with someone very disappointed, wanted to join YWAM, had some experience with it, but they were told, you either go through DTC, Discipleship Training, or you don't get accepted.

Not for continuing. You can go in an early stage. And I'm not saying we should require everyone to go to the ship before they go on in other parts of OM, but I think in general we need a greater emphasis in OM on basic training.

And that just takes time in preparing people for their longer-term ministry. So let's keep that recruiting challenge in front of us. And then, finally, we can all get involved in helping find the finance for the ships.

To be quite honest, the thing that made the biggest impact on me is the lives of the people. That's what really hits me on the ship. I tell you, these people are committed.

I can be as critical of OM and our lack of commitment and zeal as probably anyone. May God teach me more balance, grace, and self-control. But as I spent time in the engine room, as I spent time with so many different people in group and individuals, I was just spoken to by the zeal and by the commitment.

Of course there are always some who are discouraged. Of course there's always some who are going to go away hurt. That's happening with people who don't go into any ministry at all.

We can't be in the world and not have experiences in which we're hurt. Being hurt is not something unique to OM or the ships. It's unique to this planet.

And what I think we sometimes fail to see are the number of people who are really being helped and counseled in depth within the scope of the ship ministry through visitors, through men with pastoral gifts on the ship, on doulos. I told the crew and staff on doulos that I estimated there were at least 30 people on that ship with pastoral gifts. But those gifts are not going to be released if people don't take the initiative.

Because I can tell you 80% of the people in OM are basically shy by nature and in their background. They're not great initiators. They're not going to go down to the lower dormitory.

By the way, I went down there and got in the women's section and almost got in trouble. And bang on doors. Would you like a little counseling here? There has to be initiative.

But I can tell you at the end of the day, a lot of people are getting help for their in-depth needs on these two ships. It is not a superficial ministry. It's not a matter of just working people all day long.

So they're exhausted. Plenty of people out in the world are exhausted at night as well. But I believe there is an in-depth work of the Holy Spirit going on.

Let's go out and find the finance and the prayer power so that these brothers and sisters can go forward in their ministry. And that includes those who are laboring so hard in Mospach and in many other parts of OM because the ship in OM is an in-depth partnership that in a sense stands and falls together. Let's go out, find the finance for this massive electrical conversion job that must take place on the Doulas.

It's a big risk operation. It's a reinvestment into the ship. And I got some real exposure to what that's going to cost in terms of sweat, work and manpower.

Going down in what was once a water tank and seeing four welders who are going to spend a month or two there in much higher temperatures than the engine room. The engine room was bad enough when I went through there. But I got into this water tank with all these welders and I thought, how can they work here seven, eight, nine hours a day to prepare that water tank for the new generator? Yes, I was, to say the least, deeply challenged by the commitment and the vision and the zeal of the people I met on those two ships.

And I would ask you to consider greater involvement with us in this ministry and this project. We'd love to correspond with some of you. We'd love to hear from people.

We'd love to be able to send more information. Let's pray. Our God and Father, we thank you for these twenty powerful years of ministry.

We thank you for so many thousands who can trace their decision to become a Christian back to a visit to one of the ships. Or even like that Sri Lankan who's now a leader in the church in Colombo today, who

was converted for an open air meeting in front of the ship. Lord, we thank you that through the heartaches and the disappointments and the mistakes, yes Lord, even our sins again and again, we have seen you overrule.

And we've seen your youth, weak, ordinary, often struggling people just like me, Lord, used to accomplish your purposes. To see your church strengthened, to see greater vision, greater action in evangelism and discipleship. Again, the tasks sometimes look so overwhelming, especially in these huge countries with huge populations in the ports.

Tremendous poverty problems and drug problems. We just pray that the people on the ship will not be overwhelmed by what they see, but somehow will be strengthened by your Holy Spirit in the inner person to go forward in that ministry. We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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