

Message 10

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the importance of global missions, the reality of suffering, and finding joy in God amidst discouragement.

Duration: 54:12

Scripture: Joshua 10:12-14, Psalm 18:38-42, Isaiah 40:31, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Luke 15:11-32

Topics: "Faith In Action", "Perseverance In Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to be proactive in their faith and to share the message of God with others. They mention that they have free books available for distribution, but ask for donations if the books are for personal use. The speaker also mentions an annual report of the ship ministry in 2004, highlighting the provision of God and the people who have visited the ship. They briefly mention a prayer challenge news item from Sudan, but state that they may show it tomorrow. The sermon then focuses on the importance of continuing to work and not giving in to discouragement, using the scripture 'You don't work, you don't eat.' Despite difficult circumstances, the speaker encourages rejoicing in the Lord and finding strength in Him.

Transcript

Bertil Inquist, the founder of Operation Mercy, literature in missions and church development, Jerry Davey, cookbooks, firemen, jazz musicians, and dairy farmers. That's a hot chapter. So pick that up.

It's just any donation. How many of you now have Operation World? Raise your hand. That's encouraging.

You may wonder why should an ordinary person get Operation World? It's real simple. Because if you love Jesus, you love people. This is a book about people.

The next time you, Afghanistan is flashed on your television at the news, you can turn to A for Afghanistan and see what God is doing there. They talk about Algeria, you can turn to Algeria. Every nation in the world.

You know what some people pay, I don't know if they're still doing this, to give their children an Encyclopedia Britannica? I mean, it used to be \$1,000. For a donation, even the cost price of \$10, even less, you can have this encyclopedia. Your children will use it.

Your grandchildren will use it. Believe me, this is a very significant book. Many believe the most important mission book in the history of the church.

Even to read about what God is doing in the United States. The author of this book is a very close friend who was on our ship for a year or two. He has another book.

We don't have it here, but you can email me. I'll send it to you. It's brilliant.

The title of his other book is, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*. You know how easy it is to be small-minded. Just lock into our little denomination or our little church and forget the millions of other believers around the world who are just like you and me.

I never met most of you before. I didn't have to, like, investigate you before I preached. Check out whether you're really believers.

Check out Romney. See, you know, what is this? Is this a cult? Because the fellowship of the saints and the discernment and the wisdom God gives, the union to the Word of God and so the *Church is Bigger Than You Think* is a great book. This is a great book.

We hope you'll take, as we close the book down, book table down after tomorrow night, you'll take a final look. We're still hoping for a few of you to take the *Skeptic's Guide to Global AIDS Crisis* and send it to someone. I sent it to Charles Colson about 40 minutes ago, a man who I admire, and sent me a letter recently.

I gave him a personal note and stuck this in there. And a lot of pastors have never read one item about HIV and AIDS, apart from say an article. And yet this is sweeping the world.

40 million infected. One million now Americans infected. Of course, we're a rich nation.

We just pump the medication into them, keep alive for five or ten years. But I'd urge you to become proactive and we have some more of those books free if you'll give them to others. If it's for yourself, we'd like you to give a donation.

If you have given significantly in the offering tonight or last night, then just take this. You know, you're probably given everything, you don't have anything left. So just take it and we'll count it square.

Also, just before I left, I grabbed some copies of the annual report of the ship ministry. And that little leaflet will give you a quick overview of the ship ministry in 2004 and it will blow your circuits. The money that God has provided.

The people that have visited the ship. So we have a few of those. The annual report for 2004.

I wanted to show a quick prayer challenge news item from Sudan. It was on DVD, but maybe it's not possible to show it. I do, but maybe tomorrow night.

Is that a bad copy? Okay. Okay. Don't worry about that.

Let's turn in our Bibles now to the book of Habakkuk. But before that, let's pray. I especially wanted to pray for islands.

Just for islands. And all the islands of the world are listed in Operation World. Let's start with the famous island where I live.

Great Britain. It's actually several islands. Ireland is a separate island.

Jersey Island. But it's mainly this one big island. And every time we want to go to the continent, got to get on a boat.

Now, recent years, we go through the tunnel. Let's pray. Father, we pray for Great Britain.

It was once the greatest missionary sending nation in the world. We thank you that you're still working in Britain, though it's a desperate situation with 1.5 million Muslims in some cities, 14% Muslim. And we pray for those that are trying to work among Muslims.

And we cry out for this nation as there's been some more difficulties today, some explosive devices. We thank you that many died. But we know the nation is in the grip of fear.

Pray that may cause some to seek your face. And then, Lord Jesus, we would reach out to the Faroe Islands, where there's just an amazing percentage, maybe 50% of all the Faroese people that love you, Lord Jesus. We thank you that this last ship we got was from a Faroese company.

And we pray for the Faroes. We thank you for one of our captains from the Faroe Islands. We're praying for more workers, especially for our ships from the Faroes.

And we reach out to Iceland, where things are a little chilly most of the year. But we pray for spiritual defrost among hardened people in a difficult mission field. And we pray for Greenland.

Lord, I think of probably a hundred times I've flown over Greenland, or just south of it, and have never landed there. But I pray for the small church in Greenland. And then, Lord Jesus, we would reach out to the giant island of Australia.

We thank you for so many churches, thousands of churches in Australia, and thousands of missionaries sent out from around the globe. But, Lord, we're asking for more, as 90% of the population doesn't even bother to go into a church on Sunday. A lot of atheists, a lot of agnostics, now Islam growing in Sydney.

We pray for our team working among Muslims in Sydney. And then we pray, Lord Jesus, for New Zealand, way down there in the southern hemisphere. Lord, where they film Lord of the Rings.

Lord, again, we thank you for so many great churches. We thank you for many missionaries, quite a few on OM. Lord, you want to do more in New Zealand.

And then, Lord, we'd reach up to Hawaii. We just think of the challenge of Hawaii and all the people who live there. We just cry out to you that there could be a greater work of grace in all the islands of Hawaii.

And then to Japan. Lord, I just thank you for the wonderful visits the ships have had to Japan. I thank you for the privilege of ministering there.

Probably, in my view, the most unique, totally different nation in the world. And we just cry to you for Japan and Taiwan. And then, Lord, the Maldives, where there's almost no church whatsoever, almost no believers.

And Socotra, where also there's almost no believers. We thank you also for Madagascar and the breakthroughs there have been lately in that island off the coast of Africa. We pray for Sicily.

And we cry out to you for Cyprus. And we believe you want to accomplish more on these Mediterranean islands, which are very, very unreached. And many small, unlisted items are islands where the church hardly even exists.

We pray for the islands of the Mediterranean. Lord, there are many other islands. We thank you for giving us a vision tonight of the islands of the world.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Praise the Lord.

It's exciting to pray. And our final little prayer meeting tomorrow, that I'm going to have the privilege of leading. I hope you'll come.

And maybe when you come, you'll come with one quick prayer request you have for your ministry. That's going to be the focus tomorrow morning, your ministry. And we're going to get you to quickly share.

And the person next to you is going to pray for your particular request and see if we can make it right around the circle. So we look forward to our final prayer time tomorrow morning. And we'll try to start right at nine o'clock.

Now back to the Old Testament and the famous book of Habakkuk. Turn to the book of Habakkuk and turn to chapter three. Try not to neglect the Old Testament.

And I appreciate some of the young people going the extra mile to be here because my heart is so much with young people. Many of the meetings I take are just only young people. It's so exciting.

And every year for, I don't know, as far back as I can remember, I take college campus meetings here in the United States. This year it was Cornerstone in Grand Rapids. And some years ago it was Gordon College to the south of here.

Of course, Biola many times and Moody many times. And God is working in our Christian colleges and universities. There was a recent article about that in Christianity Today, one of my favorite magazines.

A resurgence, almost like a revival of reality flowing through our Christian college campuses. That's really exciting. So thank you for being here.

I don't know whether to read the whole chapter, the third chapter. It's so, it's so unique because my main thoughts are based on the last verses. But let's read the whole chapter.

A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, on Shigiona. Lord, I have heard of your fame. I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.

Renew them in our day. That's a good prayer, isn't it? Don't we want to see that? In our time, make them known. In wrath, remember mercy.

Here's a powerful little, little phrase. In wrath, remember mercy. God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran.

His glory covered the heavens, and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise. Rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.

Plague went before him. Pestilence followed his steps. He stood and shook the earth.

He looked and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled. The age-old hills collapsed.

His ways are eternal. I saw the tent of Cushon in distress, and the dwellings of Midian in anguish. Were you angry with the rivers, O Lord? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea? When you rode with your horses and your victorious chariots, you uncovered your bow.

You called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed.

Torrents of water swept by the deep, roared and lifted its waves on high. Sun and moon stood still in the heavens. At the glint of your flaming or flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear, in wrath you strode through the earth, and in anger you thrashed the nations.

You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness. You stripped him from head to foot, Selah.

With his own spear you pierced his head. When his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding, you trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters. I heard in my heart pounding.

My lips quivered at the sound. Decay crept into my bones. My legs trembled.

Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. And then the verses that I want to speak on tonight. Though the fig tree does not bud, there are no grapes on the vines.

Though the olive crop fails, the fields produce no food. Though there are no sheep in the pen, no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior.

The sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to go on the heights.

For the director of music on my string instruments. I want to especially speak tonight from this passage, but especially on the subject of dealing with discouragement. Certainly in my life, discouragement has just, I can't remember the really early days, but it's generally always been there.

It seems to sometimes come on an almost daily basis. Sometimes it's very quick. It just, it sort of passes through and I deal with it from the scripture or through praise or through just getting on with what's at hand.

Sometimes one of the best things to do when you're facing discouragement or doubt or some difficult emotion is just get on with the work at hand. After all, that's what most people in the world have to do anyway. If they don't, they don't eat.

It's an old scripture. You don't work, you don't eat. Now I know society, especially in Europe has been trying to overcome that scripture.

And so lots of people live off the social system who don't work and don't want to work. And they find collecting money from the government is a lot easier than working. And some even make more money from the government and various benefits than they would just going on the minimum wage.

I've heard that some of that happens sometimes in the United States as well. So sometimes when we're dealing with difficult emotions, we should just get on with it. At the same time, we need to know what the Bible says.

I was just on the phone with a friend from Sierra Leone, an African friend. He's in turmoil right now. His son was just killed on the highway at 19 years of age a month ago.

He left the horrendous situation in Sierra Leone because he wanted to give his family something better in America. He got exposed to some of that because he was on our ship years ago. And that's the risk you have in an international ministry, taking people from all nations, including some of the poorest nations in the world.

They learn about other things. They learn about other nations. And you can't blame them.

They want to go there. My father left the Netherlands because he wanted a better life in America. His father never found it.

My father, through Jesus, did find it. So my friend that I was just on the phone with, he's in turmoil because it seems that everything is now collapsed. He left his native land with all of its suffering and all the ministry he could have there.

He was a leader there and settled in Florida to give a better life to his son and his son's dead at 19. What does he do now? Again and again through the years, right after my conversion, I discovered the reality of suffering. Billy Graham says life at its best is filled with sadness.

There's a verse in Corinthians that has helped me along the way where it talks about the fact that God allows us to go through different suffering. And it seems to indicate that one of the reasons is so that we can help other people who are going through the same kind of suffering. A very powerful passage there in Corinthians.

Now let's look at this passage for a moment. The fig tree does not bud. A lot of the people in that day lived according, you know, agriculture.

Society has radically changed in a hundred years. Most people don't live in an agricultural environment. They do in quite a few other countries.

Do you know that? It is so completely different in other countries. And some countries, 80% of the whole culture is agricultural related. And so when they have a drought and when there's complications, like many poor countries, they cannot sell their cotton because the cotton industry in America is highly subsidized through your wonderful taxes.

You just love to pay all those taxes so you can subsidize the cotton industry. That's so important so that we can sell our cotton cheaper so that people in poor countries can starve to death. I don't know if you've ever read about that.

A lot of us prefer not to read those kinds of things. But as we look out across the world, and then we look at this passage, we realize this is a desperate situation. This is pretty well as bad as it could get.

There's no crop, there's no sheep, there's no cattle. And yet, what does it say in verse 18? Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior.

For the sovereign Lord is my strength. And I think the key to running the race, and that's our theme all this week, we don't want to just start well, we want to finish well, is that our strength comes from our sovereign Lord. It doesn't come primarily through what we do.

Now, I have to be honest, I'm very fulfilled in my ministry, and I get a lot of challenge through what I'm doing. It's a privilege to share God's word. And so I receive strength to some degree from what I do.

It may be a letter, it may be a phone call, it may be counseling with someone, praying with someone. I just prayed with a dear elderly lady who thinks her husband may die tonight. But the end of the day, especially when things are going wrong, especially when prayer doesn't seem to be answered, we have to get our strength from the Lord himself.

Why do we have this scripture? Why do we have similar scriptures? Because God wants us to know how to draw our strength not from our ministry, not from our friends, not from circumstances, but from himself. Until we get our walk with the Lord beyond the circumstances that are impacting us, we will never be the kind of disciples that Jesus wants us to be. We must not allow our spiritual temperature, here's a different way of expressing it, you may want to write it down, we must not allow our spiritual temperature to be determined by the weather outside.

We may get buffeted, we may be in a Habakkuk situation, we may feel rejection, we may somehow not be seeing prayer answered, even for our own family, and that if we allow that to determine our spiritual climate, we will not be the disciples God wants us to be. Now, I've had the privilege of observing and working with a lot of consistent Christians. Isn't that something that encourages you when you meet consistent Christians? The greatest tribute that ever could be paid to my wife and I was paid by someone who wrote in this book, because I have felt at times that I was inconsistent.

I've never painted myself as being consistent, but those who have worked with me for 30 and 40 years somehow made that decision that they saw consistency in my life, probably including my weaknesses and my struggles, that seems to be consistent. My poor golf seems to be fairly consistent, and again I proved it today, but I still had a lot of fun, and it's fun to watch the golfers. It was really fun to watch Richard.

Richard has a really good practice swing, and he gets up there, and the ball's there, and boy, he looks like one of the best golfers you could ever watch, this practice swing. Now, he has a little difficulty when he actually goes to hit the ball, but his practice swing is tremendous, and he's, you know, he has a good wood shot and was in the woods several times, but praise God we had a lot of fun. Have you ever heard of Ronald Dunn? Ronald Dunn was a southerner, I think he was a Texan.

He wrote that great book about prayer. He came over to the, when I first met him at Keswick, Ronald Dunn was addicted to Coca-Cola. Have you ever met a Coca-Holic? He could not function without Coca-Cola, and it was a little harder to find where we were in Keswick, but he managed to find some Coke and get ready for the evening service.

The next time he came, somehow the Lord had set him free from his Coca-Cola addiction. I'd never heard of anything, but Ronald Dunn lost his son after praying and praying and praying, his son committed suicide. Anisha Roche, an Arab friend of mine, you may have heard of him, boy, is he an out-of-the-box guy.

He's the most bold person debating Muslims that anybody I've ever met. He's got a lot of books. He lost his son through suicide.

My friend Larry Smith lost his daughter, jumped off a building and committed suicide. And to me, when these things happen among godly praying people, it is a greater indication that we must have a theology, a solid theology of suffering. We must not have a theology that only functions if we don't suffer.

We avoid suffering, we get blessed, we prosper, our prayers are answered, we live happily ever after. Our kids and our grandkids, everybody's wonderful. Unreality.

Praise God for every exception. One of my friends is Jonathan McCrosty. All of Jonathan McCrosty's children are going on for God.

But Jonathan was in a car accident 20 years ago and has been a paraplegic ever since. And one of my more extreme friends sent me a tape blaming me if we didn't raise up Jonathan McCrosty from the wheelchair, saying I ought to fly him to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where they were having so many miracles. And anybody who's done research into the miracles and the healings knows that it's only like one percent of all these people that are prayed for where something, you know, seems to happen that is unusual.

And if that's the case, praise God for the one percent. But you can't build your theology on a one percent. That's God's exception.

That's the unusual. Just think of what Johnny Erickson Tata has suffered with people who believe that everybody must be healed. And this woman, I tell you, she is a holy ghost tiger.

And when she dove into that pond and she broke her neck, little did we know that millions, millions of people in the world would be blessed because of that horrendous accident, because she has one of the most powerful ministries of any person I know in this century. God knows how to work through a crisis. God knows how to work when the stall is empty, there doesn't seem to be much fruit.

When an evangelist pours out his heart as I have, and nobody comes forward. That's our favorite thing. We give an invitation, nobody comes forward.

We feel so bad, we decide to give an easier invitation for anybody who wants to rededicate their life. Eventually we get some people forward and we feel a little better and we go home. You know, God must have more of a sense of humor than us, right? We have to have a theology of suffering.

We have to know what to do when our prayers don't seem to be answered. I have never found this a hindrance to my praying. In fact, it's caused me to pray more, to persevere, to worship God in the midst of mystery.

I've been praying for Afghanistan for 48 years. It's almost the number one nation in my life. My own nephew, as somehow my life impacted him, he went to Asia, he's just completed 25 years, most of it in Afghanistan.

Another friend of mine, when he was kidnapped, he was never seen again. Only after 48 years, I'm gonna just remind you where Afghanistan is, tucked between Iran, Pakistan, there's Afghanistan. Only in the last couple of years have I begun to see answers to 48 years of praying.

That's a lifetime. That's a lifetime. But I never, despite all the discouragement, the people who were killed, the invasion of the Russians, the setbacks, missionaries almost all leaving the country when the Russians came in, all kinds of other tragedies, I just kept praying.

I just kept distributing Operation World, which teaches you how to pray for Afghanistan. I kept challenging people to go there. Another friend from the Netherlands went there.

He was a pharmacy, a chemist, forget how you call that in America, and he was slayed. He was slayed by a sword. His own children walked in the house and saw their father slayed and murdered by the sword, the blood running on the floor.

Disappointment, setback, heartache. And yet somehow, you keep persevering, you keep praying. What are some of the basic reasons why people get discouraged? Number one, I think, is poor health.

That can be very discouraging. You pray. I mean, it's amazing what people will do to get good health.

I mean, the vitamin industry is one of the biggest industries in the whole of the United States. I noticed in a lot of Christian magazines, they emphasize every kind of vitamin and royal jelly. Have you seen the royal jelly ads? I mean, you just, you know, bees, something that comes out of a bee.

And I'm not saying these things don't help people. I'm only mentioning that we are, I believe, over-infatuated with wanting to have good health. There must be some more sane approach to the whole thing.

And some of these extreme people, in their teaching, they basically give the idea you don't die. You don't die. When in fact, some of the people who had that teaching, guess what, friends? They died before they were 50.

They died before they were 50. People that taught God heals everything, you don't die until like 90, maybe 95. We keep upping it.

100, maybe you're allowed to die in heaven. What is all the talk about heaven? If the main thing is to stay alive, then what is all this talk about heaven? Randy Alcorn, by the way, has done a new book. It's that thick on the subject of heaven.

You want one? He gave me a whole bunch of them. I don't know why we didn't get any on the table, but I'll be happy to send you a big thick book about heaven. Bill Bright wrote a thinner book.

His is called Heaven or Hell. I'm sure that has a lot of balance. Let us by faith embrace the bigger picture, the glory of God.

To be with Christ is better than to be here in some nursing home down the road for five or ten years, barely communicating. That's something I don't understand. I have to go back to Habakkuk when I visit nursing homes and see people who are basically unable to do anything, just sitting in the aisle in their wheelchair, then wheeled back into their little room at night and put into bed.

I wonder how many of us pray passionately for people who have Alzheimer's, that our scientists could get a cure for Alzheimer's. Of course, if you're a believer, the greatest cure in the world is when you go to heaven. I think of Robertson McQuilkin, a close friend of mine from Columbia International University.

He left almost all of his ministry to care for his wife. I once had lunch with him there in their home in Columbia, South Carolina, and only a year or two ago she went to be with the Lord. He had a theology of suffering, and so Robertson McQuilkin went through those 20 years with his Alzheimer's wife in the house.

Not everybody can do that, and he kept rejoicing in God the whole time. These are my heroes. I'm not too big into sprinters, people that, you know, they run for a few months or a few years, then you don't see them.

I'll pray for them, but my heroes are the marathon runners. The Oswald J. Smiths who ran right to the end, the Ken Taylors, whose funeral I was just at in Wheaton a month or so ago, who ran the race. He was almost going to the office for the last two weeks, and God took him to heaven.

Homer Payne, a Dallas Seminary graduate, 90 years of age. He's gone down to Bolivia for another summer evangelistic crusade. Men and women, all of these people, they've been through heartaches, they've been through suffering.

Most of them have at least one of their children that have got away from Jesus, and some of them died. Ken Taylor died with some of his children or grandchildren not walking yet with Jesus. Now, he had 10 children, so he had a little more scope than the average.

I was just with my friend Jack Walker. It's amazing how certain Americans get into this, you know, maximum baby thing. I don't know whether Bill Gothard got this going and I have this friend Jack Walker.

He had 12 girls. You think he's satisfied with 12 girls? This is only one wife. One woman popped all these out.

Then he had three sons. The last time I was with Jack, he has 89 grandchildren. I never forgot one day I was with him.

He said, George, you know what? I've been poor most of my life. Well, I guess so, you know, with 15 kids. And then he said, I'm praying that now that they're married, some of them are going to start sending some money back.

And one of them finally sent him a thousand bucks. He was so happy, he gave me a hundred dollars. Oh, my.

We are a nation of all kinds of people, a nation of phenomenal diversity, and that's one of the reasons I encourage God's people to understand that God's unity is in the midst of diversity. God's unity is in the midst of diversity. We don't have to copy people.

Did I come here and preach global jacket theology, huh? Did I say, if you don't wear a global jacket, you know, God's not going to really use you? You know, I was tempted, but I held it back. I got so extreme that I got a global underwear. And it was a very special day in my life at a Christian rock festival in Chicago.

When all these musicians were so wild, I thought I can be wild. It was late at night. I got carried away and I, you know, I just took my trousers off to show a couple thousand people my global underwear.

It was only boxer shorts. It was no big deal. You'd think that lightning struck.

Even these musicians, rock and rollers, were shocked. And then it went on the internet. And then when InterVarsity advertised me that I was speaking at Urbana, went global, George Behrer, the man that takes his trousers down and shows people his global underwear.

You know, you're laughing, but my wife was not laughing over this particular situation. And when I got back home, suddenly my global underwear disappeared. Well, you can be sure I am not preaching that it's necessary to wear global jackets or have global underwear.

God's unity is in the midst of diversity. Sometimes in Bible college, we get a preacher and then we get another preacher and it seemed like they were contradicting each other. I used to get a kick out of that.

But I saw often it wasn't contradiction. It was paradox. And it was different men and women of God seeing things in different viewpoints.

I just think that's so beautiful. But let's move on quickly because the time is going. Many people are discouraged because of the challenge of health.

Secondly, many people are discouraged because of tough church situations. How many of you have ever been in the midst of a tough church situation? A division, a lot of hurt, all that kind of thing. Eighty percent of you.

It happens. Some people now, they never go to church anymore because they just, they don't want to get into another hurtful church situation. Now, let me just say, I travel all over the states.

We have many great churches. We have churches and I've been in some that haven't had any major division for years and years. But probably about 50 percent have.

Which means if you've had two different churches in your life, probably one of them was a tough situation. But the beautiful thing is to see the way, and I think of Romans 8.28, God can overrule these tough situations. And one of the things I'm asking people to understand and crying out to the Lord about is to not have unrealistic unrealistic expectation about our churches.

Now, we should have realistic expectation and there are things that that are clearly sometimes wrong and they have to be dealt with. I'm not talking about that. But generally speaking, we can expect too much from our pastor and from his wife in a complicated day where people are watching other preachers on television.

They're watching DVDs and videos and they're comparing their little pastor from the village church down the road with some other pastor that may have a greater communication gift. Actually, many great pastors that have had great churches are not necessarily super communicators. I mean, the better they are, of course, but they're pastors.

They have a pastor's heart. They visit people. They love people.

They care for people. They're there at the wedding. They're there at the funeral.

Pastoring is not just preaching. And I think in some places we put too much emphasis on the preaching and on the communication and it creates an unrealistic situation. And quite a few churches, because they

felt their pastor wasn't up to standard on the preaching and the teaching, they fired him.

And in a number of cases, it took them years to get someone else. By then the church split and when the guy got in the pulpit, it wasn't that much better anyway. So what was that all about? I tell you, in church life, we need a lot of wisdom.

But one thing for sure, we must not allow it to personally discourage us. Our joy does not come from our local church and whether it's going well or not. Let the local church life be water above the glass.

If it's going well in your church, hallelujah, water over the top of the glass. You know, a root beer float. But let Jesus fill the glass.

Let Jesus be the bottom line and fill the glass. And you'll be a lot happier and you'll be a marathon runner and go right to the end, regardless of church situations. Other people are discouraged because of unanswered prayer, especially in regard to their own children.

That is discouraging. And my wife and I, we have we have, you know, crawled through that one as all of our children followed Jesus until their mid-20s. And then our son, who got his head full of a lot of things at university, University of Southampton, England, honor student.

And he went on OM that summer in Belgium. He had a great time, but he could not relate post-university back to the local church. Different ones in that church started to walk away from Jesus.

It's a well-known good Baptist church. It was like a domino effect. And he walked away or fell away, whatever you want.

And then shortly after that, in a very different way, our daughter, who's sort of an all-or-nothing kind, walked away from her Christian faith. We decided this is not going to break our spirit. This is not going to kill our prayer life or hinder our ministry.

We're going to take it to Jesus. The last chapter in the book is not written. We know the story of the prodigal son who comes back.

We know stories of so many other people. I'm sure you have some of those stories who have wandered away from the Lord, but they've come back. And so as far as I know, my wife and I never lost a day in discouragement or confusion or hurt because of this traumatic event in our lives, which was a huge thing in our movement and lots of people talking about it.

Lots of people talking about it. Don't let the talk of other people, even if some of it's gossip, don't let that destroy your walk with Jesus. In fact, I don't know how you can ever accomplish anything and not have somebody criticize you.

If nobody is speaking against you, if nobody is criticizing you, maybe you better check out whether you're doing anything. Maybe you're a blob. The last thing you want to be is an evangelical Bible blob.

And as we begin to do something, as we begin to speak out the Word of God, as we begin to share our faith, we'll probably make some mistakes. Even when we don't make mistakes, somebody may criticize. I have learned more, I think, from my critics and from my fans.

I'm happy to have a few fans, people that really, you know, really believe in what I'm doing. I'm going to visit one on the weekend, the mother of one of our long-term workers, and she's, you know, she's got me, you know, way up here as one of God's, you know, shakers and movers. So it's good to have a few fans, but actually I've learned, I think I've learned more from my critics.

People that took me aside and said, you know, what you said in that message, I feel it was hurtful. Or what you said in that message, I feel that was exaggerated. Or the way I just saw you treat your wife, I felt that was wrong.

Whoa, that's a favorite thing to receive. I used to pick on America a little bit when I lived in Europe. I thought the only country I can pick on is my own, so I had my little jokes about America.

And then God brought my chief accountant, his father was a leading anti-communist freedom fighter in the McCarthy era, huh? Remember those days? I almost signed up. And so this man was reared in a very conservative situation, very patriotic, very pro-American. And one day I guess I threw out one of my, in a message, some negative thing about my own country.

He's a real, completely different kind of person than me. Accountant, you know, Ivy League lawyer, graduate, older than me. He came to me courageously.

And he said, I don't remember exactly what he said, but he said something like he felt that I was not being fair to the United States. And why was I down on the United States? I tell you, it just shook me. I remember, because I love this brother and I didn't want to hurt him.

I just started crying. He and I, who were so completely different in age, in background, he never married. We were so completely different.

We've had a 40-year relationship in Christ. I'm still on the phone with him as he's very unwell in a retirement home of the Christian Missionary Alliance outside of Orlando, Florida. I just talked to him on his birthday.

I thank God for my critics. And I hope you and I will not be afraid, if we see a brother and sister that are going astray, not be afraid to somehow talk to them in love, esteeming them as better than yourself, and try to share your own insight. If it's a controversial thing, then maybe you have to be willing to listen to his viewpoint.

There are many different areas of challenge. So it's, all of us are going to face the battle of discouragement when it comes to family and children. One of Ken Taylor's children was estranged from him for 20 years.

Hardly anybody knows that story. 20 years, no contact with his own son. I remember talking to Ken on the phone.

And this part of my message could be a little memorial to Ken Taylor. And I said, Ken, why don't you hire a detective? He never thought of it. He hired a detective.

He found his son. And in a few years, there was a lot of agony. They were reunited.

And I just sat at lunch at the funeral with that son, totally reunited with the whole family, but not yet with Jesus. We have so many models here in the States. We are a fortunate people.

We have lots of men and women of God who have run the race, who've stayed away from the ugly extremism that tears the body apart. People who are big-hearted, people who are forgiving. Bill Bright was another man I only got to know better toward the end of his life.

He and I, again, were very different. He was living in California. I'm living in London.

He would say things I thought they were so off the charts, sounded like American boasting to me. But as we got to know one another, as he got older, he grew in Christ. He made amazing statements, like even apologizing that we know Campus Crusade cannot evangelize the whole world.

The only way we could do it is partnership with other missions. And through the AD2000 movement, groups like OM and Campus Crusade, and the Jesus Project, we worked more in partnership, and we reached another probably hundred million people with the Word of God. The Jesus Film Project, by the way, I think is the greatest single evangelistic project in the world.

Now, God uses people first, not projects, but if you want to think of projects, the Jesus Project is phenomenal. And don't you think for a minute there are not hundreds of thousands. I'm not one to talk about the number of decisions.

There are hundreds of thousands going on for Christ in churches because of those films in over 200 languages. And so I believe we have lots of reasons to stay encouraged, even when things are going wrong, even when our health isn't what we'd like, even when our church situation may be a little complex, even when our prayers don't seem to be answered for our family. I believe we can be just like this writer of Habakkuk, yet we'll rejoice in the Lord.

We'll be joyful in God, our Savior. Romans 8:28, all things working together for good for those who love him, that has to include difficult things. That has to include mistakes and failures.

That has to include, yes, even when we sin, which is the thing we want to avoid the most, isn't it? But Jesus forgives us and cleanses us. And I bring this to a close by saying that I find many people are discouraged because they're not progressing. They don't feel they're progressing enough in their faith.

They haven't led enough people to Christ. They feel their prayer life is weak. They feel they still often have impatience or wrong attitudes.

Maybe you felt that after this morning's message from 1 Corinthians 13. And I just believe it's an area where we need a lot of wisdom. Do you know what A. W. Tozer said? Duke, please pick up his book.

He said the greatest gift needed in the church today is the gift of discernment. Discernment. What's from God? What isn't from God? What's just the human factor? It may not be that important.

What is the human factor that needs to be transformed? What is the divine factor as we saw in Elijah praying on the mountain? We need a lot of wisdom. But I believe it's so important, it's so important to realize we're all different. We're all in different parts of our pilgrimage.

Some are struggling more than others. We all have different gifts. It is unfair to compare a one-cylinder Christian with a 10-cylinder non-Christian and therefore make the Christian look like some kind of a nerd or a jerk.

That is an unfair playing field. That's shifting the goalposts without getting God's permission. We all have different gifts.

We all have different amounts of energy. We all are created by God and every one of you, every one of us is original. Original.

You're special. You're special. Some of you after our time together because of our humanness, because of what God has done through my life and our ministry over these 50 years, you may share what you learned here with other people.

You may say, well, this was a special time. This is an unusual person. We're human beings.

We're always grabbing for words to try to explain things. I've talked about Ken Taylor. It's easier sometimes to say great things about a person when they've gone to heaven.

By the way, I'd be happy to send you his autobiography as a gift. Just send me an email. But I want to close by saying each one of you is special.

Jesus Christ died on the cross for you as an individual and he loves you. He wants to bless you. He wants to work through you in your present situation, even if it's as difficult as Habakkuk chapter 3. And I'd rather doubt any of you quite have it that bad.

Let's pray. Living God, I just thank you for this great passage that has helped me again and again in times of barrenness, in times of lack of fruit, in times of unanswered prayer, in times of discouragement, disillusionment, disappointment, and even doubt. Wondering, Lord, about so many things that this passage has come back to my mind that when even everything seems to be going wrong, there's so much unanswered prayer and so many obstacles that we can rejoice in you, this great salvation, this reality of your indwelling, this greatness of your creative power all around us.

We see it at night when we look at the stars and so in grace, in mystery, in sovereignty, we worship you and we rededicate our lives to be marathon runners right to the end, rejoicing in your greatness. Oh, living God, through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

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