

# Misconceptions About Missions

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer challenges misconceptions about missions, emphasizing the need for evangelism over relief work in a world with vast spiritual hunger.*

**Duration:** 38:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Acts 17:30, Acts 17:32, Romans 10:14, 1 Timothy 2:4, Revelation 14:6

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Missions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Acts 17:30, where God commands all men everywhere to repent. He emphasizes the importance of spreading the gospel to all people, regardless of their background or location. The preacher challenges the misconception that the job of evangelism is almost done, highlighting that there are still countless individuals who have never heard the gospel. He urges believers to actively engage in continuous evangelism, which includes not only preaching but also teaching, discipling, and bringing converts into the church for growth. The sermon emphasizes the urgency and responsibility of sharing the message of repentance and salvation with all people.

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## Transcript

It's an encouraging thing for anybody doing any teaching. Now, we always have those favorite missionary verses that we choose to read from. Perhaps my text isn't known ordinarily as a missionary verse, but I'd like you to turn to it anyway, and it's in Acts chapter 17, verse 30.

Acts 17, verse 30. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day into which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter.

So Paul departed from them. But now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent. I've never preached on that text.

All men everywhere to repent. How in the world will that ever be possible if we, in obedience to the Great Commission, do not go and tell all men the Gospels? Think for a minute about this world that you live in. A world of almost 3,000 million people.

The Americans say 3 billion. 3,000 million people. And with population explosion, in 40 years, think of this, in 40 years, they estimate we will have a world population of 6,000 or more million people.

It's taking approximately, or they estimate it will take about 40 years to double the population despite present day effort in the area of birth control. Crusade magazine mentioned last week some statistics about population explosion which pointed out by one leading statistician that in 900 years at the present rate of growth there will be no space on the earth. Every man will have a few feet at the most.

The only way man will be able to exist is if the whole earth is covered with 10 story buildings with all farming on the roof. Each man will have a few square yards, that's all. You say that won't happen.

Well, we don't have to wait 900 years. We're in trouble now. We're in tremendous trouble.

Just to think of the problem of feeding. Just to think of the problem of shelter. Just to think of problems of maintaining law and order.

In this world with its exploding population, 3,000 million people. In India it only takes one year to add 12 million to the population above the death rate. Every year 12 million more people.

Five years over 50 million people. More people than live in the British Isles are added to India every five years. Every five years.

Brazil is exploding faster than India. What can we say of China? What can we say of the island of Java where it's already so crowded, it's almost impossible to go anywhere without seeing at least 200 people at a gaze. Exploding population presents great problems to the men who are studying pollution and ecology and who are studying all these scientific areas.

What about to us? We're interested in these things. We're concerned for these things. We realize that any effort we make in that direction will be relatively small.

For example, evangelical relief work in Bangladesh represents less than one tenth of one percent of all relief work. And if you think the great need in a place like Bangladesh is relief, then I might inform you that there are millions of dollars stuck in Bangladesh right now in the red tape and that the problem is not more money. The problem is men.

Men who really are honest. There is corruption beyond description. Beyond description.

Loads of wheat taken to Bangladesh were sold to the black market, smuggled back into India, resold, smuggled back into Bangladesh, resold and smuggled back into India. No conception. Personally, I think too often times we evangelicals out of a guilt complex feel that we must go around and try to do things that other people can already do better.

I know one evangelical group in India so frustrated with all their money they finally turned a large amount of it over to care. Who would have given it to care in the first place? I don't believe the main thing for us as evangelicals is to go around trying to feed people. We can't even scratch the surface anyway.

Plus starvation is not the problem in these countries. The heart. Do you know that Bangladesh has multi-millionaires? Do you know that right after the crisis we sold 5,000 pounds sterling of educational books to Bengalis who were more than willing to shell out up to 10 pounds for one book? You don't know what some of our educational books look like? We have that one book here.

I can tell you don't sell many of these to the English but when you go out to India they've got plenty of money and they'll buy things like that for 12 quid. Nothing to them. India has more millionaires than Britain.

More millionaires than Britain. People who sit in this country and think India is undeveloped don't know what they're talking about. They just have more people.

And the millionaires also don't quite have the vision for giving away their money. West Pakistan is owned by about 35 families. They got so much money that some of them could buy a good chunk of Birmingham if they wanted to.

And of those 35 multi-million billionaires because rupees of course they fluctuate what you get for each pound it's a very sliding scale but when they had the crisis and the cyclone in Bangladesh then East Pakistan only one of those millionaires gave anything. Watch one million of their own people go out into the cyclone and then in the newspapers they beg the whole world to send relief and they sat over in West Pakistan with their millions. By the way they don't keep their money there they keep it in London.

It's all illegal but anyone will tell you that between the Pakistanis and the Indians there are millions and millions and millions and millions untold millions of pounds, dollars in London, the United States there's so much Indian money one way or the other in Switzerland it's becoming a problem as to what to do with it especially when the country divided. The answer is not relief. I'm not against people doing something in that area when the spirit of God grabs them by the neck and says they should do it.

The answer is to give the world the gospel. Most of these countries are no longer interested in our hospitals they don't want our schools there are some exceptions and I praise God for Christian medical doctors some of the most dedicated men I've ever met but most of these places have not had the gospel. 50% of the people in this exploding world have never heard or read about Jesus Christ.

That to me is more important than them not getting as big a meal as we would like to give. You know we feel sorry for Bengalis no, I personally feel sorry for Englishmen and Americans. I want to tell you many of those Bengali people are better off having not yet heard the gospel than the people in our countries who have heard it and who have hardened to it and who do not want to hear it again.

And that's realizing that there are exceptions in all of our countries especially in massive cities like Birmingham where there are people who have not yet even heard the gospel somehow into this cement jungle of almost subculture that we create in these massive unscriptural cities. But it is incredible when you think of it and when we think of how these Bengali people have bounced back most of them are eating. They haven't such a flexibility they moved out of their homes back in India or over to India.

Now they move back and put up their tents and they live many of them quite happily considering now some of them aren't so happy they're moving back to India again. Those Bengali people with their ability to absorb suffering can move their whole family and their whole home much easier than you can go on a holiday. Many a woman in Britain gets almost a nervous breakdown preparing to go on a holiday.

When she gets back it takes her six months to recuperate. I don't think we need to feel so sorry for these people let our puny little drops of self-pity and thwarted pity for them run down our faces. I believe there needs to be less pity and more compassion.

Less pity and more reality. These people need Christ. Many of them are just going along quite fine but they're lost.

They need Christ. They need the gospel. That's true in Birmingham as it's true in Bangladesh.

I have more pity for people I see in Birmingham so hardened, so cold with such screwy misconceptions of Christianity. I have more burden for them in some ways than I do for some of these who have never heard. But I must fulfill the Great Commission.

I cannot run along on little misfires of self-pity. I must move in obedience to the word of God. Every man has the opportunity to hear the gospel.

So let me say I believe the first misconception of missions is that we must feed them and we must give them hospitals and we must educate them first. No, we must evangelize first. We must give them the gospel first.

We must present Christ first in literature, in word, in every possible method. Right now 90% of all the missionaries in Bangladesh are involved in relief work. 90%! There are only 75 in the nation.

Well up to 100 now. Many of them are dedicated believers. Some are giving the gospel in the relief work.

And I'm not saying they're not doing the right thing because there are truly desperate needs. Keep in balance what I'm trying to say. Those very missionaries when they invited O.M. into Bangladesh said do gospel work.

We want to do it but we can't. We're caught up in this relief work. We've got to do it temporarily.

But if O.M. comes to Bangladesh give out the gospel. That's what we're doing. Working with them.

80% of the people in Bangladesh have never had their first spiritual breakfast. 80% of the people of Bangladesh have never seen John 3.16. It's worse in Nepal. It's worse in Afghanistan.

It's worse in a few other nations I can think of. But perhaps Turkey. To me this is one of the greatest misconceptions.

Let's give them a gospel first. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Go into all the world and teach them.

Preaching the gospel to me includes teaching. It includes discipling. It includes training converts.

Bringing them into a church and seeing them grow. I'm not just talking about giving them a tract. I'm not just talking about preaching one's sermons.

Continuous, continuous, continuous evangelism. The second great misconception perhaps it's even more important than the first one is that the job is almost done. This really almost sends me into orbit.

The job is almost done. How can we say the job is almost done when half the world has never heard the gospel? Listen. Write this across your heart.

There are more people that have not heard the gospel today than lived in the whole world when William Carey started. You're telling me the job is done. Did you get that? There are more people in the world today that have not heard the gospel in any way than even lived in the whole world when William Carey started.

So let us be delivered from our misconception the job is almost done. We perhaps may be able to say in terms of minimum evangelism which is only the beginning that maybe half the job is done. And to me the best way to say that is half of the first 10% of the job is done.

The first 10% is to give the man the gospel for the first time. That's not evangelism. That's the beginning.

So it seems that we've got about half way on the first 10%. Of course since we have followed some of these up and there are churches in many countries in another way we can say that perhaps in terms of the whole job half the job is done. But anything above half I won't yield a square millimeter.

That means we need missionaries. That means we need evangelists. That means we could use 10 ships.

I know him. Somebody else. I've heard of other groups praying for the ship.

Praise the Lord. There's a lot of ocean out there. Philippines has 7,000 islands.

I don't know how many are inhabited. Indonesia has 3,000 inhabited islands. We have more invitations and opportunities to visit ports with our ship already than we could sail to in 50 years.

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Commanding all men, all men, everywhere to repent. You say, but who's the dear Lord save those whom he willeth? You mean we mere human beings can have anything to do with the salvation of a precious soul? Look, one of the biggest tricks of the enemy is to get you to think this is all God's job.

He has done his part. It is we who have not done our part. And when he said, go into all the world, he did not ask you to quibble about theological details.

He did not ask you to publish eight books to defend your faith, your inability to move out, or any other 25 excuses that we have not done. He said, go! May God have mercy on us for failing to do that. I don't know what theological arguments you have.

If you're a Calvinist, I will sell you Mr. Winfield. If you're an Armenian, I will sell you Mr. West. The trouble is, we'd like to talk about it.

We'd like to throw up our spokes. The Lord says, that all men everywhere be condemned and repent. You're one of those who want all the results of God.

I look toward that way. Praise God. Still, we've got to tell them.

Still, we've got to tell them. You're one of those whose results will more depend on peace studies. We've all got to tell them.

We've all, whether you're a Calvinist or an Armenian, or as I once told a friend, stood up and said, are you a Calvinist? He said, amen, brother. Calvin, I'm an Armenian, always. Sat down.

All men everywhere repent. I believe it's a deadly job done. Her step-sisters are no longer kids.

Her go-home parents back-bed companies go-home parents, but they tend to think about her step-parents. I also go home most times. Men who piss and run the whole cell, white, black, go to the back door, please.

Of course they go home. The man who fills that ball, the native, really can't be trusted, and lives in a big mansion with a wall around it, says, blacks, go to the back door, please. Of course he should go home.

Go home or go up, one way or the other. Most of them have gone home. Remember, many missionaries of years gone by never were that type, were always loved and always welcomed by nationals on the field.

Let's not let a few missionaries spoil the missionary image of past years. Personally, I think OM has a long way to go before we will ever catch up with many of the spiritual giants who have gone on before us. A long way to go.

The ideas don't need missions. It's nationals who have said to me, more than foreigners, we need to. We want you as teachers.

We want you as specialists. We want you to drive our lorries. We want you to help us with our bookkeeping problems.

We want you to help us in this printing program. We want you to help us train writers. We want you to help us in this particular situation.

We need evangelists who have come for certain special campaigns. One missionary society after another has sent up their spokesman. If we summed up the total of men needed by all societies at this present time, it would go over 25,000 men and women are needed right now to fill specific gaps on the mission field around the world.

Where are these men? Where are these women? Missionaries are still needed. The men are great. Revolutionary missionaries.

Some of the doors are closing. Tribes are out of the way places. But our cities are becoming bigger and bigger and bigger.

The problem is far more complex. And city missionaries are needed. Literature missionaries are needed.

In some countries like Indonesia, we could send in a thousand teachers right now. A thousand teachers could be used in Indonesia at least for ten years to get the national train. There are tens of thousands coming to Christ.

Most of them remain carnal believers. Churches are dividing and sub-dividing at a rate. Several churches seemingly per month.

So many men to go. So many men to care. So many excuses.

So many alibis. So much smoke. While opportunities are bypassed, missionaries are needed.

The world is especially open in our day to student missionaries. I can't tell you the open door we have as students. We're accepted everywhere.

Even those of us who are from the states. We're normally just great friends. As students many times we're accepted.

And on an international level we're almost always accepted. On this ship in America, behind everybody else. Nobody knows we're even there.

Especially in countries where we're not like. Open doors for every nationality. When we're an inter-denominational or international group like OEM, there's no nation close to us.

There's no nation on earth where OEMers can't get a visa. If it isn't this OEMer from Switzerland, this one from Holland. If it isn't a fellow from Holland, somebody from Finland.

If it isn't somebody from Finland, we'll send a Singapore man. Can't send him, we'll go to our Indonesian brother. Got to convert him to Muslim.

Just send him in here. Engine room on the ship. There's always somebody just for the right passport to go in.

We bear passports for more than 30 nations within the ranks of OEM. Nothing is closed. That brings me to the next misconception.

This idea of closed doors. Could you please come to me after the meeting? I'm a learner. I realize I'm an ignorant fellow.

I make many mistakes. Please come to me and show me that person I missed about closed doors. The way most people think about it.

You talk about closed doors, then I will give you a lesson on opening them. That door is closed right there. And all you have to do is walk over there.

Green is my wife. You just go over and pull that door back quickly. Pull it back.

My wife's not very strong. There it is. Get out.

Thank you. That's what you do if the door is closed. You open it.

Any little child knows that. I've seen dogs opening doors. I've seen cats opening doors.

Why can't the church open doors? And if you can't open the door, then go on a diet and go through the keyhole. You can laugh, but one-third of the world is behind so-called closed doors, which are really just plastic barriers in our own brain. God has called us to go.

When God says go, we must go. Doors will open. Doors will fall down.

What bothers me today are not the so-called closed doors. It's all the open doors we can't go into. We don't have men.

We don't have machinery. We don't have money. Dorma.

How we fall down in a tent of unbelief in this area of the so-called closed doors. Ships come sailing into the Arab world, all closed countries. You can't do anything there.

Set up a book exhibition. We hide the Bibles, everything very carefully. The Arabic Muslim sheep come on.

Oh, what? Takes it out. I'll buy one. Hey, I want one of those.

So hundreds and hundreds of New Testament Bibles in Arabic. Then they invite us over to the palace to give us the royal welcome. Say, please come back next year.

Closed country. Closed country. What a misconception.

Then there's that misconception that mission is old-fashioned. That mission is mainly for the elderly ladies, women sewing circle. Gather all from it, to sew blankets to send to Congo.

They laugh at that. We should have laughed at that. I don't really need blankets in the Congo.

It's an equator. They need fans and air conditioners. But what a pitiful thing it was to stay in Bangladesh.

Tens of thousands of blankets sent by the dear Scandinavians with their great hearts of compassion. The last thing they needed in Bangladesh at that time, believe me, was blankets where temperatures are 100 and higher. Anyway, we at least pat on our back that we did something for these needy people.

But oh my, I praise God for the women sewing circle and blankets, breaking circle, whatever they call it. But what a misconception. We need Ben.

We need Ben and we need women to pray and intercede. So many churches. Just go look at the church missionary board.

I've been in church after church. The mat on the wall is outdated. The pictures are outdated.

The strings between the pins and the pictures are half broken away. And the prayer letters sitting on the little desk in front are all months old. Nobody cares.

You can go in some churches and they don't even know what missionaries went out from their church. I went to one church. They thought one of their young men was still out on the mission field.

Little did they know that several warheads shot him down. He had come back, come an atheist a long time ago. Now, every time I come up, not every time, but every time, I pray before God.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. And I tell you, we had a dear Englishman coming to our pulpit last year called Alan Redpath. And I thought the microphone would come up to him a little.

But oh, how our hearts break when we see these misconceptions. When we see the evil ones deceiving. A phonograph record came out in the United States recently.

It had a section on it, very popular music number. And it had a section on it, young people like that. You know the biggest thing keeping people from, you know what it is? Missionaries, the word missionaries.

Made a mistake, put it out there. People aren't interested. If we brought in gospel rock, if we brought in beat groups 10 quid a night, now they're bumping it up 20 quid a night.

You want a really good girl singing her wiggles, it'll cost you 35 quid a night to whistle gospel verses at the same time. You can pack this place up. You can pack it out.

Night after night, we'd have to move it to the biggest stadium in town. Or if we brought in some celebrity. But if you're just gonna come and talk about missions, that which is breaking the heart of Jesus Christ, you'll have to bend people's arms to come.

If a church has a red hot whistling film, a so-called Christian film with a good necking scene, a lot of hot words, drugs, psych, race, motorcycles, you get thousands of people sitting there waiting for the second showing and if you charge them a pound a head, they'll still come. But if you come to Christians calling them to reach the lost world for Christ, speaking about Bangladesh, speaking about billions in Asia, going into the word of God, fine, there'll be a few. In fact, I would dare to say that most of the ministers in this city are not interested in foreign missions except token, in token, just enough to stab their conscience, just enough to say, oh yes, our church, we believe in missions.

Yes, every year we give thirty pounds, two shillings, ha, now they don't even have the shillings, the pence, and you can go into churches. I've been in assemblies where they gave maybe a hundred pounds a year to missions, and saw three Jaguars and a couple of other four thousand pound cars sitting in front of the assembly at the morning meeting. You wonder why some young people are a bit tired, wonder why many rebel, wonder why some solicit a bit of phony money.

Some of our mission groups cause this incredible battle by trying everything they possibly can, every kind of size of box, and as a matter of fact, to catch their money, I went into one house some time ago, the lady had ten different boxes, triangle boxes, leprous boxes, all kinds of boxes all over the place, most of them gathering dust. Some of these boxes get turned into these missionary societies with less than two shillings, and they've been sitting in the home for one year. One year a lady has looked at that box for lepers, or for the blind, or for the naked, for the hungry, and all that's got in it is a couple of coppers.

To have the nerve to take it in mind that maybe if it was a widow's bite it would be worth a billion times, you know, you and I know there's hardly any widow's bites left. There are a few, praise God. Misconceptions, devil's lies.

May God serve us. May we believe that somehow this cloud can be pushed aside, and mission can be given the priority that it must be for all the church, for the pastor, for the deacon, the elder, everyone. This is not O.M.'s job.

I believe if the church had been doing her God-given job, there never would have been an Operation Mobilization. I believe O.M., like many of God's work, is one of God's emergency rations for a church that has failed to do the job. For a church that has failed to see half the world is waiting to hear and get John 3.16. Another one of the greatest missteps today is concerning prayer.

We don't really believe that prayer works. We don't really believe these strongholds can be torn down by prayer. So you go to a mid-week prayer meeting, and if you see twenty people there, and if they pray more than twenty minutes, it's a miracle.

In church after church, and I've been in about seven hundred to a thousand churches all over the world, I've found very few where the prayer meeting is really functioning the way it should. There's always a few, and sometimes very little prayer. We've got to get back to our needs.

We've been deceived to think it's done by gadgets, by radio broadcasts, by literature, by swankier vehicles, the new Volkswagen. No, it can't be, it can't be. Nothing can be a substitute for prayer, for intercession, for tears, broken hearts before the throne of grace.

May God take away that misconception. He still answers prayer. George Mueller testified at the end of his life, I hope you'll read his book, that he had twenty-five thousand specific answers to prayer.

Think of that, what about you? Sometimes people say, well I can't possibly take another prayer letter, I already get five. What is five prayer letters in a world of three thousand billion people with several hundred countries? Now I'm involved with OM, I get prayer letters from everybody who's on OM. That's quite a few hundred to people.

I feel that I'm doing a little bit for world mission, very little considering the need. Yet I feel one of my priorities is to get at least fifty prayer letters to a hundred prayer letters of other missionaries and other societies and I'm praying for all of them. I admit my prayers are weak, I admit I don't pray very long for some of these missions.

But I feel that if I, such a weak people, nobody can pray for everybody on OM, plus a hundred, two hundred other societies, missionaries, that the least the average mission could do is get five or ten, fifteen or twenty different prayer letters and really go to work. That's only one letter per day. Is that too much for world evangelism? How much time do you spend in the newspapers? How much time do you spend watching all the cock-eyed nonsense that comes over the one-eyed monster you've planted by the devil's prick in your living room? And more and more, more and more, the things that really count are pushed aside.

And other things fill our lives and it must break the heart of God. It must break the heart of God. As millions and millions of people topple into eternity, never having heard John 3.16, oh, they know America put a man on the moon.

And they know that Coca-Cola is the drink to drink. They don't know that God put His Son on the earth dying for their sin. That's the crime of the century.

I protest, I protest, in the name of 50% of the people in the world who have not had even a verse, much less any one of the 29 versions of the English Bible that we're arguing over. They've not had John 3.16 in any language. They've not even had the name of Jesus, in some cases, mentioned in their ear.

Like the man in Rogerstown said, have you heard of Jesus Christ? He said, no sir, I think they live in the next village. Try there. Beloved, let's believe God to move away these myths that ask God to give us a vision.

The whole world, all around this room, all through this building, an exhibition for mission has never taken place in Birmingham like this. Let's pray and believe that somehow in this week they breathe the breath of God upon the church, the city, upon God's people. Let's phone people.

Let's tell them something's going on. No, it isn't a rock group. No, it isn't a celebrity.

No, it isn't some great, special thing the way the world thinks. Jesus Christ told us to go. Jesus Christ told us to go.

Preach repentance to all men. Something is happening right here in this warehouse that will have an impact on the whole world, on the whole world. You and I determine it shall be so through prayer.

May God bless you as you go and think upon these things. Feel free to write to me. I'm sure some of you disagree.

Wonderful. I always disagree with some of the things I say myself. It's already said and I don't have enough time to correct it.

Write to us. Communicate to us. Tell us where you think we're wrong.

Let's believe God to knock down the barriers and to do great things. Some of you, oh, ever sit here snugly and think, oh, I'm glad I got the vision. Oh, I'm here now.

All the way for Jesus. I want to see you five years from now. I want to see what you're doing five years from now when you get married and when little Pompino comes into the family.

I want to see if you're at the midweek prayer meeting five years from now. I want to see if you're pounding with the same concern. Until that day, you better be mighty humble, highly broken, because too many OMers have come, listened, have activated for a year, bladed aside, deceived, just like everyone else, by some misconception of the evil one.

Let us humbly seek faith, this faith, for a permanent revolution, permanent vision, lasting work of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray. Living God, you know our hearts tonight.

You know how easily we're deceived. You know how easily we get caught up in the evangelical game. How easily we're caught up in egocentric activity and in fleshly things.

We pray God, break us. We pray God, fill us. We pray God, give us a vision.

Take away our misconceptions. Give us a passion for a lost and dying world whose population is exploding at hundreds of thousands per day. Oh Jesus, hear our prayer.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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