

Mission Fest Alaska 2008

by George Verwer

George Verwer shares his journey of faith and the importance of missions, emphasizing God's love and the need for more workers in the field.

Duration: 1:00:25

Scripture: Isaiah 6:7-9, Acts 13:2-3, Acts 15:39, 2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of building a strong spiritual foundation for global missions. He highlights the need for men and women of God who possess moral purity, trustworthiness, and financial responsibility. The speaker references Matthew 9, where Jesus travels and teaches about the kingdom of God. He also shares personal anecdotes about his passion for evangelism and the importance of sharing the gospel with every person in the world.

Transcript

Now I'm going to introduce our speaker. We're going to do it a little bit differently. Normally when I or somebody introduces a speaker, we have them come up immediately.

But our worship committee decided to do things a little different. I'm going to introduce him, and then we're going to have some praise and worship music for a little bit, and then George is going to come up. Now George Verwer is a man that's... A lot of us don't know him very well.

In some circles he's known very well. Fifty-three years ago, he went to a Billy Graham crusade in New York City and became a Christian. Fifty years this year is the anniversary of Operation Mobilization, an organization that he founded, and he was the director for many, many years.

I kind of question he's not director because he travels constantly for Operation Mobilization all over the world, but he has turned the actual day-by-day operation over to a younger person. This man had a dream of meeting Billy Graham personally. I'm going to take a little bit of his thunder.

He's going to share some of that a little bit too, but I thought it was so interesting. He prayed for 53 years that he could actually sit down one-to-one with Billy Graham, the man that he became a Christian under. Ten days ago he had the opportunity to do that.

He sat down with Billy Graham for 45 minutes. They prayed for each other and just shared with each other. Billy's 89 years old.

His health is failing, but his mind is still very sharp. It was just a really neat experience for both of them. Our committee works with some of the Mission Fest groups in Seattle and Portland, and some of them have thousands of people come.

George has been very supportive of Mission Fest in Vancouver. He's gone many, many times, been featured speaker, which is the largest mission festival in the world. They had 30,000 people here recently come to their.

I got to attend the Portland one that had 190 workshops. They had, I forget, 10,000 or 12,000 people come. And so George's name came up as a suggestion.

I said, well, George is not going to come to Fairbanks, Alaska. But I made an invitation, and he said, I'd love to come. And he's very supportive.

Operation Mobilization is a worldwide organization. They're in 100 countries. He told me that they figure they have personally, one-on-one, reached over 1 billion people through the 50 years.

They have two ships online. They have a third that will be online very soon that reaches ports all over the world. One's in the Caribbean right now, and one's, I forget where the other one is.

And they're soon to build, their third ship is being remodeled right now. They give away books. He's going to talk about that tonight.

They do a lot of neat things. And George, would you just stand where you're at, and we can give him a round of applause. We just appreciate his willingness to come all the way to Alaska.

I've been corresponding with him for quite a while. And it's always interesting, because one time it's from Nigeria, another time it's from England, another time he's off the coast of France. I never know where these emails are going to come from.

But we just appreciate you coming tonight, George. And at the end of the music, George will come up. Amen.

Thank you, musicians. It's such a privilege to be here with you in this great city. God bless you.

Thank you for your prayers. I have a strong assurance that God is working in our hearts, that God is making Fairbanks, Alaska, an Antioch, as we had in Acts 13, which we'll look at in a moment. And we thank God for all those that have already been sent out from Fairbanks and surrounding areas to short-term and long-term missions.

Some have actually been on our ships. OM, Operation Mobilization, mainly a European movement that then spread globally. About 5,000 of us now on our staff is not very well known.

But we thank the Lord for some who have known and some who have gone. And we appreciate your prayers as we're in the midst of some really giant steps, especially in India, where there's this huge response among the untouchables known as the Dalits, with hundreds of thousands of them professing faith. We want to give everybody, and it's been great to be here most of the day.

Some of you got to the seminars. But we would like everyone tonight to pick up at least one free book. When you go out there on the right, you'll see a tremendous book table.

And any of the books you see a lot of copies of, you can take one free. We'd love to give you five or six free, but we don't have enough books. But we would like you to take at least one of those books free.

You'll meet Mark, my helper there. He's from England. Some of you got to his seminar.

Some of you have already seen his blog of me dog-mushing. Already getting emails from different parts of the world. They've seen me for the first time in my life doing that.

And we just really would appreciate if, as you leave, you just slow down a bit and pick up one of the books. AIDS in You is one of the free ones. Randy Alcorn, a great supporter of our ministry.

Why Pro-Life, that's another one that's available free. My own book, Out of the Comfort Zone, going on toward a quarter of a million copies. That one's also free.

The other books and CDs, DVDs, are just available on a donation basis. Anything you can afford. I learned that from one of the most influential musicians in my life, a man named Keith Green, who used to sell his cassettes.

Now it would be CDs for whatever you could afford. I was with Keith shortly before his death, which was an overwhelming experience for many of us, and had the challenge of speaking in many of his memorial concerts, where thousands made commitments to get involved in global missions, both in America and in Europe. Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 9, if you have your Bible.

If you don't, that's okay. I'm reading from a New Living Translation. The man who gave us this Bible, Ken Taylor, was one of my closest friends.

It was a powerful experience to be at his funeral a couple years ago. And Living Bible International merged with International Bible Society in this past year. One of the companies that I started 50 years ago merged with the International Bible Society.

And God must have a great sense of humor in it all. One of the things I hope you'll just take into your spiritual DNA, into your heart and mind, is that God wants to use each one of us. As God looks at this meeting, and He can see the hairs on our head.

Mine are disappearing fairly fast. But He doesn't just look at a talented musician or an old missionary speaker. He looks and knows each one of us.

And we would just presume that those who are believers in Jesus really are experiencing God's love. Well, we've had 130,000 people on OM. They come mainly when they're younger.

130,000. 50% of those young people needed some kind of counseling. 50% were dealing with emotional scars from childhood.

We're dealing with many with a sense that God didn't love them. And the counseling often wasn't major. There were some major situations as well.

Largely, they needed to talk things through and pray things through and just realize God loved them. I struggled with that as a young Christian. And I just thank God for His Word and for His promises.

I remember as a teenager, my big thing was mainly girls. And seeing this advertisement of a skinny guy like me with a beautiful girl on the beach. Some of you old people may have seen that ad.

And he was with this nice-looking girl. Along came a big, strong, good-looking guy and knocked the skinny guy away and took the girl. I thought, this is what it's going to be for me.

I don't have a chance. You know, I looked in the mirror. And then on the bottom of the ad, it says, You also can be a man.

Charles building. Charles Atlas. Weight gaining.

Muscle building. You can be a man. A ray of hope came.

I wrote in for this material. And I read this material. And I started into this program.

Lifting weights. Eating extra food. After six months, I gained about half a pound.

It was pretty discouraging. But when Jesus Christ invaded my life, and I'll share that story in a moment, I realized God's acceptance. Ephesians 1.6. You are accepted in the Beloved.

I was overwhelmed that God could love a character like me. I didn't like myself. I had a foul mouth.

I had a bad temper. I was moving into the world of pornography. At 16, I owned three businesses.

Knew how to lie, cheat, fast life, New York City. And I didn't like myself, even though I had a giant ego. Somehow, when Jesus found me and saved me, and I realized He loved me, it totally revolutionized my life.

Enabled me to grow in faith. Enabled me to deal with some of my weaknesses and struggles. And here I am, 53 years later, after my conversion.

I think of this letter that Tony Campalo, one of my favorite preachers, I'd love to get Tony up here to Fairbanks. Or has he already been here? And he's a wild Italian-American. I love to speak.

We sometimes speak together, because after he speaks, I come across as so mellow, and that helps my reputation. But Tony Campalo sent out this email about the thunderstorm. I wonder if you saw that.

This family in this horrific thunderstorm, lightning and thunder. Even the adults were scared. They were in the living room, suddenly realized the little girl, seven-year-old, was up in her bedroom on her own.

They ran up the stairs. They opened the door, and there the little girl is looking out the big window at the lightning, and sort of listening to the thunder. They said, What? Are you okay? She said, I'm fine.

I think God is taking my picture. I had never thought of that. Would God take my picture? Is it digital, or is it one of these Walmart throwaway cameras? It's beyond all of that.

God's love. God's concern for each one of us. And I think that's just so important.

We cannot build global missions on an insecure spiritual foundation. We need men and women of God, whether they're young or whether they're old. We need men and women who can walk in moral purity.

We need men and women who can handle money. We need men and women who can be trusted. And the Word of God is very clear about young people.

I remember that as a young person. Let no man despise your youth, but be thou an example. Be thou an example.

Even as a young person, in all the great areas of the Christian walk. In Matthew 9, we have this beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus going into all the towns and villages. We'll pick it up at verse 35.

Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogue, announcing the good news about the kingdom. He healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

He said to his disciples, the harvest is great. And it still is great. The harvest is great, but the workers are few.

So pray to the Lord who's in charge of the harvest. Ask him to send more workers into his field. That was written 2,000 years ago.

That was taken from the very mouth of the Lord Jesus. God's word. He said to his disciples.

It's red letter in this particular Bible. The harvest is great. The workers are few.

Let me share quickly my own story because I think that will also help you understand what I say after that. But I wasn't from a Christian home. It was sort of a nominal Christian home in some ways.

My grandfather was an atheist from the Netherlands. And he and my dad, when my dad was real young, came over from the Netherlands to the New York City area. And my other grandfather, he was Irish, Scottish, and English blood, which is probably toxic.

And he was an alcoholic. My grandmother divorced him. And I only saw my grandfather a couple times, the final time dying of alcoholism.

I was living sort of a typical American selfish life, doing my own thing. I think part of me wanted to do good. I joined the Boy Scouts.

You couldn't get into the Girl Scouts in those days. And I was about to get the God and Country Award. And I guess I was trying to do good.

I would cheat at cards at the scout camp, then feel a little bad about it. And so take half the money and buy some of the people I cheated some ice cream. Lucky I didn't get caught and beat up.

But a woman came into my life, a woman of God like some of you, a woman of prayer, a woman who believed this book was God's Word. And she took this passage literally from Matthew chapter 9. She began praying forth labors. She picked on the high school near her house.

And regularly workers were going out from an ungodly drunken high school near her house. People never knew why. One praying woman.

And I went to that high school. I was quite famous in my freshman year. I was voted class clown.

That'll really get you far. But by the time I was a senior, I was about to be elected the student council president of this school. And so she really targeted me.

Because her son, a godly young man, had been president when I was a freshman. And so she put me on her Holy Ghost hit list. And she not only prayed that I become a Christian, she prayed specifically.

I don't know whether it's because she didn't want me around. She prayed that I would become a missionary. And then she sent me a Gospel of John through the mail.

This little book. Around that time in my life, I was slowly moving into what back in those days would be thought of as sort of mild forms of pornography. You know, the nude picture of Meryl Monroe on the bottom of my bed.

And a few other things I won't talk about. So on one hand, I had this Gospel of John. On the other hand, I was moving into this world.

Was in this world of lust. She kept praying. Every year I got worse.

And then Billy Graham came to New York City. Just one night. It was not a crusade.

That was two years later. He came for one night for an anniversary meeting of a converted band leader named Jack Wursten. Who had another incredible testimony of God's grace.

And I remember going to that meeting. I took this gal that I was interested in. I thought maybe she could use some of this kind of religion.

This was not my scene. Somebody said Billy Graham's a hypnotist. I actually brought my binoculars.

I sat as far away as I could and watched him. To see if he had some kind of tactics. But I heard a simple message.

Billy Graham says you walk in one direction. You stop. And you go in God's direction.

And that night when he gave the invitation to repent and believe on Jesus. And I'm not exaggerating anything tonight. Somehow though I didn't understand it all.

I got out of my seat. I went in front of this huge fight auditorium. Madison Square Garden in front of 20,000 people.

And I surrendered at the cross of Jesus. And was born from above. I discovered that Billy Graham was highly criticized.

One college said he was even part of the anti-Christ movement. That was a little bit of a surprise to me. Other people said well these converts don't last.

You've probably heard that. It's just emotionalism. They go forward.

Everywhere I've gone in the world. Everywhere. I've met men and women who've come to Christ through Billy Graham.

I'm staying with some people. And the dear woman of the house came to Christ through a television broadcast with Billy Graham. Because it's not Billy Graham.

He's just a servant of the Lord. It was always my dream. And I've lived out of the United States for 47 years.

So that's one of the main reasons that I'd someday be able to sit with this man. I met him backstage at Urbana when I was speaking. We've got a couple of minutes.

Maybe that's the answer to my prayer. But I had this nagging that maybe someday I'd sit down with this man of God. Who not only influenced me at my conversion.

But through his writings. Through his message at Urbana. The strongest message on discipleship I ever listened to.

We made it required listening in our movement for the first 25 years. That had such a huge influence on my thinking. The middle road.

The acceptance of people from different churches and backgrounds. So many ways. He influenced me.

Together with another man from Canada named Dr. Oswald J. Smith. And 10 days ago. Even though Billy's not well.

And he'd just been operated on. The door just flew open. To go and spend some time with him there in his home in Montreat, North Carolina.

And I just stood in front of him. I'm an emotional character. I just began to cry.

Tears of emotion and joy. And he accepted that. And prayed for me.

And you can catch some of it on my blog. GeorgeVerwer.com Thanks to Mark Roberts here. He's such a good blogger.

So one minute you see me with Billy Graham. The next minute you see me with this dog sled. And people are surely going to wonder.

What is going on in my life? God saved me. Almost the same night he sent me back into my high school. By then I was president of the student council.

It was still legal to speak about Jesus in our high schools. In 1956. Preached to the entire student body.

Organized prayer meetings. Gave out Gospels of John in the high school. Thousand students promised to read them.

People just started to get saved. All over the place. I found out that lady had been praying for this drunken school.

For 15, 20 years. Because her children had gone there. And then we saw a Holy Ghost fan break.

I came back from college. Christmas break. 600 people came out to hear my testimony.

Including my own father who wondered what was going on with his son. And I just shared the Gospel that I had learned from his servant. From the Word.

And when I gave the invitation, 125 of my high school student friends stood to believe on Jesus. And among them, my own father. Yes.

That's what God can do. I was 18 years old. And I knew the reality of the Holy Spirit.

The reality of the crucified life. And I had been delivered from lust and pornography by the power of God. Not that I would never sin or fail again.

That would be wrong to give you that impression. And we must understand that the victorious life, As so clearly outlined in Scripture, And especially in 1 John chapter 2, Includes knowing what to do when you do sin. And by God's grace, I learned the message of grace.

And realized that when I failed and did something stupid, God still loved me. And He could use me. I soon found myself in Mexico.

And I discovered in Mexico I could learn a language. I discovered such a love for the Mexican people. I discovered the churches would welcome us as young people to help them with their youth programs.

Doors opened in prisons. Doors opened in amazing ways. And that caused me to leave my university studies.

And transfer to Moody Bible Institute and study God's Word in Chicago. An amazing step in my life. During this period, however, I had a lot of struggles.

And I share this especially for young people. I could not help constantly becoming infatuated with girls. And I thought, now that I'm a Christian, Boy, you know, this isn't going to be so intensive.

It got worse. Now all these little gospel girls. And these little Christian smiles.

And I couldn't find verses. You know, thou shalt not kiss. If I had that verse, it would have been easier.

I'd been necking up a storm since I was 12. And I wasn't planning to stop that on the basis of becoming a Christian. I knew that sexual relationships, in my view, was out of the question.

But it's these other middle ground that I was so accustomed to. And I remember leading a girl to Christ in Washington, right by the Washington Memorial. And then, you know, necking with her for the next hour or so.

I'm ashamed to tell you that. It's not really in the follow-up books. I looked there as well.

And then another girl sort of fell in love with me and was thinking about marriage. I was going off to college. Marriage, that's just bizarre just to even think about it.

And I realized I was deceiving. I was deceiving myself. I was deceiving these girls with my language of love.

God, in his mercy, as a baby Christian, used a particular experience to wake me up. I don't tell about this much, but Fairbanks, your climate has an invigorating side to it. So I'll tell this story.

But I was with this particular girlfriend. I'd been witnessing to her. Then we started some pretty intensive kissing.

And I was just about to go a little beyond kissing. We were parked in the woods in New Jersey when a police car pulled up. It might as well have been an angel.

What are you doing in there? So that was all over. I put the car in the wrong gear. Instead of backing up, I went into a ditch.

Her father was an alcoholic. He had told me to make sure she's back at a certain time. I knew that was going to be difficult now with a car in a ditch.

We ran down the street, got him on the phone, and asked him to meet us at a particular street so that he wouldn't see the car in the woods in the ditch. And he had been drinking a bit, and he said, you know, I want to see the car. When he saw the car, he started making these accusations against me.

That romance ended up breaking. She ended up marrying her half-brother, and I felt a total failure. So I made a decision called Operation Cold Turkey for romantic nutcases like me.

No more kissing, no more girls. Of course, that's when God sent me to Mexico. Not because of that.

And that's when this work, later in Europe, called Operation Mobilization, initially called Send the Light, STL, that's when this work was born. That went on for about two years. I left university.

I went to Moody Bible Institute. This was a new test of this whole area of struggle in my life. As I got to Moody, I thought, they're all Bible-carrying, committed girls.

If you tried anything with one of them, you know, they'd whop you with a big King James Bible. I was infatuated with about seven girls in the first ten days, and it was difficult. But because my focus was Jesus, world missions, the Word of God, nothing happened.

And then God, in His mercy, I just got to tell you this story. I wish my wife was with me. We just celebrated our 48th wedding anniversary.

But I went to, it still happens, I wanted to evangelize the YMCA, there was no room for me at the Institute for a living, so they put me in the YMCA. And evangelism, winning people to Christ, was just a huge passion of my life. And so to reach those men, I wanted to show a Moody science film.

So I went up to the eighth floor of the Institute, and I got out of the elevator, I'll never forget it, and I saw this lovely gal in charge of the films. I broke my fast and moved in on the target. She's a little quiet girl from Iowa, farm girl.

She had never met any loudmouths from New Jersey. And I think the first thing I said to her, I guess you're not going to be a missionary, are you? Why do you say that? Well, I mean, all the attractive girls, and all the attractive girls, they're just out hunting pastors. She didn't quite put that together.

I managed to get her on the first date. I'm not exaggerating this. It was like a Gideon's fleet.

I said, look, probably nothing's going to happen between you and me. That was my attempt at reverse psychology. Nothing's going to happen between you and me.

But you need to know this. I'm going to be a missionary. And if you marry me, you'll probably end up being eaten by cannibals in New Guinea.

Amazing enough, though I was cockeyed in love, she was not in love with me. The next week, I gave her a bag of dirty laundry. I wasn't big into washing much.

I redeemed the time by sleeping in my clothes. I gave her a bag of dirty laundry, and I said, look, would you wash this as unto the Lord? Whoa. It's a miracle she ever spoke to me again.

She reminded me the other day that she'd been washing my clothes for 49 years. She also reminded me that after a while, I started putting my friends' clothes in the same bag. And it's a miracle she kept doing it.

Eventually, she fell in love. There's no time to tell the story. We got married and headed for Mexico.

I didn't believe in honeymoons. I hardly even believed in a wedding ceremony. We just tacked it on the end of a Sunday morning service.

And all kinds of things happened. Some of you may know the story. It's, I guess, in one or two books.

And I managed to get one of the wedding cakes aside and used that to barter for gasoline the next morning. The first guy, the gas station in Wheaton, Illinois, you just couldn't believe this guy wants to sell his wedding cake. Just gave me the gas.

No, keep the cake. I think he thought it was holy or something. The next gas station, hundreds of miles south toward Mexico.

He wasn't a believer, but he said, no, he was a believer. Keep the cake. Gave me oil and gas.

The third gas station, hundreds of miles. He wasn't so kind, but he liked cake. And he gave me the cake.

I gave him the cake. He gave me the gas. Then I started to sell my wife's possessions.

Everything else I could get my hands on. And we got, my goal was to get to Mexico without spending any money so that we could use, we had thousands of dollars given to us at the wedding so we could use the money to start a bookshop. Well, we had some difficulties in our marriages.

We realized we were a typical Bible college marriage. We didn't really know each other. And I was the kind of person, everything, I wanted to do it really fast.

And she liked to do things more slow and methodical. We couldn't even walk together. I used to wait on the street corner, giving out tracks for her to sort of catch up.

I was very tight with money, and all the money was for world missions. We don't want to spend any money on anything. We get our clothes from the missionary barrel.

Let me just testify that getting certain women's items from the missionary barrel, the right size, is difficult. It can test your faith. So I came into balance.

I was reading a book about balance, and so I gave her a dollar and said she could feel free to spend that however she wanted. And we picked up this little book. There's a few copies of it on the book table called Calvary Road.

And we turned to the chapter, Revival in the Home. And God used that book to humble this insensitive, needy character and get me to really be honest about myself, my bad temper, my insensitivity, my extremism. And we got on our knees as I apologized and repented, and God filled us with our Holy Spirit, with his Holy Spirit, and has kept us together as a couple these 48 years.

We never even had our first furlough. We soon went to Spain. After Spain, it was France, then the Netherlands, then we lived in India, then we lived in Nepal, then we lived on our ships.

We had three children by then. Whoa, now we're into grandchildren. Do any of you have grandchildren? Aren't they wonderful? Tony Campala says grandchildren is God's prize to you for not, you know, killing your own kids.

It's my heart cry from sharing my story that we will just realize afresh how God can use all kinds of people, people with struggles, people with doubts, which I battled all my life, people who don't feel naturally very Christian like me. I'm a natural backslider, not a naturally spiritual person. If God doesn't meet with me and I don't meet with him every day, and I've more or less done that, I begin to slip away, and lukewarmness comes in, bad attitudes comes in, and doubt.

And I just believe with all my heart there's grace for weak, needy people. One of the passages I also wanted to share is in 2 Corinthians 12, where it talks about his grace being made perfect, his strength made perfect in weakness. Let me just find that passage.

2 Corinthians 12, talking about the thorn in the flesh and how he prayed that this thorn would go, this difficulty, many different interpretations of what that is. But somehow it didn't go. Verse 8, chapter 12, 2 Corinthians.

Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, my grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.

So now I'm glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ, wow, the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, in the insults and hardships, persecutions and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

So few people today in the United States, you know more about your own particular state, but so few are willing to consider long-term missions. You know, since OM was one of the birth movements of the whole short-term mission program, you can be sure I'm in favor of it. But let's be realistic, it is in no way a substitute for long-term missionary work.

Especially as we consider 20% of the people in the world have never even once heard the gospel. A similar number of people live in countries where there is hardly any short-term work. Have you ever heard of short-term work in North Korea? Tibet, Afghanistan, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Turkmenistan, Chechnya, Bhutan, the Maldives? Yes, there's a little.

But those places are restricted access. They have hardly any churches. And it's just so important to realize that short-term has enormous limitation.

Most short-term, and I believe in it with all my heart, we have dozens of programs you can see on our website, but we need also people who are willing to think and pray long-term. A lot of people going on short-term make a decision to go long-term, but then their churches will not support them. It takes money

to do missions, and if you're in Alaska, it takes a little extra money.

Praise God for these programs where you pick up 40,000 miles points at one shot. I believe with all my heart we need to become more realistic. We're in a warfare.

We're told that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, that's also from Corinthians, but mighty unto God to the pulling down of strongholds. I brought my globe specifically just to mention some of these countries. There are about 40 countries that have hardly any missionaries at all.

I'm not going to name all those countries, don't worry, but I just touched on some of them like Libya and Tunisia. Only a dozen or so believers in the whole of Libya. Tunisia has a few hundred.

Turkmenistan, hardly any believers up here. Iran, the church is growing. That's the more encouraging of all those top ten countries.

Iraq in the midst of the war, a land that God put on my heart 50 years ago, is beginning to see an amazing number of conversions, but it's still small compared to the size and the complexity of the country. Tibet has almost no witness, though some Chinese from other parts of China are going there now to share their faith. I believe that's an answer to prayer.

It's not time to mention so many other countries. Not only do these places, unreached places, many of them in the 1040 window, not have hardly any missionaries, I find that not many people are even praying for these places. I pray that tonight there'll be this vision to pray for the nations of the world.

I guess that's why I wear this global jacket, just to get the point across. Go into all the world. Preach the gospel to every person.

I know it doesn't look very good on me, does it? It sort of hangs. It looks a lot better on global people. It's also actually quite practical.

When you used to be able to visit the cockpit of certain airlines, British Airways welcomed you into the cockpit. I remember flying once from Sao Paulo down to Buenos Aires in Argentina. I went up to the cockpit.

It was around 1999 or so. I'll never forget it. The co-pilot said to the pilot, I think we're flying over Ecuador.

Well, Ecuador is way up here. They used my jacket in a jumbo jet to see where they were going. They were actually flying over Uruguay at that time.

So if you're going to do a lot of travel, be sure to bring a map with you. Years ago, there was a blue, dull-looking book called Operation World. The bookshops were returning the copies.

One came across my desk, I think 35 years ago. I gave it to my man in charge of publishing. I said, let's republish that book.

I believe God's anointed that book. Let's republish it with a nice cover. That's the book.

And since that day, 500,000 copies of this book in half a dozen languages have gone out across the world, presenting prayer requests on every single nation in the world. It's another illustration that God works through prayer. And I want to ask you, our time is limited.

I want to ask you, how's your prayer life? Are you getting to some missionary prayer meetings? Even if it's just for an hour, what is an hour in a week in the light of all the time we have and the light of the time we often spend watching sports or our favorite program or talking about this or that and this place for all those things in the kingdom? To be able to get into at least one prayer meeting in your own church, preferably, or somewhere else, not where there's just this general bless-me prayer going on, but specific intercession, which we see running from Genesis to Revelation in the Word of God. That's why I'm here. Because that woman prayed for me.

We see that model in the book of Acts. Turn to Acts chapter 12, very briefly, where we see Peter in prison. Peter was in prison.

Verse 5, Acts 12. The church was very earnestly praying for him. Some people would think, yeah, well, they're praying at home.

Have a little prayer before the meal. God bless Peter, bring him out of prison. But that's not what was happening here.

That may have happened a little bit. Because when Peter was delivered through prayer from prison, we read something that's very clear in verse 12. When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered in prayer.

Many were gathered in prayer. When did you last get involved in that kind of Holy Ghost gathering? Where you really prayed for situations like Dafur, 300,000 dead. Don't we care about that? Most of the problems we have in our nation, and we will have much greater problems in the future, I can assure you, but most of the problems are trivia next to what's going on in Dafur, except perhaps the crisis in Iraq.

We need to somehow be able to not just think small picture, but to think big picture. There's nothing wrong with small picture. If you have grandchildren, you have a wife, you have a family, you have a job, you have to be able to focus.

God bless you and your focus on your job, your family. Don't feel that that's not spiritual. God is not just calling us to evangelize the world.

He's calling us to build the kingdom everywhere. Your job, your work matters to God. It's part of building the kingdom, as you honor Him in the workplace, as you honor Him in whatever area of life He's called you to.

And that's one of the beautiful things that I learned through a man named Dr. Francis Schaeffer and through many other people that influenced my life. Prayer is the way God carries on His work. And we need intercessors and prayer warriors more than we need people to go.

Of course, we need both. But if we send people and they're not back with prayer, they become casualties. Thousands of American missionaries are returning, depressed, wiped out.

Many are cutting their term, even short term, are cutting their term short. We're taking a survey in our own work. We've been in this for 50 years that an amazing number of people won't even complete a two-year term.

So we need prayer. We need our mission efforts to be built on solid biblical revival in the home church, for the local church is the key to world evangelism. We see that especially in the next chapter.

Chapter 13, the book of Acts. Five men are having a prayer meeting. Let's pick it up in verse 2 because I have trouble pronouncing their name.

Verse 2. One day as these men, that were just named, were worshiping the Lord and fasting. This was the church at Antioch. That's why I open the meeting tonight by referring to your city as an Antioch.

They were praying and they were fasting. One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Dedicate. Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.

So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them away. Did you notice how that word came out in our ministry of music tonight? That's because the Holy Spirit knew that I'd be speaking about the challenge of sending. Senders, because you need many senders for everyone who goes, senders are harder to find than goers.

And we find that when Mission Fest, this kind of event, hits the city that soon there are more people that want to go than they're able to send. That then brings tension and the enemy actually tries to come in through situations where young people got excited about going, but there's not the finance, there's not the sending Holy Ghost horsepower to make it happen. So they went forth by the church.

Look at verse 5. Well, Peter wasn't, I'm sorry, look at, we're in chapter 13. After more prayer and fasting, men laid hands on them and sent them on their way. Then verse 4, so Barnabas and Saul were sent, there's that word again, sent out by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the chief executive officer of all missionary work.

You know, if you're in a charismatic or Pentecostal church, the Holy Spirit is honored and spoken about. And we of course see, or hopefully we should grasp from the book of Acts that he is the chief executive officer for all missionary work. But I think it's an area where we can unite.

Evangelical churches that may not have the exact same emphasis, they have to biblically acknowledge the Holy Spirit is the one to carry out world mission works. So whether I'm speaking in Pentecostal churches, and I've spoken in the biggest in the world out there in Korea, or more conservative evangelical churches, and one of the reasons I come here is because I know and knew that different churches would be working together. I just believe that honors God.

I believe it honors God to worship tomorrow in your own home church. He raised that ministry up. Maybe that denomination, maybe that independent church.

But I believe it honors God as well as not either or. When we can come together, we realize there's only one body of Christ in this city. And we realize we're one in Christ.

There's one baptism, one Lord. And we have to, as Swindoll brings out in his brilliant book, Grace Awakening, we have to graciously disagree. I discovered that eventually in my marriage, that was the most important thing.

Because we were so different, and as I gave her, and I needed to do that, just more and more freedom to express herself, what's on her heart, what's on her mind. We discovered we were so different. God's unity is in the midst of diversity.

And God can do a great thing. God can do a great thing here, in the midst of the diversity. Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit.

Sent out by the Holy Spirit. Then they went down to the seaport of Seleucia, they sailed to the island of Cyprus. There in the town of Selemus, they went to the Jewish synagogue, and they preached the word of God.

John Mark was with them as their assistant. And I have with me my assistant, Mark Roberts, who some of you have met. And praise God, next to this John Mark character, Mark Roberts is doing really well.

This guy struck out and had to leave the team. Later on, an amazing passage in the book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas disagreed over bringing John Mark back on the team. Barnabas seemed to be a little more patient, a little more pastoral.

Let's give him a try. Paul, a little more cleric in temperament, type A kind of character. No way, Jose, we're not having that guy back on the team.

And the Bible says the contention was great between Paul and Barnabas, and they went their way. You know why I like that story? Because I see so many messes in the body of Christ wherever I go. I see divisions, I see complexities, and people can get really discouraged, especially if it's your own church.

Take heart from Paul and Barnabas. They had a mess, they didn't resolve it, but they kept somehow going, and God used them. Maybe not as much as if they'd stayed together as a team, only God knows that.

My final passage of Scripture is from Isaiah chapter 6. Just bear with me a little more as we look at that amazing passage that so often we refer to when we're in some great missionary event as we are this weekend. We have this great prophet experiencing a deep experience with the Lord, as I believe we've had as we've been worshipping, we've been praying. It says in Isaiah 6, in the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.

He was sitting on a lofty throne. The train of His robe filled the temple. Attending Him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings.

With two wings they covered their faces. With two they covered their feet. With two they flew and called out to each other, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heaven's armies.

The whole earth is full of His glory. Their voices shook the temple to its foundation. The entire building was filled with smoke.

Then I said, it's all over. I'm doomed. I'm a sinful man.

I have filthy lips. I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I've seen the King, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of heaven's armies.

And notice this, so powerful. One of them, one of the seraphim, flew to me with a burning coal. He had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

He touched my lips and said, see this coal touch your lips. Now your guilt is removed. Your sins are forgiven.

This is in the middle of the Old Testament. How can we explain this? What's going on here? This is a miracle. Looking forward to what Jesus would do on the cross.

And I heard the Lord asking, whom shall I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us? And I said, here am I, send me. There's that word again that we sang about a little while ago, that our brother ministered to in that great song. Here am I, send me.

He said, yes, go and speak to this people. And I believe tonight, I believe tonight that verse is appropriate. A lot of people have prayed for this event.

This must not be just an event, just a festival, just a banquet. This has to be a time when you and I allow the Holy Spirit to say something to us, to move us into greater action in giving, in sending, in mobilizing, in sharing our faith right here. Some people don't like the word missions anymore.

They don't like the word missionary. Missions is simply people. It's people.

Jesus said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person. We've not done that yet. Two thousand years have passed.

Twenty percent of the world's population has not yet heard, even though we're in the midst. And I shared about that in my seminar. We're in the midst of the greatest time of church growth the world has ever known.

And that's in about half of the world. The other half has not experienced that. That's what we must target.

That's what we must target. And I believe tonight there's some people that want to hear that voice of God. Here am I, send me.

And you're willing to pray. Here am I, send me. Let me ask this little survey here.

How many of you have already prayed that prayer at another conference? Maybe mission conference in your own church. You've already prayed, here am I, send me. Raise your hand.

Let's see. I've done this all over the world. That's a pretty good, that's a good 30 percent.

Often we use this particular passage in a mission event, and quite a few mission speakers use it mainly to get people to sign up to go into global missions. I've taken a different approach to this verse, tucked away in the middle of the Old Testament. And I have a more generic approach.

Get ready. I believe it's a prayer that everybody can pray. Every believer.

Because it's a prayer of availability. I don't think from that one prayer we can just know that we're going to go to Mongolia or North Africa. The Holy Spirit may do that.

But I think every believer who loves Jesus wants God's will for their life. And it's really just one step. There have to be other steps as you talk with leaders in your church, as you pray, as you give counsel, as you read.

As maybe you go through short term. And maybe other forms of training. But every believer can pray, here am I, send me.

It may be across the street. It may be across the street. Quite a few people, when I've given this invitation, which I'm going to do in a few moments.

You know what they said to me? They said, when I stood up and prayed that prayer in your meeting, the Holy Spirit confirmed, I've already sent you. I've already sent you. I've put you in that job.

I've put you in Fairbanks. I've put you in that college. Later on, I may move you into something else.

But I have put you, maybe using God's providence. Maybe using employment complexity. Maybe family complexity.

One of the greatest things God uses is His providence. To use a slang word, or a more common word, circumstances. Some of us, we buffet against our circumstances.

We maybe even feel we miss God's plan A for our life. Be careful of getting uptight about missing plan A. I miss my plan A wife. That's really great.

Tell your wife that. Hey, here are your plan B. Sometimes I talk to people who have really messed up their lives, even in prison. When I talk this way, they just look at me.

Plan A? Plan B? What are you joking? I'm on plan L. You know what I say to those people? Praise God for a big alphabet. Press on. Press on in the grace that's in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And some of you that are older, and maybe you feel somewhere you missed plan A or you missed plan B, especially in regard to global missions and reaching the laws. It's never too late to take some steps of faith. And older people are now playing, every year, a bigger part in the task of global evangelism.

As it's tougher and tougher for younger people to raise the support, older people often launch out as tent makers or financing themselves, even in longer term missions. We've experienced that on our ships and in most of our fields. So I close with this invitation for you to pray this prayer.

Because you love Jesus. He says, if you love me, keep my commandments. And you want to.

Surely you want to know his Lordship in your life, over your time, your talent, your money. Of course God knows for some of us that's a struggle. He knows everything about us, A.W. Tozer, one of my favorite writers says, and he loves us still.

So on the basis of his love, his grace, his care, you're willing to throw yourself in a new way into the arms of Jesus and say, I'll go. I'll go where you want me to go. I'll do what you want me to do.

I'm available. It's tied in with those words in Romans chapter 12, verse 1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your body as a living sacrifice. I'm asking you to do that tonight.

If you've never been born again, if you don't know Jesus, I'm sure most of you do, then you've got to jump back to my first story. We can't talk to you about missions. We can't talk to you about hearing God's voice to go.

We want to talk to you about believing in Jesus, as I did so many years ago in that Billy Graham meeting. And you can do that even tonight while you're sitting there, or talk to someone after the meeting. Have them show you some great verses in God's Word on assurance.

But most of us here tonight are believers. We've experienced salvation. We're going on.

We're growing. We can pray that prayer. Here am I. Send me.

We need people totally radically committed in every walk of life. Especially in a country like America, where there are so many churches and so many believers. The time has come to move into a higher level of transformation.

Transformation in our community, in our nation, impacting every aspect of society. If in the end we don't accomplish all that we dream of, at least we have given our best shot to see reality and transformation and godliness in our nation, especially during an election year. May God give us the grace to see passages like Isaiah 6 and to realize that can happen to us.

That can happen to us. God's men to be God's women. To see that weak, new, struggling church in Antioch, just born by people who were scattered through persecution, send out two of their very best people under the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can read that and say, Lord Jesus, make Fairbanks and Antioch in 2008 and in the decades to come. And our churches will be visionary. Our churches will be strong.

Our churches will be generous and we'll be able to have a steady flow of short-term and long-term workers, teams and individuals going from here even to the very, very ends of the earth. God bless you. Let us pray.

Let us bow our heads in prayer. And if God has spoken to you, I want you to just pray this prayer. And as you pray it, I want you to stand up.

Then I can pray for you. I'm not going to call you forward, but I would like you to stand up. If you'll pray this prayer, here am I. Send me.

Maybe across the street. Maybe into the workplace. Maybe into the marketplace.

Maybe to the ends of the earth. That will have to come step by step. But tonight, God's spoken to you and you're willing to take at least that first step and say, Lord, I'm available.

I'm your child. I acknowledge your lordship. Here am I. I've experienced your cleansing.

I've been worshiping you tonight in this great time of celebration. Here am I. Send me. If you'll pray that prayer, just quietly where you are, please stand and I want to pray for you.

Thousands are praying for this meeting right now. And we believe the Holy Spirit wants to touch hearts in every table, in every part of this auditorium. God bless you.

God bless you. Younger people. Older people.

Praise Him. Ask Him to fill you afresh with His Holy Spirit as it was in Acts 4.31. And when they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and went forward and spoke the Word of God with boldness. Surely God can do that in our hearts tonight as we stand before Him.

Because the mission field doesn't start when you get on the airplane. The mission field starts when you walk out the building or maybe even before you get out. God bless each one of you.

Here am I. Send me. Father, I pray for those that are standing before You. I believe this is a result of many years of praying on the part of some amazing people who will never be known until heaven.

And Lord, we believe that Fairbanks is already on the way to be a dynamic Antioch, a sending base for global missions to impact the nations, even the more unreached nations and the Muslim countries and the forgotten places, some of which we mention tonight. We pray for our young people who have their whole life ahead of them who can easily learn another language, who can more easily be trained for in-depth missionary work and incarnational missionary work across the nations. We pray You'll send out short-term workers, long-term workers, and we pray, Lord, You'll raise up the resources.

People, individuals, churches, whether it's small gifts or bigger gifts, can resource Your work in all of its many aspects. And Lord, as we pray this, we ask for increased wisdom and discernment as we live in difficult days, in complex days, and Satan as a roaring lion seeks whom he may devour. We hold high that shield of faith.

We put on that whole armor to go forward in battle in Your name through Jesus Christ. Amen. God bless you.

You can be seated. Hallelujah. To God be the glory and the praise.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19647.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-verwer/mission-fest-alaska-2008/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net