

Out of the Comfort Zone Urbana 2000

by George Verwer

George Verwer challenges listeners to step out of their comfort zones and embrace the call to discipleship and missions through grace and personal experiences.

Duration: 50:09

Scripture: Matthew 9:35, Matthew 9:37

Topics: "Comfort Zone"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a mentor or someone to travel with in our spiritual journey. He shares his own experience of working with a student for 40 years and how it has been a blessing in his life. The speaker also highlights the word 'grace' as his favorite word and discusses how his book, 'Out of the Comfort Zone,' is actually about grace in disguise. He emphasizes the messiness of world missions and the need for understanding and grace among missionaries. The sermon concludes with a reference to Isaiah chapter 6 and the importance of being willing to be sent out for evangelizing the world.

Transcript

We'd like to give all of you a copy of this book. Some people can help. If you miss getting here, you can go to our OM exhibition and just tell them I sent you and they'll give you one of these free.

This is just published in the States. It's an international edition, which is a little more wild picture of me and my globe on the cover. So I don't have my globe with me this afternoon.

I believe we're just here for one hour. Is that right? Yeah. Because we got to do this three times.

Sorry for some of you that didn't get a seat. It's only one hour. I'm going to stand so you can stand with me.

If you're taking any notes, that's great. I'm going to give you seven words about this comfort zone challenge. And if you email me a year from now, there's seven words.

You get seven free books. Not next week. You can email me next week as well.

If you go into my website, georgeverwer.com, you can find my email address or you can see me after the meeting and I'll give you one of my little year 2001 calendars that also has my email. But I'll read it to you,

georgeverwer.ict. That's three little letters. I-C-T.

That's the name of the team. And O-M. We're all divided up on teams.

georgeverwer.ict.om.org. Sorry, we didn't get the parkavenue.com. But I did get that from my website. Somebody else already had my name. I had to negotiate with one of my cyberspace nerd friends to get it.

And that same cyberspace friend produced this book just for Urbana. We're giving you one of these as well. It's called God's Great Ambition.

And send your friends over to the O-M exhibit and they can get a copy of this completely free. This is a book for non-readers. Some of you have got to read so much at university, you want a non-reading book.

Just look at that. You can handle that on one page. About ten words.

But these are all quotes from different wildcat spiritual people that left their comfort zone. Norm Lewis. I'm going to mention one of his books in a moment.

Selfishness is not simply unattractive, it's deadly. Norm Lewis. So, that's a gift.

But this is the book that our lecture is based on. Did everybody get one of these? Are we all out? Okay, they're in the back of the car of my friend who drove me here. Go find him.

His name is Cliff. Cliff, are you back there? Jeff, you've got the whole hour to do that. And then we'll figure out.

We won't be able to be as generous with the next batch who come in here. Let's just pray. Father, it's a bit wild here running from one place to the next.

We thank you for the beauty of the snow that protect people who may slip on it. We thank you for what you did this morning. Oh, Lord, what a powerful time that was together.

The willingness for that dear woman, Brenda, to apologize about something that the world would think of as being small, and yet you touched her heart. And we thank you for all the seminars that are going on. We thank you, Lord, that as you call us out of our comfort zone, it's not that we will never be comfortable again.

And help us understand the meaning of these words. And help us, Lord, to understand what it is to really deny self, take up the cross, and follow you, whether it's across the street or across the world. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, I had the advantage of being able to speak to you briefly already if you were there on the opening night, so I'm not going to repeat my testimony or what I said at that time. But I wanted to just have you turn to Matthew chapter 9. In my prayer, I touched on the core principle, biblical principle that I believe is linked with discipleship.

It's linked with true spirituality. It's linked with being a biblical person. It's linked with being a missionary, whether in the big sense in which we're all missionaries or in the narrower sense, a career missionary going out to plant churches in a place like Turkey.

And that's the words of Jesus, that we're to deny self, take up the cross every day, and follow Him. Did I say Matthew 9? Verse 35. Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, curing every disease and every sickness.

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the labors are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labors into His harvest.

Brothers and sisters and friends, there's no way that we can evangelize the world without people being sent out. We have to be willing to be sent out. Isaiah chapter 6. Isaiah experiences the greatness of God, the holiness of God, the wretchedness of Himself.

We've had that passage referred to already. And then He prays, Lord, here am I, send me. And as we look at the world represented on my little jacket, we realize that a lot of people who have never heard the gospel are living a long ways away, and they are living in places where generally it would be somewhat uncomfortable for most of us.

In my own pilgrimage, God first sent me to Mexico. It was uncomfortable because the culture and the language was so different. To be honest, that was not a huge problem because I fell in love with Mexican people very, very quick.

I've had a lot more problem at times with my own so-called people back in little suburbs of New Jersey than I had with Mexicans. But I had some difficulty with the food, and then I got really sick with a little thing that's around the mission world called the amoeba. And it gets inside, and if you're already pretty skinny, it can be pretty big combat for life.

I never got into that serious situation. But I especially found the heat uncomfortable. I found working out in a garbage dump a refuse tip.

By the way, I'm from London, England, so I have a lot of funny words. And discovering people where children were eating garbage soup and just being out there, and then working among the braceros. These are poor people waiting to get jobs back then on the other side of the border.

It was two summers in a row I went to Mexico. The first was very short. The second was when our work OM was really born.

It was uncomfortable. And yet God sent me there. And that was one of the greatest experiences in my Christian life.

And I'd encourage you to consider going somewhere next summer where it may be uncomfortable. We know that also can be in an inner city situation in the USA. If you're basically a suburban person living in a fair degree of ease, we know it can also be uncomfortable there.

But if you move into the heart of New York City or Brooklyn, which is part of New York City, or Chicago where I met my dear wife, that also can be a great challenge. The Lord of the Harvest told us to pray that laborers would be sent forth into the harvest field. My wife and I soon found ourselves in Spain.

That was also uncomfortable because it was there we discovered, especially me, that I was really an ugly American. That I was a racist by default, not even really understanding that issue. That I had things that I

thought were Christian, like thou shalt not drink alcohol, which was mainly American culture.

And I discovered it most all believers in Spain, who I also fell in love with very quickly. They all had wine over their meals. I remember going off for a prayer retreat and these Spaniards wanted to stop at a bar.

Well, the devil's committee room and have a drink. And God just set me free. I was about to take this whole movement that was being born.

I was already taking it into Phariseeism and legalism. Doesn't mean God wasn't working, because He's very merciful and very gracious. And I went to one of the capitals of the universe, Phariseeism, a place called Moody Bible Institute.

And if you think that's a criticism, read their new book. Moody has just published a book, Extreme Righteousness, showing that most of us as evangelicals have a strong Pharisee streak. And of course, mix that with good old anti-communist, which I was really into, Americanism, and you come up with an interesting cocktail.

By the way, my view is there's no straight drinks left in the body of Christ. It's all cocktails. And a pure Calvinist, forget it.

Pure Arminian, forget it. Pure charismatic, forget it. Pure fundamentalist, gone with Noah's Ark.

Everybody's a bit mixed. Cocktails for the kingdom. And it's not necessarily harmful if it's in a grace-awakened mode.

So God changed our lives in Mexico. He continued to change our lives in Spain. And then He sent me to Russia.

When I was living in Spain, my big passion was the Muslim world, the communist world, and closed countries. God was about to completely change that through failure. As I went into, and that's my first word.

You better get that first word, failure. You only get the seven words. And the next summer, went into the Soviet Union.

I was doing Bible smuggling. I had a printing press hidden in the dashboard of the car. A lot of people praying.

I had learned how to type the Russian language. We were going to get in the country and then send literature out through the post, through the mail. We weren't going to try to give it out.

And we had done that in Spain, which was semi-closed. Nothing like Russia or the Soviet Union. So, anyway, to make a long story short, some butter melted on one of the Gospels.

I told this guy who was with me, Wheaton College football player. He was doing the printing, and I was doing the typing. And some butter melted on this one Gospel.

I said, well, we can't send this out through the mail. And he wanted to flush it down the john. I thought, how can we flush the word of God down the john? So, I decided the next day, we'll just give this out where nobody's looking.

So, we're driving down a country road. Nobody was around. I threw that Gospel out.

That sealed my fate. That changed my life. Because the farmer found it.

Immediately, they were watching us. Phone the police. KGB, major roadblock.

Full newspaper publicity through the whole Soviet Union. American spy arrested in Rovno. God answers prayer.

Yeah, that's right. How many of you have ever heard of God's smuggler, Brother Andrew? He's a great character. This afternoon, you've got a similar kind of a character, known as God's bungler.

Name's George. His name's Brother Andrew. Through that failure, eventually, after they decided, after three days of interrogation, that we're religious fanatics, they gave us a submachine gun, escorted out of the country.

I went off for a day in prayer. And God changed my vision. And that's my second word, vision.

And one of the reasons that we're here at Urbana is to increase our vision. Don't worry about getting too much information, too much vision. Take what you can.

Try to get a good night's sleep. And remember God's love and God's acceptance. But that was a real failure, and I was sort of groaning over that, feeling bad about it.

I went for this day of prayer. Before that, our work was very small. The vision was Muslims, Communists in closed countries.

We were known as Send the Light, En Via La Luz in Mexico and Spanish. And God showed me in that day of prayer that we didn't really have it right. He wanted us to fall into the ground of Western Europe first.

He wanted us to esteem the church, to get into the church in Western Europe. That led me to leave Spain where we didn't have so many churches. That was a semi-closed country, so we had many friends.

I was just back in Spain a few weeks ago, celebrating the 40th anniversary of all this exploding there. But I moved to the UK and started to minister in the universities, an incredible open door. And soon hundreds of British students were launching out, and that became the real birth of Operation Mobilization.

Failure so often is the back door to success. Erwin Lutzer of Moody Church wrote a book on that subject. You may try to find it.

The book, I've never read it. The title was just so inspiring. Failure is the back door to success.

Don't be afraid to fail. Over one of my countries that I love the most, the land of Germany, when some young people fail their exam, they actually commit suicide, even in high school. If you're a committed believer in Jesus Christ, if you know God's grace and God's sovereignty, you work as hard as you can for that exam.

If you fail it, you just jump up and down on the table and praise His name. You've been delivered from something. The same thing in the whole area of romance.

You might be madly in love with some girl. You feel you can never live without her or vice versa. Your best friend ends up walking off with her.

Naturally, you feel like weeping or punching or doing something. You get in a spiritual mode and jump on the table and start praising Jesus. You were delivered.

She's probably going to be an absolute bear anyway. So you just start praising God. All present company, of course, excluded from such statements.

Failure is the back door to success. Don't be afraid to fail. Some of you feel you've already had failure in your life.

Maybe you're not playing A or B anymore, right? You may be playing F. You've had some big failures. You've made some wrong turns. You've been backslidden a while.

You've had a few broken romances, maybe even a broken marriage. Maybe you're on plan M. You know what I say? Praise God for a big alphabet. Press on.

I said that at Urbana four years ago. I tell the audience that thing came unglued. Because we know it's God's grace.

And that's been emphasized this year as well. God wants to increase our vision. God may want to change our vision.

At that moment in my life, through that failure, He changed the vision. Here I thought I was going to go work among the Russians. And I was diligently learning Russian.

God was going to move me where I never, ever expected to go. Great Britain. You know, my kind of temperament fits in Great Britain.

You know, like a dinosaur on a ballet floor. And I'm loud. I'm non-British.

I'm way too American. But somehow God sent me to Britain and gave me a love for the British people. It's been my home now for 38 years.

And Britain became the main sending field of Operation Mobilization. It was there in a converted bar. We call them a pub.

And God gave me a vision for a ship. People thought this was really bizarre. So did I. But as we prayed, as we did some research and homework, as we got to meet merchant navy people, because I wasn't into that.

Though I went to Europe initially on the old Queen Elizabeth. Tells you how old I am. The one that ended up in Hong Kong.

You know, doing James Bond movies. I've seen almost all of those. And the one thing that's good about James Bond movies, you can see them a second time later when you're my age.

It's just like seeing it for the first time. Because it's all just so balled up in your head. Even whoever played the characters.

And now I know some of you are going to get in trouble. I went to a seminar with a guy who listened to these sexy James Bond films. But anyway, forgive me for that.

I am a bit of a film buff. And if you're not into films, you need to be. Because there's such a major thing in our culture.

There's a movie magazine produced by Ted Bear. Send me an email and they'll send you a sample. That reviews all films from Hollywood from a Christian viewpoint.

You can know how much nudity and swearing and F.U.C. and these words are all there before you go. So you don't have to go. But there are a lot of great films coming out.

I'm stuck on airplanes often for 13 hours at a shot. And after doing letters and praying for 7-8 hours, I usually watch a film and there are great films. Anyway, that's a separate seminar that I'm not being allowed to give.

The third word that I leave with you is the word grace. That's my favorite word. This book, *Out of the Comfort Zone*, is actually a book about grace in disguise.

It looks like a book about world missions. And the red-hot disciple-type, surreal, over-committed characters, they pick up this book. Boy, *Out of the Comfort Zone*, go for it.

But as they read it, it's not quite what they expected. Because it's a book about grace. And it's a book about grace in mission work, grace in discipleship, grace in reaching the world with the gospel.

Because there are so many agendas, there are so many strategies, there are so many visions that even as missionary workers, we're sometimes at each other's throats. And some of you thinking about going into world missions, you need to understand it's messy. You need to understand missionaries are ordinary human beings.

They get in the flesh. Some of them are impatient. You may find it very hard to work under this new leader in this field you've just gone to.

You may find that your team leader of your little team, even though he looked real nice when you first met him, is sort of a selfish ego-tripper and not somebody you really want to work with. And my appeal in this book is that we need a grace awakening. We have a lot of talk about grace.

Some of the most ungraceful people I know talk about grace. Some of the most pharisaical churches on planet Earth have the word grace in the name of the church. Now, they're usually only talking about being saved by grace, which I believe in 100%.

And one of my favorite books, I just happen to have a copy with me, is Charles Swindoll's book, *Grace Awakening*, which is in many different languages. The first two chapters of this book, which I found a little boring, are all about salvation by grace. And if you don't understand that yet, the Lord bless you, you can read those chapters.

I started in the middle, guiding others to freedom, the grace to let others be. Oh! And gracious, this is my favorite chapter, graciously disagreeing and pressing on. This is how my wife and I have stayed together for 40 years.

Though another chapter has helped us as well. The marriage oiled by grace. This is the greatest Christian book, I believe, in America in this decade.

Now, competing with it is a newer book, my good friend Philip Yancey's *What's So Amazing About Grace*. These are in competition, but they're very different. And you can decide which one is better.

But this is more about, not only grace, but grace awakening. You say, what is grace awakening? Grace awakening is 1 Corinthians 13, exploding in reality in your life. That's going to take you out of the comfort zone of smugness, of selfishness, of Phariseeism, and make you a radical disciple of Jesus.

It's not firstly location or geography, it's firstly reality. It's firstly spirituality. And that can be true in the streets of Pittsburgh or Chicago, as well as Calcutta or Bangkok.

And I'd urge you to make grace a priority and try to understand the grace awakening that Swindoll talks about, that the Word of God talks about, which is also the theme of my book, which I'm trying to get into your hands, and I haven't completely succeeded. It's a call to be big-hearted. It's a call to really love people in practice.

It's a call to brokenness. Have you ever read the book *Calvary Road*? If you can't find it here, send me an email and I'll send you one as a gift. Because *Calvary Road* was a Christian classic up till about 10 years ago, when there was a lot less reading among Christians, and being written by a British author, the book somehow never got widely distributed in the States.

If you read *Calvary Road* and don't get help, don't get blessed, one of the most influential books in my life, I will apologize and send you 10 free books. *Calvary Road* is written by Roy Hesschen. Roy Hesschen was an evangelist, but he was in his comfort zone.

You can be in Christian ministry and be egocentric. You can be in Christian ministry and be selfish. You can be in Christian ministry and basically you're living off the nice things that people may be saying about you.

And he went to Africa at the time of the East African Revival. Revival, by the way, is not the end. Revival is the beginning.

And if you're praying for revival, let me tell you, if it happens on Saturday, Monday will be the messiest, toughest, toughest, most difficult day in your life. And a lot of the praying for revival in America, God bless all those who pray, because we're known as the nation of the most naive people on planet Earth, it's not really what sometimes we're praying about. In fact, when the Bible talks about revival, and that's the core of Roy Hesschen's book, it's really talking more about personal revival.

It's talking about the crucified life. It's talking about you and Jesus. Revival is Jesus living through you.

This treasure is in earthen vessels. And we're often calling for the presence of God. We're often getting tremendous music to get us all to feel more Christian.

And I love the music, don't misunderstand me. But we're to live for Jesus, with or without the music. You got a Holy Ghost built-in band.

You got a Holy Ghost built-in violin. That's my favorite instrument there. I watch that woman on the violin play.

That's one of the toughest things to learn. I mean, you go out of your mind trying to learn that. I think people have, you know, even killed trying to learn how to play the violin.

But that's so powerful and so beautiful. But brothers and sisters, if we're going to be God's ambassadors, if we're going to be marathon runners in God's race, we got to learn to draw on those internal instruments. They're there when we feel lousy.

They're there when we're hurt. They're there when we're rejected. They're there when we fail, like my Soviet Union failure.

The Inner Harp, A.W. Tozer, one of my favorite authors, you can find some of his books here, talks about worship, the missing jewel of the Evangelical Church. He didn't have the same view of worship that people have in 2001 or 2000. That's okay.

But I believe we can learn from some of these great saints of yesteryear, like St. Francis of Sici, or A.W. Tozer, or Andrew Murray, or Watchman Nee, or Bhat Singh of India, who just went to be with the Lord and was one of my major mentors as I lived in India a number of years. It's all of grace. But grace, functioning in our lives, produces a grace awakening, which is another way to describe the Spirit-filled life.

The Spirit-filled life. And that's my fourth word, the word Holy Spirit. If you could turn with me in your Bibles very quickly as we're battling the clock, and I want to give a little time for questions, you could look at the Book of Acts.

I've done a whole series of 11 messages on the Book of Acts. I don't think it's available on the bookstore. You can take a look.

A lot of my other books are there. But if you can't find it, send me an e-mail and I'll send you as a gift. If you could send a few pounds or dollars to pay the postage, that would be great.

But I'd be thrilled to send you those 11 messages from the Book of Acts, mainly under the inspiration of John Stott and his commentary on the Book of Acts. I was speaking at the Maranatha Christian Conference Center, one of my favorite states, Michigan. At least it's in my top 30 group.

And I gave these words. We don't have time to look at the whole passage, but looking at Acts 13 right now, where these five men get this tremendous vision, and then while they're waiting on God and worshiping, pick it up at verse 2, chapter 13, verse 2, while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, isn't that powerful? Some of us are reared in more conservative places, and we hear or read about extreme things that are done sort of under the name of the Holy Spirit. We overreact.

And so sometimes even when you start to talk about the Holy Spirit, some people get nervous. For brothers and sisters, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which is the only thing that can really get us out of our comfort zone and keep us out of it and keep us cutting edge in Kingdom work, is for every believer. You don't have to have the Pentecostal label to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Praise God for the great Pentecostal and charismatic movement. The growth of that movement, which we work with, though that's not our particular roots, is the most phenomenal growth aspect of the Christian church in the world today. It's gone from 70 or 80 million, maybe 30, 40 years ago, to 800 million people who would be Pentecostal and charismatic in places especially like Latin America and Africa.

One of the things I love about Urbana is the bringing together of people of different backgrounds, including those who are known more as evangelicals, others known more as charismatic. That started a long time ago. In fact, Floyd McClung of YWAM and I were together in a major thing at Urbana way back in 1986 or 87.

It's exciting. We find a lot of people don't understand Operation Mobilization in America because we're European. And being European, there's more of a mixture.

So about 50% of all the people on YWAM come from Pentecostal or charismatic churches, and about 50% come from evangelicals, some even fundamental churches, from all over the globe. We're from about 80 different nations, I will tell you. People predicted it would never work.

We now have 40 years without hardly any major disunity. 40 years. We've had 100,000 people from all those backgrounds work together.

We have 3,000 on the staff right now. We have 300 on one ship, 180 on our other ship. You can get info about it at our exhibit.

Learning to live together in unity. Our first ship had a Pentecostal captain and a Plymouth brethren chief engineer. If you don't know what that's about, well, blessed be the naive, but believe me, it's a hard drink.

And I remember them once almost coming to blows. Engineers don't get together with captains anyway. And I was supposedly director.

But I saw the Holy Spirit humble those men. I saw them repenting. I saw them beginning to live in the light of grace and allowing the Holy Spirit to fill them.

Billy Graham, who has often spoken at Urbana, my spiritual father, often talks about the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. D.L. Moody, from the last century, before there was a lot of talk about all this, emphasized the fullness of the Holy Spirit. D.L. Moody, boy, he would look great in one of these global jackets.

Yeah, secular encyclopedia said of D.L. Moody, overweight American evangelist who depopulated hell by 2 million souls. That's not bad. How are you doing? Better to be overweight and spirit-filled than skinny and empty.

That's original. I never said that before, and I'm probably not ever worth saying it again. One day when D.L. Moody was emphasizing the need to be filled again and again with the Holy Spirit, a little lady in the front row raised her hand, and she said, why do you talk about being filled again and again? He looked her in the eye and he said, Madam, because I leak.

Can any of you relate to that? Filled with the Spirit on Sunday night, tremendous meeting, fellowship with the saints, recommit your life. By Tuesday, a lot of it's leaked away. Praise God for the free refills.

There's not many things in America that are better than my adopted country, Great Britain, but one of the things that's definitely better over here is the free refills. In Britain, even to get a coffee cup filled again, you'll pay. Maybe a pound.

That's \$1.40, so I drink tea. But the fullness of the Holy Spirit is for every believer, and I'd urge you not to leave Urbana until you know you're filled with the Holy Spirit of God. We all have the same gifts.

I don't believe it means that we all have some great emotional experience. Some people have more crises. I'm a more crises-oriented person.

I've had too many crises. I thought I was going to come into this midlife crisis. Have you ever heard about that? You're too young.

But guys like me, we've got these books, midlife crisis. I was doing great until I read this book. All these horrible things that were going to happen to me.

I even ended up taking up golf. This was supposed to help me through the midlife crisis. Golf for my temperament, that is a crisis.

I had to develop my own way of playing. I go late in the day when people are leaving. I jog between holes.

I make my own route. Forget those numbers. I managed to survive.

Generally, I have to play alone. Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit. Another great mistake we make about the Holy Spirit is we think that somehow when we're filled with the Spirit, when we're really spiritual, then more or less we're going to sort of be perfect.

Not quite, but we're going to be fairly together. The fact of the matter is it's a pilgrimage. I'm still struggling with some of the things I struggled with when I was your age.

It's a pilgrimage. It's a pilgrimage of grace. It's a pilgrimage of repentance and brokenness and forgiveness.

Here's something I hope you'll remember. No matter how filled you are with the Holy Spirit, you're still incredibly human. You'll still have to go to the toilet.

You'll still need to blow your nose occasionally. You'll still probably stand up someday in front of your friends and forget to zip your fly. No matter how filled you are with the Holy Spirit, you're incredibly human.

That has so helped me because I was trying to be other people. I was trying to be sort of a combination of Buck Singh, Andrew Murray, Billy Graham and Watchman Nee, which of course could drive any thinking person, especially from New Jersey, completely out of his mind. It was a glorious day in my life when I accepted myself.

I wish I were black. I wish I were a woman. I sometimes wish I were just a dog, but here I am.

George Verwer, son of a Dutch immigrant, a bit too loud, way too much energy, gets on people's nerves. Even my dear wife, she looked at me, I remember years ago, she said, darling, looking at you makes me feel really tired. We just tried to have lunch together.

You know how much time they give you for lunch on a day of fasting? The fasting caught me by surprise. We were going to have lunch with a non-converted friend. Actually, my wife's uncle, he canceled out because of the snow.

Then another guy called and said, hey, you want to have lunch? And so we had a little, it was actually breakfast because we never got breakfast. It was an omelet. In the middle of it, my friend Jeff calls me, hey, the seminar, we're all here.

What do I watch? I tell you, it's amazing. We wouldn't have made it here on time except the man in charge of driving me around just happened to go by this little, tiny, dumpy diner where we were having this weird omelet. And God's providence, we jumped in the car, and who knows what's going to happen in connection with this omelet by the time I get to the third seminar.

How many words have I given you? The fifth word. I think we just had the Holy Spirit. That was preceded by grace.

But the fifth word is, I know, not going to make you so happy. You may not even want to write it down. You may even get angry.

But it's the word discipline. And let me just say this as a great proponent of grace. I even push books like Ragamuffin Gospel.

Last time I was at Urbana, I helped put Ragamuffin Gospel on the map. This guy, Brendan Manning. Some people even accuse the book of having heresy.

There's articles written against him, written against the book. I got people hassling me because I'm pushing this book. You know, I didn't even complete reading the book.

It's a great, I only read parts. I'm more into parts than wholes. That didn't sound right.

But the cover to me was so powerful. Ragamuffin Gospel. Because I've always felt I'm a bit of a ragamuffin.

A ragamuffin, if you go back to the dictionary, came out of Charles Dickens, England. It's a little kid on the road. He's only got one sock.

The other one's got a hole in it. His nose is running. His hair is uncombed.

He's got a torn shirt and dirty trousers. And he's there in the corner. He's trying to, you know, like Charles Dickens film, Oliver, Oliver.

Oh, everybody's going to see that. He's trying to get some money in his cup. That's a ragamuffin.

Well, the Word of God teaches all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We're all ragamuffins. We're all ragamuffins.

And I believe after we're saved, we're saved ragamuffins. And that has so helped me to understand people. So many people I had such high expectation for.

One of the things that's going to blow some of you apart spiritually. I'll just predict it and I'm not even a prophet. You have unrealistic expectation.

Maybe about your parents. Maybe about your church. Maybe about your inner varsity leader.

I'm very involved with the Christian Union Movement in Great Britain. Ministering in inner varsity chapters for 38 years nonstop. Probably more than any person in the nation except maybe John Stott and one or two others.

And I can tell you many of our inner varsity chapters called Christian Unions. They get deep problems because of unrealistic expectation. What God's going to do in the next month as we pray and fast.

Especially if we fast. Boy, that really gets God moving. And by the end of the term, you got people at each other's throats.

You got people discouraged. You got some immorality that usually comes in when people do get discouraged. And so my plea.

My plea is that we understand the message of grace. And yet grace without discipline can easily lead to disgrace. The key out of your comfort zone verse is from Jesus repeated in almost every gospel.

If any person come after me, let him deny self, take up the cross every day and follow me. That's so basic. That's so bottom line.

We need to remind ourself of that in the morning. That's how we become better husbands. When we deny self.

That's how we become better wives. That's how we become better fathers, better students, better learners. It is not self-denial.

It is not asceticism. It has to be kept in balance with all the other great verses. About all the riches we have in Christ Jesus.

About God supplying all your needs. When I was a young student, I especially overwhelmed by the challenge of the poor. And by certain things I saw in the New Testament.

I especially started to preach the message of forsaking all. When I was a student at Moody, people would meet me. They just start forsaking their possessions.

They brought them to my room. I opened a store in my room at Moody Bible Institute selling people's possessions. To get money for missions.

People would come and buy things. After they bought it, we'd give them the message. Some of them would bring the same item back.

Because they felt it was bad that they had bought that. And they didn't really need it. Then it spread to Wheaton College.

And things really went bizarre out at Wheaton. And we made a lot of mistakes. Because we overemphasized one truth and failed to bring it in balance by other truths.

Our big verse was Luke 14, 33. Except you forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple. But we didn't.

Philippians comes much later. We didn't get that far. My God will supply all of your needs according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

I'd urge you. I'd urge you. This is my next word.

To seek balance in all of these things. Even as you go to different seminars. Even as some main stage speakers, we say in England, may seem to contradict one another.

It's often more paradox than contradiction. Can I repeat that? It's often more paradox than contradiction. God is leading different people in different ways.

Though I'm trying to challenge people to the 1040 window. Though my first passion is the millions. About 20% of all the people in the world that have never once heard.

That is my passion. I want to talk about that. I want to preach about that.

I want to challenge people to go to the Muslim world. That's where I've spent a lot of my life. If I meet someone and they tell me God's calling him to Hollywood to go into the ministry of film for the kingdom.

I'll give him a hug and say praise God. If someone else comes to me and say they're going to take over the local Wal-Mart and give the profits to World Evangelism or whatever. I'll give them a hug.

If someone else comes to me and says they're going into politics. I'll give them a hug. If someone says God's leading them to stay in their own hometown in Boogadoonga, northern Minnesota and be a farmer.

I say hallelujah. God's leading different people in different ways. But I want the privilege of being able to share my vision.

And you need the privilege of sharing your vision. And that's why the answer to that is Grace Awakening. The answer is to state things in a more balanced way where other people are not made to feel like they're second class citizens.

And we can learn how to communicate in a Grace Awakening way. This is why I see more results in this stage of my life than I did when I was 22. Though God was using me in my high school when I was only 19.

Because already the message of 1 Corinthians 13 was becoming a major factor in my life. If it wasn't for coming to understand biblical balance. And what it is to live at the center of a lot of biblical tension.

I would not be here this afternoon. I wouldn't have made it. Because I'm a natural extremist.

And to find balance you don't have to forsake good extremes. But you have to let them come under the control of the Holy Spirit. You have to let them be brought into balance by other major scriptures.

And for me learning this book and growing in a knowledge of the word is a lifetime pilgrimage. Do not think of us, especially those of us who speak there on the main stage, that we are some kind of special people. Please do not think of us as some kind of evangelical superstars.

I've had people call me that. We are just such needy people. We are so ordinary.

But God has given us gifts. God has given us, in my case, 45 years of experience. Every single day walking in the power of God's grace.

We are therefore responsible to share that. I didn't even want to come to Urbana. I prefer to stay in England right after Christmas.

Because we have Boxing Day. And as British people, Christmas time is family time. We don't go to conferences after Christmas in British culture.

They have a big conference in Europe over in the Netherlands. British people traditionally never go there. I'm in a campaign to try to get them to go there.

We had 180 out of 9,000 people that went to the big Urbana of Europe called DEMA. The leader of it's here, Trevor Gregory, he's British. Hardly any British people go.

Because in Britain we stay home at Christmas. Even the students, many of them, stay home. Of course, there are many exceptions.

So praise God. That word balance is very, very important. And then my final word is proactive.

I know that's out of date, used too much. It's a business word. Some spiritual people don't like it.

The verse that comes to my mind as I bring this to a close and open for questions. I hope we got 10 minutes for questions. Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is never in vain in the Lord.

There were Paul and Barnabas on this team that were sent out in Acts 13. But there was another guy. Did you spot him there in verse 5 or 6? His name was John Mark and he was a helper, it says in some translations.

He was an assistant. And in the work of God, for every dynamic speaker, every dynamic leader, every dynamic church planter, we need many helpers. Most of the people who initially came on Operation Mobilization, about 100,000 of them now, they just came as helpers.

Came to work in the engine room of the ship. Came to go door to door with literature in Paris or to help meet people's physical needs in the back streets of Bombay or in the middle of Central Asia. They were just helpers like John Mark.

That's such a beautiful passage in Acts 13 because it shows failure. It shows failure. It didn't work.

They had to send John Mark home. He failed. But he bounced back.

Later, Barnabas said, let's bring John Mark. What did Paul say? No way, Jose. Paul was choleric, temperament, a little bit impatient probably.

Barnabas was a more loving, grace-awakened kind of person. Paul hadn't read the book yet. They split.

They went their separate ways. Later on, Paul admitted, maybe John Mark would be helpful. Isn't it wonderful? That there's so much about failure in the Word of God.

One of my closest friends is a man who was going to speak at Urbana once and last minute some things went wrong and it was all canceled. None of us will ever forget that or are linked with intervarsity. Through that failure, he became one of my closest friends.

His name is Gordon McDonald, who God used to write one of the most off-the-wall great books in the history of the church, *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. Brothers and sisters, I stand before you, not as a director or founder of a great mission society. I stand before you as a needy ragamuffin who's failed the

Lord many, many times with my wife, with my kids, with my movement.

But every day, I experience the grace of God. Every day, I discover He still loves me with all my unlovingness and my impatience. And I know that if a character like me, with all my struggles, even doubting the faith, even doubting the very existence of God, can live in the power of God's grace every day for 45 years, what will be your excuse, especially after coming to this seminar? God bless you.

Let's pray. I think a few of you know that my dad died this year. And now my wife's mother just died two days ago.

We were just with her as she was dying, but had to leave before she actually transferred to Gloria, a wonderful woman. We had to go right from here on the first back to the funeral. Lord, I just thank you for this opportunity to share my heart.

And Lord, we know that getting out of the comfort zone isn't perhaps what we think. It's not really that uncomfortable because there's grace. There's your Holy Spirit.

There's ministry. There's fulfillment. There's the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, bringing the fruit.

And it includes a lot of joy. It includes victorious life. It includes that abundant life spoken about in John's Gospel.

I have company and I have life, and you may have it more abundantly. Lord, help us to be proactive. Help us as we count the cost, as we see the problems, as we feel intimidated and weak, to somehow go for it anyway.

To be those persevering, proactive marathon runners right to the end of the race. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We've got 10 minutes for questions. Feel free to ask anything you want. You can put me on the spot.

I love it. I do a lot of television and radio. They put you on the spot, try to make you look like a real idiot.

And it's great training. And I may not be able to answer the question, but before you go storming out of here... Or is that the end? Does that bell mean the end? No, that's a college bell or something. We do have more copies of the book that will be given as you go out.

See Jeff. Jeff's pretty tall. Every year for 40 years I've had a student working with me.

He's been one of the greatest blessings in my life. Jeff is the present... well, he's a graduate now. And of the 40 people that travel with me, work with me, live with me, almost every single one of them is going on for Gone Today.

So I challenge you to, you know, get somebody to mentor you, get somebody to travel with. Team up. Who wants to ask the first question? Okay, forget it.

Second question. First question, it's always hard to get that. You got the seven words? One year from now, seven free books if you send me an email.

The man with the lovely hat. I'm a hat person by the way, I don't know what I did with my hat. Go ahead.

When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, I believe you will see some of the fruit. It won't all come at once because that would blow you away, but you'll start to see the fruit. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, against such there's no law.

People around you will start to see fruit. You will also have the witness of the Spirit of God in your heart. That's a little bit mystical, a little bit unexplainable, but it's a reality.

It's not there every hour of the day. There are times when it's there, especially when you're worshiping. There's times when you feel blah because you're human.

And you'll also begin to bear fruit. You'll begin to see people touched through your life, through your ministry. There's different degrees of anointing.

The anointing of the Spirit is a whole separate subject, but you'll start to feel and experience something of the anointing, and lives will be touched through your ministry. There'll be a lot more peace in your heart. However, you'll continue to have struggles.

You'll continue to have doubts. Great faith is not in the absence of doubts and struggles and tears, failure, disappointment, but in the midst of all those things and much more. There are great books on this subject.

I'll be happy to send you one. Someone else. Yes.

Part of the vision started to come before I was a Christian. The question was, how did the vision develop in my life? This lady prayed for me. She sent me the Gospel of John.

I joined the organization that distributed that Gospel called Pocket Testament League. They were an organization trying to give the Gospel out to the whole world. I got interested in that before I was born again.

That was the beginning of the vision. Before that, as a non-Christian human being, influenced by Christian culture and nominal Christianity, I had a concern for the poor. I had concern for alcoholics because my grandfather was an alcoholic.

To make a long story short, it was evolutionary. Forgive the term. The big thing after my conversion was my high school.

After that, it was more New York City. After that, I traveled across the whole of America distributing Gospels. I was still in business.

I used to sell firefighting equipment. I'd light gas fires on people's front porches, put them out with my little extinguisher, then I'd take out the Word of God and try to go for the fires of hell. That's the truth.

Then, as I began reading, as I got exposure to missionaries and missionary materials, it just began to explode. I went to Mexico, and ever since then, it's gone off the charts. I left university, a liberal arts college, which was great for a couple of years, but I left that, went to Moody Bible Institute, where I got overdosed with all kinds of missionary exposure, people coming back like Lionel Gurney from the Muslim world.

It just grew and grew. It's still growing. When I've been through the book Operation World three times, we actually publish it, so I sort of had to read it, but every time I go through that book, my vision increased.

The holistic vision, which I always thought was for other groups, not OM, 15 or 20 years ago, OM made a huge change and became a dynamic, holistic ministry, so that now we have a much better understanding of the kingdom, where the business person and the arts person and the church-planting missionary and the pastor and the guy who collects the garbage, it all fits together for the kingdom. Boy, questions get me so excited. I was fortunate.

My generation had a lot of people going ahead of us, starting just to write those books about family and acknowledging problems with family on the mission field. And I read that material, and our whole movement was born in the 60s, really, with a sense of family's priority. And so we made changes, even where people lived, on the basis of their family.

My associate director, Peter Maiden, who will probably take my job two years from now, has never left his hometown. When he took on this job, I felt his family, his kids, his church, he was an elder in his church. Even though I wanted him to come to London, where I was, I said, stay up there in Carlisle, that's way up in the boonies.

If you know anything about Great Britain, it's almost in Scotland. And that proved to be the right place for him. So that's not always possible in mission work, even like our ships.

But family is important. I did have some failure. I didn't have this grace awakening in me in the first ten years of my marriage.

It was very slow in coming. I hurt a lot of people. I hurt my wife.

Surely hurt my kids. I was a pioneer, but again, God's grace for failures. Dr. Schaefer was a great influence in my life, together with hundreds of other people.

And I remember Dr. Schaefer, as we walked along the park one day in London, sharing the struggle between how much time to take in and how much to give out. And I learned. I learned from other men and women of God.

I learned how to relax. I learned how to get... I go, whatever I do, I go big time. Recreation, my big thing, roller coasters.

I've been on over 150 of the most wild roller coasters in the planet. Tremendous for the prayer life. So, again, balance.

Balance is very important in all this. And realizing that what's true of one person of one temperament may not be true of another person for another temperament. And my life and what God's done in my life, in this ministry, has been a lot easier for me than it has been for my wife.

Very different temperament. Rougher background. When I met her, three psychosomatic illnesses.

Father killed in the war. Stepfather threw her out of the house. It was a long pilgrimage for her.

But I wish she were here speaking instead of me. Instead, she's over there working on her word processor. She's a full-time secretary, and that's her profession.

Because she is a phenomenal trophy of God's grace to a person who had a lot more hurt, a lot more hurt than I did when God saved me. Just one more question. You've been a wonderful audience.

And I hope all of you got that free book. If not, get it as you leave. But one more question.

Yes, right here. What has been your greatest experience of doing mission work? I think my greatest experience next to just fellowship with God and worshiping God. I am a worshiper.

My kind of temperament. We're the last to learn how to worship because we're so impatient. And we want to tell God, what are you doing sitting around up there? We've got a job to do.

But you repent of that bad attitude and press on. But I think next to that, it was seeing the birth of the ship ministry. That was a vision God gave me.

It seemed impossible. And when that ship, Lagos 1, there's a whole book about it, was born in 1970, 71. My wife sailed around the whole of Africa on that old ship, shaking all the way, wondering if it was going to sink, and turning the next corner.

Eventually, we did lose that ship 17 years later on the rocks in the Beagle Channel, right down here on the bottom of my jacket. But that first year on the ship, seeing God put all that together, the engine room, the relationships, arriving in India where I was no longer allowed back into India. I was no longer allowed visas.

When the ship came in, I was given a shore pass. And as the ship came in India, I just wept and wept and wept for joy that I could get back to India, my first love. Today, we have 700 workers in India.

We've given the Word of God to 500 million people in the land of India. And it's a story that would fill 10 books. God bless you.

I look forward to your emails.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/21/SID21630.mp3>

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