

# Purpose of Om Conference

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer emphasizes the importance of seeking God, financial stewardship, and spiritual preparation during the OM conference.*

**Duration:** 57:18

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:10, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Missions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of fellowship and learning to walk in the light. He encourages the audience to open up and share their feelings and experiences with others. The speaker also mentions the significance of receiving news about a financial transaction, highlighting that money is not the most important thing to God. The sermon then transitions to a discussion of the Book of Nehemiah Chapter 8, emphasizing the need for unity and collaboration in making decisions and seeking God's confirmation. The speaker acknowledges that the conference time is limited but expresses the desire for more time to delve into God's word.

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## Transcript

We had a tremendous conference last week. God dealt a number of blows to my own heart. We know that many of you are now going into your second week.

We're also aware that some of you who maybe did not get invited to the leaders training have as much potential leadership as some who were invited. And I hope you will forgive us for our lack of discernment. It's not easy to determine who should be involved in a conference like last week.

On Saturday, I went down to visit the ship, the Franca Sea. And the Lord enabled me to get back here in time to speak about that on Saturday night. So I won't say too much about that now.

But I think most of you know we are seriously praying about the purchase of this ship as the second ship. And then I've had the joy to have two days with my family. And as I have come back to the conference, I felt burdened to speak something about the purpose of a conference like this.

What are we here for? Is it just to organize people on teams and send them out again? Do you know how much a conference like this costs? Tens of thousands of dollars. And what it costs for us to travel here? Thousands more. What it costs to recruit people in the first place? Probably \$100,000 this year just to

recruit.

This depends how you measure what you're using the money for. Very few people understand how hard inflation has hit the international cause of missions. And what it costs to operate now compared to that first big European push in 1962.

And I believe one of our notes of praise should be in thanksgiving for the Lord's supply of finance over this past year. The Lord has answered prayer. I think most of you know also that after the meeting on Friday night, when many in this auditorium recommitted their hearts to Christ, and there was a great sense of faith.

I very seldom felt it as strong as I felt on Friday night. And I was giving my closing thoughts. I had to run to the phone and receive the news that our 42,000 pounds sterling from Ghana had arrived into the banks in London.

I think the timing of that was even more significant than the money. Money is not that important with God. So we have much to thank God for.

I'm going to cut out some of my other introductory thoughts because of time and get into this passage of Scripture. Last week we didn't have any interrupters. So our time is reduced.

The book of Nehemiah, chapter 8. I'm going to read only in English. You please follow in your own language because it's a long passage. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street.

What a crowd that was. That was before the water gate and they spoke unto Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. Verse 2, we're going to read right through verse 12.

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of the men and women, and all who could hear with understanding upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the street and was before the water gate from the morning until midday. Before the men and the women, those who could understand.

And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra, the scribe, stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose beside him. And then you have a big long list of names that I will not try to read.

Verse 5. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up. And I'd say a number of countries, they make you stand up when you read the word of God.

Continuing. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands.

And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. And then we've got that list of names again. Caused the people to understand the law.

And the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, who is Teshatha, and Ezra the priest,

the scribe, and the Levites, who taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord, your God, mourn not, nor weep.

For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Lord. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them, for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy unto our Lord.

Neither be ye grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

Let's pray together. Living God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for what we learned from both the Old and the New Testament.

We thank you for the privilege of gathering together in this way. We thank you for the reality of your presence. And we believe that you want to speak to us from your word.

Not just tonight, but through these days together. Help us, O Lord, to set the pace for this conference from the very beginning. As we read your word, as we seek your face, for we pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen. I am aware that perhaps there are some who don't find conferences easy. I wonder what aspect of the Christian warfare you do find easy.

Personally winning souls to Christ, until they are soundly converted, do you find that easy? Planting a church in the Muslim world, or even in France, do you find that relatively easy? What significant thing that God has commanded us do you find relatively easy? Not too much. There are blessings that God pours upon us. And when he pours a blessing upon us, we can be doing a difficult thing and it seems wonderful and easy.

And I believe that God wants to pour his blessing upon this conference. One missionary said once, if you don't take the young people through the training conference, whatever you do, don't send any of them to me. I believe we are here because God has brought us together.

I probably and myself want to be here less than most of you. And there are things of one's family life that one should not bother to share. And I can only say that separation from my family and wife is probably five times more difficult than it was even five years ago.

I spent 20 years of going to OM conferences. I spent one seventh of my entire life in conferences. And I don't find them any easier.

Some of you may feel and find it's difficult because no one seems to know you or go out of the way to talk to you. You may find that difficult. I would yearn for such days to come back.

I so enjoyed my time with the Agape Force in Texas. I was the only speaker, four hours a day. No one knew me.

Most of them seemed too scared of me to bother me. And I enjoyed that conference more than certainly OM conferences. Because you see, we're not just gathered here for a blessing.

Those of us who are here as leaders know we are here with a specific work to do. And that work involves giving ourselves to you. And we want to meet with you.

And for most of us, it's from 6.30 at night, 6.30 in the morning until midnight. And though we don't find it easy, this is what we want to do and this is why we're here. And we are excited about what God is going to do in our midst.

If you want to see God work in this conference, ask Him right now for a spirit of expectancy. We've got to expect great things from God. That's what William Carey taught us.

The Crusade, the year program, has already begun. For me, it was last Thursday when I arrived here from Canada. For you, maybe it was yesterday.

And we don't want to think in terms of what are we going to do when we leave here, but what are we going to do now? A Christian is a man who lives in the now. Some of you may never leave this conference. And we want to make these days count.

We see throughout the Old Testament, as we just read in Nehemiah, the people of God often gathered together. It's my prayer that our brother Baksin will be able to visit us next week or the week after that. I've learned something from him, from his fellowships out in India.

One of the things I've learned is that the people of God love to gather in the name of the Lord and worship the Lord. If you think it's crowded here, you should go to one of their holy convocations, where 5,000 people live, most of them outside, on a grounds probably one-fifth the size of these premises. And more than that come to the meetings.

And they worship the Lord. And they feed on the Word. And they listen to the longest sermons ever preached in the history of the church since the Apostle Paul had, what's his name, fall out the window.

And they, in India, call these holy convocations because they find that name in the Old Testament. When I arrived in India in 1963-64, and I went to one of those convocations, I found some things that were similar to what we were practicing in OM that I had not found almost anywhere else in the world. Especially their emphasis on prayer.

I was in a holy convocation in Madras. And they had continual prayer going all day, 24 hours around the clock, in a little prayer room. One of my burdens for the second ship is that we can have a prayer closet and perhaps prayer going 24 hours a day around the clock for the life and the ministry of the ship.

Not as a marathon, but because people love to pray. And they know that prayer is the weapon. So throughout the Old Testament and to modern days, true, I believe, true movements of God have done everything possible to gather in the name of the Lord in this way as we are doing here.

Without these conferences, I do not believe that OM would exist today. Even on a practical level. The decisions that are made during these days.

As we seek the Lord for the decision. And as we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As I said in the leaders conference, if I didn't believe the Holy Spirit was the true leader of OM, I would quit today.

And may God have mercy on us if that someday just becomes a phrase in our Christian vocabulary instead of a reality on our teams, in our board meetings, and in everything that we do. Some of you have

read the little tract, The Displaced Person. The author of that tract believes that the displaced person in modern missions is the Holy Spirit.

Tozer believed that the displaced person in the average church was the Holy Spirit. He asked how many committee meetings in churches begin with an hour waiting upon God, getting the mind of the Spirit before making their endless decisions about their own work in the church. So many times in the work of God the prayer is just sort of a little preamble.

We pray a little prayer and then we launch off in all of our human wisdom and man-made ideologies. I know because I've practiced it myself. Oh, for the sovereignty of the Spirit of God and the love of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ on a practical level in OM, this is what I yearn for in this coming year.

Let me give you just a few of the thoughts that I wrote down as I prayed over this. Why are we here? What are our goals? First of all, to seek the Lord. That's reason enough for being here.

Even if you weren't coming on OM. Even if you weren't going to the Muslim world. Even if OM didn't have a ship.

To seek the Lord. Tozer said you can't get many in meetings anymore where the only purpose is to seek the Lord. Think of the crowd some of our great gospel singers can draw.

Think of the tens of thousands our great evangelists can draw. Then think of the crowd the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ draw in your midweek prayer meeting back in your church. I believe the prayer meeting is the most important part the prayer meetings the most important part together with your quiet time in this conference.

People say, well it costs a lot of money to bring people just to pray. How much would you pay to spend a night of prayer with the Apostle Paul? Or even some living saint? I believe the expenditure that goes into this conference is probably as valuable as anything else we invest in. To wait upon God.

To seek the Lord. I think some people after I visited the ship on Saturday expected me to come forward with some great proclamation and decision. I believe it will take many more days waiting upon God before we can decide on this particular ship.

Not just those of us who are here but other people who are not here. We have come to seek the Lord, to worship the Lord. I believe worship will be the Mount Everest of our times in prayer.

But I believe that worship should start during your personal time in the morning. Don't think because you can come in the evening meeting and enjoy singing choruses that that is worship. I can tell you plenty of carnal Christians miles away from Jesus Christ can sing those choruses, leap in the air and enjoy it even more than you do.

If you are not walking with God in the morning in your quiet time and worshiping in Him, I doubt whether you have experienced revival to bring you suddenly into His power and presence just because you are singing your favorite chorus. No doubt many O-Emers would have a better quiet time if they could have someone follow them through the woods playing on an organ. Perhaps we make the mistake of thinking worship is firstly something we feel.

Now feeling is involved in worship. And there is certainly nothing wrong with feeling the presence of God. Of course, sometimes we need a discernment to see if we are feeling the presence of God or we are just feeling some feeling.

It costs, doesn't it, to have a quiet time with God. I would estimate from my surveys that 35% of O-Emers last year's year program failed basically to have a real quiet time of any significance throughout the year. If you think that's depressing, some mission societies estimate that less than 25% of their missionaries have a significant personal time daily with a living God, even on the mission field.

And I can assure you that joining O-Em will not make you automatically spiritual anymore. You will have to learn. Have to learn to worship.

And this will mean discipline. This will mean praying when you don't feel like praying. Reading God's word.

Sorry, go ahead. Reading God's word when you don't feel like reading. And knowing by faith you have been in the presence of God.

People always say to me, well, my quiet times are so dry. Some of my quiet times are dry. When I find that they're dry, I take longer.

I go back again after lunch. I walk out to the woods and see if it's wetter out there. And in England, sometimes it is.

But I don't give up. And I tell you, spiritual life and prayer and all that kind of thing is about as natural to George Verwer as drinking arsenic. And I don't believe it's an exaggeration to say that the fact that God could use such a one as I to even help lead any kind of a spiritual movement is the sovereign mercy of a great and loving God.

So we're here we're here to seek the Lord. Don't think I'm against choruses. You don't understand my speaking methodology now if you think I'm against choruses.

My favorite chorus is, Seek ye first the kingdom of God. And how my heart gets challenged because it's mainly all Scripture. And I would like that to be the motto of this conference, even if you don't like the chorus.

Secondly, we have come to feed upon the word of God. Again, I believe that doesn't just mean listening to the messages, but it means also on your own. Though let me make this little clarification.

That while we're all gathered together like this, we will put extra emphasis on teaching and preaching the word knowing that the rest of the year, some of you lonely people, you'll be digging all day because there won't be any OM team speakers coming your way where some of you are going. I know within the next two weeks some of you will be mighty sick of listening to me. But you can have the consolation that you probably will never have to listen to me again the rest of your life.

So I'm getting my innings now while I've got you where I want you. And I was so excited as I came across this passage. Sometimes I find a passage and speak on the passage.

Other times the Lord gives me a burden with a lot of scriptural thoughts. Then I think, well Lord, what passage? And in an amazing way, the Lord gave me this passage. I've never even read this passage publicly, I don't think in my entire ministry.

That's why I didn't attempt the names. But isn't that passage exciting? Come to gather in the presence of God. We've come to give thanks as these people were giving thanks.

We've come to lay a spiritual foundation for this year as those people, these people were doing. And if you read the rest of the book of Nehemiah, you will see some other wonderful comparisons. In the early days on the ship when it was dry docked in Rotterdam, God gave us this book of Nehemiah.

There were many similarities. So we've come to feed on his word. Now, I know a few people find the messages long.

Many other people have written to me and said, why didn't you speak longer? It's not easy to find the balance. We just hope those of you who find it long, especially through interpretation, maybe just tune me out for a while, and just intercede, just worship the Lord, and then after a while then you tune me back in. I don't really feel, in the light of the situation, that we're spending too much time in the word of God.

Will many of us never have an opportunity like this again? We could say, alright, let's not have any interpreters, that will save us a lot of trouble, a lot of time. But we've tried that in the past. We've tried simultaneous interpretation.

Or we've sent them off to other rooms. No, no, we want to come back to the main room. We feel left out.

So in OM you have to learn to give a little and to take a little. And you can tell by my size that I've been giving much and not receiving too much back. The third thing is that this is a spiritual boot camp.

Now, I don't know what that is in French. When you first go into the army, those first couple of months, when they give it to you rough. That didn't sound too exciting.

But we know when we first go into the military and we have some famous military people with us. Ex-military. Private, first class, George Everett Miley.

I think you were getting close to a general, weren't you, by the time you left? At least you were generalizing. How many other people have served in their national army? Please stand up. Don't be ashamed for your country.

I was also in the Boy Scouts, so I will stand. Okay. When you first join an army, you go through boot camp.

They make it rough. And it's training. Get it out of your head that this is a spiritual holiday camp.

This is not filing. That is the other side of the water starting in a few days. This is a military spiritual boot camp.

One time, a number of leaders wanted me to speak at filing. And someone said, no, this is not the atmosphere for the kind of message that George Verwer has. Anyway, I got there to speak anyway.

And so we know that some things are going to be hard this week. Getting up early in the morning. Being kept up so late that night.

And the diet. Of course, a lot of people say this food is great. Some of those are dishonest.

Some are trying to be spiritual. Some have no stomachs. Of course, the food in O.M. does vary from place to place.

But as you keep praying in the finance, we will keep the food coming. Some of you, for a long time, have been hanging around minimum support so when there's minimum stake, you won't complain. Actually, I'm amazed at the price of food these days.

And a lot of people are battling in their homes just to get food on their table. We hope that in the midst of this difficult training, you will be honest. If you are finding it too hard, we want to know.

If you don't believe that, you read Revolution of Balance and Love. We have to train people for difficult tasks ahead. But we don't believe everyone is the same.

And if you're finding it too hard, if you need a break, a day off, or maybe to see a doctor or special food, we want to know. We may not be able to do something but we want to know, we want to try. And I believe with all my heart that when you leave OM, most of you will find life harder than when you were on OM.

It's easy to get in this self-pity puddle of Operation Mobilization. We feel we are suffering so much and we're going to come apart. The strain is too great.

There are too many people. Too many problems. I know the self-pity puddle from one end to the other.

I swam back and forth many times. And God hates it. And I've had to repent many, many times.

Don't get in that these days. You ever get in the nobody understands me puddle? I challenged all the leaders last week to read that dynamic book by those two women who worked in the Muslim world Have We No Rights? And we want to mention that book again tonight. So we're here for training.

Not just for the coming year. For life. You know one of the roughest times you're going to have in your life? After you get married? You got three kids and they're all teenagers.

And married? I got three teenagers. I've got a wife who's finding it very hard. She's got a husband who's finding it harder.

And a lot of the things I thought I suffered in OM in the past are very, very mild compared to some of the things my soul is having to wrestle with in these days. I thank God for a wife who knows something of a disciplined life probably more than I do. And I've just thanked God for her a thousand times I would not even be here if it was not for her discipline, her stick-to-it-ness and her perseverance.

She went on the OM boot camp in Mexico. She found it horrible. And after the summer I was a bit extreme in those days.

I said, you stay on here alone. I'm going back to Bible school. She wasn't in Bible school.

I said, you stay here and crack the language. And I left this frightened young lady in the middle of Mexico City. Of course.

With the national workers, of course. Who she could barely communicate with. And she came apart.

God brought her back to Moody Bible Institute on a bus. And we discovered that she had deep, deep emotional problems. And in the lounge of Moody Bible Institute we were about to break our engagement.

Because I said, look, this way you'll never make it. I'm probably going to New Guinea. We're probably going to end up in a big pot somewhere.

You're not going to make it. Actually, I told her that on the first date. And she went through soul struggle and agony.

She went back after some nights to her room. And came to the end of herself. And God met her needs.

She had five major psychosomatic illnesses. They were all healed that night. That doesn't mean that they've never tried to come back.

And that she's perfect. She's still very human. But lots of weakness like her husband.

But that training, what God took her through in her early days, has stood her 17 years in all kinds of incredibly difficult situations. And that failure, that failure in Mexico was the back door to the greatest victory in her life. Some of you are here for your second year.

Your third year. There's been failure. You're not sure you can go any further.

Devil shot your quiet time apart. You've done other things that you know were areas of sin and failure. But last year's failure could be the door to the greatest program God has ever put you in this coming year.

A man who gives up in his first year of fighting has never learned to be a soldier in the first place. Fourthly, we have come together to fellowship. Many people don't realize this.

That's why we need these conferences. But fellowship for us is as important as evangelism. We want you to learn to walk in the light.

As it says in 1 John chapter 1, verse 5, 6, 7 and 8. We want you to learn to share with others. I get O-Emers tell me it's taken me three years to learn how to share. Think of all that you can do to your physical health, your mental health and your emotional health if you wait three more years, even one year to learn how to open up and to share and be real.

Why don't you learn that here? This is your opportunity. You go right into your discussion group tomorrow. And just start crying.

Anybody does that tomorrow, give them a free book. Just go in there and start crying. I can't stand George Fowler.

If he speaks again, I'll die. Great, wonderful. You're just learning to fly.

What good will it do for us to bottle up all of our feelings and never express ourselves and never open our mouths? How will that help us? Of course you just can't do this anywhere and everywhere. We'd prefer it not in the dining hall. And there's not enough toilets to do it in the toilet.

But that's what the discussion groups are for. To express yourself. Most of you are not that intensive.

You're not as emotionally mixed up as me. But I hope you will learn to share. And if you don't learn to share, you will join the ranks of hundreds of thousands of other evangelical phonies who go around with their big smile, isn't Jesus wonderful? And it's not real, and they know it.

I was reading in Hebrews yesterday how we should not forsake gathering together. And I just believe this fellowship is so important. A revolution of honesty.

And then lastly, though there are many other things I would love to incorporate in this. Well, just these two final things. There is the practical things that we have to get done.

That makes it valid in itself as well. We can't possibly organize what we want to do next year without a couple of weeks together. It involves literally thousands, thousands of interviews in the next 20 days.

Don't think that your situation is going to be solved with one interview with one leader. We have to discuss. We have to cross-discuss.

We have to pray. We've got to get the Lord's confirmation about certain strategies. The ship is only one of many things.

I personally feel the conference is too short. But we had an election, and I lost. But there is a lot to be done in these few days, and for everything you see, there's ten things going on behind the scenes, often late into the night.

And then, of course, there are so many practical things you need to learn in connection with your field that you're going to in the many different messages. Some messages you won't get as much as other messages. That's normal.

God just can't speak strong in every message to every single person. If he did, many of you would get a short circuit anyway. And you're going to find a great cross-range of speakers.

Those of us who will be at the Coordinators' Conference are going to have the joy of listening four times to a brother, Chua, from Singapore, who is the leader of the International Fellowship of Christian Students, IVF International. We're going to feed on the word, because we need it. And we're going to have many different speakers.

Some of them will even contradict one another. We don't have one little line we're trying to push down into your head. You're going to have to search the Scriptures and see if these things sow, whether it's George Berler speaking, or Billy Graham, or whoever else we bring in.

Training. It's important. And lastly, I believe God wants to bring revival.

I know that word has lost its meaning in many places. I believe God can pour out His Holy Spirit upon us in these days. Acts 4.31. There has to be the crisis and the process.

I believe more than general revival, when God does work in a special way, God's sovereign timing plus prayer is the ingredient for that. And repentance. But I believe as we pray toward that and work toward that, we have the privilege of appropriating personal revival as God's children.

We are alive in Jesus Christ. Let's learn to claim that. Let's learn to live in the light of that.

Vance Havner said, if we had more vival, we wouldn't need revival. And if you want to pray for those of us who are leaders, pray that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit. Pray that we may know personal revival.

Without that, this movement is doomed even if we had 25 ships. We need God. We need the reality of the Holy Spirit daily.

We need the brokenness that only the Spirit of God can produce. And we know that God can give it. He's given it in the past and He can give it again.

Not always in the same way. Sometimes it's rather noisy. Sometimes it's very quiet.

Sometimes it's in a prayer meeting. Sometimes it's just one by one. Two by two.

God touching. God breaking. God healing.

Healing relationships. Whenever I go, people expect me to speak about the ship. I actually don't like to speak about the ship.

I sometimes announce in the church, I'm going to speak about the most important ship tonight. Oh, oh, he's going to speak about the second ship tonight. Or he's going to speak about Lagas.

And then I start speaking about relationship. And then I start speaking about fellowship. And then I start speaking about worship.

I'm sorry for the interpreters, but I couldn't resist that. Just explain what I've said. And God wants to do that in these days.

Earth's new revival. To bring that healing in relationships. That reality of fellowship.

And that joy of worship. For the joy of the Lord is our strength. Let us pray.

Just a few moments of silent prayer together. Oh God, we know you have brought us here for a divine purpose. We praise you that you have given us this privilege.

We praise you for all you have done this last year. By faith we praise you for what you're going to do this coming year. Open our hearts, oh God.

Break our hearts, oh God. Take away wrong attitudes. Even toward this conference.

Or toward any brother or sister. That we may walk in repentance and brokenness and revival. That our cups may be full and running over.

We thank you for the revival you brought to Ezra. Through the reading of the word. And we pray, oh God, do it again.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's stand and close by singing, seek ye first the kingdom of God.

No shortcuts. Each verse repeated by the men as the girls worship. We all worship the hallelujahs.

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