

Rebuilding Relationships

by George Verwer

This sermon emphasizes the importance of rebuilding relationships in the church by examining our hearts, forgiving others, and being gentle and affectionate towards one another.

Duration: 45:32

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:9, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

Topics: "Christian Community", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of aiming for high goals and principles in the body of Christ. He highlights the need for love and sanctification among believers, as well as the responsibility to address those who have gone astray. The speaker also emphasizes that the gospel should not just be preached in words, but also demonstrated through power and life. He encourages believers to prioritize their own walk with God and their relationships with one another. The sermon references verses from 1 Thessalonians and highlights the example of Paul and his team's gentle and affectionate approach in sharing the gospel.

Transcript

I have some encouraging news about my own medical situation. I went last night to my doctor, specialist, and he looked down at my vocal cords, and he was quite surprised to discover this little nodule has shrunk, which is, in his view, almost a confirmation that it's not cancerous, because supposedly if it's cancerous, which is unlikely anyway, then it doesn't get smaller. He also got all my blood tests, which show no sign of anything like cancer.

So he's now not in such a rush to operate on me, and wants me to come back in six weeks. And he also has become, I guess, a little more convinced that my nodules are more linked with my speaking, but he also has this theory about the need for lubrication. In fact, especially in airplanes, he's given me a prescription now, so that I have to put some salve or cream so that my vocal cords stay lubricated in the airplane, because that supposedly is always dry, according to him.

The exciting thing is that yesterday morning I was very much burdened for Sri Lanka, reading about Sri Lanka, praying for Sri Lanka. And as we came to the end of our conversation last night, Sri Lanka was on my mind. I thought maybe he was a Sri Lankan.

And I said, were you born here in Great Britain? And he said, no, I was born in Sri Lanka. At that point, there was just a lot of emotion, as I discovered he was a close friend of Celestine Fernando, my friend in Sri Lanka, who recently went to be with the Lord. And then we began to talk about the Sri Lankan crisis.

He has had patients, both from the Tamil Tiger side and from the Sri Lankan national side. It was just really a time of bonding together. Now I'm almost looking forward to giving this man the opportunity to operate on me.

He will demand four weeks of quiet after the operation, which I know many of you will be very encouraged by. But only one week of silence. So I was encouraged by that visit, needless to say, especially since rumors flying around that George Verber has throat cancer.

That supposedly is in California. If you can help quench that rumor, if you hear it, that would be encouraging. I'd like you to turn now in your Bibles to the book of Thessalonians.

We did get Steve Chalk's message on tape. Just my introduction didn't come out, so I did a reintroduction. And that eventually will be duplicated if some of you want to make use of it.

First Thessalonians is a book that I would encourage you to study, like all books of course, but it's been one of the books that has especially ministered to me again and again. I'm amazed that I haven't spoken on this particular subject this morning. Some of you who are new may not realize that sometimes I share a burden here, not because it's just on my heart for this team, but it's on my heart for the work.

Majority of teams in a landline never have the opportunity to visit, though I do visit quite a few teams within the course of a couple of years. And so probably some people will only hear this on cassette tape. I've spoken before about relationships.

I'm constantly speaking about love and balance and a lot of things connected with this. But this morning I want to speak very clearly, I hope, on how to rebuild or restore a broken relationship. If I have spoken specifically on that, I can't remember it.

And I was quite surprised when I sensed the Lord was putting this message on my heart and writing the thoughts down, I was quite surprised. But I hadn't spoken on this before, because as I look back on my pilgrimage with the Lord, it seems that this is one of the biggest, absolutely biggest issues among Christians. And again and again I'm with people and they're sharing with me broken relationships.

It does seem to be certainly one of the greatest problems we face in the church. People who start out together and even planting a church together, and the relationship breaks down. I'm going to one of the biggest churches in Iowa in a few weeks.

Last time I was there, there was these two key guys that were a team together. Since I was last there, they have broken apart. One fellow took most of the staff and hundreds of people from the church down the road to start his own church.

And this was all splashed across the Iowa newspapers. And this is not uncommon. And in Operation Mobilization, I think, as we look back, one of the greatest encouragements has been to see so many relationships maintained.

But as a movement, we have seen broken relationships. You may have broken relationships. I perhaps have been oversensitive, especially when you get involved with so many people, because I have found that one broken relationship or relationship that has even semi-collapsed causes me more concern than 30 good relationships.

And I guess that may be linked with the concept of the 99. If all are going well except one, the one we should give attention to, is that one that has gone astray. Some verses that just challenge our hearts concerning this, in 1 Thessalonians, the whole chapter does, the whole book, but let's just look at verse 5. 1 Thessalonians 5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Quite a few of the epistles of the Apostle Paul were written in an attempt to keep his own relationship with whole churches. Because after he left, wolves in sheep's clothing came in, division came in, and Paul was accused. It's very easy to accuse a Christian leader when he is not present.

It is one of the most common phenomena among God's people. That's why there's some Christian leaders very nervous at times leaving their church for a few weeks holiday. Because when they come back, the devil has done his work, and all kinds of things happen.

I'm always amazed even at O.M., some of the things that get said at certain meetings when I'm not there, in comparison to when I'm there. Of course, as a hopefully mature Christian leader, I have to accept that negative things have to be said about me when I'm not there, because that's the way life is, and because of course there are people that have to evaluate my ministry, evaluate perhaps some negative thing. Of course, the biblical road is that these people should firstly go to the person involved, and that is our goal, that is ideal, but I think we are unrealistic if we think that's always happening, and if we get upset with people when that doesn't happen, because that just adds one problem on top of the other.

But Paul's thrust in writing 1 Thessalonians is that the gospel didn't come just in word, but in power and in life. And I think at the beginning of our new O.M. year, even our new team year here, it's just good to remember again the most important thing is our own life, our own walk with God. It's not how many leaflets you give out or how many letters go out, all of that can honor God.

Hard work, I'm sure, often honors God, but our own life, our own attitude, and surely right here on this team, our own relationship with one another is something that can either dishonor or bring honor to the Lord. It really hit me this morning as I listened to the news of the danger of my present direction as I'm getting more concerned about justice and righteousness and social, that whole sphere. I've always been interested, but in the past six months I've become more active, and I praise God at the general council we decided we were not ready for this big mega statement we were about to swallow because we hadn't counted the cost as a movement.

And our position, for example, in foreign countries up to now has always been to stay out of politics, and I believe God has honored that, especially when it's not our own country. And of course, where does social concern and justice move into the political arena? It moves very quickly, it moves very quickly. And already, George Carey, as far as I can see, maybe I misunderstood the news, he's in trouble by what he said.

I'm not saying whether I agree or don't agree with him, but what I am saying is that we move into this area, the minefields are many, especially in political areas or justice, social action, where there is disagreement.

Because, for example, suppose I'm a Tory, as a Tory who loves Jesus Christ, unless I am a Tory because I don't have the privilege of voting, they don't let carriages let me vote, I'm just an immigrant. My first burden wouldn't be necessarily some Tory legislation, some of which certainly is silly.

My first burden would be to see other Tories come to Christ and to see people in labor come to Christ. But if I shoot off my mouth about some policy that I think is justice, but in fact all these people in the other party totally disagree, surely I'm going to alienate those people. How am I going to now talk to them about Jesus? So we have this terrific rift in Britain, it's been going on for years.

One part of the government is saying, look, the church should stick to evangelism and the church and the souls and all that and stay out of government affairs. None of us would totally agree with that, but all of us would agree how complicated it is when we bring our faith right into the political arena and we start mouthing off and it goes on television. I'm not saying they shouldn't do it, I'm not saying we shouldn't do it, especially in our own countries, but I am saying it is far more difficult and complicated than we may think.

Anyway, that's a little sidetracked, but I hope we will continue to pray for George Carey and for those who are convinced as British citizens that they should speak out on these issues and that somehow it will not be a stumbling block for evangelism, but it will be a stepping stone for evangelism. It's a tough area. But we see the Apostle Paul having to defend himself, we see the Apostle Paul then opening his heart and we see once again how concerned the Apostle Paul was for relationships and for love and for peace.

Look at verse 7. In case you think Paul is just all choleric, over the wall in the basket three years and weeping kind of character. But we were gentle among you even as a nurse, a nurse cherished her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls because you were dear unto us.

We had an outstanding Christian leader visit us here yesterday afternoon of a movement that used to be considered almost a cult, the Jesus Army. His name is Noel. He came here yesterday afternoon, I guess just in God's beautiful way, he put us together for fellowship.

And as we share the history of our two movements, there are some interesting parallels and there are many things that are very different. But he in the early days also got deeply spoken to by Acts 2, deeply spoken to by Acts 4 and believed that Christianity was something more than just going to church and the kind of superficial relationships that often exist. And they launched into a community.

They now have over 50 community houses across the nation. And they made a decision some years ago to try to get into the mainstream of the evangelical church and to work with other believers and to have link-ups with other believers. And I think they may now be linked with the Evangelical Alliance.

I'm not sure of that. But we also as a movement had a very, our roots, a very strong commitment to community. We dropped the word community because it was a hot, misunderstood word and because a lot of people who were into community were into community for the sake of community.

Our approach to community was more pragmatic. We wanted to get the world evangelized and we were extreme on wanting all of our money to go into the work of the gospel. And that by pooling our resources, sleeping three families, living three families in the same house, all kinds of things that our movement was known for in the early days, a lot of money was saved, a lot of money was released.

And one of the greatest things we're struggling with in OM today is what is the place of community. There's certainly a segment of people in OM that would not be committed to community in almost any form, but they would be committed. They'd be committed to love, they'd be committed to the local church, they'd be committed to most of the things that I want to talk about this morning.

But I and this team still is trying, and most teams are, ships are, trying to go forward with a modified view of community largely because we believe we are one body in Christ, we are committed to one another. As one member suffers, we all suffer. And I've just been thinking a lot about our team these days and the danger of this team being divided and basically ICT just becomes a convenience store, sort of a 7-Eleven.

You basically come here for what you want and then you go. And so we can end up with this group in the corner. We are of India, we are of the communications department, we are of the Spanish-speaking world.

The pressure is on us to divide our team financially into this. That pressure, by the way, is off us right now because some people have seen that isn't going to resolve some of the things we struggle with. Some say that if we went that way, dividing up financially, which is income as well as expense, some expense is already divided up.

Of course, our bill, each one of these departments is largely paying its own way already. But I sense that if we take this further step of dividing financially that the enemy could try to use that to bring in the kind of thing that Paul spoke against in Corinthians where different ones claim they were of this group and they were of that group. Probably in a very limited way in the early days.

But people do say things that aren't always encouraging to someone else or to some other group or to some other department. I would like us as a team, and I think this is a team true of headquarters situations around the world, not to compare ourselves so much with the IBM Corporation or some other great corporation where I listen to their tapes and read their books and we can learn a lot from these people. But we are the body of Christ.

It is a totally different world. The backstabbing that goes on in the corporate world, I don't know how much you've been in the corporate world, is beyond imagination. The politics and all kinds of things.

We urge people to read Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, but not always with the same motivation that a corporate leader is asking his people to read it. And people are using, especially in my own country, people are using the teachings of Jesus to satisfy their own greed and their own desire to satisfy ego, to build empire. All kinds of people.

Endless books on this now. Endless. All kinds of books have discovered these Sermon on the Mount teachings, they actually work.

And that if you are a nice, loving, good guy, and you go around saying hello to all your employees, you do certain things, your employees will love you and they will work harder. And these big corporations are proving that this is true. I'm not saying that's totally wrong.

God has to judge motives, not me. But I am saying that in the body of Christ, with Satan breathing down our neck trying to destroy what we're doing, we are in a somewhat different world. And we need to see that.

And we need to aim at these high goals and high principles that the Apostle Paul talks about. Look over at chapter 3, verse 12. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

Verse 3. For this, in chapter 4, this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor. That's Old English. For your wife.

And for God's way of purity. Look at verse 10. And indeed, ye do it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.

But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more. That's tied in with the last line, in verse 9. Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And one of the highest callings we have on this team is to love one another.

Now that sounds so simplistic. But in fact, it's the greatest commandment in the Bible. We love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And we love one another. And as we attempt to love one another, serve one another, we have a commitment to one another. We don't just have a commitment to our particular interest area.

Whatever part of the world it is, we have a commitment to one another. And I know that's hard because you're in a local fellowship and you also feel a commitment there. And I think you know my heart.

The last thing I want to do is put you into some kind of straitjacket of idealism and leave you exhausted at the end of the day. You have to know your limitations. But I think one of the things we do have to work at is to rebuild a relationship that may have deteriorated or may be in neutral.

How can we do this? How can we rebuild a relationship? I've just listed a few things. If you can write them down or remember them, that really would be an encouragement. First of all, you need to examine your heart to see if you have any broken relationships.

And I believe one of the most subtle things in OM is people deceive themselves into thinking some relationship is alright when they know down in their heart they have been hurt by that person, they have turned that person off to some degree because some hurt has been inflicted. And there is a sort of mutual toleration. And when we live in a team like this, in a building like this, we're interacting with each other, we will hurt one another.

I'm sure I must have hurt some of you at times. And there will be the temptation to go on an emotional-spiritual strike toward a particular person. Or, even greater danger, reading in to a situation that someone doesn't love you, someone doesn't really feel they have a relationship with you because you feel you have hurt them and they have not forgiven you.

Or just some very simple misunderstanding. I have been amazed at times to hear what people in OM say about other people in OM. I'm keeping it OM.

I've been more amazed, just as amazed, in the Church and in other situations. So I'm not putting OM down. But brothers and sisters, we need to make a commitment to biblical relationships, to loving one another.

And I just pray these practical things that God has put on my heart will be a help to you. Number one, see your own sinfulness. That has been such a help to me.

I have many weaknesses and many failures. It's good you don't have them all, isn't it? Do I have to have them all? I don't want to have failures just so I can go around and talk about failure. I do get great impact in my messages when I talk about failure, but honestly, I'm not going to talk about what doesn't exist.

I don't have much struggle in holding things against people. It's never been a big thing in my life, even before my conversion. But I've battled some, and I've had to search my wretched heart, which I don't trust.

But I had this goal from my early Christian days not to go to bed with anything against anybody anywhere. And a lot of other teaching that I've had, a little of which I'm sharing this morning, has just helped me to forgive people. And I found that people that put the knife in me the most, sometimes the greatest love and forgiveness toward them.

And in God's work, we've got to know how to somehow take the knife out, maybe just a little knife, maybe a little gossip, a little criticism, and just let it, give it to the Lord. And in God's work, we've got to know how to somehow take the knife out, maybe just a little knife, maybe a little gossip, a little criticism, and just let it, give it to the Lord, let it be cleansed by His precious blood. And one of the things that's helped me to forgive people is I have a pretty good vision of my own wretchedness.

And as I deal with my own wretchedness and my sinfulness, wrong attitudes, impatience, it makes it hard to judge other people. Now the devil's so clever, he tries to use that. He's used that on this team.

I will tell you the reason sometimes I haven't gotten some of you in a word of exhortation. Because I feel I'm such a worm myself, how am I going to go to you and then correct you? Can one worm correct another worm? I think the Bible does teach it can. But it's not easy.

Number two, receive absolutely from the hand of the Lord forgiveness for your own sins. Be sure that you are experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit, that you really have accepted yourself and that you are at least, to a biblical degree, relaxed about yourself. It's often when we're not relaxed about ourself, we're struggling with something in ourselves, that we project that onto another person or we don't have the spiritual strength in ourselves to do what we should do toward that other person.

So caring for yourself is important in serving God. I tell you one of the reasons my voice may be a little bit better is because this summer I took less meetings, I had bigger meetings, but I took less meetings, I had more voice rest, I took a little more time off and so far for my vocal cords and it's paid big. And I think spiritually there's a comparison that when we take care of ourselves spiritually, we're better able to serve others.

And if you do sin against a brother and a sister because you are spiritually defeated, you are going through a time of struggle, why don't you tell the person that? That's so logical. Go back to the person and say, look, I'm sorry what I said or did the other day. I have to be honest, I was really down, I was in a bad mood, I didn't mean that.

And it certainly came out wrong and I want you to forgive me and pray for me. I don't see how we can have biblical relationships without confession. It's something I learned when I was just a year in Christ.

We have to confess. Sometimes we have to confess to others, confess your faults one to another and pray for one another. Surely one of the great dangers in OM today, a movement that has gone through hurt, it has gone through failure.

We have disappointed one another is to be more honest and more open and to be ready to take the initiative. Number three, take that person to the Lord in prayer. Now I'm not just thinking of people on OM.

My burden is the whole body of Christ. Is there someone back home? Is there someone in your family, in your church? Is it a broken relationship? Take that person to the Lord in prayer. Start praying, put the name on a list and pray specifically.

As you pray with a person, you bond with them before you're even with them. You bond with them before you even see them. And so when you do see them, there's a much better chance that there may be some kind of relationship and love coming forward.

Number four, admit that the root of the whole problem, especially in Christian work, is probably a misunderstanding. When I get wound up about somebody doing something, so often I find out it's a misunderstanding. And I tell you, on this team, if I wasn't on the phone with people, if I wasn't communicating with people, I would be making wrong judgments.

If I make a wrong judgment, it's going to affect the whole team. So before I open my mouth and I'm still learning, I try to talk to people on the phone, I try to get their viewpoint, try to get maximum information and then confront or speak. And I've learned that in having to confront and fellowship with many people, it's just so much better to presume that it's a misunderstanding, to believe the best.

That is so important, to believe the best. Especially in O.M.'s call to freedom, with a few less rules and regulations, with that has to come the right attitude, believing the best. And then of course, often making an effort to sort out the misunderstanding.

And let's not be naive, some misunderstandings will never be sorted out. You spend your whole life, once you're involved with a lot of people as I am, spend your whole life sorting out misunderstandings. That's why there's no substitute at the end of the day for love, believing the best, agreeing to disagree as it talks about in Grace Awakening and getting on with a priority task.

And I think some of you are good at that and I praise the Lord for it. Number five, let love cover. Ultimately, we in O.M. will continue to have areas of disagreement.

We saw that at the General Council. And sometimes it does get very personal because people say things that we take personally. And Christian leaders notoriously, and some of you who are listening to this are leaders, notoriously Christian leaders have made the mistake of taking criticism of their work and their movement personally.

I have made that mistake. And it's especially easy for a founder. And that's why some founders, the only answer is that they got to leave.

Because they just take so many things personally. And if I've had any victories in trying to lead this work, it's been to try to take things less personally, delegate a lot of the leadership off and allow the incredible changes that are continuing to take place in Operation Mobilization. But it's tied in with letting love cover.

Paul Bilheimer wrote a book by that subject. It's so beautiful. There are all kinds of tensions within O.M. Let us not be naive.

What do you think Peter Maiden is doing on the phone? Having, you know, placing bets on the local horse races? I mean, he is just so busy sorting out misunderstandings, reflying people, sometimes 10,000 miles to sort out one misunderstanding. Can you imagine how much money we could save if the whole movement would become a little more mature? And God wants O.M. to become more mature. He wants me to become more mature because I'll tell you there are areas in my life that are immature and childish, childish in the negative sense.

And I need to re-read David Seaman's book about giving up your childish ways. Number six, in a practical realm, with a person where the relationship needs improvement, why don't you try doing something together? Don't sit down and have a discussion about the area of difference. You know, here are two people that are disagreeing on the women's issue, which may happen until the Lord returns.

You know, if the only time you talk to that person is on the women's issue, you're not going to get anywhere. Here's Joe Moderate Fundamentalist who's worried about Joe Semi-Moderate Charismatic. They're on the same team.

If the only thing they ever talk about are the gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, prophecy, the Kansas City Prophets, and other hot issues, they're never going to have much of a relationship. You've got to start something more basic. Why don't you go for a walk and take a bird watching, as I've started to do again under John Stott's influence.

I'm praying for a pair of binoculars, by the way. But just go out and share about yourselves. Go down and have a pizza together.

Go down to McDonald's or a cup of tea. Again, nothing is a total simple answer. Some people can go down and just have a cup of tea and end up in a difficult situation.

But I find that so often, just having time with a person, just getting to know the person. Of course we're limited. That's why there's no substitute for believing the best and keeping a positive attitude about people, even if you never have time together.

On a team of this size, we cannot all have personal time with one another. It's unrealistic. So that's why the believing the best, the love, the revolutionary biblical principles are in a sense more important than some of the practical thoughts.

Another practical thing, however, is if you can have just a time of prayer together. Sometimes we don't have any fellowship because we feel short of time. We don't have enough time.

Many of us in OM we're so pressed with so much to do, so many relationships. We also want to win new people to Christ. The easiest thing in OM is to get on overload and therefore other relationships break down because you just don't have the time.

I say ten minutes of prayer is better than nothing. And if we could just occasionally pray briefly with people, with one another on this team. I will tell you some of you and I haven't had a lot of time, but your ten minute note, I don't know if it took you ten minutes to write your note, but a few minutes note.

Somebody recently wrote me two pages and it's brilliant. Confidential. No one else has to read this.

It even said read it whenever you want. Amazing. That makes you want to read it immediately.

We can minister sometimes to one another with just a note, just a phone call. I don't have much ministry with some of the wives on the team, but I'm told that just a phone call when the husband is away seems to be meaningful. This isn't something that just the leader can engage in.

In fact, people have been hurt on this team in the past when their husband has been away or the wife has been away and they heard from no one. This kind of thing is not the work of just the leader. A team this size, all of us can minister to one another.

I know many people are. I have no axe to grind this morning on that issue, but when you can get together for a little prayer in twos or threes, in departments, in the car, it's a beautiful thing. And then number nine, we do have to go the extra mile.

We have to go the extra mile in forgiving and forgetting. If you're still holding something against somebody here or wherever and therefore your relationship is hindered with that person, I beg of you, on the basis of the word of God in the scriptures, forgive and work on forgetting. People often say this to me, I tried to approach that person, but I was rejected.

That is one of the greatest mistakes we can ever make. You cannot give up on a person because you were rejected the first time around. I think of how many have given up on people very close to me.

I'm very hesitant to mention names. Very close to me, people gave up on them because they got bad vibes on the first approach. Can you imagine where I would be if I gave up because I had bad vibes on the first approach? Now, I am working on my first approach.

I mentioned this tape I listened to last week about the initial impression we make. I tell you, I wish I'd listened to that tape 20 years ago. Because I know I have lost people for this movement.

I am not so conscious of the people that I may have won to the movement and now they are on the mission field and people say some amazing things about me. Remember, you may hear very positive things about me. I don't hear that.

I live with the negative things. I don't have some great image that George Burwell is some famous Christian leader. I don't.

I live with my wife, Drina. She is not spellbound by George Burwell, the famous leader. She is more finding it a pain in the neck to live with me as I am such a scatterbrain and forget the keys and do this wrong, not wrong around the house because that's what life is all about.

And that's why a lot of famous leaders, if that word is appropriate, get blown completely out of the ministry because I get to drive my car through the traffic or be driven just like everybody else and have the same struggles, brushing my teeth, getting up in the morning, this thing, that thing that any of you may have. And I think it's a hindrance on our team if we don't understand the complexity of people like myself and realize how needy we are and how we do fail and we are often very, very conscious of our failure. I have pursued, almost to extreme, people that I thought I hurt and that is not just a basis of the Christian teaching but as a child I was like that.

And if you don't understand how a person was brought up as a child, what their parents are like, you'll never understand them. It's not just that they were converted, not just that they were filled with the Holy Spirit or that they got this teaching. We are a product of our environment and the great influences came before we were 10, at least before we were 15.

And I know as a child I never wanted to hurt anything. I saw this yesterday when in a bad mood in the morning I poured boiled water on a big spider in our sink. Died almost instantly.

For an hour I kept thinking about this poor spider. I eventually grabbed him a piece of paper and killed him so he wouldn't suffer. Then I went up and discussed this with my wife and immediately I think of the Hindus and the Jains and if anybody, a Jain, had seen me doing that it would be really bad.

And of course then I left it with the Lord. Don't worry, I don't carry such things around. And I believe these things are created for our consumption.

Not spiders but other things. Cows. Which of course is an abomination to thought for certain people in our world.

Many people in our world have thought of killing a cow. So I have a problem. I don't want to hurt anybody and my behavior could be unbiblical and I could lack the decisiveness and the firmness that I need in certain situations.

So I don't see any way ahead for OM. I don't know if you're listening to this tape on the ships where at times there's interesting relationship breakdown. I hear interesting things from the ships I can assure you and it isn't all positive.

But I don't think OM is going to make it. I don't think we're going to make it in our relationships if we don't go the extra mile to rebuild relationships, to let love cover, to completely forgive and forget the past, to give people a second chance in your life. All right, they blew the first chance.

Maybe they blew the second chance, the third chance, the fourth chance. Where do you have the right to say, I gave this person five chances in my life, that's it. Now, I give them my emotional blockage, whatever word you want to use.

No, you've got to give them another chance. Not becoming neurotic about it, not putting yourself down, not living in failure. Building relationships is incredibly difficult.

Do some of you feel you only have a few personal friends? Do any of you feel you don't have any personal friends? That is very normal on this planet. And the devil tries to use that to intimidate a lot of people. A lot of people.

Because close friendship is very complex. Probably you have more friends than you're willing to acknowledge. And if you acknowledge that you had more friends, you probably would have more friends.

I remember how hurt I was once, years ago, when a brother, who I thought I was a close personal friend, I had spent time with him, I'd written him, I loved him, I felt close to him. And he communicated that he had no personal friends except one guy and it wasn't me. Beautiful test.

Do you ever get that kind of test? That's the chance for George Verwer to respond immaturity. But guess what in that situation? I didn't respond immaturity. I was hurt.

I said, hey, I'm your close friend. I forget what I said, but it was a big, crazy conversation. He had a very different definition and concept of close friendship than I had.

You see, so many of our problems are language. And once we're international, interdenominational, intertemperamental, there's a new word, language is a major problem. Language is a major problem.

So without the extra mile, without talking things out, without asking a person what he means, without getting a little definition, definition of words, personal friendship, rejection, all kinds of things we throw around. What do these things mean? Without going the extra mile in understanding the meaning of words and the meaning of what people are trying to say, which involves listening to them, we will have perpetual havoc in the area of relationships. And my heart goes out, especially to anybody in Oman, and I'm going to bring this to a close, who has to tell anybody what to do.

The bosun on the ship. Hello, bosun on the ship. He cannot, early morning when they've got all this work on the deck, sit down and have a major democratic discussion on how they're going to load the ship and how they're going to do this and do that.

He has got to give orders. But among God's people who often are a little bit sensitive, giving orders, leading, telling people what to do, because we may say it in the wrong way, it is not easy. And I think if O.M. wants to evangelize the world, we're going to have to go the extra mile in love, believing the best, forgiveness, taking the initiative.

People say, well, he doesn't want to have time with me. I'm going to take a risk now. I know I'm a risky speaker.

Seldom any longer does anybody invite my wife and I to have a meal with him on this team. It's my own fault because I turned you down. I turned you down.

The main reason I don't go around and have more meals is I'm working almost every night. I'm on overload. We've got so many different crises and this financial crisis.

I have to work on it every day. And so, I've just limited the times that I go out. Now, those who take the initiative, like Regina with her Indian meal, she had my wife and I for meals.

She tried a second time and didn't have it. I've been wanting to have a meal with Peter and Mary Holmes for over 15 years. It happened two nights ago.

Why did I never get together with Cliff Richards? Something I wanted for 25 years. I never took any initiative. I finally took the initiative and as you know, last January 1st I think it was, we had this wonderful one in the morning supper with Cliff Richards.

I'm using this as an illustration. I don't want an immediate invitation to meals. I'm leaving.

But I would. I would like to eat with Cliff Richards and eat a meal with my wife in every one of your homes. I can tell you, I enjoy doing it.

Once I'm in it, I enjoy doing it. It's booking it. It's making the decision.

No phone calls tonight. No letters. No broadcast.

Oh, I could do that from your home. But a meal. I still have a little piece of paper from the Dean family.

This is a ticket to come and have a meal. It's many years old. I'm sure the Deans have given up inviting me.

But the illustration is, don't give up the first time. Life is complicated. It doesn't mean the person doesn't want to come and have a meal with you.

It doesn't mean he doesn't like you. Don't read these things into people. Life is too big for that.

It's too complicated for that. One of the reasons my wife and I are surviving is because I don't overpressure her as I used to with continual people coming into our house. If we're going to do some of the things we want to do, we have to drop some.

We learn the hard way because for me, a meal is nothing. It's nothing. Give them a peanut butter sandwich.

The early days of OM, if they don't like it, repent. It's not what you eat. It's the privilege of being with me.

Right? Subtle arrogance. With my wife, every time I invited someone to the house, it was a major event. She was vacuuming and cleaning, preparing.

What would they think of this? What would they think? And the meal, she wanted it to be perfect. And many women are like that. Some men are like that.

Can you imagine inviting Mrs. Frampton over and serving her peanut butter and jelly sandwich? So, I beg of you with this plea from my heart to go the extra mile, to believe the best, to take the initiative and to work on any relationship that has broken down or that seems to be broken down. And I believe God will honor that. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your mercy that throughout the history of O.M. there have been so many tremendous relationships. People that were initially turned off by one another came together as long-standing friends. And God, we know this is not going to be easy.

And we know there will be hurt and there will be miscommunications. And we just ask for your help. Oh, God, we ask for a special refilling of your Holy Spirit that what we've heard in song and hymn and in the word may be put into practice on many, many different levels right across the world.

Lord, help us to take the initiative in building and maintaining relationships. And yet, at the same time, Lord, help us to live within our own limitations. We can only do so much.

We can only meet, converse, and have friendship with so many people. And the rest, we have to believe the best. Put it in your hands.

And we know sometimes, Lord, we have to put a relationship on hold because it's just not working. The person legitimately has not responded or something else. And Lord, help me to live within my own I'm sorry to say that that is all there is of this recording.

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