

# Shares About Urbana (This Talk Starts a Little Way In]

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer shares a heartfelt message about the ship Lagos collision, emphasizing faith, prayer, and community support during trials.*

**Duration:** 53:35

**Scripture:** James 1:2

**Topics:** "Mission Emphasis", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

The speaker begins by mentioning that he spoke on Monday night and made several important decisions. He also mentions that he had prepared a manuscript for his sermon but decided to forget about it and rely on the seven words that God had given him. He shares that he was able to bring in four more points during his sermon on New Year's Eve, which were a review of what God had done in the past five days. The speaker also mentions that there was a strong emphasis on book pushing during the conference, with 10,000 copies of Operation World being sold in a short amount of time.

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## Transcript

I'm sure most of you have probably heard the news. It's not a rumor, it's not something we're just spreading around. The ship Lagos has had a serious collision off the coast of Argentina, actually in Chile in the waters.

We received this news, I guess about 2 o'clock this afternoon. Peter, who's been involved with me in God's Providence, Peter and I were to be together today at Forest Hill, which is a rather unusual thing. I only arrived back on a very late flight from New York.

But we received the news from Dale, who had talked to Graham Wells, who was standing next to Jonathan Stewart. I think I burst into tears, and probably will. Not because it's such a sad thing, though that's there, but because in God's mercy he spared all the people.

Let's just have some people give thanks for that before we talk about some of the other details. No one is hurt, no one is drowned. We know that's the big question parents, of course, have.

So let's thank the Lord for 17 years of ministry and for his mercy. God, we just do cry out to you with mixed emotion. We're earthen vessels.

Sometimes different emotions collide within our being. We don't even know what's exactly happening. But when we think of the ferry that crossed the channel, with all those people dead, and we think of you sparing us in this collision at sea, seemingly with a rock, and spared all of our people.

We thank you for the Chilean Navy who were involved in this rescue. We thank you for the fast thinking of crew members. We won't know all the heroic tales for a while, but we give you thanks.

And we know, Lord, you give, you take away. We bless your name. Yes, Lord, we do want to really thank you for watching over the 140 people or so on board the ship.

It just amazes us, Lord, that not only was no life lost, but not even a minor injury incurred. Can we just look at two scriptures together? Two that I shared with you, I believe, some weeks ago, in James chapter 1, and in 1 Peter chapter 1. James 1. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience.

Let patience have her perfect work. Ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let a man ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and uprightly, if not, it shall be given him.

Let a man be steadfast in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. So let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord. Going on, blessed is the man that endureth temptation.

For when he hath tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. As we think about this incident, we need to understand there's no way any of us here can feel what the people on that ship are feeling. It's just impossible.

I've lived on that ship. I've wept in the engine room and wept on the bridge. I've been scared silly when I thought we were going to go down and coming out of Calcutta and going Christians and came down and said, look, you know, basically, I don't know where we are in the sandbars all around us and I'm sure the echo sounder doesn't work.

And we just prayed and I said, look, go up. And, you know, he said, it's so old. I said, we'll go up and try it.

And he, you know, ran back up and tried it and it worked. And we got into Bangladesh and when we sailed out of Rotterdam and we almost managed to turn the ship upside down in Rotterdam. But when we sailed out of Rotterdam, I said, God, if we just make it to India, I think I'll be happy.

And we made it not only to India, but we made it 17 years throughout the entire world. We have so much to thank God for as we face this crisis. But we feel with those who are there, it is a very, very, very traumatic experience to go through what they have gone through.

Because as you're in the midst of that experience, you don't know how many of your friends around you you'll never see again. You don't know, as we already knew, the first thing we hear is everybody's safe. Immediately you're relieved.

If you know anything about ships and with that ferry crossing in Great Britain this year, we're well aware of what ships can do. So we want to try to, as we pray for the staff and crew, we're going to point out where this area is on this map in a few moments. We have a cell phone turned on here and Dale Roton may

come through any minute with more details.

At 9.30, hopefully from Vera's flat, if she will allow us, we will be doing a broadcast over MBI radio network in North America to mobilize prayer. This has already been arranged. We cannot stop something like this getting into the news, so we'd like to get the story at least a little bit straight.

We believe God can use that. And certainly when we think of this scripture, we realize that this is going to be a great test. It is a great test for those who are there.

Great test for those who are on the bridge. We don't have the details, but all those men on the bridge will fight enormous struggles. When we had our difficulties years ago, sometimes it was a cooperative effort between the bridge and the engine room.

So even though we find it difficult, I'm sure some of you who are new to OM, to enter into this enormous trial, test of our faith, we especially want to think of those who are there, pray for them by name. We are trying to contact all the parents of all staff and crew within a period of 24 hours. Massive amount of information going on.

People have been phoning me just perpetually nonstop since the news came out. The director of OMF lost a woman through a stabbing just recently in the Philippines, whose husband now has three children and facing a considerable crisis. John Wallace was one of the first missionary leaders to call and give his prayers and his sympathy.

Well, keep that in mind as we look at 1 Peter. Let's allow the Word of God to speak to our hearts. We have another aerial on that, so that's not an emergency.

We've got our makeshift, what do we call it? Paperclip aerial on the cell phone, which now we're told may damage it. But we've been doing that for two months. Blessed be the God and Father, verse 3. By the way, I never had to use these at all at Urbana, wasn't that a great victory? I got a big print Bible, but I don't have that one with me right now, between the tears and whatever else.

Praise the Lord for these reading glasses. Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, it fadeth not away.

That's so important. OM's treasure did not go down with the MV Lagos. By the way, the ship has not sunk yet, and you can feel free to exercise faith that she will not sink.

We have been told that with a bow ripped open, water in hold 1 and 2, 45 degree list, and water continuing to come in, it is unlikely that she will not sink, even as we're here. But maybe a sandbar there that nobody knew about. That, by the way, could be more of a problem than a help.

Because if we are in shipping lanes, we have to pay for the removal of that ship, which could cost more than the price of the ship. We do have, fortunately, praise the Lord, insurance for that particular happening, and salvage insurance institutions are already functioning, and all kinds of things are happening. But we are trying to get further news from exactly what's happening.

But in any case, our treasure is not there on that ship. We have very clear scriptures about being ready to experience the spoiling of our goods. I remember in one of the first wars, in my adult period, between

Israel and the Arabs, that John Furwerda, living in Jerusalem, which was part of Jordan at that time, I think he lost everything he had.

And unless you've been through that, it's hard to understand what that's about. I think he did eventually get some back by visiting the other way later on. Some of us in this room went through the Bombay Fire, which was a quarter of a million dollar, a highly destructive fire.

They say one of the worst things that could ever happen on a ship is a fire. We had a ship go up in the Rotterdam dockyard next to us, and many of the men were burned alive with their heads out the porthole. So God has spared us from such things, but we seemingly, as far as we can see, have lost the Lord's ship.

Let's just pick it up from verse 5. "...who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be. Ye are in heaviness through manifold trials." That's a trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perish, though it be tried with fire, might be found under praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

"...whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, full of glory, seeding the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Just two of many passages of scripture about being tested, about being tried. And I'm sure you probably realize that God has been preparing many of us for this kind of thing. If this were the only trial we were facing in OM right now, we would have very easy sailing.

But a movement of this size is wrestling with many, many testing, many, many trials because we are committed to every individual in this work. And we have individuals, we have the children of individuals who are in times of difficulty and trial. Again and again we have spoken of spiritual warfare in this very room.

But sometimes the Lord uses events like this to somehow shake us out of our immaturity and our naiveness. I'm not claiming that any of you are that. I certainly am a bit of that.

And to face life as it really is. It's so interesting that yesterday I was fellowshiping with a lady who lived next door to my parents who had their own baby daughter, young daughter burned to death in their house before their very eyes. And I was sharing with her a book that I got from another close friend who just lost a very dear loved one at a young age.

And so I brought that book over to her and somehow I picked up two highly damaged copies. Let's just pray now as Peter talks perhaps to Dale, perhaps to someone else. Let's just have silent prayer and you can listen as you pray.

It's not a private conversation. We do especially uphold now the parents. As they would be people especially phoning, we're trying to phone them.

Lord, I don't know how far we've gotten in this so far. We just pray for wisdom for different people. We pray also for this press statement we're trying to put together.

We don't even have all the facts. Commit to you Lord the board meeting tomorrow. Believe that you're going to give wisdom to these board members.

We again uphold Dale, Rotan, Mike Pointer as they fly tomorrow toward Argentina. We're believing you to really overrule and work that out according to your purposes. God, we just unite together right now for the ship.

Lord, if there's any way in your purposes that ship can be saved. Parts of it to be used, to be repaired or salvaged. We don't understand all the whole thing of salvage is so complicated.

We trust you to work this out. Lord, we would worship you at this time for what you have done. We pray especially for Captain Jonathan Stewart and for Chief Engineer David Thomas.

We uphold them and we just believe that you're going to work according to your purposes. We cry out to you now for these different things that have to fall into place in terms of moving the people up Argentina, up the coast. Give wisdom about the program as we sense that the program should not be canceled.

But go forward on shore and enable us to just really carry out that. Trust you. We look to you.

In Jesus name. Amen. Little update on that phone call.

A lot of Christian magazines are calling Quinta already in this country wanting a statement which we are working on. Keep in mind the United States is five hours, six, seven, eight hours behind us. Don Hammond just called from California.

He's willing to go down on a pastoral visit. He's been very involved with Lagos. He's eight hours behind us.

We have even a decision whether we should get, because he can get a visa. The offices are still open. It's too late for visas over here.

I was just sharing how I found these two very defective copies of the book that perhaps ministered to me more than any other book as a young Christian when I was so confused about the problem of pain and suffering and why God allows so many bizarre things. It was Eugenia Price's book No Easy Answer. I hate to throw things away and I grabbed these two very defective copies.

When I went over to visit these people next door who lost their child in that fire and they feel it very much at Christmas time. I was sure she must have read that book because it's one of the very quite well known in the States and she hadn't. I said, well, look, this one's defective, but most of it's here.

Read it and if you think it's good, then you can get the whole book. The amazing thing is that through the whole Urbana Convention, I was chauffeured to the various meetings by volunteer people, somewhat elderly people who had just lost their son in a small plane crash, a dedicated Christian. He had lived in John Matthew's house after John Matthew joined OM.

That's the house that I had lived in. I'd never met these people before. And then they ended up taking me back to Chicago.

And of course, every day they would share, really, and they would show me things, including a postcard written to John Matthew. It was never posted because they didn't know where he had gone to. And just shared the trauma of losing this son that they were so close to.

They may seem like small things, but I sense the Holy Spirit preparing me for this shockwave of what we're facing right now. And we know the only way to face it is in faith. It doesn't mean we can't weep.

It doesn't mean we will have all the answers to our questions. And it doesn't mean we won't work everything we can to do what needs to be done. But during a testing of our faith, a trial of faith, we have to stand on God's promises.

And I hope you will do that. And I hope you will be committed not just to pray about this, but to allow this to expand your horizons. Praying for both of the ships of YWAM.

Praying more for Duluth. Praying for all the people in missionary aviation. How seldom they're prayed for.

Many have died in missionary aviation. Praying more concerning the vehicles. Which still, within OM, have caused us more death.

The ship hasn't even gotten near it. And that can happen right here. Nothing hit me as much in this town as the death of George Foster's son.

At least as far as road accidents. As he laid in that hospital so long like a vegetable. And so many thought he would be healed and then he died.

And we don't need to elaborate. We've all faced that struggle. Let's just get a couple of long-armed people up here to hold this map up.

And if Peter could take out the names. If you could give the names. We'll just point out, because some of you may not know where this has happened.

It is in one of the most dangerous waterways in the world. I've done some reading about this waterway. But it's especially dangerous in the winter.

At present it's in the summer. And that could be all the differences. Enormous storms and winds in this area.

If this had happened in the winter. I'm not sure we would allow Lagos to go through there in the winter. Thank you very much.

It's right down here at the very, very bottom of South America. There's an area here I'm pointing to called Tierra de Fuego. Earth of Fire.

And below that is a little city. I'm pointing to it there. But it's hard to pronounce.

Ushuaia. U-S-H-U-A-I-A. Anybody from Argentina can pronounce that place.

Ushuaia. Thank you. Sailing from there to Puerto Madryn.

So it's that little strip of water. Below that is more land. But if you were close to this map, right where my pen is.

There's a canal. A channel. What's the name of that channel? It's written here.

I really need my glasses for that. It's called the Beagle Channel. Beagle Channel.

Is it on the Pacific then? No, no, no. It's in between. This is a channel of water that takes you from basically this southern ocean over to this ocean.

You're crossing the dividing line. You're not going all the way south. But you're cutting through there.

They were just in that port. We don't know how far they're out from the port. We know they hit seemingly a rock.

We've heard rock. But we know from past experiences in OM what initially we hear. Later on, it was something else.

There are other things, I can assure you, in the water that ships can hit. But as far as we know, it's a rock. They were rescued by the Chilean Navy.

Everyone is safe. They kept some men on the ship for a while. But as things got worse, everyone is evacuated.

I think we need to make sure no one is killed. We don't yet have the whole picture. Someone may have been hurt in the Chilean naval vessels.

We may discover there was someone on the ship that we didn't know was on the ship. And these are all things we're wrestling with. I think we can let you come down now.

But that at least will help you understand where this accident took place. When I was talking to my close friend at Moody Radio, who I'll be going on the air live with at 9.30, he asked whether we ever had a major accident before with the ships. In fact, we have never had anything that most people would classify as major.

We did have an accident with a ferry. Lagos and a ferry in Istanbul. One man jumped in the water and was fished out.

The ferry was damaged. Very small damage to our ship. But, you know, there's nothing that anyone would call major.

We did have a man killed when he was trying to board the Dulas in Latin America. He tied his rope onto something that people told him not to tie onto. That thing came loose and unfortunately hit him right directly in the head.

And he was killed. We've had many, many small things. And some of those small things weren't so small.

And we've certainly at times just again and again experienced the mercy of God. You may not be aware that we just had another generator on the Lagos explode. Basically, that means it was finished.

And Mike Pointer is in New York right now trying to find a second-hand generator for that particular crisis. So he and Dale will be rendezvousing in New York and heading down toward southern. Remember, this is very southern.

Argentina is a quite long country at this time. I think we should now just spend a little more time in prayer, especially remembering Captain Jonathan Stewart, who will feel the enormous weight of this because he was the captain and we don't even have the details, but we just know Jonathan and we want to uphold him. We want to uphold Dave Thomas, the longest-serving member of the ship.

Ministry, is anyone who stayed on board? Manfred Schaller, by the way, is also going to Argentina, who was the ship director for a couple of years. He knows Spanish. We want to uphold the staff in Argentina.

Can you imagine? This probably will be very widely covered in the media in Argentina. Very strange if it wasn't. That, of course, may be picked up by international media.

We live in the day of the satellite. There may be someone watching this that actually knows more than I do, at least in South America. We want to just really bathe all of this in prayer.

We want to remember people by name, people that you know who are on the ship. I called Captain Dallas Parker, who has been captain of Lagos. He already knew because he has a parent here in Norfolk, of someone who is on the ship.

We just need a lot of wisdom. Who is handling the phoning of the parents here in Great Britain? Ory Complete. Do you know the number of British people on the ship? It's probably one of the larger delegations.

Let's pray that God will use this to stir people for more prayer. There's nothing that has disappointed me more in 1987, and I don't say this because of the ship, there's nothing that has disappointed me more than the overall lack of prayer among God's people. I was just talking to a pastor two days ago.

Outstanding British pastor. He's gone to America, taken a fairly big church. Fourteen people come to the prayer meeting.

This is a good church. This is a live church. They pray five minutes.

Don't misunderstand. I am not blaming this on people who don't pray. That is not the point.

We know that Satan is a roaring lion, seekers whom he may devour. We know that God uses prayer. We know, of course, there were more than enough people praying for Lagos.

Other missionaries had as much prayer as our ship. And many other projects. I don't think we can say this is a lack of prayer.

We always like a nice, easy answer. Lack of prayer. Prayer went down in 1987, therefore the ship went down.

No. Not if you've got a brain. You can't engage in that.

You can speculate if you'd like. Because many, many, many great ministries have far less prayer than this ship. One of the most prayed for ministries in the entire world.

I mean, just go port to port gathering prayer partners. But at the same time, the message and the possibility of God using this to challenge people to more prayer is still something that I can't take away from my mind. This pastor decided to change the prayer meeting and have a full hour of power, presented it to his church.

Fourteen came out. The same fourteen. But anyway, he's trying to be an optimist.

And I certainly got a burden to pray for him. So let's pray. The Lord will use this.

If in any way we have been at fault, on any level, we are not going to try to cover that up. Usually such things happen. Man is somewhere involved, right? Captains of ships know that when they take on that enormous responsibility.

So we are not going to engage in any kind of cover up. Knowingly, things sometimes get confused when people can hardly seemingly get through to us on the phone from the southern tip of Argentina. So let's pray.

Let's pray as one body, some of you who have ministered on the ship. How many here have been on the Lagos? I wonder if you would just stand up if you've actually been on the Lagos, either visiting or ministering, working. Do we have many? I think we have quite a few.

Thank you. Maybe you, some of you could especially lead us in prayer. And if you are like me and get emotional, someone else will pick up the prayer and run with it.

Let us pray together. In God's providence, Peter Maiden and I were together this afternoon about the time this information came or shortly after it. I thought it would be good if he could, being with us this evening, come and just perhaps share a few thoughts the Lord has put on his heart.

I don't know if you remember what Dale said, but before this news came, the Lord gave Dale Roton a scripture from Jeremiah about crying out in the midst of disaster or something. It was quite unusual. I think it was... Was that the one? Lamentations 3.22. And so they were... The Holy Spirit used that to prepare them in Mosbach.

Peter, may you? Dale actually said that he was ministering at the January conference this morning on that verse, Lamentations 3.22, which speaks about the great faithfulness of God in the midst of disaster. So he felt quite prepared for the event when he heard it. Well, my first reaction when I heard this news was to sense my own smallness.

I don't know how you react to such things, but I came down to Bromley today with a list of meetings that I was going to get involved in, and a list of meetings that I was going to get involved in tomorrow. And on the way down on the train, I'd been reading the EBE budget, that's the Logos budget for 1988, and going through it as I'm responsible on the finance committee for the EBE budget. And all of that, you know, half an hour later, was just totally changed.

And you just sense again that scripture, which says we can plan and we can purpose, but it's the Lord's purposes that prevail. And we see just how fundamental and central 2OM, this meeting is. When week by week we come and we seek God, it's his work, he's the sovereign ruler, and you know you're not less at work when you're at this prayer meeting than when you're behind your desk.

You really are involved in the real work when you're before the throne of the sovereign. So that's how I felt, I felt my own smallness and God's greatness when I heard this particular news. Just a few prayer requests.

I think those in Mossbach especially need wisdom because of certain decisions which have to be taken and are being taken even as we pray. Decisions with regard to salvage, it does seem that that is taken care of. The Lloyds of London, with whom we're insured, have taken care of that, but it's still a difficult thing.

Dale had a phone call a couple of hours ago from a salvage operator who wanted to get involved and asked for an immediate \$100,000 from Dale in order to get involved. And there's all kinds of things like that at a time like this and we just need wisdom, Dale particularly and others in Mossbach, to make the right decision. And then we have to understand our insurance position.

We've never really taken insurance very serious I don't think. Thankfully John Chappell on our board has taken it very seriously and we need to find out exactly to what degree we are insured. It does look as though we are insured, as I think George said.

If it's lying in a shipping lane, it does look as though we are insured for it to be removed. Whether the hull of the ship is insured, we're not really certain. Gerry looked at some papers earlier this afternoon which seem to suggest that we're insured up to the amount of about £50,000.

But there's a great lack of clarity right now as to what our actual insurance position is. That's the scrap value. We've called an EBE board meeting for tomorrow.

We'd appreciate your prayers for that. The board showed its great commitment by every board member agreeing at such short notice to be present tomorrow afternoon. So we'd appreciate your prayers for that board meeting at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon when obviously they, the legal owners of the ship, will have to make some decisions about the present and about the future.

I suppose the thing most on my heart is 140 people who in about three days' time will arrive in Buenos Aires. They're going to be transported from where they are now. I believe they're on some small island at present.

They're going to be transported to the mainland by ferry and then it seems the Chilean, I think, army or navy are going to help to get them to Buenos Aires. It does seem as though the Chilean authorities have been extremely helpful from what we've been told so far. So that's something also to thank God for.

But you can imagine, about 140 people arriving. Earlier today they were quite convinced of what they would be doing for the rest of this year, some of them for two years, some of them for a long term. And now that's all completely changed.

And we're going to need great wisdom in counselling these people when they arrive to get across or over the initial shock and also their future ministry. To what degree can we continue the programme in Latin America without a ship? To what degree can we continue it with land teams? How many people will be prepared to remain in ministry in a land situation? We need to know exactly who should go down there to help in these decisions and in counselling individuals. And then, as that phone call just showed, the whole issue of communication at this time is a very crucial issue.

Already a number of Christian magazines have been on to the Quinta asking for a statement from us and we don't really have sufficient information yet to make a sensible statement. We're hoping that a telex is coming from Mossbach. But we need to make some statement very soon.

As you've heard, George will be involved in this radio interview at 9.30 and I think we need particular prayer for that, that the information we give might be accurate and consistent. And we need to make a press release at the very latest, early tomorrow morning here and in other parts of the world. As well as the people on board the Logos, Jack mentioned in prayer that there are 20 young leaders who have been recruited over the past 12 months from Latin America who were to be joining the ship in Argentina, it was,

wasn't it, Jack, to spend a year with the ship.

So they've given up their jobs, many of them, to get alongside the ship, going with it from port to port in a leadership training programme. The pastor from California is probably right now on his way to the Logos with his family to spend three months on board. So there's all kinds of implications like that which we're facing and we, of course, need to pray about it.

I'll leave it there, George. George has a little more to say about the Logos first and then we'll follow the talk about Havana about four minutes in from the start of this side of the tape. Just one little amplification that may help in regard to insurance because that is a question especially people outside of OM will ask.

It is true in the last few years we haven't given much thought to this but in the early days it was a very, very big decision that was debated quite intensively as to whether we should get haul insurance and just getting the quotations for the insurance of the haul in a couple of years was worth more than we paid for the ship. So it was after considerable discussion and meeting with various insurance agents in several countries we decided not to do that. Then, some years ago through the inspiration of Captain Chaplin we re-looked at this and amazing enough got a much lower quote and both boards I remember the German board was a little slow but both boards eventually got a basic third party insurance a very good insurance for the ship against anything we hit against people who were hurt on board and apparently it does cover having to remove the ship if it's in a shipping lane and I'm amazed that there may be some token haul insurance included in that.

It's something we at least I didn't realize. So I just say that because it's not something that we've looked at flippantly. The whole problem of insurance within OM has been an ongoing endless item of discussion on everything that you can think of.

We just continue to need more wisdom. It's great to insure everything and everybody and yet who pays the premium in a movement that at times has been over \$500,000 in indebtedness at the end of a month. I would encourage you to know that financially we go into the new year not in stage one we actually go into the new year with considerable amount of financial health.

Giving in the past few days has been quite phenomenal. There are overdue bills because some of the cash given is designated money for particular projects and because Christmas season, New Year season is a difficult time to get things done. Like the urgent fax I sent with the international update to Bromley the day before Christmas.

Went down and sent it myself but of course the office in Bromley of Mr. Print doesn't open at all until I think this morning or is it yesterday morning? Is that correct? Yesterday morning it opened? Oh they were open but somehow we maybe weren't open. But anyway that didn't get through and one of the exciting things that also you can pray about is that that very large gift came that we talked about before Christmas and some of it now needs to be moved shifted around to various places. Let's have one more season of prayer and many other things to pray for.

Let's pray in small groups three, four, five, what's ever convenient for these items that Peter Maiden has spoken about. There are many more. We really would like to get some more news from Dale and I very much would like Peter to go call Dale in Vera's flat just to let him know that we're under pressure and can he give us any more news especially before this nine o'clock interview.

So let's pray in small groups. Amen. I'd like to just especially since you've been praying for me so much share a few highlights from the Urbana Missionary Convention.

I'd love to take time to give you some of the history of how that convention started back in the 40's through different men of God who had a vision for the student world and a vision for mobilizing students into world missions. There were about 18,500 people at this convention. Not all students.

There were 400 pastors. There were many missionary executives. In fact I was on a panel discussion answering questions about the cities and urban evangelism together with Floyd McClung and one other dear brother.

Very, very challenging and a very encouraging time to meet these different missionary leaders. There were of course many other adults there. Quite a few people last minute had their hearts broken and were turned down all over the country.

In fact I heard of a young man from this church I spoke at this past Sunday in New Jersey who was responsible for mobilizing the young people in this church to go. He thought the elders of the church were taking care of his application because they said we'll take care of you, meaning expense. But they never made out the application and though they pushed many doors he was not able to go.

But 18,500 were there. They could not all be in the arena at the same time. A small number, just a small percentage on a rotation basis were in an overflow that was done by closed video.

A lot of prayer has gone into Urbana. Some of you know the Gordon MacDonald crisis that I've shared previously with you. It was a great encouragement for the leaders of InterVarsity to see this whole thing come together.

Billy Graham spoke the first evening. Finally after these 33 years I met my spiritual father. I had a tremendous conversation of about three and a half minutes, so don't ever complain again that I don't give you enough time.

He was suffering from phlebitis, is that how you pronounce that? In his leg and had to go off to Mayo Clinic the next morning. He's 69 years of age. Major feature article in the press, not necessarily to do with Urbana, is that Billy Graham says in his headlines ready for heaven but not willing for retirement.

So he has no plan to retire but to pray for his health. He had a difficult task that first night of giving an evangelistic message plus a challenge for commitment. And he did it when he gave the invitation quite a few people all over a couple hundred for sure to give their hearts to the Lord.

There was very good follow up for these people to get grounded in their faith. In the mornings we had Ajit Fernando found out that of course I know Ajit but I found out that he was the son of another Fernando whose home I had a wonderful time in once in Sri Lanka. He's very linked with us.

And he gave the bible readings each morning on the book of Jonah and did an excellent job. Just basic challenge, biblical exposition. And he was I think just a very very special part of Urbana.

This goes on, you know, we started Sunday night and it goes right through New Year's Eve. So, you know, I can't give you a blow by blow description. There's not enough time for that.

We want to pray. I spoke on the Monday night as many of you were praying. God gave me tremendous grace just to make a number of heavy decisions right down to certain little audio visuals that I was led to use which really helped open the hearts of the young people and also just basically forget about the manuscript that I've been working on for so many months.

On the train out to Chicago I had the joy of taking the train, get a little more time to think. The Lord just gave me seven words that were just sort of burning in my heart and I tied in some of the things out of the manuscript and God gave grace and there seemed to be an encouraging response among the young people. Also, in a very encouraging way, the door opened on New Year's Eve for me to share for another five minutes or so and I managed to bring in at least four more points that were just burning on my heart.

There was terrific book pushing. We sold 10,000 Operation World in 10 minutes, maybe 20. Don't exaggerate.

It was one of the first big conferences except an OM conference and even there it doesn't happen much, in which my books were featured in all the copies with no turning back. They could get them out the door as they went out. They were all gone.

They didn't really have enough. One of the letdowns was I wrote the months ahead about the books that I wanted to push and they did not have those books in quantity in their display. Overall, their display was good.

Imagine me pushing Spiritual Depression It's Cause and Cure with 18,000 people. They had 50 copies. Just to give you an idea the book fervor Don't confuse that with George Burr.

I haven't been introduced like that. I had all these tape albums which don't sell very well. Six tapes usually sell for \$15.

John Wright produced them. Since we were having such a good time the leaders and the speakers, we pray together before each main session twice a day. I said, John and Kyle most of my books are sold.

We had a few extras which we gave, they immediately sold. Can we put these tapes out? Would you mention them? This took quite a little behind the scene work, Rob Provost. But they put 100 of those albums out and when I went to the prayer meeting that night John and Kyle, who leads their band, just threw it back at me He said, they're all gone.

They put 100 out, no announcement, nothing and \$15 in each they were gone. That just gives you a little idea of the interest in books and even in tapes. I had a seminar every day but one day, so did David Hicks the seminars were just packed I could take maybe two or three hundred in my room.

Would you say 200? What would you say, Rob? Maybe closer to four. Rob said that to the 215 seminar at 130 you couldn't get a seat which is a little bit disappointing but the response was good there as I spoke on why many volunteer and few go. And that was indicative of many, many seminars.

Some of the other people. Yes, Rob? I was going to say, not only couldn't you get a seat but you couldn't get a seat an hour before for yourself. And George won't say it but his message on Monday night was easily one of the highlights of the week and the Lord really used him.

Praise the Lord. God's grace. By the way let me just say a couple of the other highlights since we got into that For me, one of them was to meet Johnny Erickson behind the stage.

She was watching and listening to someone else speak and then she had to go make a TV thing. It was TV going all the time. In fact, by New Year's Eve, they had a beautiful, powerful video cassette to review what God had done in five days.

And these, of course, these young people, most of them young people, so energized. Every time another speaker came up on the screen, people just went wild. What a New Year's Eve that was.

That was just before I got my extra five minutes. Now that came to pass because they were stuck with all these YWAM prayer calendars. Someone had ordered thousands of YWAM prayer calendars.

They put Urbana on top of them so it doesn't really look like it's just YWAM. So John Kyle came to me in the prayer time and he said, we have decided, it was a little prompting in this during the day, that you should push these and we've got them at all the doors. This is the final night.

The exhibition isn't open anymore. We'll put them at all the doors. The first part of New Year's Eve, what I just mentioned, when they showed that video and there were a few other testimonies and speakers, then I came up with this book review and was able to weave in about three or four points, including a powerful Solzhenitsyn quotation.

Most people don't know this, even at Urbana, but one man, who especially was spoken to by my emphasis on confession, talked to me the next morning New Year's Day, saying he felt, wished there had been more emphasis on confession. And he's glad I did and I mentioned Solzhenitsyn. I found out later that God had spoken to him and he had transferred \$200,000 from his account, dollars, to InterVarsity's account.

Too bad my account wasn't right there. But they had a financial indebtedness, not Urbana, but InterVarsity Missions. Two separate accounts, a bit like OM.

And we were burdened to see that come into Black Ink. Another highlight was news from the U.S. Center for World Missions that they had just about reached their target to pay off the U.S. Center. And we took an offering on New Year's Eve.

A huge part of that was going out to the U.S. Center for World Missions. They took an offering a day or two before that for international student work, basically IFES. And he did a terrific job in 10 minutes.

You'd think I had a problem in half an hour. They gave him 10 minutes to tell about all the student work in the entire world. Do you remember what the amount of that offering was? I think it was \$200,000, certainly upward pushing toward \$200,000.

Now these are young people that have already paid several hundred dollars just to get there, which was quite a big thing. Perhaps the most explosive message with the greatest response was Tony Compolo. How do you pronounce it? I had met this man back in the prayer meeting we had shared together.

I'd been listening to his tapes for years. I just found him so real. Behind the stage, behind the prayer room and all, he's a very quiet character, really.

And I tell you, from the moment he started speaking to the end, it was just like somebody throwing gigantic chunks of spiritual dynamite out into the audience. Unless you heard the tape, you couldn't imagine how

bold, how courageous, how uncompromising in regard to his own convictions, which may not be everybody else's convictions, this man is. When he gave the invitation first, it was for salvation and lordship.

More people stood than on the first night. I didn't really understand all that was happening at that point, but I think most of those people didn't have assurance of salvation or they wanted to make Christ Lord. They felt they were just playing games because he spoke about an American cultural Christ that was not the Christ of the Bible.

And then at the end he gave a call to commitment to world missions. Very strong on going. Very strong against materialism.

Just so exciting. And I think 75%, 80% of the entire audience stood. Now some of those people already made commitments before they came.

They made new commitments. They have a terrific card. In fact, I still have it.

I'm one of the ones that didn't fill out my card. That's the Urbana Decision card. If any of you would like to see that, it even has my name on it.

Probably I'll get a computer note. You have not sent in your card. But you keep half.

You fill out the other half. There's all kinds of aspects to that. The women's ministry.

Controversial in the minds of some. In my mind was just outstanding. Becky Pepper.

Found out that she was influenced by OM people in Madrid back 20 some years ago. Gave an outstanding word. Helen Rosevear.

Rosevear. See, people correct me, but later on in my mind, I don't know which is the correction and which is the original mistake. None of you ever have that difficulty.

But what a joy I just wept when I fellowshiped with her. I think I must be known as the weeping prophet. I was weeping with Johnny and weeping with Helen Rosevear.

Billy Graham I think I managed to I was a bit taken back because he actually looked quite old. And all the pictures I've been praying over and looking at all these years. He looked so young.

But you know he is 69 and I guess even evangelists do grow old, even if he is my spiritual father. So it was a challenging time. So much was happening behind the scenes.

So much was happening over meals, small meetings. Many exoamorists. We had a large staff.

We must have had one of the largest staffs of any group on our exhibition. Of all different types. Malaysians.

Mayway was there. Of course Americans and different nationalities. Peter and Birgitta Conlon.

And weren't they more or less talking to people non-stop? Where is Mayway? Is it non-stop or were there some gaps occasionally? Pretty non-stop. Do you have any idea how many names we got from there? It was many hundreds I know. Names we actually got.

So there is a lot to pray about. Many many other things that I won't take time to talk about. I have to go now and make this phone call into Chicago.

I was interviewed by the way at the moment I arrived at Urbana at the same prime time. This thing went live one day late throughout the whole Chicago area when I got back to Chicago and talked to a friend. He just watched you on television.

It's gone all over the nation by cable. All over the nation by radio. More outreach from this Urbana than any previous Urbana as far as media.

A number of people there were fired at CBN when I was there a month ago and now they're doing freelance work. And somehow they were there. A girl I met named Jody.

When I finished speaking I must have prayed with at least 50 people in front of the platform. And after that I went up on the platform and did a video presentation with her. I don't know how all these things get used but can we pray? This is the largest single exposure for the sake of the kingdom that we have ever had in the United States.

We want to pray that it won't just all be lost and that so many who make commitments they will have opposition from parents. Some will have opposition from churches. One of the main features of Urbana was the cities.

Not everybody was in agreement. One of the things I like about InterVarsity is similar to OM. They accept a wide range of speakers.

They're not all saying the same thing. One very dynamic black Christian leader who has just resigned from InterVarsity shared a very relevant word. Floyd McClung shared on the cities.

And there's just a lot. So thank you for praying. God gave grace.

God gave the victory. But probably for an event like this there's more that has to happen afterward than before. John Kyle has resigned from Urbana.

The man who helped put all this together to take the place of the leader of a Presbyterian Mission Society. Mission of the world that stands behind Rick Hibner. Peter Dance.

So that's where John Kyle will be going. And a man named Dan Harrison. Pretty sure it's Dan Harrison will be the new leader of Urbana Missions.

They are still praying and seeking God's mind for their new president. That is all there is of this recording.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16091.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-verwer/shares-about-urbana-this-talk-starts-a-little-way-in/>

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