

# The Local Church Worldwide

by George Verwer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the church as a whole, rather than just focusing on our own local church or group.*

**Duration:** 56:31

**Scripture:** Acts 11:27-30, Acts 13

**Topics:** "Local Church"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of unity among Christians and the negative consequences of division. He shares his experiences of learning about different denominations and streams within the Christian church through preaching in various groups. The speaker emphasizes the need for Christians to work together and support each other in spreading the word of God. He also mentions the importance of faith and how God honors those who labor together despite their differences.

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## Transcript

The book of Acts, chapter 11. Let's just pray. Our God and Father, we thank you for the privilege of being here together, looking into your Word, looking out over the harvest field, waiting on you, and just help us to absorb all that you want us to absorb now, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Verse 19, And now they who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem.

And they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. When he had come and had seen the grace of God, was glad and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cling unto the Lord. And he was a righteous man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

And many people were added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.

And it came to pass that for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught many people. And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. Then we read about them sending a gift back to the church in Jerusalem.

Quite interesting, the newly found church ends up sending a gift back, you know, to the older church. A little different than it is generally these days. And then Acts 13, verse 1. Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius, Cyrene, Manan, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul.

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, from the work unto which I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and they sent them away. So they being sent forth by the Holy Spirit departed unto Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

And when they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogue of the Jews. And they had also John as their helper. This morning I want to speak to you on the subject of the local church.

I want to speak to you about the history of O.M.'s relationship with the local church. I want to speak to you about the place of the local church in world evangelism. I want to speak to you about some of the extremism that it's possible to get into once we get this vision for the local church and hope to bring in a few other related things.

Like the outline of a message that I want to give you right now called, Why I Believe God is Working in Such a Wide Range of Groups and Churches. Why I Believe God is Working in Such a Wide Range of Groups and Churches. I think this is so important today.

We live in a global village. Many of God's people despite this are still very provincial. Very local.

They don't see beyond their own little county. Maybe their own little town. I've been overwhelmed with this in England.

To meet so many people who are provincial. I once thought as Americans we led the world in being provincial. Until I started to fellowship with our English counterparts especially in villages and small towns and generally more so among God's people.

Who often get such a narrow view of what God is doing. As if everything that God ever did started in England. Just as some Americans very much get the idea sometimes that every really big thing that God has done started in California.

Or at least in the United States. Even when we read our Christian periodicals in America it generally tells us what American Christians are doing. What American theologians are thinking.

People openly complain about the World Congress on Evangelism that was so dominated by Americans. And it was quite a shock for some as shared by one Englishman when finally they thought there was someone else that could possibly lead the singing apart from Cliff Burroughs of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Of course America is a huge country with a huge church and any who are not Americans should not be surprised of course that Americans are found in many places.

It's partly linked with the sheer numbers. The sheer numbers. If there were 40 million Russian evangelicals and Russians had total freedom to go anywhere in the world I dare to say we would be dominated in the evangelical world by the Russians.

Oh that it would be so. At least it would be a relief or a change for some of us. But there is a danger in any country that we become very provincial.

And close to provincialism in the Christian world is sectarianism. We see our group. We have a number of groups in England now whose goal is outwardly it seems world missions but when you study it it's to spread their vision to other countries.

This gets incredibly complex out in the mission field. I know in Nepal over the years the many different people that have arrived in Nepal to give their vision and they present it in a way that revival is taking place in our hometown and if you do this, this and this you will have revival too. The chaos of the church in Nepal because of people who have arrived pushing their vision.

People failing to realize they're basically presenting a provincial sectarian viewpoint. Then of course there's the effort to try to convince people that what's happening in our little church or our little group is the true revival in these days. And we have really got that special touch from God.

This produces a super and hyper spirituality that is very hard to contain. Others are judged. OM of course was wiped off years ago and is annually wiped off the slate by people who have this kind of super spiritual mentality.

In the light of a lot of the problems in the church today I thought it would be good to give some of the reasons why I believe God is working in different nations, in different ways, in different people and that we therefore especially as a worldwide movement need to understand the church. Not just our church, our little group. But to understand the church as a whole.

I find Anglicans don't have a clue about Lutherans. I find Lutherans don't know anything about Anglicans. Baptists, they're so big now, so strong they don't even want to know about some of the other groups.

And if you're not in the Baptist mold well you're just, you know, not worth really fellowshiping with. Praise God there are many Baptists who don't believe that way. And I just hope that as we are trained in OM it will not be some narrow little OM-ish sectarian training program.

But that we will have a wider view. God wants people who are willing to look at the big picture. Picture of the whole church worldwide.

The church in China which is so unique to get to understand that church. How it's developed during the time of persecution. How it was before that persecution.

The groups that fellowship with Watchman Nee and the divisions and struggles they went through and where that has gone to up to this day. The groups that were more linked with men like Wong Ming Tao. The groups that were more denominational.

How liberalism came in and took over many of the groups and was so unbelievably used by the communists. Rather than just studying one little group in China getting excited about that and thinking surely that is the way God works and then actually trying to make a carbon copy of that group in your little

hometown back in Kalamazoo, Michigan. One of the things that has caused the greatest confusion is when people have tried to transplant a church which they felt was the New Testament church but which was in fact a church very much affected by a particular national culture.

And though there were New Testament aspects and God used it the cultural aspects were also there and people found it very difficult to overthrow those aspects. Let me give the specific reasons now because this is only my little warm-up for my main message and it's liable to take too much time. Number one, the reason I believe God is working in such a wide range of groups is history.

I find many people do not study church history. They do, they read it from one particular denominational viewpoint. History is a very complex subject.

It was my subject at college or university before I left there and went to Moody Bible Institute and there my favorite course was church history. I've always believed that in one sense there are two Bibles for the Christian to read. There's the Bible, the Word of God and there's the Bible of history.

Don't misunderstand that. But if something actually happened in history like Hudson Taylor being led of God to go to China if things actually happened, if prayer was answered if people were converted this is factual and therefore we can learn something from it. A lot of the Bible is history.

It needs to be read as history. When people over-spiritualize certain basically historical passages of the Bible especially from the New Testament sooner or later they'll probably start a cult. And a lot of the extremism of our day, a lot of heresy comes through taking Old Testament passages out of context.

Certainly a lot of legalism comes that way. And basically I'm convinced if you want to you can get anything you want from the Old Testament especially if you rationalize, take things out of context. You have Christian leaders who have justified concubines.

They have their verse. You have the Seven Day Adventists trying to get us all to worship on Saturday if you've ever discussed things with them. They've got verses.

And of course if you get involved in the Herbert W. Armstrong cult you'll discover that he's still celebrating the Feast of the Tabernacle somewhere over in Texas every once in a while. And he has verses for a lot of the things that he's into as well. So I commend the study of history.

I'm finally getting into Volume 2 of Whitefield. I've waited 10 years for this book. I read Volume 1 around the turn of... as we turned over from the 60s into the 70s by this man Dillimore.

An incredible book of 500 pages. Now I'm waiting my way through. I misplaced my copy.

Volume 2. And oh, what I've been able to learn. What I've been able to glean from that. A definitive biography of Whitefield which touches on a lot of the early Wesley movement.

When I read Volume 1 I read one of the very strong pro-John Wesley volumes at the same time and combined that with research and study of the Salvation Army. What a challenge that was. Around the same time I was reading the Marashal, the story of William Booth's daughter.

And because William Booth was so extreme, and he was an extremist, and God uses extremists, and perhaps if they were less extreme He could have used them more, though I'd have to check that out when I get to heaven. But he kicked his own daughter out of the Salvation Army because he said, I'm your

general first and your father second. You disobeyed a command.

She was out. She went on to be one of the greatest evangelists of her time. I almost made that book required reading within OM, but the male chauvinistic side of Operation Mobilization fought it and it didn't get launched.

No, actually it was the women who fought it because it is a very, very upsetting book in the 20th century. Of course, I'd be the first one to admit, to say that people like the Marashal are God's exceptions. They're not the normal way of life for the way God normally leads a woman.

And I think that's so important because if you pattern your life after God's exceptions, the Billy Braves, the W.P. Nicholson's, I've just been listening to one of his sermons, one of the most fiery Irishmen when he hit Cambridge University, the place was never the same. And he had all of the things that you would think a man should have to be able not to make an impact at Cambridge University. I didn't know they had any recordings of this man before he died.

But in his latter years, they got some tape recordings of this man. And he is an amazing person. He was speaking at Tent Hall, a ministry born through the ministry of Dale Moody in Glasgow.

The man was making too much noise. He sort of lost his whatever when he was preaching. And he said, Now, if this man down here in the 15th row does not quiet down, I will personally come down and punch him in the nose.

You think you've got troubles with me. But I think we will always be in trouble and a movement will be in trouble if we pattern ourselves after God's unusual men. God raises up unusual men.

Of course, in a sense, we're all unusual. You can tell that just by looking around, as you did recently. But can you imagine if all the women in O.M. started patterning themselves after the Mara Shah? By the way, she did get married.

We never heard much about her husband. She did keep her baby. She had a lot of children.

I was recently with her daughter, some years ago now, and it was the only case where I ever heard of the same vision that I had. I had the vision, so I would never buy anything in my early days of marriage, to keep the children where they were born in the dresser drawers. I thought these are handy, you know.

So Benjamin stayed in this drawer. After a while, I took it out of the bureau so he could have more air. And I was so excited when I read this book, The Mara Shah, because here she was, how many years before I was ever born, and she kept her children.

She had a whole pile of them in the different drawers. I was recently on the phone with her granddaughter, who lives in Bromley, and her granddaughter is going on for the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to read some exciting history, read something of Whitefield, something of Wesley, mix it a little bit with The Salvation Army, and of course, to top it off, get into the history of the Plymouth Brethren.

That is really an unusual history. When you read about Newton and Darby and the split they had, and Mueller, you read about the birth of that movement. So history, I believe, history of all these different groups, history of the Pentecostal Church, the history of the Holiness Movement, the history of certain individuals who made such a strong impact on the Church.

And then to get to mix with some of these people today in different parts of the world, and discover that in most of these groups there are still live churches, there are still born-again people, and they're going on for God, they're helping in evangelizing the world, and therefore I don't believe any group of live believers, regardless of their label, should be left out of our thinking. We may not always be able to work together. We may not agree.

And OM has never had a deep relationship with The Salvation Army. Though we have many similarities, many unbelievable differences. Though we've had many good personal contacts.

And of course you will discover in most of the groups today that there's a wide range of people within each group. Through history there have been always those who felt led out of the Church when the Church was beginning to deteriorate, and those who remained within the Church and fought for reformation. You see this in the history of the Church in England.

In fact, in the beginning of Puritanism and Protestantism as we would know it, and the Reformation around 1490, around that period, to the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, before James took over, you find that they had two kinds of non-conformists. You had the non-conformists who left the Anglican Church, usually got martyred, not all of them, and that brought the birth of what were called the free churches, they were called separatist churches, they were called non-conformist churches. At the same time you had men remain within the Anglican Church who were called non-conformists within the Church, who worked for reformation within the Church.

And today really the contemporary British evangelical Anglican, the John Stott, the Michael Green, and many others, really can be traced back to those non-conformists who remained within the Church. One of the interesting things about that period of history was that a Roman Catholic who remained within the Church, but who refused to go along with the deception of Henry VIII, the man who's portrayed in the film, a man of all seasons, a film, if you ever go to Dulas, you'll have the opportunity of seeing it. Someone throw his name out.

Thomas Moore. Here was a man who was a Roman Catholic, and yet his teachings, his emphasis, and his life helped actually bring in the Protestant ethic of the 16th century. God used many, many different kinds of people to bring the Protestant, the Reformed, and eventually the Evangelical Church, and eventually all of these different groups that in that day would be classified as free churches.

Little did they dream how many different separations there would be. One of the most unique things about history is that often groups that break away from dead churches to start what they feel is the true church suffer from division within the first few years, and some cases end up in the most unbelievable form of extremism. Some of the first Puritans, they were only just being called that, that left Britain running for their lives.

I read this morning about one group that tried to get in a boat in Boston to get out of Britain lest they lose their heads or not be able to worship the living God. And they had this ship all arranged. There was only one problem.

The captain was a phony. And when he had them all on the ship, he turned them over to the government, and they were killed and jailed. Unbelievable story.

But amazing, those that finally got over to Holland, and a group of these early Protestants got to Amsterdam. Within the first year, they divided in the most weird divisions. One over lace, over whether they should wear lace.

And a group pulled out from that group. They went to a place in the Netherlands called Leiden, and there, and that was the encouraging part of this morning's history lesson, a beautiful fellowship was born where for years there was no division, and they functioned as a powerful body of the Lord Jesus Christ. So history has caused me to believe God works in a wide range of ways, and today God is working in a wide range of ways.

Number two, personal acquaintance. This is one of the blessings of OM. And it's true in other fellowships as well.

To go to different countries and to meet different people. To discover a beautiful, dear, committed, loving Christian before you find out what his label is and discover it's one of the labels that you've not yet totally accepted. What a mind-bending experience.

Especially if you discover it's one of the labels that you've actually attacked in one of your more fervent moments. So personal acquaintance in my own situation in some 40, 50 nations of all kinds of people from all different backgrounds has been such a help for me on this. And then thirdly, the Word of God.

That really is first. Especially the book of Acts. As we saw two days ago, the different ways that God was working.

And even here in this morning's reading, how we see different kinds of people being used to bring this church in Antioch into being. We don't even know where they came from. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene who when they were come to Antioch spoke unto the Greeks preaching the Lord.

Well, I need to be corrected because it shows there where they did come from. From Cyprus and Cyrene. And then verse 21, and the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.

We don't know where these men came from in terms of their church affiliation. We know that a wide number of people were scattered abroad according to verse 19 in persecution. And Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch.

Maybe these were converts of Stephen. Needless to say, they certainly fit into the description of being a team more than they fit into a description of being a local church. They were a team of men and they were used to start the church in Antioch.

And then the church in Antioch apparently got things more organized and they later in chapter 13 sent out these apostles, disciples and that's called the first sending forth of missionaries. Well, I'm getting ahead of myself because I want to touch on that later on. But you'll see plenty of indication in the Word of God if you study it as objectively and as free from prejudice which is very, very hard as you possibly can.

Number four, the emphasis on love. I don't know how you can emphasize love and unity which is such a biblical principle and not want to fellowship with all believers and try to believe the best and listen them out and love them and love even when you may not agree. And some of the groups that I may indirectly come down on in my session this morning I still love those people especially believers and long to see them

come into greater balance and unity.

Obviously, they may long for me to come into greater balance and unity. And, of course, disagreeing with other Christians is as basic as breathing if you're in the church. We're human beings.

We have many convictions, many beliefs. We're not going to agree with everyone. It's so strange that often people think, well, you know, I shouldn't come into something like that unless I agree with everything.

This is ridiculous. I'd have to leave on the basis of that. How do you get a spiritual movement to represent only sort of one thing? Especially a movement that is not run by on a dictatorial basis.

It's run as a fellowship where there's freedom given to various countries where leaders have liberty to get on with the job meeting together with their co-leaders. And so I think it's so important to see that unity comes in the midst of diversity. And some of the greatest blessings in history have come when people who didn't all agree labor together in the name of the Lord.

And then number five, what is going on right around the world? That which is taking place right around the world. I've been reading some of the things and talking to people about what's been going on in Finland. So totally different from England.

I know a fair amount of what's happening in England. Try to read most of the English periodicals and pick people's brains from Land's End to the north of Scotland. And it's amazing.

But it's very different from what's happening in the United States. The United States being the biggest of all the evangelical bodies perhaps is the most complex, the most difficult to understand. That's why it does grieve me when some people, including one Englishman who went to America recently for a couple of months, came back and wrote for one of the British periodicals the most unbelievably negative and sarcastic things against Christianity in the United States.

It does grieve me when some people, including one Englishman who went to America recently for a couple of months, came back and wrote for one of the British periodicals the most unbelievably negative negative and sarcastic things against Christianity in the United States. And that's something Americans have been guilty of as well. It takes a long time to understand a country and the church that's in the country.

And it grieves me also that within OM often I hear people making sweeping statements about other groups when they don't really know what it's about. And when there are many, many, many aspects to that particular fellowship or movement or emphasis. This is why we're always, every Leaders' Conference, playing with people to avoid generalizations, avoid making decisions or statements when you're not sure what it's all about.

And I just feel one of the reasons that we want to work with such a wide range of people around the world is because God is already. And if God's working there in most cases, I think we ought to be able to and should work at least to some degree. And then, number six, the way is already so narrow, we already are so few, I don't think we can afford some of these divisions.

We're not maintaining a close linking with Youth with a Mission because we believe the exact same way that they believe, have the same practices, agree with everything they do. And do you think for a minute that they would agree or have the exact same way of doing things as we would in Operation Mobilization?

In many ways, over the past years, we've seen the tremendous differences in the area of guidance, in a number of other areas, as we've fellowshiped and we've talked. But we feel that there are so few of us in this job of world missions, there are so many people in the world, the harvest is so huge, we're not sending anybody out to the Cambodian refugees, we're not going to use our ship for relief work and hauling refugees from Cambodia to South America.

The task is so great, the job is so huge, we can't afford division. There will be differences and God will use different groups in different ways. It would be ridiculous to think that we were the same as Campus Crusade for Christ or that we understood or agreed with everything they were doing and the way they go about it.

And I'm sure the same would be true of their evaluation of us. First of all, of course, to make an evaluation, we need to do a lot of research. I spend hours and hours every week researching everything I can lay my hands on to keep up with the movement of modern missions.

And then I also have men, of course, doing it for me, trying to feed back to me the things that are relevant. In fact, sometimes it's overwhelming all that we're trying to keep up on. But you can often mix things together.

I'm going to a particular group to preach. I've got an hour before the meeting so I can ask a lot of questions. They always want to give me tea after the meeting.

I can ask a lot more questions. So a lot of my information, for example, on the church comes from preaching and probably more than 40 to 50 different denominations and groups and streams within the Christian church down through the years. And so that's sometimes a more exciting way to learn than just reading a book.

So the way is already so narrow, I don't think we can afford these divisions. This is why we've committed men to help and work in the Campus Crusade film program in India as hard and as complicated as it has been getting. This is why we have given copies of our line-up manual, a book that thick, to youth with a mission a long time ago and have tried to have contact with them about their ship ministry.

And then seventhly, and there's a lot more I could say about that but we're running short on time, I've come to see that God honors faith. And linked with that, He works through earthen vessels. I've had to go back on statements I made, most of them before 13 years ago, statements I made about certain men of God that I was so upset with their methods, so upset with their extremes, that I made public statements and named them.

Only a few times I've done this. And in a couple of cases, I've had to eat my words. And one particular case I can think of was a man who was a healer and he seemed so extreme to me.

Of course, one of the things I've had to learn through all this is that God uses people despite their extremes. Sometimes He seems to use them because of their extremes. And if you're a person with no extremes whatsoever, especially at this stage of your development, you may have a real problem.

And isn't this so often the case that instead of people who are on the march and on the move and therefore probably have some extremes, people today are just indifferent. And no wonder someone brought in the phrase evangelifish. It frightens me.

And I'll never forget being with Brother Andrew. I guess he would be classified as an extremist by some. He certainly is attacked by a few people.

And I remember preaching over in Holland at a conference with him. And I've always been more cautious about giving invitations and not wanting people to become too emotional. And you know, I wrestle with all these things.

We were talking together. Some of you have heard this. He said, did you give an invitation this afternoon? I said, no, no.

And I sort of, you know, I covered up for him. I said, I think I'll leave that for you tonight. And he looked me in the eye and said, yeah, I'm going to give an invitation.

I've discovered it's easier to cool down a fanatic than warm up a corpse. OM attracts extremists. Probably 50% of you sitting in this room are potential extremists.

And one of our burdens in the process of breaking you and bending you and molding you, and we hope the Holy Spirit will do most of it, and seeing you come into balance is that at the same time you'll not lose some of that godly extremism. You know what I mean by that? Because you see, if there's nothing that's really moving, nothing that's on the attack, and therefore having with it perhaps some extreme aspects, then there's nothing to bring into balance. It's like trying to put, you know, we always talk about the airplane illustration, and the wings, and perfect balance.

But of course, if there's only wings, no plane, very hard, to bring, you know, the plane into balance. And if you're only wings, your great burden in life is to be balanced. There's no drive, there's no initiative, there's no oomph.

Forget it. You're not going anywhere. And if any of you see two pair of wings going through the air with nothing in between, I can tell you we have good psychiatric clinics here in Germany.

One of the things that has helped me as I've studied extremists, John Sung, a man highly revered. If you study him closely, he was of course extreme. Pak Sing, a dear, dear brother who I know so well.

As you live with him, you study him, you study his movement. It's extreme, he's extreme. His view of Pentecostals would scare you right out of your shoes, a lot of you are Pentecostals.

And he broke fellowship with O.M. basically. His fellowship with us individually, but his assemblies, especially his disciples, like to go further than he does, really broke fellowship with O.M. and with the ship because we fellowship too widely. And I think it's been a beautiful thing that though our fellowship is broken with that movement to some degree, we have still maintained a very, very close relationship.

And we've had him of course at our conferences. God honors faith. God honors faith.

Very few men filled with faith did not have extremes. It's very difficult to be totally balanced and to be a man of reckless faith. That's why today I am stronger on balance and weaker on faith.

I heard just yesterday morning of how Bhaktsingh united together with his band of people and prayed for a woman hundreds of miles away who had cancer. They united in prayer. They phoned her up and they said, we believe you're healed.

She went back to the doctor and she has been healed of cancer. Some people don't like those illustrations because they're the super, super cautious about healing. And they've got this thing all neatly tied up that basically God doesn't do that today.

God has clinics and doctors and heart specialists who when they operate you die. And other people. And we have to, if we acknowledge history, if we acknowledge what God is doing, and of course the cop-out, the cop-out which frightens me out of my shoes, is to go way over into the corner and say, oh, this is of the devil.

I will tell you, if there's any of you that narrow, I'd like to have a personal meeting with you. Because if you take men of God, the mighty works they have done, and you without research and without discernment say that's of the devil, I tell you, you're getting on dangerous ground. Always be careful when you make pronouncements.

That's all of the devil. That's what the church has so often done when it has become paranoid and sectarian and extreme. And I've known of cases where someone gave what they felt was a prophecy and a word from the Lord in a more charismatic type of meeting.

And another person got right up in the meeting and said, that prophecy was of the devil. Can you imagine sitting in a meeting like that? I mean, I would have thought that if the prophecy was of the devil, the brother who felt that way could have, you know, a little more quietly taken the other brother aside after the meeting and maybe shared in a loving way. And of course, that particular meeting, this one shouted back, no, you are of the devil.

And this one said, the spirit you have is not the Holy Spirit. And the spirit you have is a deceptive spirit. Right in a meeting, shouting and yelling back and forth.

You don't think that happens in the church? You haven't lived very long. You haven't read very much. When God's people lose their cool, I'll tell you, clear out.

When this weak, feeble child of God loses his cool, clear out. Fortunately, I'm surrounded by people who don't punch me in the nose. God honors faith.

God works through humanity. God doesn't say to this man, until you're driving a smaller car, living in a smaller home, having a simple lifestyle, understanding 16 major principles of A.W. Tozer, until you've read all of Andrew Murray and are walking in total spiritual balance, I will not hear your prayers. Ridiculous.

And here we are, desiring to be mature, desiring to have spiritual balance, which is so important. Some little new convert comes along with all kinds of extremism, even some false doctrines, and he said, raise up in the name of the Lord Jesus and you shall be healed. You go back, now let's see.

Chapter 3 in the Discipleship Manual. Take the supernatural out of the New Testament church and you haven't got anything left. Just a study book.

Just a study book. And as someone, myself, naturally skeptical, very much wanting spiritual balance, frightened to death of extremes, I've had to acknowledge that there's a mystery here that I don't yet understand and I'm still studying hard. But to me, one of the secrets is God honors faith.

Have you ever tried to figure out that woman in America who performed such great healings and recently died? What's her name? Catherine Coleman. I tell you, I have researched that subject. I've seen books.

Many, many Christians have been influenced by her books. Millions, my friends, who live in small closets. And yet, some of the things I've researched, some of the things that came out in the press just before her death, you just couldn't believe it.

And yet, the people that are walking today, living proofs, healed by that woman. There are some things where finally, I just throw down the towel and say, Lord, when I get to heaven, I'll look for Catherine Coleman. I want to believe that she's there and I will find out what it's all about.

Meanwhile, I've been driven to this conclusion. This treasure is in earthen vessels. God honors faith.

God answers prayer. Faith is far more important with God than we think, I believe, the likes of us, who are very heavy on doctrine, very heavy on teaching, very heavy on principles. And I just pray somehow, even though you may not agree.

And of course, I don't agree with the way Catherine Coleman carried on her ministry. But I would be slow to pronounce this is from the devil. Because I've seen some of the most sincere, balanced people also do some of the most ridiculous, sinful, wrong things.

And yet at the same time, the Lord is still working through them. Well, I went too long on that. But I've still got a little bit of time.

Maybe I'll have to carry on at another occasion. These two messages were mixed together. Let me just bring you some of the history of O.M.'s working together with the local church.

You like to know the roots of O.M.? The roots of O.M.? I've been trying to trace them lately. Go back to the ministry of Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday, in the turn of the 19th century, came to Patterson, New Jersey.

My grandmother, I'm not even sure to this day if she was a believer. I think she was. The one who divorced my grandfather sat in those Billy Sunday meetings.

My mother was in those meetings as good Methodist. Very emotional. Incredibly emotional.

Definitely extreme. Billy Sunday would throw bottles from the pulpit. Converted baseball player.

But obviously anointed by the Spirit of God. He hit Patterson, the city where I was born, a city mainly of immigrants, a silk city. And years after he went off, some people said, well, he left nothing behind.

But one of the things that was born out of the Billy Sunday meetings, and I only got this history recently from Pastor Brolin of the Hawthorne Gospel Church who was there in those meetings as a young boy. He's been the pastor of that church more than 40 years. One of the things that came out of the Billy Sunday meetings was a little, small, local Bible study in the Hawthorne area.

And eventually, there's not time to go into this, from that Bible study was the birth of a local Bible-believing church known today as the Hawthorne Gospel Church. One of the somewhat famous, well-known evangelical Bible-believing testimonies, certainly in New Jersey and in the States. It was these people, really, who influenced so many others, including Mrs. Clapp.

And all over the Wyckoff area where I lived most of my life, the influence came from the Bible group of the Hawthorne Gospel Church and others who were related with that. Out from that group was started a little church, a Baptist church in Wyckoff, which was destined to be the first local church that I was involved in. That church was being born at the same time that I was being born again.

In fact, after my conversion, I went to the church parking lot where they were working on the building. They only had an old house then. And there was Henry Reid, now with the Lord, and I talked to him about this Gospel of John program for Ramsey High School and asked him for the money to buy the Gospels.

Broke a major O.M. policy in the founding days of the movement. You know, very few see all of the truths that God is trying to teach them or even the policies they are going to practice in their life on the first week or the first year. I was about one year old in Jesus Christ.

I mean, the mistakes that I made just were too many. I was only 17 years of age. I didn't know there was such a person as George Mueller.

I didn't know there was most of these things. But I wanted to evangelize my high school and I wanted to get Gospels and it seemed logical to go to a man who loved Jesus and loved the Lord who had been praying for me and became one of my spiritual counselors to tell him about this burden. I don't know if I actually directly asked him, but somehow he wrote out a check and we bought the Gospels.

And it was in that same local Bible believing little Baptist church. Before I went to Mexico in 1957, Dale was already in school in Wheaton and we were picking him up on the way. Walter, the other man who went with me, we were going door to door with Christian books.

I'd sold a fire extinguisher business and one or two other businesses and bought all these Christian books. We were going door to door. We were hiring buses to go into the Billy Graham meeting.

We were showing Christian films in the local grammar school doing a few other things. But it was in that local church on a midweek meeting that they prayed for us and commended us to the Lord and to go forth to Mexico. That is the birth of O.M. At the same time, a lot of the things we were doing had very little to do with that local church.

They had their job. We had to get on with our job. It was Henry Reidike, I believe, who bought the first old truck.

\$149. A 1949 black Dodge truck. And its engine exploded in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania a few hundred miles down the road.

What did we do at that time? Did we just pray? Did we say, Lord, bringest thou one more engine from the heavens? I picked up the telephone and I phoned the men who were in that local church and one or two others and I said, this is a situation. Will you pray for us? And they phoned back in a couple of hours and they said, we've got the money for the engine. Buy it.

We put in a rebuilt engine. That is one of the earliest relationships of OM with a local church. In Mexico, immediately in the early days of the work, we got involved from the very beginning with local churches but we also got involved with the Whitcliffe Bible Translators which was a para-church organization.

Anybody that could ever be so foolish as to say that a group like Whitcliffe was God's second plan or because it isn't local church, it's not really, you know, what God wants in our day. You know, it's so sad when people think that way. Through the work of the Whitcliffe Bible Translators, hundreds and hundreds, probably thousands of churches have been born because they have been the first people in the area breaking down the language and people often making wild statements in the home country don't have any conception of what it is to evangelize the unreached countries.

People that don't even have a written language. And so God linked us up in those early days with John Beekman. John Beekman who was a miracle.

I only found out about him by going door to door in his hometown. I met his sister. She put us in contact with him.

He was one of the first men in history to have a heart, open heart surgery and putting in of a valve. He should have died 20 some years ago. 30 years ago.

And he died a few weeks ago. Pray for his life. He was our first real missionary contact.

And you know, first impressions are so important. And how it breaks my heart sometimes when people come into OM and contact with our teams and their first impression is not a good one. I tell you, it really, really disturbs me when people don't get the right welcome, the right love and care.

I know it's hard and I know that I fail. And I know back then some missionaries and some people didn't give us much of a welcome. But here was a man, of course he must have had doubts.

Fortunately I had the recommendation of his sister. And he took us under his wing. We, most of us were sick by then.

And I can remember him coming up the stairs. His little plastic valve was the old-fashioned type. You know, it sounded like a clock tick, tick, tick, tick as he came around the corner.

And showed love to us there on the bed of sickness. He took us out for a day of sightseeing. I believe back then, my conviction that most sightseeing was of the devil.

It was a little extreme on that point, together with cameras. Anyway, somehow we compromised. I probably justified it and said we're going to go on to evangelize the great pyramids of Mexico.

And on the way out to the pyramids, he said to me, he said, you know, I don't remember all we were talking about. He said to me, you know, God has given us common sense. He said that to me, directly.

He was so gracious about it. He was so loving. I don't know what 25 extremist statements I had already made.

But somehow, he was gracious and I learned from that experience. And in those very earliest days, we came in contact with the brethren assembly there in Mexico. I think this was the second or third trip back, third summer.

Things began to happen very quickly. Most of us didn't even know what the brethren movement was. Those of you who know, brethren have a very strong emphasis on the local church.

Back in those days, generally speaking, would not cooperate with anything interdenominational, anything that was not them. And the history of the brethren is really incredible. But we met some very, very dear open brethren.

They welcomed us in the meeting. We saw different people ministering the word. And again, that brought the vision of the local church into our midst.

Dale Rotton was not involved for about a year and a half. And during that period, I went back to Mexico again with three or four others. None on that team who are with us today.

It was the next Christmas and summer that people got involved who, some of them, like Dick Griffin, are still with us. But during that time, Dale Rotton first became very, very much a Whitcliffe man. Eric Whitcliffe.

And he was very strong on that. Then he got very much into Bible memory. See, God separated us for about a year and a half for a real purpose.

Because he wanted to bring a lot of emphases to Dale, a lot of emphases to me, and then bring us back together for cross-pollination. He was going to go with Whitcliffe. He went through their special training course, that linguistic course.

My worst subject at Moody was this thing, phonetics. So that wasn't my gift, obviously. Dale was very gifted in this area.

And then from there, he got involved in a local assembly, the same assembly that was involved with the brother who died, one or two of the brothers who died in the Ecuador massacre or martyrdom. I had read that book at college before going to Moody Bible Institute, and it brought me to tears through Gates of Splendor. Read that if you haven't read it.

And I had never read Jim Elliott's book, The Biography. Who knows? That one might have led me into some form of extremism. I don't know.

The Lord kept me low dosage because He knew what a potential case I was. And even during my time living in Chicago, A.W. Tozer lived in the same city. I don't think I ever knew it.

If I did, it was only a name. If I had been overexposed to Tozer in those very early years, probably I would have gone maybe into the extreme. I don't know.

The Lord knows. The influences on my early life and Dale's early life and others who became the early leaders in the work, the influences on us from many different directions was our, so to speak, salvation. And I warn you, if the influences on you are all one direction, one basic message, one certain church, one certain group, probably you'll become either sectarian or extremist.

You may have your favorite. Tozer's my favorite. But Oswald J. Smith was a greater influence on the early three years of my life than A.W. Tozer.

And they are in two different worlds. God uses different men. But Dale Rotton was really getting wrapped up in the local church.

And Roger Malsted came into the scene. The story of the early extremes at Wheaton College, if you want first-hand information, Roger Malsted is the man. You've all read about him because the little letter in the book, True Discipleship, marked at the end, I guess we were afraid to put names down in those days, R.M. After that unbelievable letter to the Wheaton College class, resigning from the class presidency is none other than Roger Malsted.

So if you want the extremes, and Wheaton was always more extreme than those of us at Moody, you will have to get the information from Roger. There was an important meeting back in those days when I went out to see Dale Roton at Wheaton College. And around that time, the big thing for me was forsake all and totally commit your life to world evangelism.

Immediately I saw Roton's books I challenged him about forsaking his books. Dale was caught up in memory verses. He was caught up, he had about a third of the New Testament memorized.

He was caught up in Whitcliffe and reaching every tribe, always going on about the tribes. And he was getting caught up with the Brethren. And finally I began to see something about this Brethren movement.

Soon through Dale, I believe, I ended up speaking at Emmaus Bible School and was introduced to William MacDonald who, of course, was destined to be an important influence upon O.M. Ever since that day, we have had a very close relationship with Brethren Assemblies, one of the strongest movements in history on the emphasis of the local church. Lord, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the many different ways You're working through different people.

We thank You for the linking You've given us.

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