

Why Go to Urbana 1996

by George Verwer

George Verwer encourages listeners to consider attending the 50th celebration of Urbana, a missions event that represents a phenomenal commitment to world evangelism and a true event for students and young people with a major focus on the Lord himself.

Duration: 11:03

Scripture: Psalm 96:3, Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:38, Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:2

Topics: "Urbana"

Description

The video is a sermon on the Lordship of Christ and the importance of the Urbana event in spreading the message of the gospel. The speaker highlights the impact of Urbana and the commitment of the organization to take the gospel to every person in the world. He encourages listeners to use the cassette tape to redeem their time and share it with others who may catch the vision for missions. The speaker also reflects on his own experience as a speaker at Urbana and the powerful response he witnessed, emphasizing the importance of knowing God and being an effective witness.

Transcript

I'd like to share with you about the great Urbana Convention coming up at the end of 1996. I'd like you to consider personally the possibility of being at that convention and if you're not able to be there I certainly would like you to get something of the vision and be involved in a Ministry of Intercessory Prayer as we're hoping for some 18,000, mainly students but not exclusively students, to come together for that important event which has been going on every third or fourth year now for 50 years. This will be the 50th celebration of the beginning of Urbana way back in Toronto in the mid-40s.

Let's just pray together. Father, I thank you for the privilege of being involved in your work. We thank you for what you're doing around the world and especially in the student world.

And we long for many hundreds of thousands of college and university students to catch the vision for the great fields that are still ripe under harvest. Lord, help us to really take ownership of this great event that has gone on these 50 years and that has propelled so many students and others out into the mission fields of the world. We're looking to you, Father, as we share this vision with others and as we carry out the challenge of being mission mobilizers for your kingdom.

For we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. I've written down a number of reasons why I believe you should consider getting involved in Urbana and, if at all possible, being there when it comes again, the end right after Christmas, 1996.

I've just returned from a two-and-a-half-day prayer and planning conference for Urbana. I went to Chicago to be involved in that event and it was quite a challenge and encouragement, especially to meet many of the people who will be involved in 1996, including students and younger people who really also have a great vision to see Urbana being used of God in a mighty way in the months and years to come. I'm making this particular cassette tape back here in London now, not just in order to get people to go to Urbana, as important as that is, but to get people to pray.

For we know from Matthew chapter 9 that we are clearly instructed by the Lord to pray to the Lord of the Harvest that he would send forth workers into the harvest fields. One of the prayers that was repeated again and again during our recent retreat was that the Lord would send the right people to Urbana. When we pray this, it doesn't mean in turn that we somehow sort of sit back and then just expect people to automatically go there.

We're living in a day in which there's a huge amount of information coming at people and especially students from every direction. One of the reasons I'm putting this on cassette tape is because I know some people use these tapes to redeem the time when they're stuck in their vehicle traveling somewhere or maybe when they're doing something else. And I'm hoping that you'll not only listen to this, but feel free to make copies or to pass the tape on one way or the other to other people who may catch the vision for what is still the largest missions event in the world.

I'm aware when I say this that there have been one-off single events like the great stadium missions gathering in Korea last May in which there were more people than at Urbana. But I don't think we can compare a one-off meeting with a convention like Urbana where for a number of days there is such phenomenal input and phenomenal opportunity for growth in the whole area of evangelism and missions. What are some of the reasons why you should be involved? First of all, because I believe the worldwide movement of InterVarsity, IFES, UCCF, however it's referred to in your country, is a movement raised up of the Spirit of God.

It's not time to go into the amazing history of this movement, but surely in nation after nation it has been one of the backbones of the spiritual life of the nation and of the church. So many tens of thousands have been converted to Jesus at university and have later become missionaries or key people in their own local churches and fellowships. I don't think we can measure what the Spirit of God has done through this great movement.

We know the Urbana convention is only one event of this great movement which above all else is really people, students and young people and others allowing the Holy Spirit to work through them for his glory and the accomplishment of his purposes. We see in the Book of Acts very clearly that the Holy Spirit is the chief executive officer of all missionary work, and it's because I'm convinced the Holy Spirit has raised up this Urbana event and all that goes together with it that I'm so extremely excited about being involved myself and wanting to get other people involved as well. The second reason that I believe you should be involved is because over the years InterVarsity and Ithas have been so faithful to the Word of God, and Urbana represents an ongoing phenomenal commitment to world evangelism.

I remember listening to a tape by Billy Graham when he preached at Urbana way back in the late 50s. That was such a strong message in the early days of my Christian life that I think I ended up listening to it 15 or 20 times over the years. For many years most of the people who came on Operation Mobilization listened to that great Urbana tape when Billy Graham shared that powerful message about commitment.

Little did I realize back in the late 50s that by 1967 I would be one of the speakers at Urbana. What a great experience it was, and when I had the privilege of giving the invitation and seeing about 4,000 people stand in brokenness and repentance and recommitment before God, I could honestly say it was one of the highlights of my Christian life. Urbana, of course, is very much teamwork, and in 1995, as it was way back in 1967, I was just one member of a tremendous team of people committed to see this event accomplishing God's purposes.

I was again privileged to speak at Urbana in 1986 or 87, and it was just amazing. There was a much larger number at that time, and men like Billy Graham and Tony Campalo and others gave powerful messages. I had the privilege at that time of speaking on the Lordship of Christ, and the video of that particular message has probably been distributed more than any one single video or tape I've ever made in my life.

The influence of Urbana continues way beyond the event, and one of the purposes of this particular cassette is to help us build up a spirit of faith and a spirit of expectation and also realize there's so much we can do in the months between now and the Urbana event. Praise God that this organization and this movement in the United States, coordinated out of Madison, Wisconsin, has remained faithful to the Word of God and the commitment to take the message of the gospel to every person in the world. It's been a joy to be involved with Dan Harrison, the coordinator of Urbana, and he was with us at Korea in the great Jikohe event, which was an encouragement to many of us.

We praise God for the leadership of Steve Hainer, the head of InterVarsity in the United States, and the leadership of Lindsay Brown, the international secretary of IFES, which is the international network of InterVarsity and UCCF movements throughout the entire world. People will be coming from many different nations to Urbana. The very fact that the main Bible teacher is a Latin American is something that to me is just so exciting.

In the past, they've had Ajit Fernando of Sri Lanka and many other men and women sharing from the Word of God in such a powerful and relevant way. The third reason I believe you should go to Urbana is because it is a true event for students and young people with a major focus on the Lord himself. Let's be honest.

In the United States today, there are not that many really large events that are totally biblical and Christian, especially for students. Many individual colleges have missions conferences, and I've spoken at many of them. I've just recently been at Bethel College.

About this time last year, I was at Taylor University. In the near future, I'll be at the Biola Missions Conference and the Wheaton College Missions Conference. Recently, I was up at the Briarcrest College Missions Conference.

We praise God for these missions conferences and, of course, for missions conferences that go on in local churches. In no way is this a competition with anything like that. This event only takes place now once every third year, and we can be assured that the main focus is on the Lord himself.

Much of the ministry will be aimed at drawing all of us closer to God, to know God, for it's only as we really get to know God that we can make him known more effectively. We'll not just be dealing with missions out in the regions beyond, but we'll be dealing with that vital, important topic of how we can be an effective witness, which is one of the key words of this coming event, how we can be a key witness.

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