

# You Can Take the Boy Out of Om

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon challenges listeners to engage passionately in reaching the Muslim world through prayer and action.*

**Duration:** 22:21

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 10:4

**Topics:** "Missions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of feeling called by God to reach out to the 800 million Muslims who are at risk of not knowing Christ. He recounts a story of a team from OM who went to Libya in 1972 and were arrested for distributing the Gospel of Luke. However, they were able to show the Jesus film in Arabic to the people in their homes, leading to many conversations and Bible studies. The speaker emphasizes the importance of not underestimating what God can do and warns the audience about the potential for God to call them to longer-term commitments and deeper prayer.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles with you, will you turn to 2 Corinthians, chapter 10. I want to congratulate all of you who are on your way to OM, because I believe that the people here are people who are hungry, hungry for reality, hungry for what God wants to do in your life, hungry to be used by Him to make a significant contribution in accomplishing His purposes in this generation. And Jesus said, blessed are the hungry.

And so you're blessed, you're to be congratulated. I think very much you're in the right place, you're doing the right thing. I remember when I first got involved with this movement in 1959, I had no intention whatsoever of becoming a missionary.

I didn't know what a missionary was, but I knew I didn't want to be one. I just wasn't the type. I didn't want to marry a girl that had her hair up in a bun with a doily on the top and didn't like snakes and spiders, was a red, white, blue American who thought maybe he should be a lawyer, and I was headed for law school.

But at the last minute I heard about this Wheaton College where there were a thousand Christian girls, and I felt strangely led to go there. But I still had no conviction whatsoever of the ministry. But I was walking across Wheaton's campus, and Dale Roton, who's now the interim director of the ship's ministry, came up to me and said, Greg, how would you like to go to an all-night prayer meeting? I said, why? What have you got to pray about that takes all night? At my little Baptist church we had prayer meetings which

were really Bible studies, you know, with 10 minutes of prayer tacked on the end.

Those prayer requests were usually the weekly medical bulletin. You know, has anybody got any requests? Yeah, Joe, your grandfather's hip, okay. Joe's got anything else? Yeah, Susie, you've had the flu, okay.

And we sort of, you know, hit the requests like swatting flies, you know, boom, one request, two, three. We didn't expect anything to happen. In fact, if Joe's grandfather got up and said he was healed, we'd have kicked him out, of course.

But this was my concept of prayer. So I wondered, what do you have to pray about that takes all night? And he said, the Muslim world. Have you ever had that experience when nothing, I mean, nothing comes on your computer screen? I mean, Muslim, Muslim, isn't that a white cheesecloth? Or what is a Muslim? I had no idea that one out of every five people in the world was a Muslim that went on in life day after day after day in 44 countries of the world without a clue that God's ever visited the earth.

And more out of pride than anything else, thinking, well, I can pray as long as he can, I went down to this prayer meeting at Moody Bible Institute, and this skinny guy named George Burwer stuck his finger in my face, and he said, what country are you claiming, brother? Well, I wasn't even, I wasn't even claiming my tuition, much less the country. I didn't know what claiming meant, but I didn't want him to know that, so I said, well, what's left? And he said, Libya. You got Libya.

So I'm thinking, let's see, Libya must be one of those islands off Florida. You know, it's got to be, it's got to be out there somewhere. Well, I found out that night, as I opened up my heart to what was on God's heart, I found out about Libya.

I found out that here was an entire country without one known baptized believer among the Libyans. I found out about Turkey with maybe four or ten Muslims who had come to Christ, and Afghanistan with maybe four, and Mauritania with no known believers, and country after country after country, and the more I let God speak to me about these lands where his name is not honored. It was kind of like that commercial, I don't know if you have it up here in Canada, where the guy is shaving, and it goes, gotcha, because I had been captured for a challenge that was exceedingly beyond anything I'd ever thought about doing.

I suddenly realized that God wanted me to do something about 800 million Muslims going into a Christless eternity. Well, some years later, in OM, we sent a team to Libya. In 1972, they were out distributing Gospels, and they were arrested and put into prison and sentenced to eight years in prison for distributing anti-state propaganda, the Gospel of Luke.

So I'm sure that any of you are ready to follow in their steps. You're just delighted to be in a dirty, filthy Middle Eastern prison for Christ, but strangely enough, since that time, we haven't been able to find hardly anybody else that wants to go to Libya, until we went away from the Bible schools and away from the Christian colleges to Penn State University and found some Christian students that were so dumb, they didn't know that God couldn't answer prayer and couldn't get them into Libya. You know what the worst missionary disease is? It's not malaria, you get that in black Africa, that's bad enough.

It's not filaria, you get that out in India. I've got filaria, that's worms in the blood, that's why I wiggle around a lot. But that isn't the worst disease a missionary can get.

The worst disease a missionary can get, and it seems to have crept somehow into North America as well, is not malaria or filaria, but dullaria. And the way you can discern that you have dullaria is if you no longer are excited about the promises of the Word of God. You're living by your experiences instead of by the promises.

And when you see the promises, you say into this mountain, get up and go into the sea, you say, well, yes, that's a nice devotional, but I think we need to be practical. And I just stand before you and praise God for His grace of my life, that I'm just as convinced at 44 that God can answer prayer and open up doors in places like Libya as I was at 19 in that prayer meeting. And I pray that God will use you as another generation to keep coming and coming and coming at the missionaries that are already on the field and bring back conviction and faith and hanging on to the promises until we see the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ become a reality in the Muslim world.

Because the giant that we face, that I want to share with you in just a few minutes tonight instead of Thursday, because my wife decides she'd like me home a little more often, is the giant of Islam. When I was with North Africa Mission, we would have candidates come in and the candidate committee would quiz them and say, where did you get your vision for Muslims? They'd say, Mexico. And the candidate committee was scratching their head, wait a minute, how can you get a vision for Muslims in Mexico? Of course I knew it was on Operation Mobilization.

And God is going to continue to enlarge your heart for the world, including the Muslim world, while you have your time on OM. And I pray that it will be a disease that will never leave you until you're part of that force that's going to believe him to see tens of thousands and thousands and thousands of Muslims vowing, not to Mecca, but to the Messiah, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And might God give us conviction that it really is going to happen.

I don't think for one minute the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven tonight scratching his head, talking to the apostles and prophets and great missionaries of the past, saying, well, guys, we did pretty well in black Africa and Latin America and not too bad in Korea. They got those nice big prayer meetings in North America. There's been some good things happening, but I don't know what to do with those Muslims.

Anybody have any ideas? Maybe we should just write them off. You can't win them all. But we act like that.

But surely, in fact, we know because you can peek in the back of the book and find out how it ends up. And we read there in Revelation chapter seven, verse nine, that there are going to be people from all nations, every people, every tongue worshipping the Lamb. So we know there's going to be a breakthrough among the Muslim peoples of the world, that God is going to open their eyes.

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. They're not of the human level, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. Picture from West Africa, Mauritania and Morocco and Algeria and Tunisia and Libya and 80 million Muslims below the Sahara Desert and across the Middle East and across Afghanistan and Pakistan and 80 million Muslims in India and Bangladesh and beyond into Malaysia and Indonesia and the Philippines.

Picture these fortresses where they have locked Muslims in the darkness. Muslims who are taught from the smallest age that Jesus isn't God. Jesus didn't die on the cross.

Wicked Jews changed the Old Testament. Wicked Christians changed the New Testament. So God had to send the final revelation in the Quran which has no savior.

Picture these fortresses and then remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail. Now that doesn't mean what most people think it means. Oh boy, the devil isn't going to get me.

The gates of hell won't prevail. You ever been attacked by a gate? Gates don't attack people. No, Jesus is referring to these fortresses where people are held in darkness, where people are closed out by the fact that missionaries aren't allowed.

And he says, as we go after it, as we obey him and we ram the gates and ram the gates and ram the gates, the gates will not prevail. They will go down. We will be able to enter and take up residence and dwell in the land and do good and love them and demonstrate the loveliness of Jesus Christ.

And Muslims will come to him and form into vital worshiping, witnessing congregations. If we don't grow weary and faith not. You know, I can't find in this Bible anywhere that Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations if you can get a missionary visa.

I don't think he said, go and make disciples of all nations if it's safe. It's not a new Testament question. It's not safe.

It's not easy. Islam is triumphalistic. It believes that it is going to bring the kingdom of God to earth.

It must reign, not Christianity. We are on a collision course with Islam. There's no question about it.

And they've just closed down another church in Saudi Arabia. They've just killed an Indian brother who went to the Maldives to preach Christ. And they're trying to slam out the gospel in place after place after place.

And we say, oh dear, that's too bad. Tis, tis, it must be closed. That's well, we'll have to go somewhere else.

But it seems to me that God wants to raise up people once again, like Peter and John of old, who were commanded not to speak in this name of Jesus anymore. And they said, excuse me, sir, could I ask you a question? We need your advice. You're a should we obey God or man? What's a Muslim leader going to say if you ask him that? Should we obey God or man? Well, you better obey God.

Thank you very much. I agree with you. And God told me to come here to Kuwait and he didn't tell me to leave.

Well, if you don't leave, we're going to put you in prison. Well, sir, if that's what you think you need to do, you do what you think you need to do. But I feel we ought to warn you that at least once in history, when somebody did that, the whole jail is destroyed.

Brother Andrew, God smuggler says he doesn't believe that Muslims are going to come to Christ until they see Western Christians willing to suffer, willing to go to prison, willing to do whatever it takes until they say, wow, you are really serious about this. You're not just a Christian out of convenience. And then when we are willing to suffer, national believers, Arabs and Iranians and Turks and others, as it says in Philippians one will be more bold, but it has no good to scold them to witness.

We're going to have to show them that Muslims can be transformed by the good news of Jesus Christ. And I think that he's calling us to send many, 10, 20 armies frontiers. It's just one, this little band of people that we're pulling together to send out 200 church planning teams across the Muslim world.

It's just one of the regiments of God's army. That's going to come from every flank until there are hundreds and hundreds of disciple makers, permeating these Muslim fortresses everywhere they turn. They're meeting someone who loves the Lord Jesus, who refuses to stop speaking in his name until those churches become a reality across the Muslim world.

This is the dream that God has given me. And I pray that he'll give it to many of you. Well, we went to Penn state university.

As I started to say, and said, would anybody go to Libya? And I was beginning to get dull, Larry. And I didn't think anybody would ever respond to that. But four fellows who were graduating in a month or so came forward and said, we'll go to Libya.

I said, you will. We better have breakfast and make a plan. So we got together the next day and we made a plan.

And plan A was to go to London where the Libyans were advertising jobs. So they went to London, they applied for the jobs. They were told these jobs are not for Americans.

So they quit and came home. Yes? No. They went on to the next step.

They went to the island of Malta where there were some 3,500 Libyans and they began to live with them and speak with them and make friends with them, finding out about opportunities in Libya and about the schools there. And finally praying all the time, claiming the promises that they were going to get into Libya. They wrote off to some colleges and in answer to prayer, got a telegram back to all four of them that said, we want you to be our English faculty in a certain university.

We'll give you \$17,000 a year, free room, free board, free trip home to North America. You just come. The problem was, however, how could they get inside the embassy to get a visa? Well, they showed their telegram to the guard.

Finally he let them in. They went to see the man who gave out the visas and he was very cold because of the political distance of the two countries of Libya and America. And as they were standing there saying, Lord, you got us this far.

You've got to keep us going. Another man walked in and said hello to them and said, where are you from? They said, Pennsylvania. He said, really? This Libyan man said, I have a son in Pennsylvania.

They said, really? Where? At Penn State University. They said, we're from Penn State University. What's his name? Mohammed so-and-so.

We just had lunch with him. Well, if you know anything about Middle Eastern people, suddenly the whole chemistry of the place had changed. The man who gave out the visas called in for coffee, as these were friends of his friend's son.

And everything was a different story. And in 15 minutes, well, actually an hour, 45 minutes for coffee, 15 minutes for the visa. They got on the plane, flew into Libya, were met with a chauffeur, taken to the

university.

And the administrator said, I'm sorry, but we've got a problem. We don't have any place for you to live. Would you mind living with the 290 men in the men's dormitory? They said, well, okay.

Did they have an opportunity to share Christ? They didn't have an opportunity for privacy. Day after day after day, Libyan students were in the room. What is the Injil? That's the New Testament.

Teach about this. What do Christians believe about that? What do you do about this? And they had Bible studies every single day explaining their view of life. The only time they weren't having Bible studies was on the holidays.

And of course there are many holidays in the Middle East. And so what did they do then? They went to the parents of their students. Now, when you go to a home in Libya, you don't bring flowers or candy.

If you want to be popular, you bring a video cassette movie. See, they all have VCRs. They're tired of the one television station with Gaddafi's harangue.

And so they all have VCRs and they smuggle in movies. That's one of the problems because they have their view of Christianity from Hollywood. But our guys had a movie on VCR called the Jesus film in Arabic.

They said, yeah, we got a new movie. Hey, all right, come on in. Called in the neighbors, got a new movie.

They showed this film in home after home after home. Everybody made a copy of it, of course. They don't respect copyrights, you know.

And not once were they told to stop. In Libya. Do you see how easily we are bluffed into deciding what God can do and what he cannot do? And God wants to train you this summer.

And by the way, you might stay around longer than the summer. I feel my other warning, the first warning was stay away from these extended times of prayer because God's going to get you. It's going to be like the mafia, you know too much.

And the other thing I want to warn you about these summer programs, because God's going to speak to a lot of you about staying the year. My wife and I, we were so generous with the Lord. We offered a whole year to him when we first came on OM.

We got home 12 years later. Sure did shoot down a wonderful medical and law career. But you know, if there's any one word that sums up our time with OM, it's the word significant.

Significant. We thank God. I owe my spiritual heritage to OM and the brothers and sisters who taught me the principles of warfare and love and unity and the messages you're going to be going through again and again and again of brokenness of international fellowship.

And I may not be in OM today, but like they say, you can take the boy out of OM, but you can't take OM out of the boy. And I thank God for my heritage and the way that God used the people in OM to disciple me. But I pray that as you are about the Father's business in OM, that you'll let him keep enlarging your heart and that it'll bother you something awful that some 400,000 Iranians have been killed, according to Time Magazine, and some 400,000 Iranians, according to the Bible, have gone into a Christless eternity.

And you say, God, whatever way you lead me, use my life to see you honored among the peoples of Islam. Let's pray together. Take just a few seconds to speak to the Lord yourself and ask him to move you with compassion for those 800 million Muslims for whom Christ has died and tell him that you're hungry to be used.

If there's anything I've learned in OM, it's that God uses not the most gifted people, but those who want to be used badly enough. Tell him that you want to be a different person, a bigger person with enlarged heart by the end of this month. Father, you know our hearts.

You know how we love you. You know how we desire you. You know how we don't want to miss anything of what you're doing in our generation.

And our hearts hunger to so get involved in your purposes that we might hear you say, well, thou good and faithful servant. Lord, use us, even us, to be part of the team that penetrates those fortresses and sees beautiful Muslims for whom you've died, liberated, worshiping the lamb forever and ever. We ask it in his name who has all authority to do it.

Thank you.

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