

o.m. Ship Ministry - Logos li

by Lloyd Nicholas

The speaker shares about the Ministry of Operation Mobilization, its purpose, and its impact, highlighting the importance of discipleship, Christian living, and literature distribution.

Duration: 28:34

Scripture: Matthew 20:28, Mark 16:15, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 9:19, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Church Growth", "Evangelism Training"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes a unique church setup where there is only one queue at the back of the church. The preacher pulls a lever, and the people in the queue move to the front while another queue forms at the back. The preacher believes he has solved the problem of people sitting in the back by getting them to sit in the front. He then goes on to talk about evangelism and the importance of spreading the gospel worldwide. He also emphasizes the need for training and discipleship among Christian young people. The sermon highlights the ripe harvest of souls in the world and the need for more laborers in God's kingdom.

Transcript

Brother Lloyd, can you come and give us a living word out of the wood of God? Thank you very much. You know, I'm very aware that this is the time where you normally finish your service. Just a few years ago, I was in Indonesia and I was invited to speak at a church in Indonesia that I find to exist.

A brass hut, full of dirt. As I went into that hut and began to meet people, they all clattered to the front and I was sitting in the front row on a wooden bench. And after about an hour and a half, it was my turn to get up and speak.

I spoke for a long time. And then they asked me to continue speaking because their service normally goes for three hours. So that would be great, wouldn't it, boys? Be in church for three hours.

I know I have three little children and after about ten minutes they were ready to do something else. I think in our Western world, a great mystery for preachers is why people don't sit in the front queues. In every Western country I go to, they count on the front two queues to be empty.

Of course, for the congregation, it's a great mystery why the preacher doesn't finish his message on time. Beyond that, there's a story about such a pastor who wanted to change the situation. He was always

frustrated why people didn't sit in the front.

So he developed a plan to change that. At the end of one week, at the beginning of the week on a Monday, he called in carpenters and engineers and they started rebuilding the church. The congregation drove by and they couldn't figure out what the preacher was doing.

All throughout the week there was banging, hammering and pieces of metal being taken to the church. Then came Sunday morning. The people came to church and there was just one queue right at the back of the church.

The whole church was empty, just that one queue at the back. Of course, as people normally did, they sat in the back queue. Then the preacher reached down and pulled the lever.

All of a sudden, that queue went straight to the front and another queue popped up at the back. Of course, more people came in. Once again, he pulled the lever.

The people came forward and another queue at the back. So the preacher thought he'd solved the problem. He got everybody now sitting in the front queues.

He began his sermon and he went on and on. He was really excited now. The people were there in the front.

They were listening to him. He felt the power of the Lord upon him. After about half an hour, people started looking at their watches.

He didn't mind that. He knew that they were listening to him. They were right in front.

An hour went by and people were beginning to get frustrated. So one of the elders quietly stepped up to the side, went to the back, and pushed a button. All of a sudden, the trapdoor opened.

I hope that doesn't happen today, but I will try to keep my sharing short. By the way, although a pastor introduced me from coming from Germany, I am not German. I am Australian.

So if you hear kind of a strange accent, that's probably a mixture of everything. I work with the Ship Ministry of Operation Mobilization. I'm here right now on the west coast of North America investigating the possibility of bringing one of our ships, a passenger ship, it's not a boat, it's a large ship like the one you see down at your passenger terminals, a Christian ship, to Vancouver in 1996.

That's why I'm here to investigate that possibility. Myself and two of my colleagues, we've also been on the west coast of the United States. In Portland, I met a black preacher, a black pastor.

He was going to a big convention and he was going to speak at the convention. So I was just talking to him on the bus and I said to him, well, I guess you've spent many years or many, many days preparing your message for this convention. He looked at me with a big smile and said, Brother, the message is in the heart of the preacher.

And I thought that was really right. The message is in the heart of the preacher. And so I'm not coming to you today with a big exegesis of some passage.

I'm coming to you just sharing what the Lord has been speaking to me this past week while I've been investigating. As I said, we've been presenting the Ministry of Operation Mobilization and our two ships, we have two ships, Tulos and Logos, ocean-going passenger vessels. These are God ships.

We have 500 people on board two ships, 300 on Tulos, 200 on board the Logos. We have children on board our ships. Yes, children your age.

And they go to school. We have a little school on board, kindergarten for the children who are not ready for school yet. They have a great time on the ship.

Really, they do. And they enjoy going from country to country. Of course, for them it's like a living geography lesson, going from Asia and up here and out to India.

And the kids really have a great time. One thing they miss out on about it is just being drunk. They really like getting off when the ship comes aboard.

But as we go from place to place, we seek to serve God's people and to make an impact in this world with gospel. I've been talking to people about five characteristics of the ship. One is evangelism.

Every port we go, we are involved in evangelism, whether that is in Bombay, India, or in Bombassa, Kenya, open Santos in Brazil, or here in Vancouver, Canada. We will be seeking to be living witnesses for Christ to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure you can sympathize with me.

We all want to preach the gospel so people come into the kingdom of heaven. All over the world today, God is moving in a great way to bring people into his kingdom. A few years ago, I was in Portugal, and it just really surprised me how ripe the harvest really is.

As I mentioned, I come from Australia. It's a little bit like going out in the street and trying to give out a little tract, say a word to somebody who immediately seems to be offensive to them. Nobody wants to have any contact with you, certainly if you come trying to talk about Christianity.

In Portugal, as one example, it's very different. For the first time in my life, I went out onto the street corner, my knees knocked, and I took the Bible in my hand, and I began to preach. Before I knew it, there were hundreds of people around me listening to what I was saying.

I just couldn't comprehend that this was possible. These people were listening to me sharing my own personal testimony, how I came to know Christ. After that time, after about 10 minutes, in great boldness, I said, you know, is there anybody here who wants to know the Lord Jesus Christ? A number of people said, I do.

I want to know Christ as my Savior. For me, it was mind-blowing. I couldn't believe this was actually happening in today's world.

And it does. And there are places in this world today where the harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few. And any one of you today, if we could, in an instant, go to Portugal and stand on the street corner with our knees knocking, we could preach the gospel, and people would come to know the Lord through that message, through the testimony of our lives, what God has done in our lives, how he's changed our lives, we would see people enter into it.

The second part of our ministry is missions. We want to encourage churches, young people, to be involved in missions. As I mentioned, God is working in a great way today.

As an example of that, just a few months ago, we were in the Arabian Gulf. We all know about the Gulf War. And in Kuwait, the very heart of that war, a few years ago, there may have only been about 50 Christians living in Kuwait.

These were not Kuwaiti people. These were mainly expatriate people from Egypt, Jordan, United States, Britain. And they were meeting together in two small fellowships, two house fellowships, regularly, every Friday.

That's the best day. Seeking just to enjoy a fellowship together with Bishop John. I was in Kuwait many years ago, and we were thinking about bringing the ship there, Logos.

And they said, don't bring your ship here. It would be too threatening for us. If the government feels that you are trying to do evangelism in our country, then they will close our church and turn it into a fisherman.

After the Gulf War, some amazing stories have been coming out of Kuwait. Now, instead of 40 or 50 believers, there are something like 5,000 Christians living in Kuwait, regularly worshipping. In the last three years, there has been such an explosion of God's kingdom in Kuwait.

It is almost incomprehensible that such an amazing thing has happened. God is working in the world today to bring people into his kingdom. And we need to be involved.

If we are going to see the world reached, we, as God's people, need to take a responsible role in world missions. The third part of our ministry is training. We want to train Christian young people in discipleship and Christian living.

You may think that onboard the ship is just wonderful. Here are 200 people, all committed Christians. The captain, he is a committed Christian.

He really loves the Lord Jesus Christ. The cook, chief cook, he loves the Lord. He is singing praises to God.

He is mixing up his rice and potatoes, putting everything together because we come from so many different countries. Everybody onboard is such a living, committed Christian. And you might think this is heaven on earth, heaven on the sea.

And it is. It is really exciting. But, you know, we have our problems.

We have our struggles as well. We are not perfect people. And I remember after six months onboard the ship, I really went through a struggle in my life.

I thought I was a good person, a good Christian. And, you know, I came to the ship as a really strong Christian man. I was ready to win the world with the gospel.

I was reading my Bible, studying my Bible, praying many hours, seeking to really show love to my fellow man. But after six months, you begin to notice that that other brother over there, he is not as good as I am. He has a few problems in his own life.

And this sister over here, you know, she talks a lot. Why does she have to talk all the time? And you begin to realise that we are not all perfect. And God began to teach me, well, the problem isn't in my brother's heart or my sister's heart.

The problem is in my own heart. The problem is in my own life. And God was working in my heart to show me that I needed to respond to his teaching.

I needed to change my own attitude. I needed to trust him and allow him to work with me. One of the greatest, hardest lessons I had to learn was that of learning to be forgiven.

It was very easy for me to forgive others for what they had done against me. I found men to stifle acceptance of forgiveness. Now, on board the ship, we are learning what it means to be a real Christian.

We are learning what it means to really love one another. Not just in our head, or even to embrace somebody. To love one another is a practical key.

To embrace one another as brothers and sisters. And as we go from port to port, we are trying to teach people as well Christian discipleship. We have young people who come on board the ship, one or two weeks of short-term training programme.

We try to expose them to the things that God has taught us. We hope that they will carry on with it. Some years ago, the ship was in Korea.

And there was a young Korean pastor who came on board the ship. One month, he wanted to join our special Christian life training programme. And we felt this was great to have a pastor.

We just asked him, would you just take part in the same kind of discipleship training that we are doing? This pastor, it revolutionised his life that one month. He went into a cabin with two other men. Very small cabin.

These cabins, you can't all stand up together to change clothes. But one at a time. And on the bulkhead wall, there is a verse.

Christ came not to be served, but to serve. This made a big impression. We put him into the galley.

He had never washed dishes in his whole life. This was a Korean pastor, maybe 30 years of age. In his whole life, he had never washed dishes.

That was his first job on board the ship. To wash the dishes of 200 other Christian people. He really struggled with that.

He was a married man, by the way. And in Korea, the men just don't do that. But he really struggled with that.

He went through great, great pain in his own heart. And every night, he would go back to his cabin. Christ came, not to be served, but to serve.

And that gave him a chance to go another day back to washing dishes. Early one morning, he got up. And he went up on the deck.

And he saw many of our young people up on the deck, reading their Bibles quietly and praying. And he went up to one of them and said, what are you doing? And they said, well, we're... And in that short conversation, the pastor learned how to have a quiet time, to spend every morning reading his Bible, meditating upon what God was saying to him, to spend time in personal prayer. He also attended our night of prayer.

Once a week, we have a night of prayer. Pray for the world, for Afghanistan, for India, for South Africa. Not only praying for our own needs, but praying for God's people and what God is doing throughout the world.

He had never done that before in his life. Sure, he had prayed for himself. He prayed for his church.

He prayed for his own country. But never before prayed for the world, prayed for needs elsewhere. This radically changed.

And so after one month on board, this young pastor's life was very different. He and another pastor who had also joined that program, decided they would start up a similar place called Discipleship School in Korea, where they would invite young people and young pastors to come to their school for one week. They would wash dishes, they would take off their suits and get in, roll up their sleeves, wash dishes.

Pastors, that would be their first job. They would get involved in the nights of prayer, praying for the world, praying for other needs. They would learn how to have a daily quiet time, how to read God's Word, how to meditate upon it, how to respond to what God was saying to them personally.

I met this man just two years ago, also in Korea, this time he was in a small village, seeking to be a witness for a planet. And he told me this story. I was really excited to hear this.

And then he showed me on the wall his quiet time notes, and just volume after volume over the past 12 years, of the notes that he had taken down as he personally spent time with God in the Word of what God was saying to him. And he told me that I asked him, well this is really amazing, how many people have you had through your discipleship? I expected to hear it. He said to me, 20,000.

I said, you mean 20,000 young people and pastors? He said, yes, 20,000. And it just amazed me what God can do to the life of one person, really walking and responding. This young pastor is still right now being a church planter in South Korea.

South Korea is one of the most exciting churches, I think, in the world. There are millions of Christians in South Korea. And churches are packed.

You know, a small church would be 3,000 people. They often have 20 or 30 pastors in the church. But one of the great tragedies of the church is that they haven't been as strongly missions oriented.

In the last 10 years, that has begun to change. Now there is clearly a move of the Korean church to get involved in world missions. So much so that just recently a group of Korean pastors went to Kazakhstan in Central Asia to explore the possibility of sending Korean missionaries to Kazakhstan to reach out to Central Asia.

And I think that in the next one or two years, we will see hundreds, if not thousands, of Korean young people, Korean trained and skilled Korean young people going from Korea, supported by their churches, to some of the most unreachable possibilities. I really believe this is going to happen. And I think this is

one of the most exciting and thrilling events in Christian history.

... With our ship, we're also involved in literature distribution. As I mentioned just recently, we were in the Arabian Gulf. We went to places like Dubai, Bahrain, Oman.

These are Muslim countries where 99% of the people are Muslim. These Muslim people are claimed to know God. The children, the Muslims, have 100 names of God.

These are all names that we would agree with. God is the creator. God is powerful.

God is faithful. But the Muslims say that we as human beings only know 99 names. And the 100th name of God is a great secret.

But that secret of the 100th name of God is known by one creature on earth. Do you know what animal knows the 100th name of God? There is an animal, according to the Muslim people, that lives on earth that has the secret of the 100th name of God. I'll tell you.

It's the camel. That's why when you go to a zoo, you look at a camel, he always has his nose up in the air. Have you ever noticed that? A camel always looks so proud because he has the secret of the 100th name of God.

But if you read your Bible, I guarantee you, you as believers in Christ, will know that 100th name. And I think it is the greatest name of all. And that is the name God is love.

Of all those 99 names, that name, God is love, is not listed. And I believe if we as believers could just take the love of God, the Muslim people, tell them the secret 100th name, we would see a great turning of people towards the love of Christ. That's, in the end, why we have all become to know Christ, isn't it? Because we have known the love of God.

And so we took the ship to the Gulf, really, not to say so much about the love of God, but to demonstrate the love of God. And we had many, many men in their white linen robes, and women in their black robes, just seeing slits of their eyes through it, come on board the ship. We were able to do that.

But even more thrilling than that was our literature. We had tens of thousands of Bibles and New Testaments on board the ship. We never knew whether it was possible to distribute those.

In Dubai, for instance, I went into a large Christian, so-called Christian bookshop, and there was not one Bible in that bookshop. There were a few books, Christian biographies. There were lots of other educational-type books, but no Bible.

And this really discouraged me. I later heard and found out that the government just doesn't allow Bibles in the country. So here we came with our ship laden with Bibles, and we really wondered, would they allow us to sell Bibles? We invited the government censors to come on board the ship, and they walked around the exhibition.

They came to a section where we had a huge display of English-language Bibles. And these censors began to talk and debate among each other in Arabic whether they should let us display these English Bibles or sell them. And then the chief censor said, well, just let it be.

And then they turned the corner, and there was another huge display of Arabic Bibles and New Testaments. They looked at it and just kept on walking. I couldn't believe my eyes.

They turned around the corner, and then little by little, there was a huge section of children's Bibles. Once again, they had a debate. Should we allow these people to display these children's English Bibles? And once again, the head censor said, yes, let it be.

Well, after three weeks in the Gulf, we have seen 25,000 Arabic Bibles and New Testaments in that area. Let alone all the English that was also displayed. 25,000 Arabic Bibles and New Testaments.

And this is not something that has been put in all the Christian news media. We don't want that. But I can tell you, this is the largest distribution of Arabic Scripture in the Middle East ever in that spiritual history.

We should be praying for that. We should be praying that God will use His Word to bring Muslim people while those Bibles have not only gone in Dubai and Bahrain, but that people have taken them across the borders to Saudi Arabia and Qatar where they do that at their own risk. Fifthly, we're involved in a relief effort every year.

We choose one port where we seek to demonstrate the love of Christ. Last year, we went to Mozambique just after the war. We went to a small village situation where there were 50,000 refugees who had lost their homes, lost everything.

They were living out in the fields in grass huts. They had to walk five miles or eight kilometers to get to the river where they would fill up huge plastic containers of water. Women and many young girls your age would put these containers on their head and walk five miles or eight kilometers back to their grass hut, and they would do that twice a day.

There were no medical facilities in this village, and it was a really desperate situation. We sent a team there. The government actually gave us some land to start an agriculture project, and then with the ship we went there.

We took a lot of materials, sent 120 men to that village. We built a clinic and outfitted that clinic with medical supplies. We built a skills training center where young men and young women could learn practical skills, how to repair your motor car, how to be a carpenter, how to be a metal worker, and equipped that center with tools.

We also built an orphanage for 50 young children who had no parents and who were living out in the fields in nobody's home. We also helped find some materials for that foundation. So in this way we just felt we were contributing in some way to demonstrate the love of Christ in that village.

As we were there, a church was being planted and a Mozambican pastor was meeting about 100 people out in the fields of Mozambique every day to listen to the word of God and praise his name. I found that so encouraging. Well, this is just something of what we are doing in the ships ministry.

We are planning and hoping that the Lobos 2, one of our ships, will come to Vancouver, and we are coming really to serve the church here. We believe God will use the ship to catalyze his work in this port, and I trust that it will resolve in the Kingdom of God being extended here. I could tell you much more.

Just one last story. As I was driving from San Diego to Los Angeles, on the California highway, I saw this big four-wheel drive pickup truck. On the back was a bumper sticker that said, Real Men Love Jesus.

I thought, well that's typical. It's a bronze Californian, 4x4 pickup truck, and it's got Moses as its attorney. He's a real macho man, and only real men love Jesus.

I thought to myself, well that's not me, in one sense. Because I am not strong and powerful. I cannot conquer the world.

We in the ships ministry, you may think that we are some kind of super spiritual heroes. We are not that at all. But we love Jesus.

We are failures. We are weak. Sometimes we are afraid.

Sometimes we experience serious pain in our lives and in our community. We are seeking to win the war and share God's love. We are seeking to be a Christian community, and to be a model for Christians wherever we go.

We are seeking to demonstrate Christ's reality in our lives. As I was thinking about it a few days later, I thought, well that actually probably is the correct statement. Real people love Jesus.

Because real people are just like you and I. Weak, sometimes afraid, sometimes lonely, sometimes really hurt. We love Jesus. And as we walk in our love for Him, in faith and obedience, then the world will know that Christ is real.

We will see all around us in our lives. So I just want to leave that with you. Real people love Jesus.

That is true in my life. I am a real person. I love Christ.

But I am also weak. And I need Him every day of my life. And I need you all the time around me.

While we sing one song, and we ask the choir to come up, because they want to serve us again at the end of the service. By the way, for instance, please help yourself with some literature, because I am curious.

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