

How to Evangelize the World

by Oswald J. Smith

Oswald J. Smith emphasizes the urgent need for the Church to evangelize the world in this generation through effective communication and a focus on the gospel message over physical structures.

Duration: 41:50

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41

Topics: "World Evangelization"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of publishing the gospel among all nations before the end of this age. They believe that once every nation has had the opportunity to hear the message of salvation, Jesus Christ will take over the reins of government and rule the world for a thousand years. The speaker passionately appeals for the tools needed to finish the job of evangelizing the world, drawing inspiration from Sir Winston Churchill's plea for tools to win the war. They also discuss the challenge of evangelizing the world in this generation and illustrate it with the example of a billion dollars being invested in building churches but not enough being given for world evangelization. The sermon concludes by highlighting the need for churches to prioritize evangelization and overcome the obstacles of persecution.

Transcript

Thank you, shall we be seated. My friends, I want to make it very, very clear to you that you cannot be any more disappointed than I am. I've been looking forward for over a week to hearing my dear friend Dr. Harold Ockengate at this service this noon hour today.

And an hour and a half before this service was to be held, I got a call, as you've heard from my son, telling me that Dr. Ockengate could not be here and asking me if I would attempt at least to take his place. Well, of course, that's impossible. I've been looking forward to hearing him, and here I am hearing myself instead.

What a change. I trust that you'll not be too much disappointed and that God will bless nevertheless and that we'll have a wonderful service and that God will be glorified. Last Sunday, I was in Hammond, Indiana, preaching in what is supposed to be the largest church on the face of the earth.

Whether it is or not, I don't know. But I preached last Sunday morning in that church and I preached last Sunday evening in that church and faced two tremendous audiences. The church itself is just about twice the size of this church, just about twice as large as this church, the people's church in which we're meeting

this morning.

It seats approximately 5,000 people. They claim to have 30,000 members, 30,000 members. That means that they stand first, that they are the largest church in the world.

And then they claim to have 15,000 Sunday school scholars. And the Sunday school meets at different times during the day and there are 15,000 students altogether in the Sunday school. Well, I had the great privilege of being there last Sunday and of preaching both morning and evening.

And then I came home looking forward with great interest to hearing my dear friend, Dr. Harold Ockengay, today at noon. An hour and a half ago, I discovered that he would not be here. Now, I trust you'll pray as I speak this morning and that the message may not be delivered in vain and that God's blessing may rest upon the convention today as well as other days.

This morning, I'm going to answer a question, a question that I've answered before in missionary conventions, and I trust that it will throw a little new light on the situation of world evangelization. I'm going to answer this question. How can we evangelize the world in this generation? Now, of course, it's difficult to speak to a group of missionaries on a subject such as this.

They probably know more about it than I do, and yet God lays this subject upon my heart. How can we evangelize the world in this generation? Before I speak on this subject, I would like to emphasize two words in the question I've just asked. The first word is evangelize.

Let me make it very plain and very clear to each and every one that I'm not speaking about the Christianization of the world. I'm speaking about the evangelization of the world. And if you do not differentiate between Christianization and evangelization, then you do not understand God's program so far as his word is concerned.

Nowhere is the Church of Jesus Christ told to Christianize the world. That is not the job or the work of the Church. But the Church is told to evangelize the world, to give every country an adequate opportunity of hearing the gospel and knowing about and accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

And when we have taken the gospel of Jesus Christ to every country on the face of this earth, then we will have evangelized the world. We will not have Christianized the world because the vast majority of those to whom we take the gospel message will not accept it. But they must hear it.

And until they hear it, they are not evangelized. Therefore, our job, our work as a church, as missionaries, is to evangelize the world. I'm sorry to say that there are some missionary societies that have never caught that vision.

And they're still working in the same spot, in the same location, in which they started their work 50, 75 years ago. They've never left that place where they commenced their work of evangelization. Once a center has been evangelized and thoroughly evangelized, then by some way, by some means, we should move on to another center that has not yet been evangelized and see that they too, those living in that center, have an adequate opportunity of accepting Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

Now, that's the job or the work of The Church of Jesus Christ. That's been our vision for nearly 50 years now, the work of evangelization. We do not talk about the Christianization of the world.

We talk about the evangelization of the world. And so I ask my question, how can we evangelize the world in this generation? Now, I think you must understand and realize, if you know anything about the Word of God, you must know that the world must be evangelized within the limits of a single generation. There is no other way to evangelize the world.

For instance, we cannot evangelize the last generation because the last generation of heathen, they're all dead and gone. We cannot evangelize the next generation because when the next generation of heathen will have been born, this generation of Christians will have died. Each generation of Christians must evangelize its own generation.

There is no other way to evangelize the world. Some one generation must be evangelized before we can honestly say that we have evangelized the entire world. Why not our generation? Why leave it to the next generation? Why should not we evangelize the world and give every nation on the face of the earth an opportunity of hearing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? And so my question is, how can we evangelize the world in this generation? And then there's that word, world, which means that our vision must be worldwide.

If we are content to settle down in one local community anywhere on the face of the earth and never think beyond the limits of that community, then we are not getting God's vision. We are not thinking of a world. I've traveled a great deal during the 65, 70 years of my ministry.

I've traveled extensively all over the world. Seventy times I've gone throughout the world to 70 different countries preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I've seen something of the work that has been carried on as I've mingled with the missionaries and labored in these different countries throughout the world.

But do you know that as I go to many, many churches, I find a complete lack of world vision? Again and again, I go to churches that have no world vision, that never think of anyone beyond their own locality or beyond their own town or their own city, many churches that never think beyond the four walls of the church in which they worship, and who have no idea whatever of reaching the entire world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it's been my work down through the years of my ministry to go to churches all over the country, everywhere, and try to impart, if possible, a world vision. And I thank God that there has been a degree of success and that many churches that never had a world vision before now do have a world vision and are thinking of evangelizing the entire world, doing something to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to every country on the face of the earth.

Who was it that gave us the Reformation? You say it was Martin Luther. Let me say something about that Reformation. It was not Martin Luther's preaching.

Martin Luther only reached a limited number of people by means of his preaching. But Martin Luther wrote nearly 100 books and pamphlets, and those writings of his were circulated throughout the length and breadth of Western Europe. And as a result of the writings of Martin Luther, there came the Reformation.

Not the preaching of Martin Luther, but the writings of Martin Luther. The Word is mightier than the voice. And the reason that you and I are Christians this morning is because we've had the Word.

Had we not had the Word, the written Word, we might be Roman Catholics. We might not be Christians at all. We might not know Jesus Christ today, but we've had the Word, the Word of God.

And because of the written Word, we have come to know Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. Now, do you know how many people learn to read in this world of ours every week, every seven days? According to the latest figures, so far as I can find out, every seven days, no less than 2,000 people throughout the world who never had been able to read learn to read. That means that last week, 2,000 people who could not read one single word are able to read this week.

It means that next week, another 2,000 people who cannot read a single word this week will be able to read next week. 2,000 people every week. But what are they going to read? What are they going to read? Let me tell you something without any fear of contradiction.

The Communists have the answer. Do you know that in one single year, the Communists published two books for every man, every woman, every boy, and every girl on the face of this earth? Two books for every one alive. What other nation has ever done that? No nation on the face of the earth has done it.

But the Communists have done it. Why, they even boast of having taken China by means of the printed page. For 25 years before the Great Revolution in China, the Communistic Revolution, they poured their literature into China.

And as a result, China has become a Communistic nation. They have taken China largely by means of the printed page. Before the Great Revolution in Russia, they poured their literature into Russia.

And they prepared Russia for the revolution. And as a result, Russia became Communistic. Do you know how many books the Communists printed in Russia in one single year? Brand new books never printed before, translated and printed.

No less than 60,000 books. What other country has done that? No other country on the face of the earth has done it. But Russia did it.

60,000 books translated and published or written within one single year. And do you know the nation that came second? Japan came second with 24,000 different books written or translated and published in 12 months. Japan, the most literate nation on the face of the earth.

And do you know the nation that came third? Great Britain came third. Great Britain came third with 19,000 different books printed during that same year. And then India came fourth with 18,000 different books during that year, translated, written or published.

And do you know the nation that came last of all, the fifth nation, the United States of America? Do you know how many books the United States printed during the year of which I'm speaking? Translated, wrote or printed new books, brand new books? Only 12,000. Now which nation believes in the power, in the effect, in the influence of the printed page? The United States with 12,000 books or Russia with 60,000? Do you wonder that one third of the world has become communistic? Russia believes in the power of the printed page. And Russia is using the printed page as no other nation on the face of the earth is using the printed page.

Publishing magazines, magnificent magazines, filled with pictures as well as articles. Publishing books, doing everything possible to spread communism by means of the printed page. Gandhi's grandson, Gandhi of India, Gandhi's grandson was in the United States of America a number of years ago and he made a statement that shook me to my foundations.

He said this, the missionaries taught us to read but the communists gave us the books. The missionaries taught us to read but the communists gave us the books. Now why didn't the missionaries give them the books? Because the churches that had sent out the missionaries had never caught the vision.

And after sending their missionaries to the regions beyond to evangelize, they allowed the communists to come along and supply the reading material. Now let me tell you something, the false cults today are on the job. All you have to do is to do a little investigating to realize that the false cults, I say, are on the job.

Do you know that Jehovah's Witnesses have the largest religious printing press on the face of the earth? It's in Brooklyn, New York. Do you know how many magazines that press produces every minute? That one press produces no less than 500 full-sized magazines every minute. Eighty-four million in a single year.

And that's only one press. There are scores of other presses run by Jehovah's Witnesses that are doing the same thing to a greater or less degree. Many years ago now when Billy Graham was holding his great evangelistic campaign in Madison Square Garden, New York, I was with him.

Day after day we sat on the platform. We looked into the faces of 18,500 people. I never remember seeing a vacant seat in Madison Square Garden during all the weeks that the campaign was being held.

Eighteen thousand seats occupied night after night, day after day. One day I was sitting beside Billy on the platform. He was on my left.

And while the song service was in progress, he leaned over and whispered in this left ear of mine, Dr. Smithy said, Would you mind preaching tonight first? And I turned and looked at him in amazement. I said, Billy, you want me to preach here in Madison Square Garden to this congregation first? Yes, he said. You preach first tonight.

And then he said a little later on, I'll bring my message. Well, I said, Billy, if you want me to do it, I'll do it. I'll never forget it.

It's a moment in my life that will always be remembered. I said, I'll do it. And a few minutes later, after the song service had concluded, I found myself standing in the pulpit of Madison Square Garden, New York City, and preaching to that tremendous congregation.

While Billy Graham was sitting on my left, very close beside me, listening to every word I was uttering. And then later on, after a hymn or two had been sung, Billy got up and brought the main message of the evening. But do you know, if you remember the history of that campaign, you will remember that we left Madison Square Garden and we went for the closing service to Yankee Stadium.

Never to my dying day will I forget sitting on the platform of Yankee Stadium with Billy Graham and looking into the faces of 90,000 people after 20,000 had been turned away because there wasn't room for them. Never had I faced such a congregation in all the days of my ministry. 90,000 people.

I'll never, never, never forget it. And after it was all over, I walked down through those aisles with Billy Graham looking into the faces of those people who had listened to a service the like of which perhaps they had never attended before. But this is the point I want to make.

If you remember that campaign, if you recall Billy Graham's great ministry in New York, when it was my privilege to work with him, if you remember that campaign, you will remember that a few months later another organization, Jehovah's Witnesses, took over Yankee Stadium and held a great baptismal service. I'll never forget it. I wasn't there, but I read about it.

You know how many they baptized at that one service, just one service? They baptized 7,136 converts. 7,136 converts to their cult. How many were baptized on the day of Pentecost? Less than half that number.

How many have all the churches of the world baptized in a single baptismal service? Nothing like that number. How many were baptized in your church at your baptismal service? It remained for Jehovah's Witnesses to baptize the largest number of converts ever baptized at a single service. A false cult.

7,136. Now that leads me to ask this question. Which is the most important, the building or the message? I think that's something that every denomination should face.

I think that's something that every Christian should face. Which, I say, is the most important, the building or the message? If buildings are more important to God than messages, then we ought to be investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in building churches. And we ought to be building the most magnificent cathedrals we could possibly build if the building is the most important.

But is the building the most important or does the message come first? There was a year in the United States of America, many years ago now, I happen to get the figures, when there were built, during that one year, in the United States, no less than 6,000 brand-new churches. 6,000 brand-new churches at a cost of \$1 billion. Now, I'm not against building churches.

God led me to build one here in Toronto in the early days of my ministry, the Alliance Tabernacle, seating 1,800 people, crowded to the doors, hundreds turned away. I'm not against building churches if they are needed, if there is a congregation, if the pews can be filled. The second church that was built was built under the leadership of Dr. Paul, this church in which we're now worshiping, and I cooperated, of course, in connection with the building of this church as well.

And as you know, we see this church packed to capacity time after time, Sunday after Sunday. I'm not against building churches if they can be filled, if we do not have to preach to empty seats, if we can get a congregation. I'm not opposed to building churches.

But I say again, in the United States, there were 6,000 new churches built in one single year, oftentimes when the present church was more than adequate to take care of the congregation. How much is a billion dollars? You know we do not talk very much in billions. Let me illustrate it this way.

Suppose I were to hold in my hands a billion dollars. And suppose this billion dollars should consist of \$20 bills. And suppose every minute, every 60 seconds, suppose I should toss a \$20 bill over this pulpit onto the table here in front of me.

How long do you think you'd have to sit here and watch me to see me toss over a billion dollars? And that amount of money was invested in brick and mortar in the building of 6,000 churches in one single year. And I wonder how much those same churches gave to evangelize the world. Do you know the first church that was ever built on the face of this earth? Do you know the year it was built? You remember that in the early days there was nothing but persecution.

And during the persecution it was impossible to build churches. They had to endure persecution. The first church ever built on the face of this earth was built in the year 222 A.D. There never was a church building until 222 A.D. And yet the Apostle Paul carried on his great ministry during the days when there was not one single church building anywhere in the world on the face of the earth.

And more converts were won to God under Paul's ministry without a single church to back him than during all these years that have passed and gone since he lived. Is it necessary to have church buildings in order to evangelize the world? Are the people the most important or is the building the most important? Listen to me. Some years ago, a little while after communism had taken over, the leader of all Christian work in Poland got through the Iron Curtain, sat in my study here in this church just across from me with my desk between.

He told me a great deal about what was going on in Poland. Of course, I love Poland. I preached extensively in Poland.

I've been there again and again and again and proclaimed the message of God's salvation in Poland. I'll never forget Poland. And I asked this man a question.

I said, Tell me, sir, how many churches are still open and holding services in Poland now that communism has taken over? And to my utter amazement and astonishment, he answered by saying, We still have 280 churches that are open, that are holding services regularly every Sunday in Poland. You see, Roman Catholicism is so powerful in Poland that even the communists have not been able to take over. And Roman Catholicism still flourishes in Poland.

And of course, they haven't time to deal with the Protestant denominations because their hands are filled with the Roman Catholic situation. And there are 280 Protestant churches carrying on work in Poland. I said, Can I help you in any way? My heart is in Europe.

I've preached all over Europe from Finland right through in practically every country in Europe. My heart is over there. I said, What can we do to help you in Poland? And this book of mine was lying on my desk, The Salvation of God, in which I make the way of salvation plainer and clearer than in any other book that I've ever written.

A book that has gone out in tens of thousands of copies, The Salvation of God. All together, including the other books, well over a million and a quarter circulating throughout the length and breadth of the world. And he looked at me and he picked up this book, held it in his hand.

He said, Dr. Smith, if we could take this book of yours and if we could translate it into the Polish language, and then if by a miracle, we could obtain permission from the communist government to publish it on the communist presses in Warsaw, Poland, it would be a godsend to our people. I said, Why don't you do it? Well, he said, First of all, apart from not having permission, we do not have the money. Well, I said, Suppose I go to the United States and raise the money.

I always go to the United States when I want money. They're the most generous people on the face of the earth. They've never disappointed me in all these years.

Well, he said, We'd do it. I crossed the border. I went to the United States.

In a matter of three or four days, I had the money necessary. And I came back. I sent the money over to Poland.

It got through the Iron Curtain. The committee got it. Then they started negotiating with the communist government.

And they negotiated for six months. And every now and again, they would hold the money up that I had sent over. And they'd say to the government, We'll give you this money if you allow us to publish Dr. Smith's book.

At the end of six months, the government was so anxious to get control of the money that they gave permission. The book was translated into Polish. An edition was published.

It was sold out in no time. A second edition was published. It disappeared quickly.

A third edition was published. It also was sold out. Then I sent two other books to be translated and published.

And altogether, a total of 120 languages now have this book. For this book has now been translated and published in 120 languages throughout the world. Within the past few weeks, I received samples of four other languages.

And right now, within another six weeks, the book will appear in another seven languages, this time in India. And we'll soon have 130 languages throughout the world into which the book has been translated and is being circulated. I believe in the printed page.

I believe in the power of the printed page. I know what the printed page will do. I know what the printed page did for me.

I know that if you and I had never had the King James translation of the Bible, which was translated and published in the year 1611, if we had never had that edition of the Bible, the probability is we would not be Christians today. But we have the printed page. We have the Bible in our own language.

And as a result, we know Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior. How can you expect those in other countries, those in other lands, how can you expect them to become Christians if they do not have one single edition of the Word of God in their own language? That's why during all my ministry, I've been concentrating on the translating and publishing of my books both for Christians and for the unsaved in foreign languages. And I'm still doing it.

And I'm continually raising funds for that purpose. And I very often cross the border to the United States when I need more funds for that purpose in order that the message of God's salvation might be given to the entire world and the whole world evangelized for the Lord Jesus Christ. My wife and I were driving along the highway one day.

My wife went home to me with the Lord three and a half years ago now. We were married for 56 years. She traveled with me to most of the countries in which I traveled and ministered throughout the world.

Europe, South Africa, Australia, South America, and a great many other countries. And suddenly, I drew the car to the side of the road. I turned off the engine.

I tuned in London, England. I knew that Sir Winston Churchill was going to speak directly to the American people at that moment. So I prepared to hear what he had to say.

He only spoke for about three minutes. And I'll never forget it. I'll never forget it as long as I live.

Speaking to the American people, Sir Winston Churchill said this, Give us the tools and we'll finish the job. Give us the tools and we'll finish the job. The war was raging.

America had not yet come in. And Sir Winston Churchill made that appeal. And America gave the tools.

And America got in. And the war was finished and won. And Nazism did not triumph.

We still had freedom because the tools were supplied. Give us the tools and we'll finish the job. And this morning, I say to you first of all in the words of Holy Rick, the Gospel must first be published, be published, be published among all nations.

Then I add the words in Matthew 24, And then shall the end come. Not the end of the world. But the end of this age.

And then the new age will be ushered in. And then Jesus Christ will take over the reins of government. And for a thousand years in millennial splendor, glory and power, He'll rule this world of ours for a thousand years.

After the world has been evangelized and every nation has an opportunity of hearing the message of God's salvation. And so this morning, in connection with this convention, I say to you, I say it from my heart, Give us the tools and we'll finish the job. And speaking on behalf of every missionary and every missionary society and every missionary organization and everyone who is putting forth an effort to reach the world for God and bring back the King, I say to you this noonday hour, Give them the tools and they'll finish the job.

And I thank you.

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