

Grace
AWAKENED
LEADERSHIP

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Grace Awakened Leadership

by George Verwer

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Grace and Its Enemies

One of the main reasons I decided to write this book was to give a heart's cry for a "grace awakening" in the area of missions work. This term, "grace awakening," comes from the title of Charles Swindoll's book, *The Grace Awakening*, which has spoken so powerfully to me and many thousands of others over the past years. The book begins with a reminder that Christians are saved by faith through the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and that we have nothing to offer him in return. We can simply accept his free gift given to us in grace. Swindoll says, "Once we grasp its [grace's] vertical significance as a free gift from God, much of horizontal grace—our extending it to others—automatically falls into place."*

It is this "horizontal grace" that I want to write about in this chapter—the quality that allows us to recognize that individual Christians and groups of Christians, including our group, are free in Christ from legalism, to grow and work as he leads us. *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery* (Galatians 5:1).

We rejoice in this freedom, but we do not flaunt it. We use it to build up others and show them respect in their walk with God and their work for him. *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love* (Galatians 5:13).

Many spiritual writers have emphasized the same message. Stanley Voke's *Personal Revival*, is another book which has spoken

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powerfully to me of this truth of grace, along with Roy Hession's *Calvary Road*, which has been recommended reading in Operation Mobilisation since the very early days. These and many other books point us back to Scripture where great passages like 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 show us how to live in relationship with one another: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres* (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).

Another word that I sometimes use for this quality is “big-heartedness.” I think of the incident recorded in the Gospels of Mark and Luke when John reports to Jesus how the disciples stopped someone who was casting out demons in Jesus’ name, but who was not one of them. John took the narrow, legalistic view but the account goes on, “*Do not stop him,*” Jesus said. “*No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us*” (Mark 9:39–40). Jesus took the big-hearted view.

The familiar verse, Romans 8:28, is another one of the “big-hearted” scriptures, *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*. We often use this verse to encourage ourselves or others we are close to, when things do not seem to be going well, as a reminder that God’s compassion still surrounds us. But of course we can also apply it to others when we believe things are going “wrong” for them because they aren’t acting correctly, or they are following policies and strategies we don’t agree with.

There is such a need for this grace-awakened, big-hearted

approach in mission work. There are so many areas where a lack of grace causes hurt and tension and positively hinders the work of God across the globe. So often our fellowship as Christians seems to be based more on minor areas in which we are like-minded, than on the real basics of the gospel and the clear doctrines of the Christian faith which are so amazing and on which we should be more united.

Swindoll powerfully lists the enemies of grace as:

. . .from without: legalism, expectations, traditionalism, manipulation, demands, negativism, control, comparison, perfectionism, competition, criticism, pettiness and a host of others; and from within: pride, fear, resentment, bitterness, an unforgiving spirit, insecurity, fleshly effort, guilt, shame, gossip, hypocrisy, and so many more. . .grace killers, all!

I think of all the people who have been rejected, to some degree, because they did not fit in with someone else's expectations—because they were not Baptists or Anglicans or because they did not speak in tongues, or did not come up to the mark on any one of a hundred possible issues, which may or may not be of genuine importance. Many have felt rejection and hurt because they were not received by those who emphasized the gifts of the Spirit, simply because they did not have the same understanding of those gifts. The reverse is also true. Those who emphasize the gifts of the Spirit have felt rejected by members of the body who didn't.

What makes this problem even more complex is that so often preachers emphasize these smaller issues from the pulpit, affecting how their congregations think and how they evaluate other people and their beliefs. It seems to me that our behavior often testifies that these little issues are more important to us than the unity and reality that we have in Jesus Christ by the new birth through his Holy Spirit. We lack grace in this area.

Speaking graciously about our work and the work of others

One of the areas where lack of grace shows itself to be most harmful is in the supposedly factual statements which people from one group—a church, a para-church organization or a missions agency—make about those from another, without first of all checking that we have the facts straight and that we have the whole picture. Often, again, it is the leaders of organizations who make these kinds of statements. From my own forty years of experience I realize that we can easily say negative things, however subtle, about other leaders or their ministries. Sometimes these comments lack a factual basis, which leads to false conclusions and generalizations. Sometimes, even when perhaps the facts are correct, they are put over in a way that is hurtful and damaging.

Constructive criticism, following the pattern of Matthew 18, is something quite different—*“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector”* (Matthew 18:15–17).

I confess it is a great struggle to find the balance between telling the truth openly and boldly and acting with love. I think that often those of us in leadership don’t realize how much extreme or untrue statements upset other leaders who hear them. Once they get into print or on e-mail and go around the world, it is almost impossible to correct them. If we are grace-awakened and love the Lord, then we will be more careful about all that we say or write about others.

In our present society, commitment to telling the truth is under threat. When we do say something that is not true it takes grace to confess and put it right. An inability to do this leads to a cover-up. If you think that there are no “Watergates” in the Christian world, then I’m afraid you are in for a big shock!

The law in most countries is that you are innocent until proved guilty, but sometimes in the body of Christ, you are guilty until proved innocent. May God have mercy on us for this habit. If we are to see great victory in these confusing days, then we must listen to one another and try to keep communicating with one another with grace. This is true in mission activities, in our local church and indeed in our marriages and all personal relationships.

Along with graceless criticism often goes a tendency to make exaggerated claims, again without sometimes having the facts right. Many are confused and even angry when they hear another Christian boasting; however, few have the love and courage to call that person to account and ask for more specifics about what is being stated. How extremely sad that the term, “evangelically speaking,” has come to mean that something is an exaggerated statement or statistic. Any effort we can make in reporting numbers more accurately would be a great victory for those involved in mission work.

For example, when a TV or radio station talks about a potential audience, we make a huge mistake if we report that audience as the number who actually watched or listened to a particular program. And surely we must all finally agree that a decision or profession of faith doesn’t necessarily mean a true, new Christian. Someone once said that if all the claims about his country were true, then everyone in the nation would have been converted twice! If we hold our listeners in esteem, then we are more likely to be careful with the facts.

On the other hand, people who are angry or offended by the exaggerations or wrong statements of other missions leaders, must not “write them off” without any discussion or confrontation. If they know something of reality, brokenness and the way of the cross, they will be very slow to condemn or speak evil of another brother or sister, especially a leader in God’s work. At the same time those making strong-minded statements or apparent exaggerations must be more approachable and willing for correction. They must also be

more diligent in their preparation and research and make an extra effort to stick to the facts. They will have to learn to love their critics and resist making unkind statements about them in their ministry.

In the chapter entitled, “The Grace to Let Others Be,” Charles Swindoll identifies two powerful tendencies which nullify grace in peoples’ dealings with one another. The first is the tendency to compare, of which he says:

Before we will be able to demonstrate sufficient grace to let others be, we’ll have to get rid of this legalistic tendency to compare. (Yes it is a form of legalism.) God has made each one of us as we are. He is hard at work shaping us into the image he has in mind. His only pattern (for character) is his Son. He wants each one of us to be unique. . . an individual blend and expression unlike any other person.

The second is the tendency to control. Swindoll says:

Controllers win by intimidation. Whether physical or verbal, they bully their way in as they attempt to manipulate us into doing their will. . . . Whatever the method, controlling, like comparing, nullifies grace. If you are given to controlling others, grace is a foreign concept to you.

The opposite of grace awakening is the human tendency to be legalistic, narrow-minded and rigid, which is so often partly a cover-up for our own insecurities and fears. To be honest, I believe in some sincere saints it is actually a wrong view of Scripture, linked with overemphasizing favorite verses rather than the whole counsel of God.

It is amazing how some churches that I knew twenty years ago, born out of a new freedom of the Spirit, with lots of new ideas and strategies, are now more rigid in certain ways than the older churches they left in search of grace, freedom and reality. If you try to confront some of these new (now older) leaders about this you will see in their attitudes that history does repeat itself.

Don’t we have two thousand years of proof that God works in a variety of ways? Different missions have different strategies and

even within a mission or church there can be tension and division over strategy and the detail of how things should be done. Must we be so dogmatic on matters that the Bible is not clear about? Can't we accept that God works in different ways among different groups of people? The work of God is bigger than any fellowship or organization. To get a job done we need organizations that respond to specific needs. For example, God brought Operation Mobilisation into existence for a specific purpose—to mobilize the young people of Europe and North America and then across the globe. We don't worship organizations or get uptight because we don't agree with everything in them. We should assess them in the context of their specific purpose and be big-hearted about them. Remember the message of Philippians 2, that we should esteem others as better than ourselves? *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others* (Philippians 2:3–4).

Wouldn't the practical implications of this bring a revolution of love and grace? It would mean that, as well as being caught up in the plans, goals and strategies of our own organizations, as of course we must be, we would become bigger-hearted, understanding more of the full picture of what was happening and the unity in the body of Christ. What a wonderful day it would be if we were to hear mission leaders speaking out in a positive way about other peoples' plans, goals and strategies! How wonderful it would be to hear Christian writers and artists promoting other peoples' work and not just their own, taking other peoples' books and materials to their meetings! I thank God for those who already do this.

Esteeming other groups and individuals as better than ourselves would involve more than just speaking out on their behalf. It would include one group getting under the burden of another and assisting them positively with money, practical resources, know-how and

prayer. There is a balance to be kept here because of course each mission group has its own God-given vision and methods and we must not pretend that there is unity where there isn't and insist on it when it isn't necessary. Neither must we use this as a cop-out and deny that Scripture requires us to esteem one another and act in grace towards one another, as God does to us.

Grace where there's genuine disagreement

So, we need a grace awakening in the way we speak about one another, in the way we report the progress we are making in the work of taking the gospel to the world, in our practical approach to one another's work and in our sensitivity to one another's cultural and theological differences. But, we also need grace within the many genuine debates in the church over the best way to operate as we work to fulfill the Great Commission. So often the alternative ways of doing a job in missions are presented as incompatible, as "either / or," instead of, "either or both." There are many of these controversies and some of them will be dealt with later in this book when I look at the debates over the relative value of tentmakers and full-time professional missionaries, whether missions should ask for money or not and whether to send missionaries from "Western" countries or to concentrate resources on "national" workers.

In all these debates my plea is for a "grace-awakened" approach which gives esteem to the ways other people do things, which does not compare or control, which does not say, "This is the only way" and which does not judge an organization outside the context of its specific purpose. Where there is genuine disagreement, let there be loving and constructive discussion and even, sometimes, loving and constructive confrontation. Let us be honest about our differences. As Christians with a commitment to take the gospel to the world, we will of course sometimes have genuine disagreements. On some occasions there will be the need to take a hard line. Sometimes

I wish Christians would take a harder line on issues such as the Ten Commandments, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone and the need to respond to the Great Commission, just to mention three examples. Where cooperation is not possible on central issues, we should have the grace to disagree lovingly and then get on with our work.

At this point, I want to look at a particular controversy in the world of missions as an example of how a grace-awakened, big-hearted approach could help to show the way forward. This is the disagreement over one who makes a suitable candidate for certain types of mission work. In today's church, there is great controversy over the word "apostle" and of course churches and denominations who use this term must do so as they feel led without condemning those who do not. In some circles it refers only to a relatively small number of highly gifted and qualified people. This way of thinking encourages the view that only the very best candidates should be considered for mission work. I am in full agreement with the practice of selecting mission candidates with care, but the long history of the church shows that God sends out and uses all kinds of people with a huge range of gifts and talents. Stephen Gaukroger, in *Why Bother with Mission?* says:

The history of missions is a colorful history of "unlikely heroes"—characterized by obedience rather than ability. Time after time God confirms his Word; *Think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong* (1 Corinthians 1:26–27).

Modern, short-term mission agencies have often received people at a young age, with no real mission experience. On-the-field mentoring, the method used by Jesus, has proved to be one of the very best ways to produce long-term church leaders and

missionaries out of such people. Some assume that if we have a large number of new, especially young, workers that they will not be well-qualified workers. My experience has shown me, and I love to testify to the truth of this, that God uses all kinds of people. Books like *Ragamuffin Gospel* make this point and are well received by Christians in general but sadly, when “ragamuffins” sense that God is leading them to be missionaries, they suddenly find that many start to get very concerned about the quality issue.

At nineteen, I was one of those “ragamuffins” whom God somehow led and sent to Mexico. Today, why are there so many pouring cold water on young people and others who may not be “apostles” (according to some peoples’ definition), but who want to move out and serve God? Somehow perfectionism has got married to legalism and together these two can now stop even the most sincere and zealous disciple from taking steps of faith in the area of missions. Martin Goldsmith, in *Don’t Just Stand There*, maintains, “Missions do need highly qualified people, but they also need good people who may not have high academic or professional qualifications. Missions desire to work amongst people of all sorts, so they need workers of every experience and background.”

Let us older and supposedly more mature leaders acknowledge that many of the so-called “quality” people of our generation have been knocked out of the battle or fallen into serious sin. The really big mistakes and sins that cause grief to the body of Christ, in ways that are hard to assess, are not usually those of some inexperienced, young person on a short-term mission trip following a call to mobilize. As God’s people we need to be more compassionate and concerned for our youth. Instead of condemning their music or the way they dress, we should be reaching out in grace and love. We should not compare what we think our strong points are with their weak points, but rather we should face our own weak areas more realistically and learn to let love cover their weaknesses. In this way

we may begin to recognize the tremendous energy and commitment which they are able to bring to the work of taking the gospel to those in need.

In *The Grace Awakening*, Charles Swindoll entitles one of his chapters, “Graciously Disagreeing and Pressing On.” In many ways this is a perfect description of the approach I have been trying to encourage to the controversies referred to in this and following chapters. Swindoll says: “One of the marks of maturity is the ability to disagree without becoming disagreeable. It takes grace. In fact, handling disagreements with tact is one of the crowning achievements of grace.”

He goes on to quote Ephesians 4:29–32—fitting words to end a chapter on the need for an awakening of grace in mission work. I quoted verse 32 earlier but look now at the whole passage:

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

While writing this book, I started to read, *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey (winner of a “Book of the Year Award” from the Christian Publishers Association). I urge you to read it as part of your pilgrimage to be a more grace-awakened person.

Suggested reading

Swindoll, Charles R., *The Grace Awakening* (Word Publishing).

Yancey, Philip, *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* (Zondervan Publishing House).

Voke, Stanley, *Personal Revival* (Authentic Media).

Hession, Roy, *Calvary Road* (Christian Literature Crusade).

Luther, Martin, *Commentary on Galatians* (Fleming H. Revell/Chosen Books).

Books referred

Goldsmith, Martin, *Don't Just Stand There* (IVP).

Manning, Brennan, *The Ragamuffin Gospel* (Multnomah).

Taking the Lead

“Leadership is knowing how to get from where we are to where we should be” (Steve Chalke).

What a huge need there is for people to serve as leaders. If you want evidence of the shortage of potential leaders, look at the painful process through which the United Nations struggled to find a new Secretary General, or the process by which the USA and other countries select the handful of people who are fit and willing to stand for the highest political offices. Most Christian agencies, and especially missionary organizations, are crying out for more leaders, both men and women. I know one mission that has been searching for over two years for a General Director or CEO. There is a need for more Christians to take up leadership, not as an honor or a prize, but as a way of serving the body of Christ with the gifts and ministries given them. Many, who never expected it, will become leaders, especially in their local church. Being a leader in the home might prove to be the greatest challenge of all.

We need more emphasis in the church on the training of leaders, old and young. I am often reminded that those leaders of the church in Thessalonica, with whom Paul corresponded, were just a few weeks old in the faith. Training can start with the young. I am committed to the task of training people for leadership right where they happen to be, while at the same time presenting them with the truth of a world vision. What a powerhouse the church would be if we could amalgamate the kind of biblical teaching that creates dynamic spiritual leaders in home countries, with the

kind of vision which we read about in Acts 1:8. This would lead the church towards a greater forward thrust into world missions. There is a need for leaders who will “mobilize the people of God for adventurous and imaginative mission.” (Paul Beasley—*Murray in a Call to Excellence*.) May God give them to us.

Be filled with the Spirit

Much of what I have to say in this chapter concerns the tough reality of being a leader in the church and in mission work today. However, I won't finish without reminding you of the glorious resources available to leaders in Christ. Over the years as director of Operation Mobilisation I have spent much time in the training of leaders. Sometimes when speaking at a leaders' conference, I will deal with the special spiritual and character qualities needed by leaders in God's work. These are important and I will write about them later in this chapter. Sometimes I even get down to the details of how to make decisions as a leader and how to organize yourself. This too is important. Most often, however, I find myself speaking to leaders about the need for them to work on the basics of the Christian life—their own spiritual development and walk with God. Nothing is more important for leaders than this. It follows that in their relationships with others, leaders must do everything possible to edify, build up and help people come more and more into conformity with Jesus Christ: giving full consideration to the different circumstances in which people work in the organizations and movements that have been raised up by God to work together in the task of world evangelism.

Most of all, what I want to emphasize when speaking to leaders is, *Be filled with the Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18), because it is the Spirit who is the director of all Christian work. J. Oswald Sanders in his book, *Spiritual Leadership*, calls his chapter on the Holy Spirit, “The Indispensable Requirement.” He says that there may be many desirable qualities for spiritual leaders but only one is indispensable

—that they should be Spirit-filled. I am convinced that there needs to be a greater consciousness of the Holy Spirit and his work in believers. Each one must be taught that it is a privilege to know daily the fullness of the Holy Spirit as he exalts the Lord Jesus and is sovereign director of our lives and our affairs. This fullness is not only to do with the emotions and the inner spiritual life, it is also to do with the quiet reality of how we live our lives from day-to-day (see Galatians 5:22–25) and with the making of plans and the development of strategy in our Christian work. I am especially concerned to say to leaders that we must depend more on the Holy Spirit for directing us as we move forward in mission work. It is so clear from the book of Acts that the Holy Spirit directs missions work—*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*” (Acts 13:2).

The book of Acts also makes it clear that those who lead missions work need to be filled with the Spirit. J. Oswald Sanders says:

It stands clear in the book of Acts that the leaders who significantly influenced the Christian movement were men who were filled with the Holy Spirit. It is recorded of him who commanded his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high that he was himself “anointed. . .with the Holy Spirit and with power” (10:38). The privileged one hundred and twenty in the Upper Room were all filled with the Spirit (2:4). Peter was filled with the Spirit when he addressed the Sanhedrin (4:8). Stephen, filled with the Spirit, was able to bear irresistible witness to Christ and to die as a radiant martyr (6:3, 5; 7:55). It was in the Spirit’s fullness that Paul commenced and exercised his unique ministry (9:17; 13:9). His missionary companion Barnabas was filled with the Spirit (11:24).

He would be strangely blind who did not discern in that fact the fundamental criterion and equipment for spiritual leadership.*

Some people regret the passing of the fervor often associated with an early experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but as it is explained in the book, *Unseen Warfare*, this loss of fervor may be a sign of getting beyond the early stages and of “growing up.” If you are going to be a Christian leader you have to grow up. You have to settle into a steady routine of having the Spirit guide you in the daily pursuit of your work and your plans, just as we have seen in the book of Acts. This should be a constant daily filling but not a restless search for new “experiences.” Many people feel that they need a fresh touch in their lives and they go from conference to conference seeking something new. Of course I am not excluding the possibility of crisis experiences with God, but there needs to be a “continuing program for spiritual growth,” to quote the subtitle of Ralph Shallis’s book, *From Now On*. When God saved you and put the Holy Spirit into your life he put the ball into your court. He may be waiting for you to hit it back. To use another analogy, it may be that God is urging you, as Nehemiah urged the people of Israel, to “rise and build” (Nehemiah 2:18).

Tough realities for leaders

Of course Spirit-filled leadership is not as easy as it looks. Tozer speaks about it in his book, *Leaning into the Wind*, and this title reminds me of my own disastrous attempt to windsurf. It looked easy, but I didn’t manage to stay upright for more than a few minutes at a time. It’s not as easy as it looks or sounds. There are many tough realities that anyone involved in mission leadership or indeed any Christian leadership has to face up to.

* Taken from: *Spiritual Leadership* by J. Oswald Sanders. Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Moody Press. Used with permission.

I'm convinced that people of vision, who want to see something specific happen, must know how to win the loyalty of others and must know how to delegate and be a team player. The bottom line is that we must really believe in people and learn how to trust, love and affirm them.

I have learned the hard way how an insensitive word or even the wrong look on one's face can be hurtful to others and can hinder them in their walk and ministry. I once spoke to the staff and crew on the ship, Doulos, on the subject of loyalty and the response was quite encouraging (that message on cassette tape has gone around the globe*). I want to share a couple of the main points.

There are several reasons why building loyalty in mission work is so tough. First, there is a huge range of very worthy causes which can distract Christians from the greatest ones. There is so much to catch peoples' attention, that world evangelism has become just one cause among others. Many Christians are totally absorbed with the anti-abortion campaign, with human rights issues or with politics. Of course I have no argument with people who are concerned with these matters; I am concerned about them myself. But when these things make Christians relegate world evangelism to just one legitimate interest among others and ridicule those for whom it is the main issue, then I begin to worry. In this climate it is possible for some Christians to feel that an emphasis on world evangelism is some kind of extremism and for those on the edge or the outside of the churches to confuse some missions groups with the cults.

Second, even among Christians who do have a basic commitment to world evangelism, many are distracted by the extremist books and tapes which circulate suggesting that one particular view is the whole answer to the problems of the Christian life. Sometimes the books are at fault, but sometimes it is the readers who are ready, for

* OM Tapes, CDs available from: Operation Mobilisation, PO Box 17, Bromley, Kent, England BR1 3JP, e-mail: www.om.org/tapes.htm, www.georgeverwer.com

their own comfort, to commit themselves to some extreme, grossly oversimplified view of Christian living. This can lead to a damaging form of super-spirituality, which makes people very hard to win because of the strength and narrowness of their views on what is correct. Similar, though less dogmatic, is a kind of false idealism which some people have about the nature of the world of missions, refusing to recognize and finally being deeply shocked by the reality of the weakness, heartache and error which can be present in this type of work. Sometimes of course the opposite can be the problem, with Christians becoming so infected by the spirit of cynicism in the world, that they find it hard to take anyone on trust.

Loyalty normally involves some form of submission and must work both ways. In an age when obedience to parents has been weakened, another difficulty in building loyalty in the task of world evangelism, is that many find taking orders of any kind from a leader very difficult. There is a kind of pride in the defense of supposed liberty. In some cases this can be the leader's fault. I know that I find it very hard to be gentle when giving direction, particularly when I have to work in a second language. There is a need to learn submission without becoming cultic or manipulative. There is also a need to learn how to work with a team of people.

The building of loyalty and teamwork for the cause of world evangelism is a major challenge for leaders today, but there are other tough realities which leaders and potential leaders will have to face up to about the world.

They will have to accept the harsh reality of suffering in the world without minimizing it or disguising it with simplistic clichés. Leaders should be able to face up to the reality of a suffering world in which Christians of different ethnic groups are capable of involvement in the massacre of one another. We know that God can bring healing from these things but we must not minimize their impact on people, or pretend that they do not affect us. In his book, *From Tragedy to Triumph*, Frank Retief, a leader within the South

African church, has written about the experience of his congregation in coming to terms with the murder of some of their members and the traumatization of many more when gunmen burst into a church service, opened fire on them and lobbed a hand grenade among the people. He says:

There is an unspoken feeling among Christians that, if there is to be suffering, it should be bearable and that we should not experience the same horror that unbelievers do. The truth of the matter is that we are often exposed to the same depth of suffering. Our sufferings are not always reasonable. In fact, they sometimes appear to be more than we can bear. Grief and sorrow overwhelm us and we feel as though we are sinking. This is a plain fact of human experience in this world.

Many people have been helped in this area through C. S. Lewis' books, *Mere Christianity* and *The Problem of Pain*. Many have come to know Christ through these books and if we are visionary leaders, we should be distributing such books.

Leaders must also have the courage to face up to the complexities and divisions within the church and on the mission field. The church is divided and this situation isn't going to change very much. Individual churches, organizations or even whole towns may unite, but not the whole church. Even projects that might be expected to unite us, such as AD 2000, are opposed by many and seem to cause disunity. History shows that much of church growth has taken place in the midst of tension and disunity. Let us admit the truth of this situation. Young people especially want this kind of openness from their leaders. There needs to be a greater reality in the church and this will help to break the chains of legalism which are so detrimental to building the kingdom. A naïve view of the degree of unity within the church sometimes results from a failure to appreciate the extreme complexity of the church and the society within which it exists. Operation Mobilisation is a large complex organization beyond my personal understanding and that is why

it is run by a team of leaders, hopefully under the direction of the Holy Spirit. You can be sure there will still be lots of human folly.

Leaders should be able to face up to the power of money, not just in worldly affairs, but in Christian ministry as well. There are many good books about this, but let me just say that a realistic view of wealth and the ability to handle it and make use of it in all its power in the affairs of God's kingdom, is essential for a leader in missions work.

Sexual immorality is an area of great danger for spiritual leaders. Of course everyone is subject to temptation in this area and nobody doubts its power, but I am amazed at how many leaders in the church and missions have had their ministries ruined by sexual immorality. All leaders are targets of the enemy. It is one of his more proven darts and many will face subtle attacks on their minds and perhaps their marriages.

From my earliest years, influenced by Billy Graham's boldness on this subject, I have also spoken out clearly from God's Word on this subject. Again and again we have taken young, potential leaders to verses like 2 Timothy 2:22, *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

We have been able to distribute millions of books on this subject and thousands have written or testified how they have been helped. Last year, when a book called, *When Good Men Are Tempted*, by Bill Perkins came into my hands, I realized it was spiritual dynamite and we flooded it across the world. We know God is using it. Lois Mowday's book, *The Snare*, is in some ways even more important, especially for people in ministry.

As leaders we must be acutely aware of the frustrations that come from the limitations of our own weaknesses and humanness, as well as those of the people with whom we are working. Sometimes I feel as though I am driving a brand new Mercedes Benz down a German

autobahn at 15 miles per hour. As someone who believes in the importance of relationships and the empowering of other people, I have to recognize that I may not be able to go at the speed I want to as a leader. People of passion and purpose have to accept that their own and other peoples' vulnerability needs to be recognized and taken into account. There may be times when leaders need to move quickly, to be strong and firm with people, but there are other times when we must slow down, pull back and wait upon the Lord and often his people as well. Without this, even at a slow pace, we may end up on the wrong road or off the road in a ditch!

As I have run this marathon race every day for over forty-four years, I have especially been amazed by the harshness and yet often the subtleties of pride in its many forms. Even blatant arrogance is not so uncommon among those in leadership. How wonderful it is when people honestly confess this! Surely it is one of the doorways to reality and revival. My own struggle in handling criticism reveals things in my own heart which I have not liked having to face. For all of us it will be a lifelong battle.

The last harsh reality I want to mention here, for the particular attention of mission leaders, is that of the reality of the lostness of humankind. The full nature of that lostness may remain a mystery to us, but it must continue to be a major motivator for all those involved in mission work. John Piper, in his wonderful book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, at the end of a chapter in which he closely argues from the Bible for "the supremacy of Christ as the conscious focus of all saving faith," says:

So I affirm again that the contemporary abandonment of the universal necessity of hearing the gospel for salvation does indeed cut a nerve in missionary motivation. I say

* Taken from: *Let the Nations Be Glad* by John Piper. IVP. Used with permission.

“a nerve” rather than “the nerve” because I agree that the universal lostness of man is not the only focus for missionary motivation. Arching over it is the great goal of bringing glory to Christ.*

Let us regularly remind ourselves of John 14:6: Jesus said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”

Balance in the life of a leader

In the face of all these harsh realities it is difficult to maintain the essential biblical balance which is the mark of the Spirit-filled leader. Over the years I have taught much about balance. In one of my old Bibles I have listed thirty pairs of opposites where I have urged the need for balance in the effective Christian life; there are many more. I would like to mention seven areas where balance is of relevance to Christian leaders who are working to fulfil the Great Commission.

1. First is the *balance between faith and common sense*. Often leaders are called upon to demonstrate reckless and daring faith, to take risks. The history of missions is full of stories of leaders such as Amy Carmichael, Hudson Taylor and Jim Elliot. Of course, when the Spirit of God encourages leaders to take great steps of faith, then they have to move, and those who follow them need to try to move with them. But there has to be understanding on the leaders' part as well. Leaders need to grasp the fact that they fire others up and pass on their expectations to them. For this reason they need to be aware of their responsibility to maintain realistic aims and perhaps even develop a little common-sense scepticism about what is possible. Young leaders, in particular, need to be clear that the apparent reckless faith of the giants in missions history has often come after years of experience and indeed after many earlier mistakes. I am convinced that many of the Christian biographies are not totally honest, as they leave out the sins and failures of the great leaders of yesteryear. As A. W. Tozer said:

In our constant struggle to believe we are likely to overlook the simple fact that a bit of healthy disbelief is sometimes as needful as faith to the welfare of our souls. I go further and say that we would do well to cultivate a reverent scepticism. It will keep us out of a thousand bogs and quagmires where others who lack it sometimes find themselves. It is no sin to doubt something but it may be fatal to believe everything.

(The Root of the Righteous)

2. The *balance between discipline and liberty*. You may quote Galatians 5:13 to show that we are called to liberty and I would agree with you, but in the same verse, we are also called to serve one another. Where there are rules, there must be some restriction of freedom, but rules are also a way of showing that we want to practice love among ourselves. Another way of looking at a rule is to see it as an exhortation with added strength. After all, grace minus discipline can lead to disgrace. Leaders, with their overview of an area of the Lord's work, may be inclined to overemphasize the importance of rules. An awareness of the strength of the opposing voices of liberalism, in the wider world, may encourage them to do this. But it may also be that the pride of a leader is tied up with the way in which others put his or her decisions and rules into practice. It may well be that they are right in what they decide but wrong in their method of communication and in their attitude to the people concerned. Those of us with a strong temperament and strong convictions often come across in a far more offensive way than we realize.

3. Closely linked with this is the need for a *balance between authority and fellowship*. There are striking stories, from the history of missions, of the powerful authority of mission leaders. Both William Booth and C. T. Studd asked members of their own families to leave the movements they were running because of a perceived failure to follow the direction of the leader. I believe that today, as well as

the need for strong leaders, there is also a need for fellowships to be involved in exercising authority. In addition to those who make executive decisions, there must be those who exhort, correct and challenge and there should be checks and balances against the power of a strong leader. In many missions organizations this function is performed by a board of trustees or their equivalent. History and current events show that God uses a wide range of leadership structures, styles and methods.

4. *Determining priorities* is a constant challenge for leaders. There are so many demands on us that careful use of time is essential. Some of the important balances, which have to be maintained, are between time alone and time with others; between time with family and time with non-family; between work and rest; between work and play; between prayer and Bible study and between witnessing to non-believers and helping believers. Temperament plays a big part in achieving this balance. No two leaders or their jobs are identical. A balance in the use of time needs to be worked out in the context of a particular leader's own situation. People who aren't leaders should also be concerned to see this kind of balance in the life of their leaders and should encourage it by not having unrealistic expectations which put unnecessary pressure on them. Love and teamwork must be emphasized. We will be working on this area for the rest of our lives.

5. Leaders are expected to be *decisive and firm* but there also needs to be a balance between these qualities and those of *gentleness and brokenness*. Brokenness speaks louder than endless work; it cannot be faked. It means taking the sinner's place, admitting wrong, being honest about false motivation and confessing wrong to others. This is not the same thing as failing to take any action because of fear of causing trouble. Indeed an essential part of the leaders' equipment is the ability to stand firm against intimidation. Some people are very gifted at saying things that intimidate others and making them feel inferior. One of the verses that helps us stand against this is

2 Timothy 1:7: *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

Some people have misunderstood the message of brokenness and have consequently developed an unhealthy understanding of themselves and their own personality—a low sense of their self-worth. Such people will find it hard to be missionary leaders and may even have difficulty in their own country in being effective disciples and missions mobilizers. Leaders will always make waves and need the strength to stand against the intimidation that may result, but they need to do it in combination with a willingness to deal openly, honestly and lovingly with the consequences. For the past thirty years, in our own ministry, we have seen God use the message of David Seamands, especially through his book, *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, which has helped many people in this particular struggle.

6. Balance in the area of *doctrine* is important for the leader. Dr. Francis Schaeffer and Dr. John Stott have helped me to learn to love purity of Christian doctrine. A. W. Tozer, and others like him, have taught me to value the daily experience of the presence of God. We need both emphases and they will always be in dynamic tension—a balance between life and doctrine. However, doctrine needs to be distinguished from personal convictions and ideals. Many leaders are in a certain position because of a powerful personal conviction that some particular task needs doing or some point needs making. There is nothing wrong with this, but there is a need to recognize the fine line which separates major doctrines all of us need to believe, and other areas where there is room—or should be—for disagreement. Sadly, many denominations and their leaders are intimidated by interdenominational cooperation because it demands flexibility in their convictions and ideals even though it would not threaten essential Christian doctrine. This kind of attitude is brought about by isolation and can be broken down by bringing people from different backgrounds together to pray and make decisions. Where

there are genuine doctrinal differences, then of course these need to be respected. Often, however, there will be opportunities for loving compromise, where personal or organizational principles and ideals are concerned, or at least the chance to agree to disagree, while at the same time pressing on together.

7. Finally, leaders need a *balanced view of God*. I love this beautifully balanced view of God that A. W. Tozer gives:

The fellowship of God is delightful beyond all telling. He communes with his redeemed ones in an easy and uninhibited fellowship that is restful and healing to the soul. He is not sensitive nor selfish nor temperamental. What he is today we shall find him tomorrow and the next day and next year. He is not hard to please though he may be hard to satisfy. He is quick to mark every simple effort to please him. We please him most not by frantically trying to make ourselves good but by throwing ourselves into his arms with all our imperfections and believing that he understands everything and loves us still (*The Root of the Righteous*).

A picture of a missions leader

There are many hard words in this chapter and I would like to conclude by giving a picture of the spiritual leader in missions work and by reminding us of the resources available to enable this picture to be developed. It is clear, from what I have already said, that the leader in Christian missions is someone controlled by the Holy Spirit, not just in the emotions and the inner, personal spiritual life, but also in the details of daily life and especially in the matter of missionary strategy. It is someone who is able to build loyalty among the members of the body of Christ for the task of world evangelism in the face of strongly opposing forces. It is also someone who has the balance of the Spirit in the areas spoken about above.

To complete the picture I want to briefly mention six further qualities. A leader in the world of missions is someone who has:

A vision—a powerful sense of what needs to be done and

the initiative to take hold of it and work towards its completion. J. Oswald Sanders shows how many of the pioneer missionaries were people of powerful vision.

Carey was seeing the whole world on the map while his fellow preachers were preoccupied with their own little parishes. Henry Martyn saw India, Persia and Arabia—a vision of the Muslim world—while the church at home was engrossed in its petty theological squabbles. Of A.B. Simpson his contemporaries said, “His life-work seemed to be to push on alone, where his fellows had seen nothing to explore.”

I shall always remember, many years ago, climbing a mountain in Scotland, listening to a tape by Dr. John Stott on leadership, in which he pointed out the importance of vision. His great example was the marvelous story of Wilberforce; I’ll never forget it.

Along with this type of vision goes the *sensitivity and understanding* which has regard for the positions and feelings of the others who are involved in the fulfillment of the vision, whether it is something huge, like the “Acts 13 breakthrough” vision, or something much smaller, like the sending of a single missionary by a small church.

Leaders should consider and develop an understanding of their own nature and feelings and the particular character of their own leadership. There are no simple rules about which type of person can become a leader. It may not be clear to begin with who is going to be an effective leader—some people develop slowly into the role and may not look like leaders at first. It isn’t only choleric and talkative people who fill these roles; quiet and reserved people can be great leaders. Indeed James 1:19 tells us to be slow to speak. Different character types are needed for leadership because different types of leaders are needed: those who pioneer work and those who consolidate it being just two of them. An understanding of these matters will enable leaders to see their role in its broad context and to understand how it impacts others. We need to remember the

huge range of leadership types needed in the whole body of Christ. In one sense, everyone needs some basic leadership skills; this is especially true in the present age of so many single parents.

As leaders, we should be *people of prayer*. It is hard to put into words how strongly I feel about this. It is so clear in God's Word and most leaders agree and pay at least lip-service to it—but where are those who make this a practical reality in their daily lives? Perhaps the most famous book challenging us on all this is *Power Through Prayer*, by E. M. Bounds.

We should also be *encouragers of people*. We should encourage, in others, a high view of the sovereignty of God. We should encourage high standards in the details of everyday Christian life and work: the courage to rebuke in love; to give compliments; to maintain a sense of humor; in the quality of work done; in delegation; in follow-up; in keeping others informed and in being systematic and organized. The bigger an organization the more complex the challenge.

I have told young leaders that every word of correction must be preceded by many words of affirmation and encouragement. Even a phone call or letter of encouragement can be a huge blessing to people in the midst of the battle.

As leaders in mission work we need to be *committed to high standards in communication*. Much of this will be within the organization in which we work but, most importantly, we should be communicating the needs of the world to the church. Clear communication on the prohibited subject of money is vital if visions are going to be fulfilled.

I have had struggles writing this chapter because I find it hard to express what is burning in my heart, especially as there are already so many good books on leadership available. Hopefully my final point will get you into some of these books:

A leader needs to be *a reader*. I hope that you are reading God's Word along with powerful Christian books and that you will go on

from there to discover a wide range of books, magazines, tapes, and videos, including some truly great films.

There are a large number of books on leadership and leaders should be using them. However, we should not only be reading Christian books, but a whole range of other books and magazines.

It's a risky road because there is a lot of rubbish out there, but as leaders we must choose this road, there is no other biblical way.

I hope that what I have shared here will whet your appetite to study some of the great books on leadership. Since I began to write this book, *Future Leader*, written by an OM leader, has been published and I urge you to read it, along with the following titles.

Suggested reading

Pollard, William C., *Soul of the Firm* (Zondervan).

Thomas, Vivian, *Future Leader* (Authentic Media).

Sanders, J. Oswald, *Spiritual Leadership* (Authentic Media).

Marshall, Tom, *Understanding Leadership* (Sovereign).

Beasley-Murray, Paul, *Dynamic Leadership* (Monarch Books).

Beasley-Murray, Paul, *A Call to Excellence* (Hodder and Stoughton).

Bennett, David W., *Leadership Images from the New Testament* (OM Publishing).

Maxwell, Dr. John C., *Developing the Leaders Around You* (Word Publishing).

Maxwell, Dr. John C., *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* (Word Publishing).

Books referred

Hodges, H. A., (Foreword), *Unseen Warfare* (Mowbray).

Tozer, A. W., *Leaning into the Wind* (Authentic Media)

Tozer, A. W., *The Root of the Righteous* (Christian Publications).

Shallis, Ralph, *From Now On* (Authentic Media).

Retief, Frank, *From Tragedy to Triumph* (Nelson Word Ltd).

Lewis, C. S., *The Problem of Pain* (Fount).

Lewis, C. S., *Mere Christianity* (Fount).

Perkins, Bill, *When Good Men Are Tempted* (Zondervan).

Mowday, Lois, *The Snare* (Alpha).

Piper, John, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (IVP).

Seamands, David, *Healing for Damaged Emotions* (Alpha).

Bounds, E. M., *Power Through Prayer* (Moody).