

Mobilizing the Local Church for World Missions

By George Miley

Announcer:

This morning, we're privileged to have with us George Miley, who comes to share with us the burden that's on his heart for mobilizing the local church. George is a graduate of Grace Theological Seminary, and he spent five years with Operation Mobilization in India, after which he spent 15 years as director of the two ships for OM and since that time, he and his wife have been ministering around the world in some 55 countries. And as a result of all that, he really has felt a burden to see the local church put into action for world missions. And at this point, he is based in San Diego with OM and is working with churches around the country to revitalize that element, helping people to grow in their drive for the Lord and their burdens through prayer and through revival. And he's going to share some of that with us this morning.

Miley:

You know, I have an almost overwhelming sense that I would feel a lot more comfortable, and you may feel a lot more comfortable if I could stand down there. So shall I do it? Shall I go for it? Already this week, we have been getting some tremendous challenges over our own lives. And what I'd like for us to do today and tomorrow, I can just hang on to that. Is that okay? Thank you so much. I appreciate that. What I'd like for us to do today and Tamara, is talk something about strategy. It is not enough to be dedicated and go someplace else. That's not enough. We have to know what it is that we actually want to do. I was with a group recently, and the

statement was made. We need to understand what it is we actually want to do in missions, lest we waste time and energy. And the response immediately come. How can you ever waste time and energy? I mean, if you're doing evangelism, any activity at all that is evangelism can't possibly be wasted time and energy. Now let me take you to the next step that will make me a lot more comfortable this morning, and that is it will make me a lot more comfortable if you will talk to me rather than me standing up here and pontificating.

I've got a feeling that the last thing you need is another lecture. So let me ask you a question, and this is no there's no right and wrong. You know, you don't get marked down if you get the wrong answer. You don't even have to agree with my answer. But how many would say would agree with that statement that any activity that can be categorized evangelism can never possibly be a waste of energy? Raise your hand. How many would agree with that statement? It's intimidating, isn't it? How many would not agree with that, that it's possible for activity to be evangelism and still be wasted energy and resources? Well, that's great. And then others are not sure and that's okay, too. On this side of the chapel, if there were one unsaved person and 100 people trying to evangelize that unsaved person, and over here, there were 100 unsaved people and one person trying to evangelize those hundred, and you came in the door and joined this group because your friends were here, would that be wasted effort? And the only point of that little story is to try to communicate the thought that strategy is important.

Now, if we have strategy and our spiritual lives are off target, then of course our strategy won't do us any good. But it's not enough to be dedicated. Let me give you one word that I am convinced should be a crucial word in the mythological vocabulary of every Christian, and that

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word is the word analysis. Analysis. And in the church, we have developed a subculture where we say certain words and think in certain ways. And too often that subculture that we have developed can mitigate against any analysis. Do you agree with that? Anybody disagree? If so, now is your chance to say so. I think that's a ridiculous statement, George. Good. Let's talk about it. Why is it let me ask you another question, see if I can get you to respond. Why is it that in the church this is my thesis we tend against analysis. Why is that? What are the dangers of analysis? What are the things that keep us from analyzing? Yeah,

Audience Member:

It can exclude the Holy Spirit... [inaudible]

Miley:

okay, good. It can exclude the Holy Spirit. What about the Holy Spirit? You know, you're talking about this technique and that technique and this strategy and that strategy.

Where's the Holy Spirit? Great question. Yeah, [inaudible response from audience member]

okay, good. Here are two vital points of view, aren't there? Here one person approaches the whole thing of strategy and says, look, we've got to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Audience Member:

We Didn't hear what she said.

Miley:

I'm sorry. She said that one of the reasons we don't analyze is we think the Holy Spirit should lead us, and therefore we tend not to analyze because really, we got to depend on the Holy Spirit. And what I'm saying is we desperately need both of these two points of view. [inaudible audience response] Yes, yes, yes, yes. That's right. It's sinful. We are analyzing rather than being led by the Holy Spirit. I'm going to get those two hands. Let me say something to stimulate a little bit more. This is another thesis on mine, my part. There is untold nonsense going on under the name of Christian activity. People saying they're led by the Holy Spirit. There's untold nonsense going on. Now, that's a radical statement, and if you want to shoot at that, go ahead. Yes. What did you want to say? [inaudible audience response] Okay, good. Yeah. It can lead to complication to analyze confrontation. Confrontation. Okay, good. It can lead to confrontation.

Tell me more about that. What kind of confrontation? Yeah, all right. Against the tradition. Now, this is really interesting. What do human beings prefer to do once a pattern of behavior is established. We prefer to perpetuate the pattern of behavior. You walk in this meeting now, this is a meeting in our culture and what do we do? We begin with a special number. We have prayer, we introduce the speaker. The speaker comes and speaks. That is a set pattern of behavior that is fairly predictable. And so we prefer to perpetuate activity. Now, is that necessarily bad? No, it's not necessarily bad to perpetuate activity. In fact, that's the essence of culture. Is it necessarily good? No. You see here is let me put myself here and let's accept that where I'm standing now is

a time reference point. Here I am in time 1900, 1950, 1850 wherever it is, and there is a certain environment around me, I initiate activity that is relevant to the environment around me. What then happens to that pattern of activity that I have begun? What happens? It gets copied, it gets repeated. It gets repeated. And we keep repeating this pattern of activity.

That is a good pattern of activity. But while I'm doing that, what is happening to the environment around me? It's changing. Now, that wasn't true so much in 1850 as it was in 1950 because we're living in an environment where there is accelerated change around us. So at some point our brother said back there that the problem with analysis is that it can become confrontational. At some point, what happens to the activity that back there was relevant? What happens to this activity that's just being repeated? It becomes irrelevant. Not that. So if it becomes irrelevant, what do many people say? If you stand up and say, hey, this activity is irrelevant, what do many people say? We've always done it that way. Even heavier. Give me something even heavier. They say something even heavier than that. Shall I tell you what it is? The Lord led us to do it this way. Ever hear that? Back in the beginning the Lord led in a certain way it was God that spoke that we should do it this way. Therefore, any thought that we should change is paramount to questioning the wisdom of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit led us back here.

You see the point. Now what we want to talk about today is the local church because this whole thing of strategy, we could have weeks on this. This is such exciting stuff that we could just keep going. But we got to stop, are going to stop by God's grace at 11:30. So we can't get going anymore on that side. But let's talk about the local church. Let me tell you who I am. I am a missionary that is not going back to the field. Now, the minute I say that you know what

happened when my wife and I came to the States? I'm originally from the States, I'm from Virginia. My wife is not from the States. She was born in Germany, but she didn't grow up in Germany. She grew up in England because she was born in Germany of Jewish parents. And as a little girl of seven, she escaped from Germany in 1939. Her parents died in the Holocaust. She grew up in England as a little Jewish girl, came to Christ through the Ministry of Billy Graham. But we didn't meet in England. We met in Belgium, but we weren't married in Belgium.

[laughter]

We were married in India. And so when I came back to the States, after being away for 20 years, I brought my foreign alien wife and we're living here. And when we came here, Hannah said to me, that's my wife's name. She said, George, did you remember when you said you were going to spend the rest of your life in India? I said yes. She said, do you remember when you said you're going to spend the rest of your life on the ship? I said yeah. Do you remember when you said you're going to spend the rest of your life in Germany? Because we were in Germany establishing an administrative base for the two ships? I said yes. She said, now, when people ask you how long you're going to stay in California, just don't say anything. [laughter] Having said that, we are missionaries that are not going back to the field. What do people say about missionaries that are not going back to the field? What do they say? Dropouts. What else? Giving up the ministry, setting your hand to the plow and turning back. What else do they say? Not really missionaries. What else do they say?

Out of the will of God. Out of the will of God. You know, in a meeting like this, somebody said they call you missionary statesmen. Anyway, we're not going back to the field. Why are we not

going back to the field? Let me tell you why. I so often see missions as a huge mountain. Here's the huge mountain, see? And that's missions. And God wants the mountain moved. How are we approaching moving the mountain? We are approaching it in this way. We have one brother or two or three brothers and sisters standing at the bottom of the mountain and they have teaspoons and they are working away to move the mountain, you see? So this brother just can you see him? He's working away to move the mountain. So we say, Brother, what are you doing trying to move this mountain? Lord's calling me to move this mountain. And so we say to him after a while, what is the most obvious thing that seems to pretty be obvious? Brother, you got this mountain here that you're moving, but you only got a teaspoon there. It looks like at least you get the big earth moving machinery in if you want to move this mountain.

And what does the brother say? Well, I just want to be faithful to the Lord. I just want to be faithful to the Lord here. Lord, call me here. I want to just be faithful. And so he's working away, trying to move this mountain with a teaspoon. And you can sit back and look. He's not going to be able to do it. Now, there are many people who should be out there with the teaspoon. Third are many people who should be. And God's leading in all of our lives is different. 20 years ago, to me, when I was in seminary, the only logical thing I could possibly think about doing was going to India. I couldn't conceive of anything else. I actually couldn't understand why everybody wasn't going to India. I honestly couldn't understand. I mean, if there's a road and the tree is blocking the road and there are nine people on one end trying to lift the tree and one person on the other end, and you really want to help, which end are you going to pick up? So, I mean, to me, missions. I just couldn't do anything other than going to missions.

Well, I took a map of the world and started asking myself, Where shall I go? I mean, I can't go everywhere. Lord, where do you want me to go? And it was almost as though the Lord said, Get some information. So I remember getting information about China. That was the biggest country in the world. Still is. One fifth to one fourth of the whole world's population is in China. Seems like to me that's where we should be targeting. But it was difficult to get into China in those days, and so I ended up in India, one 7th of the world's population. If you put India and China together, you get one third of the whole world. And then when I got to India, I just so fell in love with India. I just was going to spend the rest of my life in India. I remember one day walking across the Howard Bridge in Calcutta over the Hooghly River and thinking, I'm going to take my passport and tear it up and throw it in the river and become a sadhu, because I was convinced that somehow I can stay in India as a sadhu.

And I couldn't understand why everybody didn't want to go there. Now I have come to the point in my spiritual pilgrimage with the things that I have personally been exposed to, where the only thing that makes any sense to me is to be back with the sending church, because the answer to the mountain is the church. Why am I not going back to the field? Because I made a wonderful discovery. I discovered that world evangelization was not my job. I thought it was my job. Here I was, working very hard, trying to evangelize the world with my teaspoon, working away at the mountain, and slowly but surely, the understanding began to dawn on me. This is not my job. You know, I love to hear David Cummings, the president of Wycliffe, talk about this. You know what David said? World evangelization is a problem. Wycliffe has bought the problem, but it's not Wycliffe's problem. And so there's this huge problem out there. And you go out there and all

of a sudden you bought this big problem. You didn't need another problem. You got enough problems. Now all of a sudden you bought the problem. It's not your problem.

Whose problem is it? Whose problem is the fact that 50% of human beings living on planet earth are living behind cultural barriers from the gospel. Whose problem is that? Tell me. It's the church's problem. It's the church's problem. And unless the church moves, we are not going to see the mountain move. Now, when I say the church moves to finish the job of world evangelization, less than 1% of all Christians need to go as crosscultural church planners. So, you know, I'm not here trying to make you all missionaries. In fact, I'm totally relaxed about whether anybody in this room becomes a missionary. Have you ever heard we should close down the church and send everybody to the mission field? Ever hear that? That is a horrible idea. We should never do that. That would be an unmitigated disaster. That would set the work of world evangelization back, humanly speaking years, decades. If we send everybody to the mission field, we would have untold disaster if we did that. We shouldn't do that. Less than 1% of all Christians need to go as cross-cultural church planters. And we can complete the task of world evangelization. So we don't have to send everybody.

We don't even have to send the majority. We only have to send less than 1% of evangelical Christians alive today. See, here's my problem. My problem is I have worked too long with laypeople. You know, when you have a ship now just picture this. You have a ship and it's 10:00 Monday morning and the ship is going to sail. And so can you picture the ship? It's sitting there by the berth, and there's a tug at the bow and a tug at the stern. And there are men on the jetty ready to lift off the ropes from the bollards. And the pilot is up on the bridge and all the

Christians are on the key side waving goodbye. And the captain calls for the engines. And that telegram relays that call for the engines down in the engine room and down in the engine room they're engineers. At that point. At that point, you don't care whether the engineers know Hebrew and Greek. You just care whether or not they can turn on the engines. You know, when we first got Logos, we had a book exhibition on Logos. We didn't know where to put this book exhibition.

And some people on the ship figured out we can put it on the foredeck. And they actually made a tent to go over the foredeck. Who do you think it was that figured out how to put the book exhibition on the foredeck? Of course you don't know who was there, but do you think it was somebody who had been to seminary? I'm not against seminary. I don't want you to pick that up. But the people who figured that out were welders and professional seamen. They are the ones who figured it out. Then. Do you know what we had? We had two massive holds, cargo holds. And all the way down in the bottom of the hole there were the books. And we had to bring the books up with this very crude rope and pulley. We would be pulling the books up. And one of the engineers walked out there this engineer. If you told that engineer to come here and speak to you lot about missions, he wouldn't sleep the night before. But he's got a brain on him. His head is like a computer. And when he walks around, you can just see the calculations going around in his head.

And this engineer figured out, we can build some decks down in the ship and we can make a lift and we can buy an engine cheap and arrange it up here and do the electrical circuit so that we can push the buttons and we can devise. We can design and create and build a system for getting

those books up. What am I trying to communicate? The task of getting the gospel to the unreached people is a task that desperately needs the laity. Desperately needs the laity. We need the total giftedness in the body. There are different gifts. We are not going to evangelize the world with people who are only gifted to preach and teach. We need those people who are gifted to preach and teach, but they are only a part of the body. We need the whole body. Who is-

[audio cuts out and the recording ends]