

Seminar 1: Europeans: Unreachable or Simply Unreached?

By: Rick Bravine

[00:00:00.370]

My name is Rick Bravine, and I'm with a group called Greater Europe Mission. I've been here before, and great to see some people I've seen before, as well as make your acquaintance. Is that loud enough. Is it? Okay. Anyway, let's start with a word of prayer. Okay?

[00:00:17.830]

Father, thank you for this time that we give back to you as you've given it to us. May we see more of your heart as we look at some of the realities in the rest of this world. And may it bring you joy to see us together, as well as the opportunity for your Holy Spirit to guide and directed each life here. I ask this in the name of Jesus, your beautiful Son. Amen.

[00:00:47.370]

Some of you may have come to a seminar in the last year or two, and some of what you'll hear and see will be reminiscent of that. And there'll be some parts that I think will be a little bit new. As I said, my name is Rick Bravine. I've been with Greater Europe Mission for a long time and served the Lord myself in France for a little over 17 years with my wife and four children. But before I went to France, I did some other things, and the theme of what this week of God's glory and that we can rejoice in it and be real in it and really kind of stop and take the time to recognize what he's doing, not only here, but in significant ways all over this globe.

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And it brings him honor and glory as we recognize that and praise Him for it. And I hope that part of that will be done this hour. I know that what you just saw isn't all that great, and, oh, isn't that wonderful? Think of all those lost people and how the church seems to be growing in so many other parts of the world, so much faster. What's happening there? Let's just praise God. Well, we praise Him, yes, even in the midst of some of that darkness, because he is alive and well, and he's doing some wonderful things, some of which you'll see during this hour.

[00:02:09.840]

How many of are you from Europe? Let me ask you that. Oh, cool. Where are you from? (Student: My great grandparents are from Czechoslovakia.) Cool. Were you born there, though? Okay, that's what I'm kind of asking. Who's from Europe? Cool. That's good. Somebody else back here? Barcelona. Barcelona, Spain? Yes. Good. I've been to Barcelona, but I don't speak Spanish. Oh, too bad. I mean, that's okay. I'm partial. What can I say? I'm speaking for all of Europe with Greater Europe Mission, but at the same time, spending a little over 17 years there has marked me. And I love France. I love the French people. They drive me nuts. But then Americans drive me nuts too. So, I mean, all you have to do is get on freeways here, right?

[00:03:08.050]

Yes. Janelle, didn't you have your hand up. Oh, it was in back of you. Okay. Okay, very good. Yes. Somebody else back there? Holland. Holland. Holland. That's about it. Okay. Somebody else? Yes, from Sweden. Very good. Other Europeans? People born there and now here in North America. Very good. How many have visited Europe, whether on a ministry or vacation? Wow. A lot of you good. Different ministries. Some of you maybe can tell me what you thought or

what you observed when you were there in terms of, like, the religious level or spiritual level of the people. Some good, some bad, maybe some that was unexpected. Anyone? Yes. From all those hands. Yes.

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That's good. That's real good. We're working at making that or the Lord making a change through us. Yes. When I was in France, one of the things that the typical French church is between 30 and 50 people. That's a full-grown church, and that's an evangelical church preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And in France today, according to Patrick John Stone, who is the editor of Operation World, there are other sources, but that seems to be one of the most reliable.

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Currently today in France, about eight tenths of 1% are biblically Christian. A lot of cultural Christianity, like what we're seeing here in North America, people say, Oh, yeah, I'm a Christian. Well, do you go to church? Well, no, I don't do that. In European countries, they're just a couple of actually centuries ahead of us in terms of where they are, and it's so cultural. If they were born in France, well, then they're Catholic. Do they go to church? Do they pray to God? Do they worship Him? Do they know Him? The answer usually is no. What does he have to do with it anyway?

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I don't have time to tell all the stories that I could tell, but one guy I met in Northern France, he was assistant mayor, and I took a basketball team from Multnomah Bible College in Portland up

to this area, and we had some what they call friendly games, like machamicada. And with those friendly games, I got to meet some of the people who opened the doors, and they were the talents people, the mayor and so forth of a variety of cities. This guy, I can't remember what his name was, but he introduced himself something like [inaudible 00:05:58] As soon as I heard him or talked to him, he said, he mentioned his name and he said, and I want you to know that I'm number one, a Communist.

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After we talked a little bit, he told me, he said, you know, my mother has a hard time with the fact that I'm a Communist and I'm still a good Catholic. Oh, really? And of course, because being a Communist, he was a good atheist. And he really did tell me, he said, I don't see a problem with that. I can be a Communist and a good Christian, too. That kind of dichotomy is very normal there in Europe. And that's part of that humanistic, secular mindset. We'll get into that a little bit.

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Okay, I did want to mention a few things of myself. I'm originally from Chicago, went to university out there. Became a teacher at the high school level in the public schools in a suburb of Chicago. Saw God do some wonderful things among my students even though technically you're not supposed to talk religion or God. God opens up doors, and he did when I was teaching at Cicero Berwyn, which is our suburbs of Chicago.

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And that's a Cicero Berwyn, by the way, you've heard Al Capone, the name. That was his hometown. So, it's a nice place. Anyway, I did enjoy it. I really did. And God opened up doors among some of my students who actually did become believers and then went on into the ministry. But as I did that, I started feeling a real need to know more of the Scriptures. So, I came to this place, not Biola, but Talbot because I already had my degree and stayed there a few years. And the dean of the school right now, Dennis Dirks, he and I were classmates many, many years ago here on this campus. And my wife graduated from Biola. So, we have some kind of connections with all of you that are sitting here in this room today.

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And it was at Talbot that I saw on the bulletin a bulletin board, that's a bulletin board with pins or needles or thumbtacks, nothing electronic at that time like computers. And where I was first introduced to the reality of the needs in Europe. Now, I titled this Europeans Unreachable or Simply Unreached. There's a big difference between those two terms. What I hope you see and some of you already know and know that it's not that they're unreachable, but they haven't been reached. They haven't had somebody to tell them about who Jesus Christ really is and live that reality in front of them.

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And how is this possible in a cultural climate like Europe has? And the affluence that's there and even the Christian background. I mean, after all, the Reformation did take place there. And we're the recipients of some of those good things that took place during those years. Even the Apostle Paul had his feet on European soil. How can it be so? You saw the statistic up there. Overall, in a

general way, less than 1% of Europeans know Jesus Christ in a personal way today. I hope that for some of you that shocks you. For those of you that already know that I hope it's just an affirmation of the reality that they do need to hear. And we, as brothers and sisters in the Lord have, we have such a privilege of being able to go over there again, not under our own steam. But if God calls you, if God pushes you, maybe.

[00:09:48.750]

Dr. Peter Kuzmic, I met him at Denver Seminary several years ago. He's a Croatian and he started or began the Croatian Theological Seminary and he's also the chair at Gordon Conwell Seminary out east. And I met him at Denver Seminary when he was the speaker there. And one of the things that he talked about is the lostness of Europeans. And he's European. He said there's like 750,000,000 of us and over 500 million do not even own a Bible. And that's not just in the east, what used to be called Eastern Europe because they couldn't own a Bible. They're just so secularized. I know in France, with 60 million people, about 45 million do not have access or they just haven't taken the opportunity to get the Scriptures.

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One of the things that I did when I was in France was the music ministry. In fact, tomorrow I'm going to have a little seminar on reaching the French through music. And I'll talk more about this, but I'll give you a little one story that happened to me. I had the opportunity to sing on French army bases. Now, Americans don't get on French army bases, certainly not Americans who are going to sing about Jesus.

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But again, the Lord opened those doors, and I was on several of these bases. And I'll skip some of the details today. Tomorrow I'll get into a little bit more. But we had a luncheon with the general or the top dog there on this French army base and together with some of his lieutenants and so forth. And it was a long lunch, like about two and a half, 3 hours. But one of the things that the high brass said to us is, we noticed in the concert that you gave us yesterday, you seem to have a message. Can you explain what you said or what you did? I mean, the Lord just opened up those doors at the end of our conversation. The chaplain through whom I worked had brought Bibles for each one of them. There were a total of ten of them and he gave Bibles to each one. Seven out of the ten. It was the first time that they had actually held the Bible in their hands, and that was theirs.

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That's part of the reality. When you talk about a country where less than 1% know Jesus Christ again, are they unreachable or simply unreached? All of these men took that Bible and said, I'm going to read this. God's faithful and he's opening up those things. Yes, Dr. Peter Wagner, who is originally from California, I think he pushed the and you've heard the 1040 window, which is very true, a real need there in the Muslims speaking part of the world or the Muslim world. A couple of years ago he opened that up to include Europe and now calls it the 40 70 windows because the reality is so many Europeans do not know Jesus Christ. I'm going to give you a little. I better be careful with this video clip.

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Where it was made in Brussels, Belgium, and originally in French, so you'll hear the French in the background, but it has some English overdub so that we can understand it here. And it's questions like the significance of God or the Church and that kind of thing. And they themselves, the Europeans, are telling us what they feel, not telling you and me in the original cut, obviously, but allowing us to know from their perspective why they believe or don't believe. And then we'll have some questions and answers after that. Okay, now, do I have the right one here? What's that doing up there? Now? That's one. And now I did that, and then I started this one. Is it going? Cool.

[00:14:16.430]

[Shows clip: My name is Pascal Messier. I'm 36 years old and have lived in Brussels for about 30 years. I've been a professional fashion photographer for about ten years now. I have a degree from the Brussels Academy of Fine Arts, considering sculpture, painting, and photography. After I received my diploma, I decided to specialize in fashion photography. This kind of photography allows for more creativity. So, it's really a choice that allows me to explore my interest in the arts and capitalize on them commercially. I'm also married. I have two adorable children, two beautiful little boys, and I live very close to my studio, only about a half mile away from here. It's nice. It allows me enough time for both my work and my family.

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The basic question and what we are taught as children is really true. Has God really spoken to us? Has the God that we speak of and who spoke via His Son Jesus Christ, did really exist? One is forever unsettled by these questions. Most of us have been told all of this with certainty when

we are children. However, once we are adults and have gained some distance from our upbringing, we can decide for ourselves and personally, I am forever on the fence about this. Sometimes I'm really touched by something, and I say, okay, I believe at all I'm willing to align myself with the Christian faith. Then there are other times I am more influenced by science or other belief systems which are more radical.

[00:16:21.110]

What do you believe in and what do you put your hope? I believe in myself. In myself? That's quite a lot already. I believe in love, riches, money, and power that's it. In happiness. In having a family. In peace. I believe in the Catholic Church. I believe in passion, in work, in perseverance and in human will. Me? I believe in nature, you know, flowers, countryside, living creatures, etc. I think there are some people who simply have faith. But I think things are more complex today. The questions of life are very complex. Technology has made our lives complex. No one accepts the resurrection anymore. Although it may be possible, people today have too much information, causes them to ask questions, to doubt the Church, to doubt the works of Christ, to doubt everything. It's only logical, even scientists shown us certain things. Television has communicated other ideas.

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The archaeologists, Bible translators they've shown us that the words of Christ were not always as we thought. So, all these questions mean people have doubts, about the Gospels, about the life of Christ, et cetera. This creates anxiety at all levels. I think that people of today don't go to church, don't give any time for religion, because their lives is toxic with daily obligations and

materialism, especially in Belgium, in Europe in general, especially in Belgium, people are obsessed with their image, their external image. Not necessarily the inside beauty of a person, but people are impressed by the exterior. Money, power, comfort, anything luxurious. That's what becomes important. And it takes up all of their time, really. When they finally have the time to think of something spiritual, they're too tired, or their time is simply run out. It's already tomorrow one day following the next, and life passes by. When the day comes with their conscience troubles them, it's too late. Or it's just because they've crumbled under stress or had a heart attack.

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With most of the people that you meet, if you start to ask about their spiritual interest, they'll change the subject, or their attitude will change. But it's not the sort of thing you talk about at a dinner party, or when you're out with friends. It's not the sort of thing you bring up. People would be shocked. Does religious faith have a place in today's society? No, I don't think so. I think that religious people are too showy, more concerned with looking right. I don't think Europeans expect much of the church. It's there and that's it. They don't believe, I don't think that the Church will save them or help them, support them, or offer them comfort, or anything else they need, for that matter.

[00:20:16.310]

There's something interesting and helpful in each religion for making our way through life. That's what interests Pascal right now, and what we want to do as a couple, to take different pieces from each belief and put it together in a way that fits our lifestyle and teach this to our

children. We don't want to blindly follow something without investigating for ourselves, be it the Christian religion or any other faith. So, we're going to start at the catechism we receive as children, keep the good things, and let our faith evolve as [inaudible 00:20:49] because in my opinion, Christianity hasn't much to offer, at least not in Europe, in any case. We have to try to do things ourselves, gently, slowly. But it has to be a personal confession.

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I have a friend, someone I've known a long time, who became a Christian, a biblical Christian, one who really bases her life on the Bible. But it's your certainty in God, the God of being birthed in Christ that impresses me. She really tries to apply the Bible and it's changed her life very positively. I think it's a good thing, but you have to be careful, careful not to let them take over your whole life. What could the Church do to attract believers? Well, I think that you have to look and see what interests' people today, because each generation changes everything changes the culture, lifestyle, no problems. Be ready to change. You know, 100 years ago, it didn't take much for people to believe, but today, the young people are different. Everything is different. The mentality way of life, society, customs, everything has to start over each time. You have to find things that are relevant to this generation, whatever it is. Like things that relate to their daily lives.

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What did the Church do to attract believers? Be more appealing, maybe a little bit of show, something more interesting about beat music, something like that. As for the Church, everything needs to change. It's outdated on every level. It's awful. So do something completely opposite,

like a big show visit perhaps more my style, being a fashion photographer. Maybe do something like out of a [inaudible 00:23:00] film spectacular. Have special costumes to create. Create a really exciting ceremony, but in a completely different language. That's the key. The language would have to be richer.

[00:23:13.590]

What's the obstacle which keeps you from accepting Jesus Christ as your savior? If there is a God. What do you mean is tolerant? With all this going on in the world today, I can't believe God would permit all that. Makes it hard to believe, preach peace and see what's happening in the world today. Hard to accept a personal savior. I don't think that I need one today or ever will need one. When my life is over, it's over. I don't believe in heaven. That would be a big surprise.

[00:23:46.060]

What is the obstacle which keeps you from accepting Jesus Christ as your savior? I don't have an obstacle. If there were such a thing as a savior, I would accept whoever came along. I guess I don't have a religion because I don't really have the means to know about different religions, to test or analyze belief systems. I guess I became an atheist and just never asked questions about all that. I don't really believe in anything. Faith just isn't possible for me because I'm not sure there's the obstacle. I don't have a certainty and I don't see how I can get.]

[00:24:50.450]

(Rick Bravine: You can't hear me. That's one thing. Whoa, this is really a hot mic.) How do you feel or what did you feel when you heard what you heard, and you saw what you saw? I'm not

asking what you heard, because I know, I'm not asking what you heard, but how did you feel when you heard those people give those responses? Really, honestly? Tell me. Yes. And how did that make you feel? Oh, cool. I've got an application with your name on it. Okay. I'm sorry. Yes.

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Now, how did that make you feel when you heard that? I'm trying to get under the service a little bit here. So how did you feel about that? I know I'm pressing. You've felt feeling that's descriptive. I'm sorry. Would you say that you may be felt a little bit frustrated? Okay. Maybe even a little anger, like no. Okay. All right. Yes. Thank you. Did you all hear that? No. Little louder. It felt like a confirmation of what you already knew about Europe and you being European. Yeah. Okay. So, an affirmation of what you already knew. Probably not real positive, but just there. Okay.

[00:27:30.570]

Another one. Yes. Sadness. Okay. And next to you. Disarmed, just pretty helpless. Okay. When you speak up loudly so everybody can hear you. Yes. Now I'll get to you guys, too. Yeah. That kind of affirms, what the lady said, right? She said people don't think about it until it's too late. Over here? Yes. Back there. Disappointed. Good.

[00:29:07.970]

I'll just throw in the parenthesis. Now, I'll ask the rest of you to respond to that. When I came back from France, I didn't want to be critical, like a missionary coming back and seeing all the things that are wrong here, because I really believe God has blessed us and allowed us to

influence the rest of the world for him, and it's both a responsibility and a privilege. But I felt to a degree that's what I was seeing happen here in North America, what happened in Europe is happening here. The difference is that it took them, like, 4500 years, and we're doing it in decades, not in centuries, because everything moves so quickly. And that's scary.

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Yes. Who else had a feeling? Well, you all have feelings. I know, but I mean, with regard to what you were seeing. Who was really reaching out to them, let me ask this question? Okay. So, you're feeling what would it be like a desire to help if there was a way. Okay. Somebody else here. Yes. Depressed. Depressed. Okay. Do you want to amplify that a little bit? Yeah. It is scary. Now, how do we reach people like that? Now just kind of turn your thinking around. You've shared some of your feelings. You saw what you saw. You heard what you heard. They said it. It wasn't scripted. Now, recognizing that the frustration, the hopelessness, the depression, the affirmation of what I've already known, being afraid or scared of the future for ourselves too, how do you reach people like that?

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Yes. Okay. Other ways or amplified on that? Yes. Back there. How do you do that? You had a go ahead. I think it's right. Okay. Yes. Okay. So, the distribution of Bible is just so that they have access to them. Yes. Okay. Now, how does that happen? Okay. We're getting closer. Okay. Yes. Okay. So, being a witness, that's visible, right? Okay. Yes. Back there. Okay. So how do you get to the place where you can give them that biblical evidence and the difference that it makes in a life and stuff like that. Okay. Yes. What? Free seminars. Okay. That's one thing it is. Okay.

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How do you get in a person's trust? You have to get to know them, which means your friend, you're building. That's right. It's true that we've got all these things, and I've heard you, and none of them are bad. They're good. Listen to them, see where they are, start at the level and all of that. But all of that is the background for building a relationship, where trust is part of that outcome of that relationship. And then they're ready to hear one of the things that actually greater your mission and other mission agencies that are in Europe are doing is that very thing. We have a program, and this is a little promo, but not really, because we're not having it this year.

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But to give you an idea of what I'm talking about when I talk about relationships, some of you are aware of the nuclear disaster that took place in Belarus, in Russia, back in the late eighties, the nuclear fallout. Chernobyl. That's a Chernobyl. Well, yes, but then there were a lot of nuclear fallout happened in Belarus, and the people there basically like they were little kids, or actually, some of them were conceived, but not born yet. But because of that nuclear fallout, they ended up having/contracting cancer or having cancer.

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And what Greater Europe Mission has done for the last six years, working through a secular agency, we were able to connect with some of these young people who are now your age, and then sponsor them, about 20 of them, to camp. The last one has been in Sweden, torch bearers camp, which is an English work, Ian Thomas and so forth, being around for a long time, and

camps, if any of you work in camps, they always need maintenance and all the rest. Well, our idea was to build or to have a program, not for a program's sake, but that would facilitate the building of relationships in order to express our faith. And so, we would get about 20 North American young people who were able to raise some support and go over to Sweden for about two and a half weeks, and we would find 20 Belarus people, young people who had cancer, bring them over who were not believers, bring them over to work at this camp.

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And shoulder by shoulder, shoulder to shoulder, nothing was said about preaching at them and things like that. For about the first three or four or five days, it was just sweating together, digging a ditch, or repairing a roof or painting the side of a building at this camp in Sweden. And after a couple of days, without anything else happening, the Belarusian people, young people, typically said, what are you doing here? you know through interpretation, because they didn't know English and we didn't know Russian, but there was a little bit going on. But then we had some interpreters for some of the deeper conversations, but they would basically come to the conclusion that they were, I know why I'm here, I got a free ticket here, this is fun for me, but what are you as a North American young person doing here, having to raise your own money, and all you're doing is sweating with me, painting this roof or repairing this roof at this camp?

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That gave us a clue that they were open, and this is what we are looking for. And then with the person that you've been working with for three or four days, then you tell them why you're there, because the relationship has begun. What's happened over these last five or six years is that

typically 13 to 15 of this group become biblical believers, and a new church has been planted in the city from which they come. This is the work of God. He is creative. It's not grand and spectacular. It's not a Billy Graham Crusade with 30,000 people. It's just one to one and Greater Europe Mission and other groups that are working among Europeans work this way.

[00:37:45.030]

Because think of your own conversion experience. It doesn't mean that the Billy Graham Crusades aren't good, and God doesn't use them. He does. But that's one link in a chain, and usually the bottom line. The bottom line, somewhere along that process, you're going to see a relationship that then helps a person come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. I grew up in Chicago. Like I said, I grew up as a kind of a dysfunctional Roman Catholic. And then a fellow from my high school, a large high school, public high school in Chicago, invited me to a curious little church on the northwest side of Chicago called the North Side Gospel Center, where AWANA youth association started. And some of you might be familiar with the Awana program. And he invited me to come as a teenager there. And week after week I heard the gospel, but it was Doc Latham, the guy, the pastor who started it, and Art Rorheim, who was the youth pastor at that time. When I tell people of my own conversion experience, the bottom line is they showed me the love of Jesus through friendship and opened the path so that I could take that step into a saving knowledge of Christ.

[00:39:02.160]

It was about relationship, and God used that relationship. I mentioned Dr. Peter Kuzmic when I first started, the prof at Gordon Conwell and the Chair of Intercultural Studies there, and also Croatian who started the Croatian Theological Seminary.

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One of the things that he said during his time at Denver was that there was a group of Western Christian leaders and Eastern Christian leaders that got together talking about this several years ago. How can we in the west who have the resources, help those in the east who don't have the resources but have the open heart and want to reach their own countries and former Eastern bloc of Europe. And he said at the time, typically what the North Americans came up with was the three M, he called it. They told the Western Christian leaders, told the Eastern Christian leaders, we have to think about money, management, and methods. The three M's.

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Now, none of those things are bad. If Dr. Kuzmic started a seminary, he had to think about money because he had to finance it some way. It had to be financed, there had to be management, and there had to be methods. None of those are wrong. But he said the Eastern European Christian leaders looked at the Western leaders and said, put those things aside. Send us people who are authentic, who live real Christian lives.

[00:40:43.530]

Multnomah Bible College in Portland, Oregon. I'm familiar with that school because I worked with it a little bit. It wasn't on staff or anything, but we did some stuff in basketball evangelism

and stuff. Dr. John Mitchell was one of the founders of Multnomah and my father-in-law worked with him over a period of time and did recordings and radio messages. One of the things that Dr. Mitchell was fond of saying is, do you love the Savior? Do you love the Savior? It gets down to that relationship that we have with the Lord, doesn't it? When Dr. Kuzmic is talking about authentic Christianity, he's really talking about an outworking of the relationship that you and I have with our Lord and that that's going to affect the people around us.

[00:41:29.800]

Now, this isn't simplistic, but what it is, is going back to the basics. We talk about Europe. I've seen this video literally hundreds of times. When that middle-aged lady looks at the camera and says, I don't need a Savior. I never have and I never will, it still affects me. I hope it affects you too, in the right way, because there is an answer that she needs to hear, and it is based on the relationship that she doesn't have today or now. Maybe she does now, I don't know. But at the time of the filming, she didn't have a relationship with the living God like you and I do.

[00:42:13.690]

And what a privilege we have to influence that continent that is so strategic for world evangelism. Okay, my time is up now. I really thank you for coming. Any last-minute question or yes when that was made? About twelve years ago. And I do have some copies if anybody would like, they're VHS, though. Yeah, on the table are some magazines or literature of what's happening in Europe. And also, if you want to see more of that first video that I showed, you can take a card there, fill it out, and we'll send you a video on it. Thank you for coming and pray for Europe. Oh, and I do want to invite you to if you're interested in music and stuff like that,

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tomorrow's session that I have reaching the French through music at 04:00 at Calvary Chapel.

And we've got a booth that we'd love to talk with you about.