

A walk with Mr O (10)

I really want to serve the Lord!

Mr O, I really want to serve the Lord. But, to be honest, I don't know where to begin.

And in answering you I don't know where to begin either! But I am immensely encouraged that you want to talk about the subject. There are so many people in our churches who never mention it.

Would you prefer that we leave it for now, and talk about something else?

No, no. I think I can say something useful off the cuff. I'm going to suggest that you start by remembering four words: 'Please hold my hand.'

You've lost me, Mr O, and not for the first time!

I'm thinking about our Lord's experience in Gethsemane. As He entered the darkness of that terrible agony He said to Peter, James and John, 'Stay here and keep watch with me.' Our Lord, fully human yet sinless, did not want to face Gethsemane alone. He craved for company. He wanted His closest friends near to Him. And yet they couldn't really do anything to help Him.

They couldn't lighten His awful load. They couldn't share His burden. But He knew that He would be comforted just by them being there. If you like, He was saying to them, 'Please hold my hand.'

I've never thought about that before and I am in awe. What is more, I think I can see where this conversation is going.

Yes, in all of us, converted and unconverted, there is a little voice that can't be silenced. 'Please hold my hand', it cries. None of us wants to face life's trials alone. A child who has a bad dream is instantly comforted by a mother's touch. A hospital patient can endure their pain better if a friend sits beside them and literally holds their hand. Longing for someone to 'be there' for me is simply part of being human. This is something the Saviour wants us to recognise - and to act on.

To make everything clearer to me, could you give me some further examples?

Many older people live on their own and spend almost every hour of their week without seeing anyone. Is there someone in your church like that? Maybe there are a few. Why not pop in on them on a regular basis? Give them a definite time, so that they've got something to look forward to. Chat to them, learn from them, read the Scriptures and pray with them – and run some errands too. They will thank the Lord for you, seeing you as His messenger. And, incidentally, you will be a richer person because of it.

What about younger people? How does this 'Please hold my hand' principle work out with them?

You younger people are very good at networking and at following each other on social media. You know about each other's experiences, hopes, fears, disappointments, joys, setbacks and sorrows. Send helpful messages to everyone facing difficulty alone. But remember, three or four handwritten sentences on a plain white card will have infinitely more effect than all your electronic messages. Your friends will pin those cards on their bedroom wall, convinced by them that you really care.

Thank you so much. However, when I raised the subject of serving the Lord I was thinking more about evangelism.

You will never be any good at evangelism unless you are a caring person. Learn that first, and then evangelism will become second nature to you. In the meantime, why not also 'hold the hand' of those currently engaged in evangelism?

Once more, could you give me some examples of what you have in mind?

Perhaps there is a faithful man in your town who regularly preaches in the open air. Did you know that he is filled with trepidation every time he stands up to speak? Now you are not yet ready to preach. But you could stand with him, or stand listening to him. You could do something similar with those who go door-to-door visiting, or who go from your church to preach in other churches, or who run meetings for children, young people or students. Hold their hand. Just 'be there' for them. It will mean more to them than they can ever express. And who knows what you will learn along the way?