

A walk with Mr O (6)

More about our hidden life.

Mr O, we've talked about church membership, Bible reading, meditation, and cultivating a spirit of prayer. And you were very plain last time. You told me that where there is no spirit of prayer there is no true Christianity.

I didn't put it quite like that. But, yes, that is what I believe.

So, please, can I ask you something very personal? Are there some things that you haven't yet mentioned? What do you do yourself to keep a spirit of prayer alive in your heart?

I'm not keen to answer questions of that sort. What I do may not be the best thing for you. It may not even be possible. We are all very different. By prayerful trial and error, we have to find out what works for us personally. Besides, I wouldn't want to give the impression that by doing this, and this, and this, a spirit of prayer will automatically come upon you. Walking with God is not about ticking boxes. It's about going daily to the cross to confess our sins; and then about waiting on the Lord to discover what He wants us to do next.

Yes, I understand all that. But it might still help a younger Christian like me to know a little about an older Christian's hidden life.

Okay. I'll tell you a little, but not too much. And the first thing I would say is that I start my morning by slowly reciting the Apostles' Creed. In that way, in the Lord's presence, I reaffirm my commitment to the great truths of His gospel. That gives a certain flavour to the whole of the day that follows.

I'll look for it on the internet.

Yes. You can get it there in older or more modern English, and you'll find that it doesn't take long to learn.

To go on: I read in both Testaments every day, but my reading in my first quiet time is always in the Gospels. I feel that I need to have a clear view of Christ before I meet the world. I also have a prayer list by which I fulfil a commitment to pray regularly for certain people and works.

I imagine that that is common among many Christians. But, as far as you know, is there anything about your devotional life which might be a bit different from what other people do?

I have no idea what most other people do. And I would stress again that each of us has to find out what is best for ourselves. For myself, I love to sing. We always did that in family worship, and it is also my practice when I am alone.

The first thing I sing every day is a Psalm or, if the Psalm is long, part of a Psalm. In this way I get through the whole Book of Psalms about twice a year. For years I used a psalter, but found that I spent too much time comparing it with my English Bible. I don't do that anymore. I now sing straight off the page of my Bible and make up the tune as I go along. I'm sure the Lord doesn't mind! I think it has helped me to pray more biblically. And yes, before you ask, I also sing at least one hymn a day, concentrating on the great old hymns of the faith, especially the ones that are both doctrinal and experiential.

We're getting near home now, Mr.O. Is there anything else you would like to pass on?

Yes, I love the Westminster Shorter Catechism. In 107 questions and answers it summarises what God expects us to believe, how He expects us to behave, and what steps we must take to walk with Him. I recite from memory one-sixth of it every day, and then use that section as fuel for prayer. This means that I get through the whole Catechism about sixty times a year. I would say that that simple discipline has done more to enrich my spiritual life than anything else that I could mention. Why not try it for yourself?