

A walk with Mr O (29)

The power of one

Mr O, as you know, I'm the only Christian in my family. I'm also the only Christian where I work. Sometimes I feel very alone and out of things. I get horribly discouraged. Is that wrong?

I can't enter fully into your experience. My own pathway has been rather different. However in my teens, having been converted during the summer holidays, I do remember what it was like to go back to a school where there were no other believers.

How did you handle that?

Not well at first. But fortunately, I soon joined an inter-church youth group called 'Young Life' where we prayed for each other in our differing lonely situations. And in that group we were also taught what was called 'the power of one'.

'The power of one'? I've never heard of it. What is it?

Again and again, we were pointed to biblical examples where the presence of one person changed everything. The Bible contains dozens of such examples.

Can you point me to a few?

That's not hard. For example, the swift intervention of one man (Phinehas) saved an entire nation from being destroyed by a plague. The stirring faith of one woman (Deborah) resulted in God's people overthrowing a seemingly invincible enemy. A sentence spoken by one small girl led to the healing and salvation of a pagan general (Naaman). In similar fashion a few words spoken by one boy (Paul's nephew) prevented the assassination of an apostle.

Big doors swing on small hinges. Sometimes everything hinges on a single individual – as the lives of Noah, Abraham, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Peter, Paul and countless others vividly illustrate. With God's blessing, one person can change everything!

I think I'm a bit slow, Mr O, so how does all that apply to me?

Well, God has not given up on your family. That's why He has put you there. Nor has He given up on your work colleagues. The proof? He has put a believer to work

side-by-side with them, so that they can see close up that the Christian life works, and so that they can hear the gospel message from a friendly voice.

So, you're saying that I should start being adventurous, bold and active , and stop whining about being alone.

I didn't put it like that! But, yes, that's about it. Which brings me to the other thing that we were taught about 'the power of one'.

You mean there's more? Please go on.

I was taught to imagine that I was the only Christian in the world. If this year I won someone to Christ, there would be two of us. If next year each of us won somebody else for Christ, there would be four of us. If we all went on like that, after seven years there would 128 of us. After ten years, 1,024 – and after thirty-three years everybody in the world (yes, 8 billion!) would be converted! That is 'the power of one'.

But that's not going to happen, is it? We know that most people are on the wide road that leads to destruction and that they're not going to leave it. Besides, conversion is the Holy Spirit's work, not ours.

Be careful, very careful! None of us knows how many people will come to Christ, except that the Bible tells us that there will be lots of them. And to say that 'conversion is the Holy Spirit's work, not ours' is to state a half-truth.

I don't understand. What do you mean?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is 100% God. He is also 100% man. That is a mystery – and that mystery invades everything relating to Christ. Conversion is 100% God's work. It is also 100% our work. That is why the apostle Paul writes, 'We persuade men'.

But Mr O, I don't know how to do it!

And nor do I. But I do know how to pray:

'Lead me to some soul today, O teach me, Lord, just what to say;
Friends of mine are lost in sin, And cannot find their way.
Few there are who seem to care, And few there are who pray;
Melt my heart and fill my life, Give me one soul today.' (Will H. Houghton).