

A walk with Mr O (32)

Christian living is simple

Mr O, I've got a lot on my mind today. We've got terrible trouble in our family – by that, I mean our extended family. I don't want to go into details, but there's been a massive falling out. Lots of family members, who've been accusing and insulting each other, are no longer talking. If I meet this group here, then that group there won't have anything to do with me. It's awful, and I don't know what to do.

That's really sad and I can see that you are upset. The Lord never intended family life to be like that, so it's all the more important for you now to shine as a light in such darkness.

Yes, Mr O, but how?

Well, first of all, by realising that living the Christian life is simple.

Simple? What do you mean, simple? Believe me, there's nothing easy about my situation. The family is in a mess and the whole thing is very complicated.

I said that living the Christian life is simple. I didn't say that it was easy. It isn't. Living as a Christian is sometimes very difficult indeed. But God's answer to complexity is always simplicity.

Right now, Mr O, you and I are not on the same wavelength. What actually are you getting at?

Imagine that you are one of those old sea captains crossing the Atlantic. Your boat is seaworthy. Your crew is reliable. Everything is shipshape. But that doesn't mean that you are going to escape the battering of waves, gales and life-threatening storms, does it?

No, of course not. But I can't quite see where this is going.

The old sea captain is confident that his ship won't sink. But he could be blown off course. To prevent this happening, he does just one simple thing: he constantly consults his compass, or, if he hasn't got one, he uses his sextant to take readings

from the stars. Using this one simple discipline he navigates his vessel and arrives at last in harbour.

I think that I get it. I'm in the middle of a storm. The Lord won't let me sink, but I'm definitely in danger of being blown off course. To avoid this, I need to engage in one simple discipline. But what is it? What is the Christian's compass in difficult situations? What is his guiding star?

It is 1 Corinthians 10:31: 'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.'

Could you say a bit more about that, please?

Satan will tempt you to ask and answer the wrong questions, such as, 'How can I keep out of trouble?', or 'What can I do to stay in everybody's good books?', or 'Can I do anything by way of damage limitation?', and so on.

No! No! The Christian life is not about you. The question to be asked – the only question to be asked – is 'Which course of action will bring the Lord the most credit?' Asking and answering that one simple question will guide you safely through all the intricacies of Christian decision-making.

If you were in my shoes, how in practice would you go about that?

For myself, I would get a large sheet of paper. At the top I would write out 1Corinthians 10:31. Underneath it I would write, 'Which course of action will bring Him the most credit?' Then, one per line, I would list the names of every family member.

And then what?

Then I would pray and ask the Lord for wisdom, reminding Him of His promise to give wisdom to all who ask Him for it. Following that, I would write against each name the answer to our simple question. Finally, when all that has been done, I would write 'SOLI DEO GLORIA' – which was the great principle which drove the Protestant Reformation. It means, 'May God alone be glorified!'

All this is new to me, Mr O. Thank you!

Stop looking at the waves! Fix your eyes on Jesus. Think great thoughts about Him. And live in such a way that others will do the same!