

A walk with Mr O (20)

Leadership in one word

Mr O, I hope you don't mind me saying so, but you're getting on a bit and you won't be around for much longer.

Don't count on it! We shall see. But why on earth have you begun our chat in such a strange way?

Well, you've been in Christian leadership for most of your life. After you've gone it will be people like me who have to take over. Have you got a key piece of advice that you would like to pass on to future leaders?

Yes. Love!

Is that it?

Yes. Love! Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And love everybody else like yourself.

Love, love, love, love, love, love, love!

I know you're right Mt O, but my first reaction to that answer is to feel a bit disappointed. I've been looking forward to you teaching me a hidden secret you've discovered. I've been preparing myself to hear something radical. And all you're doing is to tell me to love!

But it is radical! Think about it. If I love God, even a little, I will regularly take time to stop and admire Him. Love does that. I will pause in silent awe while I reflect on His being, His attributes, His One-ness, His Three-ness, His covenant, His creation, His providence, His redemption through Christ, His application of that redemption by His Word and Spirit, His coming judgment, His personal dealings with me, and so very, very much more. In that place of contemplation my flickering love-flame is fanned into a blaze. He is wonderful! And He loves me.

I can't help loving Him in return. Isn't that what you want to see in every Christian leader? Isn't that what you want in your own life?

Go on, Mr O, please don't stop!

Overcome with the God-ness of God, and conquered by His love, we are driven back to His Word, which we now read with new affection and new eyes. More and more we see things as God sees them. We see people as God sees them. Our hearts ache for them. We are eager for their present and eternal welfare.

We put a new value on every child and adult that we meet. We weep over the crowds who go through life as sheep without a Shepherd. And in the depths of our soul, we find a special and tender desire to care for each one of God's people, and a willingness to sacrifice ourselves so that our inward love can express itself practically.

What else does love do?

There is rigour about true love. It is not sentimental slush. The love which we are talking about is dominated by the thought of God. It therefore cannot see anything as the world sees it. It knows that what the world considers wise is foolish, and what the world considers foolish is wise. It cannot bear to see people being led astray. It is aware that the devil blinds human minds and that the whole world lies under his sway. It therefore questions everything that humans say and do.

Everything?

Everything! God is perfect and His way is perfect. Therefore, anything that deviates from His way is inevitably a disaster. Love is broken hearted when it sees men and women despising God and running to ruin.

God's way is the way to go! So, love takes the time to weigh up and evaluate the truth of every news outlet, the integrity of every politician, the direction of every trend in society, the eternal worth of people's values, the content and spirit of every sermon, and the beliefs and practice of every church.

But surely that's a recipe for cynicism!

Cynics don't see any good anywhere. Nor do they come up with a solution to the evils they see. Godly love is different. It doesn't receive anything without questioning it, but when it does see something good, it recognises it and thanks God for it. It then proceeds to trumpet the fact that the gospel of the grace of God is the cure for everything else.