

A walk with Mr O (23)

Everyone in the world

Mr O, do you think that I ought to become a missionary?

I strongly believe that every Christian should ask themselves that question. But what has caused you to ask it?

I've been doing some thinking. If someone in the U.K. or the U.S.A. starts to seek the Lord, it is comparatively easy for them to find the way of salvation. They can buy a Bible, go to church, download Christian materials, and perhaps come across a Christian teacher or work colleague, an open-air meeting or a beach mission. Meanwhile millions of others elsewhere are doomed to live and die with almost no chance of hearing the gospel. I think that maybe I should devote the rest of my life to telling them about Christ.

What you are saying is very challenging. But there is a problem in that sort of reasoning. Can you see what it is?

No, Mr O, I can't. In fact this train of thought has really shaken me up. I've been shedding tears over the lost. There are so many of them; and they have no hope.

If the only thing that sends you abroad is a sense of people's need, believe me, you will soon be discouraged beyond recovery. You will come home weary, broken and useless. That's not what you want, is it?

No, Mr O. So what's wrong with what I've been saying?

This might shock you, but I have to tell you that although you are so wonderfully sincere, you are not thinking like a Christian. All reasoning which is properly Christian starts with God. That is true whatever the subject might be. That is what distinguishes the way

Christians 'tick' from the way that non-Christians 'tick'. Your thinking about missions has started with people's need, and not with the Lord.

And now I'm all muddled and confused. Please help me out.

Our God is a missionary God. He sent Jesus 'that the world through him might be saved.' Before He returned to heaven, our Saviour commanded His apostles to make disciples of all nations. He then commanded that those new disciples should be taught to observe everything that He had ever commanded His apostles. In other words the Great Commission, as we call it, is to be fulfilled by every single Christian, with no exceptions. No exceptions at all.

So every Christian is to be a missionary?

Exactly! If the Great Commission means anything, it means that every Christian everywhere is to be engaged in regular, nameable, specific activities which have as their aim the evangelisation of the whole world

But Mr O, that's not what we see. Most Christians I know go to Sunday services and midweek meetings, and that's it. They don't get involved in any other spiritual activities.

Sadly, that is true. Maybe they are the first people that we should evangelise. Didn't the Lord say, 'He who does not love me does not keep my words'? Nobody who loves Christ just sits back and lets the world perish. Passive Christians are probably not true Christians at all. They don't need to be stirred. They need to be converted!

I think that I'm beginning to see things more clearly. But among those who are spiritually active, how do some of them end up as full-time missionaries in other countries?

As people engage in activities aimed at proclaiming the gospel to the whole world, something happens to some of them. They begin to 'ache' inside. A particular need, or a particular part of the world, begins to interest them, and it won't let them go. The more they pray about it, the more it gets hold of them. The more they seek the will of God, the more sure they become that they should give up everything

else, and devote themselves to that particular need, country, language group, or whatever. But please note that 'the missionary call', as it is often referred to, doesn't come to lazy Christians. It comes to people who love Christ who are already engaged in telling others about Him. And when they leave their comfort zone to proclaim Him elsewhere, it is with the conviction that Christ Himself has sent them – which is why they keep at it however great their discouragements.

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