

A walk with Mr O (43)

Our pastor has crashed

Mr O, as you've probably heard, our pastor is off work at the moment and is likely to be so for several months.

Yes, I had heard. Do you know why?

We've been assured that it is not a moral or doctrinal problem. Apparently he is simply worn out.

Then he has my sympathy. The pastoral ministry is incredibly demanding – far more than most people can imagine. Six years after I was ordained I myself had several months off. I was still in my twenties, and yet I was dead beat physically, mentally exhausted, emotionally drained and spiritually spent. Happily, I recovered, and nothing similar has happened to me since.

Wow, I didn't know that. So, what would you say to my pastor?

I don't know what I would say to him, because I am not in possession of all the facts. But I know what I would now say to my younger self.

What would that be?

It would be, 'Stuart, God loves you and has always loved you. And He wants you. That is why He made you. That is why He saved you. Whenever He's in your company He is delighted. He enjoys speaking to you. And you can tell Him anything – and when you do, He is thrilled, just like any father who listens gleefully to the babbling of his child.'

Go on, Mr O, because I've never heard things put like that before.

I would go on to say, 'Stuart, it's you the Lord wants, not what you can do for Him. The Father chose you in the His eternal covenant. The Lord Jesus Christ wants you so much that He suffered, bled and died to have you. The Holy Spirit has come into you so that your whole being may be the Lord's dwelling place. As God sees it, your heart is His home! That's the final proof of how much He wants you.'

That's wonderful, but what would you tell your younger self to DO?

I would say, 'So, go on, delight Him. Thrill Him. That's what you've been put on the planet to do. Give Him the company that He so much craves. Open the Bible and let Him tell you what He wants to tell you. And you tell Him everything, everything, that's on your heart.

Go for walks with Him. Give Him joy by admiring the creation that He's made for your pleasure. Listen to music together. Please Him by pouring out your love on everyone you meet. Yes, you're His son, but make it also your life's ambition to be His best friend.'

Yes, Mr O, what about your younger self's ministry?

Stuart, become best friends with the Lord and your ministry will take care of itself. He will tell you what to do. And He'll tell you how to do it. And you'll do it in a way which won't break you, even though the going may often be very hard.

He's the Vine and He's the one who produces the fruit.

You can't do that. You are just a branch on which the fruit appears. So, stop trying to do what He alone can do. Let the Lord enjoy you, and you enjoy Him. He'll do the rest.' And surely all that doesn't just apply to pastors, does it? Isn't that the way that all Christians should live?

Yes, it is. But pastors are called to be examples to their flocks. However, before we split up, I must mention a very real danger that we must all avoid.

It's been such a happy conversation today. You're not going to spoil it now, are you?

Not at all! Just the opposite. But we must make sure that we don't go into the Lord's company with ulterior motives. We don't go to Him so that we can have a fruitful ministry, a happy life, a united church, or even revival. We go to Him so that we can have Him, and so that

He can have us. That's it! There is nothing beyond Him and we must not think that there is. Jesus is enough. All He wants is us, and all we want must be Him. That's the Christian life. Everything else is idolatry.
