

A walk with Mr O (46)

Become a man of God? – Forget it!

Mr O, I'm sick to death of my low standard of Christian living and I've decided, come what may, to become a man of God.

Okay, so what are you doing about it?

Well, Mr O, this is where I need your help. I've gone to YouTube and typed in 'How to become a man of God', but there are dozens of preachers who have messages on that subject and I don't know which ones to listen to.

My strong advice is that you don't listen to any of them.

How can you say that? Many of these men are eminent preachers who are respected internationally!

I think that you are mixing up prominence with eminence. Think about it. If a man preaches a sermon called 'How to be a man of God' he is saying, in a round-about way, that he is a man of God and that he can tell you how to become one too. He is preaching himself.

But the apostle Paul said, 'We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your slaves for Jesus' sake' (2 Cor.4:5).

I see what you mean.

Not only so, but if you asked Paul whether he was a man of God, do you know what his answer would be?

Yes, I suppose I do. He would say, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief' (1Tim.1:15). And he would tell me that he wasn't spiritually 'there' yet and that he was pressing on and on in his quest to know Christ (Phil.3:10-14).

Exactly. The Christian life is not about you. It's about Jesus. Stop trying to measure how far you've come and how well you are doing. Forget the idea of having a 'victorious Christian life'. Give up trying to be someone who plays in the spiritual Premiership. Take yourself right out of the picture. Live your life by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you (Gal.2:20).

Get obsessed with Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb.12:2).

Yes, Mr O, but what does all that actually mean in practice?

It means getting alone with the Lord and telling Him that you are not obsessed with Him. You're a failure. Even your view of the Christian life is centred around yourself. You love yourself too much and you don't love your crucified Saviour enough.

And you're sorry about it, but you don't know how to change. You want to be different, but you can't manage it. You're a sinner kneeling at the cross, and that's all you're ever going to be.

And then what?

Jesus loves failures! 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, you will not despise' (Ps.51:17). 'This man receives sinners and eats with them' (Luke 15:2).

Go to Him with your breaking heart. He won't turn you away. He will welcome you and pardon you – and He will do this every day and every hour until you go to glory.

As you pour out your heart to Him you will become conscious of His presence, His tenderness and His embrace. You will find that He is wonderful.

I don't know what to say.

In conscious fellowship with Him it will become clear to you what your next steps must be. I can't tell you how the Lord will deal with you individually. For myself, I once read this line which changed my life: 'There where you see His wounds, you will receive His breath.' It's an allusion to John 20:19-23.

Something happens to sinners who find themselves in Christ's presence.

It will happen to you. He Himself will change you. The big change will be that you will want Him like you never did before – which is why repentant people love the Bible and love to pray. He will become your magnificent obsession. 'So, life shall be transformed to love, A heaven below, a heaven above.' (Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871)